LEARNing Landscapes

Journal

Teaching and Learning With Stories

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Statement of Purpose

LEARNing Landscapes[TM] Journal is an open access, peer-reviewed, online education journal supported by LEARN (Leading English Education and Resource Network). Published in the spring and autumn of each year, it attempts to make links between theory and practice and is built upon the principles of partnership, collaboration, inclusion, and attention to multiple perspectives and voices. The material in each publication attempts to share and showcase leading educational ideas, research, and practices in Quebec, and beyond, by welcoming articles, interviews, visual representations, arts-informed work, and multimedia texts to inspire teachers, administrators, and other educators to reflect upon and develop innovative possibilities within their own practices.

Review Board (Vol. 11 No. 2)

Editorial

 In 2012, as part of the commentary section in the spring issue of *LEARNing Landscapes*, we had the privilege of audiotaping an interview with Jerome Bruner, which I invite you to visit: www.learninglandscapes.ca/index.php/learnland/article/view/Commentary-Cultivating-the-Possible

Suffice to say, it was exciting to hear from this wonderful, renowned psychologist who had so profoundly influenced many educators and researchers worldwide. A year later, Mary Stewart, Managing Editor of *LEARNing Landscapes*, and I lamented that we had not been able to videotape the interview. We decided we should thank him in person for his contribution and deliver a hard copy of the issue to him. Our request to visit was welcomed warmly. So, on a sunny afternoon in mid-spring, we were greeted at his apartment in New York City, where we shared conversation over cups of tea. This energetic and vibrant 97-year-old had just returned from Mexico to deliver a talk and was leaving imminently for Europe to deliver another. His passion for his work was palpable and obviously, unstoppable, and we left humbled by this very special encounter.

Jerome Bruner was 100 when he died two years ago, leaving an immense legacy to education (www.theguardian.com/science/2016/jul/15/jerome-bruner-obituary). It seems very fitting to pay tribute to him in this issue given his important contribution to narrative and storied ways of thinking and understanding. We owe so much to him.

Bruner suggested that there are two general ways of thinking. The first is the paradigmatic, or logico-scientific way that concentrates on similarity-based facts, or clusters of thought, used to form an argument. The second is narrative. It is the way humans account for their actions and events around them and shape their everyday experiences. It is "a dialectic between what was expected and what came to pass" (Bruner, 2002, p. 31) and "both can be used as means for convincing another. Yet, what they convince of is fundamentally different: arguments convince of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness" (Bruner, 1986, p. 11).

> The paradigmatic mode offers the power of prediction in that it sets up and tests hypotheses about the nature of reality. In contrast, the narrative mode organizes the complex and often ambiguous world of human intention and action into a meaningful structure. (Adler, 2008, p. 423)

This packed issue of very interesting work is a testament to the importance current educators attribute to the value of the narrative/storying mode of thinking in teaching and learning. As Freeman (2017) reminds us,

> We are surrounded by stories and construct stories as we make sense of the events we live and witness. Our stories are often embedded in other stories, which are themselves embedded or linked to other stories. This unending flow of meaning making, affects and is affected by human existence, whether, or not we pay attention to it … Furthermore, this form of thinking is

        action-oriented and purposeful … constituted by the human need to know how to act in the social world. (pp. 32–33)

This issue highlights the importance of story for understanding all human endeavors. It attests to how and why narrative modes of thinking and doing in teaching, learning, and research have flourished exponentially in the past 35 years. The summary of the commentaries and articles that follow shows the variety and poignant ways in which stories can be used in education to make a difference in teaching and learning contexts. As in the past, the commentaries and articles are published alphabetically in the journal, but are organized differently in this editorial for ease of discussion.

Invited Commentaries

We are very privileged to be able to include a videotaped interview with **Carol Gilligan**, who is a renowned psychologist, and currently a professor of Humanities and Applied Psychology at New York University. Gilligan rocked the research world when her book "In a Different Voice" was published in 1982. Her research "story" featured the voices of women which had been neglected and missing in psychological research. In this interview, she traces her pre- and post-journey around this pivotal book. She discusses the dramatic dissonance that existed between the relational orientation of women's voices and the emphasis on separation, autonomy, and independence that, until that time, had been reflected in psychological theory. Her work opened many doors for others. It is a story that needs to be preserved and we are very pleased to be able to document it in her own voice in *LEARNing Landscapes*.

Not long after Gilligan's work was published, University of Alberta Professor Emerita **Jean Clandinin**, known and respected worldwide for her work as a narrative inquiry researcher, teacher, and teacher educator, commenced her illustrious career. In this videotaped interview, Jean traces her narrative inquiry journey from the time she studied with Michael Connolly at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education until now, as she transitions her final, remaining responsibilities as the founder and director of the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development (CRTED) at the University of Alberta (https://CRTED.ualberta.ca) to the current director, Professor Bonita Watt. Under Jean's gentle and skillful tutelage, CRTED has nourished, scaffolded, and supported narrative inquirers from all over the world. Jean shares how her work was informed by her childhood and a mosaic of muses (well worth reading) such as Arendt, M. C. Bateson, Dewey, Elbaz, Gilligan, Greene, Lakoff and Johnson, and Noddings, to name a few. She outlines the basic tenets of narrative inquiry in both classroom and research contexts, illustrates with some of her favorite narrative inquiry stories, and discusses the challenges, which thankfully are less than what they were, that narrative inquirers still face.

Margaret Kovach is a Professor in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. In her compelling, written commentary, she shares how she devoured stories as a child and believes that they ignited in her an emerging social consciousness. She was born a Cree-Saulteaux but, from the age of three months, grew up in White rural Saskatchewan with adoptive parents. She shares how in 2017 she felt the need to reinvigorate herself in her academic life and did so by spending a year reading successive books at sunrise each day. She began a ritual of sharing these with her partner and realized that this event

transformed a "cerebral exercise into a relational ceremony … the stories came alive." She connected this experience to the Indigenous belief that sharing stories with others, which are animated and oral, defies dichotomy and fragmentation, connects old and new, sustains relationships, and nourishes a sense of community. She recognizes the importance of the written word in academia, but as an Indigenous academic she is compelled to "respect orality as a relational encounter that [her] community requires." She argues persuasively for the transformative power of story and suggests that through story, teaching, learning, and research can be decolonized.

Steven High is an Associate Professor of History and Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Public History at Concordia University in Montreal. We were very pleased when he agreed to provide a written commentary for this issue. Steven has been a pioneer in developing a space for oral history, which is rarely taught at universities because historians tend to study the past, rather than the present. Because oral history has been on the margins of academia, it has emerged in community contexts which have become rich and creative places for social justice advocates composed of artists, teachers, archivists, among others. This diversity among oral historians has contributed to developing a myriad of cross-disciplinary approaches for studying and portraying the work that has been enhanced by advances in digital technology. High describes how his oral history classes are driven by inquiry and active learning grounded in a deep respect for relational interaction and sound ethical practices. The results are varied and compelling and include digital and graphic stories, audio walks, live performances, music compositions, and poetry. He suggests that there is an increasing interest in teaching oral history at all levels of education. No doubt his work has contributed to this important trend.

Corrine Glesne and **Marlene Pugach** are Professors Emerita at the University of Vermont and Wisconsin-Milwaukee, respectively. In their engaging, written commentary, these authors urge educators to think about possibilities of story as pedagogy because of the powerful teaching and learning that occurs when story drives pedagogy. In their reflective essay, they draw on their own stories as examples, sharing how they came to understand through narrative and to value story as a way of thinking and seeing. They attribute that their exposure to books in their childhoods and encouragement from a parent or teacher about their reading and writing laid the foundation for narrative in their adult lives. They share in some detail the pedagogical strategies they have used to encourage storied ways of learning and argue that narrative is foundational to the development and growth of all students and should not be used solely for enrichment purposes.

Stefinee Pinnegar is an Associate Professor at Brigham Young University. The coauthors of this commentary are **Eliza Pinnegar**, who is an independent scholar, and **Celina Dulude Lay**, who is a graduate student at Brigham. They posit how stories create community and develop safe spaces for sharing. Nuanced understanding of teaching comes from stories teachers tell and it is through stories that experience can be linked to theory and course content. They share, with individual experiences of their own, how stories can help to positively disrupt preservice teachers' tendencies to teach as they were taught, can provide scenarios for analyzing teaching and learning, and can contribute to teacher identity development as preservice teachers transition and evolve in their teaching beliefs and practices. Many of the themes in these commentaries are reflected in the articles that follow.

Storying for Embodied Self-Reflection

Leggo, poet and education scholar, reflects on the notion of cliché in a life writing journey of poems, prose, and "citational ruminations." In a masterful way, he deconstructs, questions, and braids together possibilities for connection to the original idea of cliché, which was something pithy and worthy of replication/duplication, rather than something that has become "commonplace and worn out." He suggests imagination and creativity are the necessary ingredients for storying in diverse ways and provide opportunities to reach more diverse audiences. **Hoben** and **Pickett** share how, in a self-study, each explored two critical incidences in their teaching that had transformed their sense of self as teacher educators. They wrote reflectively about these experiences and ultimately transitioned this prose into poetry. This process deepened their appreciation for the important connections between narrative and poetry. Their work lessened the isolation and vulnerability they had previously felt. They intend to use their stories and poems in their work to broach difficult topics in meaningful and safe classroom encounters. **Chung** describes her narrative inquiry with three Indigenous, female youth and their families and her observations of the teaching of an Indigenous elder. In these experiences, she began to see "education as ceremony," rather than the rituals of schooling that focus on control, standardized testing, and mandatory attendance. This study gave her different and nuanced ways of thinking about and reflecting on her teaching, parenting, and self-identity, and the importance of connecting her students' classroom experiences to their personal lives. **Saleh**, **Menon**, and **Kubota** conducted an autobiographical, narrative inquiry into their names and the significance that each of their names has had in relation to their personal and social identity, and their futures. Their stories poignantly illustrate how a name can become a treasured gift, or a site of considerable pain. Names have the power to uplift or destroy, signifying the reticence educators should have about renaming a student for the sake of convenience and the importance of honoring the diverse subtleties that names imply. **Stoddart-Morrison** shares her story of being brought up by her oldest sister in Jamaica in a loving, caring, encouraging, and education-oriented, yet, appropriately structured, context. This early learning had a tremendous impact on her and her life. To this day, her sister's voice lingers in her mind—the voice of an astute elder who continues to mentor her without being present. She reflects on how the voice of her sister has become her inner voice in her classroom as she encourages, discovers possibility, and provides storied and safe spaces for all students while they learn and grow. **Choudhury**, in an epistolary approach to reflection on her developing researcher identity, traces the journey she experienced in a qualitative research methodology class while doing her PhD. She describes in detail and with visuals how her class exercises, reflections, and readings culminated in a portfolio which allowed her to claim her voice and researcher identity through a process of multimodal and embodied storying. **Jack-Malik** shares how she used the idea that curriculum making is a storied process that occurs not only in schools, but also in homes and communities (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011) to help her weave together and understand what she was experiencing as a teacher and a pregnant mother-to-be during the tragic and brutal massacre of the 14 women in Montreal in 1989. She used and continues to use narrative inquiry to find the interconnectedness among stories that occur on the different landscapes of life, to use past stories to inform future ones, to live relationally, and to understand tensions and find resolutions when these stories collide.

Stories and Storying to Assist Preservice and Novice Teachers

LeBlanc and **Irwin** describe their work mentoring novice teachers living and working in remote, rural areas of British Columbia. These researchers have recognized that visual narratives, in this instance, comics, are an artistic and aesthetic form of storytelling. This article shares with examples how personal stories of early teaching were extracted from interview data, themes were identified and then were transformed into coherent stories through the medium of comics. These products were not only the tangible results of their study, but also were used to share with and engender helpful reflection among other novice teachers in the mentoring project. **Hirsch** uses the qualitative methodology known as portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997) to create the stories of two beginning school teachers who were well prepared to teach all content of the curriculum, but discovered they were unprepared to deal with the imposed strict classroom management practices of the Charter School in which they had been hired. This produced considerable stress for them in their first year and Hirsch suggests that more emphasis needs to be placed on preparing teachers to be emotionally resilient in the face of dissonance that may occur when transitioning from preservice to the status of beginning teachers. **Baer** describes her work with preservice art majors who were required to teach a series of visual art lessons to first grade students in a local elementary school. Working in groups of four, the students then went through a design-thinking debriefing session (share and empathize; identify issues; brainstorm solutions; role-play solutions; test solutions with the class). This author suggests that the combination of design-thinking and storytelling facilitated a complex and systematic way to approach teacher reflection. **Jao** describes how she used the format of Margaret Wise's picture book, "The Important Book," to inspire preservice mathematics teachers to create their own "important" books to develop mathematical concepts for students in classrooms. The results were shared in postings on the Web and suggest that these preservice teachers were not only motivated by this creative work, but also began to think more broadly about mathematics teaching and to see the relevance in what they were learning about the curriculum in their university program. **Douglas**, **Sano**, and **Rosvold** share their results of a narrative inquiry into a two-week, study abroad program for preservice ESL teachers from Japan that took place in British Columbia. In excerpts of the narratives of five participants, they illustrate how meaningful intercultural encounters and interactions with the local community created positive experiences for the participants and that the narrative inquiry process and the co-creation of stories served as both a positive research approach and pedagogical tool.

Linking Personal and Professional Stories to Benefit Teaching and Learning

As a follow-up to an article written over 10 years ago, **MacDonald** and **Hill** examine the use of pedagogical documentation (PD) as a storied method of assessment and inquiry that they used with early childhood teachers in a graduate diploma program. The teachers used multimodal approaches to document classroom practices and created learning stories to reflect, respond, and articulate future possibilities that emerged in the process. Their study revealed that teachers used PD as a lens from which to focus intently, as a catalyst for creating next steps in their teaching, as a way for making learning visible, and as a vehicle for sharing tangible evidence of learning. **The Self-Study Group** is composed of

11 authors, members of a group of teacher educators. They discuss how they used the notion of "Bildungsroman," or the practice of creating narratives that focus on the cultivation of the self, and "Bildung," which assumes maturation requires willful engagement of the self through social interaction. The resulting narratives conceptualized their personal and professional journeys and underscored the interconnected nature of the personal and professional and importance of this in self-actualization. **Lyle,** in the spirit of post-qualitative inquiry (PQI), or the conducting of inquiry outside normalized structures of epistemology, ontology, and methodology, shares how she began to realize she was so conditioned to write academically, that her work had become formulaic and distant. She turned to autobiographical work and was determined to encourage graduate students to do the same based on the premises that teaching is autobiographical work, good teaching is inextricably linked to identity and integrity, identity is created through story, and integrity is fostered by problematizing the work. She argues that PQI offers an avenue through which teachers can move from a recipe orientation to teaching to one of an exploration of "the ingredients." **Ingersoll** describes in a short, personal epistolary piece to well-known narrative scholar, Robert Nash, how difficult it was when she was required to create first-person narratives, rather than the typical research papers or literature reviews. She argues that academic writing is much easier because it masks the self by mimicking an outside voice of authority, while personal narrative expresses a voice which must produce ideas from within, rather than a synthesis of those of others. She concludes with a poem to two other narrative scholars, Fowler and Luce-Kepler, who as Nash, believe narrative is a way of making deep connections.

Storying Curricula to Enhance Learning

Ryu shares how she used autoethnography, a creative nonfictional type of storytelling, to explore her piano teaching and learning with three young beginning students. Her interesting and reflective stories about her personal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal experiences of her teaching and their learning highlight how this process helped her become more attentive to the needs of her students and to create a connectedness with each of them. By being in "pedagogical presence" with these youngsters, she developed more artful and effective ways of teaching piano. **Gade** describes how she has used the well-known children's series titled "Le Petit Nicholas," created by Rene Goscinny and Jean-Jacques Sempe, to inject ontology into the curriculum. She illustrates how three of these stories resonated with children's own experiences of school and, as a result, they begin to see different ways of becoming as they developed their student identities. She suggests that stories like these can act as a tool for mediating students' everyday experiences. **Roessingh** discusses how storytelling in the classroom honors orality, acts as a bridge to literacy, and can be particularly helpful in promoting inclusion for diverse learners. She shares a story that she and a grade six student, Abhi, co-constructed. She highlights how using stories to link to his personal identity and experiences enhanced both her literacy teaching and his learning. **Zanazanian** and **Popa** situate their work on the landscape of historical consciousness. They present a rationale for using an interesting, narrative template which they have developed for the teaching of history. Building on the work of other scholars engaged in work in narrative competence, they share how the aim of the tool is to help students produce and validate their personal stories of belonging by

conducting original research and to assist teachers in engaging their students in learning the history of English-speaking Quebec.

Using Visual Stories in Learning Beyond the Classroom

Fendler and **Shields** describe how a group of teenagers used storytelling in a yearlong documentary film project run by the Palmer Munroe Teen Center. During neighborhood walks and attendance at local community events in Frenchtown, Florida, they mapped their routes with film and photos and then portrayed the information they gathered in documentary videos which importantly depict the perspectives of the teen producers, rather than a report on experiences of people they encountered. The authors present a series of vignettes that are linked to the videos the teens produced and discuss how this "engaged pedagogy" shows the links between storytelling and filming and the careful kind of attentiveness that these young people developed as a result. **Cook** and **Beliveau** describe their study of a collectively created theatre piece entitled, "Give Me Your Hands," based on stories from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and produced by community members and staff at the University of British Columbia's "Learning Exchange." This study shows how collective playmaking and research-based theatre can be used to portray experiences that are difficult to depict in traditional academic prose. Last, but not least, **Rosen** shares how 14 visual stories of teachers' professional learning that she created for virtual professional development, accompanied by directed activities for participants, helped to generate conversations among participants because of the resonance that resulted from viewing these visual stories. Importantly, it also helped to elicit stories of their own experiences that otherwise they might not have shared.

Enjoy listening, reading, and viewing!

LBK

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Lynn Butler-Kisber (B. Ed., M. Ed., McGill University; Ed. D., Harvard University), a former elementary school teacher, is Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education in the Faculty of Education at McGill. She has held a number of administrative posts including a deanship, two associate deanships, and five directorships, and has served on numerous committees within the University and in the educational milieu. In 2007, she was appointed and continues as Outside Educator to the Board of Directors of St. George's School and also serves on the board of Explorations Camp. Her interests, teaching, and graduate supervision focus on multiliteracies, leadership, student engagement, professional development, and qualitative research. She has a special interest in feminist/equity and social justice issues, and the role of arts-based analysis and representation in qualitative research. Her research and development activities have included numerous international projects. Locally, she is currently working on the NEXTSchool Project. She has just completed stints as a visiting scholar at universities in Alberta, Vermont, and Worcester (UK), where she focused on arts-based research. She has also presented on narrative inquiry and school leadership at Hebei Normal University in Shijiazhuang, China, where she was awarded an honorary professorship. She has published and presented extensively in her areas of interest and the second edition of *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Based Perspectives* was just published by Sage.

Reflections From a Narrative Inquiry Researcher

D. Jean Clandinin

Abstract

In this interview, author, researcher, and professor D. Jean Clandinin reflects on her many years of experience as a narrative inquiry researcher, teacher, and teacher educator. She believes that growing up in a large, extended family with rooted engagement in the community set the stage for her later interest in narrative inquiry. She describes the many varied scholars who have had an influence on her and explains the basic tenets of narrative inquiry in both the classroom and research contexts. The challenges that face narrative inquiry researchers are described and she shares her vision of how things are changing. Finally, she tells one of her favorite narrative inquiry stories.

You are renowned around the world as a narrative inquirer. Can you talk about how you first became interested in the power of stories and how your work in narrative research unfolded?

People sometimes assume that I grew up in a storytelling family—and that's not at all the story that I tell. I grew up in a family that was part of a community and one of the things that was really important was people's experience. The familial curriculum making of my family was very nested in a larger extended family and also in a community where I learned about responsibility. Now that I think about it, I think of civic engagement, of living in community-minded and responsive ways. Then it was just that: we were responsible for ourselves, but also for the people, land, animals, neighbors and, of course, our family members.

It was experience that captured me, more than story. When I arrived to do my doctoral work, of course, I had already been teaching. I also worked as a school counsellor alongside elementary school teachers. When I arrived to do my doctoral work at OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), it was not with Michael Connelly, but with Frank Smith and John McInnes—it was my interest in language and trying to help children with reading and language skills because that was an area of great concern in the schools and that's the first thing that children were identified as having problems with that brought me to doctoral studies.

I had worked for about 10 years as a teacher, counsellor, and special programs teacher before I started my doctorate. That's important because when I arrived to do my doctoral work, one of the first courses I took was with Michael Connelly—and he had just started his work with Freema Elbaz. My great interest in their work was they were talking about something called "teacher knowledge." And everything I was reading in the literature basically was saying teachers didn't have knowledge. A new area of teacher thinking had just emerged and that just struck me as astounding because, of course, I knew teachers had knowledge. Teachers had rich experience: they always told stories of their teaching, but they were their stories of experience. And, of course, as a special programs teacher and

school counsellor, I listened to many teachers tell their stories. I'd worked in their classrooms, I watched them live their stories in practice, and their knowledge was always experiential. When I ended up in this course with Michael, and reading Freema and his early work, I abandoned my interest in language arts and came over to really trying to work with their work around teacher knowledge. And trying to understand what teachers knew and what was expressed in their stories, both their lived and told stories.

But it took us a while to get to narrative. I have told this story in books and articles, and many times to people. It was actually Mark Johnson, the co-author with George Lakoff of, "Metaphors We Live By." It was Mark's influence when he said: "I think you should read Alasdair MacIntyre's book, "After Virtue." He said, "Don't read the whole thing—you'll be bored. In the moment I thought: *What does that say about me?!* He said, "Read the part about narrative unity." Mark's suggestion was the first time we explicitly talked about narrative and trying to understand stories and to see that the experiential knowledge teachers held was storied knowledge and that they expressed it in the stories they told and the stories that they lived by in their classrooms. And it helped me to see: "This is a much richer notion of what goes on in classrooms—it's a richer notion of teacher knowledge." It's kind of a backdoor way into narrative. It's always interesting to me over these many years: Had I stayed in language, would I have gotten to stories through a more "narratology" kind of way of thinking about teacher knowledge? But I didn't. I came to it through teachers' experience and understanding experiential knowledge.

Who are the scholars who have contributed to your work, and how have they done that?

As I said, Mark Johnson's "Metaphors We Live By," which I had already read before I met him. But then his work on embodied knowledge has always been really powerful. John Dewey's work is just essential—"Experience in Education," "Art as Experience"—those books I devoured and are really central. But there were other people too: Carolyn Heilbrun's "Writing a Woman's Life" was really powerful; Mary Catherine Bateson's "Composing a Life" and then Maxine Greene's work toward the end of my doctoral work. She was my external examiner in my doctoral work. I loved Carol Gilligan's work, "In a Different Voice." The feminist scholars like Sandra Harding; this was a long time ago—but that was really radical stuff. I've been asked if my kind of turn to the feminist was because I'm a woman, and the answer to that is "maybe." But certainly, I think I've always been a feminist; they gave words to some of what I knew. But I think, as well, part of it is that so many elementary school teachers are women. The parents I interacted with most when I was teaching were mothers.

It was really interesting to come to the more feminist work—but also the feminist work that was very narrative; that was about voice, that was about experience. Those were the early years as we were doing that work. Nel Nodding's work on ethics and care, and on feminist ethics. When that book came out, "Caring," I was all over it—I think I'm on my third copy of it as I keep giving my copies away. Her work allowed me to think about the kind of research that we do; it allowed me to think about "voice" and about the relational work. I had already been thinking about that with Martin Buber's work, "I and Thou," which is another book that's so well marked up because he gave me much to think about.

More recently, though it was still long ago, David Carr's work was very important. I, of course, read Foucault and Ricoeur—they didn't capture me in the same way that some of the other writers did. I knew what they were saying, but they seemed less grounded in people's experience, in the body. In that kind of sense of the social, as well as the personal, and that it's always a body in the world—it's a gendered body. And that I think comes from the experiential work. It's always someone in the world.

And I think someone told me to read Heidegger's work when I was a doctoral student. Instead, I read Hannah Arendt. I'm being reminded of her work again in some more recent work I'm doing with Vera Caine, but I read her books and was very taken with her ideas … she called herself a "social political theory" writer. But what she was talking about … about the experience of people … about the private and the public … was very important as I thought about teachers and teachers' experience … and as I thought about understanding experience narratively.

In 1988, my colleague Miriam Ben-Peretz, who was then Dean of Education at Haifa; Madeleine Grumet; and Sally Brown, in Scotland, organized a little conference called "Private Women–Public Work." And that was a very narrative kind of conference at the University of Haifa. Hanna Arendt's work was really fundamental to that conference, but Madeleine Grumet was also important, certainly in thinking about her book, "Bitter Milk." Sandra Hollingsworth's work, in some ways, awakened me to narrative in a different way, thinking about teachers' lives over time.

What do you consider are the basic tenets of narrative inquiry in both classroom and research contexts?

Narrative inquiry is the study of experience. That's really fundamental. In order to understand experience, we have to understand experience over time: stories come from somewhere and go somewhere. We have to understand that it is a body in the world, so it's both personal and social always. It was interesting that we began trying to think about place a bit later in our work as we started to think about how important place was. It's important to understand that you can't kind of pull temporality, sociality, and place apart—they're always operating all the time. So, when we look at a child or teacher in a classroom, we have to see experience as something that's unfolding and enfolding over time, always in place or places, always social and personal. I get a little concerned when people only want to talk about the "personal" or they only want to talk about the "social." I say: "Well, you're not really thinking about narrative inquiry then, because if we're thinking narratively about experience, we have to be thinking in all of those ways at once." One of the really basic things is this kind of experiential focus.

Stories, when someone tells you the story—like I'm telling you stories now—you have to inquire into those stories. They're not little nuggets that you can take away and analyze. You always have to understand them as something composed; they're told in particular ways in particular times. Narrative inquiry involves inquiry into stories. Stories are always on their way, in the midst, in the making, because experience is always on the way. It comes from the intergenerational, from our early beginnings, the stories that were told in our early years. They get remade and retold, but they don't go away. They're always pointed in a direction. We have to understand that. Sometimes people want to smooth storied experience over and make it "first this and then this" as if there's some smoothness.

There's no smoothness—it's always messy. And it's always also "intentional." The stories we live are always lived in, shaped by, intentions, within time, environment, context, larger narratives.

Those are fundamental things and I think they're fundamental as we think with teachers in classrooms that it is important to understand what teachers are doing. They are often not seen in this way, seen to be living their experiential knowledge in their classrooms. We offer a way of thinking about children as works in progress, children as composing their lives. Too rarely are teachers given the space to really think about who they are as teachers in relation with children in classrooms. I think, somehow, we need to slow things down for them, so they can have the moments to think about children. But, they write report cards all the time. I was just talking to one of my doctoral students who's in the midst of writing report cards. Report cards are, in some ways, the stories they are telling of a child's life making. Unfortunately, that's not the larger institutional narrative about report cards. They sometimes don't have time to really think, "I'm telling a life story of a child here … I'm shaping this child's story." I think that's important for teachers, for all of us, to think about.

As researchers, these same things are always at work as we think about participants, as we think about the stories that participants tell us or allow us to come alongside as they live. It's really important to always know, whether we're a teacher in relation with a child and his or her family, that we're characters in that story and we need to be reflective and reflexive about who we are over time in those stories. And, as researchers, it's not a study of the "other"—it's always a study of us in relation with participants.

Can you share with us one of your favorite narrative inquiry stories and what you learned in the process?

I have many favorite narrative inquiry stories. I think I'll share a story about a youth whose pseudonym is Jason, who's now a young man—he was part of a study we did with Indigenous youth. In this particular study, we set up an art club in a junior high school and we met every Wednesday with youth who chose to come. It was a large study with my colleagues Florence Glanfield, Vera Caine, Sean Lessard, Simmee Chung, Trudy Cardinal, Cindy Swanson … there were a lot of us involved in that study. Jason came. He was in grade seven when he started to come to the art club. One of the first stories that Jason helped me see is that it is not the researchers alone who select participants, who select which youth we wanted to engage with more intensely and intently. We didn't understand that the youth, who knew it was research, and they knew that they might be selected to be with one or another of these many researchers. And Jason picked me, and it really woke me up to the ways that participants also come into the research with their own intentions and they knew who they wanted to work with.

Jason was not a youth who was really engaged with the art-making activities. He was really engaged in the food and he was engaged in the messing around. And he invited me, even though I was oblivious to this initially, by saying, "Will you hold my phone?" as he came into the art club. Now they, of course, all have phones—I don't really know the school policy, but he would ask me out of all the researchers who were there. One week, and then the next week, and then the next week, and finally I said to our little research group, "I think that Jason wants me to work with him." And it was like: "Of course, they're making up their own minds about who they want to work with and whether or not

they wanted to be worked with." But I just hadn't seen that somehow. I was aware of this, but much more about the process of selecting research participants and thinking in some way, "*I* have the power to invite." He was letting me know that *he* actually had the power. When I asked, at first he was very hesitant. "Well," I said, "I have to talk to your mom." And he replied: "I don't remember her phone number." Well, there's no child who doesn't remember his mother's cellphone number. It took him quite a while before he said, "This is my mom's number; you can call her." Because he really wanted to continue this relationship. But it kind of shifted things and reminded me once again of the importance of thinking about who I was in that space and how I fitted into his story—not only how I was fitting him into my story. Because he's not the one I would of … in all truth, I would have picked one of the girls who was sitting there nicely working on the various art projects or someone who was very focused on that. And this kind of a little bit unruly young man was picking me! That's one of my favorite stories because it calls me up short. Jason and I lived many other stories, but I think I'll stay with that one for now. It reminded me of the importance of knowing that all the power doesn't rest with the researcher in narrative inquiry.

What challenges do researchers face in doing narrative inquiry?

Oh, the challenges are huge! They're less huge than they were, because I think we used to bump in very significant ways with research ethics boards that couldn't understand how there weren't a set number of interviews and where the power wasn't all with the researcher. Because so much of what the research ethics boards do kind of assumes that the power is with the researcher: *we get to ask the questions/we get to select the participants/we get to say how long they'll meet*. Some of that has lessened, but there's a still great sense of, "Well, what questions are you going to ask?" In response I say: "Well, this is where we'll start, but we have go where their experience and their stories and their life making takes us. So, we can't know. We aren't the only ones who get to decide how many conversations we'll have. That also depends on where the stories take us and it's a co-constructed relationship."

Some funding agencies still want us to be able to say what the findings are, i.e. *we found these four things*. Funding agencies, I think, are coming to a point now where sometimes I'm actually approached to take on research projects using narrative inquiry, because what they really want is to understand the experience of participants—they want to understand those experiences.

There are all of the issues of, "How do you find participants?" Sometimes, we work through institutions, through hospitals, through schools, through the university. When we don't have an institution to work through, then it's more difficult to find participants. When we were doing the narrative inquiry with teachers who had left teaching we faced that question of "How do we find participants?" There are those kind of issues. When we did the study with the youth who had left school early before graduating, it was also a challenge to find participants as we were used to finding them through schools, but they're not *in* schools. There are many issues around understanding that narrative inquiry really does ask you to do a lot of self-facing. The reflexive work is huge, to be able to say: "So, who am I in this? Why am I here? Why do I want to know about kids who leave school before graduating? And then how do I do that work on myself?" I think you need to be ready to do that. Sometimes people

want research done so quickly … the timeline is so short that you can't do the kind of work that narrative inquiry asks you to do. One of the big issues for people is the speed.

Of course, one of the huge issues is how we actually represent our research in a research text; how do we actually represent experiences of two people, a participant and a researcher who came together over time, told stories, lived alongside each other. How do we work with that to represent experience in text, which is still how we're asked to represent in dissertations … and how do we represent this moving, living body in ethical research texts. Whether they're for journals, for final reports, for dissertations. So, that's another big issue.

I could go on about the issues forever, but I don't want to discourage people from doing this because it's *so rewarding*. You learn so much about yourself and it really asks you to live in the world in a different way. And if I can just go back to my growing up, I think my parents and my family were asking me to live in a world in a different way. They were asking me to be responsive and responsible for the kind of world that is being created and for who I am in that world. I think that narrative inquiry calls each of us to do that kind of work. And when I think about teachers in classrooms doing this kind of work, I think, if you think about children as composing their lives in classrooms, you're really called to think about them differently as more than a child who does or does not do the activities that you make in the classroom. It really calls you to think about: "So, who am I in this child's life and how can I come alongside this child, not to remake this child, but to come alongside in ways that he or she might able to tell his or her story and our stories differently.

Do you have any final comments you'd like to make?

I've been a researcher now for many years. I do think it's what's sustained me. It's what's called me to think about the world I'm part of in different ways. It calls me to be more wakeful to children and to teachers, and, of course, to nurses and young physicians who are just starting out, and to school principals. It calls me to think, to stay awake to the worlds that children and families and teachers and physicians live in. And to the larger narratives that we construct. I think so much about this right now, in part because of the work we're doing about Indigenous youth and their families, and those larger narratives in which their stories, their experiences, are nested. And how I need to think about who I am in their stories.

One of the current studies that we're just getting in the midst of is with refugee families. And trying to come alongside as they come to Canada, not because they wanted to leave their home country, but because their home country could no longer allow them to live there. I think about how it keeps me awake—I don't want to ever really stop being awake in the ways that narrative inquiry calls me to be awake. I do feel that it changes the world by asking us to be awake in different ways. We engage in policy and practice so much differently because of thinking narratively.

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Revisiting "In a Different Voice"

Carol Gilligan

Abstract

In 1982 Harvard University Press published Carol Gilligan's landmark work, *In a Different Voice*, a book on psychological theory and women's development, which sparked a heated discussion in the world of psychology. After listening to women speaking about themselves and about morality, Gilligan noticed that psychologists would study men and generalize to humans, and decided to explore the different voice she had heard. That became the basis of her book. In this interview she explains the origins of the book, how the book was received by the psychological community at the time, and why it had the impact that it did.

Can you share with us what early life experiences contributed to your becoming an academic?

Your question absolutely stops me because I never set out to become an academic. Why did I end up writing? Why did I end up writing about voice? Why did I end up teaching and why did I end up in the university world? It was not that I set out to do it. And I do tell the story at the beginning of my book, "Joining the Resistance," about when I was two years old and my parents took me to this educational program at Vassar College for children and their parents. And the children were in one building, and the parents were in another—they thought they were running a kibbutz or something! Anyway, I loved the school and I loved my teacher, but I wanted my mother. And I was the child who just insisted, who cried and cried that I had to have my mother come and put me to bed. And they just changed the rules, and my mother came and sang me to sleep. So you could say I learned at a very early age about the effectiveness of voice. As a child I loved stories. I have always loved literature—that's what I studied in college. I also was very involved in music and singing. When I came into the field of psychology, it makes sense that I would be someone who would listen and ask, "Who's speaking"? The sort of questions you ask if you are used to thinking about stories. "Who's speaking to whom?" and in what societal and cultural frameworks? That's the origin of my work.

When I left college, I really wasn't sure what I was going to do. I went to graduate school thinking I wanted to become a therapist. But my love was for literature. Then I was very involved with the civil rights movement and I did voter registration. If you think about this, if you want to make the theme, I was saying to people: "You need to have a voice." Sometimes I say to myself that, "I'm a novelist who happened to wander into the world of psychology and listened to the conversation." *In a Different Voice* originated with my saying, "Wait a minute, what the field of psychology presents as the truth *is a voice*. And how do you show that? By introducing *a different voice*." At that point I got very invested in research and that's how I started, then one thing led to another.

In a retrospective on your renowned and pivotal 1982 work, "In a Different Voice," what alerted you to the fact that the voices of women were missing from the study of moral development and what had readied you to listen to these stories?

I have to just thank you for this question because it's such a clear reading of my book: "What alerted me to the fact that the voices of women were missing?" Because if you think about that, for a psychologist, that's a huge error because in history women may not have been that essential, but to a psychologist, women are half the sample of humans. How had intelligent psychologists—I worked with Erik Erikson; I worked with Lawrence Kohlberg—somehow left out half the sample? But that's not the way I was thinking. I was interested in stories. I was very interested in the points in life when people come to a crossroads. We all do this, where we come to a place and the roads diverge, and you think, "Which way am I going to go?" And who's the "I" in the sentence, "What am I going to do?" and does moral language come into play? *What's the right thing to do? What should I do?*

I had worked with Erik Erikson, who worked on identity … this was really the opportunity I had being at Harvard was to work with the people who had created the theories … it's like I had a close-up. I thought asking people hypothetical questions: it's easy to say what some hypothetical person should do. What about if you're actually *on the line*? But that's what I was interested in: what happens when you're actually *there* and you're going to live with your choice. Who's the "I" that makes the choice and where does morality and culture come in?

What happened is I was teaching discussion sections in Kohlberg's class on moral and political choice. This was in 1972—it was the height of the anti-war protests. I had these very articulate Harvard students in my class and they all thought the Vietnam War was unjust—this was a course on moral and political choice. And then there was a week when we were talking about the Draft, the Vietnam War Draft. And I noticed, suddenly, all of these men—these very articulate men—became silent. And I thought: "This is interesting. How come they've suddenly stopped talking?" Well, that was not hypothetical. When they were seniors in college, they were going to face the Draft. So, I became very curious about what men were not saying. And why they were not talking about the Draft … when it came to it, were they going to resist the draft … were they going to go to Canada … were they going to go to jail? They were concerned, not only about was the War in some abstract sense a just war or unjust war. They were concerned with how would their response to the Draft affect people they cared about and also with their own feelings about going to jail or leaving the country—they were concerned about emotions and relationships as well as about upholding their sense of themselves and their moral principles. And they knew because they were studying with Kohlberg, that to be concerned about relationships and emotions was to sound like women and be at a *lower stage* of moral development, according to Kohlberg's scale. So, they weren't going to be hypocritical; basically their integrity had led them to say nothing. I thought: "Fine. I'll wait until they're seniors and then I'll interview these guys and see what are they going to do and how will they speak about their decision." That is (as it was called in the field?), I would study the relationship between judgment and action. Well, in 1973 President Nixon ends the Draft—that's when they became seniors, so there went my study.

But then the Supreme Court legalizes abortion. I think: "Oh, here's another group of people who have to make a decision in a finite period of time, and it's an either/or—you can't both have an abortion and have a baby." It fit what I was interested in. So, with Mary Belenky, who was a graduate student at the time working with me, we start interviewing people who are facing an actual conflict and choice and our first question was in essence: "What is the choice you are facing and how have you been thinking about it so far?" Our first question to these women was—and this was in street-front clinics in the South end of Boston, and at pre-term and planned parenthood and university counselling (we're all over the city)—anyone who was in the first trimester of a confirmed pregnancy who was thinking about abortion … we would come and we said, not, "Do you believe in the right to life or the right to choice?" Instead we asked: "How did you get pregnant and how have you been thinking about it so far?" And the teenagers looked at us as if to say: "Really, you adults don't know anything!" But then we went on to ask: "What alternatives are you considering and how are you thinking about each? Who's involved in making this decision?" And then, finally: "Is there a right way to make this decision, right just for you or for anyone?"

I remember, my friend Dora came over one afternoon. I was reading the transcripts of these interviews and I said to her: "You know, Dora, I understand why Freud and Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg are having so much trouble understanding women, because many of these women are constructing the problem differently. They're starting from a different set of premises." And she said: "That's interesting. Why don't you write about it?" And so I wrote: "In a different voice: Women's conceptions of the self and of morality"—the paper published in 1977 that then led to the book. Listening to women speaking about themselves and about morality, I could see also why so many women felt—and I could also relate to this—that if we said what we really thought and felt, we would not be listened to; we would be corrected, told how we should think and feel or what was the right way to think and feel about ourselves and about morality. I understood why so often women felt unheard and misunderstood. *In a Different* Voice is about a different way of framing self and morality, and relationships and choice. For many women, the dilemma posed by the question of whether to continue or abort a pregnancy was a dilemma of *relationship*.

In a Different Voice was the first thing I wrote that was not for school. It was a paper that I wrote for myself. And that's when I noticed the extent to which psychologists in building their theories of human psychology had been studying men (and I would add, mostly privileged, white men) and generalizing to humans. In essence, my work asked the question … : "Can you really leave out women and miss nothing of significance?" Because the only question that was being asked about women is: "Are women the same as men or different from men?" And if women are not the same as men, then: "Who's better? (more moral, more developed)" And to me, those were not very *interesting* questions. I was interested in what had been *missed* by leaving out women. And then I saw how bringing in women's voices disrupted psychological theory because it gave voice to a world of relationships within a framework that valorized separation.

Can you tell us your story post-1982?

The book comes out and that's when I get committed to being in the university—your initial question—I'm teaching part-time, I have three children, I'm a modern dancer, I'm a civil rights worker, anti-war … another mother for peace. I'm not looking for tenure at Harvard. I'm operating in a very free space and suddenly everybody is saying, "This book, *who are you*?" First of all, it was an amazing moment in psychology because I remember I was going around giving talks because everyone was inviting me, and it was like a public confession. Men would get up and say, "I published my study on achievement or on this or on that, and I realized I never reported my data on women because it didn't make any sense … I don't think I said that in the article." I felt people kept wanting to argue with me: "Are women the same as men?" I did not do a statistical study. My book is called *In a Different Voice*—honestly you need an *n* of 1 to write a book about a different voice. Here's a voice, here's a different voice … it's interesting to say here's a voice and here's a variation of this voice, or here's how this voice changes or develops over time, and so forth. I wasn't writing about women versus men, but my work kept being assimilated to this framework where the two questions were: "Are women the same as men or are they different from them? And if different, who's better?" To me, as a literary person the answer is *both*: we're the same and we're different. And then, "If women are different, who's better?" "Are women more moral than men, are women less developed than men?" I'll tell you honestly, I wanted out of that conversation. I really wanted out of that conversation. And I really wanted out of the effort that was going into it by people who had a vested interest in the status quo, including people like Erikson who asked in effect, "Do you want me to change my chart?" Just because for women the sequence of stages is a bit different (which is what Erikson had written), why should he change his chart of the human life cycle? Or Kohlberg: "Do you want me to change my stage theory"? In fact, Larry [Kohlberg] and I taught together for several years around the question: did my work imply a "b" route through his stages (which is what he thought) or did it imply a reformulation of moral development? We argued this in front of students as you do in the academic world. But after a while, I felt I kept being drawn back to step one of my work (did it really make a difference to have left out women, was nothing missed by not listening to women) and I feared I was going to become a prisoner of my early work.

In *In a Different Voice*, the single voice that many women readers found most unsettling was the voice of the one 11-year-old girl in the book. Some people say that *In a Different Voice* is a book about children's moral development. Well, there are literally two children in the book and they appear for about five pages, and I'm delighted that people remember Jake and Amy and they made such a big impression. But, what's more interesting to me about *In a Different Voice* is what is *not* talked about: the abortion study, which is the focus of its two central chapters. By casting the book as a book about children's moral development, people overlook that it's a book filled with women's voices that explores a dissonance between women's voices and the voices of psychological theory. That's the contrast. Here's are the voices of psychological theory intoning separation, autonomy, and independence, and here are women's voices speaking about relationships and interdependence.

When 11-year-old Amy says—she was asked if a man, Heinz, should steal an overpriced drug to save the life of his wife who's dying—"He shouldn't steal, the wife shouldn't die, there must be another way

to solve this problem," her response sounds wishy-washy, she's indecisive. She explains that stealing is not a good way to solve this problem because if he stole the drug now and she got sick again, then he would be in jail and she'd be alone, and then what … and you think, "Well, that makes a lot of sense." But if you're a woman in the university you also think but that's not the right way to think about this problem. So, my writing about Amy picked up on that inner discussion many women will have with themselves. Amy says about Heinz and the druggist: "The two of them should just talk it out and find some better way to solve the problem." So, that was the voice that got to many women.

I had walked into an intersection of psychology and culture, where there's a psychological resistance to entering a cultural framework that's going to undermine basic human capacities, by splitting reason from emotion, the mind from the body and the self from relationship—splits that psychological theory and in particular theories of psychological development had bought into at that time. And girls, narrating their coming of age were narrating the resistance and also narrating the incoherence of these splits. They felt, "If I can't say what I'm feeling and thinking if I want to have relationships, then actually I can't have relationships because if I'm not saying what I'm feeling and thinking, I won't be present."

I discovered that if you follow girls' development from childhood into adolescence and have girls narrate their experiences in coming of age, what you encounter is the tension between human psychology and the culture of patriarchy. And that discovery completely changed my work.

What suggestions do you have for educators in schools to foster situational and relational moral reasoning?

Relational thinking is where we all start from, at the beginning, we're born with a voice—with the ability to communicate our experience and with the desire to engage responsively with others, that is to live in relationship. My studies with girls revealed that what psychologists had called "development"—the separation of reason from emotion, the separation of the self from relationships … that's the move from a relational thinking to separate thinking. The separation of reason from emotion, mind from the body, the self from relationship: it's not development—it's an initiation. And now with the work of Damasio [who] says his separation of reason from emotion is not the achievement of rationality, it's a manifestation of injury or trauma. There's an initiation with girls that tends to take place at adolescence, but with boys it happens earlier, between four and seven. That was the work I did after the girls' work. My former student Judy Chu has written a brilliant book called, "When Boys Become Boys." She demonstrates that much of what's said about boys is not how boys *are*, but it's how boys may feel they have to *become* in order to be recognized as *real* boys. These are the times when kids in school start to show signs of psychological distress. For the little boys, the boys roughly between four and seven—the reading problems, the learning problems, the speech problems, the out-of-touch and out-of-control behavior, the signs of listlessness and depression that you see more in young boys than in young girls—school is where this is going on. And it's true also for girls at the time of their initiation which tends to be at adolescence, when they are becoming young women. That's when there is a sudden high incidence of depression, eating disorders, cutting, and other forms of destructive behaviour. And the school's role: Is the school invested in this initiation? Is the school the agent of this initiation? Or is the school aligned with a healthy

resistance in the child and will the school join and educate their resistance? *That's my question*. It's absolutely key. I have a student right now who just did a beautiful interview showing that the alternative to resistance in the children is disconnection. That is, they disconnect from the school. So, to me, schools are key.

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Carol Gilligan is currently a University Professor at New York University; she was the Patricia Albjerg Graham Professor of Gender Studies at Harvard and the visiting Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at the University of Cambridge. Following *In a Different Voice,* she published five books with her graduate students, including *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* with Lyn Mikel Brown, a 1992 New York Times notable book of the year. Her books include *The Birth of Pleasure: A New Map of Love,* and *Kyra: A Novel.* She received a Heinz award for her contributions to understanding the human condition and a Grawemeyer award for her contributions to education. In 1996, she was named by *TIME* magazine as one of the 25 most influential Americans.

Story as Pedagogy: A Reflective Commentary

Corrine Glesne and Marleen C. Pugach

Abstract

This commentary seeks to encourage reflection upon learning and teaching through story. The authors illustrate ways they have used story in their teaching and what they perceive as the benefits of doing so. They explore how they learned through narrative as children and why they came to value it as a way of seeing and thinking. Then they consider how story disciplined their approaches to professional work before identifying specific narrative strategies used in teaching undergraduate and graduate students. The article concludes with suggestions about ways to better integrate narrative practices into teaching and learning.

Background

Stories convey lessons, messages, and perspectives. They evoke feelings, create empathy, trigger tears, and arouse rage. They provide frameworks for finding meaning in lives and the world. And they can help shape beliefs and actions that are inclusive and supporting or exclusive and destructive. Through this commentary, we strive to encourage readers to reflect upon how they learn and teach through story and to think consciously about the potentially positive roles of story as pedagogy.

Everyone's life is shaped by the narratives of the places and times in which they live and by the stories told to make sense of experiences. Through our comments, we (two retired professors) strive to illustrate some of the ways we have used story in our teaching and what we perceive to have been some of the benefits of doing so. This is a reflective essay, taking a personal approach and drawing upon our own stories—from three vantage points—as examples.

First, we challenged ourselves to think about how we learned through narrative and why we came to value it as a way of seeing and thinking—a value that predated our commitments to narrative in our professional lives as educators. Next, we considered how narrative disciplined our approaches to professional work, starting with graduate studies. Last, we identified specific strategies we used in teaching undergraduate and graduate students that drew directly on the power of narrative. In sharing our stories, we seek to support and strengthen other educators' commitment to using narrative, not to simply enrich, but rather as foundational to the development and growth of students.

Story and Our Personal Development

Early in the process of writing this commentary, we discussed our attraction to story and gave ourselves the assignment of writing independently about the place of story in our own personal development. By highlighting the words and phrases that stood out in our individual reflections, we created the following transcription of the essences of this writing. We acknowledge as an important theme the circumstances that, first of all, allowed us to spend much of our childhoods reading and writing, and also provided us with access to books, along with the encouragement of a parent or teacher.

Marleen:	Corrine:
I read, read, read. I read to escape a less than comfortable home life. I read to lose myself and pass the time. With no one to talk to about the world, I entered—through story—places not my own.	Lying on the floor, my nose in a book— A sanctioned escape from siblings in a household that valued reading. Whatever was there, I read. I read by flashlight under covers at night. And learned the power of words, the possibility of other worlds.
And I wrote. Twin narrative practices, so early on. I wrote to cement connections—a trail of young feelings sent to friends I could trust. A properly irreverent English teacher encouraged a stint on the literary magazine—short vignettes, fledgling poetry.	No teacher in my rural Midwest town encouraged creative writing. My own forays were meager, but I read poetry and my Mother taught me about Haiku. Sometimes we composed them together.
Never a keeper of diaries until a young adult, I scribbled conflicted, confused emotions into volumes. Throughout college, a year in the Middle East, I journaled to try to make sense of the direction my life was taking.	Mostly, my writing filled journals, preferably the kind with a lock and key. These practices, reading and writing, instilled an enduring love of stories and admiration for those who write them.
Then, as a special education teacher, I began telling stories. I told stories about my students who themselves, had troubled stories. And I began to tell stories about how I thought all teachers should be prepared for special education.	Novels, poetry, and travel narratives evoked feelings I hadn't yet experienced, deepening my emotional well, and fostering curiosity about and interest in the world.

Fig. 1: Words and phrases that stood out in our individual reflections

Whether growing up in a metropolitan suburb (Marleen) or a small rural town (Corrine), reading and writing—twin narrative practices—were key to our early connections to story. Fortunate to have easy access to books, we both read insatiably. Although at first reading provided escape from aspects of home life, it became reinforcing as we learned about lives and worlds beyond our own. Then, encouraged by a teacher or a parent, we tested out, to varying extents, aspects of creative writing. Much of our early writing explored our own "conflicted, confused emotions," whether secreted away in journals or scripted to friends in letters. These writings also held dreams and plans—stories of how we wanted life to be. Through reading and writing, we both were sensitized early on to the value of story. We could have been

exposed to narrative in other ways, for example, by family practices like oral storytelling. Ours was mostly more private, but our orientation towards story influenced our paths as professionals.

Story, Graduate Studies, and Approaches to Professional Work

> Reading a novel after reading semiotic theory was like jogging empty-handed after jogging with hand weights. What exquisite guilt she felt, wickedly enjoying narrative! Madeleine felt safe with a nineteenth century novel. There were going to be people in it. Something was going to happen to them in a place resembling the world. (Eugenides, 2011, p. 47)

Different paths converged, taking us to graduate school at the same place and same time. Between her bachelor's degree in anthropology and beginning graduate school, Corrine lived and worked in other parts of the world for much of six years. She knew anthropologists kept field logs and journals, and as she traveled she did as well, documenting what she saw and did and learned. Journal keeping and working in other cultures prepared her to gravitate towards ethnographic and qualitative inquiry in graduate school. Marleen became an elementary school teacher, specifically a special education teacher. "I never wrote about my elementary school teaching," she states, "but I thought about my work narratively. No surprise, I was drawn to qualitative methodology as a doctoral student although no one else in my specific program used—or was particularly interested in—those research methods."

Because we already inclined toward story in our personal and professional lives, our landing at the University of Illinois' College of Education in the late 1970s was fortuitous. An early adopter of the qualitative research paradigm, the Center for Instructional Research and Evaluation (CIRCE), at that time, simmered with creative professors doing innovative work, several of whom (Alan Peshkin, Terry Denny, and Robert Stake) became guides and mentors for our work as graduate students. From them, we learned not only about qualitative inquiry, but also about the possibilities of writing and storytelling and grew to value story as a way to communicate research results. We participated in what fondly became known as the "Fat Data Group," an informal collective of half a dozen doctoral students studying with Alan Peshkin. We met regularly to share our developing projects (Peshkin included), asking the group for insight and suggestions on anything from interview questions to editing. We learned to trust the group to provide helpful perspective, supportive feedback, and the political will to carry on with this approach to research.

Through these teachers and our own research, we learned to listen for multiple perspectives and to seek complexity. The narrative approaches we embraced included being empathetic to another's story and also listening critically, placing the story in a socio-cultural and historical milieu—although we understood it was never possible to do so completely or perfectly. That kind of teaching and learning made sense. We didn't realize what a methodological oasis we had happened upon, finding support and encouragement at a time when qualitative research was not routinely accepted in much of the larger educational research community.

As we entered into teaching in universities—Marleen in Milwaukee and Corrine in Vermont—story took on a central role as an organizing principle for our work. A professor of teacher education in urban

communities, Marleen prepared novices for positions in urban elementary and middle schools. She realized she had strived to tell a couple of interrelated stories across her career. The first story—one that no one else seemed particularly interested in telling at the time—was how the preparation of every teacher was being shortchanged by too narrowly defining the work of special education teachers, and how understandings of diversity were also being shortchanged by separating special education from growing commitments to multicultural education. She began to tell this story in her professional writing as well as in academic venues. Alongside this central organizing story, she was trying to help students—who were often completely unfamiliar with working in urban schools—engage well with the children and youth in their inner-city clinical school sites. She asked these teacher candidates to learn the stories of their students, particularly the compelling stories of students whose backgrounds differed from theirs.

Corrine primarily taught qualitative research, anthropology of education, and social foundations of education courses. With a commitment to honoring multiple perspectives, multiple values, and multiple ways of living, qualitative inquiry became her vehicle for entering into teaching—not through whatever the current academic jargon and theoretical fads were—but through story, through listening to her students' stories of their lives and through teaching them how to seek out and make sense of the stories of others.

Albeit employed in somewhat different ways, narrative knowing shaped our work. We both used teaching strategies that reflected our commitment to the value of story in learning.

Narrative and Teaching Strategies

Over the years, we used six pedagogical strategies embedded within our commitment to story. We supported each other's implementation of these strategies in our distant efforts as well—a community of two, anchoring the importance of story within our "teacher talk."

Reading Published Narratives

In anthropology and social foundations of education classes, Corrine assigned published novels, autobiographies, and poetry to immerse students in the lives of people with experiences and histories different from their own. These texts provided insights and a basis for conversation connected to the course content (see, for example, *Ambiguous Adventure* by Cheikh Hamidou Kane, a classic novel on colonization and the clash of Islamic African values with Western schooling in colonial French Senegal). We both used ethnographies in our qualitative research courses to exemplify authors whose writing from data was exceptional in its use of varied creative approaches, as well as to introduce content that we felt important for our students to consider (Barbara Myerhoff's *Number Our Days: Culture and Community Among Elderly Jews in an American Ghetto* is another classic and a favorite of ours).

Listening to Stories of Others

We asked our students to talk with and learn from the stories of others. We both tended to focus on difference in these assignments. For example, in undergraduate teacher education courses, Marleen and her colleagues required a "two-way autobiography," asking candidates to work with students whose background differed from their own. This typically meant white candidates worked with Black, Latino, Hmong, or Native American students. Each teacher candidate paired with a student over several sessions, sharing back and forth from an interview protocol. In this context of dual disclosure, candidates learned about their students' lives—and came back with stories of their own fledgling—and often naïve— discoveries from these stories, such as seeing the value in a large extended Latino family living together. These same teacher candidates were also required to work in an adult learning setting with those whose background differed from theirs. In these settings, they learned stories, for example, of adults coming to citizenship or English classes at night, after a full day of low-paying work, always talking about what it meant for their children's futures. These story-featuring learning opportunities were designed specifically to create empathy and disrupt students' (often negative or stereotypical) views of families in Milwaukee's urban, inner core.

Creating Better Writers

Our experiences with the "Fat Data Group" gave us confidence in the value of reading and commenting on each other's writing—even (and sometimes especially) in its most "drafty" stages. We had not done that before our graduate school experience and we later found that most of our doctoral students had never done so either—the exception being the few with English degrees or who had previously attended creative writing classes where "workshopping" other's writing was common. A palpable sense of foreboding accompanied the sharing of the first few pages. But invariably, students got over it and immediately embraced the value of feedback, guided by clear guidelines for reading and supportive commenting on manuscripts.

Learning the value of sharing work with others for constructive feedback, students sometimes asked to continue the process when the class ended. Whether this resulted in a writing group or in mentor/mentee sessions, we grew in relationship to each other through the process of sharing our writing.

Writing Self-Stories

We asked students to write autobiographically and to share their writing with classmates. Sometimes we used poetic guidelines for these self-stories, sometimes prose. Through these strategies, we heard diverse stories such as those of first-generation graduate students from Hmong families who unequivocally considered themselves to be political refugees, but whose parents and grandparents never talked about their experiences during the Vietnam War; of a trans student who used this assignment as an opportunity to come out to the class—well before most people were talking about the deep difficulties of being trans in our society; of the son of migrant farmers, who himself had been a migrant worker, pursuing his doctorate; or of native Vermonters whose grandparents had to deny their Abenaki heritage to escape

discrimination. Through this approach to narrative, students shared perspectives and challenges they might otherwise not have shared or may have shared only one-on-one. Their contributions deepened the classroom community.

We also sometimes asked students to write some aspect of their own story as it related to specific course content, such as first realizations of race and racism while, in class, deconstructing the concept of race. In addition to new realizations and insights, students wrote in a personal voice, beginning to let go of the stilted, often obtuse, formal language they associated with academia. When encouraged to write about what they knew—their own life or their parents' lives—they began to thrive as writers.

Using Creative Writing Techniques

In addition to autobiographic poems, we ventured into other forms of creative writing in our research courses as a way to think about and present data. For example, in a course focused on analyzing and writing up qualitative research data, Corrine asked students to consider their data from four different analytical frameworks: thematic analysis, autoethnography, poetic transcription, and ethnodrama. The class focused on these approaches one at a time, reading theory and practical advice as well as examples. For each approach, students (and sometimes Corrine) composed five pages of text from their data that was subsequently workshopped in class. Students discussed what they learned differently about their data through each approach—how thinking about and writing up their data in these various ways caused them to focus on different aspects of their data. Through engaging their creativity, students grew excited about their research and their writing, something some of them never thought possible. Several went on to publish articles from the work they began in that class.

Giving Students Permission to Go Places They May Not Otherwise Have Gone, in Ways to Which They May Not Otherwise Have Had Access

Finally, narrative research methods gave students interested in telling stories permission to do so in a disciplined, rigorous way. Not only were we privileged to assist students in telling evocative stories, but also we and other students learned from these shared narratives. An art teacher's dissertation illuminated the deep limitations of urban elementary school art programs where, for example, Kachina dolls made of toilet paper rolls were routinely considered appropriate projects. An African-American woman pursued narrative stories of African-American community college students who were successful in remedial mathematics programs (rather than the unsuccessful stories typically told). A young man working with people living with disabilities was able to join with his clients to together tell through his dissertation stories of disability and of people's strivings for control over decisions affecting their lives. These are but few examples among many that a narrative approach to learning and teaching has made possible in our classes.

Reflections and Possibilities

We persisted in our individual and joint commitments to narrative as a way of organizing pedagogy because we liked what happened in our classrooms when we did so. What did the use of these particular narrative strategies mean for the quality of our teaching and learning?

First, the use of story (whether published or through students' interviews or writings) engaged students and shaped insights that would have been difficult to achieve any other way. Students connected to concepts and perspectives that may have been challenging or alienating if presented in other ways.

Next, narrative techniques created a sense of empathy and understanding among our students for individuals and communities with differing life circumstances. Students made personal connections to and grew curious about and interested in people, cultures, or situations that may not have concerned them before. As students worked to understand varying perspectives, we watched them develop in their understanding of complexity within social phenomena.

Further, narrative strategies often created a sense of community within the classroom. These strategies helped to build respect among participants, relationships, and sometimes, long-lasting friendships. By sharing their stories and the stories of others, students came to appreciate and value each other.

Finally, of particular delight to us as professors of qualitative inquiry, we saw students grow in enthusiasm and skill as researchers and writers. In writing their own stories or using creative techniques to write the stories of others, students often "found" their own voices and new passion.

We conclude with half a dozen ways to better integrate narrative practices into teaching and learning.

1. As teachers and citizens, we can work to provide all children with access to books that provide high-quality stories reflecting the diversity in our schools.
2. We can encourage students to write and, as teachers, provide constructive and encouraging comments. Schooling seems to mitigate against this with large class numbers and (for PK-12) obsessions with test preparation. But we can simultaneously argue against the class size and testing challenges—and be creative about ways to encourage writing—use of journals, short papers that add up to something longer, group processing of each other's writing, and so on.
3. We can encourage students to become better writers through group work and feedback— the workshopping technique—providing them with guidelines for offering constructive, supportive reflections.
4. We can inform ourselves and encourage others to learn about qualitative inquiry and narrative ways of knowing.
5. We can be willing to mentor others in narrative ways of knowing and to continue to seek out mentors ourselves.
6. And, as teachers, we can consider story as a form of activism. We can use published narratives, we can write, and we can ask students to tell and write stories that communicate shortcomings, marginalization, and the need for change.

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Listening Across Difference: Oral History as Learning Landscape

Steven High

Abstract

Oral history as a field of research, teaching, archival collection, community building or engagement, truth and reconciliation, and creative practice, emerged with the diffusion of the tape recorder in the 1960s and 1970s. This was a time of enormous social and political upheaval. As a result, oral history was quickly taken up by feminists, working-class and queer activists, racial minorities, and other marginalized people who sought to record the hidden stories that would otherwise be lost. This article introduces readers to the field of oral history, its methodology and ethics. Oral history is a creative practice, open to adaptation and experimentation. As it is a place of listening across difference, oral history interviewing presents itself as a unique learning landscape. Several pedagogical examples are also shared.

Background

People have always shared stories. Stories tell us who we are and where we come from. They also carry experiential and traditional knowledge from one generation to the next.

Oral history as a field of research, teaching, archival collection, community building or engagement, truth and reconciliation, and creative practice, emerged with the diffusion of the tape recorder in the 1960s and 1970s. This was a time of enormous social and political upheaval. As a result, oral history was quickly taken up by feminists, working-class and queer activists, racial minorities, and other marginalized people who sought to record the hidden stories that would otherwise be lost (Kerr, 2016; Baillargeon, 1993; Foisy & High, 2015). Many people's stories never make it into "public" archives.

These radical origins have profoundly shaped the field. Ordinary people live extraordinary lives and these "little" histories are both shaped by, and shapers of, the "big" history that we usually hear about. Oral history teaches us that history inhabits each of us.

Yet, unlike ethnography, which is the disciplinary practice of anthropology, oral history has never found a secure home in our universities. It has had an uncomfortable relationship with the history discipline. There are a number of reasons for this. Historians study the past, not the present. We (as I am a historian too) actively suppress the present by writing in the third person and the past tense. In these ways, we historians distance ourselves from our objects of study. With distance comes clarity—at least this is the disciplinary logic (High, 2018).

Oral history has a very different modus operandi. Oral history is fundamentally about the relationship *between* the past and the present, placing memory front and centre. At their best, interviews place

experiential authority (the "I was there, and I am going to tell you how it really was" kind of authority) into conversation with expert authority (people who bring some questions, maybe some training and distance). This approach to learning across difference and in dialogue represents a not-so-subtle shift from learning *about* to learning *with*. These differences in orientation are such that, until recently, there were few oral history courses offered in university history departments. Even today, there is only one graduate program in Oral History in North America (at Columbia University in NYC). Most oral historians, including myself, are therefore self-taught.

The good news is that the marginality of oral history in the academy has meant that it has emerged as a diverse community of practice. Oral historians can be found across the university. What's more, most people who self-identify as oral historians are found off-campus—in the communities that they serve. They are teachers, artists, archivists, social activists, and community members. This diversity means that oral history is much more than a research methodology. It has become a space of creative exchange and experimentation: a place of mutual encounter.[1] We see this not only in the oral history interview, but also in what comes after it. Let me explain.

The Oral History Interview

Much like teaching, there is no one way to approach oral history interviewing. I have come to think of the interviewing as a mixed method.

1. **Life story interview:** The most common approach is the life story interview, where the conversation unfolds roughly chronologically. I often start with a question that asks people to tell me how far back do the stories in their family go? Then we talk about grandparents, parents, childhood, schooling, coming of age, young adulthood, work, and so on. This is even true if I am primarily interested in only a specific chapter in their lives. For example, to understand what forced migration means for refugees coming to Montreal, we need to know the "before" and the "after." Only then do we come to fully appreciate what it all means to them. The life story interview is adept at placing history within the context of a life lived and remembered. This is different than simply asking people to be an eyewitness to history. For example, to understand the impact of residential schools on indigenous people in Canada, we need to not only know what happened in those schools, but also how this violence rippled outward through individual lives and that of families and the wider community. It is a history that is very much present today, not something located in the distant past.

   Of course, a life story interview is never as linear as this, as there is considerable time travel in any interview. The approach is flexible and most of the questions asked are follow-ups. It is important to avoid robotic questioning, and follow-ups show interview partners that we are listening. They also allow us to delve deeper. It is also important to give interviewees the space to share what *they* think is important. This may be the same life space that you are primarily interested in or something new. A good interview, notes Henry Greenspan (2006), is a working space where two people work really hard to understand the life of one person. Interviewees also often have questions themselves and they sometimes struggle to make sense of their own experiences. The key then is to spend time with people. It takes time to build rapport and trust.

Some stories surface slowly. Life story interviews are usually 90 minutes to two hours, but can be as long as 20 hours of recorded interviews.

One of the issues that my students struggle with is when to know when an interview is "over." I often advise them to ask a large question or two at the end—something like, "Is there anything that we have not covered yet?" This often opens up another chapter of the interview. It also ensures that the interviewee doesn't leave the interviewee thinking that he or she really wanted to share a particular story, but never had the chance.[2]

2. **Group interview:** The stories that emerge in group interviews are not the same ones that emerge in individual ones. A life story interview is naturally centred on the individual's life course. A group interview is focused, instead, on the stories shared by those being interviewed. Interviewing couples together, and interviewing them separately, results in very different stories emerging. Group interviews are usually best when the group knows each other already, so the research is merely plugging into an existing conversation. I have conducted a number of group interviews over the years, mainly with couples. The most extreme example was in the 1990s when I was invited by a retirees' group of steelworkers in Buffalo, New York, to travel down and do a group interview. I had expected a group of 10 or 12, which was intimidating enough. When I entered the room, there were more than 100 people awaiting. I toured from table to table, the best that I could—recording some very important stories. One, in particular, still stands out in my mind. A steelworker told me that he heard about the closing of his steel mill on the radio. A few days later he got a call from his boss, who told him that he was eligible for a 35-year service pin and asked if he still wanted it. The man said sure, and was told to come to the front gate the next day. When he did, his supervisor came out and passed it to him through the chain-linked fence as the gate was padlocked. A stunning story that reveals much about the sense of betrayal that permeates the US Rust Belt to this very day (Smith, 2015).

3. **Photo interview:** Another way to share memories is through photo elicitation. Flipping through a family photo album or a pile of old photos elicits new stories. Each photo has a story and the arrangement of photos in an album offers us much to think about. A photo interview does not have to be a stand-alone interview, but could be turned to at the end of a life story interview. A video or still camera is helpful here as an audio recording is ill-suited to capture these photo-centred conversations. This can be done in individual or group interview contexts (Payne, 2011).

4. **Memory mapping:** Another interview form is the memory mapping exercise or workshop where a person is asked to draw on a blank piece of paper. It could, for example, be their childhood world or home place. Or a workplace, school, or other physical site of memory. Real maps can also be introduced, where people are asked to locate memories and draw boundaries. Here, too, very different memories or stories emerge. A mapping exercise can also be integrated into a life story interview, especially with respect to the very localized memories of childhoods.

5. **Walking interview:** If your core interest is place, and that place is nearby, why wouldn't you go there with your interview partners? The walking interview has emerged as a popular way to elicit place memories. In these interviews, the built and natural environment becomes a prompt for remembering—intervening into the conversation, making it three-way. It is important to let interviewees determine the route, as this too, tells us something. You can imagine a series of walking interviewees in a single neighbourhood, each taking its own trajectory.

These memories are anchored in what you can see, hear, smell, or touch. Here past and present collide, as people point to what was once there, and what is there now. Urban change is often at the heart of these conversations. They are mobile, but walking interviews are much more localized than a sit-down interview at a kitchen table where the interviewer is free to span continents as well as decades in his or her recounting.

Oral historians are increasingly combining oral history interviewing with other cross-disciplinary methodologies such as Photovoice (where you ask your interview partners to take their own photos and then share stories), digital storytelling (where people are asked to narrate and compose their own stories and go public with them), and arts-based or participatory media methodologies.[3] The possibilities are endless. I prefer to think of oral history as a creative practice, open to adaptation and experimentation.

Most oral history projects focus on those we like or empathize with. However, it is also important to listen across political differences. This even extends to those we abhor. Historian Kathleen Blee (1993), for example, interviewed women involved in the Ku Klux Klan to understand why people hate. It is easy to dismiss these people, but it is more important to understand. I had a graduate student, Erin Jessee (2017), who likewise interviewed a convicted genocidaire in the Rwandan prison system. She wanted to know why people kill? These are never easy places to go, but they are necessary ones.

Luckily, most oral history interviewing is not nearly as difficult. My undergraduate students often interview a grandparent or another elder in their life. I therefore teach them some of the fundamentals of oral history interviewing—to take your time, ask straightforward open-ended questions, to respect silence and not to fill it too quickly. And it is important to plan your day so that you are not concerned about time during the interview. Students should plan for a three-to-four hour stay. There is always transitional time before and after the interview. It is also important to give back to interviewees, giving them a copy of the interview and ideally the research-creation project produced from it. It is essential that we are accountable to the communities that we work with. For more, check out the webinars available on the website of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling.[4]

Ethics in Oral History

University students and faculty in Canada are subject to mandatory ethics reviews. This is a good thing, as there has been considerable abuse in the past. There are also ethics requirements in other educational contexts. A consent form is a minimum—allowing interviewees to determine how their interview is to be used. Ethics is a lot about diffusion. Is the person to be named or not? Will the interview be archived and available to others? Will it be available online? And so on. At Concordia, we think of the consent form as a right of use agreement, rather than a copyright transfer agreement. We feel this distinction is important as we often work with marginalized communities. These are their stories. In my workshops, I often cite a British example where a project on HIV used copyright transfer agreements. The interviews were transcribed and then donated to the British Library. However, when one interviewee wanted to use the transcript as the first draft of his autobiography, he had to write for permission from the British Library.

This is just wrong. But for a right of use agreement to mean anything different, the interviewee must be told about the intended uses.[5]

Another tricky issue is confidentiality. If an interviewee does not wish to be named, how can we guarantee this person anonymity to others. There have been a number of legal cases in the United States and Canada which have revealed the inability of oral historians and other qualitative researchers to protect the identity of their confidential sources. We are not like medical professionals or religious people: there is no cone of silence around our work. The law therefore trumps our ethics. This happened at Boston College where an interview project with IRA bombers led to a subpoena from a Northern Irish court for access to interviews that were supposed to be closed for 20 years. Here, in Canada, the Magnotta trial revealed similar issues when confidential interviews were reviewed as part of a murder trial. Our practice at Concordia is to transcribe confidential interviews, return the transcription to interviewees for approval (where they can make any additional changes they wish), and then produce a public transcript. The original interview recording is then destroyed. This is the only way to cut the link.[6]

Other issues include mitigating harm, the right of withdrawal, and so on. I could speak to each of these. Many of these ethical issues are best resolved through collaboration. The more that researchers work with community members, the more secure the process becomes (see Miller, Little, & High, 2017). This is particularly urgent when working with marginalized people. Being aware of one's own privilege and positionality is crucial to this.

Teaching Oral History

Students in my oral history classroom learn by doing. They have to envision their projects, go through ethics review, interview, transcribe, interpret, and go public with their work. I encourage students to go public in creative ways. Students have produced graphic stories (Rebecca's Oral History Odyssey https://oralhistoryodyssey.wixsite.com/oralhistoryodyssey), audio walks (www.postindustrialmontreal.ca —go to La Pointe Audio walk produced by my class), online digital stories, live performances, visual or sound art, composed music or poetry, and so on. They have also written blogs, newspaper articles, and research papers.

Fig. 1: Oral history students performing story with theatre students at Share the Warmth in Point Saint Charles. 2016. Photograph by David Ward.

Fig. 2: The speed-dating-with-history exercise. Share the Warmth. Point Saint-Charles. 2016. Photograph by David Ward.

I have played with the many ways that they can listen to story. One popular exercise is known as the "speed-dates-with-history" assignment. Here students are each assigned a recorded interview to watch/listen to at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (storytelling.concordia.ca). They have to become an "expert" on that person's life, taking notes as they listen. They then have to perform that person's story in the first person. Imagine a class of 45 students organized in two concentric circles with the chairs facing each other. At the sound of a gong, students in the inner circle have 90 seconds to introduce themselves as their interviewee. Then, the students on the outer circle do the same. They all shift right (which means in opposite directions) and they have to do this again, and again. The exercise is designed to create "ethical squirm" as people are forced to pretend to be people unlike themselves. Race, gender, generation, class, and other markers of identity separate them. This exercise therefore teaches us much about the politics of representation. We represent people all the time through our writing without a second thought, but when we have to embody that person it all comes home. How people choose to represent voice, body language, and so forth are all food for thought. After the exercise we have a debriefing period where we talk about the learning—the decisions they made in representing their interviewee, what they found difficult, and how their interpretation evolved over the four to five iterations. Sometimes they encounter another student who is representing the same interviewee—and this raises an opportunity to think about the different approaches taken.

There is a growing interest in teaching oral history at all levels of education. I have identified some of the best published work out there.[7] It is an exciting time to be working with personal story.

Notes

1. Alessandro Portelli is the leading light of global oral history. His notion of oral history as mutual encounter comes from his book, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1991). The chapter on "What makes oral history different?" is particularly relevant to those getting started.

2. An excellent general guide is offered by Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat (2017), *The Voice of the Past*. Fourth Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press). There is a vast scholarship on oral history interviewing. Among my favourites are Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki (2013), *Oral History Off the Record: An Ethnography of Practice* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan); Henry Greenspan and Sidney Bolkosky (Summer 2006), "When is an Interview an Interview? Notes from Listening to Holocaust Survivors," *Poetics Today* 27, 2, 431–449; and, Julie Cruikshank (1998), *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press).

3. There are many examples of creative outputs of oral history. For some Montreal examples, see Catherine Charlebois and Jean-François Leclerc (2015), "Les sources orales au coeur de l'exposition muséale. L'expérience du Centre d'histoire de Montréal," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 69, 1-2, 99–136; Steven High (2015), *Oral History at the Crossroads: Sharing Stories of Displacement and Survival* (Vancouver: UBC Press); Edward Little and Steven High (2014). "Partners in Conversation: Ethics and the Emergent Practice of Oral History Performance," in David Dean, Yana Meerzon, Kathryn Prince (Eds.), *History, Memory, Performance* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan), 240–256; and, Hourig Attarian and Rachael

Van Fossen (2013), "Stories Scorched from the Desert Sun: Performing Testimony, Narrating Process" in Steven High, Edward Little and Thi Ry Duong (Eds.). (2013). *Remembering Mass Violence: Oral History, New Media and Performance* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press).

4. http://storytelling.concordia.ca/toolbox/training/webinars

5. For examples of consent forms and other ethics advice, see the website of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling: http://storytelling.concordia.ca/toolbox/ethics. COHDS offers free public workshops on a regular basis. If you are based in the Montreal area, you are most welcome to drop in.

6. Some of the more interesting ethics articles include: Valerie Yow (1995). "Ethics and Interpersonal Relationships in Oral History Research." *Oral History Review* 22, 1, 51–66; Robin Jarvis Brownlie and Roewen Crowe (2014), "So You Want to Hear Our Ghetto Stories? Oral History at Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre" in Steven High, Edward Little, and Thi Ry Duong (Eds.), *Remembering Mass Violence: Oral History, New Media and Performance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press); Katherine Borland (1991), "'That's Not What I Said': Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research" in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (Eds.), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York, NY: Routledge).

7. For a general collection of educational projects, see: Kristina R. Llewellyn and Nicholas Ng-A-Fook (Eds.). (2017), *Oral History and Education: Theories, Dilemmas, and Practices* (New York: Palgrave Studies in Oral History), especially Julie Perrone's chapter on inspiring Canadian elementary and secondary teachers who use oral history. The next article is coauthored by a secondary school teacher and student about a term-long project. The article was written while Noelia was still in high school, went through peer review when she was at CEGEP, and finally appeared in print when she was at university. Noelia Gravotta and Megan Webster (2013), "Co-Creating Our Story: Making a Documentary Film" in Steven High, Edward Little and Thi Ry Duong (Eds.), *Remembering Mass Violence: Oral History, New Media and Performance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press). Other oral history in Montreal classrooms include: Bronwen E. Low and Emmanuelle Sonntag (2013), "Towards a Pedagogy of Listening: Teaching and Learning From Life Stories of Human Rights Violations," *Journal of Curriculum Studies*; Michele Luchs and Elizabeth Miller (2015), "On Tour With Mapping Memories: Sharing Refugee Youth Stories in Montreal Classrooms," in Steven High (Ed.), *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 235–256; Stacey Zembrzycki and Steven High (2012), "'When I was your age': Bearing Witness in Holocaust Education in Montreal," *Canadian Historical Review*, 93, 3, 408–435. I reflect on my own teaching practice in *Oral History at the Crossroads: Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014) and in the sixth chapter of *Going Public*.

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A Story in the Telling

Margaret Kovach

Abstract

Story is experience held in memory and story is the spark for a transformative possibility in the moment of its telling. The words we use are equally significant. This commentary reflects upon why words, stories, and oracy are powerful in learning landscapes. Indigenous peoples have known the value of story and the significance of words in creating and sustaining relationships. In an era of Truth and Reconciliation as Canadian postsecondary institutions seek to indigenize, the words we use and the stories we share will matter.

> People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that is what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experience on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. (Campbell, Moyers, & Flowers, 1991, p. 1)

Stories give our life meaning. Stories gift us with "an experience of being alive." Since childhood, I have been a story listener. I devoured stories in any form. Stories from the talk of the kitchen table. Stories of weather on its way and stories of the first crocuses of Spring; stories of haunting ghosts spilling from my Aunties' memories; hushed stories of adult duplicities that the grown-ups didn't think the kids could hear. And the bedtime stories. I loved the eclectic bedtime stories that either mom or I would read; stories that would entrench in my imagination a diverse crisscrossing world of Jean Valjean and Rapunzel. Too young to unpack Rapunzel, I saw her as a girl with a room and options for letting her hair down. To me, back then, she was a woman with space and choices. The stories of my childhood ignited a spark, an early flash of a budding social consciousness. I return to those stories. We return to our stories because they tell us who we are.

I started in this world as a story listener. At three months of age, my parents adopted me. I grew up in a White rural farming community, but was not born to it. I was born in Saskatchewan and raised there. I am Cree-Saulteaux. From the start, I knew I was adopted but I didn't know about the first three months of my life. I did not know where I came from. Nor did I have an inkling of how my identity was interwoven with the social, political, and economic narrative of my country. But, I knew there was a story there. I share this with you so that you know why stories loom large for me; they always have.

With a curiosity embedded early in life prompting an insatiability for story, it is no wonder that I became an academic. Academics create, channel, receive, and involve ourselves in story all the time. Teaching and research is not possible without chronicling knowledge through descriptive accounts relevant to life. As an Indigenous academic, without story there is no academic me. As Cree Scholar Shawn Wilson says, *Research is Ceremony* (2008). Story is ceremony.

The narratives we share with others and those we silently hold in memory compel me. Increasingly I am ensorcelled by story as an animated, in-the-moment happening in the presence of companions: story as event; story as relational; story as a moment. And because I am an Indigenous professor, oral stories are of deep cultural significance. This meandering commentary is a story in itself with some bookish bits woven within. It is a sharing of my recent thoughts on story as happening and a word or two about Indigenous oracy in academia.

August 2017, I had one of those stop-in-your-tracks reckonings as I was sitting in a Kitsilano (Kits) Café on an unimaginably beautiful Vancouver, B.C. morning. It struck me that in an effort to streamline my academic life, it was beginning to mirror the advice I was giving to my research class on developing a well-crafted research question: keep it narrow, focused, and achievable. My intellectual life was feeling algorithmic with an absence of soulfulness, and I knew action was needed.

I was not in the midst of an interpersonal crisis, but was experiencing an intellectual craving. In the past several years I noticed a domesticity settling in and like Leonard Cohen's "Bird on a Wire" (1969, track 1), I could no longer tell if I was free or caged. The remedy, I knew, meant resuscitating my natural inquisitiveness that brought me to academia in the first place. Reigniting my curiosity meant returning to story. Story would breathe life into the flatness, but I needed a strategy. My plan was modest and achievable. I would select a book, wake up at six in the morning, make a coffee, and read a chapter. After finishing one book, I would straightway start a new one.

Over the year, I read books, lots of books—academic books, books from popular culture—all kinds of books. They were mostly nonfiction, but within each book there was story woven throughout. I like reading, so it wasn't a drain. At first, I noticed that I was reading for content but then somewhere, by October, there was a shift and I noticed that I was falling asleep at night anticipating my morning reading event with an author. After my sunrise reading, I shared the ideas and stories with my spouse (he is also an academic) and the stories came alive. My morning book reading shapeshifted from a cerebral exercise to a relational happening and it became a morning ceremony of sorts.

Events, happenings, ceremonies. I began to think about what they meant in my life. I thought of ceremonies in both my Indigenous and European culture: Sweat Lodges and Baptismals, Powwows and Fowl Suppers. One of my morning books was *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts* by Charles J. Stivale (2005). Deleuze thought on the significance of the "event" and what he identified as an "assemblage." The Deleuzian perspective of the "event," as articulated by philosopher James Williams (2014), is "… openness and chance in the present. It is guided by the future and the past, not assumed as burdens, but welcomed as gifts to be worthy of" (p. 90). From my understanding, the Deleuzian event is about the merging of past and future in a present moment of connecting, merging, becoming. An assemblage is a coming together for which an event can occur.

Deleuze's appreciation for mutability and connectivity reminded me of the fluidity of Indigenous thought that exists "… outside the box of linear fragmentation, seeing beyond and across separations, categories, and disciplines. It is wholistic, meta-paradigmatic and timeless, connecting old and new…"

(Parry, 2015, p. 258). I can imagine my great, great grandmother sharing a story or two with another. Stories of chores and children, of pemmican and medicines. It is an assemblage and Kokum is careful with stories and words because she knows what Cree oral historian Winona Wheeler (2010) reminds us: "Words have great power. They can heal, protect, and counsel, but they can also harm." "manitôkiwin" Winona says. Speaking words to another is "doing something in a holy manner, making something sacred, making ceremony" (p. 55). I imagine Kokum speaking, sharing story, choosing words, discerning, nodding, intonating. Words matter because they sustain relationships and keep communities connected.

Story offers the promise of sharing and hearing, affording us a moment of affinity with another. Through its power of connectivity in the moment, story holds transformative potential. Kahneman and Riss (2005) argue that an individual's perception of well-being arises from two different processes that include the "experiencing self" and the "remembering and evaluating self" (p. 285). They point out that it is the remembering self, rather than the experiencing self, that influences our intrapsychic perceptions of well-being. According to Kahneman and Riss, memory and the story of an experience in its aftermath is powerful in determining our perception of an event; however, they give due regard for in-the-moment experience. They say: "We have argued that the experiences that make the moments of life worth living deserve to be studied" (p. 300). They add, "we have urged that the experiencing self be given due regard in well-being research" (p. 300). Story is the consequence of an event and the event itself and is a catalyst for "meta-paradigmatic" connectivity, a Deleuzian "event," and the experience of "the moments of life."

Story, Indigenous-style, is relational, animated, *oral*; and yet, I sit, my fingers pressing letters lightly on my keyboard. I am writing. I am an academic. Academics are conjurers of the narrative. I am writing now because as an academic it is what we do. My currency, beyond all else, is the written, published word. Knowledge on paper. Expository writing. Academics explain and use the written word to provide evidence. The term "publish or perish" is engrained in the psyche of the western world academic. Published writing is what counts and it is what is counted. We need to honor the written words. But I am also an Indigenous academic. My bloodline summons connection. I work in and through Indigenous Knowledges. My scholarship demands that I respect orality as a relational encounter that my community requires. We need to honor spoken words.

Words offered in the presence of our community is a requirement of the Indigenous academic who works through Indigenous knowledges. It is what gives us credibility and currency. This currency arises from precontact Indigenous philosophy that is wedded in orality. This was recognized and confirmed in the 1997 Canadian Supreme Court decision on oral testimony in *Delgamuukw vs British Columbia*.[1] In reflecting on *Delgamuukw* and the oral testimony given, Chamberlain (2004) writes:

> For the Gitksan, the ada'ox Mary Johnston performed was proof of the truth of the events it described: that is to say, the storytelling tradition itself, with its stylized language and its ceremonial protocol, was its own guarantor of truth. (p. 147)

For Indigenous peoples, oracy is fundamental in knowledge dissemination and truth claims. Oracy, and the relationship it creates and sustains, remains primary to Indigenous culture. Without its due recognition, a shadow is cast upon indigenization as put forward by universities.

In Canadian universities, abstract language of indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation are molded to align with the language of institutional plans, strategies, and mandates: words, words, words. At times it feels like Polonius and Hamlet trying to figure it out. Coyote dances across my keyboard, the trickster with a secret smile, raises a brow: "Maybe there is more than parched words in the full story?" I think, hmm, yes, there is healing words, felt words, meaningful words, trustworthy words, this is also a part of the story.

Narratives give space for transformative possibilities in teaching and learning, and story is implied in research discoveries. This includes quantitative research where, we know, that behind every statistic there is a story. Story is a powerful communicative event. It is the sharing of story, the witnessing of story, and the learning from story that the Indigenous Elders know hold the potential for shifts in consciousness. This is a transformative shift that first happens in a performative testimonial space that is viscerally known in the relationships that embrace story. For me, as a critical educator, this is where social justice starts. Story is how we will decolonize teaching and research. Story is how we will decolonize the academy…

It is Spring 2018, and the academic year is coming to an end. The conversations, connections, and stories of this past year flicker and move through my mind as I conclude this commentary. I close with a thank-you to my students for allowing me to see that, although we may live in a world full of birds on wires, birds we still are. And to all who have gifted me this year through morning book dialogues, womyn's assemblages, office talks and skype calls, and the generosity of spirit as you found my rambling emails in your inbox. You've kept me engaged. You reminded me that story is ceremony. Miigwetch, Ekosi.

Note

1. In the 1997 Delgamuukw case (Delgammukw v Queen), the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that oral testimony as evidence must be given equal treatment as other forms of evidence.

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Using Story to Understand Teacher Knowledge

Stefinee Pinnegar, Eliza Pinnegar, and Celina Dulude Lay

Abstract

The knowledge preservice teachers bring is experiential, grounded in stories they've lived and told. Because of the way story captures experience, it's valuable in the learning-to-teach process. In this commentary, we return to narrative research we completed to consider the stories preservice teachers tell in learning to teach. We explore what we know about teaching from stories we've told and consider how story positions teacher educators. These explorations provide narrative insights that guide us in developing stronger teachers. These stories allow us to build on teacher knowledge as well as disrupt preconceptions and beliefs within their teacher education.

Background

Clandinin (2010) argues that the basis in preparing teachers should be teacher knowledge which emerges from the experiences of those learning to teach. In contrast, most teacher education programs are guided by knowledge of teaching which begins with categorization and fragmentation of theory, conceptions of best practices, and so forth. When teacher knowledge guides us, we attend to preservice teachers' experience and personal practical knowledge which form their basis in learning to teach. As Bullough (1989) argued, who teachers become as teachers emerges from who they are as humans.

The knowledge preservice or even inservice teachers bring to the learning-to-teach process is experiential—grounded in the stories they have lived and told. Thus, in teacher education, attending to experience as represented in story could lead to the development of more innovative, grounded, and continually evolving teachers. Because of the way story captures experience, we see it as valuable for the learning to teach process. As Polkinghorne (1988) argues, story has the capacity to bring together multiple plots, distort yet represent elements of time, and capture without totalizing characters like students, principals, parents, and other teachers. This makes narrative a stronger vehicle for representing knowing and meaning in human interaction and praxis. Because of these characteristics, story both builds on and disrupts teacher knowledge.

As we consider Polkinghorne's argument, we are struck with the way in which narrative is seen as story and story is seen as narrative and yet their value in studying teaching and learning to teach is obscured when they are treated as synonymous. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue moving to narrative we live, tell, retell, and relive story. Narrative begins in experience. From experience, we shape and form stories. We decide what is the beginning, middle, and end; how details are orchestrated, which characters populate the story, and how the plotline is arranged. The story we tell becomes one possible account of the experience. Retelling stories opens space for considering and reconsidering, viewing elements from

different angles and imagining them differently. Reliving stories involves the ways in which retelling shifts our knowing of experience, ourselves, and the meanings we hold of things like teaching and learning. By differentiating conceptions of story and narrative, we are positioned to explore how we have used story in learning to teach. In some cases, we use story (simple, authentic accounts of experiences). In other cases, we use narrative because we have engaged in that process of living, telling, retelling, and reliving.

In this commentary, we return to narrative research that we completed (Lay, 1998; Murphy, Pinnegar, & Pinnegar, 2011; Pinnegar, 1996). We consider the stories preservice teachers tell in learning to teach and explore what we know about teaching from stories we have told and the narrative understandings that emerged as we examined these stories. Finally, we consider how attention to story positions us as teacher educators through stories we tell about teaching teachers and their development and how these explorations provide narrative insights that can guide us in developing stronger teachers.

Stories Preservice Teachers Tell About Teaching

When using story in educating preservice teachers, their stories can provide two sources for support and disruption in the education of teachers. The first is the experience they have had, as learners or as teachers in different roles and settings, and the ways it forms their personal practical knowledge for teaching. In Murphy et al. (2011), we see how early life experiences and earlier teaching experience inform and shape learning to teach. Sometimes these stories serve as moral and ethical filters. When the stories are told and retold, they thrust teacher candidates into new relationships with teacher education.

Through her experiences as a teacher assistant, Eliza shows how she negotiated tensions between a difficult child, Jeff, and the Head Teacher of the class, Karen. As tensions grew between Jeff and Karen, Eliza realized the need to stay in relation with both. A token reward system had been put into place as a way to reward children who displayed good behavior, while it was also used as punishment for negative behavior. Eliza's teacher knowledge, as well as her knowledge of teaching, made her uncomfortable with this practice, but she realized that she alone could not change the policy in favor for one that seemed more ethical to Eliza. Later, in a teacher preparation course, Eliza had difficulty with the professor in her English as a Second Language class. Eliza worried that her negative feelings toward the professor, and the stories that the teacher represented, would affect who she would be as a teacher. Eliza realized the impact that her teacher preparation could have on her future teaching. As Eliza would continue to have the professor for other courses, she worried that her relationship with the professor would change how Eliza taught those subjects as well. Eliza realized that she had to forgive her professor at the beginning of the new semester if she was going to be able to develop into the kind of teacher she wanted to be. Eliza shows that teacher education is not just about the learning of subject matter and procedures for an effective classroom, but to learn the intangible qualities of being a teacher and working in education. They also show how experiences, and the stories that are told of those experiences, can disrupt the simplified image of teacher as someone who simply loves children and teaches at the front of a classroom.

In Lay (1998), we see how studying stories of teachers can provide insight into their growth and development. Lay and her colleagues, who were all student teachers, met together during their student teaching experience and told stories from it. Initially, they could not form coherent stories. Their ability to tell comprehensible stories improved, indicating growth and insight into these teachers' individual experiences. Teachers and university supervisors knowing of the student teaching experience would be both supported and reformed since the individual stories provided needed insight into how preservice teachers experience student teaching. In her analysis of these stories, Lay was able to construct a metanarrative of the plotline of successful accomplishment of teacher preparation. According to Lay, the stories uncovered a pattern contained in the label "student teaching." Preservice teachers began as students and their stories reflected that they positioned themselves as students in relationship to and in interpretation of their supervisors' advice. They then needed to move from student to student teacher and in this move they began to see their interaction with students and their interactions with supervisors differently. Finally, by the end of student teaching, successful preservice teachers storied themselves as teachers. One of the participants moved from student to student teacher to teacher, but in her last stories moved back to the student position and never took up teaching. As we look at Lay's analysis, we see that preservice teachers begin in their stories focusing on themselves and their personal reactions, but then their focus moved to students and learning.

Preservice teachers bring experiences and stories to their learning to teach experience. As Hammersley's work (2006) indicates, the interpretations of their experiences and the goals they have underlie their orientation to learning from their teacher education curriculum. Preservice teachers have a vision of who they want to be as a teacher and what they need to learn to do that both disrupt and shape their learning. Analysis of preservice teachers' stories can disrupt and enrich our understanding of how preservice teachers experience learning to teach, their development, and points of intervention or support. Preservice teachers' stories are useful whether they are clichéd or unique—what they reveal can support teacher educators in creating stronger teachers. Using story allows us as teacher educators to disrupt, support, and gain insight into their learning to teach.

What We Know About Teaching From the Stories Inservice Teachers Tell

From stories Stefinee (Pinnegar, 1996) told as a teacher educator returning to teaching, she discovered the way in which living, telling, retelling, and reliving experience (moving experience to story to narrative) was a pathway that teachers used to learn from their teaching. Stefinee told of not being sure how to tell an experience, forming it into a story, retelling the story by altering its dimensions, and then articulating the ways in which she could live differently in her teaching as a result. Stefinee discussed this as problem representation. Meaning the original formulation of the experience into the story constituted a way to represent experience. Taking alternative perspectives and retelling the story opened spaces for learning. Finally, in the text Stefinee expressed commitments she made to act differently and to think differently about her teaching.

Telling a story of her anticipation that something was going down in the classroom, but she couldn't tell what or how she knew that, uncovered an understanding that she knew things in her body about what

was happening in the classroom. Moving story to narrative allowed Stefinee to recognize how stories from teachers uncover their personal practical knowledge and allow it to grow and change—how telling stories of teaching opens space for teacher learning and development. In examining her experiences with the teacher that she worked with, she realized she and the teacher experienced the classroom and teaching differently, and the stories each told of a shared experience clearly revealed those differences.

The Stories Teacher Educators Tell to Teachers

Teacher educators tell stories of their experiences in classrooms. Stefinee (Pinnegar, 1996) explored how she told stories in her adolescent development class to guide and support student learning. She held particular purposes for storytelling in her course. She wanted students to gain experience in analyzing adolescent experience, determine implications, and plan responses. This enabled her students to think and act in these ways when they taught adolescents. Moving stories to narrative, she covered additional purposes—stories create community, develop space where students could safely share (written or spoken) stories that made them vulnerable, and the need to present content. Stefinee constantly faced a conundrum between her ethical responsibility for stories to carry course content and provide space for students to link experience to theory and research. Her past experience of storytelling as conversation interfered with the strategic way she used story in teaching teachers. Like explaining jokes, overexplaining a story can kill its value to the learner. Further, her understanding that in authentic settings the story is told and interpretation left open, conflicted with my purpose to engage students in explaining the connections between experience and course content. Because of her conflicting purposes (creating trust and space, storytelling responses by students, and narrative structure), she found herself monitoring the tension between the teachability and tellability of stories. As the course developed, students shared experiences that linked stories read or told to experiences of their own and connected it to content, either telling a story that disagreed or was in concert with the content. Stefinee uncovered a pattern of storytelling where she left empty nodes in her discourse and wait time to draw students into sharing relevant stories and working as a class to link stories and content.

Conclusion and Discussion

In *The Call of Stories*, Robert Coles (1989) provides compelling evidence that the literary stories and poems his students read influenced their moral decisions in their professional as well as their personal lives. The characters and events of the stories became a vital part of the cadre of memories and experiences about which his students puzzled and from which they reasoned in examining their own experience and making choices for their lives.

It is through the stories that preservice and inservice teachers hold of teaching and learning to teach, that they are able to attend to their experiences in ways that aid their development and allow them to evolve in their teaching. As teacher educators, using story, and helping those we work with inquire into those stories and move them to narratives, these stories allow teacher educators to build on teacher knowledge as well as disrupt preconceptions and beliefs within their teacher education.

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Eliza Pinnegar began her work in education in day- and after-school care. She has a degree in Elementary Education and has taught first grade, and is a graduate of the University of Alberta with a Masters and PhD. Her master's thesis was a narrative inquiry with D. Jean Clandinin focused on teachers who graduated in teaching but didn't teach. Her doctoral research explored the experiences of children in after-school/daycare classrooms. She has published in *Teaching Education, Mentoring and Tutoring,* and *Teacher Education Quarterly*. She is an active participant in Narrative Research, ISATT, and S-STEP research methodology communities.

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The Design-Debrief: Using Storytelling to Connect Preservice Teacher Reflection With Design-Thinking

Stephanie Baer

Abstract

As a teacher educator, I prepare preservice students for regular reflection about teaching and learning by incorporating design-thinking and storytelling. In order to facilitate more interactive reflection on students' early teaching experiences, I developed the design-debrief—a classroom activity that asked students to story their teaching experience with first-graders using the design-thinking process. I make connections to how design-thinking and storytelling enabled a more complex and systematic way to approach teacher reflection.

Once upon a time, there was a group of students who were beginning to explore what it meant to teach elementary students. Every day, they would think about teaching theories, planning lessons, and classroom management. One day they had a chance to teach a real lesson to a real group of students, in a real school. Because of that, they had even more questions about the practicalities of teaching and classroom management. Because of that, their art methods instructor created a debriefing experience that asked each individual to consider real issues and potential solutions from a real teaching experience. Because of that, they considered real problems in teaching, role-played potential solutions to those problems, and discussed implications with their fellow student teachers. They not only reflected about teaching, but they also discussed and embodied real solutions to real issues they had experienced in the elementary classroom. Until finally they had a deeper understanding of what it meant to be an effective art teacher in an elementary setting.

Using storytelling as a vehicle and inspired structure, I reflect on a unique class activity I created and facilitated for my preservice art teachers during their sophomore year studying elementary art methods: the Design-Debrief. As the story explains, design-thinking provided a foundation for my students to carefully reflect on their beginning teaching experiences. Design-thinking is understood as a creative problem-solving strategy typically used by designers, but now widely seen as a cross-disciplinary approach for multiple contexts. I also draw connections between the power of storytelling and the structure of design-thinking, drawing out critical components of effective reflection.

Understanding the Literature

Reflection on teaching, design-thinking, and storytelling are concepts that have been around for quite some time with origins that cannot easily be pinpointed. While the role of reflection in teaching and learning has been widely addressed in many disciplines of research, design-thinking and storytelling in relation to education is perhaps a bit more elusive. In fact, Buchanan (1992) offers that,

Despite efforts to discover the foundations of design thinking in the fine arts, the natural sciences, or most recently, the social sciences, design eludes reduction and remains a surprisingly flexible activity. No single definition of design, or branches of professionalized practice such as industrial or graphic design, adequately covers the diversity of ideas and methods gathered together under the label. (p. 5)

He also surmises that,

…the masters of this new liberal art [design-thinking] are practical men and women, and the discipline of thinking that they employ is gradually becoming accessible to all individuals in everyday life. A common discipline of design thinking—more than the particular products created by that discipline today—is changing our culture, not only in its external manifestations but in its internal character. (p. 21)

Avoiding the thought that this might be detrimental to the realm of design-thinking, Buchanan's (1992) larger-than-life description insinuates an over-arching connection that emphasizes process and experience over any particular product or content area. Similarly, storytelling maintains itself as a cross-disciplinary, multidimensional vehicle to the progression of human experience. Every culture within every time period made and makes use of sharing personal, communal, and cultural accounts or narratives with others. The notion of the storyteller takes many forms and is not limited to any one interpretation or methodology. In fact, for the purposes of this paper's story, Abrahamson's (1998) suggestion marks an important thought in that, "storytelling can clearly be viewed as the foundation of the teaching profession" (p. 450). In the emotional and mutual investment between storyteller and listener, new understandings can be created. "Through storytelling, the instructor can help students give up some of the limitations of their viewpoints so they can achieve a state of receptivity to the application of course content to which they are being exposed" (p. 449). The power of the medium of storytelling sets the stage both for how my students engaged with their teaching experiences as well as how I approached my own reflection of the design-debrief.

The common denominator in the seemingly varied worlds of teacher reflection, design-thinking, and storytelling is in each of their abilities to positively develop the identity of the teacher/storyteller/design-thinker. Reflection, design-thinking, and storytelling can be effective, creative approaches to how we communicate our experiences as teachers and how we, in turn, learn from those experiences to improve practice and develop our identity.

Beginning Teacher Reflection

Reflection is a rather common process—especially for those of us in the field of education. As teachers we reflect on our teaching, student performance, assessment, class environment, learning experience, resources and materials, and the list goes on. As teacher educators, we prepare future teachers for this eventuality when we engage our preservice students in regular reflection about lesson planning, disciplinary content, teaching and learning philosophies, classroom management, student behavior, and so on. We also reflect ourselves, on how to best model the teaching we want to see in our preservice students. We gather relevant material for study and construct learning and beginning teaching experiences that communicate critical thinking, social justice, creativity, and collaboration.

Effective and supported reflection with novice teachers is a central issue in the discourse of education. It is undisputed that in order for a teacher, especially a novice teacher, to be effective, well balanced, and resilient, reflection must be part of their practice (Conway, 2001; Dewey, 1910; Palmer, 1998; Schön, 1983, 1987; Van Manen, 1995). There is also consideration for reflection's relationship to teacher efficacy and autonomy whereby the practice of reflection can result in higher efficacy and autonomy (Noormohammadi, 2014) and positively alter thinking and behavior (Bandura, 1986). It is also understood that effective reflection on teaching practice is a developmental process and not innately carried out (Parikh, Janson, & Singleton, 2012). Noormohammadi (2014) and Dyment, O'Connell, and Boyle (2011) describe the need for training and feedback in reflective process. Yost (2006) affirms this idea in asserting that, "teachers need knowledge of how to reflect as well as time to think about their practice" (p. 61). Jarvis (1992) describes her participants' heightened sense of responsibility with the use of written diaries for teaching reflection. There are also several studies that examine the quality, type, and depth of reflection (Lee, 2005).

In response to the regular and expected practice of reflection, I try to stray from the common written format as much as possible within my art methods classes. I want my students to utilize the creative process in conjunction with their pedagogical studies and understand art as a way of thinking, rather than simply a content area. In an effort to engage my preservice students in more interactive reflection on their beginning teaching experiences, I looked to the realms of design-thinking and storytelling. My initial thought was that these more experiential mediums might yield more complex reflections and a deeper understanding of their teaching experiences.

Design-Thinking in Education

According to IDEO, a global design company created in 1991, the five steps of the design-thinking process are: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test (see Figure 1). Because my preservice art education students are heavily involved in studio art curriculum as well as teaching methods, the design-thinking process seemed to be a natural organization of what they already understood about creating artwork. An artist *empathizes* with some type of idea or need to create, *defines* a media, *ideates* how that idea might be visually represented using that media, *prototypes* by composing sketches and working with the media to create representations of their ideas, and *tests* the final piece through exhibition or inviting others to interact with process/product. Of course, not all artists work within this process, but design thinking adds a language and structure to what is often a more subtle or undefined process. Both endeavors (artists' creative process and the design-thinking process) encourage a nonlinear and creative approach that invites deeper, more comprehensive reflection.
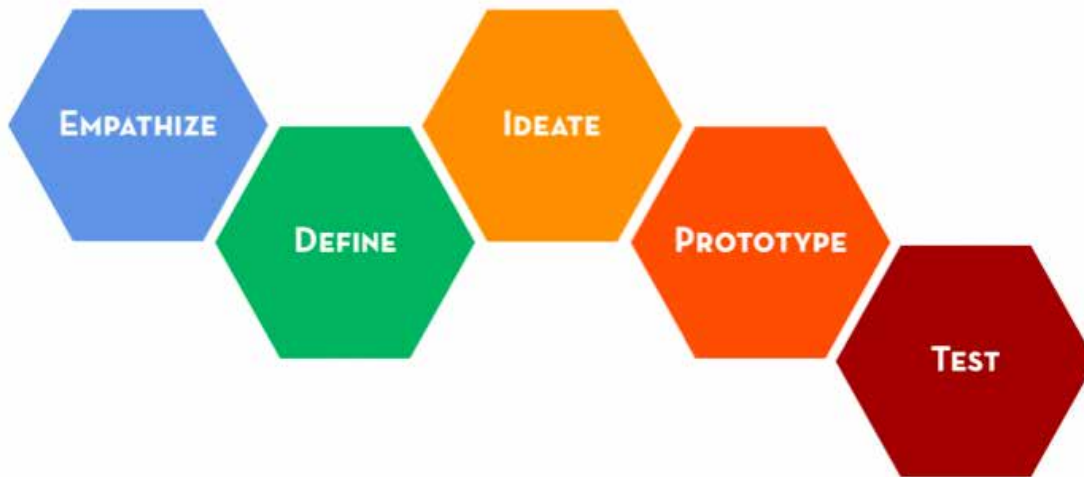
Fig. 1: Design-Thinking Process conceptualized by IDEO and illustrated by the Stanford d-school.

The origins of the intersections between design-thinking and education cannot necessarily be pinned down, but can be tracked through a review of research that spans various fields like engineering, graphic and communication design, as well as visual arts. In Razzouk and Shute's (2012) review of design thinking and its importance, they identify not only prominent characteristics of design thinking, but also distinguish between features of novice and expert design-thinkers as well as describe the capability of design-thinking to promote problem-solving skills. Referencing many studies on design thinking and education, Razzouk and Shute (2012) say the difference between expert and novice design-thinkers could be the focus on the solution, rather than the problem.

> …building experience in a particular domain allows designers to quickly identify the problem and propose a solution. Generating, synthesizing, and evaluating a solution are frequently identified as key features of design expertise… creative and productive design behavior seems to be associated with frequent switching of types of cognitive activity. (p. 343)

These authors go on to describe the critical nature of experiencing the process of design-thinking and its usefulness within the classroom and beyond.

> Helping students to think like designers may better prepare them to deal with difficult situations and to solve complex problems in school, in their careers, and in life in general. Current educational practices, though, typically adhere to outdated theories of learning and pedagogy, evidenced by a so-called content fetish (Gee, 2005). That is, schools continue to focus on increasing students' proficiency in traditional subjects such as math and reading, via didactic approaches, which leaves many students disengaged. (p. 343)

> Having good design thinking skills can assist in solving really complex problems as well as adjusting to unexpected changes. Although the design process involves in-depth cognitive processes—which may help our students build their critical thinking skills (e.g. reasoning and analysis)—it also involves personality and dispositional traits such as persistence and creativity. (p. 345)

This connection between design-thinking and developing productive dispositional traits is especially pertinent within the realm of teacher education. It affirms the nature of critical thinking as a process and one to be learned and developed alongside experience within the field. Teaching and learning within the visual arts is inherently an experiential journey and thus can perhaps mimic the structure and process of design-thinking where extended experience, creativity, and solution-focused exploration is central.

Storytelling in Education

In a 1997 conference focusing on stories and storytelling in education, the proceedings coeditor and conference coordinator begins with,

> Stories live everywhere, but rarely stay in one place. Despite our attempts to classify, codify, and construe them, stories keep moving too mercurially to fit intellectual categories. Stories also shape change. They shrink or expand depending on the listener, the medium, the time, the place, and the teller (Hearne, 1998, p. 2).

In the final paragraph of her introduction, she offers that, "Good storytelling makes education an entertaining experience and entertainment an educational experience" (p. 2). She also points out the connection between the learning that occurs during storytelling and play. This connection aligns with Macintyre Latta and Hostetler's (2003) consideration of the "call to play" where the idea behind play and dialogue is that we enter into these acts and then exit them constantly, always changing and being transformed from who we were upon entering. They suggest the idea of "catching oneself" in the act of teaching and how educators must rethink, revise, reconsider, and ultimately play with their teaching role to better understand and develop it. Walsh (2007) said that, "Whoever tells the stories defines the culture" (p. 24). Thus, in developing future teachers' ability to examine and reexamine their teacher selves and experiences in the classroom, we are asking them to story their evolving culture. They become the storytellers, ready to reflect on and suggest change for the future.

Abrahamson (1998) suggests that, "Storytelling develops a context for active learning and remarkable ownership of the learning, both in terms of process and content" (p. 450). McDrury and Alterio (2002) expand that idea, describing storytelling as a theory of learning. They address storytelling pathways that consider multiple listeners and contexts and how a student's choice of pathway can transform his or her reflective ability. McDrury and Alterio borrow from Moon (1999) and Entwistle (1996) in creating a Reflective Learning through Storytelling model (McDrury & Alterio, 2002, p. 60). The model creates a spectrum of learning based on story finding, telling, expanding, processing, and reconstructing. Alongside the stages of learning, storytelling outcomes are described in terms of reflection, release, and changes in practice. This suggests that in the exploration and restructuring of stories, that greater understanding can occur, and thus potential change to practice. Strauss's (2011) collection of "story solutions" offers hope that through the telling and discussion of stories, issues like bullying, drug prevention, and conflict resolution can be more effectively addressed. He references Sima and Cordi's (2003) work indicating that, "telling stories also gives children a chance to practice public speaking skills

and develop confidence in their ability to communicate with others" (Strauss, 2011, p. xv)—vital skills needed for teachers as well.

Connections Between Design-Thinking, Storytelling, and Teaching

As I was developing the design-debrief, I was struck by the similarity between design-thinking and the storytelling structure outlined by Karia (2015). Karia (2015) synthesized a list of five basic elements of a good story as illustrated by the most successful TED talks. He names character, conflict, spark, change in character, and take-away as the most present and important parts of the most-watched TED talks. The phenomenon of the TED series has created a new methodology for engaging in storytelling. The worldwide acknowledgment of how an individual story can spark change and wider discourse on difficult issues has given storytellers new and crucial consideration (Anderson, 2016). However, are we teaching future generations *how* to tell those important stories? Are we equipping the next generation of teachers to engage their students using stories and creative methodologies for thinking and learning?

As we engage in the creative process as artists, we are constructing and telling a story with some type of media with the intent to communicate that story to ourselves and others. As we engage in the creative process as teachers, we can capture the same fluid nature of the design process. Teaching, lesson-writing, and reflecting are all creative acts if we seek to experience them this way. When done so, the result can create a multi-tiered understanding to the creative act of teaching. Bringing together a wider understanding of how the design-thinking process overlaps and weaves within the elements of storytelling can add power to the message we want to send.

When comparing and connecting the steps of design-thinking and the elements of a story (see Figure 2), the greater purpose behind each collection of ideas becomes more apparent.

Design Process	Elements of a story	Connection
Empathize	Character	• We create/describe a character that others empathize with.
Define	Conflict	• We define a problem or conflict, setting the scene/context. This helps us better understand the character and purpose.
Ideate/Refine	Spark	• We think of ideas, brainstorm, eventually arriving at a spark of inspiration.
Prototype	Change in Character	• We choose an idea and embody/test it to create change (in a character/situation).
Test/Present	Take-away	• We learn something and start the process again.

Fig. 2: Connecting the steps of the design-thinking process and elements of storytelling.

In both the design-thinking process and in storytelling, the designer/storyteller/teacher is trying to communicate a message effectively for a given audience. In order to do that, the designer/storyteller/ teacher has to be aware of the contextual elements of their process, audience, and form—whether that be a designer developing a product design, a storyteller weaving together a narrative, or a teacher constructing a learning experience. In other words, each creator must both know his or her content well

(e.g. product design, story, learning goals) *and* exert effort and skill in *how* that message is communicated. The communicator is just as necessary as the message and carries much of the intended meaning. A design must be created; A story must be told; A lesson must be taught. Delivery matters.

At their very best, teachers are storytellers. They engage their audience (students, colleagues, administrators, parents, etc.) with important content and strive to present lessons worth learning. At their very best, teachers are designers. They take the time to consider various perspectives and methodologies for how to present and teach information, media, and experiences. Effective teachers are consistently reflective and can enter that same creative process with how they *think* about their teaching as well. The steps of the design-thinking process and the elements of storytelling can create a framework for how my preservice students could engage in thoughtful and comprehensive reflection.

The Characters and Context for Reflection

In the fall of 2017, my elementary art methods made new meaning of their beginning teaching experiences in a design-debrief process. Our class, comprising 13 first- and second-year art education majors, was invited to teach a series of three visual art lessons to the first-graders at a local elementary school. In order to prepare teaching the first-graders, my preservice art education students were put into four teaching groups of three to four students each. Every preservice student would have the opportunity to be lead teacher for one of the three sessions at the elementary school and serve as an assistant teacher for the remaining two lessons. The students had varying levels of comfort and experience in working with elementary students. Planning and teaching these 20-minute lessons as part of an elementary art methods course gave them an opportunity to get their feet wet alongside peer support with a well-structured pre- and post-teacher education lesson in place. The pre-lesson afforded them the opportunity to see modeled instruction, build a lesson plan with instructor and peer feedback, and practice their teaching with peers. With each step in their teaching preparation, the preservice students were reflecting both in writing as well as class discussion. The post-lesson, the subject of this paper, was a debriefing session where students engaged in reflection that was structured around the design-thinking process and storytelling. After a description of the Design-Debrief steps, I will make connections to how design-thinking and storytelling enabled a more complex and systematic way to approach the reflection process. Student perspectives on this special debriefing session will be shared as well as suggestions for facilitating similar reflective experiences.

The Design-Debrief

Following their first elementary teaching experience with the first-graders, I told my preservice art methods students that we would be debriefing their experience using the design-thinking process and a classroom assessment technique called *invented dialogues* (Angelo & Cross, 1993) where students role-play using dialogue they construct themselves. A few of the students had exposure to the design-thinking process in other courses, but the majority of the 13 students were not familiar with it and none were familiar with invented dialogues. I gave a brief introduction to the steps of the design-thinking process

we would navigate together. While storytelling was not explicitly explained to the students beforehand, each step engaged them in a form of storytelling (see Figure 2).

We began class with a handout and PowerPoint presentation that communicated the day's goals to the students:

> *The goal of this class activity is for students to synthesize their knowledge of teaching issues and strategies in a specific context into the form of a carefully structured, illustrative conversation, using the design process as a guide. Other teaching goals associated with this process allow students to:*
> - *Develop ability to draw reasonable inferences from observations*
> - *Develop ability to synthesize and integrate information and ideas*
> - *Analyze various strategies and techniques through discussion and collaboration*
> - *Evaluate potential solutions and test them through role-play and presentation*

While these goals presented a complex set of tasks, the design-thinking process guided us through each step. Prior to arriving to class, the students reflected individually in written form to begin a personal analysis of their group's teaching experience. This primed them to begin group analysis upon arriving to class.

Empathize. First, the students shared their reflections of the first teaching experience with their group. They referenced their individual reflections identifying major issues, questions and concerns they had, and any other observations worth mentioning. As expected, classroom management was a hot topic for several of the groups as this is a central focus of preservice and beginning teachers.

Within each group, the students took turns preparing to be the lead teacher for each teaching session at the elementary school. They each were required to plan, write, and execute a lesson plan focusing on talking about art with first-graders. All students had also been placed in varied different elementary art classrooms for semester-long observations. This shared experience resulted in varied perspectives on similar issues and allowed for relevant suggestions to be brought forward. The students also practiced empathy with one another (see Figure 3), working to understand the whole of the others' experience in the classroom.

Define. From the discussion, the students then identified a central issue to focus on based on their shared observations in the first-grade classroom. For example, one group experienced difficulty in gaining the first-graders' attention after the first-graders were asked to discuss with their neighbor. Once the issue was identified, each group formed a "How Might We" statement so they could more definitively state the issue or problem they encountered as well as the desired outcome. The structure of the statement needed to follow this format: "How might we [actor + action] so that [desired result]?" For example, the group having trouble gaining first-grader's attention came up with: "How might we bring the focus back to distracted students so that they stay engaged?" In this step, the preservice students were beginning to focus their story toward a more structured telling. They were identifying the conflict present within their teaching space and discussing how they envisioned influencing a change in first-graders' behavior.

Fig. 3: Students sharing reflections with one another in the first step of the design-debrief process.

Ideate. Next, the groups brainstormed solutions to the potential issue. How could they get from the problem to the desired outcome? A list of ideation rules (Ideo.org, 2017) were posted as the students worked to encourage creative and plentiful discussion:

1. One voice at a time
2. Defer judgment
3. Encourage wild ideas
4. Build on the ideas of others
5. Go for quantity
6. Be visual
7. Stay focused

Groups were given a whiteboard to visually record all ideas. This enabled all group members to stay focused on the task at hand and consider all options as they worked to find solutions to their chosen issue (see Figure 3). The students furiously took note of all ideas—realistic or idealistic—deferring judgment and censoring for later. In this stage, they were searching for a spark, an inspiration that might offer a solution to the problem they'd identified.

Fig. 4: Students brainstorming solutions and recording ideas visually in the third step of the design-debrief process.

Prototype. After the groups spent around 10 to 15 minutes brainstorming solutions, they began the prototype step. For this step, the students role-played some of the solutions they came up with. This exercise, similar to Angelo and Cross' (1993) *invented dialogues*, required students to step outside their comfort zone and practice some of the teaching techniques they were coming up with. The assistant teachers in each group role-played first-graders, while the student who lead-taught the lesson the week before at the elementary school role-played the teacher and revisited the defined issue with potential solutions. The groups then debriefed and decided which strategies might be most effective.

The students tried on different ideas. They were entering in and out of different versions of their teaching story, looking to hone their skills and more quickly adapt to difficult situations. With each prototype, the group would assess and reassess working to identify the characteristics of each proposed solution and what would best fit their teaching context.

Fig. 5 and Fig. 6: Students prototyping brainstormed solutions with their group for the fourth step of the design-debrief process.

Test. Once the groups had the opportunity to choose what they thought would be the best solution thus far for their chosen issue, they tested their ideas out on the class as a whole. In turn, each lead teacher presented their solutions in continued role-play while the remainder of the class role-played as first-graders (see Figures 7-8). After each lead teacher role-played a four-to-six-minute situation, including their group's chosen solution, the whole class debriefed together and gave feedback.

Inevitably, the classroom stories that the groups worked with to identify both their issue and proposed solutions surfaced as they presented their ideas to the class. The groups felt compelled to give a wider context to help their audience understand the elements they were working with (e.g. disruptive students, noise levels, etc.). In turn, each group became storytellers of its teaching experience and in that telling, students reflected both on their own experience and that of others. They built a collective understanding of best practices, developed greater empathy for one another (and their cooperating teachers), and had a deeper sense of what others were navigating as beginning teachers.

Fig. 7 and Fig. 8: Students testing chosen solutions for entire class for the fifth step in the design-debrief process.

The five steps in the design-debrief process were meant to circulate and not follow a linear pattern that ended after step five. The strength of the process was in the continual reworking and reconsideration of ideas to make them stronger. These preservice students returned two more times throughout the semester to teach the first-graders at the elementary school and had the opportunity to debrief after each session. While debriefing didn't always follow the design-thinking steps explicitly, the students had initially engaged in a reflective process that honored everyone's voices and stories, gave opportunity for contextual expertise, allowed for failure, and encouraged multiple solutions. This experience also invited the teaching teams to trust one another and become closer as they navigated their personal and professional perspectives on their teaching experience.

The Take-Away

While I'd like to say my students and I engaged in a flawless process of the design-debrief, I cannot. There are things I would change about how I led the experience and approaches I would try to increase student understanding and engagement. In a blog post entitled, *22 #storybasics I've picked up from my time at Pixar*, Emma Coats shared, "Finish your story, let go even if it's not perfect. In an ideal world you have both, but move on. Do better next time." Following Coats' example, the "letting go" is part of the creative process—it's how we arrive at new ideas and truly engage in reflective thinking that focuses on solutions, rather than fixating on problems. It also gives us the opportunity to engage with others, get feedback, and move beyond a singular perspective—a trajectory crucial for teacher growth. In that vein, I surveyed my preservice students following their design-debrief experience. Here is what we learned:

Brainstorming (ideating) as a group is a critical step: When asked what the most helpful element of the design-debrief experience was, many students mentioned the opportunity to brainstorm together both as a small group and as a class. One student said, "Coming up with ideas together was really helpful and I feel like I have new ideas for my lesson." Another mentioned, "writing down ideas and brainstorming with no bad ideas was helpful! It made me really think about how many ways you can go about one thing." When asked what they would do to improve the design-debrief experience, the need for discussion came up again. One student suggested more

time be allowed for groups to brainstorm. Another wanted to add a larger class discussion after the small group discussions. One student offered the idea to collect all groups' written ideas in writing, so everyone had the benefit of all group solutions. "That way we can gather and keep the ideas shared so we can look back to them rather than just seeing them."

Role-playing can be awkward: Expectedly, there was some discomfort around the role-playing activity. "I do not enjoy acting it out to the class. I get the idea, but we are not first-graders, so we aren't going to act like them...it's a little uncomfortable." One student believed, "testing them in our classroom was not helpful since it will truly be applied in the actual school setting." Another student simply said, "I don't think the role-playing was necessary." On the other side of the spectrum, one student offered, "I liked acting out the solutions to see how effective they are." Another said, "The acting out was kind of difficult, but I see why we did it." Still another admitted, "It was a bit stressful to do a roleplay at first, but stress is good, it helps us grow!" I have encountered this love-hate relationship with performance in class many times as a teacher—at all grade levels. Performing can be a difficult task when you are experimenting with new ideas. Though these students had been in class together, their comfort with one another was not completely established. As the instructor for the class, the design-debrief process was one way I was attempting to foster greater trust between the students—but that trust-building needed to begin before that day. Often it is the fear or discomfort that creates openings for greater understanding of self and other (Baer, 2012; Dewey, 1904).

Structure matters: As the instructor in this context, having a structure created expectations both for me and for the students. They knew what to expect and what role each step was intended to play. Breneman and Breneman (1983) suggest that in order to work with a story, one must first break it down and analyze its parts—both logistically and emotionally addressing tone, mood, theme, character, and plot. They suggest framing the theme in a single statement. Like our "How Might We" statements in step two of the design-debrief, the storytellers are asked to consider a more succinct and direct telling in order to pinpoint the desired outcome.

Often, open reflection can go one of two ways: If the students "buy in" and are ready to consider their experience and describe it to others, the class can have a rich experience sharing out. However, simply diving in with opened-ended questions like, "How did it go?" or "What did you think?" can leave many students clinging to surface impressions of their experience, or leave them to rely on the most verbose classmates to dominate the discussion. Open-ended reflection can also fall flat very quickly for these reasons. In the design-debrief, the structure added a democratic approach where all voices were needed and seen as full of potential. Everyone's experience mattered, and the breadth of learning depended on the contribution and collaboration of group members. There was accountability with the use of small groups, which then translated well as we came together as a whole class to offer solutions to one another.

When students were surveyed, I asked them if they would like to engage in a design-debrief after the following two first-grade lessons that would be taught at the elementary school. Despite the discomfort in role-playing and some students' preference for written reflection, all students responded with a resounding, "Yes."

Concluding Thoughts

In reflecting on the design-debrief experience, I was inspired by animator and storyteller, Emma Coats' offering of how Pixar creates their successful stories. Number four on her list offers a particular structure to sequence a holistic understanding of a story. "Once upon a time there was___. Every day, ___. One day___. Because of that, ___. Until finally ___." (see introduction paragraph for the design-debrief story). Coats suggests to storytellers that they empathize with their character, consider the rationale behind why they want to write, and "pull apart" the stories they like—recognizing particular elements and connections within a story. Another poignant bit of advice: "You have to know yourself: the difference between doing your best and fussing. Story is testing, not refining" (Coats, 2013). The design-thinking elements in Coats' advice are striking and guide storytellers to consider both structure and openness as they approach their creative process.

The preservice students I worked with during the design-debrief activity engaged in a reflective experience that can be simultaneously described as both open and structured. In order for them to more fully reflect on their beginning teaching experiences with depth and complexity as well as to become accomplished communicators of that experience, they embodied storytellers and design-thinkers. The structure of an effective story carries an important message and allows the audience to more fully engage in empathy with the characters involved. It considers conflict a necessary step in growth and highlights inspiration, allowing for characters to grow and develop throughout a story. Rather than stifle the creative telling of an experience like teaching, the storytelling structure and design-thinking process add succinct eloquence that absolutely requires and begins with open reflection. Consider the possibilities of growth if that reflection is carefully guided by a process grounded in empathy and ideating, champions mistakes as much as success, and invites an iterative approach to understanding. Not only would the storyteller/designer/teacher have a more comprehensive understanding of their experience, but they also encounter a more holistic idea of how they played a part, individually, within that educative experience. Perhaps the differences between storytellers, designers, and teachers are not so extensive, but rather beautifully similar as communicators of the human experience.

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A Rediscovery of Voice:
The Story of Self Through a Qualitative Lens

Sabina Choudhury

Abstract

The following article tells the story of how a qualitative research methods PhD course and the creation of a researcher portfolio helped to answer the sometimes elusive question of, "Who am I as a researcher?" and ultimately led to a rediscovery of voice. This story describes how using various modes of inquiry set the groundwork for my rediscovery of voice. This is my story. This is my story about voice. This is my story about how this PhD course provided the starting point to discover who I was as a researcher, and, more importantly, allowed me to reclaim my lost voice.

Background

The strength of story-telling lies in its ability to transmit and teach information to others, acting as a means to learn and unleash the power of voice. My reference to voice lies not only in the verbal expression of words, but also in the overall expression and description of thoughts, of emotions, of heart, in whatever form. In her book *The Lowland,* Lahiri (2014) writes, "His hands seemed an extension of his voice, always in motion, embellishing the things he said" (p. 62). For me, this is a beautiful depiction of voice and reminds me of the power of stories to convey and depict voices.

What is it about stories that make them such powerful vehicles? Stories can be transmitted by various media—books, audio, pictures, and theatre. Stories can recount historical events. I believe that stories can forge the path towards a greater understanding of others and self. I believe stories can teach. I believe that stories can help you learn. More importantly, "we are epistemologically and ontologically engaged in using stories as an integral way to sort out who we are as people in relation to other people" (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009, p. 152).

Clark and Rossiter (2008) state that narrative learning provides a new way to think about how learning can occur. However, how can stories actually help you learn? When we embark upon graduate studies, each one of us has a story unique to our own lived experiences. When we are in the midst of our graduate work, many of us have to conduct research. Some of us need to learn *how t*o conduct research. We have to learn how to *become* researchers. However, does anyone question his/her researcher identity? Who am I as a researcher? This was a question that I found difficult to answer, as I seemed to have lost my personal identity as an individual. While I had concrete values, strong opinions, and belief systems, various personal and professional events occurred where I felt I had lost my voice. I used to speak freely. I used to speak my mind. Therefore, I am not exactly certain at what point I lost my voice. I do not think that it was one monumental event. Perhaps it was a cumulative effect of different circumstances.

Was it because I felt I had chosen the wrong academic path and ventured into fields where I had to reeducate myself? Was it when those in leadership positions positively guided me towards unknown territories because they saw something in me and, as such, I felt that I had to prove myself to others in order to illustrate my competencies? Was it because of previous, unhealthy personal relationships where my opinion was not valued? Or was it because as children and young adults, my siblings and I were always told to remain in the background and not "stand out?" Perhaps all of these circumstances caused my voice to be suppressed and ultimately lost. It was therefore remarkable that while a qualitative research methods course at McGill University introduced me to new modes of thinking, in doing so, it also allowed me to *tell my story* and set the groundwork for this self-discovery and rediscovery of voice.

In embarking on this course, it became increasingly evident to me that qualitative inquiry is not simply a method to conduct analysis as a substitute for quantitative work (as had been "mildly" suggested by my scientific and engineering friends). Rather, qualitative inquiry is a rich, explorative, inquiry process that, at its core, places emphasis on voice—lost voices, subdued voices, and strong voices. Butler-Kisber (2010) describes inquiry as a holistic process and not simply as an approach or a method. She maintains that qualitative inquiry questions, "focus on what, how and why, using participant voices and experiences to interpret and explain about a phenomenon or what is happening in a certain context" (p. 26).
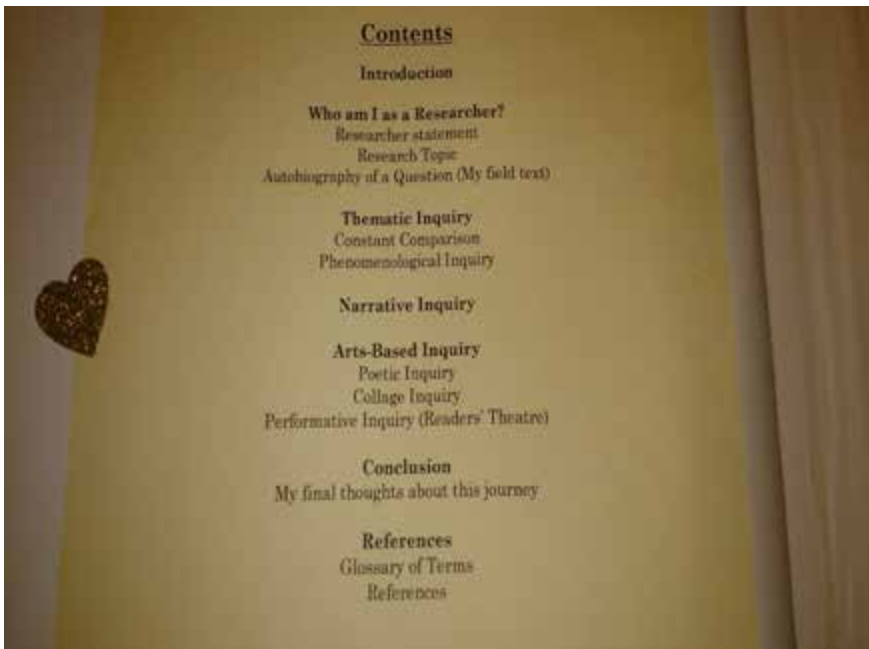
However, in order to effectively portray the voices of others, I believe a researcher must understand herself and be comfortable with her own voice. She must have a sense of who she is as an individual and in what form she can express this sense of self. This self-understanding and identity will help her understand who she is as a researcher, in order to effectively answer the question: "What is her researcher identity?" This, in fact, was a question asked in an early stage of my qualitative research methods course at McGill University. During this early stage, I did not believe I could lay claim to being a researcher, nor did I deem myself worthy enough to align myself with researchers whose work I admire. I thought of myself as a *sponge* (I soak in the experiences of others), a *gatherer* (I accumulate the voices of others) and an *explorer* (to explore the meaning of these experiences), but were these the qualities of a researcher? Most overwhelming to me was how do I accurately portray that I will one day be a capable researcher who can give a voice to my participants, when I feel that I have lost my voice.

The Journey—The Pieces of the Puzzle

While I participated in the qualitative research methods course, I discovered the power of story-telling as a means to not only learn key classroom concepts, but also as a medium to ask, explore, and learn the lessons important to the fundamental question: "Who am I as a researcher?" I created a researcher portfolio as the required class project to illustrate what I had learned about qualitative inquiry. However, this project became a personal journey towards the discovery of who I am as a researcher and who I can become as a future researcher. This portfolio described my journey of rediscovery in order for me to write this story. The portfolio explored the themes learned as part of this qualitative research methods course and utilized various elements and activities to document my story and my journey. Items included in this

portfolio were the reflective memos from classroom activities (which included the professor's comments), my own glossary of terms, my original identity memo, and "what am I grateful for" personal cards that represented this journey. Finally, I used an epistolary approach of writing letters to myself to reflect on each stage of this journey. This, surprisingly, became an extremely personal and thought-provoking exercise, but one that I believe truly captured my understanding of the qualitative process and allowed me to explore myself. These letters made references to the class readings, exercises, and memos we had done in class, with the original intention to reflect what I had learned about qualitative inquiry and to express the emotional journey, discovery, and rediscovery of my voice. While the original intent was to simply display and relearn the exercises used in class to represent my understanding of class concepts, I soon discovered that this course allowed to me tell a story. This is my journey. This is my story about how I started to rediscover my voice.

Fig 1: Table of contents: Research portfolio: "My journey of self-discovery through a qualitative lens: A rediscovery of voice."

Key Elements to This Story

Chase (2011), writes that narrative theorists define narratives as "meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (p. 421). Indeed, this is how my story was constructed and how it unfolded. My story was constructed, quite simply, with a *beginning,* a *middle,* and a *finale*. It started with the beginning, where I asked the fundamental question of, "Who am I as a researcher"? The middle represented revisiting the various modes of inquiry learned in class and the finale described my final thoughts and conclusion about this story towards the journey of self-discovery. Additionally, for me, part of telling a story and reading a story

involves a "lesson learned." In my story, the lessons learned were illustrated by the epistolary approach (letters to myself) and "grateful cards," which were reflections and appreciations of what I had learned.

Upon reflection, the approach I chose is a form of narrative inquiry which Chase (2011) refers to as "storytelling as lived experience" (p. 422). I told this story through my lived experiences, because the story comes afterwards [life] (Cavarero, 2000, p. 3). While this is often used for those that are oppressed, Chase states that this type of narrative is interested in how people narrate their experiences and that narration is the "practice of constructing meaningful selves, identities and realities" (p. 422). Key to this storytelling and this journey was the epistolary approach to reflect on each stage of this journey as it allowed me to reconstruct my voice and find my identity within the reality of a PhD journey.

My Story

Chapter 1: The Beginning

The beginning started with a *letter to myself* regarding my decision to embark upon the PhD journey. I had to ask myself difficult questions.

> So, you have finally made the decision to pursue a PhD. You have finally made the decision to embark upon this journey. What took you so long? Was it because you still heard the words of your ex from so many years ago, who said that you could never succeed in PhD research? Was it because you wanted a break from the academic world? Was it because you, yourself, did not really believe in yourself?

Every story needs a protagonist and for this story, the protagonist is me as the researcher. The overarching question of my PhD research is whether or not "nonacademic mentors" contribute to the human performance improvement of third-year medical students. I work in an environment where I teach and interact with these students. My decision (and regret) to not pursue medical school was perhaps the reason why I wanted to help these students with whom I felt a kinship. However, when asked the question "Who am I as a researcher?", feelings of self-doubt and insecurities about my ability to become a researcher arose and I subsequently formulated the answer to this question in the form of an in-class researcher statement. This researcher statement required that I look deeply within myself to address my insecurities, my perceived limitations, and more importantly, my capacity to be the voice of, and represent, my future research participants (medical students). I revisited my proposed research topic to address these concerns and to further look within myself.
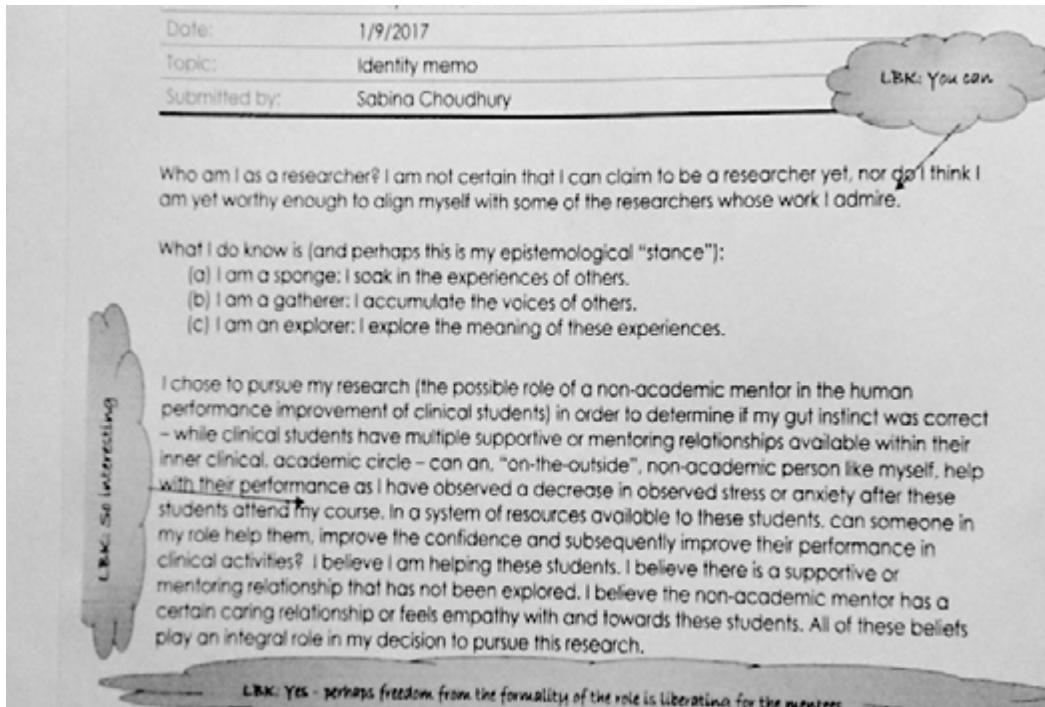
Fig 2: Identity memo. Who am I as a researcher?

A story needs a plot and the plot needs to be developed with other characters and through the relationships with these characters. In this story, the other characters are the future research participants (medical students). While the researcher statement required that I look deeply within myself (alone), it was the *Autobiography of a Question* (the reason for my research question) that allowed me to start to understand the relationship of who I was vis-à-vis my future research participants (medical students). These were high-achieving students, some of whom had insecurities about their chosen profession. In writing the autobiography of a question, I realized that their insecurities were not foreign to me. Looking back, I understood what these students were feeling and could relate to their pressures and anxieties. I grew up in a family with extremely high academic standards. The pressure to succeed was enormous. Thus, I felt a kinship with these high-achieving students. Digging deeper into myself, I realized that this kinship was a result of my belief that medicine was a field that I should have pursued more vigorously and perhaps my own insecurities had prevented me from this pursuit. Therefore, their voices did appeal to me. Earlier in this article, I outlined the life events where I felt that I had lost my own voice. Perhaps I was hoping to rediscover my voice with this research. To illustrate my understanding of the students' plight, I ended the autobiography with a poem that I wrote:

I am that voice
From so many years ago,
The road so clear and so bright,
But with nowhere to go

I hear your voice
With words you might not want to say,
Like the nights in the forest
You feel you have lost your way

Can I be one of your voices,
That can help you climb to those heights
Towards your path of great promise
Together, can we make the journey all right!

In this section, I wrote a *letter to myself*. Here I reflected that this autobiography of a question exercise led me to a more profound and clearer understanding of the root of this research topic, given how I could relate to the insecurities of these medical students. This was the "lesson learned." I realized this lesson was an opportunity. I told myself to "*use this to invigorate your research. Use this to help these students.*" I told myself to use my *Autobiography of a Question* as a field text to illustrate my process and knowledge of qualitative inquiry and to put into practice the concepts and exercises of interpretive inquiry performed in class. Through this, I was able to not only develop a better understanding of concepts learned in class, but also document my journey and my story. I was grateful for the opportunity to potentially represent the voices of my research participants and, more importantly, hope that this voice would bring some comfort to myself and those who would eventually entrust me with their stories. Unbeknownst to me at the start of this journey, this would lead me to a greater understanding of my potential as a researcher and a rediscovery of my voice. Revisiting these forms of inquiry for a class project would not only provide the possibility to give a voice to the participants, but also allow me to find my own voice.

Fig 3: Letter to Sabina: Response to research topic and autobiography of a question and example of grateful card.

Chapter 2: The Middle

The true discovery of my voice began during this middle section of the story. It was in this section where I started to explore the various modes of inquiry learned in class. Using Butler-Kisber's (2010) classification of qualitative modes of inquiry (thematic, narrative, and arts-based), I used my *Autobiography of a Question* written in the PhD Pro-seminar course as a field text to practice these modes of qualitative thinking. For this story, I can now say that I equated this to the life cycle of a plant: *thematic inquiry* was the *seed*, *narrative inquiry* was the *plant*, and *arts-based inquiry* was the *flower*. This activity of revisiting these modes of inquiry by using my autobiography of a question proved pivotal. In addition to being a field text, the constant rereading and analyses of this question required that I look deep within myself. This process was a journey, and this story provided the starting point for me to reclaim my voice, with the hope that, one day, I would be able to understand and portray the voices of those participants in my future research.

Thematic Inquiry: The Seed

The middle section of this story starts with Thematic Inquiry. Two forms of thematic inquiry are used to tell this story: c*onstant comparison* and *phenomenological inquiry*.

When I first read about *constant comparison,* I thought my scientific and logical approach to problem solving would render this activity easy for me. Butler-Kisber (2010) summarizes a constant comparison approach where data is organized, materials are unitized and assigned descriptive labels and codes, after which, rules of inclusion are written to define categories that can be subsequently expanded and/or collapsed. This is done in order to "reveal deeper understandings and connections" (p. 24). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) calls this the "inductive" approach to data analysis, where the data collected relate to a specific focus of inquiry, hypotheses are not generated, and variables for data collection are not predetermined. While the professor used a creative approach to illustrate this method, I found this exercise challenging. I rationalized that part of the reason was because the field text used in class was not from my own research. However, when using my own autobiography of a question as a field text for my portfolio, while a little bit easier, I again, still found this exercise and the notion of rules of inclusion quite challenging.

Phenomenological inquiry proved to be somewhat easier, albeit still challenging. In this method of inquiry, researchers must "state their intentions and biases up front, and 'bracket' these as they strive to understand the essence of the lived experience of others" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 50). Initially, I found it difficult to believe that one exhaustive description could encapsulate the voices of, what I believed, are divergent views of existing phenomena.

While the first approach seemed to break down texts into smaller components in order to find different rules of inclusion, the second approach seemed to want to arrive at one exhaustive description. The fact that I found the approaches difficult seemed to be at odds with my logical, decisive approach to my work and problem solving, since both methods involve breaking down information to find themes.

It then occurred to me, that this was the lesson learned. These somewhat contradictory approaches were almost like a metaphor to my life and my story.

Life is complicated. The rediscovery of my voice is a complicated process. Moreover, while I may want to be logical in the approaches, the path to rediscovery may be contradictory until the true voice is found. While breaking down the story of my life, into themes, the rules of inclusion can help give my voice some power to express the overall meaning. This was the initial seed that was planted in order for my voice to come through. I am grateful for these challenges as this will help me grow, further strengthen my resolve, and, ultimately, help me rediscover my voice.

Fig 4: Grateful card in response to challenges of thematic inquiry.

Narrative Inquiry: The Plant

The narrative research process involves a strong collaboration between researcher and research subject (Moen, 2006). A narrative inquiry approach will take the life experiences of research partners as told by those who lived them (Chase, 2011). Based upon this, I was looking forward to this exercise, since I have always liked to write. However, it was still very revealing to me how narrative can be used in research and, more importantly, as a means to portray the voices of research participants.

Additionally, I was drawn to Moen's (2006) reference regarding the strong collaboration between researchers and research participants. My *autobiography of a question*, and the resultant letter to myself, revealed that my interest in this topic may be as a result of a perceived need to help these research participants, because of a strong affinity with them. I know about their insecurities, their anxieties, and the need to achieve excellence. I am them. This is the strong collaboration. I like the narrative approach of perhaps being the champion for this group and to represent their voices.

Chase (2011) refers to storytelling as lived experiences and that this type of narrative is interested in how people narrate their experiences and that narration is the "practice of constructing meaningful selves, identities and realities" (p. 422). In undertaking this exercise with my own field text, my story reflected my "meaningful self." This was the lesson learned in this part of the story. I understand the plight and insecurities of these research participants. I heard their voices which resonated with my past desired identity (i.e., at a particular stage in my life, when I wished for an identity as a medical student). In understanding the participants' anxieties, I am empathizing with their struggles and giving a voice to this group. In doing so, I am also starting to reclaim my voice. This activity, therefore, led me to a deeper understanding of myself, and formed the next step towards the rediscovery of my voice. The plant was starting to grow. My voice was waiting to be heard. I am grateful to be given this opportunity to help and be heard.
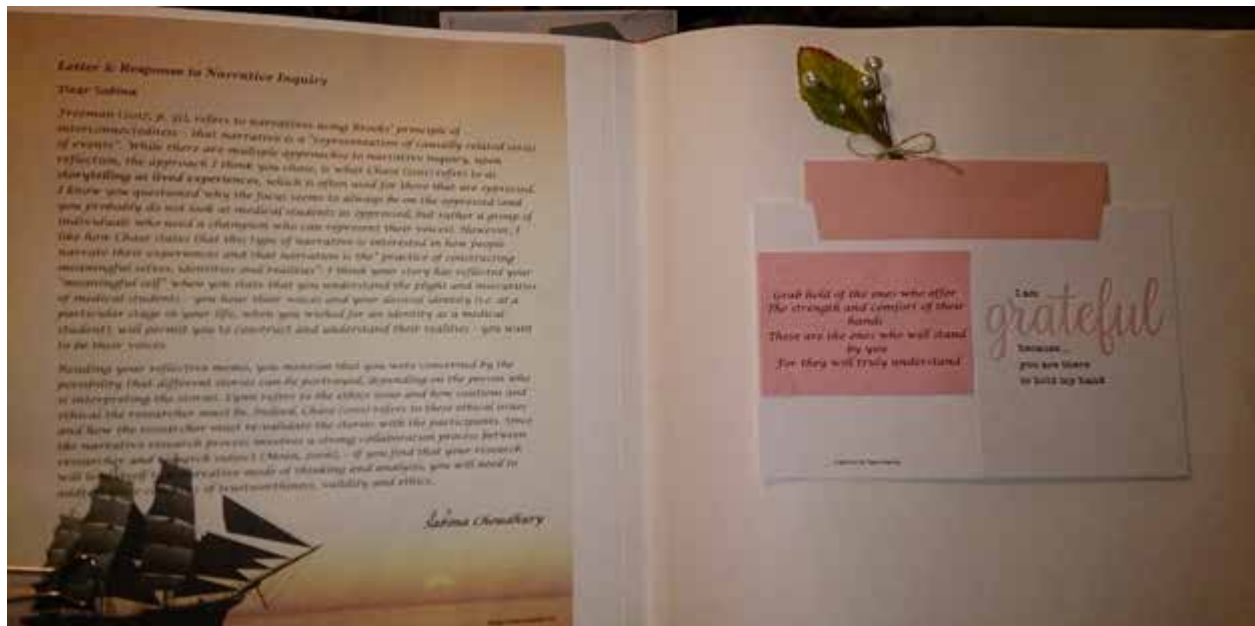
Fig 5: Letter to Sabina: Response to narrative inquiry and example of grateful card at the end of narrative inquiry.

Arts-Based Inquiry: The Flower

The three forms of arts-based inquiry explored during this journey was *poetic, collage* and *performative inquiry* (readers' theatre). These forms of inquiry were truly foreign to me, especially poetic inquiry. I was curious to explore as it would allow me to examine creative elements of myself that had laid dormant for many years.

Poetic inquiry. Freeman (2017) suggests poetical thinking, "invites, even requires participation, dwelling, a desire to be transformed, an activist engagement with the polyphony of the senses" (p. 80) and that it requires a sharing of the experience. Using the story created during the narrative exploration of this course, I created *found poetry* that I entitled, "Voices." Butler-Kisber (2002) defines found poetry as an approach where the researcher uses the words of the participants to create a poetic rendition of the story or phenomenon. Since I enjoy writing poetry, I was skeptical of found poetry, as I thought using other

people's voices to represent what I want to say would diminish my own voice and feelings about a situation. However, what I found and the lesson I learned were quite the opposite during this journey of self-discovery. Found poetry is a powerful representation of participant voices, in that one has to clearly construct the phrases and verses in particular sequences so that they evoke meaning and allow readers into the participant's world. Constructing this poem allowed me to refine my own voice as I heard my own voice echoing back to me. While I was representing other voices, I found that I was also writing about my own voice. The flower was beginning to blossom.

POETIC INQUIRY

*Note: This **found poem** was created using the narrative entitled **I know how you feel – Let me be your voice!** It is part of my journey of enlightenment and self-discovery.*

Voices

I understood what these students were feeling
Their voices appealed to me
I felt a kinship with these students
Their insecurities was not foreign to me
I am that voice!

The words you might not want to say
"Not good enough", "afraid of making mistakes", "lack confidence"
Voicing insecurities
You feel you have lost your way
I hear your voice!

This type of student has been overlooked
Can someone like myself, help
To alleviate their concerns?
I could do more to help them succeed.
Can I be one of your voices?

Fig 6: Found poetry: Voices.

Collage inquiry. Collage refers to an art-form which involves the "cutting and sticking found materials onto a flat surface" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 102). In collage, Butler-Kisber states that the creator seeks the fragments "and glues them together to express a feeling or sense of an experience or phenomenon rather than a particular idea" (p. 104). I attempted to use a partial Markus approach where the researcher *picks a focus, creates the collage, picks a title, and then writes a paragraph describing what the collage is about* (p. 105). This method was used in an effort to represent the feelings that led to my research question and the feelings elicited by the autobiography of a question. Initially uncomfortable with collage (as I do not consider myself visual), I decided to incorporate Gerstenblatt's (2004) description of image that allows for the inclusion of words, since I was more comfortable with words. Entitled *"Life's Common Core – Shared Legacy,"* I was able to let creative juices flow and express what I thought was the shared legacy between myself as the researcher and research participants. This inquiry, I thought, was the turning point in this rediscovery of voice. I was quite afraid that my perceived inability to do collage work would render my work as inadequate to

myself, my classmates, and my professor. What I did learn was, "even if you are afraid, do it anyway!" The flower was beginning to grow its petals. My voice was becoming stronger.

Fig 7: Collage creation: Life's common core – Shared legacy.

Performative / Readers' Theatre

I will be completely honest. When I read articles on performative inquiry and readers' theatre, I was skeptical and questioned whether "you can perform your data." I quickly changed my mind when I wrote the readers' theatre for the class exercise and for this portfolio. Readers' theatre is a "joint dramatic reading from a text, usually with no memorization, no movement and a minimum of props" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 140). What makes the arts and literary techniques work well in education is that education is an "applied" field (Donmoyer & Donmoyer, 2008). What I learned was how revealing and intimate this process is—it is "getting to the bare soul" of the participants' voices. I think they are correct. By writing and performing readers' theatre, you are, in essence, participating in all roles. It is as if you are required to know and feel these different perspectives. Donmoyer and Donmoyer (2008) further elaborated: "For Brecht, in other words, theatre should never be escapist or tie things up in neat and tidy packages" (p. 213). Rather, it should encourage thought as well as emotion and provoke analysis. In this story, writing for and performing the various roles of the future research participants (medical students), invariably required some form of analysis of what I think their emotions would be, in order to accurately portray a meaningful performance.

Whatever voice I had lost can be best summarized, expressed, explored, and reclaimed by Brecht's simple statement (see Fig. 8). What I discovered was that my voice can represent whatever is in my thoughts. *My voice* is laden with emotion. *My voice* can provoke analysis, from myself or from others. I have a voice and my voice needs to be heard. I am starting to know my voice. Now that I have my voice, I can start to be the voice of others. I am not certain how, yet, or how I can use my

voice to resonate with or speak for others, but this is a step in the right direction. I have found my voice. The flower was in full bloom.
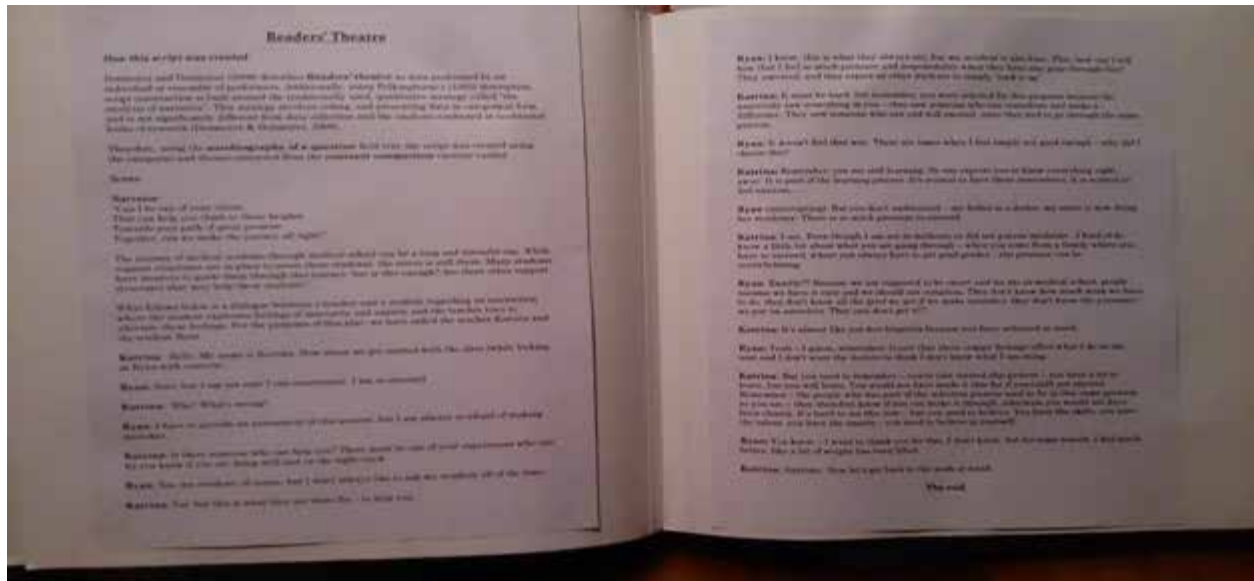
Fig 8: Readers' Theatre – I know how you feel (Brecht, 1992).

I was grateful for this opportunity to go beyond my comfort zone and to not be afraid to explore these unknown concepts. What better way to rediscover voice than to jump into unchartered waters. I started from a place of relative safety and familiarity (poetry), where my voice could speak with relative ease. During the collage activity, I dipped my toe in cold water to test the temperature. What I found was that my voice was permitted to come out, with no judgment from others. I reached the peak of the mountain with readers' theatre. Writing and reading from the perspective of others allowed me to start to explore and understand their voices. In doing so, my own voice became stronger. I was rediscovering the power of my voice.

Fig 9: Grateful card in response to what had been discovered using arts-based inquiry.

Chapter 3: The Finale

This activity started off as a class requirement to create a research portfolio. It became a story about self-discovery through a qualitative lens whereby I rediscovered my voice. In creating this narrative and constructing my story, the pieces of my researcher self were coming together—this narrative helped me learn and I was beginning to make sense of my researcher identity (Clark & Rossiter, 2008). This story used elements and activities from classroom sessions (reflective memos, glossary of terms, etc.), reexplored the various modes of qualitative inquiry (thematic, narrative, and arts-based), and ended with an epistolary approach of letters to myself which served as reflective memos of this journey. As mentioned earlier, I felt that these letters developed into an intimate portrait of myself, where I was forced to look deep within myself, to understand my limitations, to self-reflect on the process and my understanding of these concepts. This opened the doors towards the analysis required to rediscover my voice. This became my story.

Why is this story important? More importantly, is this story important? In his 1995 article, "Memory comes before knowledge – Research may improve if researchers remember their motives," Hampton asks, "What do I have as a human being to contribute to this topic?" (p. 47) As human beings, Hampton references a teacher who said, "humans only have three things – *time, space and energy*" (p. 47). Feeling that this description was limited, Hampton added *spirit* and *emotion;* "the feelings of being alive and the emotions that we feel every day" (p. 47). He says that research is about learning. While some people may think that research is about creating knowledge, Hampton believes that he is not arrogant to assume this. I, like Hampton, also do not think I am this arrogant. I subscribe to Hampton's view that the "motive behind research is emotional because we feel" (p. 52). I need to learn about and understand who I am as a researcher in order to conduct research. This involves getting to the crux of the emotional me. Just like Hampton, I also "appreciate the opportunity to talk today about things that are important to me" (p. 54). What we do "for reasons and those reasons are connected to how we feel" (p. 54) and care. "We do things for reasons and those reasons are connected to how we feel" (p. 54).

In the beginning, I felt I had no voice. I had lost my voice. This was a story with no words. A story with no protagonist. A story with no plot. I was expected to become a researcher, but with no voice. How can I possibly give a voice to my participants if I myself had no voice?

For me, teaching and learning modes of qualitative thinking were an excellent illustration of how stories can be told and how voices can be discovered and rediscovered. Through the power of written field texts, exploration of themes, development of narrative, and creation of various art-based media (poetry, collage, readers' theatre), the stories that one can tell and the voices that can be unleashed are incredible. This seed was planted when *exploring thematic inquiry*. Having an appreciation for this structured approach resonated with my orderly way of working, but this was not enough for my voice to come out. The seed started to develop into a plant with the *narrative* mode of thinking. My voice started to grow in telling my story of the students for whom I think I can help. It was not until the plant grew flowers (*arts-based inquiry*) that my voice started to roar. These modes of thinking were completely new to me (from a research perspective), but in practicing them I was given a forum to explore and try without fear

of criticism or reprisals. This act of exploration without fear allowed me to rediscover my voice. Is this permanent? Only time will tell. Will the PhD journey and life events erode this self-confidence and therefore diminish my voice? Perhaps. However, what I do know is that no matter what events come my way, the true voice does not and will not be muted.

So how does this story end? Is there an ending? I equated the exploration into qualitative modes of thinking to the life cycle of a plant, but some plants and their flowers eventually die. However, the plant leaves seeds that will create other plants. The same can be said of voices. If we document our own voices and the voices of others and continue to tell stories, these voices never die. The voices may become soft, they may become low, they may become temporarily silenced, but once the voices start to speak and the story is told, the story and the voice lives forever.

Therefore, what is my researcher identity? It is still a work in progress, but what I do know is that creating this research portfolio provided the starting point for me to reclaim my voice, with the hope that, one day, I would be able to understand and portray the voices of those participants in my future research. This is the identity I want to establish as a researcher.

Is there a moral to this story? I am not sure. However, what I do know is that the journey documented through these reflective letters and this process, became almost a metaphor for my life. I learned that at each stage, you need to *stop, pause, think, reflect*, and *always remain grateful*. I am truly grateful for the opportunities this qualitative research methods course has offered me and for the opportunity to explore different modes of analysis and thinking. I am also grateful that this course and portfolio have allowed me to slowly rediscover my voice and have given me the freedom to learn, explore, fall, and get back up to try again. To me, this was how I started to find my voice. This process was a journey, providing the starting point for me to reclaim my voice, with the hope that, one day, I would be able to understand and portray the voices of those participants in my future research. This is my story. This is my voice. Now that it is written, this story and my voice, will live forever. I can now start the next story—the story of my research participants.

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Education Is Ceremony:
Thinking *With* Stories of Indigenous Youth and Families

Simmee Chung

Abstract

This research with three Indigenous youth and their families is an intergenerational narrative inquiry around experiences of belonging and identity making. Pulling forward teachings from Indigenous Elder Francis Whiskeyjack, a metaphor of "education as ceremony" is juxtaposed with the ceremonies of "schooling" (Greene, 2001). Thinking with stories lived and told by the youth and their families, I retell stories as a teacher, mother, and now, teacher educator. Experiencing personal and practical shifts to my teaching and learning, I reconsider the ceremonies of "schooling." This study offers possibilities for how educators might co-compose more relational and educative (Dewey, 1938) experiences in schools.

Do you want to know why we do a morning song and prayer?

Do you know why we drum?

Why we hug one another before school?

Education is Ceremony.

We acknowledge education and the creator.

This rock, this eagle, this feather, this tobacco

all these things are natural.

We are all connected. These are all our relations.

We are all living and human.

(Teachings of Elder Francis Whiskeyjack, March 11, 2011)

Elder Francis Whiskeyjack's teachings[1] stayed with me long after we visited his high school classroom. Three youth, Mary, Sage, and Bryann, who participated in a three-year-long narrative inquiry, asked me to take them to see Elder Francis in order to attend his Cultural Arts class and to continue work on their rattles and beadwork. Because they did not know the Cree language of their kookums and moosums,[2] they also wanted to attend a Cree language class.

I recall our arrival at the school: morning song had just begun with singing and drumming led by Elder Francis and some students. Students and teachers were gathered. After morning song, people hugged before heading to class. The girls and I stood in the doorway—watching, fixed in place. This way of

starting a school day was unfamiliar. As a teacher and researcher, I did not know what to do. Should we join in? I sensed we had entered in the midst of a ceremony. Was joining in allowed?

Following the morning song, we followed Elder Francis to his classroom. As we walked, he greeted every student with a smile, a hand shake, or a hug. The classroom, a warm place filled with colors of the earth, and walls filled with dream catchers, welcomed us. We sat on the floor and met students as they trickled in, one by one. Elder Francis invited us to the center of the room and began sharing teachings around the eagle feather. "Do you want to hold the feather?" he asked Sandra. Perhaps sensing our earlier hesitation, he explained more about connectedness and the importance of acknowledging education and all relations. He asked, "Do you know why we do a morning song and prayer?" He explained why smudging[3] is a ceremony and invited Bryann, Sage, Sandra, and I to join him in smudging. In those moments, I learned that everyone is welcome to join the morning song and prayer. Now as I look back, I understand how Elder Francis was working to create an educative, relational space where students and teachers came together, in ceremony, and *as* ceremony.[4] I wonder about the ceremonies of education and how they are lived out. What rituals and protocols shape the ceremonies?

In this narrative inquiry, Elder Francis gently guided me through puzzles as I wondered how I might come alongside Indigenous[5] youth and families in more relational ways. Holding his words close, I learned the importance of honouring and caring for the stories youth, and families shared with me. He helped me see how educators might attend in more relational and educative (Dewey, 1938) ways to youth and families' experiences. Before I met Elder Francis, I was already drawn to engaging in research puzzles to learn more about how I might think *with* stories. Morris (2002) notes the distinction between thinking *about* stories and thinking *with* stories:

> The concept of thinking with stories is meant to oppose and modify (not replace) the institutionalized Western practice of thinking about stories. Thinking about stories conceives of narrative as an object. Thinking with stories is a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative as . . . of allowing narrative to work on us. (p. 200)

My puzzle for my doctoral research was around whether the stories youth and families live and tell are shaped by their experiences of belonging and identity making in and out of schools. As I came alongside the three girls, I began to think *with* their stories and mine, and began a process of retelling stories of my experiences as a teacher, mother, and person. Elder Francis' teachings kept drawing me to recollect the stories I lived and told as a child, a teacher, and now a mother. As I considered education as ceremony, I also began to consider my experiences of what might be seen as the ceremonies of schooling. As I did so, I knew Elder Francis was drawing me to the ceremonies of "education," rather than "schooling."

Greene (2001) distinguished between education and schooling, and noted that in education,

> We are interested in openings, in unexplored possibilities, not in the predictable or the quantifiable, not in what is thought of as a social control. For us, education signifies an initiation into new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, moving. It signifies the nurture of a special reflectiveness and expressiveness, a reaching out for meaning, a learning to learn (p. 7).

When I hold the ideas of schooling as ceremony and education as ceremony, I see differences. The ceremonies of education are filled with rituals that inspire—awe, wonder, curiosity, inquiry. The ceremonies of "schooling" are also filled with rituals, as Greene (2001) notes, around "the quantifiable" or "social controls." I wonder if she was referring to norms such as standardized testing, attendance, attendance boards, and so forth. Juxtaposing "education" with "schooling," we see schooling leans towards how we gain greater social control and pursue the measurable. Dewey (1938) also writes of the difference between schooling and education, noting that not all experiences in school are educative. "Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves towards and into" (p. 38). In contrast, mis-educative experiences are experiences that had the

> effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be as such to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experiences in the future are restricted. (p. 25)

Experiences were "educative" when they created "conditions for further growth" and "opportunities for continuing growth in new directions" (p. 36).

Pulling forward these distinctions in light of Elder Francis's teachings, I wonder about the ceremonies in "education" and in "schooling" (Greene, 2001). I wonder about the ceremonies in schooling that may be "educative" or "mis-educative" (Dewey, 1938). As teachers, what ceremonies do we embody, engage in, and enact in schools? Are these ceremonies educative or mis-educative? As I thought about Elder Francis's teachings and about how he lived his practices in schooling, I wondered again about his words, "education is ceremony." How can we, as educators, open possibilities to engage students in more educative and responsive ways? How can we create spaces in schools where ceremonies might be educative?

Methodology

Clandinin and Connelly (1998) also shaped my understanding of education when they wrote,

> We see living an educated life as an ongoing process. People's lives are composed over time: biographies or life stories are lived and told, retold and relived. For us, education is interwoven with living and with the possibility of retelling our life stories. As we think more about our own lives and the lives of teachers and educators with whom we engage, we see possibilities for growth and change. As we learn to tell, to listen and to respond to teachers' and children's stories, we imagine significant educational consequences for children and teachers in schools and for faculty members in universities through more mutual relations between schools and universities. (pp. 246–247)

Positioned as a doctoral student researcher within an interdisciplinary research team[6] (Caine et al., 2010), I was part of a larger study where we came alongside 30 youth in an after-school arts club for the 2010–2012 school years. Elders Francis Whiskeyjack and Isabelle Kootenay worked with us, sometimes joining in the club for sharing circles,[7] and medicine wheel teachings. I invited three adolescent Indigenous girls who joined the club to be participants in my doctoral study, part of the larger research study. Eventually

they brought me to their families (two mothers, a grandmother, and kinship caregiver) who also agreed to participate.

"Narrative inquiry is not a method, but a methodology, even more so, it is a way of composing a life, of living" (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013, p. 37). Attending to dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), my research was an intergenerational narrative inquiry around participants' experiences of belonging and identity making.

In the Field, Composing Field and Research Texts

I first came to know the participants within the club alongside other researchers. I later came alongside the three girls in other places and in ongoing conversations. As I lived in the field, I attended to the temporal unfolding of my life and theirs, in places through time. At first, conversations were guided by art club interactions and activities. Later, in one-on-one conversations, we listened to each other's lived and told stories and together inquired into them. Clandinin (2013) writes of how I think about the conversations. "The places and relationships we become part of when we begin with living alongside participants call forth the stories we, and they, tell" (p. 45). We often spoke of artwork created in the club, artifacts brought from home, personal artifacts such as photographs, photographs taken to show experiences, and annals we created. Sixty-five conversations were recorded and transcribed over three years. I went where the youth participants took me: their homes where I met their families; other places special to them; places they wanted to go. "In living alongside participants, we enter places that are important to participants" (p. 45). In both the living and telling of stories, the youth brought me to people important to them; particular family members, a close friend.

The study design also included their families as participants. The relational field with the two mothers, a grandmother, and an aunt, did not begin in the relational space of the club. Knowing I lived alongside their niece, daughters, and granddaughter, the participating adults began by telling their stories in one-on-one conversations, in family conversations at agreed meeting places, and later in participants' homes. Three narrative accounts, one for each youth, were co-composed alongside youth and families and are part of the research texts for the study.

Retelling Stories of Experiences Alongside Youth and Families

Since I began this narrative inquiry, I have experienced many changes in my life. For example, I worked as a teacher and teacher educator, married, and resigned from my tenure as a teacher and teacher leader with a public school board. I gave birth to two daughters and moved three times, once to another country. Currently, I work at a postsecondary institution as a teacher educator with preservice and practicing teachers. As I lived alongside the youth participants, my experiences of belonging and identity making were continually shifting and being composed over time. In the living, telling, and retelling[8] of my experiences of belonging alongside the youth and their families, and of our co-composed understandings, I am reminded that

storytelling is always quietly subversive… you think it faces only one way, but it also faces you. You think it cuts only in one direction, but it also cuts you. You think it applies to others only, when it applies mainly to you . . . it startles your complacency . . . stories are very patient things. . . . They drift about quietly in your soul. (Okri, 1997, p. 35)

Okri captured a sense of my experiences alongside the youth and their mothers that has, in a way, "startled [my] complacency" and "taken-for-grantedness" (Greene, 1995) in how I attended to theirs and my experiences of belonging and identity making.

The experiences of both researcher and participants are under study in a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is not a study of the *other*. Thinking *with* the stories that I lived in the narrative inquiry changed me as these stories called me to live differently (Basso, 1996). Engaging in this narrative inquiry shifted my earlier understanding of belonging as I learned from, and with, the youth, their families, and Indigenous Elders. Thinking with their stories, I awakened to how I began to shift my stories of experience as a teacher in ways that might allow me to think *with* stories of the youth and their families.

Personal and Practical Shifts: Thinking *With* Stories of the Youth

As a teacher. This narrative inquiry allowed me to retell my stories of who I am as a teacher.

When I walk into a classroom,

The first thing I look at is the

teacher's face to see how her

If they [teachers] are mad, I freeze up

and I don't say anything

at all.

(Transcript, Sandra, May 6, 2011)

Sandra, one youth participant, was speaking about another teacher in this conversation, but as I reread her words and turned my gaze inward, I recognized that this teacher could have been me. A teacher for over 15 years, I embodied certain rhythms (Clandinin, 1989) and routines of school, ways of living as a teacher that I took for granted. For example, teachers often speak of having a "teacher look," looks that expressed their disapproval. I often used my "teacher look." Now as I think more about Sandra's words, I wonder what story I tell of belonging through my "teacher look." I wonder now about the spirit of belonging the children and I co-composed as I taught. Did I pay attention to the spirit of belonging that lived within each student's storied experiences through playfulness, loving perception, and "world"-travelling (Lugones, 1987)?

I consider myself to be a teacher who strives to create an inclusive classroom for all children. Now, as I retell stories of belonging, I am not sure the practices I was living in and living out were paying attention

to children's lives in ways that allowed me to attend closely to their stories to live by, who they were and were becoming. I may not have attended to the children's spirit of belonging in my classroom. As a teacher, I thought I was cognizant of how my body, looks, actions, and embodied rhythms created places where children and their families could belong. And yet, coming alongside the youth and their families has caused me to think again, to begin the retelling of who I was and wa**s** becoming as a teacher. Thinking with their stories, I wonder if I created school spaces, where, education, rather than schooling, was ceremony.

As I retell my stories as a teacher, I think back to the stories Sandra and her mother lived in and lived out, of not belonging in school places. During my time in the field, I remember standing outside of a classroom with one participant, waiting for a teacher to unlock the door, a door locked against students who came late. I think about Sandra who became anxious near the end of the school year when her mother received a warning letter about her attendance. Sandra's mother, Mary, was temporarily taken away from her family and placed in foster care when she was a child. Sandra shared her worries of being taken away to a group home like her mother. She worried about getting charged with truancy and the consequences for her mother and grandpa. When she received the letter from the attendance board, her friends also shared stories of how she could be taken away by authorities.

Returning to memories of our visit to Elder Francis' classroom, I remember how he responded to a child's very late arrival to school. When I asked him if all the children were there, he said, "no... but they are always welcome when they get here." These words resonate with me as I think back to the stories Sandra told of being afraid, after receiving letters from the attendance board.

Ceremonies in "Schooling"—Retelling as a Teacher

As I retell my stories as a teacher, I see now that I took the processes of mandatory attendance with its accompanying practices for granted. Gazing inward, I recall the many times I gave out attendance slips because it was part of the mandated curriculum in schools. Even as I welcomed students with a smile and explained attendance slips as part of the school mandate to ensure they were safely at school, I abided by the school rules and gave them a slip to bring to the office. Giving a late slip was carrying out the school policy. Inside I was always happy that the children came and told them so, but I lived out the mandated story. Looking back, this was the ceremony of each day of schooling; the ceremony that started the school day for students.

I do not believe this schooling practice was the kind of ceremony Elder Francis was referring to in his teachings. However, giving late slips was the ceremony that greeted my students at the door. My intention as I retell this story is not to tell a story that attendance is not important or that I should not follow attendance policies. However, in my retelling I know I need to attend to students' lives and think about how these stories of school may shape their experiences of belonging and identity making.

In thinking with the stories of the three youth participants and their families, I was provoked to wonder more about attendance and attendance boards. What does it mean to invoke institutional

bodies such as attendance boards into children and families' life making? As I researched the power of attendance boards, I was struck at the potential consequences[9] outlined by Alberta Education (Government of Alberta, 2016),[10] which noted that the Attendance Board has the same power as the Court of Queen's Bench[11] in Alberta.

As I retell my stories as a teacher, I remember when Sandra and her mother shared stories of not feeling a sense of belonging in school places. I think about the stories they lived in which their names were written on the whiteboard for being late or when they were sent letters from the Attendance Board. I see how lingering reverberations and legacies of colonization shaped stories of school around mandatory attendance; these stories stretching backward and forward as they continued to shape the girls and their families' experiences of belonging and who they were in the place of school. These experiences shaped fears of being taken away by Children's Services or fears of not living up to stories of school; these stories of school silenced the youth and their families.

I return to Sandra's mother, Mary, who spoke of "floating around school" and to her words, "I remember in grade four feeling depressed but didn't want to tell anyone. I didn't want Children's Services to take us away" (Transcript, June 23, 2011). Sandra and Mary's childhood stories around their fears of being apprehended by child welfare services provoked me to research further.

It is understood that the fear of being apprehended or placed in child welfare services, in particular for children with Indigenous ancestry, have deep-rooted connections to legacies and reverberations of colonialism (Blackstock, Clarke, Cullen, D'Hondt, & Formsma, 2004; Johnston, 1983; Sinclair, 2007; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). According to the TRC (2015), "although in 1920, the Indian Act was amended to allow the government to compel any First Nations child to attend residential school" (p. 62), the practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families continued. From the 1960s onward, the residential school experience was followed by what has been called the "Sixties Scoop," or the wide-scale apprehension of Aboriginal children by child welfare agencies across Canada (Hanson, 2009). Child welfare authorities removed thousands of Aboriginal children from their families and communities and placed them in non-Aboriginal homes (Blackstock et al., 2004; Johnston, 1983; Sinclair, 2007; Timpson, 1995; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth continues today as it is estimated that 30–40% of all children in care in Canada are Aboriginal (Blackstock et al., 2004).

With these histories of colonization, I think about the present-day reverberations shaping Mary's fears that vibrate onward and shape her daughter's fears of being apprehended. As Sandra shared in retelling of an incident following an accident where she was suspended from school, she wondered, "Am I going to get taken away to a group home? I don't want to get charged because my mom and grandpa will have to pay for me to get out of jail" (Transcript, November 4, 2012).

I wonder about what might be called ceremonies in schooling, ceremonies that focus on attendance boards, deficits, increased accountability, standardized testing. What would ceremonies look like if they were the kind where students' lives and attending to their spirit of belonging were central? With these

kinds of ceremonies at the forefront, who would I be as a teacher in relation with students I teach? Stories of belonging shaped by school attendance opened spaces for me to recollect the times I was fixated on carrying out the curriculum-as-planned (Aoki, 1993, 2005), the curriculum outlined in programs of study. In following the planned curriculum was I overlooking the experiences of children and their families and not attending to their curriculum of lives?[12] (Chung, 2008; Chung & Clandinin, 2010; Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011).

I retell my stories as a teacher with a deeper understanding of how the youth and their families tried to sustain their spirit of belonging, spirits that kept them returning to class, and school, even as they bumped up against stories of school. In the retelling of her stories, Sandra taught me more about a "world" (Lugones, 1987) where she felt her spirit of belonging was honoured.

When I walked into the club,

The adults were all happy,

I was happy.

(Transcript, May 6, 2011)

Sandra loved the art club as it was a world which invoked, for her, a sense of ease[13] and belonging. This makes me wonder about her notions of happiness and how happiness and belonging might be intertwined for her. For her, the club was ceremony and I sensed a living out, of education as ceremony.

As a teacher, I wonder how I can create more inquiry spaces within the curriculum-as-planned for youth to express their rhythms and embodied ways of knowing and being. I begin to sense how it might be possible for the rhythms of school to become a new ceremony where students feel a sense of belonging.

In *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play*, Paley (2004) writes of her self-facing:

> My stories were not in rhythm with the children's themes. I rarely paused to listen to the narratives blooming everywhere in the garden of children in which I spent my days. I saw myself as the bestower of place and belonging, of custom and curriculum, too often ignoring the delicate web being constructed by the children in their constant exchange of ideas the moment I stopped talking and they resumed playing. (p. 19)

Paley (2004) writes that examining children's [and youths'] play is to study their "curriculum in its natural form, much as they study one another through the medium of their play" (p. 3). Lugones (1987) reminds me of the importance of having a playful attitude where I have an "openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to construction or reconstruction of the 'worlds' that I, and my students, inhabit playfully" (p. 17). It is this attitude of playfulness "that carries us through the activity [and that] a playful attitude turns the activity into play" (p. 180).

I understand the challenges of working within the curriculum-as-planned to attend to youth and their families' living curriculum, particularly with increased high-stakes testing and a heavy mandated curriculum to enact. However, if ceremonies are to be educative (Dewey 1938), rather than

mis-educative, I must stay awake to how I might lovingly "world"-travel (Lugones, 1987) to the different "worlds" the youth and their families live in and live out. It is important to open spaces where students can both share and experience a spirit of belonging in the classrooms where I teach.

Moving Forward—Gentle Teachings

Do you want to know why we do a morning song and prayer?

Do you know why we drum?

Why we hug one another before school?

Education is Ceremony.

We acknowledge education and the creator.

This rock, this eagle, this feather, this tobacco

all these things are natural.

We are all connected. These are all our relations.

We are all living and human.

(Teachings of Elder Francis Whiskeyjack, March 11, 2011)

I return to Elder Francis' teachings once more as I think about how this research with the three youth and families that I lived alongside, is teaching me how I might retell and relive my experiences so that they become "educative" (Dewey, 1938) for me. They are teaching me about what it means to live an "educated life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998) and perhaps how I can better create educative spaces for those I teach.

Keeping the youth and their families' lives at the forefront, I wonder how policies can think *with* the storied experiences of youth and families. I wonder how we can create educative, belonging spaces for youth as they experience multiple transitions in their lives. I wonder how we can better attend to their experiences and work with them as they compose lives where sometimes they have to leave schools. Within my different roles in the field of education, other educators, including preservice teachers, have asked me if they should create or mandate an Indigenous youth "program" in their schools. They wonder if there is a guide to creating a belonging project with children and youth. While I see their openness in wanting to become more attentive to Indigenous youth and their families' lives, the intention of this narrative inquiry is not to offer a prescriptive or "how to" guide on addressing the needs of Indigenous youth and families. What I want to make visible is that it is important that teachers think *with* and work *with* Indigenous youth and their families' experiences to open inquiry spaces where they can share their stories of their experiences of familial curriculum[14] making; spaces which lend an openness

to "world"-travel to each other's worlds, for playfulness (Lugones, 1987) and play (Caine & Steeves, 2009; Paley, 2007, 2010, 2015).

As a teacher, researcher, and human being, it is important for me to resist focusing on "deficits" or "fractures" and seeing Indigenous youths and their families as fixed beings. To be able to see education as ceremony and perhaps to see some of the ceremonies of schooling as educative, it is important to be willing to learn from youth and their families, and to think *with* them as we look towards possibilities for the future. In the words of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), "it will take many heads, hands, and hearts working together" (p. 8).

Returning to My Shifting Stories to Live By—As a Mother and a Human Being

As I think about the stories of belonging I learned from the youth and their families, I am in the midst of learning to compose new stories to live by as a mother and teacher educator. My mind slides back to the stories of belonging connected to their families, to places(s), stories of belonging where they felt "like home." Thinking *with* the stories Sandra and her mother told, I understand there are more layers of complexities to the cultural and linguistic narratives that are shaping my children's life making, and that are shaping mine. My eldest daughter tells me,

> I do not want to go to school, mommy. I have nobody to play with at recess. I just walk around pretending I am doing something...centre time is hard because I do not know if it is okay to join in.

How is it that my outgoing little girl who used to love preschool, is so sad in kindergarten? As I come alongside my daughter who has just begun formal schooling in a new city and home, I worry every day. Will this be a day where she feels a sense of belonging at school? I wonder what safe spaces will be co-composed where her spirit of belonging is nurtured. Will she and her little sister experience education as ceremony? I wonder, as the three youths' lives continue to unfold, and as they navigate through high school, new places, with new relationships, how they will sustain their stories of belonging, who they are, and who they want to become.

Sliding back to Sandra's stories centred around attendance boards and being afraid, when policy drives the curriculum, I wonder, what will drive Sandra to "keep going." Will her spirit of belonging sustain her? I think about the spirit of belonging that I carry as a daughter and a mother that will shape who my daughters are—and are becoming. These wonders keep me wakeful to the stories to live by that I am continuing to compose alongside my children. Sandra and Mary have taught me to pay attention to my stories. Just as the daughter, teacher, and researcher in me also has to continually strive to co-compose safe inquiry spaces, I have to remember that I have to open spaces for my daughters to share their dreams, to shape and compose their own stories of belonging. I know that I have to travel to their worlds with a loving perception and compose "playfully" with them (Lugones, 1987).

Thinking with stories, I am learning how to care for stories of belonging that the three youth and their families shared with me as they call me to stay awake (Greene, 1977, 1993, 1995) as a teacher, mother,

and a human being. I am reminded that loving "world"-travelling requires spaces for play and playfulness, for it is "from these co-constructed story places, possibilities for continuing to compose new stories to live by are created" (Caine & Steeves, 2009, p. 2). I am learning that is through "world"-travelling to children's, youths', and their families' worlds that I might learn to gaze with "loving perception" where "[I] can understand what it is to be [other] and what it is like to be [myself] in their eyes" (Lugones, 1987, p. 17).

With the gentle guidance of my friend, Elder Francis and all my relations, I am learning how important it is to gaze outward and inward to see the I, as well as the we, as we collectively make sense of belonging, and who we are, and who we are not-yet (Greene, 1993, 1995, 2001).

The three youth and their families helped me understand more of the power of stories (King, 2003; Okri, 1997) as do Young et al. (2015), who reminded me that the sharing of our intergenerational stories is a gift because "it is through stories that we can connect with our ancestors" (p. 59). These intergenerational reverberations transcend time and place. These stories have the potential to be educative (Dewey, 1938) if we care for them (Basso, 1996) and for each other in loving and respectful ways, in and out of school places.

Learning to think *with* stories, provokes me as a human being to reach beyond myself, and to see more than "other." We are all relations (Wilson, 2008) and as Elder Francis teaches me, "education is ceremony" (Personal communication, Francis Whiskeyjack, March 11, 2011; August 24, 2017; November 20, 2017). In my role now as a teacher educator, I continue to have new conversations with Elder Francis Whiskeyjack as well as other elders who guide me. I hold on to these teachings as I think about how I want to live as a teacher educator alongside my students in their midst of becoming future educators. I wonder, how together, we (students and teachers) can imagine new possibilities of what education as ceremony looks and feels like.

Notes

1. In many conversations, over more than six years, Elder Francis encouraged me to use his teachings to think about who I am as a teacher. He also encouraged me to write about how his teachings were helping me in my life composing.

2. "Kookum" and "moosum" respectively refer to grandma and grandpa in the Plains Cree language.

3. According to KiiskeeNtum (1998), smudging is a ceremony widely used by Indigenous peoples which involves "the burning of various medicine plants to make a smudge or cleansing smoke...Elders teach us that all ceremonies must be entered into or begun with good intent. So many of us use the smudge as a symbolic or ritual cleansing of mind, body, spirit and emotion… smudging may also be used to cleanse, purify and bless the part of our Mother, the Earth, which we utilize in seeking after the spiritual...It is customary to cleanse, (brush or wash the smoke) over our eyes, ears, mouth, hands, heart and body. Some people choose to brush it over their backs, to 'lighten their troubles'." (para. 1-5).

4. The definition of the word "ceremony" points toward other words such "an act or series of acts performed according to a traditional or prescribed form" and "as the ritual observances and procedures performed at grand and formal occasions."

5. How we acknowledge the first peoples in North America is complex. There is no singular term that accurately reflects the diversity among the individuals and communities they are used to represent. This doctoral research was framed using the term Aboriginal youth and their families to describe participants and their heritage. Now I use the term Indigenous peoples, currently considered a more inclusive term.

6. My doctoral study (Chung, 2016) was part of a larger narrative inquiry into the educational experiences of urban Aboriginal youth and their families at home, in communities, and in schools; this collaborative study was undertaken by Elders, community organizations, representatives from a school district, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. The larger study was funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family, and Community Research (ACCFCR). I also received an individual SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship.

7. Sharing or talking circles are widely used in Indigenous communities as a way to "encourage dialogue, respect, and the co-creation of learning" so that everyone is heard (First Nations Pedagogy, 2018, para.1). In a clockwise direction, whoever is the holder of the sacred object (i.e., talking stick, rock, feather, etc.) speaks while others in the circle, listen. In this relational approach, "everyone gets a turn to speak and all voices are heard in a respectful and attentive way" (para.1).

8. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) note that while "telling stories is a hard task, retelling stories is even more difficult. Retelling requires a vivid imagination as people try to rethink their stories in the context of the stories of others with who they interact" (p. 252). Retelling also requires "attention to tension" (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Murray Orr, 2010, p. 88).

9. At the time of this research, according to Alberta Education (Government of Alberta, 2016), the Attendance Board may direct "students to attend school or to take an education program or course; parent/guardian to send their child to school; and /or parent/guardian to pay up to $100/day fine to a maximum of $1000. It may give any other direction to the students, parents/guardian or school considered appropriate… not obeying the ruling may result in contempt of court charges being brought against the student or others." (para. 1-6)

10. The source of the materials is Alberta Education (Government of Alberta, 2016). The use of these materials by Simmee Chung is done without any affiliation with or endorsement by the Government of Alberta; reliance upon this use of these materials is at the risk of the end user.

11. Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta (2018) notes, "The Court of Queen's Bench is the Superior Trial Court for the Province, hearing trials in civil and criminal matters and appeals from decisions of the Provincial Court."

12. Pointing to the centrality of lives in the negotiation of curriculum, Clandinin and Connelly (1992) wrote of how curriculum "might be viewed as an account of teachers' and children's lives together in schools and classrooms." They envisioned curriculum as being a "course of life" (p. 392). Seeing teachers' and children's identities, their stories to live by, as central to curriculum making, Clandinin et al. (2006) build on this notion of curriculum as being more than mandated subject matter: a course of life, or perhaps a "curriculum of lives" (p. 135). In my master's study, I built on Clandinin et al.'s (2006) and Schwab's (1969, 1973)

understanding of curriculum to view a "curriculum of lives" as a "curriculum co-composed in the meeting of children's, family members' and teachers' lives in a school milieu and through interactions with mandated subject matter" (Chung, 2008, p. 11).

13. Lugones (1987) wrote of "being at ease" in a "world" in one or all of the followings ways: 1) knowing all the norms that are to be followed and having confidence with them; 2) being normatively happy and agreeing with the norms; 3) being humanly bonded with those you love and those who love you; 4) having a shared history with others in a world (p. 12).

14. Whereas school curriculum making is focused on experiences in the context of subject matter nestled in the school milieu, "familial curriculum making is situated and composed in experiences outside of school, within family, and in community places" (Lessard, Caine, & Clandinin, 2015, p. 198). Familial curriculum making "as an account of parents'/families' and children's lives together in homes and communities where the parents and families are an integral part of the curriculum process in which families, children/learners, subject matter, and home and community milieu are in dynamic interaction" (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011, p. 8).

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Community Stories and Growth Through Research-Based Theatre

Christopher Cook and George Belliveau

Abstract

Community members and staff at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Learning Exchange collectively created a theatre piece, based on stories from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), entitled *Voices UP!* This article examines the impact this project had on four DTES community members who took part in the collective creation process. The results are presented as both a thematic analysis and a short play script, entitled *Give Me Your Hands*. *Give Me Your Hands* is a play about making a play, illustrating the shared and individual learning experiences of those who took part in a community-based collaborative theatre process.

Background

As an embodied storytelling practice, theatre has the potential to contribute to learning and well-being in community contexts. The therapeutic relevance of theatre has been posited for centuries—in Ancient Greece, Aristotle argued drama was a means of processing emotion (Aristotle, 1970). More recently, the well-being benefits of art creation have been advocated by authors in psychology and health-related fields (Leckey, 2011; Lomas, 2016; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010), education (Gildin et al., 2013; Mitchell & Ezcurra, 2017), as well as in arts-based literature (Boydell et al., 2016; Cox, Brett-MacLean, & Courneya, 2016). How and why the arts may bring therapeutic benefits to learning spaces is worthy of further investigation; in particular for arts educators, researchers, and practitioners, whose central goal is to make a positive difference in the lives of the communities with whom they collaborate.

In 2016, staff members at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Learning Exchange began to work on a theatre piece with community members in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), a community whose notorious reputation for drug use, poverty, mental illness, homelessness, and crime often overshadows the strengths of its residents. Over the next two years, more than 30 community members, artists, and staff would collectively write, rehearse, and present the play, entitled *Voices UP!,* four times. *Voices UP!* consists of a collection of dramatized stories shared by, and about, community members' experiences at the Learning Exchange. This article examines the impact this project had on four of the community members who took part in the collective creation process. To represent some of the insights of the analysis, we include scenes from *Give Me Your Hands*, a play created from interviews with the four community members. As a meta-research-based play, *Give Me Your Hands* helps to better represent the shared and individual experiences of learning and positive growth from those who took part in *Voices UP!*

The UBC Learning Exchange was established in 1999, and it brings together members of the community and university to collaboratively engage in knowledge sharing, offering inclusive and accessible educational opportunities. Based in the DTES, in Vancouver's Chinatown, the Learning Exchange serves a diverse range of community members. Individuals living and/or accessing programs in the DTES may face multiple barriers, including living below the poverty line, unemployment, and mental wellness challenges. The DTES is home to a large population of seniors, and the DTES neighborhood of Chinatown includes large immigrant populations. The city has recognized the need to promote sustainable arts and culture initiatives to support individual and community health (City of Vancouver, 2014), and the Learning Exchange has launched a range of low-barrier, arts-centered programing, such as *Voices UP!*, to address the diverse needs of the community members it serves.

O'Connor and O'Toole (2017) suggest that arts-based practitioners should generate artistic initiatives that create "space for people to reflect on who and how they are in the world and, just as importantly, who they might become" (p. 63). Collective creation has previously been utilized in a number of contexts where well-being through theatre-making was central to the project (Prendergast & Belliveau, 2018; Sadeghi-Yekta, 2017; Wager, 2014). In a review of studies on the creative arts and their contribution to mental health, Leckey (2011) concludes that research evidence points to the potential for arts to positively affect well-being in a variety of ways, including self-esteem, mood, relaxation abilities, and optimism. Psychologists and counsellors often borrow elements of theatre—enactment of stories, improvisation, and spontaneous play—as tools for use in the therapy room (Snow, D'Amico, & Tanguay, 2003). Replacing the counselling room with a community-based learning space, this article aims to show how participants stories of taking part in *Voices UP!* built on the authors' understanding of collective theatre and storytelling to include therapeutic benefits.

Research Approach

Participants and Data Collection

Four community members agreed to take part in the study.[1] Three participants identified as seniors, and two identified as Chinese Canadian, one as Canadian, and one as Indigenous. Three identified as male, and one as a female. The study drew participant stories from several data sources, though the three we'll explore more closely in this article include the *individual interview transcripts*, participant *sketches* done during interviews, and *objects* chosen by the participants to represent their collective creation experiences. Each participant took part in an individual narrative interview of approximately 60 minutes. The interviews began with a request that they share stories around their experiences of *Voices UP!*, and portions of the interviews were audio recorded. Participants were invited to bring an object to the interview, such as a prop they made for the show, a personal item, or a found object, and had the option of sketching their experience. Participants had the opportunity to speak about this object and their sketches as part of the interview. Chris, lead author of this article, conducted the interviews, and was part of the entire development process of *Voices UP!*

Data Analysis

All audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed, and the four participants were invited to make any changes they wished to the transcript. An analysis of the narratives present in the interviews was done following Braun and Clarke (2006), who describe thematic analysis as a means of "identifying" and "reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). Combining the analysis of the transcripts, sketches, and chosen objects, a series of monologues and scenes were produced. Collectively, with the participants, these were interwoven into *Give Me Your Hands*, a short script generated from immersion in the research data, and an analysis created with the aesthetic sensibilities of a playwright as researcher (Belliveau, 2007; Mackenzie & Belliveau, 2011). As Leavy (2009) writes, "artistic practice" and qualitative practice are both "crafts" (p. 10)—effective qualitative research requires the transposition of data into a new form that offers insight, just as theatre and other art forms may encourage new connections among diverse perspectives.

Findings

A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts and chosen objects led to the establishment of six core themes, of which four are discussed below. The theme titles are in vivo quotes from interview transcripts. Excerpts from *Give Me Your Hand*s accompany the thematic analyses, artistically opening up insights and creatively highlighting findings gleaned from the study. Script selections have been edited for clarity and length to facilitate their inclusion in this article. Puppets were central to many of the experiences reported by participants in this study and are the fictional characters that populate *Give Me Your Hands*.

Give Me Your Hands: A Research-Based Play About Collective Playmaking

Cast of Characters

ZHAN: *A sock puppet. A creator/performer of* Voices UP! *The actor playing ZHAN should be older.*

EHREN: *A sock puppet. A creator/performer of* Voices UP! *The actor playing EHREN should be younger. This actor also runs the projections during the show.*

SHELLEY: *A sock puppet. A creator/performer of* Voices UP! *The actor playing SHELLEY should be older.*

Setting

The play takes place in a room at the Learning Exchange—a sometimes classroom, sometimes meeting room, sometimes art-studio, sometimes karaoke club, and one of the primary rehearsal spaces for Voices UP!

***Give Me Your Hands* Excerpt 1: First Showtimers**

        ZHAN, SHELLEY, and EHREN—three sock puppets—look out at the audience.

EHREN   *(to audience)* Over 22 months, we made a play together.

ZHAN   *(to audience)* Me, this is my first time to do a show.

EHREN   These words are directly quoted from or
                             inspired by interviews I did
                             with community members who took part
                             in the creation and performance of *Voices UP!*

SHELLEY   *(to audience)* We're talking about making a script—

ZHAN   *(shaking arms, covering mouth)*
                             Bit nervous. It's just about—
                             "Will we be successful?"
                             "Will we?"
                             "Can we do it?"

EHREN   I'm a first-timer—not to theatre, but to academia.
                             How do you write a play and make it research?

SHELLEY   To be honest, I have no idea what's going to happen.
                             Just blank!

ZHAN   … Bit nervous—but little bit of excitement too.

Theme one: "I learned something—how to do a play." "It's a fun activity," said a participant, referring to the process of creating *Voices UP!* Beyond pure enjoyment, participants pointed to *Voices UP!* as a skill-building experience. In putting on a theatre production, the collective explored acting and script-writing, song writing and performance, set design, prop design, staging and direction, as well as post-show talk-backs with the audience. Skill development is an important insight, as it offered agency to the participants and transferable learning they could take away from being a part of the collective creation process.

In terms of performing in *Voices UP!*, some participants described the thought of being in front of an audience as provoking anxiety, while others expressed feeling at ease with public speaking from the beginning. For one community member who did feel nervous, practicing helped: "After a few times [in] rehearsal, you feel more comfortable." Similarly, another participant stated that the rehearsal period gave "each person the chance to speak in public" before the performances. Both participants implied rehearsal was a means of laddering up to performance, working from speaking in front of other members of *Voices UP!* towards acting in front of a general audience.

Voices UP! was presented as a staged reading, meaning that the cast performed with scripts in hand, and memorization was not required. Despite reading from the script during the performance, one participant described using the acting skill of "expression" to convey meaning:

> I don't want to, hopefully, be just reading out a sermon on the stage. The expressions, the intonation, and the volume of it, has a lot to do with the show … in attracting people's attention … You've got to bring [the audience], and you've got to guide them through. Because you are trying to tell [them], "This is what I am going to say."

Most theatre creation processes work towards a performance of some kind, and each participant described how the performances became a goal. One collective member said "everyone" was working hard, putting in "energy" and "effort" until "the show." Two participants asked when the next performance of *Voices UP!* would be during their research interviews, and one provided the name of a venue for a future show. These insights suggest how all four participants embraced working towards performance as an overarching goal of making a play, alongside gaining broader skills in theatre-making over the nearly two years that *Voices UP!* was being developed.

Give Me Your Hands Excerpt 2: VOICES UP?

EHREN   *(to audience)* We help each other make the script—

SHELLEY   I still don't really think
we have any idea what we're doing.

ZHAN   Every time when we were meeting,
we discuss the story, the lines, the characters.
Everybody gives ideas and sentences.
Ehren writes it down.

EHREN   People have different opinions,
different ways of saying things.
And of course, we try to work through it.

SHELLEY   You've got to listen—
it's just a matter of sharing different ideas
to make the whole thing better.
Actually, *Voices UP!*—
it's a very good title for our show.
We really can voice up our opinions and everything.

ZHAN   No problem with most people in the group.
Sometimes someone is hard to handle,
But what can I do? Just—
I try to keep my feelings to myself,
try to keep my voice down.

EHREN (*to ZHAN*) But it's called *Voices UP!*

ZHAN (*to EHREN*) In case someone blows up or something.
(*to audience*) I try to keep it to myself.

SHELLEY (*to ZHAN*) I just VOICE UP my opinion!
I don't think I am over confident—
I have never done any big show.
But I don't mind—if I speak up, I speak up.

ZHAN (*to SHELLEY*) I don't want to show it … in front of everyone.

SHELLEY (*quietly*) Oh.
(*Slight pause. Then, to audience*) But this is something—
over here we have people—
drop-ins, students, volunteers from
different nationalities and backgrounds—
we all come here and we are going to stay
and share something with one another.

EHREN We have our script—then we rehearse it.

ZHAN This means cooperation.
Because everybody is doing their own part.
There's no conflict.
I think it's a lot of fun,
I like to do the scenes—
it makes me proud to say the words we wrote.
Even in the rehearsals,
practicing gives each of us the first chance
to speak in public.
And we build up friendship—
We're spending afternoons together.

Theme two: "The creation of relationship." Theme two illuminates the *Voices UP!* creation and performance process as a means of cultivating and developing relationships, both within and outside of the collective. This theme was present in all four transcripts. One participant described the collective as a "family" during her interview:

> We were very happy because we looked like a big family. For example, if I say, "Oh! Today I want to change how the puppet is looking," then somebody can give me an idea … The group … help[ed] each other.

The above quotation implies a connection between the relationships that developed and supporting one another in the process of creating the show. As suggested by offering an image of a family, the participant also implied a feeling of belonging. Summarizing the experience of making a play overall, she said, "we have membership," the collective is "all together."

A sense of belonging was echoed by another participant, who said, "I want[ed] to be part of" the collective. Additionally, this participant highlighted the interactions between audience and cast during *Voices UP!* performances, saying "this is also a relationship": "They share in our ideas, thinking, expressions, when we are on stage—and we look at them, and we get feelings from them too. It's both ways. It's always the word 'interact.' And it's also the word 'relationship.'"

The relationship between performers and audience members was also present in participants' descriptions of the post-show talk-backs:

> I like to be with the audience. I like to listen to them. Because they are from a different group, not from the Learning Exchange … They would have asked me a question … from their own point of view, which is something I would never experience.
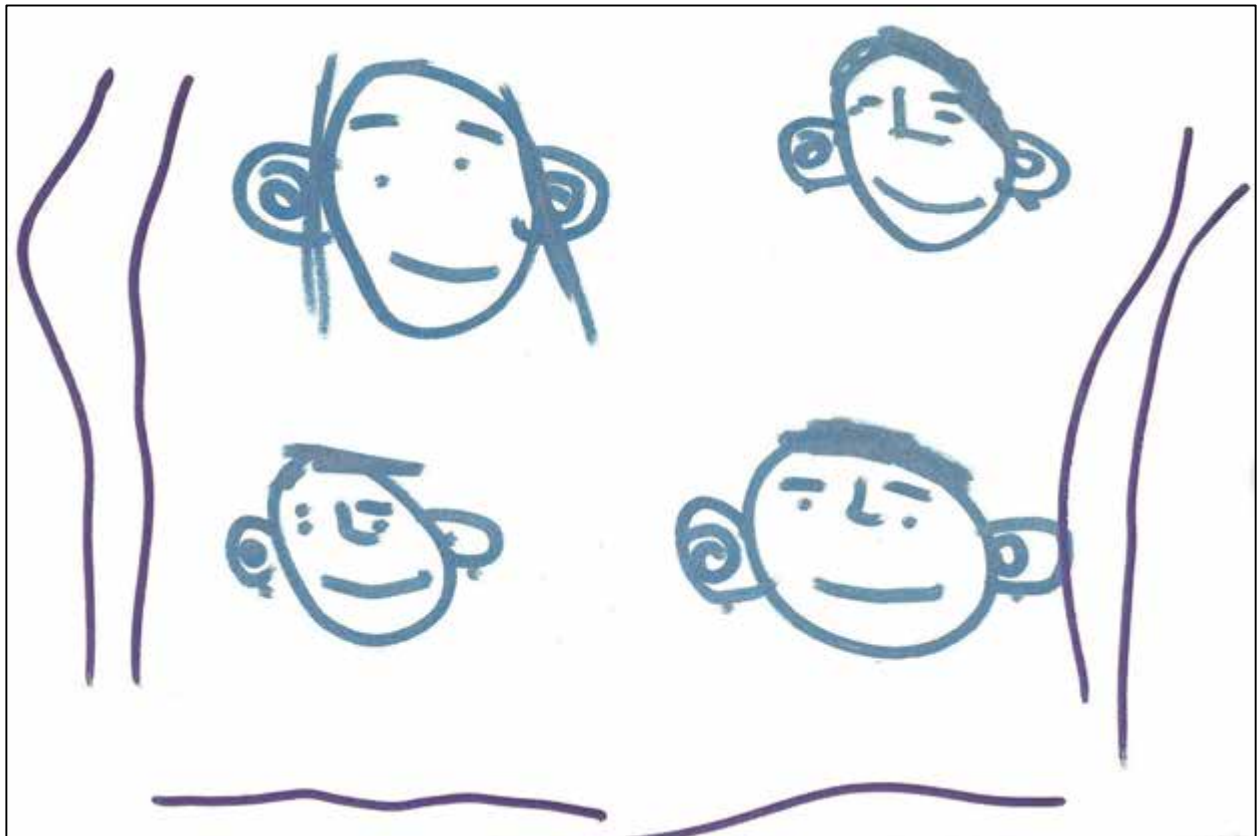
Fig. 1: Drawing by participant

Another participant drew the above sketch during his interview to represent his experience of *Voices UP!*—"friends" onstage, during performances (see Figure 1). The few dark vertical lines representing the curtain, and solitary horizontal line representing the stage, are only a backdrop to the lighter, smiling faces of the cast that take up most of the page. The open faces draw our focus as we view the sketch.

Interestingly, although the participant described the faces as "friends" with each other, they are smiling at us—the viewers—extending the relationship outside of the *Voices UP!* group.

Give Me Your Hands Excerpt 3: A Puppet Is Born

> *EHREN turns to ZHAN and SHELLEY.*

EHREN	Hey, Shelley, Zhan—we're making sock puppets!
ZHAN	*(to EHREN)* Oh really?
SHELLEY	*(to EHREN)* Well, I don't know anything about it …
ZHAN	*(to EHREN)* So nice!
SHELLEY	*(to EHREN)* I'm willing to give it a try. *(to audience, quietly—an aside)* Socks!?
ZHAN	*(to audience, quietly—an aside)* No clue what we'll have at the end.
EHREN	Doesn't matter what kind of puppet you want to make. Here—

> *EHREN cycles through projections of various materials for making sock puppets, like the material the audience has used to create their own puppets.*

ZHAN	*(to audience)* All the different items, different materials— *(playful, having fun, to SHELLEY)* "Hey! I want bigger puppet eyes!"
SHELLEY	*(to ZHAN)* "I want my eyes lower!" *(to audience)* I never knew for socks, other than putting on your feet, you can work it into something else! I had no idea that it would end up into something very much different than just a sock, a piece of sock.
ZHAN	We each make our own, But the group is making all these puppets together. When we finish, we give them names.

> *EHREN cycles through photos of the sock puppets from Voices UP!*

EHREN	I love the one named "SUPER SKY"!
SHELLEY	I don't want to name mine "John" or "Mary"— then it just comes up in my mind: the word "Love." That's what I really want to show.

> I go home that night, I find my teddy bear—
> it's wearing a little sweater with
> "LOVE" embroidered on it.
> So I put it on my puppet.

ZHAN Almost like people
       when they have babies—
       they give them names too.

SHELLEY "Love" is not just a name.
         There's a lot of feelings,
         a lot of meanings at the back of that name.

ZHAN It looks like—
       the puppets—
       it looks like they're born.

Theme Three: "A puppet can be like a little bridge." After the first few months of developing and rehearsing *Voices UP!*, a member of the collective suggested the group create a scene with puppets. The collective did not have time to develop the scene prior to their first and second performances, but in the fall of 2016, the group created sock puppets and added them to the script. The collective performed the show twice with the puppets, who became significant characters, with their own dedicated scenes.

Linked to the theme of relationships, the third theme describes puppetry as a communication tool. It highlights how puppetry became a major component for many of the participants' descriptions of Voices UP!: "And I find it interesting … I never imagined that a puppet can be like a little bridge. We are building a bridge. For both sides. Me. And the other people. A bridge for the other group members."

During their interview, the participant quoted above posed the question, "How do you interact with other people?" He answered by describing the puppets as "a method of communication."

In a similar vein, a participant explained that the puppets were a tool to "make friends," because they could "use the puppet to talk to each other." The participant spoke of the puppets—rather than the collective members—writing, rehearsing, and performing the play. For example, he said, "all the puppets [developed] the *Voices UP!* script, the whole group of puppets [practiced], and the puppets gave a successful performance." The participant implied that the puppets were characters that collective members could step into when onstage, during performances, and offstage as well: "Every time when we are practicing, if one of the puppets doesn't like [an] idea [in the script], they can change it right away." In other words, the puppets may have offered a means of voicing opinions safely: a collective member was not wanting to change the script—his puppet was.

The puppet characters may also have offered confidence and a tool of overcoming anxiety during the performance, giving the group something to focus on:

It feels like we were real puppets. We're not people—[You] are not [you], [I] am not [me]—we are into the puppet. We are the puppets. In the show, everybody is not thinking of themselves, they are thinking of the group of puppets. I don't know—I don't know if that [was] the idea or not, but that's my feeling.

Give Me Your Hands **Excerpt 4: Shelley's Solo**

> *SHELLEY comes back on stage, and ZHAN and EHREN take seats in the audience.*

SHELLEY   "I am a puppet. My name is Love."
Next person says,
"My name is John, I am also a puppet."
But I wanted to sound more interesting.
I added, "I was born at the Learning Exchange."
Then, "I'm a Canadian."
We are all Canadians, we are all part of it.
That's what I wanted to tell the audience.

It's not that I wish to take up a couple of seconds on air,
but to enhance—
I hope the puppet's name, Love,
can draw people's attention.
Because if you just say,
"I am John," they will forget after half a minute.

How did I come up with that name?
Well—Love is not just a name.
There's a story behind it.

First, as we were half-way through the process—
I lost somebody.
I lost him.
He is gone forever.
So much in grief, so much in Love.
I lost my Love.
In every way,
In every sense the word means—
Love is a big word.

Then the second part is:
I want to emphasize Love.
We all need Love.
You can love anything—anything!
Your tea,
You can love your pet,
your work.
You can love a certain person.
Love makes a happier life, a better world.
A famous English poet once said:

EHREN and ZHAN stand and speak from the audience.

EHREN   "The best portion of a good puppet's life:

ZHAN   "Their little nameless unremembered acts of kindness—

SHELLEY   "And Love."

Theme four: "I want to be creative." *Voices UP!* offered opportunities for both expressive arts, such as performance, and visual arts, such as set design. This theme acknowledges the desire and possibility for collaborative and individual creative expression present in the participants' experiences of collectively creating a play. "I don't want to miss any part of it," said one participant, who tried to be present throughout the development process, because he wanted the chance to "be creative," and had that "opportunity" with *Voices UP!* "We [made] up the story," said one participant, referring to a collective means of creative expression present in *Voices UP!*

Another participant, who chose her puppet as the object representing her experience of *Voices UP!* (see Figure 2), emphasized the "feelings" and "memories" present in the puppet she created. As suggested in *Excerpt 2: A Puppet Is Born*, the participant named her puppet in a way that was personally significant to her. The participant explained that the puppet gave her the opportunity to express her "ideas" to the audience.

Fig. 2: Chosen Object. "Love". Puppet by Teresa Shu-Tak Wong. Photo design credit: Voices UP! Collective.

Dramatizing Data

Plays within plays, as well as plays and scenes about playmaking and performance, have been rich sites of exploration for both historical and contemporary playwrights, from Shakespeare to Stoppard. *Give Me Your Hands* attempts to represent and lift all data sources, including interview transcripts, sketches, and objects chosen by participants. As such, the script becomes more than just direct quotes from interviews; instead, it's an artistic rendering. The narratives generated from data are transformed into stories of three fictional characters, highlighting the essence of the community members' experiences. This play is only one possibility for dramatizing the data collected for this study—while offering an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences, it attempts to refrain from suggesting the collected data can lead to a single, specific understanding (Sinclair, 2014). The play presents the data in a form to be experienced, rather than only examined.

In *Give Me Your Hands*, the puppets address the audience directly throughout the piece. Audience-performer interactions serve to further highlight the centrality of relationships to the participants' experience of collective playmaking. At various points the performers, through the puppets, relate to the audience as confidants, participants in a sock-making workshop, and an actual crowd gathered to watch a show.

Butler-Kisber (2005) states that, "borders are crossed" in arts-based research, and "deeper and varied understandings occur" (p. 215). The character of Ehren in *Give Me Your Hand* disrupts the traditional researcher role as distant observer, removed from the analysis. Ehren, like Chris in the actual research, was in the middle of the creative process, generating and facilitating the research. Therefore, his reflexive and reflective voice via the puppet Ehren becomes critical in understanding the dynamics at play in this inquiry process.

Give Me Your Hands Excerpt 5: So Many Questions

EHREN	After the show, we have a talk-back— a question period with the cast onstage.

The performers sit in unison.

EHREN	Someone puts up their hand, and I point to them—
ZHAN	*(hand up)* "Are you doing any work evaluating this experience for people? Like—what was it like for you to make a play together? What are you all taking from it?"
EHREN	One of the cast says—
SHELLEY	"Actually, that's what Ehren's research is on."
EHREN	"Yeah, I'm making a play about making a play." I'm wondering if my cheeks are as red as they feel.

How am I going to translate this experience into research?

ZHAN   *(to EHREN)* Can we help?
              I think English has this saying too, right?
              "Two heads are better than one."
              We can do things successfully,
              even though we are not experienced,
              if we do it together.
              That's what the puppets stand for, to me—
              Our strong group.
              Because if you are by yourself, you can't do those things.
              That's a group of people, making good things, all together.

SHELLEY   I would never have this opportunity if
              I was just by myself within the four walls.
              (Repeats quietly) Within the four walls.
              Everybody grows old.
              But people grow old with grace.
              Regardless from the teen to the twenties
              to the thirties to the forties whatever—
              you've got to keep going, keep learning.

ZHAN   You help yourself by helping others.
              Working on this project,
              You pick things from other people.

SHELLEY   It's not only the making of the puppets, or even the writing.
              For weeks, downstairs in the parkade, we were setting up the set,
              and we were sawing and then nailing and painting.

ZHAN   You don't use a pen or ink?
              Just use different instruments—
              the hammer, the nails.
              You're still a part of the group.
              You need different people to do different things,
              You need everybody.

SHELLEY   It's really amazing.
              I mean, I can pick up chopsticks,
              forks and knives,
              but not a saw!
              And I did. I sawed a piece of the set!
              It's part of a very important memory in my life.

ZHAN   Also, you know, Ehren—you are a very good leader.

EHREN   *(to ZHAN)* But like Shelley,
              I learned how to saw
              when we made the set.
              I wasn't leading any of that.
              I never would have built a set on my own.

And you taught me how to drill, Zhan!
I like what you said before,
"Leading-Group Members."
Everybody's leading, everyone
took the lead in the project.

ZHAN   *(to EHREN)* Yes, a good leader,
            leads good group members.
            It takes both.

EHREN   Thanks, Zhan.

ZHAN   You don't have to thank me.
            After *Voices UP!*, we're more than just friends,
            we're like brother and sister.

Discussion

Voices UP!, a collaborative play creation project, was an arts-based learning opportunity for interested community members in the DTES. The stories participants shared in this study—relationship building, of gaining transferable skills, and exploring their own artistry—expand our conception of collective theatre and art creation to include therapeutic potential. This study reflects recent research on the mental health benefits of social connectedness and group membership involving seniors and diverse cultural identities in Canada (Puyat, 2013; Richmond, Ross, & Egeland, 2007), as well as research suggesting art creation may support social relationships among seniors (Balyasnikova, Higgins, & Hume, 2017; Bennington, Backos, Harrison, Etherington Reader, & Carolan, 2016). If collective theatre creation is a potentially therapeutic endeavor, our responsibilities as educators and researchers change, particularly when working with participants in marginalized communities. Chris needed to consider balancing multiple roles, as an artist, researcher, educator, and a facilitator of a therapeutic experience.

This study represents an example of how collective playmaking and research based-theatre can be utilized by researchers as a means of capturing experiences that may be difficult to present fully in traditional academic writing. Research-based theatre is a methodology (Belliveau & Lea, 2016) that attempts to bridge an embodied art form with scholarly writing, exploring the space between art and inquiry. Collective theatre creation disrupts the traditional hierarchy of researcher-participant and/or teacher-student, to facilitate a sharing of leadership roles, as the collective explores individual and group narratives together. Offering this action-based, collaborative storytelling program to the DTES community, inside rehearsal halls and performance spaces, supports the efforts of educators and practitioners to make relevant learning experiences that contribute to well-being accessible to a greater number of community members in diverse contexts. The research presented here also suggests that community members can be co-creators of an experience that is creatively fulfilling and therapeutic. Co-creation means collective art-making can be adapted to whoever is in the room—acknowledging and embracing diverse identities and backgrounds, drawing on the group's strengths, and encouraging shared growth.

Limitations

This research project was conducted in a specific community and organization. It involved DTES individuals who were interested in creating and performing a play. Therefore, the insights and findings are not generalizable. The data and narratives presented here are not meant to be reflective of all patrons of the Learning Exchange, or all community members of the DTES. As each theatrical process is unique, a different organization engaging in collective creation may generate different experiences than those presented here.

Implications for Further Research

Following on the description and advice of the participants who stated that evaluation should be left to the audience, future studies could also examine the impact on audience members who witness collectively created performances by community members (Belliveau & Nichols, 2017). Another line of inquiry could explore the benefits participants report from taking part in collective creation projects of shorter durations, for example, for several days or several weeks.

A Concluding Dialogue

***Give Me Your Hands* Excerpt 6: Remember What Puck Said?**

ZHAN   Even though now we have finished,
              I still look at the photo of the cast
              and think, "Oh what a good time!"
              Sometimes I meet Shelley outside too,
              then we stop, and yap yap yap for a few minutes
              then—bye-bye.
              Not only here we become almost a family,
              outside we are friends too.

SHELLEY   I consider this play as one of my masterpieces.
              Through the project I have done it the best that I can.
              Maybe I screwed up a little bit here and there—
              I forgot a word—but that's alright, I did my part.
              You remember what Puck said, at the at the end?
              "If you don't like it, it's okay.
              But I am honest to myself."
              Okay? "Give me your hands.
              You give me your hand."

Note

1. All community members who took part in *Voices UP!* from July-August of 2017, during the data collection phase of this study, were invited to participate. The four who agreed had the option of being credited by name or a chosen alias in study results and artwork. This research received ethical approval from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board at the University of British Columbia, certificate number *H17-00101*.

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Short-Term Study Abroad:
The Storied Experiences of Teacher Candidates From Japan

Scott Roy Douglas, Fujiko Sano, and Mark Rosvold

Abstract

The story extracts presented here reflect the experiences of five teacher candidates from Japan on a short-term study abroad program focusing on developing English-language skills while exploring Canadian culture and English-language teaching methods. Narrative inquiry techniques were employed to gather data related to the participants' program experiences. These data were crafted into stories with participant input and review. The story extracts relate to intercultural interactions, First Nations culture, teaching methods, meals, and extracurricular activities. On reflection, the narrative inquiry process employed in this study worked as both a research and pedagogical tool to uncover meaningful program experiences.

> *I was on the tarmac. My eyes blinked at the bright sun reflected from the plane as I looked back at my two friends climbing down the metal stairs. We stood together a few minutes, disoriented by the new surroundings, before we followed a small string of people into the terminal, down a long corridor, and through a set of glass doors. At the front of a waiting crowd was a tall blond guy about our age. He came right up to us, told us his name was David, and ushered us towards the baggage carousels. When we pointed, he lifted our bags off the conveyer belt, and then led us out the front door. He asked us questions the whole time while we pulled our bags behind us. I could feel myself stumbling over a sudden and expansive use of English. Outside, a female taxi driver took my bag from my hand. We were crammed into the back seat of a yellow cab, and David climbed in front as he continued to talk and ask questions. Minutes later, we arrived at Pacific Interior University ...*

And thus, Gida began her short-term study abroad program in British Columbia, Canada. This paper presents excerpts from five stories created as a result of a narrative inquiry into a two-week short-term study abroad program designed for teacher candidates from a university in Japan. Canada is a popular destination for international students, and British Columbia welcomes around one third of all international students coming to this country. In British Columbia, over 130,000 international students with study permits attended educational institutions in 2015, with 6,555 of those students coming from Japan (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training, 2017). However, because they do not need a study permit, those numbers do not include students coming to British Columbia for six months or less, such as the participants in the current study. Exact numbers for students studying short term in British Columbia are difficult to estimate.

The short-term study abroad program in this paper is part of a growing trend of short-term study abroad programs that are attractive to international students because they offer a chance to study in another language without interrupting their main university studies (Jackson, 2008). Nevertheless, these programs still represent a significant time and financial investment, along with the effort of studying in an additional

language, to university students. This investment in time, money, and effort calls for research that can inform the crafting of the best possible short-term study abroad experiences for learners (Douglas, 2015).

The purpose of the current study was to explore the potential of narrative inquiry (Benson, 2014; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995) as a pedagogical and a research tool for creating accounts of short-term study abroad experiences with teacher candidates from Japan. A further goal was to obtain a better understanding of the short-term study abroad experiences from the point of view of participants themselves. As such, the guiding inquiry question was as follows: "What were the storied experiences of teacher candidates on a short-term study abroad program designed to develop both English-language skills and content knowledge?"

The narrative excerpts presented in the results section are an attempt at answering the above question by providing a window into the storied lives of the participants during the program.

Background

Short-Term Study Abroad

The short-term study abroad program that is the focus of this paper lies within a broad definition of short-term study abroad programs that typically last less than four to six weeks, focus on additional language learning, and take place within a postsecondary context (Douglas, 2015). However, it is not easy to generalize the short-term study abroad experience. Jackson (2008) has pointed out that there are many manifestations of short-term study abroad programs, and it is difficult to stay abreast of the diverse number of complex variables affecting students. These variables can include instructional practices, student accommodations, interpersonal relationships, and program length (Churchill & Dufon, 2006).

By and large, a number of positive outcomes resulting from the short-term study abroad experience have been found. Jackson (2008) has reported that when students were able to engage in the language and culture around them, a short-term study abroad experience could have a profound impact on the participants. It has also been reported that university students on a summer program learning French were able to improve their language skills and lower their anxiety levels (Allen & Herron, 2003). Another summer English-language program for university students from Korea significantly improved learners' willingness to communicate, speaking skills, and interaction in class (Kang, 2014). Oral fluency, accuracy, and listening comprehension gains were similarly evident for university English-language learners from Catalan- and Spanish-speaking backgrounds on a three- to four-week short-term study abroad program, with lower proficiency level students particularly benefiting (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009). For preservice teachers from Hong Kong on a short-term study abroad program in New Zealand, Lee (2009) noted that participants used a large amount of English, which helped their language development and awareness of different varieties of English. The participants also interacted with people from many different backgrounds, which fostered the development of their intercultural awareness and a deeper appreciation of Indigenous culture in New Zealand.

Along with growing additional language proficiency and intercultural competence, there can also be other benefits to short-term study abroad. Pigott (2011) has maintained that short-term study abroad programs should not only be judged based on students' improvements in their additional language proficiency. The opportunity for students to have life-enriching experiences should also be taken into account. For example, Pigott found that second-year university students from Japan experienced positive changes in their knowledge, motivation, and world-view as well as their English-language abilities during a short-term study abroad program. Short-term study abroad programs can have academic and socio-psychological impacts that go beyond additional language learning, such as changes in relationships and the development of friendships, the creation of support and social networks, the realization of having outsider viewpoints, and feelings of freedom and liberation (Gay, 2016). For preservice teachers from Hong Kong, new pedagogical understandings can also result from the short-term study abroad experience, with the gaining of new teaching and assessment strategies that can be put into participants' future teaching practice (Lee, 2009). The same participants also found that they underwent personal development, acquiring new life skills, a sense of independence, and more maturity (Lee, 2009).

The key to many of the above findings appears to be the ability to interact with the surrounding host culture. However, students may not always be able to engage in the language and culture around them. For example, Douglas (2015) found that intercultural encounters may not occur naturally and students may not have the intercultural experiences that they had anticipated. The potential for a profound well-rounded learning experience may depend on the extent to which students are welcomed into the short-term study abroad context (Kinginger, 2009). For example, students on a short-term study abroad program may have strong desires to directly experience the host culture, but there may not be many opportunities for them to interact with that culture, as was the case for a group of university students from Japan (Horness, 2014). Kato and Reeder (2015) noticed that for some university students from Japan studying in Canada, their expectations for multiple opportunities to interact with people from native English-speaking backgrounds were not met, and even challenged by a multicultural context in which labels of native and nonnative English speakers did not align with preconceived understandings. This mismatch between preconceptions and reality put the onus on students to create their own opportunities to use and improve their English. In another study, some students from Japan studying in New Zealand also did not have as many opportunities to use English outside of class as they expected, even when they were in a homestay environment. This may have been because of their limited English-language abilities, but it may also have depended on how much local users of English were willing to adjust to learners' English-language proficiency levels. Local attitudes seemed to play a role in the number and quality of English-language interactions for the participants outside of class (Tanaka, 2007). Finally, there have been studies showing that a short-term study abroad program may even have the opposite of the desired effect. Trent (2011) found that, for some preservice teachers from Hong Kong, short-term study abroad experiences could lead to identity conflicts and antagonistic feelings between how teaching was conceived at home versus the short-term study abroad context. In fact, it may have even led to preservice teachers reconsidering whether they still wanted to become teachers in their home countries. Nevertheless, Trent reported that short-term study abroad plays a role in contributing to the development of teacher identities. While it can be challenging, Trent found that increases in language proficiency and

cultural knowledge contributed to participants consolidating their identity as English-language teachers. For Trent, the short-term study abroad experience was part of an overall trajectory of teacher identity development taking place both at home and abroad.

To create a successful short-term study abroad program, Benson, Barhuizen, Bodycott, and Brown (2013) have put forward that interactions with the local community, support for students' additional language learning identities, increased intercultural encounters, control over the learning experience, engagement in goal-setting, and realization of hopes and wishes, are part of a complex formula for creating positive short-term study abroad experiences. Above all, students expect interactions with the host community, and the potential for having these interactions and advancing their additional language skills is what often motivates them to go abroad. In exploring the perceptions of undergraduate students from Japan on a short-term study abroad program in Canada, Douglas (2015) found that meaningful intercultural encounters, content-rich classroom experiences, and a wide range of extracurricular activities were the three most important elements of a successful program. However, Douglas pointed out that these meaningful intercultural encounters might not always take place and engaging extracurricular activities cannot be left to chance. Similarly exploring the experiences of university students from Japan in Canada, Kato and Reeder (2015) emphasized that institutions offering programs for Japanese learners of English should take student expectations as well as the adaptation process into account to maximize the benefit students receive from their study abroad experience. Along these lines, Allen and Herron (2003) have endorsed summer short-term study abroad programs for developing language skills, but have emphasized that nonacademic factors related to the experience should be considered along with an understanding of the importance of interacting with users of the target language both inside and outside of class to encourage language acquisition and changes in outlook.

Theoretical Framework

An additional language socialization framework can aid in the examination of how developing additional language skills and other kinds of knowledge are gained through and in the target language (Duff & Talmy, 2011). This framework takes into account a socio-cognitive perspective of language acquisition (Atkinson, 2011) that focuses on the contexts for additional language learning along with its social, cognitive, and cultural aspects. It is the process by which learners develop their English-language skills through community membership and legitimate participation in the surrounding society (Duff, 2007). Participation in the local community is highlighted as an important aspect of how learning takes place (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This community participation facilitates additional language learning when, along with having access to comprehensible input in low-stress situations (Krashen, 1982), students are able to communicate and negotiate meaning with other more competent users of the target language (Long, 1996). Thus, a metaphorical space can be created to bridge what additional language learners can do independently and what they can do in collaboration with others (Vygotsky, 1978). As such, the extent to which additional language learners are able to access opportunities for meaningful interaction through their membership and perceived legitimacy in the target community is an important aspect of additional language learning (Duff & Kobayashi, 2010).

The Study

Participants

The five participants were all third-year teacher candidates from national universities in the Kanto region of Japan, with the goal of becoming junior high school or high school English as an additional language teachers on graduation. Four of the participants were female, and one was male. On average, they were 21 years old. The professor who accompanied them from Japan estimated they were all able to use English independently at approximately a B2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. All of the participants chose pseudonyms for this study, with the names of the people with whom they interacted also changed to protect their identities. Table 1 briefly describes the participants, along with some of the key people in the story extracts.

Table 1

Descriptions of Participants and Key People from the Story Extracts

Name	Role	Description
Gida	Participant	Female teacher candidate
Miyako	Participant	Female teacher candidate
Sakura	Participant	Female teacher candidate.
Tamoka	Participant	Female teacher candidate
Yuki	Participant	Male teacher candidate
David	Activity Coordinator	Local undergraduate student
Brett	Assistant Professor	Local Education faculty member
Sally	Instructor	Morning Canadian and Cultural Studies teacher
Anne	Instructor	Afternoon Language Teaching Methods teacher
Prof. Motoyama	Professor	Accompanying education professor from Japan

Research Setting

The two-week short-term study abroad program took place during the summer session on one of the campuses of a research-intensive public university in British Columbia, Canada. The campus is given the pseudonym Pacific Interior University (PIU). The program was designed for teacher candidates from non-English speaking backgrounds specializing in teaching English as an additional language in Japanese K-12 settings. The program integrated language and content learning objectives, with the goal of developing participants' English-language skills while also learning academic content. Mornings consisted of 2.5-hour seminars related to Canadian and cultural studies, and afternoons consisted of 2.5-hour seminars that focused on additional language teaching methods. Mornings and afternoons had different instructors. Other educational programming included museum visits, guest speakers, and participation in local teacher education classes. Participants lived in student residences on campus, and a full program of evening and weekend activities were also organized, such as winery tours, visits to farmer's markets, hiking trips, time at the beach, café breaks, sports activities, concert attendance, restaurant outings, festival attendance, and shopping.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a form of research endeavour in which stories are the central focus for data gathering and analysis (Benson, 2014). It can involve "portraying people living in and through a situation" (Kim & Macintyre Latta, 2010, p. 69). The current research design focused on describing the lives of the participants, collecting and recounting their stories, and creating narratives of their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). To create the narratives, "descriptions of events through interviews and observations [were synthesized] into narrative or stories.... the [stories were] the outcome of the research..." (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012, p. 402). The stories were created to make sense out of the gathered data (Polkinghorne, 1995), and used as a "form for the presentation of research findings" (Benson, 2014, p. 155). The merits of this kind of narrative research lie in the ability of the stories to engage readers and allow them to develop their own interpretations based on those stories (Benson, 2013). Benson further maintained that storied narratives have the potential to count "as the findings of a study without further analysis" (p. 162).

Data Collection and Analysis

On receiving approval from the institution's research ethics board, data were gathered through multiple ways, including semi-structured interviews, short final interviews, and the sharing of oral and written anecdotes. These sources of information were transcribed for analysis. To promote trustworthiness, these data were triangulated with further data collection consisting of researcher observations of classroom, field trip, and extracurricular activities as well as attendance at the program orientation, final presentation, and closing reception. Detailed research notes were kept. Finally, the lead researcher gathered artifacts from the program, such as course outlines and timetables to complete the data collection.

To create the first draft of the stories, the transcriptions were reviewed, and key elements of the participants' experiences were annotated for inclusion in the narratives. Data were organized so that they followed a chronological sequence, with particular note to where the stories took place, who were in the stories, what happened in the stories, and what meaningful moments occurred in the stories (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). A research assistant created the first drafts of the stories, which were then reviewed by the researchers and revised based on the transcript data and the lead researchers' field notes. Once the second drafts were completed, they were shared with the participants via email so that they could read, review, edit, and contribute further to the narratives. This review supported the validity of the stories and lessened the discrepancies between the stories the participants initially shared and the stories the researchers reported (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). At the end of the project, all participants received a finished version of their story via email. The final stories were around 1000 words each. Extracts of approximately 300 words each (edited for length) are presented below.

Results: Story Extracts

Gida: Interactions Over Ice Cream

One day after class, Miyako, Tamoka, and I caught the bus from PIU's campus to go downtown. It was a hot day, so we all wanted to get some ice cream. We watched carefully for the correct bus stop, and we soon all got off the bus. The ice cream shop was on main street, about a block away, and we walked along the wide sidewalks past clothing shops and busy restaurants to get there. At the ice cream shop, there was a bit of a line, but it gave us time to look in the long refrigerated glass cases filled with bright flavours in plastic tubs. We each chose something new when it was our turn, paid the young teenager working the till, and then went outside into the hot sun. I had a cone with two scoops: cookies and cream on top of banana fudge. As soon as we left the shop, my ice cream was already starting to melt, and I offered, in English, to share a lick with my friends. We all exchanged cones and had a taste. I guess we were kind of loud because behind me, as I was licking Tomoka's ice cream, an older man with a funny smile came over and asked me if he could have some too. I turned around and laughed awkwardly. I didn't know what to say. He grinned, said something I didn't quite catch, and walked away leaving us to eat our ice cream cones in the sun. I was surprised he spoke to us, but people around here in shops and on the bus always seem to be making comments or saying something to me and my friends.

Miyako: Discovering First Nations Culture

We all got into a little rented bus, and we crossed the long bridge over the lake to the local First Nations museum. The museum was in a two-storey building made of rough pale stone, with a large blue sign in the local Indigenous language. Even though it was early in the morning, it was already hot, and on entering the museum it took my eyes a few moments to adjust to the cool atmosphere. We were greeted by the museum curator. At first we hung back, but he taught us some new words in his language and drew us in before he led us through the exhibits. I saw many colourful wool blankets hanging on the walls. I thought they might be from a long time ago, but the curator emphasized that the museum wasn't about old artifacts. Everything in the museum was filled with current meaning, and it was a place for living culture. He gathered us around a large hand-carved canoe made from a single tree. At first I was scared to touch it. I'd always been told not to touch! But the curator encouraged us to get close. I ran my hand along the side of the canoe, feeling the wood glide under my fingertips. The curator said "this canoe isn't hundreds of years old. In fact, it was carved recently, and it is still being used on the lake today." I had never imagined that these kinds of things still happened in Canada.

Sakura: An Interactive Classroom

We all sat in a jumbled u-shape of desks. Anne clicked the remote control in her hand, and an iceberg rushed into view. She described how simple words and phrases, such as greetings, could be found above the water, but some aspects of English take a long time to learn and they are under the surface of the water—just like an iceberg. Suddenly, as I was thinking about these things, Anne had us all stand up. She had written words on the whiteboard such as "mother tongue" and "English as an additional language."

She asked us to think about what they meant while she gave each of us a different colour whiteboard marker and waved us to the front of the classroom. We were supposed to write our ideas up on the board. I stood close to the whiteboard, with the marker hovering in the air. I was just looking at the empty space in front of me when Anne approached from behind to encourage me to put up anything at all related to the topic. I panicked, worried I would be contradicted or corrected, but it never happened. Anne patiently waited until I wrote something on the board, praised me, and then went to see what my friends were doing. Finally, the board was filled with different coloured words, circles, and squiggly lines. We sat down to try and connect our thoughts together to create a single opinion. Anne helped us by summarizing everything and relating our points to various research studies, once in a while mentioning her own life experiences. The time went by quickly.

Tamoka: Dinner in Student Residence

I was starting to worry a lot about my final project, which was a presentation on an English lesson plan for junior high school students on global legends. The day before our final projects were due, we were working hard on our lesson plans and presentations in the big shared kitchen in our student residence. David walked into the kitchen and noticed how tired and nervous we were. He announced we needed a break, and he was going to cook dinner for us that night. He disappeared for a bit, and then came back with a bag filled with vegetables, jars, and plastic tubs. He made everyone sit down at the big square table in the kitchen and then got us washing lettuce and slicing cumbers. Once it was ready, the first thing I tried was a bit of Greek salad. The olives in the salad were great, but I noticed that Miyako, Gida, and Sakura didn't take any olives at all. They just picked out some lettuce leaves, cucumbers, tomatoes, and red onions. As the salad bowl emptied, a lot of olives were left at the bottom of the bowl. I felt bad for those olives, so I began to eat them up. Yuki and Gida jokingly said "you are an olive girl," and the whole group laughed. After we ate everything, David brought out a pecan pie for dessert. It was sweet and sticky. David saw me wince. I told him it was much sweeter than what I was used to at home, but I liked it. With that, we all started to tell David about Japanese desserts. He asked lots of questions, and it felt good answering them. Then we helped clean up the kitchen and went back to work. I wasn't so nervous about my project anymore.

Yuki: Extracurricular Sports

One day, I went across campus to the gymnasium to see if I could play basketball. There was a PIU student there playing by himself, so I asked him if he wanted to play together. We played one on one for a while, taking turns burning past each other to do a layup, or fading back and sinking a three pointer. I think I might have scored more points than him, but we weren't really keeping track. It was just fun to have a chance to play. I also had another chance to play basketball on the afternoon after the final presentations. David took all of us downtown on the bus after the final presentations. It was really hot outside, and there were lots of boats and people everywhere along the waterfront. It reminded me of an amusement park. There were even pianos on the boardwalk, and some people were playing them as we walked by. We soon found a shady spot close to the outdoor basketball courts and all sat down.

David asked me if I was a good player, and I told him that I was just okay. David pulled a ball out of his bag, and we went onto the court. The basketball bounced loudly as it went between us. I scored a few points, but it was hot so we decided to go for a swim in the lake instead. I walked out into the lake until the water reached my chest. At that point, I turned around and saw the rest of the group relaxing and watching us from the shore.

Discussion

The five story extracts presented in this paper provide a window into the narrative experiences of the participants during a short-term study abroad program designed to promote language and content learning for teacher candidates from Japan. Glimpses into the daily lives of the participants were available to readers to see what participants thought, saw, and did themselves during the program.

In reading the stories, it seems like a number of conditions were met to create impactful experiences. For example, meaningful intercultural encounters and interactions with the local community play an important role in creating positive short-term study abroad experiences (Douglas, 2015; Benson et al., 2013). In the stories, these interactions might have just been a word or two like when Yuki asked to play basketball with a PIU student, Tomoka laughed with her friends over Greek salad, or a passerby on the street jokingly asked Gida for a taste of her ice cream, but these encounters impressed the participants enough to share them with the researchers. Some of the interactions led to deeper intercultural understandings. For example, Miyako, similar to the preservice teachers from Hong Kong who gained an increased appreciation of Indigenous culture in New Zealand (Lee, 2009), reflected on her interactions with the curator of the First Nations museum and she realized that the artefacts she saw represented a living culture she had not known still existed in Canada.

Rich content learning opportunities, such as new teaching strategies for preservice teachers, are also an element of a successful short-term study abroad program (Douglas, 2015; Lee, 2009). For example, Sakura grappled with new concepts and engaged in instructional strategies that promoted interaction related to additional language teaching methods during an afternoon class. Content learning was also seen in how the participants were invested in the assignments, such as when David had to encourage the participants to take a break from working on their final projects creating lesson plans, or the participants were learning about First Nations culture in the British Columbia interior.

A third factor recognized by Douglas (2015) as being an important element of the short-term study abroad experience was varied extracurricular activities. The little daily experiences included in the participants' narratives, such as eating ice cream, playing basketball, or eating dinner, were similar to the types of life-enriching experiences Pigott (2011) proposed should be taken into account when judging a short-term study abroad program. The participants further seemed to be deepening their friendships and creating the networks that Gay (2016) indicated were part of the socio-psychological impacts of short-term study abroad. There was a feeling of independence in Gida's description of taking the bus, new realizations

for Miyako as she visited the First Nations museum, engaged learning for Sakura in her afternoon class, enjoyment of good food for Tomoka, and bonding through sports for Yuki.

In the stories, the additional language socialization (Duff, 2007) of the participants could be seen in the use of their language skills to acquire knowledge and interact with community members around them and with each other. Incidents such as when the man on the street interacted with Gida or David played basketball with Yuki indicate that the participants were participating in the daily act of living and learning in the host society, and through that act, finding opportunities to use the target language. The narrative research process also became a mode for meaningful engagement in English as the participants had multiple interactions with the researchers through the interviews, their accompaniment on field trips and extracurricular activities, important program events, anecdote gathering, and attendance in select classes. These opportunities to gather data for the narratives set up a Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), in which the participants collaborated with the researchers to share their lived experiences. Thus, the research act also became a pedagogical task that provided opportunities to negotiate meaning with more capable users of the target language (Long, 1996) and foster English-language development. The stories themselves became a source of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982) for the participants as they read and reread the various drafts of the stories leading to receiving the final draft.

Narrative inquiry and the co-creation of stories appears to be a promising research and pedagogical tool for use in short-term study abroad contexts. Other researchers have also explored the possibility of research as pedagogy. For example, Jackson (2006) used the tools of ethnographic research with university students from Hong Kong during a short-term study abroad experience to facilitate improvement in additional language skills, intercultural awareness, and personal growth. In a later study, Dressler and Tweedie (2016) used dialogue journals with undergraduate students visiting a Canadian university from Japan. These journals were found to provide rich data on the short-term study abroad experience in which participants expressed their feelings, drew on out-of-class learning, and considered intercultural competence. In the current study, the stories give readers deeper insights into the lived-experiences of the teacher candidates on this program. Based on the participants' stories, it appears that interactions with the host community, intercultural encounters, content teaching and learning, and varied extracurricular activities were all aspects of a short-term study abroad program that should be fostered. Besides these insights, the act of story co-creation, in itself, appeared to become a rich task for language learning and development. Narrative ways of thinking affected teaching and learning, with the stories deepening the understanding of the short-term study abroad experience.

Limitations and Future Studies

The current narrative inquiry involved a small group of people in a specific context at a specific time. It is difficult to generalize the findings to other settings, and the goal of the current research project was focused on description and understanding for the particular participants in a particular short-term study abroad program (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). There is also the possibility that while the researchers involved the participants in the co-creation of their stories, the participants deferred to the researchers

when it came to decisions on the final narratives. The stories in the current study tended to stress the positive experiences of the participants. It may be that the participants were hesitant to share their negative experiences because they wanted to be polite or to avoid hurting the feelings of the researchers. It may also be that the stories in the current study were generally positive because the participants shared experiences that they thought the researchers would like to hear. In future studies, to mitigate a potential tendency for participants to focus on their positive experiences, it might be desirable to further train the participants in narrative inquiry. For example, the participants could work together to write each other's narratives in collaboration with the researchers instead of the researchers taking the lead. Furthermore, during the data-gathering stages, participants could be specifically asked to share both their positive and negative experiences during the co-construction of the stories. This inclusion of negative experiences would lead to a richer representation of the full range of experiences in the teacher candidates' stories.

The current project involved narrative analysis, in which the researchers gathered data and crafted narrative stories out of that data (Polkinghorne, 1995). Future studies may engage in the analysis of narrative in which stories are examined for common themes to create descriptions that relate to all of the stories in a collection (Polkinghorne, 1995). For example, researchers could endeavour to identify themes related to the impact of the short-term study abroad experience on the pedagogical skills and cultural content knowledge of teacher candidates taking part in such an experience. Future projects might also consider expanding the research from narrative inquiry to a full case study in which the narratives form part of the research products. As more groups of students come for short-term study abroad experiences, these programs offer a rich source for future research endeavours.

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Filming Frenchtown: Listening to and Learning From Storied Lives

Rachel Fendler and Sara Scott Shields

Abstract

This paper explores how teens used storytelling during a yearlong, extracurricular documentary film project. The project invited a group of 8-12 teens and university researchers to act as visual narrative inquirers in a local historic neighborhood. We explore the role of story, framing our project as a form of engaged pedagogy, and draw connections between storytelling and filming. We conclude that at the heart of the project is a shared dialogue. In this project, the scenario of filming enacted an encounter, and came to life through the stories the teens took in, and the stories they produced in response.

This project explores how young people use storytelling to understand and communicate individual and collective stories. Interested in both the physical places people call home and the communities that people define as being at home in (Morley, 2001), a group of young people used video documentary to inquire into these physical and rhetorical homes (Augé, 1995). The project took place over one school year where students acted as narrative inquirers in a local historic neighborhood. The teens initially experienced the neighborhood through walks (Irwin, 2006), then they began informally mapping these walks through film and photography (Powell, 2010). In the final stages of the project, students planned, organized and, in some cases, created documentary videos. Like any good story, we begin with a discussion of the setting, followed by an introduction of the characters and a description of the plot, where we will briefly establish the structure of the learning environment and the pedagogical model informing our project. The paper then moves to the action, where we share the stories the teens documented. Finally, we close with a resolution, where we offer suggestions, reflections, and considerations for how narrative ways of thinking and doing alter educational practice in informal spaces.

Setting

The story of our research and the stories the teens filmed were set in the historic Florida neighborhood of Frenchtown and the city-run Palmer Munroe Teen Center. We cannot say one location was the primary setting and the other secondary; instead, these two locations are interconnected and vital to the project. While the teens were not from the Frenchtown area, they spent almost a year walking, researching, and exploring it. Although the film club initially focused on Frenchtown as a food desert, the project quickly responded to the people we met and the stories they told us.

Teen Center

About four miles away from Frenchtown is the Palmer Munroe Teen Center (PMTC). The teen center served as the home base for our team of teens. The city of Tallahassee describes the center on its website:

For years, the Tallahassee community has been asked to provide a place dedicated to teen youth development; a place dedicated to serving some of our most vulnerable youth; a place for teens to expand their opportunities, learn about social responsibility, civic awareness and be gently guided through a restorative justice program. In August 2010, the Palmer Munroe Teen Center opened its doors… [and] offers a unique blend of educational classes, workshops, programs and recreation activities for youth. (Palmer Munroe Teen Center)

Working with teens who frequent the center, our project drew young people from a range of backgrounds. Many of the teen participants attended the teen center after school and on the weekend because the center provides a space for area youth to commune together. PMTC offers opportunities for learning, recreation, and other social supports. The center has a music studio, a small computer lab, several televisions, a communal sitting area, a kitchen, a classroom space, a gym, and a large outdoor playground. The film club, where this project began, was a collaboration between Florida State University's art education department and PMTC. The partnership began in summer of 2016, where teens, armed with cell phones and apps, played with filming a wide range of personal interests. In the Fall of 2016 the project expanded to include several other faculty members and a few new teens. This evolution of membership brought with it some upgraded equipment and access to a computer editing lab on FSU's campus. This is where our story in Frenchtown really begins, armed with a few cameras, microphones, and recording equipment, the teens made their way into the Frenchtown neighborhood.
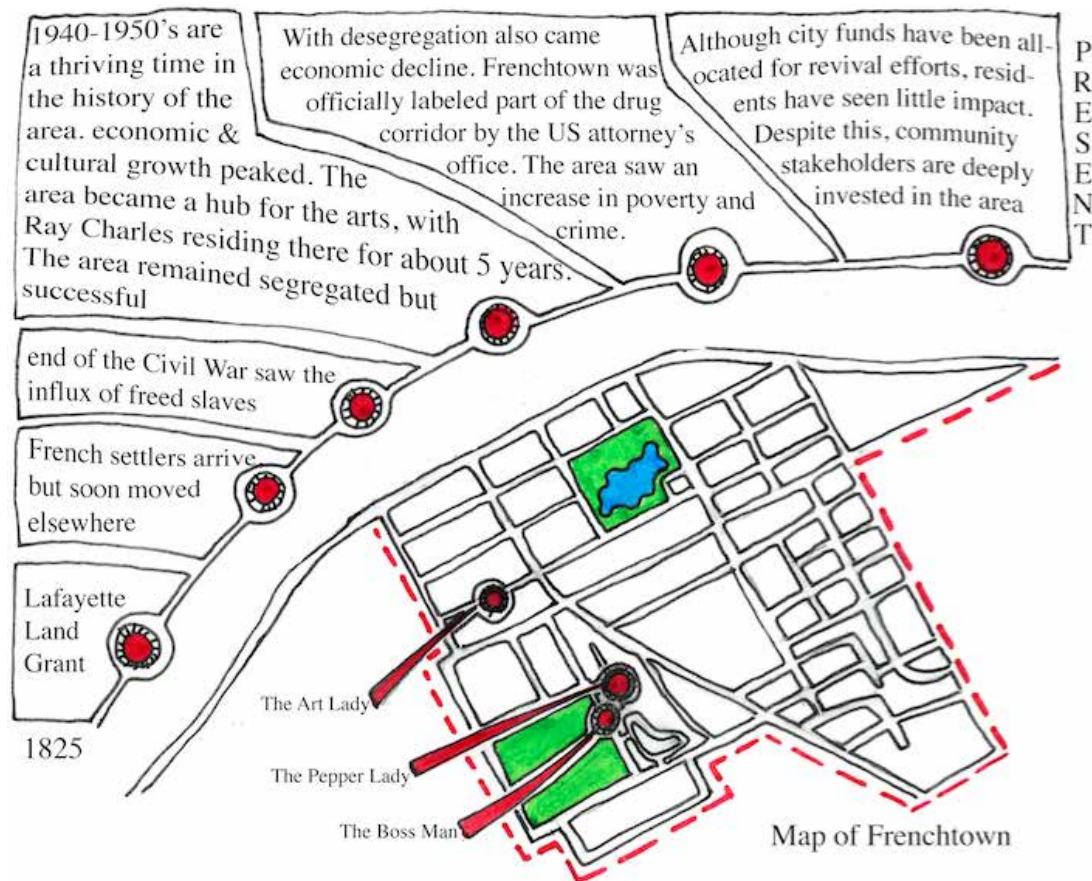

Fig. 1: Map of Frenchtown

Frenchtown

Frenchtown's history can be traced to 1825, when French settlers found their way to the area after the Lafayette Land Grant. This settlement was largely unsuccessful, and the French moved, making room for newly freed slaves to find their way to the Frenchtown area. The Frenchtown area was a thriving African-American cultural epicenter until the 1960s when desegregation ushered in a period of poverty that still affects the area today (Villeneuve & Sheppard, 2009). Frenchtown's population is over 4,700, with a majority of the residents identifying as nonwhite. The neighborhood only spans a 0.7-square-mile area, but remains densely populated, with around 6,700 people per square mile, compared with only 1,900 people per square mile in the greater Tallahassee area (Frenchtown, Tallahassee, FL, 2011). The high concentration of people has supported the development of many embedded community organizations, including a large community garden, a local farmers' market, a community center, several parks, and many local vendors (See: Frenchtown Heritage Hub).

While the history and demographics of Frenchtown are both important and relevant, this project has chosen to focus on the wealth of grassroots community organizations and stakeholders that call Frenchtown home. Early conceptions of this project were interested in having the local teens in our film club work on a film project about food access in the Frenchtown area. Our project began by contacting the Frenchtown Heritage Hub, which hosts a farmers' market and promotes food access, yet it expanded as we simultaneously discovered all the pockets of communities that existed around the Frenchtown area. As the teens explored the community, three specific settings, and their residents, emerged out of students' interests and interactions in the community: a small backyard hot pepper patch (home to The Pepper Lady), the front porch of a neighborhood icon (The Bossman), and a small, independent art gallery (run by The Art Lady).

Characters

PMTC Teens

This project was carried out by a group of 8-12 teens. Because the teen center ran as a voluntary afterschool experience, the teens were not required to attend every day. The majority of the teens that participated were Black, with more males usually attending than females. Although the teen center serviced the surrounding neighborhood, not all of the teens were from the area. Over half of the group were from local public schools and four of the teens were homeschooled by their mother. The teens' motivation for participating in film club ranged from teens interested in producing digital media to a more casual association among a few teens who saw film club as a way to interact and spend time with friends.

The Partnership

Three university faculty members worked on the project with the teens, two from art education and one from the College of Motion Picture Arts. There was also a graduate student researcher from art education

and several undergraduate researchers from both film and art education backgrounds. The undergraduate researchers attended on a rotating basis to help the teens with editing work, while the graduate researcher was a permanent fixture in the project. The partnership joined the teens with invested faculty and student researchers, providing the space and equipment necessary to work with film in Frenchtown.

The Pepper Lady, Bossman, and Art Lady

The Pepper Lady, Bossman, and Art Lady are all permanent and committed residents in the Frenchtown neighborhood. While you will hear more about them in later sections, we thought we would introduce their shared background here. All three of these Frenchtown fixtures served as focal points for filming. The Pepper Lady, a lifelong Frenchtown resident, kept a small but productive backyard garden yielding enough peppers to process, jar, and sell hot sauce and spices year-round in the farmers' market. The Bossman, like the Pepper Lady, was born and raised in the Frenchtown area. The Bossman's stories spoke to the racial, political, and cultural nuances of the Frenchtown area. Finally, we meet the Art Lady, a longtime resident, retired school teacher, and assistant superintendent. The Art Lady owns a small gallery in Frenchtown, that she describes as "a place to listen to history" (Gomez, 2014).

Plot

> Imagining pedagogy through the transcendent power of story, we see how much difference, openness, and place matter. As we are quieted by these thoughts, wonders emerge. We wonder, for example, about possibilities for storying and restorying ourselves and one another into being; we wonder about new kinds of, or maybe forgotten or written over, obligations and ways of interacting and responding to and with one another. (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013, p. 216)

Overarching the entire project was the notion of engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994). Engaged pedagogy stands at the intersection of mind, body, and spirit. The whole student and the whole teacher must come to the fore in engaged pedagogical practice. Although this pedagogical approach directly applies to formal learning environments, we see productivity for informal learning spaces. The mutual vulnerability of both formal and informal educational experiences often become one-sided. In contrast to this, we believe all participants should construct educational experiences, allowing for young people to bring their interests and expectations to the project (hooks, 1994). Our experience at the teen center was shaped by an engaged pedagogical approach. While we brought up Frenchtown as a possible site for study, the students ultimately made decisions about who, what, and where we would go. After our informal walking tours, we took time to talk to the teens about what caught their attention. In this way, we relinquished our vision of the project and opened opportunities for the learning experience to be created by the teens. We visited the local community garden, participated in Frenchtown's annual Heritage Festival, walked and danced through neighborhoods, and in the process stumbled down alleyways and wrong turns. The teachers and teens were positioned as students within this process, as we discovered Frenchtown together.

While the visits began as informal investigations of place, they quickly became more involved. The group wanted to visit the lady that makes the hot sauce; they wanted to find the chickens they saw through a fence one day; they wanted to learn more about the places they glimpsed in our initial walks. As the "grown-ups" in the group, we made those visits happen. We called and arranged a visit with the Pepper Lady at her booth at the farmers' market and later at her house; we found our way back to the neighborhood with the chickens where we met the Bossman; we arranged for the teens to visit the Art Lady at her gallery after attending a social event in her garden. By first exploring the surface and then finding places to dive deeper, the teens found their way into the stories living in Frenchtown. Slowly those stories revealed things about the neighborhood, community, schools, and local government. The connections between the personal lives of the teens and the stories of this neighborhood began to emerge. As the teens created their videos and chatted about the process, we began to see the interconnectedness of the individual, cultural, historical, political, and societal. As we all moved towards the ultimate goal of self-actualization, we found that stories were central to this practice (hooks, 1994).

Narrative as a Pedagogical Approach

Autobiographical inquiry considers the role of narrative in "reconfiguring of the past in an evolving narrative that makes sense in present circumstances" (Huber et al., 2013, p. 219). By reimagining the past as it influences and affects the present, the storyteller is able to reconsider future actions. Essentially, the telling, retelling, writing, and rewriting of story allows for people to influence their futures (Lugones, 1987), as the storied reverberations from the past move into the present (Huber et al., 2013; Freeman, 2010). We argue that when considering an engaged, narrative, pedagogical approach, the individual story, while important, is really a way for young people to come to a place where they can begin to situate their personal narratives within a broader collective story.

Stories' ability to speak to both the individual and the collective allow them to become a powerful tool when considering pedagogical aims, especially within informal learning environments, where pedagogy is often fluid and changing (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Huber et al., 2013). We find that, when removed from formal education contexts, the question of learning addresses a broad field, one which has led some authors to approach informal learning in terms of a life-wide project, as captured by Erstad and Sefton-Green's (2013) term "learning lives." Staged as a life project, approaches to learning as life course (Elder, 1998) often look at the role of identity development through processes of reflexive meaning making. This task frequently relies on narrative to relate the meaning of lived experiences (Worth, 2009). Life story and biographical research can capture important moments in ways that can transcend sociological categories, highlighting the complexity of life's transitions (Thomson et al., 2002). In this way, story becomes a pedagogical tool that asks learners to think alongside life's lessons.

Narrative work subsumes the traditional notion of analyzing stories for their content. Instead, the project the teens engaged in was more closely aligned with the notion of collaborative thinking with or through stories (Huber et al., 2013; Morris, 2002). During this project, our group began to:

construct images of who we are and what we are about, as well as images of who others are and what they are about. Carrying forward these images from across worlds, we gain deeper understandings of ourselves, of others, and of the contexts in which we live. (Huber et al., 2013, p. 219)

In this manner, we experienced how stories allow humans to create their own place in the world while simultaneously making connections to others. Our pedagogical approach pushed the teens to go out into the world and find stories that resonated with them. The teens used other people's stories to think through their own narratives, reconceptualizing their own stories in relationship to the stories of others. This stream of stories became deeper as we (the researchers) returned and rewrote these stories through our own lenses. The stories that follow have journeyed through many filters and have been written, rewritten, and retold many times. We fully acknowledge that these stories, like all good stories, are made up of many lives, voices, perspectives, and influences, allowing them to "entangle with and become shaped by, while at times also shape, social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives" (Huber et al., 2013, p. 227). What we have tried to do in the narratives that follow is first share the stories of the teens and the community they explored, and then share the story of how those experiences contribute to our understanding of the potential for a narrative pedagogy in informal learning environments.

Action

The following vignettes capture the stories as they unfolded in our project. At the end of each story we link to a teen-produced video that references this encounter or to a video the authors edited, using footage filmed by the teens.

The Pepper Lady

The Pepper Lady's fame proceeded her. When initially discussing Frenchtown, our teens weren't sure if they knew anything about it. When we mentioned that they have a farmers' market, one teen (JT) chimed in that he knew there was someone there, the Pepper Lady, that made really hot hotsauce. We told him he was right, and shared the one anecdote we knew about her, a comment that was shared by the manager of the farmers' market. Apparently, she had to wear a gas mask when making her sauce, because the fumes it gives off are nearly toxic. Mention of this evolved into a bragging session about how much spice everyone could handle. Ever since, the Pepper Lady was a reference for the group and a starting point to thinking about food production and locally grown food within our project. Early in the project we attended an event hosted in Frenchtown called "Build a Better Block," which brought local residents together in a discussion about neighborhood improvement measures. At a small pop-up market, we found the Pepper Lady with a display of her products. Since we were already equipped with our cameras and microphone, JT approached her for an impromptu interview. She was gracious, and allowed a swarm of teens to gather round to discuss her business, and her peppers. Afterwards, she invited us to visit her place some time. We took her up on the offer.

JT: So um, what's the pepper do you think to use when, um, you're baking a casserole?

PL: A casserole? Well, this is my favorite pepper. This is callend an African Fatalii. It has the heat of the Scotch Bonnet, but in my opinion a lot more flavor. So you do have the heat there, but it's not just mean, its flavorful. So this is one of my favorites that I grow and that I use the most often. I use it in my rice, and salads, I've even made salad dressings with this. So it has about a two-hundred thousand on the score bill.

JT: Nice! So another question, how long have you lived in Frenchtown?

PL: I am forty-nine years old, and I was born in Frenchtown.

JT: Nice!

PL: I moved away, and I came back, and I built a house across the street from my mom. I'm still in my old neighborhood, Goodbread.

[After an in-depth conversation that entailed swapping recipes and talking pepper varieties, we prompt JT to finish up.]

AUTHOR: Do you have a final question, JT?

JT: OK. Well, can I give you a hug?

PL: Sure!

JT: That's my final question! Can I give you a hug! [Laughs]

We learned through trial and error that traveling into Frenchtown without the cameras was a disappointment. After that first meeting, we arranged a visit with the Pepper Lady, and went to talk with her without bringing our cameras along. Our goal for this meeting was to attend to our host and gather information that would then influence the documentary films currently in development. Instead, we witnessed the teens disengage from the process, apparently bored with the conversation as they assumed a role of passive listening while doodling, talking amongst themselves, and asking few questions. A return trip with the cameras was markedly different. JT again carried out an interview with the Pepper Lady, this time with a prepared list of questions. He was accompanied by two cameras and a floating microphone on a boom pole. On another occasion, it was the sight of a group teens wandering the neighborhood with cameras that made one person stop, inquire about our project, and invite us to chat with him in his home. The cameras caught the Bossman's attention and led us into his house, and into his story. We came to witness how the film equipment bestowed on the teens a professional confidence, allowing them to request interviews, ask follow-up questions, and even enter the homes and private gardens of the people that engaged with us. The presence of the cameras provided an entry-point that connected our wanderings through Frenchtown with the local community.

Fig. 2: Questions

Fig. 3: F-Cubed interview with the Pepper Lady [Video contribution edited by the authors, using teen footage: https://youtu.be/onQ0Aj-MAjQ]

The Bossman

The white sign cheerfully welcomed us to the Goodbread neighborhood. We had been several times, looking for the chickens we had caught glimpses of through fences and bushes. We found the hen, slowly meandering their way around the neighborhood. A woman stepped out on her porch, "what ya'll doing?" We walked over to tell her about our film club and see if she knew anything about the chickens. She introduced herself, told us the chickens lived in a house at the end of the neighborhood. She was pretty sure it was a rental, filled with too many college students. She told us they used to have a

pig, but the city had come to pick him up. We thanked her for chatting with us and, with cameras still rolling, we made our way back to the neighborhood's front entrance. A truck slowed, a heavyset Black man leaned out the window, "Why don't you all come right up here and sit on the porch?" He pointed to a house just out of view. As the truck sputtered off we made our way to The Bossman's front porch. When we walked up the steps the front door was propped open with the smell of cooking food wafting out. He invited us in, told us to sit down and get comfortable.

> *Bossman: White people stayed on the East side of Bronough street, so that wasn't Frenchtown...all of that was White. The way that it got to be expanded from that area to Basin [?] street and up to Tharpe street was when they come up with all this community money. When they got this two million dollars to glorify, beautify your neighborhood. And they said you got to have x number of acres, x number of people and all that. That's when Frenchtown went from Brevard and Tharpe and all that. But the people on the other side of 4th Avenue, they don't know nothing about it. They put a sign one time that said Levy Park neighborhood. That was never Levy Park, that was called Sunnyland... That's not Levy Park, Levy Park was the playground, that was called Sunnyland. Those were the poorest White people in all of Tallahassee. If you walked in that neighborhood you couldn't walk on the sidewalk, you had to walk in the middle of the street. And you had to have a little trot coming through... now the only Blacks that lived on the north side of 4th were the Coopers, you've probably heard of Dr. Gerald Cooper... But that's not Frenchtown. And they trying to rewrite history to purposefully get the money, but it's not a part of it, it's not. It's not... You had two main [White] neighborhoods in Tallahassee, Sunnyland and Los Robles. Los Robles was where all the rich White families lived. My momma worked back there when she was younger, and right there at the gates of Los Robles, my dad couldn't walk through there to walk her home when she was younger... so he stood at the gate of Los Robles and then walked her home. (The Bossman interview transcript)*

In our final conversation at the end of this project, we asked the teens what their favorite part of the filming had been and several of the teens shared that the visit with the Bossman was particularly seminal because they learned about a time in history where Black people and White people lived separate lives. The teens went on to talk about how shocked they were to hear about how the neighborhood transitioned as integration happened and how that challenged their understanding of what it meant to be Black. One teen shared how surprised they were that, "we had to drink from different water fountains, and walk on different sidewalks." As a group of predominantly Black teenagers, many of them had been unaware of how different life once was for people with bodies and skin that looked like theirs. One of the participants looked at one of the authors and said, "Life was so different for Black people, when, no offense [AUTHOR NAME], White people weren't so nice." In the final days of the project we realized that the collective identity beginning to form was not necessarily one rooted in Frenchtown or Tallahassee, but rather this film project had been an experience in developing identities as Black "agental" teenagers.

Fig. 4: F-Cubed: Interview with the Bossman [Video contribution by teen participants: https://youtu.be/g8SY4UcsnTc]

The Art Lady

The Ash Gallery is a cheery green house that sits on Georgia St., which is a site of an urban renewal project in Frenchtown where traditional, single-family homes have been restored. The Art Lady arrived in Frenchtown during this period of renewal and describes the work she put in to fixing up the gallery and eventually her home, next door. Today, her space has a lush garden in the back, which hosts community events. We first encountered the Art Lady at such an event, when we attended a meeting for the "Build a better block" initiative, led by the city and the Rural and Urban Planning Department of a local university. She invited us back to her garden and we took her up on the offer. The story she told wove together her personal history with the socio-cultural history of the neighborhood. She got to know Frenchtown in the 60s while attending the local Historically Black College, Florida A&M University. She became a teacher at a local high school, hired as part of the process of integration, before becoming the second female Assistant Superintendent of Leon County Schools, then moved away from Tallahassee to central Florida. When she returned to the area 15 years later, the neighborhood was overgrown and abandoned. At that time no one supported her decision to move to the center of Frenchtown; she told us she is proud to have committed to this area and to have participated in its improvement. The Art Lady discussed her move to Frenchtown as one that relied on "sweat equity," communicating to our group both the history of urban Black communities in the 80s and 90s, while also providing tips for generating and maintaining wealth within Black communities, such as buying fixer-uppers for housing or independently owned businesses. While this discussion around history and how it has affected Frenchtown was interesting to the authors, when it came time to ask questions, the teens focused on the Art Lady's art practice. Essentially, they wanted to know: how does someone become an artist?

> *Don't be afraid of a right or wrong, because art is what you see. And one of the things I like to do, I like faces, but I remember when I first got started, it looked warped to me. [Laughs] … I wrap stones, I do beadwork. I didn't go to school for any of that. I had this man, I saw him doing the little*

drops around the neck. And I asked him to teach me. It was at a flea market in [unclear]. He said to me, 'Well come on over, I'll show you.' He wrapped the stone, and then he gave me one. And he said, 'When I see you again, show me what you did with it.' Well, honey, he was shocked! I came back, I had wrapped that stone, I had pearls hanging off of it! He was like, 'What did you--?' And I was like, 'I don't know, I didn't like it plain.' So you just-- If you like art, go into the art store… and just ask questions, and get started. You have to just get started. (The Art Lady interview transcript)

Our meeting with the Art Lady provided a lot of background information about the history of Frenchtown, but what resonated with the teens was the experience of having met and talked with an artist. We found out during our conversation with the Art Lady that one of the teens painted and wanted to go to art school, a fact that hadn't come up previously, despite almost eight months of collaborating. Other teens also shared their own proclivities for artmaking and we lingered inside the gallery itself, a treasure trove of colorful, painted bottles, windows, canvases, and other restored objects. Hearing the story of the Art Lady created an opening for teens to share their own passions and hopes for the future. Our interview with her didn't spark an intense interest in the past, but instead connected with a desire many of the teens held on to. This encounter invited teens to imagine themselves differently, perhaps as artists, or perhaps as young people who have the capacity to mold their life into something purposeful, just as the Art Lady had.

Fig. 5: F-Cubed interview with the "Art Lady" [Video contribution edited by the authors, using teen footage: https://youtu.be/eHVdqpHSB8A]

Although the social issue of food access catalyzed this documentary project, what captured the teen filmmakers' attention were the people we met along the way. The stories residents shared gave us a sense of place and rooted the filming process in a meaningful, personally relevant exploration of identity. The move away from food access to a more open-ended exploration of Frenchtown embodies our interpretation of engaged pedagogy, where hooks (1994) reminds us that teachers have the responsibility to respond to learners' expectation that we "will not offer them information without addressing the

connection between what they are learning and their overall life experiences" (p. 19). It was through story that our group, adults and teens, gained insight into the lived history of Frenchtown. At the same time, it was notable how much the invitation to respond to these stories through multimodal forms of expression (Kafai & Peppler, 2011) affected the project. Encountering the Frenchtown stories from an active position of cultural producers (Fendler & Hernández-Hernández, 2015; Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robinson, & Weigel, 2006) set the scene for a high level of engagement. Carrying cameras, teens were not just listening but honing their personal lenses; they not only responded to, but also expanded on the stories we found, adding their own experiences, reflections, and stories within the emergent living history of this neighborhood.

Resolution

In discussing the role of narrative as a life-wide pedagogical process, Braidotti (2006) reminds us that our "capacity to endure is collective, it is to be shared. It is held together by narratives, stories, exchanges, shared emotions and affects" (p. 199). In our case, the act of filming played a central role in developing a collective encounter in Frenchtown, one that led the teens to reflect on both their community and their own intertwined sense of place and self. Of particular interest is the role film played in this opportunity for storytelling. We found that the video camera asked the teens to bestow a specific type of attentiveness toward their setting, as it directed the teens toward an unfolding narrative.

Film is typically a narrative medium, but the stories told in the final films the teens created do not follow traditional plot devices. Wandering into the stories told by the Pepper Lady, the Bossman, and the Art Lady, the teens listened, recorded, and moved on. Their final films documented our practices of being in Frenchtown, including the interviews and stories alongside the improvised "parkour," dancing, and trips to the local community garden that also took place during our excursions. The stories that emerged through the lens of the teens' perspective tell of their own experience and do not reproduce a report on the experience of those we encountered. This demonstrates a productive intersection between the starting point of our documentary project, which resembles life story research, and an end point, which tells the story of our unfolding exploration of the neighborhood.

At the end of our project, the teens edited several short films: a Pepper Lady film, a Bossman film, one about iGrow, the local community garden, and a long "making of" set to music, among others. The use of film in educational and community settings can provide insights into thinking about and complicating the narrative role of documentary film. Ethnocinema is a term that Harris (2012; 2014) uses, which positions collaborative filmmaking as a critical pedagogical practice that engages participants in border crossing (Giroux, 1991) and opens up the possibility for new hybrid identity work in a third space (Bhabha, 1994). For Harris (2014), ethnocinema is a use of video that becomes "a record of intercultural relationships… which is mutual, artistically and socially transformative" (p. 551). In her work, Harris shifts the focus from the content of film to the practice of filming, highlighting film as a record of the relationships that were established during production. Such films do not need to reproduce a traditional, journalistic form of documentary. Rather, Harris's approach to ethnocinema reframes video

work as the documentation of affective encounters, which engage people on both sides of the lens in a project that "demands sharing and listening" (p. 555). In their review of community-based media programs, Grauer, Castro, and Lin (2012) affirm that all filmmaking is a collective endeavor and, "in a group of young filmmakers, the collaborative nature of community is significant in affirming and cultivating alternate ways of knowing" (p. 148). Both Harris (2014) and Grauer et al. (2012) point to an emerging quality in our project, where the work of filming led teens into an exchange with the stories of others. However, reproducing these stories for a film audience was not the end goal. The final films are ultimately a register of the filmed encounter.

To this end, we find that the open-ended artistic encounter with Frenchtown may have a visual result, but the impact of the project was the experience. O'Donoghue (2015) revisits Dewey's suggestion that art is experience, by suggesting that art practice:

> creates the conditions, for those of us who are open to the possibility of being seduced and cajoled and made different by them, to come to know ourselves in the strangeness of ourselves as we do things that we would not do habitually... [Art] works and our participation in them create an occasion for us to come in contact with, or encounter, our learning selves and to feel ourselves becoming and unbecoming. (p. 110)

We know through narrative inquiry that stories are what make our lives, our experiences, meaningful (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Throughout our project, we suspected that video provided the teens an excuse to engage in the making of stories, through dialogue and conversation. The final films speak to this, offering glimpses into our encounters, our meanderings, and generally showing what happened to us during the 10 months in which this project took place. Collectively, this body of work tells the tale about how our collaborative project engaged with stories, allowing them to orient our knowledge of Frenchtown, and ultimately, how these stories influence the ongoing project of our learning selves.

Fig. 6: Filming Frenchtown: Listening to and learning from stories lives [Video contribution edited by the authors, using teen footage: https://youtu.be/XxTTUxIvnsA]

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Le Petit Nicolas and the Ontological in Schooling

Sharada Gade

Abstract

"School as a site for the production of persons" (Packer & Greco-Brooks, 1999) is discussed in this article through an exploration of children's growth as students. Drawing on Nicholas' school stories from Rene Goscinny and Jean-Jacque Sempe's well-known series entitled, *Le Petit Nicolas*, the kind of people we could become as students and teachers, even if fictional, is portrayed to highlight the importance of personhood and/or the ontological in schooling.

In this article I examine the types of people we could become in school by attending to school stories, as exemplified by Nicholas' stories and voice from Goscinny and Sempe's well-known series entitled, *Le Petit Nicolas*. Consider, for example, Nicholas' portrayal of his classmate Cuthbert, in his story relating to taking a school photograph,

> The photographer and his camera had arrived too, and our teacher told him to be quick about it or else we'd miss arithmetic, and Cuthbert, who is top of the class and teacher's pet, said it would be a great shame to miss arithmetic because he did so like arithmetic so much and he'd got all his sums done, and Eddie who is a very strong boy, wanted to punch Cuthbert's nose, only Cuthbert wears glasses so we can't thump him as much as we would like to. (Goscinny & Sempe, 2005, p. 1)

Or Nicholas' tale about their getting monthly mark books,

> And Mathew started to cry. Mathew is bottom of the class, and every month our teacher writes lots of things to him mum and dad in his mark book, and Mathew's mum and dad are cross and say he can't have any pudding or watch television. Mathew told me they've got so used to it by now that once a month his mum doesn't bother to make a pudding at all and his dad arranges to go next door to watch television. (Goscinny & Sempe, 2005, p. 57)

As practitioners, it would not be difficult to recognize a Cuthbert, Eddie, Mathew, or Nicholas in our own school. And it would be easy to find parallels between Nicholas' repertoire of stories and tales that make comic sense in our own sociocultural contexts. Yet, I consider these to speak to the unceasing dialectic that lies between the many small rituals that constitute the wider practice of schooling in society, such as taking photographs or receiving monthly mark books, and the plethora of fun, exhilarating, frustrating, sad, and even tragic ways in which we experience schooling. Forming the memorable stuff of school life, these stories, as McCourt (2005) recounts in *Teacher Man*, tend to invariably follow us to dinner, to the movies, to the bathroom, and even to our beds. Moreover, I draw upon a literary model of psychology to discuss the importance of grasping the kind of people we become within schooling. Kozulin (1996) explains stories or literature more generally to serve as a prototype of human life itself and become a psychological tool with which we mediate our lived experiences. As Nicholas' portrayals exemplify, different aspects (e.g., students being top or bottom of the class or teacher's pet; or having harried parents

at home) allow us to share experiences we come to associate with schooling when these are expressed through narratives or stories. Kozulin believes that literature deserves even greater attention, given its ability to represent human understanding. As skilfully crafted discourse, literature is a vital source for achieving cognitive maturity and changing the consciousness of readers.

A storied manner of understanding the self or personhood of students and teachers remains informed by insightful writings in the social sciences. A long-time proponent of narrative modes of thinking and knowing—in contrast to more logico-scientific ways—Bruner (1987) argues that stories are ways of describing lived time as well as possible lives. He maintains that life stories, whether autobiographical or helping to structure human experiences, can be narrated in many ways and examined over and over again. Olson (2007), however, questions our ability to realize this sense of the possible, affirming that schools are institutions that are organized to meet their goals effectively and economically. Calling for school reform to recognize this gap between the personal and the institutional, Olson seeks the study of schooling in anthropological terms so as to explore the socioeconomic climate in which students and teachers are situated.

Speaking to what he said was the predictable failure of school reform, Sarason (1990) highlighted two issues he found problematic. First, schools seemed to exist mainly for students. Sarason argued that only those schools which were conducive to the growth of teachers, would have them provide the same conditions for their own students. Second, students have come to accept two worlds, one inside school and another outside. With teaching geared largely to subject matter and not children, the world outside was far more stimulating and interesting, making the conception of school counterproductive to learning. Urging that schools be socially organized to enhance students' development, Bronfenbrenner (2005) calls for making human beings more human. Based on studies conducted in the early 1970s, Bronfenbrenner lamented that the US school institution had become increasingly isolated from the homes of students. With a decline in the number of neighborhood schools, parents and teachers were less likely to be friends, he pointed out. This problem was further aggravated by the way children were segregated in classes whose composition changed every year, resulting in students having little or no social identity of their own. I draw on the works of Bruner, Olson, Sarason, and Bronfenbrenner for two reasons: first, their arguments have great relevance to present-day schooling, and second, each of these scholars speaks to the need for understanding the personal and/or the ontological within everyday schooling.

Two writings by Packer discuss "school as a site for the production of persons" and the importance of ontological aspects, beyond the epistemological, in schooling. Packer's first study with Greco-Brooks (1999) examines the kind of changes children experience as they attend the first day of school in a small, poor, working-class, elementary school in an ethnically mixed community, in the rust belt of the US. Arriving at "Room 2" with cut-out paper bears, the teacher in this classroom sets about transforming children from home into her students at school. As persons they are soon defined as "boys and girls" who must pay attention, raise their hands when wanting to speak, and follow rules in relation to thinking in the classroom. A splitting is produced in the nature of their person, they argue, as the "I" who was interested in "my dog" is now transformed into a "you" interested in "pets and animals."

Packer and Greco-Brooks underscore that such transformation in their being or person, demands ontological work on their part,

> This new subject is subject to new demands about what must remain unsaid and undone. That impulses should not be acted on immediately, but must be delayed and deferred is a constant imperative in this first-grade classroom, as in many. Desire must be postponed – the students need to listen, not talk, and they need to wait, not act. The body is disciplined, as the child becomes member of a community quite different from the family, becomes one among equals. (p. 148)

The cultural and historical manner in which schools transform a member-of-family and produce a student-in-classroom, means that both students and teachers are not the same kind of person as well. Building on these notions, Packer's subsequent study with Goicoecha (2000) formalizes the importance of ontology, beyond the more commonly attended to epistemology in school. Since learning transforms the person and the social world, they believe that the study of both is worthwhile and necessary. As illustrated in Nicholas' stories, schooling fosters the production of persons—something which epistemic theories of learning often fail to address. My focus on Packer's writings and the importance of ontological aspects of schooling emerged from my taking action and coming to know students and their experiences, while collaborating with a teacher in her classroom (Gade, 2016). Recent scholarship in the Vygotskian tradition views the ontological to be part and parcel of the epistemological as humans transform their status quo (Stetsenko, 2013). However, in this article I discuss ontological issues against the backdrop of literature as psychological tool and the social identity of a cohort of students as they navigate the worlds both inside and outside school. Attending to the first person, I delve into the existential dilemmas of Nicholas and his mates, faced within the rough-and-tumble setting of their school and deftly portrayed in Goscinny and Sempe's action-packed narrative. I thus ask: "In what manner do Nicholas and his mates speak to the ontological or personhood in schooling?"

A Nickname

I now offer excerpts from the first of three stories in which Nicholas portrays the kind of persons he and his classmates become. While Nicholas had earlier identified Cuthbert as teacher's pet, in this story he and his mates come up with a nickname for one of their teachers, Mr. Goodman. Nicholas recounts,

> So Mr Goodman took us all to our classroom. We call him Old Spuds, though not to his face of course. We call him Spuds because he is always saying, 'Boy, look me in the eye!' and potatoes have eyes. No, I didn't get it at first either, it was some of the older boys who explained it to me. Old Spuds has a big moustache and he is very strict; it's no good trying to play him up. So we were sorry he was going to look after us, but luckily when we got into our classroom he said, 'I can't stay, I have some work to do with the Head. Now, boys, look me in the eye and promise to behave.' So we all looked him in the eye and promised to behave. We nearly always do behave, anyway. (Goscinny & Sempe, 2005, p. 17)

The story continues with Mr. Goodman allowing "the top of the class" to sit at the teacher's desk, so that he, in turn, could keep an eye on others while they do some revision. Cuthbert thus chooses to have his classmates do arithmetic and Mr. Goodman visits the class now and then. However, it is not long before

pandemonium breaks out and a student who is on the lookout for Mr Goodman shouts, "It's Old Spuds!" Now, of course, Mr. Goodman wanted to know who called him that,

> 'Please, sir, it wasn't him, sir, it was Cuthbert who said Old Spuds!' cried Rufus.
> 'I never said Old Spuds! shouted Cuthbert.
> 'You did say Old Spuds. I heard you say Old Spuds quite clearly, you did say Old Spuds, Old Spuds!'
> 'Very well, if this goes on you will all be kept in!' said Old Spuds.
> 'Why me, sir?' asked Alec. 'I never said Old Spuds!'
> 'I don't want to hear that ridiculous nickname any more, understand?' said Old Spuds. He seemed ever so upset. ... ...
> 'What in the world is going on, Sp... Mr Goodman?' asked the Head.
> (Goscinny & Sempe, 2005, pp. 21–22)

Many aspects of the ways in which order is maintained in schools are exemplified in the above story. To begin with, Mr. Goodman asks his students to look him in the eye, so that they would keep the promise they were making to him. His allowing Cuthbert, an accomplished student, to sit at the teacher's desk and monitor his classmates is another—an order they attempt to of course disrupt. In using the nickname Old Spuds and in a Bakhtinain sense, Rufus and his classmates are able to do just that. This excerpt draws attention to the power differential at play between teachers and students in school more generally, one producing different kinds of persons. While we find Cuthbert acquiescing to school rules, others do not and cannot, since only one of them can be top of the class. In Alec not wanting to be kept back in class, wishing to maintain his innocence, he too, like Rufus, indulges in calling Mr. Goodman by his nickname over and over again, a ploy that is all too well known. In the Head making the same slip as students, Mr. Goodman's personhood as Old Spuds turns out to be a widely acknowledged fact in Nicholas' school.

A Secret Code

The second story relates to the inventiveness with which Nicholas and his mates attempt to overcome their being forbidden by their teacher to speak to one another during lessons. No matter how quietly they communicate with one another, either by whispering or by passing chits, he and his classmates get caught and are threatened with detention. Nicholas tells us,

> That's why we liked the idea Geoffrey told us at break today.
> 'I've invented a secret code. It's great! Geoffrey said. 'Our gang are the only ones who'll be able to understand it.'
> And he showed us. You made a different gesture for each letter; for instance, putting your finger on your nose was 'a', putting your finger on your left eye was 'b', putting your finger on your right eye was 'c'. There were different things for all the letters, like scratching your ear, or rubbing your chin or tapping your head, all the way through to the letter 'z', which was squinting. It was great! (Goscinny & Sempe, 2007, pp. 103–104)

The story continues with Nicholas noting that Matthew was not happy with the secret code since the alphabet itself was a secret code to him, while Cuthbert, in contrast, had no interest in it at all. The other members of Nicholas' gang, however, teach themselves the code, even as they are caught by

Mr. Miller, a new teacher who is only a bit older than the big boys. Once back in their classroom, all students are asked to copy down sums in their exercise notebooks, which their teacher puts up on the board. Meanwhile, Geoffrey starts to gesture and catches everyone's attention,

> Geoffrey's message was ever so long, which meant we couldn't copy down the sums. We were afraid of missing some of the letters and not understanding the message, so of course we had to keep on looking at Geoffrey, and Geoffrey sits in the back row.
> And then Geoffrey rubbed his right foot for 't' and put his tongue out for 'h', and his jaw dropped, he stopped, we all turned around again and we saw that our teacher had stopped writing on the board and was watching Geoffrey.
> 'Yes, Geoffrey,' said our teacher. 'Like your friends, I am fascinated by your curious antics. But don't you think this has gone on long enough? Go and stand in the corner, you will not go out at break, and by tomorrow you will write out one hundred times, 'I must not act the fool in the class and be a bad influence on my friends, preventing them from working.' ... ...
> It wasn't till next day Geoffrey told us what his message was. He'd been saying:
> 'Stop staring at me like that, you lot, or our teacher will notice something.'
> (Goscinny & Sempe, 2007, pp. 106–107)

Despite the consequences that Geoffrey's use of the code may have had on Nicholas and his classmates, this story depicts loyalty in the personhood of children, as both students and classmates. In fact, one can argue that in the above episode, Nicholas and his gang are working against the splitting[1] they experience between being friends and being students, as pointed out by Packer and Greco-Brooks. Yet Geoffrey's code, the learning of it and the subsequent use by the gang, followed by their teacher's threat of handing out punishment, all display the kind of persons their schooling demanded from each of them, involving ontological work that was both difficult and comical at the same time. As Olson (2007) asserts, these actions speak volumes about students' ways of dealing with various aspects of discipline and control, intrinsic to institutions like schools that are governed by efficiency and economy.

An Interesting Project

Nicholas' final story describes a "show-and-tell" project that his teacher is organizing. The story highlights the types of problems children experience as students under the watchful eyes of not one, but multiple teachers at school, who quote some more rules to the students and threaten them with serious consequences. Such governance is demanding of their personhood, as found below:

> 'We're going to do a project about very special things tomorrow,' our teacher told us. 'I want each of you to bring something interesting to school, preferably a travel souvenir. We'll discuss the objects you bring, and each of you will tell us where whatever he has brought comes from, and what it makes him think of. It will teach us general knowledge, geography and composition all at the same time.'
> 'What sort of things are we supposed to bring?' Matthew asked.
> 'I've just told you, Matthew!' said our teacher. 'Bring some interesting object ... something which tells a story. You know, a few years ago one of my pupils brought along a dinosaur bone his uncle had once dug up. Can anyone tell me anything about dinosaurs?'
> (Goscinny & Sempe, 2008, p. 71)

On reaching home that day Nicholas tells his dad that he has been told to take something to school. This makes his dad express appreciation for the teacher's idea:

> 'I think these projects are an excellent idea.' said Dad.
> 'Having something there to look at means you'll never forget the lesson. Your teacher's very good, very up-to-date. Now let's think what you can take ...'
> 'Our teacher says it really ought to be a dinosaur bone,' I explained.
> Dad looked surprised. 'A dinosaur bone?' he said. 'Well really! And just where do you think I'm going to find a dinosaur bone? No, Nicholas, I'm very sorry, but I'm afraid you'll have to make do with something simpler.'(Goscinny & Sempe, 2008, pp. 71–72)

The father then suggests that Nicholas could take a large shell that the family had bought on vacation in Spindrift Island. On the following day Nicholas recounts,

> When I got to school all our gang were there, and they asked me what I'd brought.
> 'What have you brought? I asked.
> 'I'm not going to show anyone mine till we're in class,' said Geoffrey. He likes to act mysterious.
> The others weren't saying either, except for Jeremy, who showed us a knife. It was a fantastic knife!
> 'It's a paperknife,' Jeremy told us. 'My Uncle Andrew brought it back from Toledo for my Dad. Toledo's in Spain.'
> And Old Spuds, who is one of our teachers, only that isn't his real name, well, Old Spuds saw Jeremy and he confiscated the paperknife, and he told Jeremy he'd told us a hundred times already not to bring dangerous objects to school.
> 'But, please, sir,' said Jeremy, 'our teacher told me to bring it.'
> 'Oh, did she?' said Old Spuds. 'Your teacher told you to bring this dangerous weapon to school? You amaze me! Right, not only am I confiscating it, I want you to write out fifty times, "I must not tell Mr Goodman lies when he asks me a question about a remarkably dangerous object which I have smuggled into school against the rules." There's no point in shouting at me, and the rest of you can just be quiet unless you want some lines too!'
> And Old Spuds went off to ring the bell. We all stood in line, and Jeremy was still crying when we got into our classroom.
> 'This is a fine start, I must say!' said our teacher. 'Whatever is the matter, Jeremy?'
> (Goscinny & Sempe, 2008, pp. 73–74)

Eclipsing the minor lesson that may have been learnt about Toledo being in Spain, Jeremy appraises his teacher of his loss. Mentioning that bringing a knife to school was not exactly a good idea, their teacher promises to speak with Mr. Goodman. Just as Nicholas and his classmates have the opportunity to learn that Cuthbert's geography book was bought by his parents in Normandy, Geoffrey reports that a gold watch his father had bought him in Switzerland was missing. To everyone's relief, and by the end of this lesson, Jeremy is able to find his watch in the sleeve of his coat, just as Old Spuds returns Jeremy's penknife. Nicholas concludes that his was project "interesting," with his teacher too saying that she would not forget the things her students brought to school that day. Depicted in this episode is the kind of contradictions that arise when a teacher tries out new ideas in a school that are conducive to the growth of both teachers and students (Sarason, 1990). In moving beyond demands of effectiveness and efficiency (Olson, 2007), there is a rich portrayal of the gaps that exist between the personal and the

institutional in reform-oriented efforts. It goes without saying that the sociological nature of efforts in terms of caring for shells picked up on vacation, on the one hand, and expensive gold watches, on the other, is something that teachers have to contend with in various ways that they might consider appropriate. The first person in schooling is thus deserving of all the attention that it is possible to give.

The Ontological in Schooling

I would be remiss if I didn't mention five key aspects in the writing of this article. First is my recognition that in borrowing from Nicholas' stories, I have unfortunately missed out on giving voice to girls with respect to schooling, something that is an all-too-sad reality in many parts of the world. However, such a representation is quite incidental and relates to my having bought Phaidon's recent editions of *Le Petit Nicolas* for a good summer read. In doing so, I followed up on fond memories of Nicholas' escapades, when these were read out by a colleague at our school in India in the late 1990s.

Second, as Bronfenbrenner (2005) points out, focusing on a greater concern for efficiency and economy in schools through rigid structures and routines can often result in dehumanizing us as people. As a teacher of science and mathematics, it was my memories of Nicholas which led me to more fully appreciate the ability of literature to change individual consciousness.

My third point relates to the fact that *Le Petit Nicolas* was originally written in French, and that the English translation might not depict Nicholas' predicaments in quite the same way. Yet, I consider Nicholas' world in English to be its own world, one that could be read for the many possibilities that it so aptly portrays. It is with deference to this that I have quoted Nicholas at length in his own words.

Fourth, I would like to sensitize my readers to the vital issue of ontology, inviting them to pay attention to the kind of people we become at school, as students and as teachers. For the arts—whether literature or other forms (Eisner, 2002)—have the ability to pay close attention to what is intended and slow down the perception of efficiency that can be put on the back burner for a while. It thereby becomes possible to focus upon our own personhood, in addition to that of Nicholas and his mates.

Finally, I would like to mention that ontological aspects may not be central for carrying out all types of research studies. While Elliott (1978) emphasizes the importance of ontological concerns in "educational research," this stands in contrast to what he terms "research on education." In the former, studies are carried out from the participants' perspective, phenomena are grasped with sensitizing concepts, and theory is generated in a posteriori manner. This is at odds with the latter, in which definitive concepts are deployed in an a priori manner and participants are largely objects of the study being conducted.

Note

1. Having recognized the above, it would be fair to conclude that Nicholas' stories are able to convey the splitting in children that schooling brings about when a family member becomes a student in a classroom at a school. As Packer and Greco-Brooks (1999) point out, children's desire is here delayed in pursuit of societal pressure to become one among equals. However, such a transition is difficult for most children and fraught with ontological work on their part (i.e., being top of the class or forbidden to speak, on the one hand, and having to do lines or serve detention time, on the other). I am aware, too, that however convincing Nicholas' stories may be, I am not providing any empirical evidence in this article in terms of transcripts of audio/video recordings or excerpts from field notes as an educational researcher.

   Quite deliberately I am appealing to the literary and accessing the world of school as articulated by Goscinny and ably illustrated by Sempe. Their depictions of taking a school photograph, maintaining monthly mark books, having a nickname for a particular teacher, subverting a stifling system of order, conducting routine show-and-tell activities in the classroom, are all aspects we can envision, even if they differ from what may transpire in own schools. In drawing on the tales of Nicholas and his mates, I am alluding to the numerous stories that we readers may also have about schooling, tucked away somewhere or stumbled upon in our numerous individual journeys. Storytelling and stories, be they at our homes or in classrooms, are fertile places for us to explore and relive our human condition. And it is within these stories that our existential and/or ontological concerns come to vivid life in what Bruner (1997) identifies as the work of the left hand. Like Bruner, I believe human feelings, intuition and the arts—which the left hand as a dreamer has come to widely symbolize—need just as much attention as the rationality, discipline, and the sciences heralded by the right hand as a doer. Meanwhile, the current emphasis on cognitive and epistemological aspects at the expense of personal and ontological components in contemporary schooling further echoes Bruner, who said:

   > Perhaps the moment is uniquely propitious for the left hand, for a left hand that might tempt the right to draw freshly again, as in art school when the task is to find a means of imparting new life to a hand that has become too stiff with technique, too far from the scanning eye. (p. 8)

   By this is meant a vital reclaiming of epistemology so as to include ontology in the societal practice of schooling. For it cannot be lost on us that we both *are* and *become* somebody in our respective journeys in life, whose myriad experiences we need to examine not only for the here and now, but also for another day.

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Emotions in Charter School Teaching:
Three Stories From Year One

Miriam Hirsch

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to illuminate the experiences of two recent graduates from an undergraduate initial certification educator preparation program (EPP) who began their first year working for a charter school in a large urban city. Their background in the constructivist-oriented EPP contrasts sharply with the philosophy and instructional practices of the charter school. The extreme nature of this particular context sheds light on the teacher induction process and raises questions about enhancing new teachers' adaptive capacities and emotional resilience to work through professional dissonance in the first years. These stories suggest that new teachers may benefit from additional training in communication skills and emotion management in the navigation of school workplace dilemmas.

Background

The teachers in this study attended a small undergraduate EPP in an urban city. The program is housed in an all-female college for Jewish women. While the EPP is a CAEP-accredited program, most of the program graduates typically work in Jewish day schools teaching in early childhood or elementary classrooms. The EPP offers all required pedagogical methods courses, fieldwork and student teaching experiences, and collaborates with Lincoln Center Education to integrate arts-based learning experiences into the college classroom. The program espouses constructivist pedagogies and privileges firsthand sensory learning and discovery methods to build lifelong skills and professional dispositions for inquiry, reflection, and advocacy. The new teachers joined TFA immediately after graduation and were both accepted to work in different charter schools that were part of the same larger charter school organization.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the literature of principled resistance and emotions in teaching. Achinstein and Ogawa (2006) find that principled resistance in high-control environments may bring new teachers professional isolation and contribute to teacher attrition. In contrast, Altinyelken (2013) draws upon Gitlin and Margonis's (1995) notion of resistance as "good sense," when resistance arises from deep commitment to one's professional conception of good education and good teaching. The author argues that resistance should not be viewed as a "problem" to overcome, but can play a crucial role in curricular implementation.

Hargreaves (2001) examines the emotional under-life of teaching and how "teachers' emotions are shaped by the variable and changing conditions of their work" (p. 1058). Hargreaves distinguishes "several forms of emotional distance and closeness that can threaten emotional understanding among teachers, students, colleagues, and parents" (p. 1061). The five emotional geographies (socio-cultural distance, moral distance, professional distance, physical distance, and political distance) shape emotions teachers may experience in school relationships. For example, professional distance between the school culture and the new teacher's emergent teaching philosophy can be an uncomfortable stretch thereby magnifying anxiety, conflict, and frustration. Emotional navigation (Reddy, 2001) through these waters may increase stress as the first-year teachers grapple with unfamiliar strictures and constraints at odds with their preparation and training.

Review of the Literature

Within the literature on charter schools, most studies focus on the effectiveness of the schools in terms of student achievement on standardized accountability assessment measures (Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2013; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011, Hoxby & Rockoff, 2005; Hoxby, Muraka, & Kang, 2009). In 2015, The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), housed in Stanford University, reported that the typical student in an urban charter school receives the equivalent of 40 additional days of learning growth in math and 28 days of additional growth in reading (Mead, 2015). However, in other suburban and rural areas there was no difference between charter school performance and that of the typical public school. For example, in Michigan where charter schools have been around for almost 20 years, 80% of the charters demonstrate academic achievement below the state average in reading, and 84% below the state average for math (Ingall, 2017). Research also shows increased high school graduation rates from charters beyond typical public schools in some cities (National Alliance for Charter Schools, 2016), but likewise, these effects are inconsistent, and even below the national rate in other places across the United States (McLaughlin, 2016).

Independent of student performance data, the firsthand lived experience of the particular teacher in the charter school environment is typically missing from the data. Schmidt and Datnow (2005), in their study of five comprehensive school reform models, include one charter school organization and find this model raised the most emotion and conflict for teachers. "I resent the lack of freedom I have in delivering the information" (p. 958), says one teacher. Another teacher comments: "It's not that I don't like the program . . . it's just that it's hard on you as a person" (p. 959). This study builds upon the scholarship by focusing on the lived experience of two novice teachers working in a high-pressure charter environment and the ambiguity faced by their teacher (the author) in conducting the research and confronting the reality of the charter school environment. It is important to acknowledge that this research is particular to these participants and does not claim to reflect on all charter school environments.

Mode of Inquiry

This study employs the qualitative research methodology of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) to provide a descriptive and interpretive account of the experience of the first-year teachers. "The portraitist is active in selecting the themes that will be used to tell the story, strategic in deciding on points of focus and emphasis, and creative in defining the sequence and rhythm of the narrative" (p. 10). The portraits were composed independently from interview, observation, and artifact data, but insight from one reflected onto the other with "criss-crossed reflection" (Spiro, Vispoel, Schmitz, Samarapungavan, & Boerger, 1987). While it was not part of the initial research protocol, I decided to craft my own self-portrait as the research story continued. I found myself jettisoned from pride to dismay to concern as I weighed the merit of the teaching and learning experiences for these new teachers in the particular charter school environment.

Data Sources

Data sources include multiple in-depth interviews and observations of each participant in their workplace. In addition, field notes, journaling, and concept mapping contributed to the crafting of the portraits. The participants engaged in member checking and allowed the researcher access to lesson plans, professional evaluation rubrics, and student worksheets. The researcher is a former teacher of both participants, so there is a level of trust and communication borne from personal history. "The portraits are shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 3). Both participants expressed concern about saying anything that could impede their professional advancement and occasionally asked the researcher to keep certain incidents "off the record." Honoring this request, yet still communicating the story, is an inherent tension embedded in the work. "One of the most powerful characteristics of portraiture is its ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful/ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 9).

Findings

This research generated three stories: the stories of Paige and Penny (pseudonymous), the teachers, and the story of the author who found herself in uncertain terrain waffling between curiosity and critique as she delved into her own experience in capturing and curating the stories of her former students.

Paige

Paige began her six-week TFA training in Philadelphia full of anticipation and optimism. Even though she had come from an EPP and passed the edTPA exam, the program was challenging. "I felt like going in I had a pretty good leg up in the game, but when I got there I just didn't realize how

much I still had to learn." She worked hard preparing lessons to teach fifth graders in summer school. The most frustrating part of the experience for her was classroom management:

> This isn't what I am used to, and this isn't the type of teaching I am used to doing and I don't necessary agree with it and I don't necessarily want to be doing this type of management and I don't want to be saying these things and doing these things, but what I have to do is pretty much "suck it up for the summer."

Although exhausted, Paige felt supported by the quality and commitment of the TFA community. "We had really, really trained skilled professionals teaching us." By the end of the training, Paige had come to a working understanding of the TFA way.

> They gave me really good feedback and I would say that by the end of it I was like I understand . . . I understand why I did it, because my kids got a lot out of it and I could definitely see the differences when I was managing the way they wanted me to and doing the things they wanted me to. I definitely saw growth coming out of it. So in the end of the day, even if I didn't necessarily agree with it, I was like, "this is what I am going to do right now, because . . . this is what I need to do."

Paige went directly from the TFA training into 2.5 week professional development by the charter school organization where she had to unlearn a lot of what she had just spent the summer mastering.

> I got a lot of flak for the first couple of weeks . . . they were like, as much as you learned this in TFA, that is not how we want you to do this here, because charter schools are pretty particular about the way they are run, and especially because they believe that the way that they need to run is the way that they are going to be able to keep their charter and have success. So obviously, I wasn't going to fight that, and I wasn't interested in fighting it, I just had to comply and learn their way.

The pay and graduate school benefits were some of the reasons why she entered TFA, but Paige had no idea when she applied to the program that she was responsible for securing a job as her TFA placement. "The process was pretty brutal . . . getting into TFA was easy compared to the actual process of getting a job." She went through four interviews until she was offered a second grade position; she accepted knowing little about the demands and expectations of charter school.

> I didn't know anything . . . I had never been to a charter school before, I had no idea . . . we have a much different way of management, it is very military I would say, compared to anything you have seen in any public school, even just the way that they have to stand up and push their chairs in to line up at the door.

Paige submits a weekly pacing calendar, but doesn't write lesson plans because they are all scripted. Each member of the grade team is responsible for downloading the documents (lesson plans, student packets) for one subject area and submitting in advance for copying. She is observed once a week by both her instructional coach and grade team leader, and every six weeks by her TFA mentor. The format of the instruction (I do, we do, you do) doesn't vary regardless of the subject area: The teacher models the skill, the students practice the skill together, and then they complete independent work.

Before the December break, she and her second grade students were struggling: "I am one person, and there are 18 of them that have 18 really, really intense needs in different ways." Her students' scores were not as high for the ELA assessment as the school wanted.

> I was like, "Well, there is a reason for that because there is like one of me and let's say six of them that are receiving services" . . . I sat with one of my students the other day and just coached him through writing, because he just can't, he can't get the stamina and there are 17 others that still needed me.

By March, Paige's morale had sunk. "I would say my opinion on charter schools has definitely like decreased . . . any positivity toward them has definitely decreased recently." The management system, which requires that the students sit with their hands folded tracking the speaker or receive warnings, was getting to her.

> I am not comfortable with this way I have to discipline my students, I do it simply because that is the expectation and I am held to that. And I do get, I wouldn't say graded, but when I get observed, my feedback is all based on like, managm- a lot of it is based on management and things like that, so I do have to obviously do it. I don't . . . I am becoming more and more upset by having to do it as the year goes on.

During a formal review that month, her principal said that she was "underwhelmed by Paige's urgency." Paige thought she was working so hard; that she was not meeting the expectations of the school was emotionally distressing. Ultimately, Paige gave up her prep to work with low performing students, convincing the administration of her "urgency." Although she admits, "I hate what I have become, this is what I need to do to keep my job."

Penny

Penny really enjoyed the TFA training in Philadelphia. Having gone to a traditional public elementary and high school, she found the diversity of the TFA recruits inspiring and welcoming. She especially loved the children and found her calling in the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of her students. However, she was bemused that despite her background, coming from an EPP, which was in contrast with most of the TFA members, she had to relearn lesson planning and curriculum design from "their approach." She appreciated the feedback from her coaches and mentors, and was excited to begin her year teaching in the charter school as a literacy specialist. However, at the school she had to unlearn the TFA approach, and follow the script of the charter school teaching style.

Penny's position was not that of classroom teacher. She is officially a learning specialist. She was given a small room to work in and was allocated different small groupings of math and literacy students throughout the day. She taught social studies and science to different grade one classes, but was not an official classroom teacher. Nonetheless, Penny worked mindfully to make her space warm and inviting and establish relationships with her students. But, having this focus on relationship building at the beginning of year one became a huge problem.

As a result of her relationship building practices without ample attention to the strict management system, as described earlier with Paige's narrative, Penny's authority in the classroom eroded along with her confidence. She was reminded again and again to tighten up her warnings, tracking, and overall structure, and battled her inner voice of resistance in order to improve her standing with supervisors and make her classroom a more effective environment for teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, the message was not delivered in a supportive way and Penny began to doubt her choice of vocation, questioning her decision to teach. The culture of the school is highly professional, or as Penny dubbed it, "professional to the point where it is just like a cold, working atmosphere." The principal calls his office "The War Room," and the intense focus on data driven instruction at all costs to "win the war" mutes the voices of care, concern, and support that Penny requires in her first year of teaching. At the lowest point she asks, "Why am I here?"

When I observe her teach, I noticed her struggle between following the script and motivating the students. This desire to build their confidence and make them believe in themselves was her reason to join TFA. She was actually the impetus for Paige to sign up, convincing her to apply. Yet, year one found Penny as the non-classroom teacher, in a school that did not seem to believe in her abilities or adequately support her professional development with sensitivity and respect.

In the classroom, she hits many of the marks with the academic language and fast pace the instructional approach requires, yet her conscious awareness of the misconceptions and errors of her students is lost in her struggle to perform the lines as the school demands.

An example comes from a choral call and response that I observed; the lesson was on 2D geometric shapes and the teacher is holding up a small plastic trapezoid.

This is a trapezoid, a what? A trapezoid.
A trapezoid has two parallel sides. A trapezoid has two parallel sides.
A trapezoid has . . . They answer, "Two parallel sides."
How many sides does a trapezoid have? "Two," answers the class.

Penny realizes her mistake, but the script has not anticipated this misconception. She does not have the scripted lines on the lesson plan in front of her to help the students parse the difference between the attributes of the trapezoid shape. How does one explain in simple language to struggling first graders that four sides and two sets of parallel sides are not in contradiction?

Visiting the school and talking with my former students, I struggle with my opinion that for the most part the curriculum is not developmentally appropriate. Students work hard to achieve test scores that will make the school proud, and reassure the administration of the teacher's urgency and commitment, but the lack of manipulatives, interactive experiences, stations, or child-centered learning, is viscerally hard to swallow. Yet, I do not directly communicate my displeasure with either Paige or Penny.

Instead, I ask about hands-on learning repeatedly, so I am sure they know; but I try to squelch my opinions, in order to understand their experience.

By the end of year one, however, Penny has amped up her day by creating a special lunch lesson for select students called the, "What I can be project?" She brings in magazines, scissors, and glue, and works with them to create a book and poster about their dreams and goals. On her own time, she creates a space where she simultaneously honors her own philosophy of why she entered the profession, and shows the administration she is committed to the children. She also signs up to tutor third graders after school in preparation for the state tests.

But by the end of the year, she has somewhat figured out how to work within the constraints of the environment. "I respect what they do and I do what they ask me, but I have "Penny-i-fied it." Yet, she is still feeling pressure, concluding: "They are always watching you . . . It is hard to consistently be positive."

Self-Portrait

I was really excited that two of our graduates were joining TFA. I felt that it was good impact data for our EPP that we had two students out of their cohort of 15 who wanted to "make a difference" in the lives of at-risk youth. I was proud of their choice and the commitment it takes to tackle the demands of the TFA program. Both quickly passed all the state certification exams, including the rigorous edTPA, and I was pleased that they were prepared enough to do so under the time restraints placed by the organization which gave them approximately six weeks after graduation to "get it done."

Never having set foot in a charter school prior to initiating this study, I was excited to see the school setting I had read and heard so much about. It took close to six months to receive the necessary three IRB approvals from my institution, TFA, and the urban city department of education.

Curiously, I had thought that the cultural differences between the new teacher, coming from her Orthodox Jewish background, and her students, would provide a fertile area of inquiry. Table 1 provides background demographic detail of each school, while preserving anonymity. According to the NYC Department of Education School Performance Dashboard for the 2017 academic year, the economic need index in Paige's school (School A) is 78%, and 74% in Penny's school (School B). In addition, the student ethnicity of the two schools where the participants teach is recorded as over 90% Black or Hispanic. To my surprise the new teachers reported little socio-cultural dissonance regarding the demographic differences.

Table 1

Demographics of Student Population[1]

	School A	School B
Enrollment	291	490
Asian	0%	2%
Black	46%	39%
Hispanic	51%	57%
White	1%	1%
Students with Disabilities	11%	11%
Self-Contained	0%	1%
ELL	16%	18%
Economic Need Index	78%	74%

However, they were most seriously affected by the particular nature of the charter school culture and the ensuing expectations of teaching in this extreme setting. I discovered that our graduates are well prepared to teach most subject matter content, but were ill prepared to implement the strict classroom management system upon which the charter school system was structured. In addition, a second but related disconnect between our EPP and this schooling context concerns the program completers' readiness and resilience with relationship management dilemmas. Next, I briefly address each concern.

Professional dissonance. The charter school classroom management system stands in stark contrast with the private and traditional public schools where the teacher candidates are placed for fieldwork and student teaching. In fact, the culture of the charter school stands in contrast with any school I have ever visited. Distinctive features, some as mentioned earlier in the teachers' stories, include:

- Students must sit with hands folded on desk and feet flat on the floor facing forward at all times ("scholar position").
- Students must visually track the speaker at all times.
- All lessons are scripted.
- Teachers do not plan lessons; they download the lessons for the week in each subject area.
- Students do not ask questions.
- All lessons in all subject areas follow the format of direct instruction ("I do, we do, you do") whereby the teacher models the skill, guides the students in practicing the skill, and then the students independently perform the skill.

Our EPP, most educational scholarship, and conventional wisdom advance the development of social-emotional learning through more self-regulatory and humanist strategies, particularly for younger learners, such as grades one and two in this study. At the beginning of my research study, I found the choreography of the classroom interesting. Students hold their hands and forearms parallel, and clap the answer to the multiple-choice questions of their exit assessment tickets. But, they do this every day the exact same way. All transitions are choreographed and executed with formal precision, such as pushing

in chairs and marching into line. The regularity and standardization of the schooling is both impressive and depressing. I saw young children drop pencils repeatedly, so they could bend and pick them up. I saw many students with untied shoes, and I worried that they didn't know how to tie them and would trip because shoe tying was not part of the curriculum. I found myself torn between admiration for the choreography and disappointment at the lack of animation, laughter, and life in the room.

To be fair, I wasn't there enough to know that those things never happened. But I was there enough for them to happen and I did not see it in either classroom.

The friction between what we teach in the EPP and the practices of the charter school is provocative. I wondered if I had done the teachers a disservice in preparing them for a different kind of school context. Had I set them up for stress and additional challenge by promoting different instructional approaches and management choices? Was I partially responsible for their struggle? Did our program nurture the adaptive capacity necessary for any new teacher in their first years? After all, disconnect is to be anticipated between the preparation program and the first place of employment, no matter the schooling context.

Thus, at the end of year one, I worry that I may be responsible for some of the initial confusion, dissatisfaction, and friction unearthed in their first year in the field. However, as much as I am distressed about seeing young children sit rigidly in classrooms without ample time to relax their posture, the achievement data complicates the story. When one examines the school achievement data for these charter schools, the performance on the state language arts and math exams far exceeds the scores for the city and local district. The data included in Table 2 complicates the "means-to-an-end" argument and offers provocative and compelling evidence of academic performance above the comparison group and district performance.

Table 2

Charter School Academic Performance Percent Passing[2]

	School A			School B		
	School	Comp Group	District	School	Comp Group	District
ELA	79%	67%	24%	81%	68%	20%
Math	78%	69%	24%	78%	69%	14%

Emotional resilience. A second and related area of conflict centers on the novice teacher's ability to manage emotions and relationships within the schooling context. Both Paige and Penny were unprepared to address the compliance/resistance dilemmas that emerged in year one. While each situation offered unique and quirky personality issues, their stories suggest that new teachers may benefit from additional training in communication skills and emotion management in the navigation of workplace conflicts. Both reported conflict and tension with team leaders or supervisors who were insensitive and seemingly manipulative. Paige described her team leader who would email her from across the hall, rather than speak with directly. Penny was flummoxed when she was overlooked for the position of lead teacher,

only later to find out that her supervisor did not want to lose her in the grade team, so did not inform her of the opportunity to shift roles. The areas of conflict resolution and navigating bureaucratic communication dilemmas are atypical curricular topics in educator preparation programs. However, this study asserts the importance of such training. The oft-cited 50% dropout rate for new teachers may benefit from concerted effort to address such areas of emotional and social challenges.

This research study indicates new teachers may grapple with navigating school relationships during their first year in teaching and that this may be a primary and significant source of stress within the first-year context. Communication, feedback, and collaboration are vital aspects of teaching life. Particularly, in a school setting which challenges the news teacher's belief system and teaching philosophy so profoundly, it was apparent that the new teachers were not readily equipped with strategies to address such conflicts. In addition, challenging personalities, such as the supervisor with the "War Room," provided unexpected emotional management issues. This study has generated a new area of inquiry in teacher education: To what extent are EPPs responsible for preparing novice teachers to manage the emotional under-life of teaching? Is the induction process similar to any new place of employment, or are school relationship dilemmas particularly nuanced spaces requiring strategic intervention tactics and perspectives?

Conclusion

> Given the issues we all know that await new teachers, it is important to pay more attention to developing, analyzing, and enacting strategies for navigation through emotional challenges in urban teaching so they can become sites of positive change, not negative impairment. (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008, p. 310)

This research examines the emotional ebb and flow of new teachers in urban settings grappling with highly restrictive educational policy. Whether or not a new teacher is in a charter school, there will naturally be some "unlearning" and dissonance between the preparation program and the first place of employment (Hirsch, 2016). In Paige's portrait, we see an example of her compliance in context. "This is what I have to do to keep my job," she says. The portraits offer detailed understandings of first-year emotional challenges. "Teachers must understand that in the school change process, conflict, tensions, and disturbance to long-held beliefs, ideologies and structures are inevitable and not to be feared" (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005, p. 962). The varied changes the first-year teacher experiences are considerable. Should EPPs foreground the launch into our field by enhancing emotional resilience and adaptive capacity among our cohorts and their support networks? Is that even possible? This research is important in order to prepare, support, and retain qualified and caring instructors in schools that need them most.

Notes

1.   Data retrieved from https://tools.nycenet.edu/dashboard.

2.   Data retrieved from https://tools.nycenet.edu/dashboard.

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"I'm hiding": Using the Stories-Around-Poems to Explore the Role of Vulnerability in Today's University Classrooms

John L. Hoben and Sarah R. Pickett

Abstract

This self-study examines the authors' attempts to use narrative to create impactful and transformational learning experiences. The essay describes a process of auto-ethnographic inquiry during which the researchers explored critical incidents related to their use of stories in university classrooms. Further discussion of these experiences led to the creation of two individual poems that deepened our appreciation for the rich connections between narratives and confessional poetry. By using these research tools, the authors explore the role of vulnerability and self-disclosure in the creation of meaningful classroom encounters.

Background

In this essay, we explore how narrative can provide teachers with a tool to facilitate engagement by legitimizing the life experience of adult learners and by affirming the fact that each student has something within them that is valuable and that "counts" within a formal academic environment. For both teacher-educators and students, constructing narratives can create a space that shares aspects of public life and personal life as these intersect the lived space of the course. Using examples from our own teaching experiences, we discuss critical teaching incidents related to narrative within this particular practice setting and explore ways of conceptualizing narrative-based pedagogies within adult learning contexts. Rather than seeing knowing as a mode of contestation, this essay will explore how narrative inquiry operates as a powerful form of disclosure and community-building within the "professional landscapes" (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011, p. 282) of mid-career teachers who are also beginning researchers.

By attempting to cross boundaries between creative and formal academic writing, our essay relates critical incidents in our teaching practice and "attempts to exist in the rarely seen intergeneric worlds of poetry and inquiry" (Prendergast, 2007, p. 743). In doing so we analyze not only how "poetry may be used as a profound narrative tool" (West & Bloomquist, 2015, p. 3), but also how poetry and narratives can arise—and shed new light upon—the same transformative experiences in the lives of students and teachers (Dobson, 2010; Glesne, 1997; Saunders, 2003; Ward, 2011; Witkin, 2007; Hanley & View, 2014). Following the work of other scholars, we also explore how poetry can be used to understand the implicit and tacit aspects of narratives and to create what one scholar termed a "space for stories" (Gold, 2013).

The Impact of Narrative Inquiry

A growing and impressive body of work has demonstrated how narrative inquiry is a research methodology that has important implications for individual practitioners and the field of educational research itself (Dobson, 2010; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Seiki, 2014). As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) emphasize, "narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story. . .is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience" (p. 82). In this sense, narrative provides a method for noticing our awareness of the world in a way that anticipates surprise and even, being troubled as a prelude to a newfound awareness of different ways of living. In Seiki's (2014) words, "narrative inquiry as a pedagogy requires us to learn awareness that our own stories and experiences will also bump up with, and perhaps stand at odds with, the stories and experiences of our students" (p. 39). Often, the beginning and end of inquiry is the author's own fractured, in-process, multidimensional, and *relational* self.

Even as we use narrative to explore time, society, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), we also learn to recognize that narrative spaces can be a way to use the imagination to understand and to reinvent our relationship with the "real" (Caine et al., 2017). Coming to terms with the power and promise of narrative involves, in part, understanding that, "as teachers—we are also texts our students read" (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 220). Attending to tensions and relationality allows us to become aware of how dominant cultural narratives can undermine our sense of self and our capacity for right action, meaning that narrative inquiry also has an important, and often profound, ethical dimension (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010).

More broadly, self-study has also increasingly exhibited a combination of narrative and poetic forms (Dinkleman, 2003; Dobson, 2010; Hanley & View, 2014; Gold, 2013; Saunders, 2003; Wiebe, 2008). Echoing Gulla (2014) we believe that poetry, like narrative, helps teachers to recognize that, "the ability to consider another point of view is crucial to the development of critical thinking skills" (p. 145). This is not only because of what Hanley and View (2014) call "poetry as counter-narrative" (p. 571), but also because the emotional closeness offered by poems can serve as a means of inviting others into a shared experience. Both forms, then, offer teachers and students the ability to share experiences in a way that is intensely personal and evocative through an aesthetic that more conventional modes of learning and instruction cannot (Prendergast, 2007). Poetry and narrative can complement each other and provide a provocative, intensely *personal*, and often emotionally charged means of opening up new spaces for shared reflection and growth (Simecek, 2015; Ward, 2011).

Methodology and Participants

The authors were the only participants in this narrative inquiry study. John is a 44-year-old Assistant Professor in Postsecondary Education at a Canadian Faculty of Education who has been teaching for approximately 15 years in both university and high school settings. Sarah is a 43-year-old Assistant Professor in Counseling Psychology at the same Faculty. Sarah has been teaching in a university setting for 10 years and had a career as a psychologist before her current academic appointment.

A casual dialogue in a hallway one afternoon between the authors about the role of narrative in teaching led to a discussion about how narrative can trigger emotions in the teacher as well as the students. Over coffee, together we began to discuss ways in which classroom exercises such as object sharing or even role-play might result in unsolicited life histories being shared by students. This process led us to a space where "in our research relationships, we courted and embraced uncertainty, vulnerability and tension in our autobiographical tellings and retellings" (Saleh, Menon, & Clandinin, 2014, pp. 279–280). As a result of these discussions, we identified two critical teaching experiences that had changed our sense of self and the way that we practice. We then decided to do further reflective writing on these experiences and to exchange those narratives. Two galvanizing questions that helped to guide our writing were: i) how have stories shaped my sense of self as a teacher-educator?; and, ii) how have stories about vulnerability shaped my identity and my pedagogical practice?

Through the course of our collaborative reflection, we decided to create poetry as a means of further inquiry. The creation of poetry was aimed at reflection, evocation, and drew its inspiration from our encounters (Prendergast, Leggo, & Samashima, 2009). Creating poems from our stories was challenging since it not only created richer insights that had not occurred to us before, but also forced us into "disrupting the sanding of stories" (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011, p. 282) whereby researchers attempt to fit narratives into preexisting conceptual boxes. Sarah created a poem from the actual narrative that she had shared with her class about her responses to the Pulse mass shooting, while John wrote an interpretative poem based on his experience as a new teacher at a loss to address two of his students' unexpected and powerful reflections on death. A final phase of discussions related to how these narrative poems might be used in future classrooms and focused on identifying core themes and insights arising from our study (Clandinin, 2010).

Using Poetic Inquiry to Explore Critical Narrative Incidents

Sarah's Story: Sharing a Personal Narrative About the Personal Impact of the Pulse Mass Shootings

After the Pulse Massacre, I was drawn to write about LGBTQ+ affirming practice in K-12 educational communities, pedagogy, and teacher education settings (Pickett, 2017b). Forty-nine people were killed, and 53 were injured in a gay bar in Orlando, Florida on June 12, 2016, by a single gunman who targeted these folks because of their sexuality and gender. When constructing the narratives, I focused on my lived experience within the identities I hold as white, cisgender, lesbian/queer, co-parent, and an educator of educators. I positioned myself within the LGBTQ+ community and used autoethnography as methodology, making meaningful connections between personal and cultural knowledge through provocative and disruptive representations of my experience as an educator (Ellis, 1999, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In the original work, my aim was to use three narratives, vignettes really, of my experience after the Pulse Massacre with a "goal of contributing new cultural knowledge to the question: *How can allies, K-12 educational environments, and more broadly educational institutions, such as the academy, enact an ethic of care following tragedies such as the Pulse Massacre?"* (Pickett, 2017b).

For the past several years I've taught a course I developed for preservice teachers, *Sexuality and Gender in Education Matters*. The course is delivered in an intensive format over two weeks, and the class discussions allow opportunities for experience near moments which are evocative, viscerally engaging, and contribute to awakenings surrounding constructions, embodiment, and our positionality in relation to sexuality and gender, privilege and marginalization, and power and solidarity.

The term after I wrote the autoethnographic piece in response to the Pulse Massacre, it occurred to me that I might include a reading performance of one of the vignettes in the course. I decided to include the reading performance about half-way through the course. The format is intensive; thus, after week one, the students participate in several collaborative activities which create opportunities for personal sharing, reflection, and engagement with their positions of privilege, awareness, knowledge, and skills in relation to affirmative practice and pedagogy with diverse sexuality and gender. I vividly remember driving in that morning to teach and perform; I was both nervous and excited for what was to come. My background is in counseling psychology, and so, I was quite comfortable with setting the tone of the classroom in preparation for the reading; a performance such as this, from teacher to students, requires preparation. The students needed to be informed that as their teacher I would be sharing personal, vulnerable experience. I told them that while I may shake with nerves initially and perhaps even "tear up" as I speak, I do not need them to rescue me, I am able to care for myself in this situation, and I'm prepared that emotional material may arise throughout the performance. I directly shared my expectations with them as an audience, and my preference that they listen and attend, even when it might be uncomfortable. I requested that they attune, seek to be present with the performance, and notice both the content of their thoughts and their visceral responses. The vulnerability and anticipation was palpable as I started to read.

The following poem reworks the original vignette I constructed and read to the students. I've added the shared experience I had of performing this vignette with the class of preservice teachers. I aim to integrate the students' responses to the performance and my interpretations of how the performance fostered learning. Although I was prepared for the reading performance, I was unprepared for how this moment would catapult the class into deep, reflective meaningful exchanges and relationships with each other in the classroom and beyond.

April 15, 2017, Preservice Teacher Classroom

12 p.m. Twenty eyes await, attentive, assessing, curious
    I begin
    Today I'm going to deviate from our typical format
    With these words I may cry, I may shake, I may stumble
        You may want to avert your gaze, distract, console me
        Rest assured I'm okay; please continue to listen
            It's important.

June 13, 2016: Home

6:00 a.m.
    Awake from sleep with rapid, racing, pressing thoughts
    What will we tell our children?

How do you explain massacre to a five and six-year-old?
Why don't I feel better prepared for this conversation?
Go back to bed. Covers, where are the covers?
Go back to bed, go back to sleep.

6:15 a.m.
I have to figure out what to say to them.
I have to figure out what to say to them

6:35 a.m.
Making beds, sorting through laundry, and checking the weather
we discuss how to introduce the word gay to our children?

Seems strange, a word with such power surrounding our lives
is not a part of our children's language.
Family conversations about love, romance, marriage, friendship,
gender, sex, and how families may be created
                              without
                                        the word gay.

6:45 a.m.
Precious alone-time in the shower
Breathe in the steam,
feel the pounding hot water across my back,
push my fingers tightly into my eyes,
hold my hands across my face.

I'm Hiding.

It's not explaining the word that I'm dreading;
it's what the word represents in this conversation.
Five and six, are too young to learn some people hate our family.

How do I explain a massacre?
What is safety?

7:00 a.m.
What are we going to tell them? What are we going to tell them? What are we
going to tell them? What are we going to tell them? What are we going to tell
them? What are we going to tell them?

April 15, 2017, Preservice Teacher Classroom

12:10 p.m. I look up.
        Silence, tears, shifting in seats, eyes avert my, eyes connect with mine
        Confusion, validation, visibility, disbelief, awareness, sadness, all co-occurring

I continue.

7:05 a.m.
Deep breath. Good morning my sweets.

7:15 a.m.
Kitchen table, eating waffles and cut strawberries one, by, one
I have something to talk with you both about.
              It's important.

Why explain the word gay today? Why explain the word gay today? Why
explain the word gay today? Why explain the word gay today?

7:20 a.m.
Phew, we made it through explaining the word gay.
Dig deep, pull on my mother's courage, dig deep.

I begin

The other night a person went into a place where many people who
are gay go, this person hurt people very badly.

We don't know why, don't know why, don't know why.

Many people died.
Many were hurt.

                              5-year old: They died!
              Yes, many people died.

Classroom and Home: I'm not prepared, I begin again.

              Hurt people, hurt people.

       7:25 a.m.
        Our family doesn't believe in hurting people.

                              6-year old: Where were they?

              Orlando, Florida.

                              5-year old: Where Disneyworld is?

              Yes.

                              6-year old: I don't want to go to Florida.

April 15, 2017, Preservice Teacher Classroom

       12:25 p.m. I hear a gasp, I witness heads hung, tears flow
              Experience far becomes experience near for preservice teachers.

       7:27 a.m.

We live far away from Florida.

One person's action.

12:27 p.m. Relief, I'm almost finished,
Hands have stopped shaking; my voice is strong now
20 eyes flickering, changed by these words, this reality,
preservice teacher, queer, trans, and allies
grappling together with this experience, together

> *7:30 a.m.*
> Breakfast conversation finally over.
> How'd I do?
> Too above their heads?
> Too dark?
> Not explicit enough?
>
> I didn't want to scare them.

Awful

12:30 p.m. Silence

Shana: I didn't do anything, I didn't call my friends or event know, I thought
it was far and didn't matter, I didn't know, I didn't know. I feel awful.
Lexi: You know now, you can choose to do something different in the future.
Paul: I remember that day, walking around like a zombie, so lonely, invisible.
Lexi: What could I have done?
Paul: Reached out, said, I see you, and I'm here.
Mikal: We have an enormous responsibility as teachers, don't we?

I witness and hold the space for the transformation that is rapidly occurring.

Breathtaking. Speechless. Hopeful.

I used the technique of poetic transcription (West & Bloomquist, 2015; Glesne, 1997) to construct my poem, a creative process that is both challenging and fraught in many ways. It combines narrative elements with poetic markers of rhythm, imagery, and heightened emotional response, and, as such, might be considered what Wiebe (2008) calls a "storied poem" (para. 3). I think of my poem as a form of personal testimony as well as an invitation for my students to become part of "the transformation that is rapidly occurring" [referenced in my poem]. Bearing witness can be an effective means of talking about injustice and marginalized perspectives. Whereas dominant subcultures and perspectives may talk about issues related to marginalizing by refusing to talk about their privilege, the simple but often profound tactic of saying, "No. This is my experience. It is real and troubling and unacceptable" is a way in which witnessing can provide a powerful context for teaching through narrative. The act of bearing witness also

calls to others to provide their own accounts and can become a powerful and effective means of creating a shared critical space.

Reflecting now, I also believe that my narrative helped to "unlock" something within me and in my students. It helped me to understand the relational aspects of teaching and the role vulnerability plays in creating a sense of trust and mutual responsibility for what goes on in the classroom (Gold, 2013; Brown, 2015). Poetic creation became a "process of intensifying the implicit" (Gulla, 2014, p. 147) aspects of my experiences and of letting go of the need to have the intellect control the evocative dimensions of my encounters—to leave its meaning open-textured and to put it back into play. Consequently, troubling preconceptions about what it means to be "on the right track" in a course is a vital part of "successfully" employing narrative as a teaching tool. Stories can also help writers become aware of how they might translate their acts of witness into new ways of speaking, feeling, and thinking, in a kind of circular iterative movement (Hanley & View, 2014).

This is why I feel it is so important for students to become used to being pushed to points of uncertainty, even though they may have learned to associate these feelings with being in a state of emotional distress. The story around my poem, like the poem itself, "can be a way of expressing the 'untold stories' that arise from the messy low ground of practice" (Gold, 2013, p. 853). Practitioner stories constitute more of an invitation to collaboratively construct new meanings than a judgment that aims to select out the best or only true account. The process of "poetic re-presentation" can serve as a research tool to allow us to explore themes of empathy and vulnerability (Ward, 2011) at the same time as we continue to create stronger professional communities and connections with students. This, at least, is my goal, as a university classroom teacher sensitive to issues of identity, diversity, and loss.

John's Story: Being Prepared to Share Powerful Emotions in the Classroom

I was relatively new to teaching at the postsecondary level, and I was assigned to teach a blended curriculum course several hours from the main campus. The course required students to reflect on how their life histories informed their teaching and to create a project or an artistic creation that demonstrated critical reflection and engagement. I decided to have a full-day session at the beginning and end of the term to try and bookend the learning experience. I also figured that creating a sense of community by meeting in person would make it easier for students to share their work online. While I do not remember everything that happened that day, I do have a powerful memory of a think-pair-share activity on Yeats' poem, "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death." The line, "a lonely impulse of delight drove me to this tumult in the clouds" (Yeats, 1919/1996, p. 135), led to students sharing two very different, but equally powerful, reflections about love and death.

I remember passing out some poems to the class which all addressed writing and the imagination in some way. Apart from the Yeats' poem, the only other poem I remember from that day was Billy Collin's "Introduction to Poetry." During the activity, one of the students told the class about his mother who was dying from a degenerative disease, and even though he tried to be there with her, he now realized that her experience is always her own and he can never know what it is like to be inside the experience of

facing death. After a very emotional reflection, I remembered that he finished by saying, "In the end, I guess, we all die alone." After he had finished speaking, the room was filled with thick silence, one that was finally broken when another student, Susan, spoke. Susan told the class that she had just learned that her cancer, which had been in remission for several years, had returned. She wondered if the worst were to happen, who would read to her daughter. She also confessed to wondering if she should record bedtime stories for her to hear in case the worse should happen. In the end, she turned to Jamie and said, "so I hope that no one really dies alone" before she broke down sobbing.

Not surprisingly, I struggled for words before suggesting we take a break. During this time, the two students ended up hugging and comforting each other. I spoke to both Susan and Jamie, expressed my concern, and tried to reassure them in a way that I felt to be both clumsy and inadequate. Although I was able to regain my "composure" when James and Susan spoke, I was taken aback by the power of the emotions my students were expressing. I felt like I was playing at being authentic and had hid behind my teacher-mask. My exercise was all about emotion and imagination, but when my students gave me just that—in spades—I did not know how to react. At that moment, I saw the need to move beyond a surface pedagogy towards being open to radical disclosure, or at least, to be willing to live with the discomfort and vulnerability that an ethic of caring often brings.

Even though the moment was raw and powerful and, despite the fact that it left me so uncertain, that experience brought the entire class closer together and, I believe, was the emotional catalyst for one of the best courses I have ever taught in over a decade of university teaching. Students wrote—and shared—pieces in which they took risks and explored their vulnerabilities, and in doing so they taught me how vulnerability could be a powerful teaching tool. Having recently run into Jamie at a play my daughter was taking part in, I learned that Susan was doing very well and still teaching. Although I will admit that I didn't have the courage to ask about his mother, I did learn that he was doing well, had a full-time teaching job in the city, and had a healthy young family. I should have told him how he had taught me about the power of emotion and bearing witness to the pain in our lives and the responsibility of the teacher to care for his or her students, but I didn't.

Consolation

Now listen:
there are many shortcuts
to this town,
back-alleyways and broken chain link fences;
paint-by-numbers, the training wheels
of daydreams and sunsets-at-rest;
those inflatable water wings that kids wear
like the reluctant officers of some
comic constabulary
books, old faithful and dog-eared
feet kicking aimlessly in some dream
like charts or primitive compasses
to guide the faint hearted
though their nocturnal slumbers.

But every now and then
some angry god throws
a shining spear through the moon;
unharnesses the contented planets
to run wild
through churning fields of stars. They tell stories
that cut the meat off bone,
snaps the rope
mid-swing, high over rocks;
cracks the ice
when the shore is long and lean
like the soft silhouette of
some reclining god in exile.

I am asking them for stories:
one guy has a mother
neck deep in
the wasting
her hunched body a mad tenant
that punches holes in the walls
stuffs the pipes with concrete and
stiffs her on a lifetime of unpaid rent. A litany
of prayers and curses lost in the cushions of
a once comfortable couch
rechristened by
the sullen stink
of ash.

Another woman
dreams of the lullabies that
she once-sang for her daughter
and the stories they have caterpillared into;
paper-winged-butterflies that
settle like stars just before the sun comes out; a
hot air balloon hanging serene over mountains
when the storm clouds commune
like clenched-fisted-bullies
circling an autumn playground.

They cry in turn but, I,
I am
an island of composure
cool like evening rain;
the cold bow
that cuts through ocean
water like the clean gleam of
sharpened blade on ice.

Until a lone figure
opens a door and

> raps on all my windows. A panic of hail
> bounces madly off the street
> mute bulbs like frozen sirens flashing;
> I am slinking forward
> my hands open
> wide-eyed
> like a wild animal poised on the edge
> of full-on-frantic.
>
> Someone has let
> a strange bird
>   into
> the house.

This poem is a reflection upon my narrative experience and my recognition that what scholars call "reader response" is part of the author's performance and by extension, the ongoing negotiation of new narrative selves. The author withdraws from the shared presence but, once heard, he or she is never fully alone. Or is she, since to tell a story is also to risk misinterpretation, rejection, and loss of identity? Both possibilities are immanent in every story we tell, and we can experience both in a single story. Like my story about the teachers reflecting on "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death," my interpretative poem is a reflection on how moments of insight can also be deeply jarring in their sometimes dark intensity. Like the hidden machinery of our imaginations, we don't always know where a poem will go. In this sense, my poem is an attempt to move beyond what Corrine Glesne (1997) has termed the "realist tale" (p. 204) that has been for so long the vaunted model account for academic work and towards something much more open-ended and provocative.

As strange as it may sound, I often feel as though poems "happen" to me. They are experiences that connect thoughts, feelings, experiences, and longings. They sometimes take the form of narratives or they branch out of stories I had heard or events that had occurred in my life, or the lives of those close to me. In the words of Dobson (2010), "[p]oetry seeks to retrieve the intuitive, an all-too-often ignored sensibility that many years of formal schooling and adult living may have dulled, or even dismissed altogether" (p. 132).

Now that I teach mostly in a fully online setting, these authentic moments seem few and far between. Although I use case studies and ask students to share their critical narratives, I feel a degree removed from my students. I cannot gauge the mood of the class by looking at their expressions, the tone of their voices, or even by reading their body language. The messiness of the classroom and its capacity to startle me into new insights—like Jamie and Susan's stories did—seems missing. Even though I receive many personal narratives, some that are quite powerful, there is something about the immediacy of the classroom space and the experience of interacting with a real audience that makes personal storytelling more vital, powerful, and engaging. My poem, I hope, provides a means by which I can "add to the sense of the world's variety rather than negotiate and refine a consensus" (Saunders, 2003, p. 176). In this sense, the narrative aspects of poetry and the poetic aspects of narrative provoke the same imaginative process of taking on the perspectives and opening ourselves to the experiences of others.

Reflections on Sharing

Both of us intend to use our poems in future classes as a means of broaching difficult topics that are evocative and important to teaching in today's classrooms. Sharing our poems and narratives has allowed us to "express interweaving realities" (Witkin, 2007, p. 477) and helped us to come to terms with the isolation and vulnerability that often accompanies professional practice. Our collaboration also has helped us to understand the rich possibilities offered by self-study using a mix of literary forms and life perspectives. Our experience exhibited many parallels with that of Wiebe (2008) who said, "[w]riting storied poems has helped me to see firsthand how some details of autobiographical writing can be truthful, can contain truth, even though these same details may not be historically, or literally, true" (para. 11). Consequently, following Clandinin (2010) we identified three "resonant threads or patterns" (p. 16) arising from our narrative writing and our subsequent "tellings and retellings" (Saleh et al., 2014, p. 271): troubling spaces, caring relationships, and strength through vulnerability.

We recognized that our experiences were deeply unsettling and that they unlocked insights and powerful emotions in our own lives as well as those of our students. Although stories can be a source of knowledge as the trope of bearing witness makes clear, they also can provide a means of "troubling" dominant perspectives and ways of thinking. Whereas troubling can be seen as an impediment to knowledge in empiricist or rationalist knowledge traditions, within critical traditions being troubled or troubling can be a position where powerful insights and forms of transformative agency can occur. Indeed, one of the important functions of our narratives was to show how it is possible to keep tensions and alternatives into play—to resist the tendency towards closure. Narrative's capacity to make us aware of the absence of neat easy solutions leaves open the door for responses to human tragedy and injustice that rely on imagination, empathy, and authentic human response. In this sense, our stories are a call for action, or even simply for teachers to *listen*—to *actually* listen.

Both of our narratives are about the ethics of our responses to others' pain and how empathy and sharing can provide consolation. Similarly, our writing points towards the value of "sustaining stories" (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011, p. 291) in the lives of beginning researchers who need to find connection and reassurance of their worth as teachers and mentors in an often lonely and alienating institution. Both narrative and poetry offer teachers a tool to express their vulnerability in order to build trust and to encourage empathy and perspective-taking on the part of students (West & Bloomquist, 2015). Poetry as a form is itself inherently complex and contradictory and often, in the words of Christopher Nealon (2007), "returns, again and again to questions of partial or impossible realization" (p. 869)— a quality that also makes it so powerfully imaginative and hopeful in its scope. Narrative and poetry can also become a method of translation: of creating bridges between experiences that create a sense of resonance and connection on the part of storyteller and audience. Rather than a linear movement, translation is often a means of moving laterally, into new shared spaces where growth, perspective taking, and empathy can take hold.

Although our experiences left us feeling "disrupted" and wondering how we could have been stronger, more compassionate or articulate, these encounters also taught us that there is a strength in being

vulnerable (Brown, 2015; Pickett, 2017a). In this sense, what Clandinin (2010) noted about her student participants in her own narrative study could also be said of us namely, that, "within the institutional landscape, composing an identity seemed to be more challenging than passively accepting one" (pp. 18–19). While our stories focused on teaching, the research process itself also helped us to see that, "inquiring into who we are and are becoming as researchers allows us to be present to the ways we frame our experiences within habitual modes of perception" (Saleh et al., 2014, p. 278). This too is an intensely challenging but richly rewarding endeavor that has helped us find our voices as career academics who love working and interacting with students in the classroom.

This process has taught us to try and resist the temptation to treat writing as an act of closure, particularly when writing involves a self that is always unfinished and changing, and how we are sustained by hope, imagination, and even frustration, longing, and loss. Writing can be a way to translate silence and frustration into a creative act that provides hope and meaning within often challenging and restrictive institutional environments (Ingersoll, 2012). We can never know precisely what we are going to take from a story, since the effect of entering into another's story and hearing it depends on our own experiences and our current positioning. Our experimentation with "relational poetry" (Gold, 2012, p. 856) and confessional narratives provided us with rich insights into the complexity and richness of self-disclosure in adult learner classrooms. This is what makes writing as a creative act possess the power to unsettle, to startle and surprise. This experience of astonishment is something worth marveling at. But, as academics can we leave room for work that replaces the easy assurance of conclusions and closure with a simple gesture towards marveling as an end in itself? As simple as it may sound, we all choose, simply by virtue of living writing and teaching. Perhaps that should be enough. Perhaps it is much more than we can ever imagine—so, imagine.

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Scholarly Personal Narrative:
Storied Forms as Teaching, Learning, and Writing

Marcea Ingersoll

Abstract

By embedding narrative theory within the practice of storied forms, there can be pedagogical movement from difficulty to insight. This piece explores scholarly personal narrative as a creative and critical method for attaining academic understanding. The ideas of three narrative scholars (Nash, Fowler, and Luce-Kapler) surface within two writing forms—a letter and a poem. The author playfully reports on the powerful processes that are engaged when shared creative story forms become part of teaching, learning, and writing.

Dear Robert (Nash, 2004):

You don't know me, but I've spent quite a bit of time with you. Well, not with you per se, but with your words and ideas. We first met when I was in graduate school, enrolled in a course on scholarly personal narrative. You wouldn't remember it, of course, but Rebecca Luce-Kapler introduced us. I knew right away that you were someone who would become, as Leah Fowler would say, a friend in my intellectual living room. If you haven't met Rebecca and Leah already, they also share your ideas about narrative as a way of making deep connections. (You'll find more information on them, below.)

Anyway, Robert (do you mind if I call you Robert?), when we were introduced, I learned why personal narrative writing is important to educators, and that you were not wrong when you suggested that it can also result in "stunning self-insights." Adopting this perspective has been influential to my own teaching and writing, and I share your conviction that, "all kinds of writing—personal narrative writing in particular—can reach, and even surpass, a professional school's highest scholarly standards." Wow, you weren't kidding when you said that first-person narratives were the ones that pushed your students the hardest and required more creativity and candor than typical research papers or literature reviews. Do you remember saying all that? (It was all right there at the beginning, on page three actually, of your book.)

Let me tell you, when I wrote my first scholarly narrative, I had never struggled to write a paper the way I struggled to write that one. Hours and hours of sitting and staring at the computer. Of reading and rereading and attempting to paraphrase, simplify, analyze, draw connections between. Be creative yet thorough. It was an exercise in frustration unlike any other writing I had done before. And I couldn't quite figure out why.

Honestly, Robert, it was such a struggle I decided to ask for an extension. Panic had set it. Determined to figure out what this was about, I sought solace in my classmates. (Okay I might have been procrastinating a bit, but I needed to know whether they were feeling this way, too.) It was time to get folks from the class together, have coffee, and figure out what on earth was going on. So, I emailed everyone to share my panic. And procrastinate. Everyone was willing. The very next afternoon at a downtown coffee shop we sat in brown chairs with steaming mugs, and AHA! it came out during our gathering that I wasn't the only one who had to ask for an extension.

In fact, many of us had. We were simultaneously relieved to find that we were not alone and perplexed by the commonality of the struggle. After all, we had just spent an entire semester on scholarly writing: we had analyzed our processes on other pieces, gained insight into when we wrote well and how we wrote best. We had done the readings. We couldn't figure out why everyone had such trouble when it came to writing our own scholarly narratives. (Well, not everyone. Here's a little bit of what happened at the coffee shop. I'm going to switch up the tense just to keep it interesting.)

> *Classmate one: I've submitted mine.*
> And conversation stops. Coffee cups are grasped. There is a collective leaning forward.
> A shared intake of breath. A resonant pause over our croissants.
> *Classmate one: But it's only three pages.*
> The tension breaks.
> *Classmate two, most earnestly: Single spaced or double??*
> We laugh at the quintessentially academic clarification and then the confessions start.
> And I'm overwhelmed by the sheepish acknowledgments, the bewilderment that it was such a difficult paper to write. We share our shame of having to ask for an extension, of feeling like our writing is directionless. Amateur. People seem astonished that I asked for an extension as well—they imagined I had submitted my paper ages ago—didn't think I'd still be struggling to find my way.
> *Classmate three, looking right at me: I thought it would be easy for you.*

So why wasn't it easy for me, Robert?

After all, I was quite accustomed to writing rather well rather quickly. My process for academic writing could be described as relatively straightforward. I get an idea, I make a plan, I do the reading. I make notes, I read a lot more than I plan to because there is just so much interesting stuff to read along the way, and sometimes I'll veer off on a path I hadn't anticipated. But the journey usually goes according to plan and the destination I reach is the one plotted at the start; habitually, there are only minor detours along the way.

So why, Robert, was scholarly personal narrative so different?

Why? Why…

Here's what I think. Academic writing used to be easy for me because it allowed me to not be me. Scholarly writing used to be the donning of a robe, the settling into another skin, the freedom to mimic a voice of authority that came from without. Scholarly personal narrative is difficult because it must come from within.

I had to write myself out of that difficulty and write myself into the academy.

There it is. That's why.

Scholarly narrative means knowing that scholarship is being responsible not merely for the synthesis, but also for the *production* of ideas. In your own voice.

So, Robert, all to say that I'm very grateful. To you and to Rebecca and Leah. I should probably write to them now, too.

Yours sincerely,

Student, teacher, and writer of narratives.
P.S. I forgot to tell you I wrote a poem as part of my paper. I thought I'd share it with you here.

IF (…YOU WANT TO BE A SCHOLAR)
…WITH THANKS AND APOLOGIES TO ROBERT NASH AND RUDYARD KIPLING)

If you can play with ideas, while others attempt to regulate them
If you can build on the ideas of others, while those around you
attempt to cut them down
If you can tell a story while others are being silenced,
capture the narrative quality of your human experience
in language that inspires...
If you can present your story in such a way that it rings true to human life, and help others to
reexamine their stories in light of your struggles
If you bring your passion for language and writing
and your drive to understand what makes yourself and others tick
To your work, in a way that shows how you can feel and think at the same time…
If you are willing to allow your readers
To enter your heart as well as your head
Then…
you'll be a scholar, my friend.

P.P.S. Here are some really good things to read…

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Stories, Curriculum Making, and Tension as Support for Identity Shifts: A Narrative Inquiry

Sandra Jack-Malik

Abstract

This research is nestled within Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin's (2011) understanding of curriculum making as situated not only in schools, but also in homes and communities and at the intersections of all three. It also relies on Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr's (2010) reconceptualization of tension as a space where educative experiences can occur. An autobiographical narrative inquiry into home, school, and community curriculum making, highlights an educator's efforts to teach relationally while being wide-awake to how past experiences inform future ones. This inquiry brings to life tension-filled moments and, in so doing, creates a space to know teachers as curriculum makers at home, at school, and in the community. It also suggests one of the values of autobiographical narrative inquiry is the safe space it creates to empathically enter the world of others. Mostly it encourages the reader to think about curriculum making as sentient, ever changing, and as an available support as teachers struggle to sustain their practices.

In the Midst

I sometimes wonder why particular stories linger and others do not. Is it because the stories compress and contain possibilities and profundity or is it that they offer continuous, moving links between who we were, are, and who we are struggling to become, our shifting identities? There are times when the lingering stories have wilful powers—much like a child who wants to play, but not with the toy offered. She sits on the side, not saying a word, yet screaming a sermon with her body language. My lingering stories are like that: demanding to be heard and taken up as shaping influences in the stories I tell, retell, live, and relive.[1]

A story from my first year of teaching lingers. I was working at a priority school[2] in a large, urban city in central Canada. One day at a staff meeting, the principal introduced an article by McIntosh (1989), *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. The article speaks to unearned privileges people with white skin enjoy. The principal suggested children attending our school carried invisible knapsacks because they were living lives that often included hunger, poverty, parental underemployment, and so forth. Things that might not be seen, but things that were affecting children's learning. The connection was curious because it is not what McIntosh intended and most of the students were not white. He also said each staff member had one and suggested we empty our knapsack before entering school.

Doing so would allow better focus on the complex needs of students. Very soon thereafter, my over full, invisible, knapsack slammed into my students, our community, and my family.

It was the morning following the Montreal Massacre,[3] December 7, 1989. I had been teaching approximately three months. I was pregnant with my first child and utterly distraught knowing a gunman had targeted and murdered women. I rode my bike, in the cold, face into the wind with salty tears sopping my cheeks. I knew the contents of my invisible knapsack would enter the school and our classroom. I did my best to compose myself before opening the door.

The children entered and we went about the business of beginning our day and then settled upon the carpet for opening activities; part of this routine included children sharing news. Five-year-old Alessandro,[4] son of a political refugee from South America, put up his hand and slowly began telling our class (four- and five-year-olds) about the massacre. His Poppi, who had been a professor of political science, shared the story with him. Alessandro, in his perfect, commanding English, told the class how the man with the gun wanted to shoot girls and how Poppi said this was very bad. Sitting on a rocking chair, I listened and wept. The children's eyes were on me. I felt they wanted me to speak; I was incapable. Three girls—Shini from Sri Lanka and Hope and Jubilee, identical twins from Barbados—came to me. Shini put her head in my lap and reached her arms around me and my unborn child; the twins stood on either side of the rocker and draped their arms around my neck. I remember tiny, twig-like, twin arms stretching to reach in front and back of my head and then hook together. I let them soothe me; I let them remain. Alessandro looked and asked,

"Sandra, is it true?"
I replied,
"Yes."

As I cycled home, I reflected on our morning. I knew the children experienced me in unfamiliar ways. Many children had cried in our classroom; until that morning, I had not. In response, three girls physically reached out embracing and encircling me. I received their hugs and my emotional turmoil was temporally soothed. Thinking about the little girls, I also thought about the mothers in Montreal who would never again hug their daughters, and about the child growing within me. I wanted a way to thread together these three things: the children in my classroom, my unborn child, and the murdered women in Montreal; I was unsuccessful.[5]

I suspect my efforts to thread the stories were futile because I was experiencing them through disparate lenses: stories from school, stories from home, and stories from community. I needed a theoretical bridge to help me see them as interdependent relationships, constantly in motion, regardless of which landscape[6] they occurred on. This was difficult because at the time of my teacher training (1988-89), I was inducted into a profession that was compartmentalized. Students came to school to learn from teachers who delivered content. At the end of the day, teachers went home; there were no opportunities for paths to cross. As well, I learned that a well-organized classroom and detailed lesson, unit, and year plans kept tension at bay. I appreciated the idea of tension-free classrooms because I prefer to avoid conflict. Moreover, my principal's idea that teachers should arrive with an empty knapsack supported a

view of curriculum as outcomes to be delivered by objective teachers. Finally, I grew up in a household where the word "love" was reserved exclusively for family members. A consideration of curriculum making outside of provincial documents and school, one that took in to account family, relationships, community, and love, precisely what the children shared with me on the day after the Montreal Massacre, was, at the time, unfathomable.

Letting Go of Curriculum as Documents

As a doctoral student, I took two courses with D.J. Clandinin: Curriculum Foundations and Inquiry in term one and Narrative Inquiry in term two of my first year of studies. Early in the first term, we each shared our definition of "curriculum." Dr. Clandinin then began a deliberate, layered, and intricate process of enculturation of other understandings of curriculum; I read broadly, I wrote, I discussed and slowly, I awakened to other views of curriculum. Views that allowed me to understand curriculum making in ways that were meaningful to my teaching practice and my life making. Similarly, I came to understand I could teach with a focus on the relational and the well-being of all.

I read Clandinin (1986) and Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) idea of personal practical knowledge and I grappled with it because I understood it meant letting go of provincial documents and Bloom's Taxonomy[7] while asking what I was doing with students and why. The authors described personal practical knowledge as "that body of convictions and meanings, conscious or unconscious, that have arisen from experience and that are expressed in a person's practices" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995, p. 7). I was content to leave my body of convictions unexamined; I felt exposed by what the book asked of me. I also read Clandinin and Connelly's (1992) chapter where they suggested curriculum ".... be viewed as an account of teachers' and children's lives together in schools and classrooms" (p. 393). I embraced this idea. It gave me wings directly to school the morning following the Montreal Massacre. For the first time, I understood the children and I had engaged in curriculum making that was permissible, and increasingly I understood our curriculum making as preferable.

I also read Clandinin and Connelly's (1992) chapter, which stands on Dewey's (1938) ideas about continuity, situation, and experience as education and Schwab's (1969) curriculum commonplaces: teacher, subject matter, student, and milieu. By weaving these ideas together, along with the concept of personal practical knowledge, Clandinin and Connelly shoved hard against the long-standing notion of curriculum as a course of study or a set of documents to follow. They understood teachers and children together were composing a curriculum of lives in relation to subject matter, milieus, and contexts. They (1999) also studied the experiences of teachers, listening as they shared tension-filled stories from the professional knowledge landscapes. They coined the term "stories to live by," a narrative concept of teachers' identities at the nexus of "narrative understandings of knowledge and contexts" (p. 4).

These ideas reverberated with teachers and were taken up by researchers. From their 2011 study, Huber et al. understood curriculum making is not limited to schools; curriculum making also occurs in homes and communities. The authors went back to Schwab's curriculum commonplaces (1969) and

Lugones' (1987) idea of metaphorical worlds and one's capacity to travel between them. They argued not only were teachers moving between home and school whilst engaged in curriculum making, but also that children were similarly engaged. In hindsight, I too was attempting to understand curriculum through this lens as I rode my bike home that December morning; however, I lacked schema and knowledge. Today, this understanding of curriculum allows me to appreciate my lingering story as having the potential to create new stories where communities can allow for the well-being of all and where we can "learn both to engage our differences, celebrating them when we can and also rigorously confronting tensions as they arise" (hooks, 2003, p. 109). Knowing the world this way I experience relief and a relational joining up with the children and the Montreal mothers I had not previously experienced.

Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry and Multiple, Coherent Identities and Communities

I am an educator. I am a woman. I am a mother. I am a community member and a citizen. I am a creator. These are threads of my identities. I require continuous, moving, beautiful, and flexible stories from each of my identity threads in efforts to compose a meaningful and coherent life. My participation in D.J. Clandinin's narrative inquiry class allowed me to conceptualize curriculum making as life making such that I experienced narrative coherence (MacIntyre, 1984) between and amongst my threads. Narrative inquiry allowed me to understand the narrative phenomenon of experience and methodology. I was able to inquire into my life making and the life making of students through the lens of a narrative inquirer. As I did so, my experiences slowly began to make sense. Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) notion that, "people shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their pasts in terms of these stories" (p. 375), is how I understand what unfolded in our shared classroom the morning after the massacre.

Because I am an educator, parent, and citizen, I am regularly sharing experiences and composing stories, with students, my daughters, and friends. Because I am a narrative inquirer, I understand stories shape who I am and who I might become. And because I was educated to be a narrative inquirer, I regularly find myself holding a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space in my mind (and sometimes I stretch my arms outward and my hands form a triangle) as I inquire into stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described a metaphorical inquiry space as having three sides: temporality[8] on one side, personal and social[9] on a second side, and place[10] on the last side. They also argued that this space consists of four directions of inquiry: inward, outward, backward, and forward. They posited to do research into experience "is to experience it simultaneously in these four directions and to ask questions pointing each way" (p. 50). With narrative inquiry as my methodology, my goal is to understand the interconnectedness between stories composed on one landscape and brought to inform stories that are lived out on another.

She told me. I was excited at the prospect of my youngest child coming to visit and help me move. She was going to be with me for six full days. Some of the time would be taken up with the move; however, I planned daily trips to share my favorite beaches and hiking trails. One particular day I went

to work in the morning and she packed boxes. Knowing she was coming to pick me up at 2:00, I was highly focused. When the truck rolled up, I jumped in.

We drove out to the Light House, one of my favorite trails. The sun was warm—we had appropriate gear and we were together. We walked along, laughing, occasionally holding hands, sharing stories, and taking pictures. When we came to a wooden bench, my daughter climbed on top and began doing yoga poses. I looked at her; I looked out to the sea and felt its rhythms pass between and through us. I felt mist on my face and arms and the breeze in my hair; I was joyful.

Fig. 1: Daughter doing yoga (Photograph: Jack-Malik, 2017)

We continued along until we came to a tee in the trail: to the left, we would return to the parking lot; to the right we would be on a more rigorous, less-cared-for trail. My daughter went right and I followed. We went down to the beach, where it was noisier because of the waves. The path was narrow and we therefore walked single file. When she reached the beach, she found a gigantic, flat rock and sat down. Looking back and with her hand, she invited me to join her and I did. She was quiet for a long time. Finally, she looked at me, tears trickling down her beautiful and now twisted face and said,

"Mom, I have to tell you something."
"Okay, my girl, what is it?"
More time passes and she is now breathing erratically and silent tears slide in to sobs.
"What is it? Tell me."
"I can't."
"Are you sick?"
"No"
"Are you pregnant?"
"God Mom! No!"
"Did something happen with Tim (boyfriend)?"
"No."
"Okay, I am going to stop asking. You tell me when you are ready."
We sat on that big, flat rock for a very long time. I listened, as her sobs became occasional gasps for breath and finally normal breathing resumed. I reached my hand across the space between us and rested it on her leg.
"My girl, there is nothing you can tell me that will result in me not loving you."
Then it came, like hot lava taking everything in its path.
"I'm so sorry Mom, I didn't mean for it to happen. Things at work were insane! Every shift they pressured me to sell, even when it was not in the best interest of the client and even when I made quota. When I tried to sleep all I saw was Lucy and her unborn child, both murdered. I did not go to class. I did not get my assignments done. I failed two courses. I'm so sorry Mom. I'm sorry I didn't tell you earlier. I know I should have."
My daughter is crying quietly and staring out at the ocean.
I reached my arm around her and pulled her close.
"My girl, I don't care about school, about passing or failing, I care about you."
"Any mark is good enough, as long as it's above 80%." my daughter gags as she spits this sentence into the space between us.
"What?"
"Do you have any idea how many times you said this to me? Every project, report card, parent teacher interview, it was always the same sentence. When my mark was less than 80% I felt like I failed you. I wanted you to be proud of me. Do you know how many times I threw work in the garbage so you would not see it? I could not take it Mom. And the money, I know you are mad about the tuition."
"I don't care about the money, I care about you and I am very sorry you held on to this story for such a long time. It must have been very hard."
She was quiet and then began to cry and she continued to cry for a very long time. When she stopped, we made our way back to the truck in silence. I held her hand whenever the path was wide enough to allow for it. I held her hand on the drive home. (Excerpt from journal, Jack-Malik, July 2017)

This is life curriculum making, where stories from home, community, and school collide. I regularly spoke to my daughter on the phone and FaceTime. I knew about the murder of her friend and unborn child. Despite these shared conversations, she kept many stories to herself or told me cover stories (Crites, 1979). When I inquire into this story, using the three-dimensional space, I hear my teacher voice,

through the years, over and over telling her "any mark is acceptable, as long as it is above 80%" and I know these words shaped the story my daughter shared with me on the beach. I am flooded with memories of assignments and report cards and my absolute frustration with comments and marks that reflected anything but stellar efforts and results. I remember the grounding, the supervised homework, and mostly I remember the face of a child who wanted to be anywhere else. In this moment, the intersection of home and school curriculum making is painful. I feel pangs of guilt and deep concern for my child.

My reaction is acute discomfort as I attempt to sit in the tension. I want to avoid it altogether. I think about calling her and attempting to smooth it over. Through the years, I learned very well how "… to erase, write over and silence … felt emotions to maintain smooth stories" (Clandinin et al., 2010, p. 82). Instead, I engage in what the authors referred to as self-facing and try to understand how this tension can be "a way of creating a between space, a space which can exist in educative ways" (p. 82).

Struggling to Think and Live Like a Narrative Inquirer

After my daughter left we continued to talk about the failed courses and the anxiety she experienced before telling me. I listened attentively because I understood the 80% or else story was temporal in that it continued to shape the stories we were telling and living. I understood it would not be easy for us to tell this story with new insights. I believed the onus was on me if my daughter and I were going to live out new educative stories (Dewey, 1938). I also knew it would have been familiar for me to blame my daughter, accuse her of exaggerating, of being irresponsible and demand she repay the tuition. I also could have ignored my daughter's temporal shifting to stories from our shared early, familial landscapes. I did not because I understand telling the blaming or ignoring story would "distort the moral contours, provide faulty explanations for how the situation came about, feature the wrong collateral events and circumstances while papering over the relevant ones, and depict ways of moving forward that would be morally disastrous" (Lindemann, 2014a, p. 28). Like Dewey's (1938) notion of continuity, I understand that lived stories are carried forward and shape future stories. I wanted to ensure we told this story so that together we could compose educative forward-looking stories. I wanted to take an active role, to be an agent, to retell and relive the stories so we could change.

Then someone else's child. Then a student came to my office and shared stories, including his anxiety. I listened, I stayed in the moment, and I held relational space so that he could be what he needed. He told stories of parental dysfunction grounded in alcohol and drug abuse. He worried constantly that his parents were never going to be and remain sober and that his brothers would end up in care. He said he regularly moved them between his aunts so that children's services would not pick them up. He wanted them to be together. Lindemann (2014b) noted, "serious illness puts pressure not only on individual family members but also on the family itself" (p. 97). He described returning home to find his brothers had not eaten in two days. He raged about teachers who did nothing. In the midst of his rage, I heard my daughter's voice, and world travelled (Lugones, 1987) to our relational space on the beach. I felt warmth and mist on my skin and I knew I could be in the room with this young man. He finally exhausted himself and turned his attention to his outstanding assignments. I suggested we think

about how he could carve out time to complete them. I told him I cared about him and his brothers. I gave him my phone number, something I have never done. I also told him I had some appreciation of how hard his life was because recently I had begun to understand the far-reaching effects of anxiety.

I was able to speak with this young man because of the story my daughter and I experienced on the beach and because I did the hard work of self-facing stories. Leaning heavily on and trusting Clandinin et al.'s (2010) idea of tension as an educative space between, I knew the importance of holding relational silence in the midst of acute tension to allow the other to speak, regardless of how long it took. Van Der Kolk's (2014) work also informs me. He wrote,

> social support is not the same as merely being in the presence of others. The critical issue is reciprocity: being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else's mind and heart. (p. 81)

Fully engaging the inquiry. Part of narrative inquiry involves sharing the account to ensure it cleaves to the story as the other intended. As well, an important part of narrative inquiry is concern for relationships. I needed to remind my daughter that when the work was shared and published, she would be implicated. I wanted to give her multiple opportunities to respond to what I had written and I wanted to acknowledge what she was feeling. I understood I would continue to live in relationship with my daughter, after this research was completed; therefore, my focus was on the relational. I also wanted to remind her that she could say no, and therefore I would remove her story. I was thinking about this when my phone rang. It was my daughter on Facetime. She said the call was unintended and perhaps the weight of the dog's paw activated the phone. We laughed. I told her I wanted to chat and asked if she had time. She said yes. I told her I was calling to share a narrative account of our experiences because I wanted it to represent what she remembered and I wanted her to respond to how she was represented in the text. I was nervous. I began reading slowly, purposefully. It did not take long before we were both crying and wiping away tears. When I finished I asked what she thought. I also put the pages down and looked at her. This is what she said:

> Before now when I thought about my visit to you, everything was great except I felt really bad about what happened on the beach. I felt liked I dumped on you and made you responsible for me failing the courses, for not telling you and for wasting your money. Now when you read this to me, I hear you say something else, something important. I know I was the one who failed and I do want you to be proud of me. I also know it is hard to talk about these things. The part you wrote about wanting to get the story down so we could change and that you didn't want to blame me that means a lot to me mom. Some days are so hard. School is so hard and many professors are dicks who don't want to hear about accommodations. On the beach that day mom, I knew you heard me and I felt safe and loved. I knew I screwed up and I knew you cared more about me than the screw up. (Facetime research conversation, January 2018)

We agreed we would talk the following week after we both had time to think about the text.

> Once again, I reminded her she could tell me to remove her story. This time we went through the text, line by line. She made word choice suggestions and she asked that I remove sentences; I made all changes. We co-constructed the text in efforts to describe our relational experiences. I shared the entire article because I wanted her to understand what I had learned.

Van Der Kolk's (2014) work helps to deepen my understandings of what my child shared. He wrote, "being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives" (p. 81).

Tension is an opportunity. The story from the morning following the massacre lingered with me for many years. The story I shared with my daughter also lingers. The story of the young man who came to my office joins these stories. Each story includes tensions when curriculum making on one of the landscapes (home, school, and community) collides. In the first story, I had no way of extrapolating knowledge because I was not a narrative inquirer and because I was living at a time when there was no consideration of curriculum making occurring at home, school, and in the community. Nevertheless, I had the experience of three small girls reaching through the tension and silently comforting me. I have always felt deep gratitude for the children. When they embraced me, I felt soothed. It would be years before I had the language and knowledge to name it as curriculum making and as a story that informed future curriculum making stories in educative ways. Once I knew it this way, I wanted to live stories where I did for others what the little girls did for, and with, me. Sitting on the beach with my daughter, I was the three little girls. Sitting in my office with the young man, when the temporality of my early stories was screaming at me to exit, I was able to stay in the tension, within the relational space. The three little girls, my daughter, and the young man are teaching me to be still, to hold, to wait, to listen, to be present in silence. These stories are teaching me there are no divides between the curriculum-making landscapes; there is however, fluidity. They also remind me to think hard before framing tension as something to be avoided. Finally, these stories teach me the importance of taking time to inquire. It is a wonderful goal to set to be a curriculum maker who lives relationally and allows past experiences to inform future ones. For me this means, slowing down, choosing carefully, and thinking deeply. When I do these things, I know curriculum making, as sentient, ever changing and as support as one struggles to shift identities.

Autobiographical narrative inquiry is like setting a camera's aperture to the f/1.4 stop. It encourages a wide berth as to what counts as useful research for teachers and it makes a space for many, divergent voices, including teacher voices. I understand this as a good thing because classrooms are regularly sites of complex tension and places where teachers meet and come into moments of tension with students who do not share similar experiences. In writing about my own experiences, it was partly my intention to make sense of my tension-filled stories and write a meaningful account of them. In turn, I hoped these accounts would sensitize readers to the tension experienced by teachers and students as they move amongst the various curriculum-making landscapes. Most importantly, it is my hope that this work offers the reader a moment to suspend what can be iron-clad knowing and enter into worlds of empathy with those who we experience as different.

Autobiographical reflection allows teachers to deepen their understandings of who they are and how their knowing shapes how they interact with students, families, and colleagues. When a teacher stops to reflect on what she is doing and who the students are in her class, she has an opportunity to create new stories. The reflection and inquiry often opens spaces for ambiguity and wonder. Inside the spaces a teacher can safely imagine the life of a student with empathy and compassion. Moreover, if we name the experiences students and teachers are having at school, home, and in the community as curriculum

making, then we provide a scaffold from which to reflect on and analyze a teacher's practice as she travels between landscapes. Furthermore, naming curriculum making this way would interrupt the privileging of school curriculum making. When we inquire and reflect we have the opportunity to deepen our understandings of how to negotiate tension in educative ways because we better understand why we make certain decisions. As well, it provides an opportunity to explore stories from our earliest landscapes, which can be influencing decision making in ways one does not appreciate. A teacher then has an option to begin living out new stories, which are a better fit for her new understandings.

Finally, this work is important because it illustrates a facet of teaching that is under egregious attack as we march along a path of standardized education and accountability to test scores. Content and pedagogy must be rooted in a solid foundation of respectful, caring, and, I would argue, loving relationships between students and teachers. Loving my daughter, being mindful of our relationship, allowed us to experience tension and then together find a way forward. Tension happens at school, every day and in every classroom—autobiographical reflection offers teachers a way to make sense of tension in meaningful ways and to live out new stories grounded in new understandings of who they are and who they want to become.

Notes

1. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) used four terms to "structure the process of self-narration." Lived stories are those we live. Told stories are those we tell. Retold stories are those used "to interpret lives as told in different ways, to imagine different possibilities" (p. 478). To relive stories is "to live out the new possibilities" (p. 478).
2. Priority school is a term used to describe a school where students require additional support if they are to meet provincial achievement goals.
3. Montreal Massacre: The École Polytechnique massacre, also known as the Montreal massacre, was a mass shooting at that occurred on December 6, 1989. It is the deadliest mass shooting in Canadian history.
4. Pseudonyms are used to protect the children's identities.
5. This story is taken from my doctoral dissertation (Jack-Malik, 2012).
6. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) shared the idea of professional knowledge landscape to allow us to think about schools as landscapes of "space, place, and time" (p. 4). These landscapes they posited are "filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships" (p. 4).
7. Bloom's Taxonomy (1956): Consisted of six major categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. The categories after Knowledge were presented as "skills and abilities," with the understanding that knowledge was the necessary precondition for putting these skills and abilities into practice.
8. Temporality: Clandinin and Connelly, 2006) noted, "…events under study are in temporal transition" (p. 479). By this they mean all events and people have a past, present, and a future, and it important to appreciate they are in a process and changing.
9. Sociality: Connelly and Clandinin (2006) argued narrative inquirers must simultaneously attend to personal conditions, "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (p. 480).
10. Place: Connelly and Clandinin (2006) described "the specific concrete, physical, topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events occur" (p. 480).

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Stories in Mathematics Teacher Education: Preservice Teachers' Experiences Creating an *Important Book*

Limin Jao

Abstract

This paper describes a mathematics task inspired by a children's storybook, *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown, and how secondary mathematics preservice teachers' (PSTs') experiences with this reform-based task influenced their development as educators. Findings suggest that PSTs enjoyed the opportunity to be creative and make connections to personal experiences. Engaging in this writing task also affected PSTs' development as mathematics teachers as it allowed them to think more broadly about mathematics teaching and see the value in reform-based approaches for teaching.

I am, among other things, a mathematics educator. When I tell this to people, I tend to get responses that have negative memories and/or sentiments associated to them. "I had a horrible math teacher." Or, "I'm so bad at math." Often, this is followed by an account of how they hit a wall at so-and-so grade (typically in secondary school), how they never seemed to understand so-and-so teacher who lectured at the front of the classroom, and how they did not see the relevance of what they were learning and in general found mathematics class to be boring and unengaging. These experiences typify a traditional approach to teaching and learning that is often also characterized by teacher-centered learning through repetition and rote memorization.

In contrast, when I encourage people to share positive memories of school, they are quick to speak of activities with classmates and moments where they were able to take ownership of their learning. These experiences are akin to approaches advocated for by the mathematics reform movement: devote special attention to selecting teaching strategies to support students' individual needs; strengthen students' conceptual understanding of mathematics concepts, and increase student engagement (Hiebert, 1990; Hunter, Hunter, Jorgensen, & Choy, 2016). Other examples of teaching strategies that align with a reform-based perspective include inquiry-based learning, the use of rich tasks that connect to students' lived experience, and student-centred learning. Research shows that reform-based approaches support deeper mathematical understanding in a wider range of learners (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000; 2014).

Research (and my not-so-scientific interactions as described above) also show that these reform-based approaches have not yet come to dominate the secondary mathematics classroom (e.g., Gainsburg, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2006). I keep this as a central focus in my role as a teacher educator. Through my work with preservice teachers (PSTs), I hope to develop educators who use reform-based approaches in their mathematics teaching practice. Approaches that result in positive learning experiences for their students

will surely contribute to a change in the common negative discourse about mathematics education (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2016; Rodney, Rouleau, & Sinclair, 2016).

Secondary school PSTs are often trained as subject specialists, and tend to choose this career path because they had positive experiences as mathematics learners; they are eager to share their love of the subject matter with others (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Secondary PSTs typically experienced traditional teaching approaches and were successful, perhaps even thriving through this approach. It is both difficult for them to put themselves in the place of a struggling secondary mathematics student and to imagine different teaching approaches that could be more valuable to their students than the ones that were so successful for their own learning (Nathan & Petrosino, 2003). As a result, many secondary PSTs enter their teacher education program with beliefs that mathematics should be taught using a traditional approach (Swars, Hart, Smith, Smith, & Tolar, 2007) informed by their personal experiences as students (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). Research asserts that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning influence their instructional practices (Levin, 2015; Wilke & Losh, 2008). As such, it is not surprising that many novice secondary mathematics teachers teach using a traditional approach, in other words, the way that they were taught (Lewis, 2014). And so, the cycle of traditional teaching in the secondary mathematics classroom continues.

Therefore, my challenge as a teacher educator is to show to these secondary mathematics PSTs the value of reform-based approaches and to challenge their preexisting beliefs. In this paper, I describe secondary PSTs' experiences engaging in a reform-based mathematics task inspired by a popular children's story, *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown (1949) and how this experience affected the PSTs' development as mathematics teachers.

The Use of Stories and Books in Mathematics Education

It is not a novel idea (no pun intended) for stories and children's books to be used in the mathematics classroom. Research shows them to be valuable tools to help students understand mathematics as the mathematics concepts are placed in context (Capraro & Capraro, 2006; Cohen, 2013), a key component of the reform-based approach to mathematics instruction. Learning mathematics through and, by, stories has been also found to increase students' motivation and engagement (Ward, 2005) and strengthen mathematics understanding by clarifying students' mathematical misconceptions (Skoumpourdi & Mpakopoulou, 2011).

Stories and books in the mathematics classroom have been found to engage both reluctant and keen mathematics learners (Furner, 2017). Books with implicit mathematics content, in which the story is the focal point and the mathematics is incidental, require the teacher to highlight the mathematics to students (Forrest, Schnabel, & Williams, 2006). For reluctant mathematics learners, it is the story that will engage these students and it is through the teacher's efforts that they can engage with the mathematics. For example, the children's picture book, *Caps for Sale* (Slodbokina, 1940), follows a hat salesman trying to sell his wares. Yet, teachers may ask students to notice the different colors of hats and calculate the

profit of his sales given the cost of "50 cents a cap." Similarly, readers of the novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Haddon, 2003), will be drawn in to the adventures of the main character, Christopher. However, students may be prompted to further explore the mathematical significance of the numbering of chapters in the book. For keen mathematics learners, the mathematics content within these books may serve as an additional point of access and intrigue. Conversely, books with explicit mathematics content put less onus on the teacher to make connections with mathematics. Again, with the same benefits to all students, the story in these books relies on the mathematics. In Cindy Neuschwander's *Sir Cumference* picture book series, we follow Sir Cumference's adventures in which he, for example, uses geometry to design a perfect table (1997) or uses rounding to ward off an enemy attack (2015).

Although stories and books geared towards secondary-aged mathematics students exist (including *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* mentioned earlier), most examples described in the literature are of picture books to be used in elementary school contexts. Yet, I believe these picture books also have a place in a secondary mathematics classroom (see Jao & Hall, 2018). And, while research describes the benefits of stories and books for mathematics education, these benefits are targeted to students as mathematics learners. Not yet explored is the benefit of stories and books on mathematics PSTs. In this paper, I thus focus on this gap and investigate the effect of engaging in a writing task inspired by a children's story on PSTs' development and beliefs about mathematics education.

Creating an *Important Book*:
A Mathematics Task Inspired by a Children's Story

A mathematics teaching methods course in which I was the course instructor served as the context for this study. The secondary mathematics PSTs (n=12) were enrolled in a two-year program at a Canadian faculty of education in which graduates are qualified to teach from Grades 7 through 12.

As the instructor of the mathematics methods course, I aimed to create a situated context (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and provide opportunities in which PSTs could experience learning in an environment that modeled a reform-based approach. The course was structured around pedagogy- (e.g., social justice, technology) and content-based (e.g., algebra, geometry) themes. One class in the course focused on the theme of use of stories and books in the mathematics classroom. In this class, I read the children's book, *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown. After I finished reading, I asked the PSTs about their impressions of the book and to comment on the structure of each page. The PSTs noted that each page described a different topic (e.g., snow) and different characteristics of the chosen topic (e.g., it is cold, it melts). The PSTs also noticed that the first and last line of each page highlighted the "most important" characteristic of the topic in the pattern of: "The important thing about ___ is..." and concluding with "But the important thing about ___ is...", where the characteristic from the first sentence was repeated. Finally, the PSTs remarked that the book read like a collection of poems or short stories about different topics, rather having a narrative thread woven throughout the book.

I told the class that we would be creating our very own *Important Book* about mathematics. The PSTs could select a mathematics topic of their choosing, write their contribution to the book, and post their "page" to the course website for the group to enjoy.

In order to create a rich narrative to describe PSTs' experiences and responses to *The Important Book* task, I supplemented my lived experiences in-class with written artifacts from the course. Field notes documenting PSTs' in-the-moment reactions to the task were taken both in the class that the task was assigned and in the subsequent class after the creation of their *Important Book*. Written artifacts consisted of their contributions to *The Important Book*, questionnaires, and reflective essays.

PSTs completed a questionnaire in the first class of the course so that I (as the course instructor) could get to know the PSTs in order to adapt the course to better meet their needs. Adapted from McDougall's (2004) *Attitudes and Practices to Teaching Math Survey*, the questionnaire had three sections. The first section asked the PSTs questions about their background in mathematics (e.g., List your previous degrees. Did you enjoy mathematics as a student?). The second section contained Likert-type questions about participants' beliefs about mathematics education (e.g., Teachers should be the ones to explain concepts to students. It is important to teach mathematics embedded into real-life problems). The final section comprised open-ended questions for PSTs to elaborate on their current beliefs (e.g., In your opinion, what teaching strategy/strategies is/are most effective for students to learn math?). The PSTs completed sections two and three of the questionnaire again at the end of the course.

The reflective essay was the final assignment of the course. In the essay, PSTs reflected on their journey of becoming a teacher of mathematics by describing their previous experiences as mathematics students, significant moments from the mathematics methods course, and any other relevant experiences. PSTs were also asked to reflect on their questionnaires, taking note of any similarities or differences between responses from the beginning and end of the course. Data were coded through a constant comparison analysis method (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). The initial inductive coding scheme was based on themes from literature and was deductively elaborated on based on emerging themes from the data.

Examples of Preservice Teachers' Writing

In this section, I present three excerpts from *The Important Book* created in the mathematics methods course to give a sense of PSTs' responses to the task. All student names are pseudonyms.

<u>Problem Solving</u>
By Sylvia

The important thing about problem solving is the process.

There is usually more than one way to answer a request,
So start with the question and do not stress!

We define the problem and know how to proceed,
A plan or a strategy is how to succeed!

But alas! Don't rush to the end.
Take time to organize is what I recommend.

Information to solve the problem is in the question,
Make a column or list is my small suggestion.

Now remember in math there are important rules,
Common sense, theorems, and concepts are just some of the tools,
Plus properties and definitions to prove we aren't fools.

Evaluate or solve and be sure to take care,
Double check your solution for errors could be there!

The final step you should do and do not delay,
State the answer in a sentence makes it clear as day.

The last thing I'll say I'm sure you can guess,
The important thing about problem solving is the process.

<u>A tale of most functions</u>
By Rafeef

The important thing about functions is every x has only one y
Although x might be exclusive, y certainly is not
And that my friend is why the vertical line test is sought
Some common functions we cover are linear and quadratic
These functions are simplistic, and some might say pretty anticlimactic
We do concentrate a bit on those within trig
These concepts are in 10 and are pretty big
Lest not forget those that are exponential and inverse
To graph such functions we need to rehearse
The functions we often dislike are those that are in pieces
We tend to get stumped when domain and range ceases
Evaluating occurs through replacing and rearranging
While simplifying occurs through expanding and changing
You will then further decipher what's even and odd
And on that note you will be awed
In 11 you will learn how to write function notation
And by the end you will be an expert on relations
Last but not least you will investigate transformations
And that my friend – is a frustration!
The important thing about functions is every x has only one y

<u>Correlation</u>
By Maya

The important thing about correlation is that it is not causation
But it is an important measure of relation.
Correlation can be strong, and correlation can be weak.
Correlation can be found wherever you seek.
Correlation can be measured with the Pearson Coefficient,
But in non-linear situations this is quite deficient.
It is also tricked when outliers are met,
But do not despair, other choices we can get.
One idea is a non-parametric test
Like Spearman's, Kendall's, and all the rest.
But don't forget visual inspection,
And that a correlation will not necessarily answer your question,
Because the important thing about correlation, is that it is not causation.

Preservice Teachers' Reactions to *The Important Book* Task

Analysis of the data suggest that the task inspired by *The Important Book* provided PSTs with an opportunity to experience engaging with mathematics that was meaningful and satisfying. In this section, I describe PSTs' experiences as mathematics students in secondary school and how these shaped their early beliefs about mathematics teaching, PSTs' reflections of the task, and how this task contributed to the PSTs' development as mathematics teachers.

Preservice Teachers' Experiences as Mathematics Learners and Early Beliefs About Mathematics Teaching

PSTs described their learning experiences as secondary mathematics students to be largely traditional with many using the term "chalk and talk" to describe a situation where the teacher is positioned at the chalkboard lecturing to the students. Maya described a typical mathematics lesson in her secondary school as: "Teacher stands at front, takes up previous homework, teaches lesson and [goes through] examples, takes questions, then provides free time for homework." This structure was echoed by all of the PSTs.

At the beginning of the methods course, many of the PSTs believed that they would use traditional teaching practices in their own classrooms, having had academic success themselves learning in this way. Langston shared his belief that the best way to teach mathematics would be through "[teacher-led] guided practice." Emily indicated her belief that students should be "[showed] a process/sample question" followed by the teacher "replicating the process and (allowing students to) ask any questions along the way." Emily affirmed her beliefs by saying, "The way I learned worked for me, [so] why wouldn't it work for my own students?"

These beliefs, however, were not unanimous amongst the PSTs. Some PSTs believed that the "best approach" may "depend on the student." When describing their experiences as mathematics students,

PSTs reflected that strong mathematics students (including themselves) could successfully engage and learn through this approach. For example, Justin described mathematics classes in his secondary school to be "somewhat dominated by the more talented students in the class." As such, some PSTs were uncertain whether the traditional approach would be equally successful with weaker students. In thinking about how best to support all students in their future mathematics classes, some PSTs had more tentative beliefs. For example, Justin indicated that a best approach would be "something more than chalk and talk every day," whereas Maya simply said, "I don't know."

Preservice Teachers' Reactions to, and Reflections on, *The Important Book* Task

When I presented the task to the PSTs, many were initially uncomfortable with the idea of writing about mathematics. None of the PSTs had experienced a similar task in previous mathematics learning contexts. Here, in a context in which they typically thrived (the mathematics classroom), the PSTs were being asked to engage in a medium in which they lacked confidence (creative writing). Within a couple days of being given the task, the PSTs began to post their pages on the course website. While all PSTs followed the general structure of pages from the book (i.e., beginning and ending their writing with the same descriptive sentence—"The important thing about ____ is that _____," and providing multiple sentences each describing a different attribute of the mathematics concept), most PSTs extended the structure by adding additional features. These included using rhyming couplets, writing more than twice the number of sentences that generally occurred on a page, and hyperlinking key mathematics terms (to websites that allowed readers to enrich their mathematical understanding). While PSTs described the concepts using mathematically sound definitions, they also made connections to real-life applications and linked concepts to emotions and personal experiences.

PSTs came to the next class eager to give positive feedback to their classmates and to get feedback about their own creations. This positive energy was in stark contrast to the silence and hesitation when first presented with the task. Now, the PSTs were animatedly talking about the task, sharing how much they enjoyed it (and how surprised they were at their enjoyment), and applauding the mathematical understanding that was communicated in this creative medium.

The Impact of *The Important Book* Task on Preservice Teachers' Beliefs

The *Important Book* task allowed PSTs to experience doing mathematics in a reformed way. As an approach that was in contrast to those that they had experienced as secondary mathematics students, the positive experience of *The Important Book* task expanded their perspectives about what mathematics teaching could be and made them question their initial traditional beliefs about mathematics teaching.

PSTs shared that *The Important Book* task was a valuable and interdisciplinary approach to teaching. PSTs shared their perceptions of the many benefits to this approach for students. For example, Nikki wrote that the integration of stories into the mathematics classroom would "make students more engaged, and also develop their skills more deeply in both of these subject areas." Other PSTs felt that such tasks would allow reluctant mathematics students the opportunity to bring other areas of interest and strength

into the mathematics classroom. Specifically, PSTs believed that students who enjoy English Language Arts and/or expressing themselves through words can also thrive in the mathematics classroom.

Likewise, PSTs shared that interdisciplinary teaching approaches could be meaningful for teachers. Although they were all passionate about mathematics, PSTs felt that these approaches would allow them to integrate other interests and passions. In the final reflection paper for the course, Mahmoud wrote:

> As someone who also has an interest in English Language Arts, I would like to in the future find more ways of implementing English Language Arts into math and vice versa. In the future, I could see myself for certain assessments in math having students write a paragraph or story describing their process to solve a particular problem, or even a poem to achieve that same purpose.

Having had the positive experience of *The Important Book* task in the mathematics methods course, Mahmoud was now considering ways to integrate writing into his mathematics teaching, suggesting options including writing paragraphs, stories, and poems. Mahmoud also extended writing in the mathematics classroom beyond an in-class task/activity and suggested it as a possible assessment tool.

At the end of the course, when reflecting on their evolving beliefs about mathematics education, PSTs wrote of realizing that the traditional approach to teaching mathematics may not be the only approach and that "new and creative ways to teach" were needed in their teaching repertoire. PSTs reflected that their previous experiences as mathematics students contributed to early beliefs about teaching mathematics, but as a result of experiences in the mathematics methods course, including *The Important Book* task, their perspectives about mathematics teaching were beginning to shift. For example, in her final reflection paper for the course, Sylvia wrote:

> I (reflect on) my own experiences as a student in mathematics...of "chalk and talk" lessons. I hope that as a teacher of mathematics I will create experiences for my students that are memorable and go beyond just "chalk and talk" lessons. I now think it is important that teachers plan lessons that encourage creative and critical thinking in non-traditional ways.

Similarly, Emily was able to reflect on her evolving beliefs. Thinking back to her beliefs at the beginning of the course, she wrote, "My own high school math experiences really influenced my [initial teaching beliefs]...I experienced math in a very traditional manner, I enjoyed it and couldn't really picture any other way a math classroom could exist." Emily continued to describe her new perspective to mathematics teaching by writing:

> I have now realized that there are probably more effective practices or that there should exist a balance within the classroom between traditional and non-traditional teaching methods. I want to find ways to help get my students interested and excited about math and I think that a student-centred approach and including more interactive activities is a great way to achieve greater student engagement.

Cognizant of these nascent beliefs, Emily shared that more time and experience is required for her to fully develop her ideas and to develop teaching approaches and strategies that she did not herself experience as a mathematics student. She wrote, "I continue to learn about other ways that I can facilitate

learning in my own classroom. I continue to learn and discover how I can inspire my own students' interest and even love of mathematics."

Concluding Thoughts

A good story can leave a lasting impression, whether it be the context or content of the story that was personally meaningful or satisfying, or the context in which the story was read (e.g., with a loved one, with friends, in quiet solitude) that was memorable. Authors of stories reap additional benefits, among them: having a direct connection to the material and seeing others enjoy their work. When assigning *The Important Book* task to my secondary mathematics PSTs, while I expected them to reap these particular benefits, I was unprepared for the extent to which the task would affect their thinking as mathematics educators.

In this task that combined literature and mathematics, the PSTs had the opportunity to be creative and make connections. The task of writing about a mathematics concept in the style of *The Important Book* is an example of integrating storybooks into the mathematics classroom. While some researchers (e.g., Honey, Pearson, & Schweingruber, 2014; Klein, 1996) claim that it is challenging to meaningfully integrate mathematics with other subjects, others assert that this cross-curricular approach positively extends students' learning. Specifically, Austin, Thompson, and Beckman (2005) stated that this approach deepens conceptual understanding and strengthens skills in both mathematics and English Language Arts —a belief shared by my PSTs. In their contributions to the class' *Important Book*, the PSTs demonstrated their mathematics and language abilities through their use of various literary devices and mathematically sound descriptors. Through describing the real-world application of their chosen mathematics concepts, the PSTs also highlighted the wide applicability of mathematics in numerous contexts (Van den Heuvel-Panhuizen & Drijvers, 2014; Whitin & Whitin, 2004). In addition, the emotional satisfaction and enjoyment of the task created positive memories for the PSTs. The sense of community developed as a result of this collective effort of creating the class' *Important Book*, and reciprocal appreciation for individual PSTs' contributions, only appear to strengthen the value of this task. While tasks inspired by *The Important Book* have been taken up in elementary mathematics contexts (e.g., Bertheau & Theissen, 1994; Whitin & Piwko, 2008), the positive reactions of my secondary mathematics PSTs suggest applications in secondary and even tertiary contexts.

The *Important Book* task also had an impact on the PSTs as developing mathematics educators. A task inspired from a storybook pushed these future mathematics teachers to reflect on assumptions about secondary school mathematics that they had accumulated as mathematics learners themselves through their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). Here, PSTs experienced an "extreme example of innovative practice" to counteract PSTs' beliefs about teaching (Grossman, 1991, p. 350). The "extreme" nature of this task was not in its feasibility in the secondary mathematics classroom; rather, engaging in this reform-based task was vastly different from the PSTs' previous mathematics learning experiences using traditional approaches. This new experience led the PSTs to think more broadly about their teaching practice. Grossman (1991) asserts that these "extreme" experiences stick with PSTs,

and once in the workplace, elements of reform-based approaches will be retained in their teaching practice as they instinctively drift back towards using traditional approaches. Thus, it is important for teacher education programs to provide as many (extreme) opportunities for PSTs to experience mathematics using reform-based approaches, especially those that counter their own experiences as mathematics students. Participating in these meaningful and authentic learning experiences is not only gratifying for the PSTs as mathematics learners, but also increases the likelihood that they will implement these valuable approaches into their own teaching practice (Kilpatrick, Swafford, & Findell, 2001; Leavy & Hourigan, 2018).

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Teachers Storying Themselves Into Teaching:
Comics as an Emergent and Relational Form of Research

Natalie LeBlanc and Rita L. Irwin

Abstract

In this article, we explore two comics that were produced in a province-wide teacher mentorship initiative in British Columbia, Canada. Comics-based research, undertaken through a collaborative approach, underscores the potential for this kind of research to highlight teacher stories and methodologically engage in an artistic collaboration within a research team. We use this opportunity to discuss how the mentoring project brought to our awareness the importance of sharing teachers' stories among peers, as teachers came together to study their professional practices.

Situating the Inquiry

We consider teacher mentorship as an interdependent and collaborative relationship in which teachers learn together to inquire and refine their practice. Our research project contributes to the scholarship on teacher mentoring programs by facilitating dialogue across educational communities, developing educational resources, and creating opportunities for coalitions and research collaborations.

Teacher mentorship matters because research consistently shows that teacher quality is the most important school-related determinant of student success (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kutsyuruba, 2012; Moir, 2009). Such evidence has led many educational authorities worldwide to invest in teacher mentoring programs as a powerful tool for closing the teacher quality gap (Kent, Feldman, & Hayes, 2009). Positive impacts of such programs include accelerating new teacher growth, improving student learning, and increasing the quality of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Karsenti & Collin, 2013). Without high-quality teacher mentorship, efforts to improve teacher quality are often prevented by the high rates of turnover. The consequences of high teacher turnover rates are diminished school capacity, attrition of competent teachers, loss of education dollars, and most importantly, significant negative impact on student learning outcomes (Kelly, 2004; Hong, 2010).

This paper adds to the larger discussion of the importance of teacher mentorship in early teaching practices by examining how comics-based research, an artful combination of narrative and arts-based educational research, captures personal experiences of beginning teachers as a way of understanding the significance that mentoring has played in their teaching practice. Moreover, in utilizing comics, our research deepens understandings of teacher mentorship, while provoking relational modes of engagement between the researchers involved in the process of data collection, comic-making, and between the scholarly and educational community.

Methodology

For our research, we adopted a collaborative arts-based methodology as a platform for telling, reflecting upon, and sharing stories (Leavy, 2009). Using a multi-method approach to research, we included ethnographic methods as well as semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Our process involved gathering data from participants through conducting video-recorded interviews with teachers, learning assistant teachers, and administrators who were involved in the selected school districts' mentoring programs and initiatives in British Columbia, Canada. Each research participant was interviewed at least twice over the duration of a year to learn more about their experiences as a mentor, a mentee, or a mentoring coordinator.

We used video to study the character, strengths, and uniqueness of selected districts' mentoring programs.[1] During the interviews, however, there was an interesting turn of events. After a request for anonymity was made by one of the participating teachers, the form of comics was introduced as an alternative image-based research output. As such, the comic form facilitated anonymity by masking participants' identities, which coincided with the ability of one of our team members who is a professional cartoonist and educator and well versed in the language of comic books in the educational landscape (Lawrence, Lin, & Irwin, 2017; Lin, Lawrence, & Irwin, 2016; Irwin, Lin, & Lawrence, 2015).

For this paper, we examine the artistic and collaborative process that comics afforded the research team, which we have come to perceive as an artistic hybrid of narrative and arts-based methodologies. Six four-to-five-page researcher-produced comics were created as part of our research project (see Fig. 1). This paper presents two comics that were produced for beginning teachers living and working in remote rural areas of British Columbia, Canada. A portion of this paper focuses on the production of these two comics, exploring how they have created a platform for storying the experiences of beginning teachers, while also offering a new way of sharing these stories with/in a larger network of educators in the province.
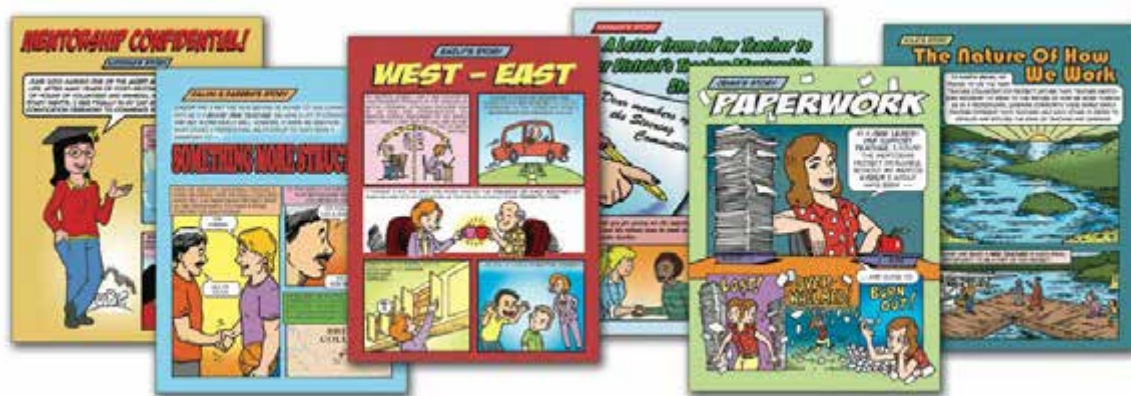
Fig. 1: Six comics were created as part of this research project. The comics, as an assemblage of multiple teaching experiences, capture the complexity of the teaching profession and the need for teacher mentorship, providing opportunities for closer interpersonal and cross-provincial relationships. Digital versions can be accessed from our research website: http://mentoringbc.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/research/comics/

For the purposes of this paper, interviews were conducted with the research team that includes the interviewer who spoke with the practitioners on-site, research associate Dr. Ching-Chiu Lin, as well as the transcriber of these interviews, research assistant Amber Lum, and the comic-creator, Julian Lawrence. Finally, we consider several reactions within the mentoring project participants, in which we articulate towards the end of this paper as post-comic dialogues.

Comics: A Spatial and Relational Way of Telling Stories

The research team has come to perceive comics as an artistic and aesthetic form of storytelling. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) have long argued for the need of narrative inquiry in studies concerning educational experience, positing that, "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (p. 2). For this project, the research team engaged in a collaborative methodology that combined traditional qualitative practices such as ethnographic observations and various forms of interviews, with more emergent and innovative arts-based approaches. By attending to the personal and to the social qualities of the participants' stories about their mentoring experiences, we selected an approach that could attend to the complexities pertaining to the relationships between teaching and learning, researching and teaching, and the multiple roles that the researchers played in the comic-making process.

Under the larger umbrella of *Narrative Inquiry* reside many arts-based methodological practices. Patricia Leavy (2009) argues,

> Narrative inquiry attempts to collaboratively access participants' life experiences and engage in a process of storying and restorying in order to reveal multidimensional meanings and present authentic and compelling rendering of data. In other words, narratives are constructed out of data through a reflexive, participatory, and aesthetic process (pp. 27–28).

To a certain extent, the comics created in this research project explore the potential of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) by attending to the narrative nature of the beginning teachers' mentoring experience. However, they share commonalities in form and in purpose, with a mode of social inquiry that has recently emerged as comics-based research (CBR). Gaining popularity in arts-based educational discourses (Jones & Woglom, 2013a; Sousanis, 2017), CBR is described as "a broad set of practices that use the comics form to collect, analyze, and/or disseminate scholarly research" (Kuttner, Sousanis, & Weaver-Hightower, 2017, p. 397). It is a flexible and multimodal form of research that explores and analyzes research participants' stories and it is also a powerful means of representing research findings.

Jeff Adams (2001) investigated the potential of comics in a critical study to construct student-teacher narratives through experimentations with graphic novels and found that comics can be a provocative form of social realism. The medium of comics allowed Adams' student-teachers to pursue serious social issues in which they were afforded a wide variety of styles and aesthetics, which provided the opportunity to experiment with various pictorial devices and compositional elements. Through the use of sequence, repetition, and juxtaposition, the medium of comics allowed students a large amount of freedom in the selection and combination of visual and textual forms to depict their stories.

Visual arts-based researcher, Marta Madrid-Manrique (2014), argues that comics are capable of showing things that cannot be shown otherwise. Through metaphor, Madrid-Manrique creates a visual language capable of conveying affect and complex emotions. Take for instance the use of *the gutter*, one of comics' key elements in which she refers to as "the in-between space among comic units or strips, which gives the reader the opportunity to interpret the rhythm and relation of scenes, actions, and ideas" (p. 34). Adams (2001) echoes this sentiment by commenting on the evocative power of the transitions between the comic's frames, which in his opinion, "encourages the use of speculation and imagination on the part of the reader/spectator" (p. 134).

Elaborating on his use of comics in his dissertation entitled *Unflattening,* Nick Sousanis (2015) describes how comics are well suited for telling evocative stories. For Sousanis, comics have a unique capacity for holding visual and verbal modes together in a single form. Furthermore, the "architectonics" (Spiegelman cited by Sousanis, 2015), or the structure in which multiple panels are organized on a single page, produces a spatial interplay that is unique to the graphic form.

For Madrid-Manrique (2014), the process of telling stories through comics is "a creative game" (p. 28), affording researchers a way to solve several problems such as confidentiality and anonymity, while challenging the researcher to (re)consider both reality and fiction on a regular basis. In her opinion, comics

> are a narrative language built on visual literacy, hypertextuality and intertextuality. Through the relationship between text and language, they frequently utilize symbolic representations, metaphor, allegory, and other literary [figures] as a way [of] telling the story aesthetically (p. 28).

As a form of relational research, Madrid-Manrique (2014) emphasizes how comics allows for re-presentation and re-telling of difficult experiences such as loss and vulnerability. Rather than drawing on visual modes of representation as a complement to qualitative research, she uses comics as an evocative form of arts-based research to denote how participants live in relation to others and places her participants (literally and figuratively) in "a net of embodied relations" (p. 37).

Embodied relations are further explored in the comics-based research of Jones and Woglom (2013b), who utilize a feminist lens to explore how "a body-and place-focused pedagogy" (p. 1) could enable teacher education students to recognize how they are "full-bodied and cultural beings" (p. 1). The authors demonstrate how such knowledge can expand perceptions of ourselves and others in place. In their opinion, "the place of learning in teacher education is too frequently positioned as a neutral backdrop upon which the 'real' learning about being an educator occurs" (p. 27). Through comics, they render the body and the body-in-relation-to place as the focal point of the narrative in order to emphasize its importance in teacher education curriculum and pedagogy.

Comics-based researchers are exploring ways in which social, cultural, educational, and pedagogical issues can be told through the medium of comics. Using some of the pictorial devices and visual tropes mentioned above, the research team used biographical components extracted from the ethnographic and interview data to compile a series of six comics. Although the results include

biographical components of each participant's experience in the mentoring program, artistic liberties were exercised to emphasize the relations that each case brought forth. In the following section, we describe two of the comics produced by Katrina and Kyle, two new teachers in a rural school in British Columbia, Canada. Each story is told through a combination of the participants and their relations to the place where they are teaching, and each is told in a way as to remain authentic to the participant's narrative. The entire comic can be accessed by following the (blue) link provided in each section.

Fig. 2: Select images from "Katrina's Story," a comic produced by the research team. A collaborative endeavor by Ching-Chiu Lin, Julian Lawrence, and Amber Lum. Please see: http://mentoringbc.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/research/comics/.

Comic 1: Katrina's Story

Katrina's Story depicts the necessity for mentorship programs. The relationship between her and her mentor occurring over a long period of time, emphasizes the roles that observation, reflection, dialogue, and conversation played in her mentoring process.

Commencing her career as an educator in a K-7 one-room school in her "home" school district, Katrina encountered many difficulties that a rural, multi-grade classroom often presents. Within her first four months of working in isolation, she began seeking support. Recalling a guest speaker in her rural education elective at University, she joined the BC Rural and Small Schools PSA (provincial specialist associations), which allowed her to learn about other teachers who were working across the province in similar teaching positions.

Communicating with these more experienced teachers over the phone, through email, and face-to-face, became an imperative part of Katrina's professional life. These contacts, in combination with funding from her Pro-D chair and the New Teacher Mentoring Project, granted her the opportunity to visit other schools and observe their programs and students. As a result, she learned new and effective strategies for teaching and acquired resources to further help in her teaching practice.

As a platform for raising questions and concerns, the mentoring project expanded Katrina's professional network, allowing her to make meaningful connections with other teachers in similar situations, which helped ease the doubt and uncertainty that she encountered in working in isolation.

In her second year as a participant in the mentorship program, Katrina witnessed a profound impact on her personal and professional growth, which she credits to the project and to her mentor who played such a pivotal role in her professional development. Katrina's Story demonstrates how the mentorship program afforded her the opportunity and time to connect with other teachers, which, in turn, allowed her to expand her professional and social networks. As a result, Katrina, with a desire to grow and improve her teaching practice, received the support that she required in order to do so. Thus, she acquired new skills and confidence, which, as an important form of self-affirmation, helped tremendously, especially in the beginning stage of her career.

Fig. 3: Select images from "Kyle's Story," a comic produced by the research team. A collaborative endeavor by Ching-Chiu Lin, Julian Lawrence, and Amber Lum. Please see: http://mentoringbc.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/research/comics/.

Comic 2: Kyle's Story

Kyle's Story is a departure from the other comics created for this project and from the comic produced for Katrina's Story. It is more multilayered, and the images and text are more aesthetically woven together throughout the comic, drawing the reader/viewer into the story by addressing particularities of the area or landscape.

Kyle's Story depicts a peer collaboration model, whereby teachers form a collaborative partnership or team, so they can learn from one another's varied experience and expertise. The collaborative partners or teams meet on professional development days to design a shared learning focus and receive training to improve collaboration skills. They are intended to provide personal accountability for growth in a specific area of teaching practice and create the conditions for their cultural knowledge and understanding to benefit each other. Peers who are geographically distanced from each other are assisted through the use of technology, establishing a virtual hub through which teachers can connect, and discuss their work.

Both comics reveal how the beginning teachers are deeply committed to their teaching practice. Through their stories, the audience learns the impact that the teacher mentoring project has had on their professional growth. Neither comic discussed is presented as a symmetrical dialogue between the mentor and the mentee. In Katrina's Story, for example, the audience can see the more dominant role that the mentor played in her process by the amount of times that they make an appearance in the comic. In Kyle's Story, however, his own body plays a more central role in the story and in the context of the school and the rural environment in order to emphasize the process of inquiry and reflection, which played the most pivotal role in his professional development.

Although both Katrina and Kyle's stories may appear as a neatly packaged document, the process of arriving there was rather complex and multi-faceted. It was very much a collaborative methodology, relying on both traditional and synergistic research practices. Some of which are outlined in the following section, elaborating on how the comic emerged over time while calling attention to some of the interpretive phases of the research process.

The Collaborative Comic Process

As a mode of arts-based narrative analysis, the research team extracted themes from the participants' interviews, focusing on their lived experiences, and then re/configured them into a coherent story told through the medium of comics. Using three major parts of the narrative process brought forth by Harvey, Mishler, Koenan, and Harney (2000), and cited by Leavy (2009), we break the comic process down into: 1) Coherence; 2) Turning points, and 3) Replotting or Re-storying.

1. Coherence. Coherence pertains to how the narrative is communicated. It is important to note that during the comic process, participants' interviews are transcribed, and the research team spends a considerable amount of time editing and selecting, or extracting, important events in the narrative to make a coherent story. During this stage, Ching and Amber work on how the story will be told—such as the style, the tense, and the tone. This stage is about honoring what is learned through the interviews, yet, at the same time, creating characters and storylines. As a young adult who avidly reads comics, Amber helps revise the text, making it more readable, fun, and casual. As an academic, Ching's writing can be hard to follow in this format. She has found it very helpful to have Amber's perspective. When this process is complete, Julian, the comic creator, makes small thumbnail sketches and a preliminary storyboard (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Small thumbnail sketches produced by Julian Lawrence for "Katrina's Story."

Julian's role in the research is to review the information, in the form of transcripts, audio, and other biographical or autobiographical text sent to him by Ching, and put it together into a cohesive narrative in the form of comics. Working mostly from transcripts of the interviews conducted with teachers and/or their mentors, Julian invents an avatar, an anonymous cartoon-like character to represent the participating teachers. As was the case with Katrina's Story, Julian is rarely provided with any visual cues for what the teachers involved in the research look like. Reading the story presented to him, he imagines their likeness as well as the geographical setting of their teaching. The process involves making artistic decisions and visualizing the teachers' physical features, without seeing any of the images or video interviews, thus maintaining the subjects' anonymity. Although Julian invents an avatar to represent the teacher in the story, he keeps all biographical information (except for the names of the school and the district) true to the story told. This differed only slightly with Kyle's Story, for which Julian was offered a photo reference and used it as a model for his avatar, closely approximating Kyle's likeness to the teacher in the story.

In Katrina's Story, her biographical information was intentionally withheld as she did not want her comic traced back to her identity or district. Her anonymity was protected as Julian had very little knowledge about her identity. Meanwhile, because of the "spatial interplay" afforded to the comic medium, the researchers were able to capture the authenticity of her narrative by including images such as the one-room schoolhouse and the wide, cold landscape.

During the process of reading the transcript, Julian makes edits to keep the story "a more streamlined narrative." He thinks through how the visual can flow better in relation to narrative, whereas, when Ching puts the script together, she does so without having any visuals in mind. At this stage, Julian visualizes what he thinks the teacher should look like, based on impressions that he makes from the words that the teacher uses in the written narrative. From there, he starts developing more concrete physical

characteristics and begins by drawing simple geometric shapes, ovals for heads, and ovals for body parts, and so forth (see Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Avatar sketches produced by Julian Lawrence for "Katrina's Story."

He also tries to visualize the teacher as a character doing activities that are mentioned in the transcript (i.e. sitting behind desks, standing in front of classrooms, driving in their cars, etc.). During the process of roughing out the story, Julian starts refining the look of the character while making important decisions to how the story will be organized. With very small thumbnail sketches, he sequences the panels, and decides on the size and shape of each one to best tell the story. In the margins of his sketches, he often refines the characterization of the main character as well as the secondary characters (such as classroom kids and other faculty). This process most often involves a repetitive process of sketching, erasing, and redrawing, which is sometimes the result of further dialogues with Ching, who is well acquainted with the participant's story. With a background in visual art, Ching often provides input after seeing Julian's initial sketches, sometimes even asking Julian to redraw aspects of the comic again.

Once the roughing out is complete, Julian places in the text using a computer, and by copying and pasting from the transcript. The comic, at this point, is drawn very rough and in pencil, but it is clear enough for everyone involved in the process to read and to see what the final story will look like (see Fig. 6). This version is then sent to Ching who verifies that the elements of the story make sense. After this step, it is sent to the participating teacher for comments or feedback. Once it is approved by the participating teacher, Julian proceeds with the next steps, which involve cleaning up the pencil lines, tracing over them with ink, and applying color. The sense of coherence is accomplished through the collective effort of the team and the participants.

Fig. 6: A combination of hand drawn images with text added with computer font. Produced by Julian Lawrence for "Kyle's Story."

2. Turning points. Both comics presented in this paper are in the format of a story in which a pivotal point of the narrative signals a shift in experience/interpretation, which Ching, Amber, and Julian all play a role in molding. For example, in Katrina's Story, the turning point is realizing what the mentorship program has afforded her in her professional development and in Kyle's Story, the turning point is how the teacher mentorship project, in a remote indigenous community, takes the shape of peer collaboration, where the needs of students and the community guide his growth as a teacher.

During Julian's process, he looks for opportunities to utilize his artistry as a comics creator to highlight these turning points. For example, in Katrina's Story on page four, the last panel portrays Katrina running on a board game. The text reads, "it is the mentorship program that's afforded me the opportunities to get to this vital point at an early stage in my career." In this instance, Julian interpreted "career" as a board game involving the rolling of dice and the constant feeling of running forward. In this panel, Katrina's career and her life are depicted as a board game that allows the reader/viewer to join in the

visualization to better understand the importance of the mentorship project on Katrina's life while simultaneously transitioning from one page to the next. In Kyle's Story, Julian used three images, a school garden, a field trip, and salmon smoking process to portray how teachers' peer collaborative activities help nurture teacher mentorship. Standing further apart from all the other comics that were produced, Julian even used some of Kyle's own artwork to highlight the role that the appreciation for the Haida culture played in Kyle's growth as a teacher (see page 3, panel 2 and page 4, panel 1 in Kyle's comic and Fig. 7 below).

Fig. 7: An example of Kyle's artwork included in the comic.

3. Replotting or re-storying. The comics process is not linear, but rather cyclical. As a "cycle of provocation," Ching describes it as a snowball that generates more detail (and interest) as it moves along. In her opinion, it is a process of replotting or re-storying in order for the researchers to maintain the authenticity of the participants' narrative. In some instances, the process of replotting or re-storying was a requirement due to some of the challenges that research brings forth (i.e., ethics, time constraints, requests for anonymity). Bringing together the various needs of the province and the partnership development grant, called for some creative decisions to be made, one of which being the comic form itself because it facilitated connections between researchers and teachers, and between the ministry and the academy. Furthermore, the use of bright colors, pleasing layouts, and character designs were intentional decisions made on the part of the research team so as to draw teachers (who have hectic schedules) into the narrative and feel a connection with the characters in the story.

The comic in final form, however, represents a significant amount of time in a short number of pages. In order to reduce the "real time" of the story, the researchers had to interpret and synthesize the data into a compelling story. In coming together at multiple stages during the process, they had to exercise judgment and make careful decisions as they worked to refine the comic. Sometimes this was achieved through extracting further elements or details from the fullness of the participants' lived experiences; other times, it involved trying various pictorial strategies to decide if they had been rendered appropriately.

Strategies such as juxtaposition, sequencing, and transitions are tested at different stages of the process so that the research team can experiment with different results. In some instances, Ching will revisit the

original transcript after the first draft of the comic has been completed in order to judge whether it has achieved the same atmospheric qualities as the teacher's original narrative, or if the avatar has captured the likeness of the teacher's character. In the final stages of the process, the researchers analyze the comic, ensuring that the key elements are told in an evocative, and not necessarily chronological, manner. This is shaped in collaboration while remaining attentive to the teacher's voice. The result is a delicate balance of the participating teacher's voice and the researchers involved in the project.

Replotting, or re-storying, also pertains to how elements of the story affect how the comic is interpreted by the audience who is viewing it or reading it. Both Katrina and Kyle's comics use metaphor, provoking multiple openings where understandings can emerge and shift, a contiguous movement (Irwin & Springgay, 2008) that may invite the audience to imagine what is occurring in the spaces between each frame or to construct a larger image of what is happening beyond the narrative shared. For some, this may ask that they reflect on their own experiences in teaching and learning, thereby engaging with the comic in a relational way. In this manner, the comic becomes an invitation for the audience to learn about other teachers' mentoring narratives—a platform for storying the experiences of beginning teachers—while also offering a new way of sharing these stories with/in a larger network of teachers.

Rethinking Teacher Stories: Comics & The Space of Emergence

A recent study conducted by Clandinin and colleagues (2015) found that early career teacher attrition is an identity-making process that involves complex negotiations between individual and contextual factors. Interviews conducted with 40 second- and third-year teachers in rural, urban, and suburban areas of Alberta, Canada, brought forth the following themes: 1) support, 2) threads of belonging, 3) tensions around contracts, 4) exhaustion, 5) balancing life and career, 6) the struggle to not allow teaching to consume their lives, 7) and other various uncertainties.

Their study prompted questions about how beginning teachers might be sustained by considering each person's storied life instead of solely focusing on individual and/or contextual factors for explaining the reason(s) why teachers leave the practice so early in their career. By shifting focus to the lives of beginning teachers in a more holistic way, Clandinin et al. (2015) encourage researchers to think narratively in order to recognize how teachers are living and composing their lives inside and outside of the school in which they are teaching. In their opinion, this stance demands for an exploration of the role that place, temporality, and personal/social considerations play in teachers' everyday lives in order to identify the reasons why teachers begin to, in Clandinin's (2015) words, "story themselves *out* of teaching" (p. 13, italics added for emphasis).

At the end of the article, the authors suggest that relational spaces—spaces that foster a continuous re/construction of experience for teachers to help re/compose their lives as they begin to teach—can help better sustain teachers in practice. This paper adds to the premise that relational spaces for reflection and reflexivity can help sustain beginner teachers and we invite others to explore the possibility of doing so through comics because it pays careful consideration to beginning teachers' "storied lives" (Clandinin et al., 2015).

As Bain, Young, and Kuster (2017) demonstrate, mentoring, like teaching, is not static. Although it sometimes relies on more experienced teachers guiding the development of novice teachers in personal ways, it also requires that teachers involved make judgments and choices to discover the right type of advice or mentoring method for them. This study attests to the emergent and reciprocal nature of mentoring, and it bears witness to how beginning teachers grow in their teaching practices through mentoring. It is our intention to contribute to the critical role in training of teachers and to pay homage to the dynamic interchange (Orland-Barack & Klein, 2005) that the mentorship process entails. The comic, as an evolution of multiple voices, is an attempt at capturing the complexity of this endeavor and the need for teacher mentorship as a means of providing opportunities for closer teacher relationships, as well as interpersonal and cross-provincial connections.

Emergence is an important concept as it refers to the process of coming into view, or existence. This is in contrast to a static or fixed notion, and in this instance, the comics explored in this paper underscore the proposition of emergence. Theoretically, a "space of emergence" (Osberg & Biesta, 2008) is where there is no predetermined end point, except to inquire into notions of interest. For the research team, this meant inquiring into how new teachers were learning through adopting a dialogical, collaborative, and relational practice in order to inquire about ways in which new teachers became more effective/reflexive practitioners. The concept of emergence is a process where properties that have never existed before, and sometimes are even inconceivable, are created or somehow come into being. Osberg, Biesta, and Cilliers (2008) define it as a quest for knowledge that is not based on developing "more accurate understandings of a finished reality as it is. Rather, the question for knowledge is more and more complex and creative ways of interacting with our reality" (p. 215). In other words, it is not about fitting into a structure of knowledge that already exists, but rather creating knowledge through an experience of emergence. As new teachers engage with their learning environments, they may come to new understandings. As they construct knowledge through their encounters with their peers, their environments, and through participatory actions (Osberg & Biesta, 2008), they take the time to become actively engaged with their own processes of learning.

Comics have provided the research team with rich ways to collect, analyze, and share our research. As a collaborative and multimodal assemblage, they have created a platform for the mentors and mentees' voices to be heard and exchanged, while generating new conversations in their evocative character. Therefore, the concept of "emergence" has two layers: one denotes the dynamic process of the research team, while the other makes reference to the rhizomatic connections that the use of comics in the teacher mentoring initiative has made possible.

Post Comic Dialogues: Comics as a Catalyst for Pedagogical Exchange

In post-comic conversations, research participants, teachers in the province, and other readers/viewers who were a part of this project, allowed for ongoing analysis of our research findings. In one informal interview, a comic reader revealed the following,

> I think that it's a really validating bit of information, to think what this program can make a difference for people and for teachers who are not particularly certain that they can continue in this job. (Laura, personal communication, July 2016)

In another conversation, a comic reader explained,

> I think it's neat to witness how comics can harness the power of the narrative. Through this sort of mosaic of comics, we have seen a rich collection of various teacher narratives that highlight the diversity of our province, as well as lived experiences in the teaching profession. (Devon, personal communication, July 2016)

Each comic, unfolding from new teacher experiences in different environments, created a platform for thinking and imagining other supports that can be put in place for new teachers in their practice. Comics have not only become an effective way of telling these stories, but through engaging in comics creation as an artful blend of narrative and arts-based research, our research emphasizes difference by incorporating the lived experiences of people in place, and people in relation to place, which, in turn, can enable further explorations as to how comics-based research can generate multiple and diverse voices.

Conclusion

In this research project, the creation of comics provided the research team with a rich way to collect, analyze, and share our research. Both Katrina and Kyle's stories, presented in this paper, focus on relations made in remote communities in British Columbia, inspiring other new teachers in similar situations to participate in this study. Both comics have not just become an end product, but a provocation to engender deeper reflection among other teachers who have read their stories and who are participating in the mentoring project, demonstrating how comics, as a mode of arts-based research, offers a new way of mobilizing research knowledge while remaining open to the space of emergence.

Acknowledgments

Note

1. A collection of videos made for this initiative can be viewed on our website: http://mentoringbc.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/research/videos/

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In Defense of Clichés: Life Writing as Iteration and Interrogation

Carl Leggo

Abstract

For over 30 years I have been committed to theorizing, interrogating, and practicing life writing as an academic, pedagogical, and curricular discipline. In my life writing I often write what one reviewer called "clichés of the heart." I wonder what is wrong with clichés. Why are so many people so ready to criticize others for clichés? In an effort to address these kinds of concerns and questions, I offer 13 poetic, narrative, and citational ruminations in defense of clichés. I am eager to understand how clichés are connected to writing about life and learning how to live informed by writing.

> We don't know that we can fight against ourselves, against the accumulation of mental, emotional, and biographical clichés. The general trend in writing is a huge concatenation of clichés. (Cixous, 1993, p. 119)

> Critical acceptance of my inconclusion necessarily immerses me in permanent search. What makes me hopeful is not so much the certainty of the find, but my movement in search. (Freire, 1993, p. 106)

When my third book of poems, [Anonymized,] was published in 2006, one reviewer wrote in a local newspaper that I wrote "clichés of the heart." I suppose I should recall the cliché that "any review is better than no review." (I certainly know what it feels like to read no reviews!) Nevertheless, I continue to be both enthused and confused about the role of clichés as a tangled locus of critical and creative focus. As a poet and education scholar, I write about lived and living experiences. I engage with life writing which can be composed in a diverse range of discursive practices including biography, autobiography, letters, journals, diaries, stories, poetry, anecdotes, photography, Facebook, blogs, Tweets, and Instagram. I am 64 years old, and I have been engaging with life writing in reflexive and self-conscious ways since I was at least an adolescent, and for over 30 years I have been committed to theorizing, interrogating, and practicing life writing as an academic, pedagogical, and curricular discipline. In my life writing I often write "clichés of the heart." I wonder if I can avoid clichés. I also wonder what is wrong with clichés. Why are so many people so ready to criticize others for clichés? In an effort to address these concerns and questions, I offer 13 poetic, narrative, and citational ruminations in defense of clichés. I am especially eager to understand how clichés are connected to writing about life and learning how to live informed by writing.

1

Cliché

as luck would have it

I am a cliché

trite threadbare twice-told

tired but happy, tried but true

a banal bromidic bathetic

specimen of humanity

well-worn warmed-over worn-out

doomed to disappointment

shopworn stale stock

along these lines

I am a cliché

prosaic platitudinous

working like a Trojan

jejune vapid shallow

no bolt from the blue

common flat dull

at the parting of the ways

over-used used-up

all too soon

I am a cliché

hackneyed stereotypical

with method in my madness

rubber stamped ready-made

safe and sound, sadder but wiser

derivative corny old hat

I set the wheels going

lifeless drained exhausted

still I was not always a cliché

once upon a time I was a word

repeated repeat repeated

repeat repeated repeat

once worth repetition

repetition rendered me worthless

the sprite turned trite

last as well as least

unable to keep up with the wor(l)d

as I grow older

always scribbled

I am more and more a cliché

my story more and more familiar

even before I have lived it

while less and less I write

my story written by others

too funny for words at least

a cliché in time saves nine

2

In the final grades of high school, I used the textbook *Mastering Effective English*. I still recall working through the section entitled "Avoid the Cliché," which sounds like the title of a Saturday matinee with monsters. The authors J. C. Tressler and C. E. Lewis (1961) explain that, "a *cliché* is a trite or hackneyed phrase that has lost vitality through over-use" (p. 30). They recognize that "the original was worth repetition or duplication," but the text that was originally precise has become "commonplace and worn out" (p. 30). They recommend that expressions like the following "have no place in writing that is sincere and natural" (p. 3): "all too soon," "bolt from a clear sky," "dull, sickening thud," "tired but happy,"

"safe and sound," "sadder but wiser," "too funny for words," "doomed to disappointment," and "where ignorance is bliss" (p. 31). As a 15-year-old writer, I was keen to compose "sincere and natural" writing. I did not know what that meant, but I was a good kid in school, and I was eager to learn from the textbooks and the teachers (who often seemed synonymous). So, I attended to Tressler and Lewis' "Practice 31. Eliminating Clichés" with a passionate conviction. When Tressler and Lewis invited me to "re-write the following sentences, substituting fresh and original expressions for what is trite," (p. 31), I labored over the 10 practice sentences with a convert's penchant for transformation (is that a cliché by the way?). I read the sentence: "Tired but happy after our hike in God's great out-of-doors, we wended our way home" (p. 31). At fifteen, I liked the sentence. I liked the sound of "tired but happy," which accurately expressed the way I often felt after a day of hiking and trout fishing in secret ponds only my father seemed to know about. I have always been sensitively aware of the presence of the spiritual and divine in nature. And I loved the word "wended" with its echoes of winded and wandered and wondered. I cannot recall how I rewrote the sentence in order to replace the trite with the fresh, but I probably wrote more clichés. When I was young I didn't know enough to avoid clichés. Now that I am old I still don't! Instead of avoiding clichés, as in *Mastering Effective English*, I now seek ways to deconstruct, question, and reinvent possibilities for acknowledging connections to clichés that still allow for newness as language is practiced with imagination and creativity.

3

How did the word *cliché* become a *cliché*—misused, overused, confused, and abused? In "The typographic imagination," Priya Joshi (2015) explains the invention of the original cliché:

> Around 1800, a French printer developed a new technology to speed up the reprinting of popular titles. Rather than having to reset type each time a work needed to be reprinted, Firmin Didot found a way to cast type from the original plates of a work. The new technology, called stereotype (or cliché), was hailed for its accuracy, since the stereotype plate did not introduce errors into the reprinting process. (p. 521)

Though Didot's technology was initially popular because it allowed for economical and error-free reprinting of new editions, especially of popular novels, Joshi notes that by the middle of the 18th century, "the word 'stereotype' emerged to connote monotony, then conformity" (p. 521). Perhaps the word *cliché* has been moulded in the cauldron of binary oppositions and facile categorizations that seek the commonplace instead of the place of complexity. Perhaps the *cliché* is the boring cousin of *originality*. While I admire the ceramic bowl handmade by a potter who lives in my neighbourhood, I am also still happy to use Tupperware plastic bowls for numerous household tasks. Both bowls have value. In a similar way, even though I have heard many times that no two snowflakes are the same, most snowflakes impress me as quite similar. When snow falls at the beginning of winter, I am moved by an abiding sense of mystery and beauty—not because no two flakes are the same, but by the immensity of the snow, and by how the snow erases the world, renders invisible the world that has grown more and more familiar since spring. Now the familiar world is erased by snow that might be constituted of diverse shapes beyond counting, but still looks like the snow I grew up with in Newfoundland and have known in other provinces, too. The snow is a cliché. I am not sure how it can be anything else.

4

According to Richard E. Miller (2005), we now inhabit the age of the memoir, and, therefore, "we find ourselves surrounded by those who write to distinguish themselves from the crowd by capturing the deep particularity and pathos of their own past experiences" (p. 20). So, from Miller's perspective, more and more people are seeking to avoid the charge of cliché by sharing their specific, original, and unique stories. With smartphones in our pockets, we can all tell our stories, all the time, anywhere. Miller wonders if we can compose "writing that moves out from the mundane, personal tragedies that mark any individual life into the history, the culture, and the lives of the institutions that surround us all" (p. 25). In other words, can we write stories that move from the cliché of iterative personal experience into the elaborate, intricate webs of social, historical, cultural, ideological, institutional experiences that extend far beyond iteration into inimitable possibilities? Each of us knows our lived and living experiences in our own body, imagination, memory, mind, and heart. From the perspective of my I-consciousness, from my self-centered location as the one who speaks the pronoun *I* and who is spoken into being by the discursive signification of the pronoun *I*, I can readily fail to attend to other pronouns, especially *you* and *we*. My story is similar to the stories of many others. Like many others, I was born. I anticipate I will die. In between, I grow older, remember childhood, adolescence, and decades of adulthood, and linger daily with a keen sense of surprise I am 64 years old! This is not a unique story. I am a cliché, but this self-knowledge is the awareness that can infuse me with a desire to know others, too. I am part of an interconnected network of creatures, sentient and nonsentient, who linger or who have lingered in the creation. Miller calls for "writing as a place where the personal and the academic, the private and the public, the individual and the institutional, are always inextricably interwoven" (p. 31). Instead of accusing another of being a cliché, perhaps we need to learn how to attend to the stories of others, so we can know their stories and our stories, too, in relationships that are inexhaustible.

5

Edwina Attlee (2015) notes that writers know "clichés are bad," but she asks, "Can attentiveness to them ever be more than an aesthetic activity? Can it be political?" (p. 1). Because the cliché is connected with the evolution of the printing press and the provision of relatively inexpensive books for eager consumers, Attlee observes that, "at the heart of the cliché lurks a rather uneasy confabulation of the democratic and the debasement of the singular by the plural" (pp. 1–2). Therefore, Attlee notes that, "a poetics of the cliché asks at what point does the stereotype solidify? When does an original become old hat?" (p. 2). She also wonders if the process is reversible (p. 2) because "to recognise a cliché is to engage critically with the text as part of a history of texts" (p. 2). The cliché reminds us about the limits of language. The cliché reminds us that there is always much more to be said or gestured or imagined. The cliché reminds us to pay attention to the unsayable, the incommunicable, the inexpressible, the ineffable, the unspeakable. The cliché reminds us to stretch language, to interrogate language. Perhaps the cliché can be repurposed, re-inspirited, and revitalized. As an old man, almost everything I do feels or seems like a cliché. The problem is not really the cliché which serves a valuable purpose in printing and communicating. Unfortunately, the cliché has been used by many people as a shortcut in order to avoid needing to communicate much at all. Working with words is hard work. Finding the language to share

your story is hard work. Life writing is hard heart work. Clichés provide an easy way in and out. Quick and simple.

<div align="center">6</div>

I once wrote a poem about my Uncle Jim who built boats and taught me some lasting lessons about writing poetry.

I'm Alone

two ways to build a boat, says Uncle Jim,

pounding each nail with three swings

so exact and rhythmic you'd think

he was a rechargeable Black and Decker hammer;

you can start from scratch and dream the plans

in the air and on paper or you can begin

with an old boat and replace each plank and rib,

piece by piece, until the old boat is firewood

and the new boat is the old boat's image;

the second way is slower, but I like a boat

with family connections; so Uncle Jim built

a plastic shack over the beached skiff,

years earlier named the *I'm Alone*

after a rum-running schooner that plied

the eastern seaboard, and searched the autumn

woods for timbers and laid the new keel

in November and the ribs in December

with Bud and Skipper and Fox dropping by

to offer advice and clint nails,

but the boat-building stopped in January

when Uncle Jim drove Fox up to Corner Brook

to the hospital, Fox smiling through his pain

that he was okay, but he wasn't okay

with most of his stomach cancer-eaten,

and all through the winter Uncle Jim

couldn't work on the *I'm Alone*

while Fox died daily and died finally in May,

and in the summer that spring

didn't make it to the top of the hills

Uncle Jim began building the *I'm Alone* again,

wishing a person could be replaced,

plank by plank, rib by rib, as easily as a boat

I have no doubt that my poem "I'm Alone" is a cliché. Reviewers might trash the poem for a sentimental effort to narrate the experience of loss and grief. Death is commonplace. That is a big problem with death. On the one hand, people die every day. I pay little attention to the death of most people. Then, my brother dies six weeks after a diagnosis of cancer, and all I can think about is his dying, his absence, and the poignant ache of silence. I spent enough time with my Uncle Jim and my father and their circle of friends to understand the grief they all shared when Fox was first diagnosed with cancer and when he died. Death might be a cliché, but the death of Fox pressed hard on the hearts of his family and friends. The death of my brother presses hard on my heart. I am a cliché, and I live clichés, and my heart is "a huge concatenation of clichés" (Cixous, 1993, p. 119). Reviewers criticize my poetry because it fails to speak to them in original or inventive ways, but I cannot control the reception of my work. I write poetry in order to help myself understand the rhythms of each day's joys and challenges, especially as I experience and witness each day's stories. In other words, I do not write poetry in order to say something novel, something that has not been said, something that will please a reviewer. I think everything has already been said, and I am just seeking ways to say again what has already been said.

The poem "I'm Alone" is a testimony to family and friends who support one another in good times and tough times. Uncle Jim and my father and their friends enjoyed building boats together, and they learned together the craft of boat building. When they built the *I'm Alone* they deliberately chose to build a kind of replica of another boat. By replacing the parts of the old boat with new parts that resembled the old parts, they created a boat "with family connections." Building the *I'm Alone* was an act of love.

As I continue my exploration of the role of clichés in writing, especially in writing about our lives, I will next follow my Uncle Jim's advice and build some writing around the ribs and planks of an earlier essay, "Blank page or scribbled page: Intertextuality and the fear of writing," which was published in 1994. When invited to write, many students moan that they do not know what to write about. They confess their fear of the blank page. I am always surprised because I do not see the blank page. Instead, I see a scribbled page, already extensively written by others. I am constantly asking if I have anything worth writing. Who would want to read my writing? Like Richard E. Miller (2005), I ask: "Why go on teaching when everything seems to be falling apart? Why read when the world is overrun with books? Why write when there's no hope of ever gaining an audience?" (p. x). In a long-privileged career as a professor, I have written many essays, poems, stories, and books, but does the world really need more words, especially from me? The question is likely inappropriate. In "the age of mass loquacity" (Amis, 2000, p. 6), many of us are hoping for citations on Google Scholar or *likes* on Facebook or retweets on Twitter. Perhaps we are seeking celebrity. Certainly many of us feel like we are competing with one another for a seat at the table. Perhaps we need to surrender the claim to our unique and idiosyncratic experiences, perspectives, and emotions in order to appreciate our commonplaces, and the opportunities for communication and community.

Writers often feel a sense of anxiety about how their writing will never gain an audience. In reflecting on Stephane Mallarme's anxiety about the influence of well-established writers, Barbara Johnson (1985) notes that, "impotence is…not a simple inability to write, but an inability to write differently. The agony experienced before the blank page arises out of the fact that the page is in fact never quite blank enough" (p. 269). This is my experience. I read widely. I have devoted much of my life to reading. Now that I am old and drawing near the end of my academic career, I sometimes think that I should simply stop writing, and devote more time to reading the writing of others. I am usually concerned that my writing is not sufficiently different. In other words, I am frequently concerned that my writing is clichéd! What I need to acknowledge is that all writing is intertextual. As Johnson explains, "'intertextuality' designates the multitude of ways a text has of not being self-contained, of being traversed by otherness" (p. 264). Every text bears traces of numerous other texts including: allusions, citations, codes, conventions, images, phrases, references, themes, and tropes. I am intertextually connected to a network of writers, a mosaic of textual production. There are no blank pages; there are only scribbled pages. I recall John Barth's (1984) advice:

> We should console ourselves that one of the earliest extant literary texts (an Egyptian papyrus of ca. 2000 B.C., cited by Walter Jackson Bate in his 1970 study *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*) is a complaint by the scribe Khakheperresenb that he has arrived on the scene too late:
>
>> Would I had phrases that are not known, utterances that are strange, in new language that has not been used, free from repetition, not an utterance that has grown stale, which men of old have spoken. (p. 206)

By citing Barth who cites Bate who cites Khakheperresenb, I enter into a chorus of iterative writing and citational practices that is already more than 4,000 years old. Like an expansive rhizome, my writing invites others to continue the intertextual connections by citing Author who cites Barth who cites Bate who cites Khakheperresenb who lamented long ago about the inescapable necessity of citing others. As the ancient Hebrew Teacher noted, "Of making many books there is no end" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). While I hear a tone of weariness in the Teacher's observation, I am still encouraged that "making many books" is a way of inviting communication in discourse communities as we learn to share our stories with one another. The page is never impossibly blank nor is it impassibly scribbled. There is always room for more writing, just as living stories continue to unfold, day by day, in all their delightfully clichéd familiarity.

8

More than three decades ago I read an interview with Ronald Sukenick (1983), and while his words initially impressed me and lingered a long time, I recently revisited the interview. I was less enamoured. Sukenick claims that

> one of the main purposes of really good writing is to destroy other really good writing, to destroy all the old concepts and formulas that come out of the best of the past. You should destroy them lovingly and with great consciousness and awareness of them, but always with the end in mind of getting beyond them again. (p. 282)

As a young man I was likely attracted to Sukenick's call for destroying "old concepts and formulas." Now that I am an old man, I am less interested in destroying the old, especially because I now have a more informed understanding of the value of the past, of history and foundations. At the same time I first read Sukenick, I also read Jacques Derrida's (1981) notion of writing as grafting on a host text: "It is necessary to read and reread those in whose wake I write, the 'books' in whose margins and between whose lines I mark out and read a text simultaneously almost identical and entirely other" (p. 4). I especially like the notion of "a text simultaneously almost identical" but also "entirely other." Perhaps writing dwells in the space between the same and the other. Perhaps we are too enamoured with the notion of the other, the strange, the unfamiliar.

Jeanette Winterson (1995) thinks that "the calling of the artist, in any medium, is to make it new" (p. 12), but she does not mean that, "in new work the past is repudiated; quite the opposite, the past is reclaimed" (p. 12). For Winterson, the past "is re-stated and re-instated in its original vigour" (p. 12) which she understands "is not so much influence as it is connection" (p. 12). In my writing I am seeking intertextual connections with others and the stories of others. For Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) writing is "a living mix of varied and opposing voices...developing and renewing itself" (p. 49). Every writer is part of a community, a participant in a chorus of voices, seeking to perform that which is both new and not-new, acknowledging what has been said and what might be said.

9

Thomas King (2003) once wrote that, "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (p. 2). This comment has been cited so often that it now sounds like a cliché. At least to me who has read and heard it quoted many times. Of course, if you have never read Thomas King or heard a scholar citing King, the quotation would not likely strike you as a cliché at all. I like the comment very much, and I really don't care if some readers might regard it as a cliché. "The truth about stories is that that's all we are." This is the kind of thoughtful and eloquent comment about the importance of stories in our lives that I am always seeking to understand and promote. It is a poignant statement. In a similar way, Julia Kristeva (2001) reminds us that, "life is a story" (p. 6) And according to Christina Baldwin (2005), "story is the mother of us all" (p. 73).

Perhaps the big challenge of stories and clichés is that we can become trapped in a story that never changes. Regarding stories of his father's desertion, King (2003) writes: "stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never been able to move past these stories, a part of me that will be chained to these stories as long as I live" (p. 9). We can be chained to stories that work like clichés. As King understands, "we do love our dichotomies" (p. 25), and "we trust easy oppositions. We are suspicious of complexities, distrustful of contradictions, fearful of enigmas" (p. 25). Story is the way we frequently understand our world, the way we live in the world in relationship to other people. We live in the world reflecting on our past experiences. We live in the world with dreams about the future. And in all of these ways, we are thinking and dreaming and creating narratively; we are thinking in stories; we are living (in) stories. But the stories are also living in us, composing us. Because "stories are wondrous things" and because "they are dangerous" (p. 9), King recommends that we "be careful with the stories" we tell and that we "watch out for the stories" we are told (p. 10).

10

According to Edwina Attlee (2015), "the cliché that is passively absorbed or used does not require any thought" (p. 5). Attlee is intrigued by poetry that constantly disturbs "fixity and consistency" by resisting "the trap of the cliché whilst calling attention to it" thereby displaying "an ambivalence towards communication" (p. 5). I once wrote a poem titled, "Alphabet Soup and an Invitation to Write (a) Perfect Poem(s)." The poem is a found poem that comprises quotations from Canadian women writers who all wrote about the act of writing. The poem begins with a quotation from Margaret Atwood (1983):

> I've said the page is white, and it is: white as wedding dresses, rare whales, seagulls, angels, ice and death. Some say that like sunlight it contains all colours; others, that it's white because it's hot, it will burn out your optic nerves; that those who stare at the page too long go blind. (p. 44)

I end the poem with a quotation from Susan Zimmerman (1980):

Consider the selfishness of poets

their ruthless naming of lovers

the way they tell the truth

(when it's painful)

or twist the truth

(when it's not, to make it so). (n.p.)

In between Atwood and Zimmerman, I included quotations from 24 other women Canadian writers whose names began with the other letters of the alphabet, B to Y, including Elizabeth Brewster, Anne Campbell, Louise Duprés, Marion East, and Patricia Young (1986) who wrote:

I wrote because I had to,

to rid myself of the awful sadness:

that's the story people read.

If I had to do it all over,

I guess I'd say no

to that.

I'd rather have been happy

than a writer. (p. 15)

I devoted a great deal of time and energy to composing the poem, "Alphabet Soup and an Invitation to Write (a) Perfect Poem(s)." I likely thought it was a clever undertaking. I certainly remember spending many pleasant hours in the library as I searched for more women Canadian writers with surnames that began with all the letters of the alphabet and who wrote about writing. When I submitted the poem for publication in a literary journal, the editor responded: "Isn't this plagiarism?" I was a little shocked. I included all the appropriate references for each quotation. I certainly aimed to be respectful of the writing of others. The question regarding plagiarism reminded me how much many writers and scholars fear iteration, even when it is presented in a novel way.

In the delightful fiction, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," Jorge Luis Borges (1939/1981) provides a witty perspective on plagiarism. While he recognizes the significant accomplishment of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Borges explains how Pierre Menard committed his life to writing "*the Don Quixote*" (p. 99): "he did not propose to copy it. His admirable ambition was to produce pages which would coincide—word for word and line for line—with those of Miguel de Cervantes" (p. 99). Borges then presents a few lines from Cervantes' writing, and a few lines from Menard's writing. The lines are exactly the same, but Borges explains carefully how Cervantes enumerates "a mere rhetorical eulogy of history" (p. 102), while Menard defines history as an investigation of

"its origin" (p. 102). Not only do I admire Borges' wit, but I am also reminded that we are always composing, deposing, disposing, decomposing, exposing, imposing, opposing, reposing, supposing, and transposing stories, images, persona, language, in our efforts to know how we are grounded and growing, located in places—but also always in process.

11

Jakob Norberg (2014) claims that, "the problem with the cliché is one of iteration" (p. 2). Certainly that is the reason that a cliché is generally rejected as overused or "overly familiar" (p. 3). Nevertheless, is there any way to avoid iteration? According to Norberg, "if a person says that which everyone else is already saying, it is…a failure of self-disclosure, for one learns nothing about the particularity and individuality of the speaker" (p. 6). Perhaps the challenge is not the "failure of self-disclosure," but the eagerness to belong to a community that holds both particularity and commonality, individuality and plurality. When almost every server in restaurants I frequent responds to my expression of thanks for their service with the odd phrase "no problem," I realize that the phrase has acquired a strange and sudden currency like countless popular fads, twitches, and aphorisms. Everybody wants to present the appearance, the persona of *cool*, but cool is not idiosyncrasy, eccentricity, peculiarity, or singularity. *Cool* is culturally defined and determined. *Cool* is a cliché. Norberg claims that people who use clichés do not express themselves because "there is no distinct self to express" (p. 6). Instead, they are either expressing society, or they are conduits for society to express itself through them (p. 6)

But Martin Amis (2000) claims that, "experience is the only thing we share equally" (p. 6). As a novelist, Amis thinks the trouble with living experience "is its amorphousness, its ridiculous fluidity" (p. 7). Life is "thinly plotted, largely themeless, sentimental and ineluctably trite" (p. 7). So, most people are not seeking to stand out from the crowd. Instead, they are seeking a sense of belonging. We often question the experiences of being human, but we ought to pay more attention to the longing for human belonging. I like Amis' conviction that writing is "not communication but a means of communion" (p. 268). Unlike Norberg's concern that relying on cliché is "a failure of courage" (p. 6) as well as "a type of communicative failure" (p. 7), I think that using a cliché is an expression of communion, a declaration of belonging. When Hells Angels or Hutterites dress in their traditional and readily recognizable costumes, and drive Harley Davidson's or horse-drawn buggies, they belong to a club or community. They are clichéd, but that is the identity of imitation and iteration that they seek.

I agree with Norberg that "in the cliché…the expression is circulating so widely that you can no longer make out the voice of any particular person" (pp. 7–8), but I still disagree with Norberg's expressed concern because I do not think we need "the voice of any particular person." Instead, we need social discourse that will guide us to understand that you queue up for the bus, or do not litter, or do not destroy your neighbor's property. We need social discourse that will guide us to acknowledge a respectful environment that honors diversity. We cannot nurture diversity by spelling out only the particularity of different people. We must acknowledge the connections and interconnections that hold the idiosyncratic in ideological pluralism.

12

When Didot created the original cliché, the stereotype that allowed a printer to save time and money, that original cliché was not the frequently used text (phrase, line, metaphor) that we now call a cliché. In Didot's time the cliché was the clamp that held the type together. The original cliché was a device for holding a text. Perhaps communication requires a device that can hold the text in place. Perhaps at least some lived experiences need to be held in place. I maintain a tidy closet where ties, pants, shirts, jackets, and sweaters are all organized and arranged so I know where everything is. Early in the morning, I am usually glad that I can find what I want with minimal effort. The cliché serves a purpose.

But who determines that a text is a cliché? How often does a text need to circulate before it is determined to be a cliché? What is the contemporary penchant for novelty? Does anyone really expect the Apple iPhone X to be significantly better than the Apple iPhone 8 Plus (and why wasn't it called the Apple iPhone 8.5 or even the Apple iPhone 9?). Meaghan Morris (2015) cites a personal communication with the cultural historian Earl Jackson who claims that a cliché "saves time for the producer of an utterance" because "the cliché allows the utterer to say something without thinking, without recomplicating the discourse" (p. 266). In life writing I lean on the device of the cliché in order to find my way to other kinds of utterances, other kinds of discourse. The cliché is a useful device. Perhaps our lives are the clichés, and we learn to utter our experiences and emotions in novel ways as we work hard with language in order to make our lives. In turn, perhaps the cliché invites the listener or reader or viewer (depending on the media used to compose, present, and perform our life writing) to use the device of the cliché in order to gain a sense of positionality that helps all of us to understand ourselves in relation to others. In other words, the cliché provides a place to stand as understanding is sought.

13

A cliché might be an

adage

banality

copy

drivel

everyday

familiar

gibberish

humdrum

iteration

jargon

known

lingo

maxim

neologism

overused

platitude

quote

reproduction

stereotype

truism

used

vernacular

well-worn

Xerox

yesterday

zestless

But a cliché might be much more. We need to learn how to resist cliché by resisting the use of cliché in clichéd ways. Just consider the ubiquity of cliché. Hollywood is cliché. Celebrity is cliché. TV is cliché. Pornography is cliché. Popular fiction is cliché. Style is cliché. Fast food is cliché. So much of educational practice is cliché. Where does cliché end? I am a cliché. Of course! A cliché is a way of communicating in short-hand, but that does not mean that all communication must only be short-hand. We can learn to tell our stories in more diverse ways for more diverse purposes for more diverse audiences. In order to do so, we must attend to both iteration and interrogation, all infused with imagination.

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Possible Selves: Restor(y)ing Wholeness Through Autobiographical Writing

Ellyn Lyle

Abstract

Education is a human endeavor, yet its research often prioritizes empirical knowledge while marginalizing human aspects of the educative experience. Creating space for self has the capacity to foster wholeness where there is disconnectedness and, therein, challenge academic conventions that prioritize dehumanization. Situated within post-qualitative inquiry and drawing on autobiography, I invite students to explore with me premises gleaned from Palmer's work on identity and integrity. While we explicitly seek to explore how including autobiographical tenets can overcome practices that limit integrated ways of knowing, we also implicitly seek to legitimate the element of selfhood in our education contexts.

Exordium

Education is a human endeavor and, as such, is informed by the intellectual, social, political, and emotional experiences of teachers and learners. Despite this obvious situatedness, education research continues to prioritize empirical knowledge while marginalizing the uniquely human aspects of the educative experience. Acknowledging the undeniable appeal of evidence as we seek to enrich knowledge, I maintain that something uniquely human is lost in the exclusion of the affective, intuitive, creative, perceptive, and critical aspects of learning. In seeking to address this marginalized humanness, I draw from Parker Palmer's scholarship on wholeness (1993, 1997, 1998, 2004, 2017) and turn to post-qualitative inquiry where I find resonance with St. Pierre who found an entry point into scholarship by advancing *writing as a way of knowing* (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). As her scholarship evolved, she began to challenge the very notions of conventional qualitative inquiry, concerned that it provides only a "container with well-identified categories into which researchers are expected to slot all aspects of their research projects so they are recognizable" (St. Pierre, 2017a, p. 1). Exacerbating its pushing to the periphery new ways of seeing, being, and sense-making, she argues, qualitative methodology has "become so formalized, systematized, and positivized" (p. 1) that it has succumbed to the very quantification and measurement it was invented to resist. She reminds us that predetermined methods-driven approaches are simply "never enough for the too much of inquiry" (p. 5), and the challenge of post-qualitative inquiry is to make room for living—both beings and inquiry. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), she insists that this is made possible by refusing to be bracketed by methodology in favor of living with theory as we navigate experience in real time. Embracing this unstructured relationship with inquiry opens us up to possible experience previously made inaccessible

(St. Pierre, 2017b). Returning to her roots in writing, St. Pierre advocates for scholarship as academic essay because of its capacity for fluidity and agility.

This advocacy reminds me of Badley's work (2016, 2017) where he champions post-academic writing. Badley (2017) discusses traditional academic texts as embodying the failures of academics to embrace their humanity in favor of claiming impartiality and objectivity. In so doing, academia has created a legion of disembodied scholars and fragmented thinkers. Drawing on the habitus made popular by St. Pierre of issuing provocations, Badley (2017) asks, "how might we, as students, teachers, and researchers, switch away from producing *sterile, voiceless academic prose* toward creating scholarly writing that is *warm, inviting and intensely personal*?" (p. 3). Ultimately, he concludes this accessibility is supported best when it embraces the slipperiness of being human and takes on a storied form.

Situated, then, in post-qualitative inquiry and challenging the inaccessibility of traditional academic writing, I embrace story to explore pathways to wholeness in our teaching and learning lives. Unable to separate one from the other, I invite to join me here graduate students who self-identified as interested in the capacity of autobiography to support this wholeness. Without particular destination in mind, we consider how story can help us overcome the broken paradoxes (Palmer, 2017) that limit integrity in teaching and learning. In the spirit of post-qualitative inquiry, this exercise compels me to identify those assumptions or premises that undergird my thinking/writing/teaching, and I follow each of these premises with a provocation offered to graduate students so that they might share their experiences as they relate to restor(y)ing wholeness. They could choose to respond to any or all provocations and were not limited by word count or form. As a pedagogical commitment to creating space for individual voices, their responses stand independently and in their own rights without further interpretation or commentary.

An Entry Point

So conditioned am I to write academically, I find lately I bore even myself. My writing has come to feel formulaic, and I am increasingly absent. This acknowledgment led me to wonder what, in teaching and learning, leads to this distance from our own selves. In thinking about that question, I was flooded with memories about schooling moments where I was asked to break with parts of myself. These chasms, while painful, came to provide me with a backdrop against which to develop my teacher-self. I decided to *think with theory through story* about the role of autobiography in praxis development.

Premise One: Teaching Is Autobiographical Work

It has long been established that teaching and learning are autobiographical endeavors (Bochner, 1997; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Feldman, 2005). Despite historic criticisms, the inclusion of autobiography in our practices is neither narcissistic nor egocentric. Being critically conscious of the embodied wholeness we bring to the classroom benefits both students and teachers (James, 2007; Lee, 2012; Palmer, 2017).

Recalling how my own learning experiences sometimes left me feeling fragmented, I was determined to enter the school system as a teacher differently. I would make room for students' lived experiences in the classroom and work to find the balance that allowed school to be both relevant and respectful. Despite my good intentions, though, I found myself as a teacher inside the same education system that pained me when I was a student. Exhausted by the immense effort to create more meaningful learning spaces, I grew disengaged, then disconnected, and eventually deeply discontent. I left the K-12 system not quite four years after I began teaching, and I turned to writing to help me understand my experiences. In the privacy of my own journals, I was able to make sense of the brokenness and, in so doing, recognized it as residing in too little room for the elemental self in teaching and learning. I took two actions toward a course correct: I returned to graduate school to study the role of autobiographical narrative in practitioner development; and I accepted a job at a local potato processing plant as the resident teacher. In my new setting, I met adult learners everyday who had disengaged from formal schooling and, wanting to foster reengagement, I was careful not to reproduce hurtful practices. As both teacher and graduate student, it seemed appropriate for me to develop a research inquiry that would enable me to understand the experience of adults who had disengaged from schooling. Having personally struggled to reengage, I invited three individuals to share their stories with me. With their permission, and with the permission of the organization, I conceptualized and completed a thesis that used story to make central the role of self in teaching and learning.

The inclusion of autobiography in education allows us to interrogate self while locating self-study relationally across the various contexts within which we live and teach. As such, autobiography allows us to understand teaching and learning as grounded in personal history. Approaching inquiry from this perspective supports the development of critical reflexivity where impressions of self can be understood in terms of social contexts (Hickey, 2016). Extended slightly further, "autobiography *is* theory, [and] every theory is a fragment of autobiography" (Snowber & Wiebe, 2009, p. 5). Now a Dean in a Faculty of Education, some 15 years after having established the adult learning centre in a processing plant, I wondered about the stories of my more recent students and if the inclusion of autobiography in their studies supports education that values lived experience. This curiosity became the first provocation offered to them for response.

Teaching, educating, and living are autobiographical journeys, and ignoring the value of experience in our students or ourselves constitutes an ethical injustice. Education is what we expect of ourselves, not what others say we can achieve. Including autobiography has changed me as a person, as a teacher, as a leader, as a father, and as a husband. Story has become a tool for consciousness. (Chris)

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The inclusion of self in graduate coursework allowed me to find a place for me in education. It helped me understand that education is an imperfect system, not that I am an imperfect student. Rather than feel burdened by my diverse learning needs, I learned to value them as an integral part of a rich educational environment. I have come to understand that diversity is a school's responsibility to value, not a student's problem to fix. As an educational leader, this new lens will inform my work. (Cindy)

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Autobiography can provide a space in the classroom to value lived experience while encouraging an ethics of care. Stories bring meaning to our lives, so limiting ourselves to scientific knowledge limits our abilities to think critically and live creatively. (Brian)

Premise Two: Good Teaching Is Inextricably Connected With Identity and Integrity

As I continued to mature in my practice, my interest in the autobiographical tenets of teaching and learning led me to explore issues of identity. I encountered Parker Palmer's work (1993, 1997, 1998, 2004, 2017) and found immense pedagogical resonance. Palmer (2017), a teacher and story-teller himself, insists that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique—[that] good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). He describes identity as the evolving nexus of intersectionality and lived experience, and he says integrity is what wholeness we can find within that nexus as we continue to re-story who we are.

Having established at that local processing plant a strong and sustainable program that made central the role of self in teaching and learning, and having completed my master's degree, I decided to pursue doctoral studies. My area of interest involved the various contextual aspects of self we bring to profession and how these inform praxis. After the completion of my residency, I recognized that my research would be made more robust by once again considering theory in terms of practice, so I accepted an offer of employment with a global Human Resource firm as National Learning Manager. While I held this position, I led a team of advanced-degree educators in the development and facilitation of leadership, change, and organizational effectiveness programs for public- and private-sector employees. While working in this capacity, my graduate work again employed narrative strategies to theorize implications for praxis. Upon completion of my PhD, I joined the academy full time and have, since then, continued to advocate for the consideration of self in teaching and learning.

Several scholars discuss the significance of self in the educative experience (Cole & Knowles, 1994; Elbaz, 1991; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Hatt, 2006; Palmer, 1993, 1998, 2004, 2017; Van Manen, 1990; and Wheatley, 2009). While many theorists discuss this tenet in terms of inevitability, Palmer embraces it, insisting that to deny self not only limits learning, but also breeds disconnectedness. Palmer refers to disconnectedness as a form of disengagement that occurs when we experience feelings of detachment

from our learning. In my reading of Palmer, I understand this detachment as occurring in any of three dimensions: spiritual/physical (when a learner feels estranged from the educative experience but remains physically within the learning environment); individual/communal (when learners who continue to seek paths to connectedness search for contexts that promote and enable it); and personal/public (when learners share personal experiences to encourage others who are feeling disconnected). He suggests that the dimensions are progressive stages of disconnection and offers critical reflection as a support strategy. Understanding reflection as *after* and *individual* and reflexivity as *ongoing* and *relational* (Lyle, 2017), I suggest extending Palmer's work to include reflexivity as a strategy that can disrupt disconnection and preclude progression to more advanced stages of fragmentation. This supposition led me to a second provocation: that making room for self in schooling practices strengthens people, individually and collectively. I returned to my students once more to gain a sense of their perspective on this notion.

> *When we reflect on the teachers who made a difference in our lives, we picture the ones we trusted, respected, and loved. These teachers were not feared—they were adored; students eagerly waited to be in their classes, not necessarily because they were breaking achievement records, but because they were authentic.* (Tina)

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> *When we speak of identity, we must look at all the forces in one's life that merge to constitute who you are. I identify as a biracial First Nations person, with two different family heritages, raised in a multicultural, but predominantly First Nations community. I remember the significant figures who helped me along the way and those who left me scarred, but stronger. I can remember the racism, challenges, and other difficulties throughout my life that taught me valuable lessons. I also remember the point in my life where I had to make the decision to leave the community or risk descending into an abyss that I may never climb out of. My integrity has been shaped by these experiences. By making space for self, we remove the cultural barriers of Silence, Individualism, and Secrecy, thereby strengthening people individually and collectively. If we do not make room for ourselves, then we become fragmented not knowing who we really are.* (Brian)

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> *I need to know who I am before I can help someone become who they want to be. It is difficult to pretend to be someone or something you aren't. One day in class a student asked me about my family and, when I acknowledged a struggle there, the student started to cry. Having a student shed a tear over my family's difficulties taught me that students cared about me, just as I do about them. Sharing ourselves strengthens our abilities to be credible sources of support for the students.* (Lisa)

Premise Three: We Create Identity Through Story

Several scholars have taken the position that we cannot know others if we do not know our selves and, without these inherent understandings, our capacities to teach and learn are significantly diminished (Eakin, 2008; Lee, 2012; Palmer, 1998, 2017; Whyte, 2001). If we are to accept this position and wish to remain meaningfully engaged with teaching and learning, it follows that we must pursue self-knowledge to excel in our professional practices. The use of story to facilitate self-knowledge gained traction in education research in the 1990s (Bruner 1986, 1987, 1990; Casey, 1993, Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; McAdams, 1993). Since then, story has continued to provide a valuable lens for teacher self-study, a lens through which we can view the content and context of our work.

> *Having left behind learning and development in the private sector for the allure of the academy, I learned quickly that traditional academe was built on an old chassis of privilege and driven by rank. Because professors tended to work within their own areas of expertise, feelings of alienation and disconnection were normalized components of promotion and tenure. In the solitary pursuit of these coveted achievements, a faculty member's value was often determined by grant monies she brought in and publications she put out. These being the currencies required to advance, teaching often felt secondary. While I had deep and broad respect for the work required to advance scholarship, I was troubled by recurring complaints that the professorial life would be much enriched without the burden of teaching. Recalling my previous experiences in education systems that marginalized, I began to consider other career trajectories. About this time, I was invited to an emerging privately funded, non-tenure-based university to consider a core faculty role. Having grown up in the publicly funded K-12 and postsecondary systems, I had internalized the suspicion of private institutions. Curious, despite skepticism, I accepted the invitation. Greeted by the president, the Vice President (Academic), and the Faculty Dean, I was impressed by the seemingly flat organizational structure and the resulting approachability. Upon closer inspection, this translated into a culture of collaboration and accessibility. This culture was not only evident among the teaching, administrative, and support staff; it was also intuitively characteristic of the school's commitment to the student learning experience. While the education faculty was newly established and still emerging, it was evident that the core values had at their centre the best interests of students. Invited to join this school, I was fortunate to grow with it, informing its development. In the almost six years I've been in this setting, I remain gratified by management's commitment to listening to students and its agility in responding to change. It has created critically conscious graduates and responsive faculty and administrators.*

As I think within my current context and story it in live time, I realize that the potential born of stories is vast. They have been noted to help us do at least four things: overcome fear (Harkins, Forrest, & Keener, 2009; Palmer, 2017); articulate our realities (Bochner, 2014; Eakin, 2008; Goodall, 2000, 2008; Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013; Palmer, 2017); mobilize change (Pelias, 2015; Quintero & Rummel, 2015); and reveal our possibilities to ourselves (Bochner, 2014; Eakin, 2008; Goodall, 2000, 2008; Holman Jones et al., 2013; Palmer, 2017; Pelias, 2015; Poulos, 2013). Realizing the potential of stories

begins with overcoming fear. Palmer tells us that this fear is most evident in our refusal to tell our vulnerable stories. He says we seek safety in abstraction and steer conversations toward opinions and ideas, rather than our nuanced lives. This practice, he says, is encouraged by an academic culture that insists the more abstract our speech, the more likely we are to encounter universal truths but, in reality, the reverse is the result: the deeper in abstraction we dwell, the more disconnected we feel. Harkins and colleagues (2009) push this a bit farther and say that we can examine our stories for the fears that shape our current research and teaching practices. These stories need not be elaborate works of fiction or nonfiction. Telling a story honestly and unapologetically can contribute powerfully to our insights while acting as a pedagogical strategy (Harkins et al., 2009; Palmer, 2017).

Stories are also useful for uncovering and communicating the realities of who we are. They are tools central to sense-making and fostering a coherent sense of identity. They can connect us to ourselves, others, society, and our multiple varied contexts as well as provide strong points of divergence through which we come to know self more deeply. They can help us overcome the narrow conceptualizations of curriculum and, through the integration of lived and living experiences, help students and teachers locate themselves in place and time (Quintero & Rummel, 2015). In this way, story provides a gateway to understanding the political nature of the educative experience. In addition to exposing the multiple and often conflicting tenets of teaching, stories can mobilize these experiences to encourage change. These become the stories for imagining both the world's potential and our possible selves (Pelias, 2015; Poulos, 2013). In pausing to consider how lived experience can foster respect for socially responsive ways of being, I found my third provocation and sought student insights once again.

> *Having lived experiences is not enough. As leaders, it is important to understand how our assumptions, opinions, and purposes influence how we think and act. To have a positive influence on students, we must be conscious of how lived experiences can affect us both positively and negatively. As educators, we can likely recall those teachers who inspired us or who left an indelible impression on us. For me, it my Grade 6 teacher—he was a small man, who had a hunched back, but he was an excellent teacher and very supportive and understanding of everything I did. There were also other teachers who I admired and whose methods I've incorporated into my teaching. While they were all different, they have one thing in common—they all had good hearts. In our culture, there is a term for this called Um Go'oti. Having a good heart is a way of being, an important one as students can detect impostors.* (Brian)

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> *In January, I started my graduate degree. I had not been a student in more than 20 years. It was very overwhelming. I found my courses challenging and, at times, I felt like I was drowning and writing in circles. Hearing stories of my professor's learning journey made me realize that I have stories of my own worth sharing and they, too, might help others learn. Instead of seeing a professor with rigid views of theories, I saw a person. A person with stories.*

A person who can reflect on her life and use it to move forward. A person just like me, working to improve herself and some aspect of the world we live in. (Lisa)

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As I critically reflected on my career, I realized that life taught me to walk my own path and to do what was right by my own values. But I had deviated from that path by walking too long in the shoes that had been assigned to me. I realized I had betrayed myself and, in turn, had damaged others in a blinded conviction to follow the practices that were set out for me, which inevitably where the same practices that turned on me when it suited the establishment. Uncovering this through story unlocked many realizations and engaged me in my work once again more deeply than ever before. I began to walk in line with my values, my own beliefs, which allowed me to learn from my own experiences and to retell stories of my life. (Chris)

Premise Four: We Foster Integrity Through Problematizing Broken Paradoxes

In grappling to understand how the inclusion of self and self-in-relation might mitigate disconnectedness, I found resonance in Palmer's (2017) discussion of broken paradoxes. He says that education seems filled with inconsistencies because of our tendency to think in polarities. In positioning parts of self and experience as dichotomous, we create divisiveness: head/heart; facts/feelings; theory/practice; and personal/professional. He argues that we need to "think the world together by means of paradox" (p. 91) if we want lives of integrity. He reminds us that the current culture of disconnection is driven partly by fear and partly by the Western notion that disconnection is a virtue. In discussing the element of fear, he implores us to "resist the perverse draw of the disconnected life" (p. 36).

> *I've repeatedly found myself on paths that led me to disconnectedness, fragmentation, even rupture. Sometimes I ended up on these routes because I was not paying attention to where I was headed. Sometimes I chose them deliberately (mis)guided by idealistic notions that they could lead to places other than where they did. Regardless of the choices that put me on these roads, I've found that, once there, I am the only one who can help me find my way back. That way back begins by seeking to untangle any incongruence between what I value and how I live. This process is assisted by finding meditative spaces where I can visit myself uninterrupted and grapple with issues that reveal themselves. I've come to understand this process as renegotiating identity and reconstructing a self that might be feeling disassembled. I am in such a space now, wondering about the chasms we craft in teaching and learning. (Re)turning to story, I seek to understand my essential (albeit ever-evolving) self, my professional practice, and my potential to contribute. Currently curled up in my big leather chair at my summer home-come-winter-writing-retreat, watching the bay now too cold to buoy me, I feel myself reconnecting with every iteration of myself that I have ever been and all those me's I've not yet grown into.*

I recall reading in my youth about the red thread of fate and wonder once again if my soul connection is to place and the ground it accords to cultivate new understandings. I wonder, too, if we leverage our best understandings from these places of wholeness, can we create a social movement to revitalize wholeness in education. This possibility became the final provocation shared with the graduate students who so generously agreed to accompany me as we think with theory through story.

I have had the opportunity to work in a variety of schools in various capacities in elementary, middle, and high school settings. The schools that left me feeling eager to wake and get to work were the schools that worked together. These schools were community-based, offering a sense of home away from home. We were encouraged to open ourselves to sharing, collaborating, and experiencing education in ways that might change our old practices and open us up to new ones. We were challenged as educators to be innovators, not programmers. We were called to find our passion and share this with our students to inspire the next generation of great thinkers. (Tina)

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I have walked disconnected at many times in my life—following what was expected of me as an employee, as a teacher, as a husband, and as a father. Many times, I have been lost in those journeys, despite following the normative practices of socially identified roles. I failed to connect the reasons for my personal state of mind with the realities of my navigation, the disconnectedness in myself with my practices, separating my own compass from the external GPS of the world. This exploratory process taught me the importance of taking time to evaluate the underpinnings that formulate my reactions—to pause when something doesn't sit well, and to speak when I might be expected to be silent. Examining the sources of silence in myself has allowed me to make space to break the silence with others. Where silence previously permeated a problem, I now open the silence into a safe place for examining understanding for others and myself. I expose myself to vulnerability. I admit my impostership openly, and I sleep well at night. (Chris)

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One of my favourite movie lines is from Shall We Dance with Richard Gere and Susan Sarandon. After a tumultuous period in their marriage, Gere's character questioned the purpose of marriage, to which Sarandon's character paused and stated, "… because we need a witness to our lives" [Fields et al., 2004]. I think this requirement is true for everyone, but I think we find witnesses in different ways. As an introvert, for example, I find witnesses through writing. I want others to know of the experiences I have had, but I shy away from activities that single me out as the centre of attention. Rather than verbally tell a story, I feel compelled to write it. In this regard, I am a storyteller and perhaps an unconventional scholar. Ellyn, through her encouragement of self, taught me to tell a story within the confines of an academic paper. Rather than view the writing as a chore, I was motivated to reflect in hopes of connecting with others. This writing is my best, but it is not always viewed as valuable. If we could hear all voices, and respect all methods to share those voices, we could revolutionize education. (Cindy)

Possible Selves

Teaching is vulnerable work because sharing self is a prerequisite condition of meaningful connection to others. As rational beings who are often conditioned to disregard that which makes us uniquely human, we hesitate to make space for this openness in teaching and learning. In denying our humanness, though, we limit our abilities to learn. As we stand at the convergence of self and the subjects with whom and which we engage, it can feel like a daunting task to weave connectedness. Yet, we must. The alternative erodes our humanity and diminishes both personal and professional integrity. Increasingly, scholars and practitioners alike turn to the inclusion of autobiographical elements, most frequently accessed through story, to promote wholeness, both individually and collectively. For those of us bored with academic conventions and maybe even of ourselves, post-qualitative inquiry provides an avenue through which we put aside the recipe and experiment with the ingredients. It is through this experimentation that we chance an encounter with what Markus and Nurius (1986) name *our possible selves*.

Acknowledgment

Author Note

The students were selected based on their self-identified interest and, after fulsome disclosure as a part of ethics review, each provided informed consent with the expressed desire to participate in the inquiry by responding to the provocations as presented.

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Ellyn Lyle has a longstanding background in innovative education practices, ranging from traditional classrooms to workplace and community partnerships, and technologically supported learning. In all these contexts, she has remained intensely interested in supporting the development of students and teachers as they contribute to socially equitable and sustainable programs. Ellyn holds a PhD in Education and has been teaching in university since 2010. She is currently Dean of the Faculty of Education at Yorkville University. The use of critical methodologies shapes explorations within the following areas: praxis; teaching and learning as lived experience; issues of identity; reflexive inquiry; narrative inquiry; and education for social justice.

The Intersection of Pedagogical Documentation and Teaching Inquiry: A Living Curriculum

Margaret MacDonald and Cher Hill

Abstract

Using interpretive research methods, this paper examines the use of pedagogical documentation (PD) as a storied method of assessment and inquiry by in-service K-3 teachers. Our findings show that PD is highly effective in opening "reflective space" for primary teachers and children aged five to eight and inviting co-inquiry to deeper pedagogical examination and interpretation of learning. The intersection of PD as a storied approach to evaluation and in teacher inquiry was implemented in a variety of ways as teachers adapted PD to meet their communal needs and address their professional goals. We conclude with a discussion of the power of digital images in learning stories and inquiry.

Background

As a follow-up to an article written over 10 years ago (MacDonald, 2007) on the use of pedagogical documentation in early primary classrooms in the lower mainland of British Columbia, this paper discusses the current use of PD as a storied method of assessment among primary teachers. In this research article, we investigate kindergarten and grades 1, 2, and 3 teachers' use of pedagogical documentation to inform self-generated inquiry questions posed by teachers who are enrolled in our *Learning in the Early Years (LEY)* Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE).[1]

Pedagogical documentation has been widely used in the project approach of the Reggio Emilia preschools in Italy and globally and by teachers in other preschools serving infants, toddlers, and three- to five-year-olds (Buldu, 2010, Grieshaber, & Amos Hatch, 2003; Knauf, 2015, Rintakorpi, 2016), and is now beginning to be incorporated more widely into North American primary classrooms (K-3) (Wien, Guyevskey, & Berdoussis, 2011) and requires further examination in these contexts. It also requires further investigation in its use as a storied from of anecdotal reporting and as a method to dialogue with parents through narrative forms of reporting.

The Reggio Emilia style of documentation has been used to document kindergarten, primary, and early childhood classroom projects in Canada and the U.S. (Cadwell, 2003; MacDonald, 2007; McLellan, 2010; Stacey, 2015; Wein, 2008,) to scaffold children's memories of activities taking place once per week (Fraser, 2011; Hunt, Nason, & Whitty, 2000), and to develop a co-constructed, emergent curriculum (Abramson, 2006). Teachers' anecdotes also describe successes in documenting the development of individual children (Giovannini, 2001) and the value of documentation in inclusive settings when assessing children with support needs (Vakil, Freeman, & Swim, 2003). Little is known

however about precisely how teachers are using PD in primary classrooms, particularly its affordances as a storied method to help teachers reflect on their own action within practice for professional learning.

Pedagogical Documentation

In theory, through a narrative approach, pedagogical documentation illuminates participants' interests, skills, ideas, and theories (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998; Giovannini, 2001; Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, 2001). It has been defined by Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999), as both content and process and consists of a collection of teacher observations and other digital traces and/or artifacts of learning collected during dedicated learning activities and/or play (e.g., photographs, video segments, children's comments, products that have been created by the children, and teacher interpretations of learning). Importantly, this content can also be viewed and discussed with students "in process" to deepen teachers' understanding and interpretation of student learning and their own teaching. It may also help communicate interests, skills, and ideas as teachers and their students co-construct next steps in curriculum or project planning. In theory, when PD is shared with the children (and families), teachers are able to perceive the significance of the classroom learning and interests and can focus on, repeat, or further it. If this method becomes proprietary in the classroom by becoming part of a sustained teaching practice where teachers are using PD to engage in cycles of inquiry, it can potentially assist teachers and students in better understanding learning moments (both the teacher's and student's), group process, classroom discourse, or any number of authentic questions that emerge from the curiosities, deep questions, or contradictions that present themselves to teachers or students. It can also take into account students' funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moje et al., 2004), unique dispositions, interests, creativity, humor, and so forth, and work at re-representing student and teacher learning in meaningful ways.

Intersections between pedagogical documentation and teacher inquiry. Pedagogical documentation appeared to be a useful method for the teachers enrolled in our graduate diploma program, which is based on a teacher inquiry methodology. In this approach the teacher engages in a systematic, intentional study of his or her practice (Cochran Smith & Lytle, 1993; Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009). Both pedagogical documentation and teacher inquiry are based on a similar core assumption that all members of the classroom community should be empowered as teachers and learners (Cochran Smith & Lytle, 2009). While teaching in the LEY program, the first author (Margaret) observed a close connection between teacher inquiry and student inquiry (Brancombe, Goswami, & Schwartz, 1992; Butler & Schnellert, 2008; Cole & Knowles, 2000). This occurred as teachers began to engage with the use of Pedagogical Documentation. When using PD, our students (K-3 teachers) were learning about their students (K-3 children), their curriculum, as well as about themselves and their practice. We posited, therefore, that there was a concomitance between teacher inquiry and student inquiry when using PD and that this interface between teacher inquiry and Pedagogical Documentation merited further investigation.

Our investigation. Given its potential to connect students and teachers through inquiry, PD was directly taught beginning in the first semester and reinforced across each successive semester through examples

and collaborative discussions of in-process work and student-led presentations of their own PD. We observed diverse forms of PD implementation when reviewing teachers' learning portfolios. This led to the following question forming the basis of the present investigation:

How is the method of Pedagogical Documentation implemented by elementary school teachers within an inquiry-based Graduate Diploma Program?

Research Context

Our program focus and goal within the *Learning in the Early Years* and other diplomas offered through Field Programs at Simon Fraser University is to be as responsive as possible to the professional development needs of in-service teachers in the province while adhering to a core pedagogical belief in Teacher Inquiry as a method of pursuing self-directed questions related to pedagogical practice. To this end, a parallel structure of nongraded discipline-specific content and theory (two or three credits) is taught in conjunction with a nongraded field study or teacher inquiry course (two or three credits) over a 30-credit six-semester program. To enroll in the program, teachers must be working in the classroom so that the content or focus of each graduate diploma can be supported by reflexive practice through inquiry into their own practice. Many of the course capacities in the Learning in the Early Years Graduate Diploma promote the development of relationships and collaboration among teachers in the cohort and between teachers in the cohort and their K-3 students. The focus of the Learning in the Early Years program is also on the development of emergent and responsive curriculum that allows activities and projects to emerge from the children or teachers' interests or from sources like: the child's own developmental tasks and challenges, the built and social environment (including materials), unpredictable and spontaneous events (i.e., challenges, conflicts, and opportunities of living together) and, importantly, the values held by the school and communities (Jones, 2012).

Methodology and Participants

This investigation is part of a larger study into the teacher inquiry methodology in our teacher professional development program unit (Field Programs) at Simon Fraser University, in British Columbia, Canada. The larger study, informed by grounded theory research design (Charmaz, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008) has led to this related investigation using interpretive research methods (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Smith, 1992; Radnor, 2002) to better understand primary teachers' use of PD. Our approach to data collection and analysis has been iterative and ongoing, shaping data collection and focusing our understandings as the project progresses. Throughout this investigation we have therefore made utmost use of collegial discussion, observation, memos, and member checks for verification of the emerging understandings of our instructional team of teacher educators participating in the project and our students (in-service teachers).

The cohort selected for this study included 39 female students made up primarily of in-service kindergarten teachers (23), two K/Grade 1 teachers, eight grade 2 or 3 teachers, one Learning Assistance/ Resource Room teacher, and five Teachers-On-Call who specialized in primary and/or elementary

on-call work. With respect to teaching experience, 15 students had between six and 10 years teaching experience, while seven had 11 to 15 years' experience and five had 15 or more years of classroom teaching experience. Of the 39 students, 12 were in early stages of their career with six having between two and five years of teaching experience and six having less than two years.

Data Collection and Analysis

Our data sources included the portfolios of 13 students that we collected after receiving their written informed consent at the completion of each semester. Although the diploma program is nongraded, the students' reflective practice and field study write-ups are evaluated for content and completion and examined at the end of each semester by way of portfolios. This portfolio is a self-directed collection of their learning and stands as a synthesis of the students' field study, discussions, readings, and class activities. It often includes a variety of photos, graphics, and narrative forms of representation. These portfolios therefore are important artifacts representing student engagement with the course content and inquiry and formed the basis of our investigation into pedagogical documentation.

Rich anecdotal evidence was collected in the fourth semester of the program, suggesting the power of "in-process" documentation where teachers viewed photos or video clips with the children, engaging them in discussion and to aid in verification and interpretation of their understandings of the children's intensions, thoughts, and/or theories. This complex interaction between the children and classroom teacher was powerful, in that it allowed the in-service teachers (our students) to reflect on the meaning that the learning activities or engagement held for their students and for themselves as pedagogues.

In addition, ongoing formal and informal discussions and observance of PD across the entire cohort were used, as was a semi-structured focus group interview to further our understandings about the teachers' use of PD and "in-process documentation." The focus group discussion was held with 10 participants from this cohort who were in the final semester of their GDE (see Appendix A for focus group questions). This group was selected according to geographical convenience, but represented a diverse sampling of in-service teachers: (two) Kindergarten French Immersion; (one) Grade 2 French Immersion; (one) Teacher on Call; (one) resource room teacher; and (five) Kindergarten (English Language teachers), all of whom were members of one mentor group. The discussion from the focus group was recorded and transcribed so that we could review and analyze the content. In vivo coding methods were used, where the words or short phrases of the participants were adopted as the code to capture student voice (Saldana, 2009).

Through our own discussion and reflective analysis, we began to consider the "in-process" work of these teachers as the creation of "space for pedagogical reflection." We were then able to generate a provisional hypothesis: that teacher reflection is mediated by the type of subjective-objective stance they take in their field study, that is, how they positioned themselves in relation to their students (e.g., as an objective observer, a co-constructor, or an independent interpreter of events). This hypothesis was later verified and deepened with our teacher participants. Throughout this process, data were collapsed and reduced through discussion between researchers (Margaret and Cher), notes, and conceptual memos that

took into consideration contextual factors and intervening conditions determined by the portfolios and later verified in the focus group interview.

Our Findings

As teachers implemented PD into their field studies, they experimented with group size (individual, small group, full class), methods of documentation (photographing, audio recording, video recording, note taking and/or transcription), and presentation (document boards, class meetings, school-based websites) in order to adapt PD based on their needs and contexts, and then reflected on the outcomes. Although at times it was challenging given the student-teacher ratio in elementary schools and the limited technology available to the teachers, over time they were able to develop meaningful processes, and viewed their LEY and school learning community as vital in enabling them to implement PD within their contexts. As discussed by our in-service teachers:

> J: because I'm a talker I kind of like having someone go through the same process as me. I like having ideas and be[ing] able to bounce ideas off, and being able to talk about what I'm thinking and what's not working or if I've hit a wall. I can't imagine trying to figure out documentation by yourself in a classroom. I think it's good to bring it to a group.

> A: Absolutely, having someone telling you what to do or try is an avenue … but unless you have peers who are doing it as well, you just kind of go, "oh my gosh it's not working."

> S: And then you see what others come up with …

> A: And then you can feel better …

> J: It encourages you to keep trying. Because when I was doing it and I couldn't get the transcription down I thought "this is brutal"…but being able to chat with other people and know that they were having the same struggles … It makes it a lot easier.

While we were pleased that our program produced such a culture, we are concerned about the sustainability of these practices once the teachers complete their formal education. Moreover, we wonder how we can best support our teachers to continue to participate in these networks.

We found that pedagogical documentation was used *purposefully and in multiple ways* as these in-service teachers reflected on the needs of the members of their learning community, as well as on their own professional goals. The documentation practices associated with pedagogical documentation and related documentation methods, such as learning stories, where the teacher presents a narrative describing the meaning of the learning moment and the future opportunities and possibilities it holds[2] (Carr, 2001; 2011), were adapted by the teachers in different ways to achieve different ends.

These adaptations, which are explored in greater detail below, were often intentional, driven by teachers' goals, and characterized by reflection, as teachers responded to situational constraints and/or the evolving teaching and learning environment. As one teacher noted,

> It has to be purposeful really. Here am I trying to communicate with the parents? Or am I trying to move the children's learning forward. So trying to be purposeful with it but also being open ended enough to reflect on it and go where the children want to take you.

Based on the portfolio and interview data, there appeared to be four predominant ways in which teachers used Pedagogical Documentation, including: Pedagogical Documentation as a window, PD as catalyst to facilitate co-inquiry, PD as a medium of communication, and PD as a mirror to provide objective evidence. These different practices involved various subjective-objective stances, and led to different implications for pedagogical relationships and transformation of practice.

1. Pedagogical documentation as a window: "When you are documenting you are listening".[3] The documentation process generated insights into the students' thinking, interests, and strengths, and enabled teachers to adapt their practices accordingly. As one teacher documented in her portfolio, "The documentation I have gathered lets me listen to the students' thinking, something that I would normally never be privy to." During the focus group, teachers talked about how the documentation process allowed them to identify the strengths and needs of all their students, even those with behavioral challenges, as well as those who rarely vocalize their thinking. Teachers then used these insights to guide their practice.

> When you do that deep listening …(y)ou can hear what their questions are and where they want to go with their learning and where you could now bring in some provocations and see what they take up and [identify] a place to start where they are at.

This type of "deep listening," or "attending to children with care," as Carini (2000) might call it, inherent in pedagogical documentation, involves a nontraditional research stance in which the knower is not an objective observer, but is aware of his or her own subjectivity, attempts to bracket assumptions; that is, tries to first identify his or her assumptions in any given situation and then see past them (ignoring them if necessary) to better engage with the perspective of the other. This stance enables teachers to see students in more complex ways, focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses, and to engage in more responsive and ethical practice.

This nontraditional research stance helped to disrupt traditional power relationships where the teacher is expected to be the only curriculum expert; however, students' roles as active co-constructors of knowledge were still limited. Without sharing and discussing data with students, teachers' understandings are limited to their own interpretations of events. For some teachers, this process of attending with care and deep listening to students might be the first step towards more complex collaborative practices afforded by pedagogical documentation. As one teacher noted in her portfolio, after experimenting with this method for the first time,

> I know I need to change how I've been using [pedagogical documentation], particularly in the area of parental involvement and evidence display. It has been beneficial for me so far, and now I need to broaden that and involve the parents, my colleagues and even the students more.

2. Pedagogical documentation as a catalyst for moving learning forward: "Go where the children want to take you." Some teachers used pedagogical documentation to not only inform their understandings of thinking and learning, but also to facilitate co-inquiry with students. Classroom photos, videos, transcripts, and the like were used as common reference points to further discussions, reflections, questions, and elaborations. Through these discussions learning was deepened as members of the classroom community were pushed forward in their thinking and curriculum was co-constructed by teachers and students. For example, one teacher documented a group of students role-playing mother-baby relationships. Initially, their play was restricted to crying "babies" and frustrated "mothers," and did not progress or deepen over a period of months. The class's examination of the photos of their play led to a discussion about the different roles of various members of families. The class then developed a list of questions that they had about babies, and the teacher invited a mother and baby to visit the class. The students asked the mother their questions and observed interactions between the mother and baby. After these experiences, the students' play "completely shifted." As she noted,

> … they realized that babies don't only cry and that there are other things that they can do. I think that experience was really powerful for them. … I had the photos of them playing after and before and you can see the change just in a still photo and then when I took it back to them, the 'moms' were really pleased because the 'babies' were finally listening.

In other similar situations where pedagogical documentation of students' learning was shared within the class, these artifacts became a communal resource that supported the learning of others in the classroom community. For example, one teacher described a project in which she documented students' constructions of elaborate block cities. Students were then asked to arrange the photos of their projects in order, revisit their work, and present their learning to the class. The teacher reported that sharing the documentation "got things going for other kids who went on and wanted to reproduce and even extend what they wanted to do."

In another case both the teacher and students were learning new information as they investigated a project on space (an inquiry that was teacher facilitated and student generated). The teacher admitted this was a new topic for her and the fact-finding for both this teacher and her students was authentic. In this example the teacher notes,

> we would sit down at our daily meeting and show the pictures and I would say "what is this person doing?" and it was all to do with our space project and then on the back I would just scribe what the answers were … I found that really powerful and really helpful to put together the panel in the end that showed the whole development of the project to find the provocations to push forward…[it was] much more conversational, it was much more natural. Because it was a project that we were all involved in, it was a whole class project we were all really enthusiastic about it, it made it a lot easier because we could all have a group discussion about it.

Sharing pedagogical documentation with students and engaging in collaborative reflection shifts the traditional teacher-student hierarchy to a more ethical egalitarian relationship and establishes students

as knowledge producers and agents in their learning. In our focus group discussion, one teacher commented on this egalitarian relationship that could be best described as co-inquiry, noting,

> The documentation, in particular in-process documentation, is how you get the kids to step up to the plate as teachers as well. And not just co-creators but actual peer teachers. Through my project in the fall, one of the most amazing things that came out of it was … not only that the kids saw each other as the expert but they got to see themselves and realized 'hey I have skills that I didn't necessarily know I had and, hey I am an expert at [what] ever it was, and so yah you can come and ask me when you need help doing this' and that's kind of how it helps them take ownership of their learning too.

In these examples their co-inquiry involves a subjective-objective stance in which teachers and students are jointly influencing the learning while simultaneously being influenced by the perspectives of others. Co-inquiry occurred in diverse ways within this cohort and was sometimes initially teacher-led and at other times student-initiated. Importantly, with a few exceptions, we found that most of the examples of co-inquiry described by students in the Learning in the Early Years cohort using pedagogical documentation seemed to involve *parallel* or perhaps *intersecting* inquiries (Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009), in which teacher and students pursued relatively separate lines of inquiry, rather than *shared* inquiries. This we found to be inconsistent with Heron's conception of Cooperative Inquiry (Reason, 2002), which guided our initial understandings of what collaborative inquiry might look like in educational settings, where all members of the community were engaged in the same topic of inquiry. As evident in the mother-baby role-playing example, while all members of the classroom community were engaged in inquiry, and jointly determined the direction of the learning, they were not necessarily learning the same things. The students learned about babies, and the teacher in this example learned about her students' interests and assumptions. This demonstrated an ability on the part of this in-service teacher (our student) to use PD as a reflexive device to bend the learning back onto herself and move not only her students' learning forward, but also her own.

3. Pedagogical documentation as a medium of communication: "Making the learning visible." Teachers used Pedagogical Documentation, raw, or in-process documentation,[4] as well as Learning Stories (Carr, 2001; 2011), to facilitate communication with parents. In the third semester of the program, the program development team was surprised to discover that an instructor had introduced the students to Learning Stories as an alternative to PD. Learning stories differ from pedagogical documentation in that PD features the voice of the students, highlighting their thinking, questions, and interpretations; whereas Learning Stories typically feature the voice of the teacher and represent his or her interpretations. This unplanned event changed the course of our examination of PD, but yielded some additional understandings about how adaptive our in-service teachers were in applying various assessment methods when communicating with parents. In this case, the teachers gravitated toward the use of Learning Stories rather than PD when they wanted to share with parents what students were doing in the classroom, how students' thinking was progressing, or to communicate their own values, expertise, and perspectives (e.g., to demonstrate to parents why outdoor play is important). Alternatively, they gravitated towards PD when they wanted to share emergent curriculum activities or project-based learning as in the example of the mother and baby play or the classroom study of astronomy. The teachers' use of learning stories took

on a heightened significance during the 2011/2012 school year when British Columbia public school teachers engaged in job action that included not writing report cards.

Using combinations of Learning Stories and Pedagogical Documentation to make students' learning visible to parents appeared to be very successful. Teachers reported that parents were particularly receptive to, and appreciative of, both forms of communication. For example, one teacher created a 30-minute video documenting students' learning, and even though parent attendance at school events was typically very low in her community, 17 parents out of 22 attended the screening. Although some merits of report cards were discussed, overall, teachers felt that pedagogical documentation and learning stories were more meaningful to parents, more child centred, and more current than report cards, and were therefore, a more ethical assessment practice. As one teacher noted, "I think it's more honest, I think it's more accurate, I think it's more valid, I think it's interesting, the parents can understand it." It was also felt that sharing these various forms of documentation with parents helped to strengthen the home-school connection.

> Teacher 1: Don't you think this type of documentation also brings the families in whereas the
>
> report cards…
>
> Teacher 2: Pushes them out!

While the communication of learning stories and PD was typically more unidirectional—from teacher to parent—some teachers shared this form of documentation in hopes of stimulating a dialogue. For example, one teacher posted learning stories on a blog and encouraged parents to comment on all documentation, not just the ones involving their child. Another teacher encouraged parents and their children to talk about the documentation she sent home in hopes that continued conversation with others would take students deeper into the learning.

> All that stuff … would go home to the parents, sort of extending it at a higher level where they can learn to take it upon themselves to write down their own thoughts and share with others and connect with the parents.

4. Pedagogical documentation as a mirror: "It's hard to dispute raw data." Although less frequently discussed, some teachers used in-process pedagogical documentation to draw attention to, and better understand, behaviors of self and other. In this way the video recordings and photos were used to draw children's attention to aspects of their behavior that was visible to others, but perhaps not visible to the individual. One teacher documented a student "throwing a fit in the classroom" and showed the documentation to the child. She also engaged the class in an activity to address the behavior (and the impetus for the behavior: problems with sharing) and she continued to document related positive behaviors for the class to learn from and monitor their growth as a whole. In confidence, the documentation of the individual child was also shared with the child's parent. The teacher concluded,

> If I [didn't] have a video the mom would probably not believe what [the] teacher is saying. But with the video she believed it … so the documentation really helped to make that situation

> visible to the mom so we're … talking to each other almost everyday about how he is improving at home and how he is improving also in school.

This use of pedagogical documentation alarmed us because it was not inquiry focused and seemed to contradict our students' use of Pedagogical Documentation as a window, where the teacher is engaging in deep listening and attempting to take the perspective of the child. Instead this use involved an objective stance that had never been reflected in demonstrations, readings, or artifacts viewed by the cohort. Our assumption had been that PD would be used to heighten and make students' aware of their engagement in learning and highlight positive interactions to further socially sanctioned behaviours. As instructors, we never imagined that PD (in this form) would be used to highlight negative behavior. In the form used by this teacher, the video was shared with the parent and child to provide a neutral, credible form of evidence. This struck us as being a powerful and potentially destructive and controversial use of Pedagogical Documentation (see Tarr, 2011, for a discussion of ethical issues in the use of Pedagogical Documentation). However, as argued by the teacher, these types of sharing practices have the potential to guide development by bringing an awareness to the child and parent of appropriate behaviors and reflecting on those less desirable ones. We, however, maintained our reservations about documenting this moment and showing the video to the child given the potential to accentuate negative forms of behavior that could be damaging to children's self-image. We had similar reservations about showing the video to the parent, again given its potential to highlight negative rather than positive behavior and precipitate defensiveness on the part of the parent. As Tarr (2011) notes, pedagogical documentation communicates to students how the teacher perceived them, and in this regard, teachers must take great care in selecting which images to share with students. In this case we were impressed by the teachers' care in communicating the behavior in confidence with the child and parent and with her follow-up, intervening and providing the child with subsequent images that could then move the learning forward and strengthen the community through dialogue with the parent, child, and class. Admittedly, we also knew little of the relationship that existed between the teacher and this parent and the history of the child in the class. This example highlights the power of teachers, who hold the mirror to perpetuate or disrupt negative images of children and contribute to positive constructions of learning moments. This example also draws attention to the fact that, unlike other professionals, teachers' expert opinions may be questioned, and supportive documentation may be necessary to initiate conversations between teachers and parents.

Conclusion

Primary teachers in the Learning in the Early Years Graduate Diploma were found to use pedagogical documentation in different ways to attend to children's interests and experiences, reflect on both their own and their students' learning moments and meaning making, and share ideas and events within the community. The inquiry process, experimentation with practice, and the support of the teachers' own learning community were vital in enabling teachers to adapt PD in meaningful ways within the elementary school context.

Anecdotal evidence verified through coding of student portfolios and a focus group interview showed that when these teachers actively shared documentation with their students "in process," it not only served as a powerful way to better understand, socially support, and mediate learning, but it also became a means to promote dialogue between members of the learning community. Such ethical encounters can disrupt and slow down the instrumental and mechanical cycle of teaching and learning and lead to transformative practices such as co-inquiry and deep listening that, as suggested by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), establish "new collaborative relationships [that] replace older expert-novice models of proficiency, and [where] new multifaceted goals replace the singular pursuit of best practice" (p. 144). We noted that when teachers had the goal of authentic collaboration in mind and were actively engaged with children during discussions of "in-process" documentation, learning was co-constructed and moved forward under more egalitarian and authentic conditions.

It is important to note that the teachers in our sample were in the early stages of incorporating PD within their practice. Furthermore, as they become more comfortable with this intersection between inquiry and pedagogy, they might shift from more private (e.g., PD as a window) to more public (e.g., PD as a medium of communication or PD as a catalyst) implementations. Discussions of in-process documentation with students and sharing documentation with colleagues and/or parents may be difficult for teachers because it disrupts traditional teacher/student roles and involves a greater extent of vulnerability and risk taking, as teachers expose their own thinking, assumptions, and uncertainties. Teachers may increasingly incorporate these aspects of PD as they become more comfortable with their shifting identities and roles.

When implemented within an inquiry-based graduate diploma program, the practices surrounding the uses of pedagogical documentation were not static and continued to evolve as they are adapted and developed by the teachers in local contexts and under various conditions. Our own practices of supporting the teachers in our graduate diploma program as reflexive inquirers and "pedagogical bricoleurs" facilitate this process, and contribute to our own ethical practice. The teachers saw various forms of PD and Learning Stories as a "genre" that could be constructed for various purposes and audiences. Learning Stories were beneficial in conveying learning to parents and provided strong evidence of competencies while in-process Pedagogical Documentation had greater appeal for use with children and colleagues, particularly when used to move learning forward and develop emergent or responsive practices. Overall, teachers appeared sensitive to the various needs of the constituent groups. Evidence that the teachers were appropriating and adapting PD to meet their needs and suit their particular contexts indicated that we were successful in our efforts to empower teachers to act as teacher inquirers—rather than technicians—and evolve methods in ways that appeared to serve their purposes. However, clearly there are limits to the extent of agency students of PD should have in order to reinterpret curriculum as we noted in one student's use of PD to provide supportive "evidence" of misbehavior. As Brown and Campione (1996) have asserted, adopting surface activities of pedagogical methods, without understanding the principles underlying the specific practices, can in some cases lead to "lethal mutations." In this regard, it is essential that teachers assume an inquiry stance rather than surveillance stance when adapting PD.

Notes

1. As teacher educators and researchers, we refer here to *in-service teachers* as our students. These K-3 teachers are enrolled in a University Graduate Diploma Program called "Learning in the Early Years."
2. Parents are often invited to add comments and responses to the teacher's narrative about the child's exploration and engagement. Learning stories were introduced by one of the instructors in the play course as a possible alternative to PD, but was not intended in the original design.
3. Quotations were drawn from focus group transcripts, and along with the metaphor, are used to summarize each form of implementation.
4. As described earlier, "Raw" or "In-process documentation" refers to bringing the documented photos, transcripts, or activities back to the community of learners (children, parents, other teachers) for discussion and dialogue prior to final write-up. This is an important part of the PD process that allows multiple perspectives and interpretation of learning.

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Appendix A:

Our focus group with students from the Learning in the Early Years Cohort considered the following questions (distributed in advance of the session):

What are your experiences using "in-process" documentation with the children in your class?

What type of dialogue (if at all) did it generate?

What were your impressions/thoughts on its usefulness for teaching and learning (if at all)?

Given that pedagogical documentation is a relatively new practice and that there are diverse understandings of this method, what is *your* understanding of it? AND What do you think are the essential elements or key practices associated with this method?

How is it similar to and/or different from other forms of inquiry? (For example, how might it differ from a teacher doing an observation study of her students?)

In what ways, if any, do you think pedagogical documentation might be useful for teachers, students, and parents?

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Cher Hill is an Assistant Professor of Professional Practice at Simon Fraser University. Her primary areas of expertise include practitioner inquiry, reflective practice, in-service teacher education, self-study of practice, and qualitative research methods. She works collaboratively with community groups and faculty members to develop graduate programs for practicing educators. Her current research utilizes new materialist theories to make visible the complex relations between humans and more-than-humans within educational contexts. Building on and extending Schön's notion of reflective practice, Cher has been experimenting with the notion of diffractive practice and exploring how diffractive methods might inform her pedagogy.

Listening to Our Students: THEIR Stories

Hetty Roessingh

Abstract

Storytelling in the classroom has long been recognized for its many benefits, especially as a bridge from orality to literacy. With the changing demographic landscape present in current elementary classrooms across Canada and internationally, storytelling reaps additional benefits for promoting the goals of inclusion among diverse learner profiles. This article provides an updated literature review reflecting these shifting instructional mandates, offers practical ideas for using storytelling in the contemporary classroom, and provides an illustrative sample of a co-constructed story between student and teacher, highlighting the many ways in which storytelling benefits all learners.

Everyone has a story. Story telling is a cultural universal (Brown, 2000). Long before humankind developed written literacy skills, storytelling was a crucial vehicle for preserving, sharing, and transmitting the cultural ways of being and knowing (savoir être et savoir faire) to the next generation. In indigenous cultures, elder wisdom is revered and oral transmission by way of stories and legends to the young is especially valued to this day. The discovery of the wreckage of the Franklin expedition, for example, is attributed in large measure to remarkably accurate oral stories told over 166 years representing many generations (Allen, 2014). Artwork, images, and objects provided important adjuncts to oral storytelling traditions.

Written literacy development is relatively recent in the human evolutionary chain—only 5,000 years of recorded documents exist. Literacy practices allow us to widen the storytelling lens, permitting broader sharing across time and space with diverse audiences near and far, including through the affordances of "new" or multi-literacies in the digital world (Garrety, 2008). Written literacy allows us to revisit stories, to hold them steady for personal study and reflection, and to reengage firsthand with texts we might ourselves have had a hand in creating, or that might have been written by others and passed down in the form of letters and diaries. Further, our stories inspire, motivate, and change the world, sometimes long after the passing of the storyteller. Perhaps the most compelling example would be *Anne Frank: The diary of a young girl* (Frank, 1947) wherein Anne, at the tender age of just 13, entrusts her innermost thoughts to her diary, Kitty, throughout two years in hiding during the German occupation of Holland in World War Two (Figure 1). Anne's diary, discovered and published after her death at the hands of the Nazis, was translated into more than 60 languages, and read by millions over the years, ensuring her voice not be silenced or that the world might ever forget—Anne was inarguably their most famous victim. Anne was acutely aware of the power of literacy. She wrote, "I want to go on living even after my death. I am grateful to God for giving me this gift, this possibility of developing myself and of writing, of expressing all that is in me."

Fig. 1: Anne's diary (Cowper, 2013). Credit: www.heatheronhertravels.com

In a contemporary context, Malala Yousafzai (2014, 2017) reminds us that, "one child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world" (Figure 2). Her advocacy for education for girls in her native Pakistan and her outspokenness against the Taliban is world renowned: even a child's voice can be heard around the world (Ivison, 2017). At the age of just 15, death itself was less frightening for Malala than the thought of being forgotten and her story lost along with the story of countless young girls on whose behalf she wanted to speak. While the Taliban might have wanted her dead, fate had other plans for Malala. Her story has inspired millions as a cosmic force for global change in educating young girls, in the telling and retelling whether orally (Yousafzai, 2014) or through print (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2015; Yousafzai, 2017).

Fig. 2: Malala (Davis, 2015). One child, one teacher, one book, one pen ….

The power of storytelling is gaining increased attention among classroom practitioners, researchers, and in academe: Mount Royal University in Calgary, for example, has a storyteller-in-residence who works with students, professors, and community members to turn interesting ideas into meaningful action, including advocacy and community awareness in a variety of media.

This paper highlights the potent impact of storytelling as a teaching and learning strategy in the context of the culturally and linguistically diverse elementary classrooms common across Canada today. In particular, when the stories belong to the children themselves as the authors and tellers of the stories (Roessingh, 2011), we create learning environments for literacy and language development that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and rich as a source for seeing the world from multiple perspectives not possible through the purchase of commercially prepared materials. Among English-language learners (ELLs) these texts, sometimes written bilingually and referred to as *identity texts,* validate students' identity and support the crucial connection to home language and literacy practices (Cummins et al., 2005).

The paper begins with a brief review of the literature relevant to storytelling. This is followed by suggestions for supporting the storytelling endeavors of students in upper elementary classrooms. A sample story, *Abhi does his hair*, generated from personal experience with one of my grade six students, provides an illustration for how storytelling can be used in the classroom to realize multiple literacy and language learning goals.

Literature Review

This section reviews four areas of research related to storytelling: children's ability to construct autobiographical texts or stories; the value of incorporating these texts into the classroom; the pedagogy of listening and being present to children; and the need to increase oral vocabulary development as foundational to the recognition of new words in print.

The demands of constructing a good story. While storytelling may seem like a natural, easy task, in fact, it is not. Storytelling requires the teller to integrate and mobilize a host of cognitive, metacognitive, and linguistic resources. These include knowledge of story structure, vocabulary, and literary conventions such as plot and theme. In addition, the storyteller must recognize what the listener shares, and whether they have pertinent prior knowledge. These abilities are developmental (Geist & Aldridge, 2002), with each year of educational advancement reflecting evolving abilities to engage with the multifaceted demands of storytelling.

In recalling a personal experience from the past, for example, the teller must reach into the autobiographical memory to marshal the sequence of events and relevant details and encode them in the appropriate words, all in working memory (Fivush & Nelson, 2004). Producing a written version of the story places the additional demands of the transcription skills—printing and spelling—on the teller. Dictating the story to an engaged adult who transcribes and co-constructs the story can lessen the cognitive burden. Cooper (2005) provides an excellent, accessible review of the theoretical underpinnings and pedagogical implications of dictation and dramatization of Vivian Paley's storytelling curriculum.

Illustrating stories with drawing or photographs provides a scaffold and a concrete touchstone for reference (Collelo, 2001; Craig & Lockhart, 1972). This is particularly effective as a pre-writing strategy, functioning as a type of priming activity as young writers retrieve the words they want to use in their storytelling. In their

seminal work on levels of processing, Craig and Lockhart (1972), and subsequently elaborated by Ekuni, Vaz, and Bueno (2011), observed that visual input created the strongest recall value of all the senses including words, especially when physical details were to be remembered, the picture superiority effect—"a picture is worth a thousand words" rings true. Such deep processing offers a scaffold for the writing task to come and enhances the quality of the writing, particularly among younger students (Roessingh & Bence, 2017). Further, newly emerging findings from the neuro and cognitive sciences (Ionescu & Vasc, 2014) underscore the contribution of body-object interaction (BOI) as these tactile experiences create connections and neuro pathways to the brain to create meaning: embodied cognition.

The benefits of incorporating storytelling into the classroom. Colby and Lyon (2004) underscore the many benefits of bringing multicultural literature into the classroom, including heightening awareness and sensitivity to differences, affirming identity by seeing oneself reflected in the literature choices for study and sharing in the class, developing empathy and respect for others, and examining issues of power and racism. It would seem, however, that when the creators of the texts are the students themselves, an added personal dimension for promoting understanding and appreciation of diversity, and a deepened sense of identity, are more immediately available. Opportunities for developing language awareness, and translanguaging—the simultaneous, fluid access to both first (L1) and second language (L2), selecting a word that may not exist or translate in efforts to realize precision in meaning making—marks these students as sophisticated language users (Celic & Seltzer, 2011). Moreover, this affords a direct connection to home language and literacy practices and offers the storyteller the opportunity (and the challenge) to negotiate meaning in the "third space"—the space at the intersection of first language (L1) and second language (L2). Figure 3 illustrates this idea.
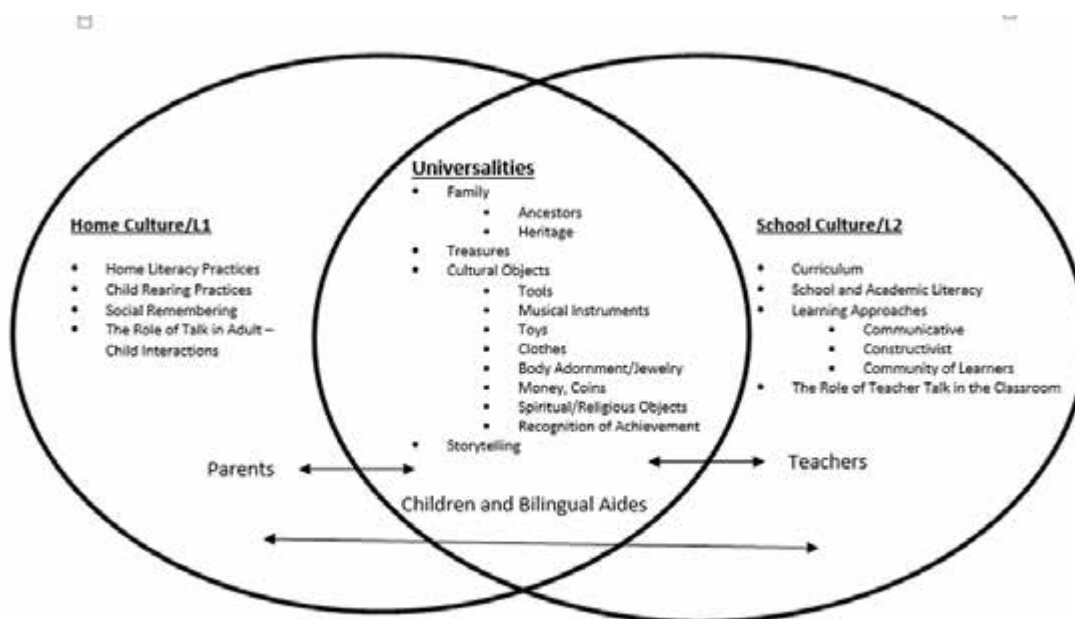
Fig. 3: Negotiating language and culture in L1 and L2.

When stories are directly connected to personal experiences or cultural universals and represented by way of artefacts or objects such as family treasures (Brown, 2000; Roessingh, 2011), costumes and traditional dress for cultural celebrations, body adornment and grooming habits, there is rich content that can be shared within the classroom and understood at a deeper level through tactile experiences.

The pedagogy of listening and being present to young students. Grounded in socio-cultural/constructivist theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), teachers can be involved in the co-construction of the text allowing for the introduction of new vocabulary that permits nuance and precision to the text. When teachers target the small step ahead of the child's current level of development—Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD)—their learning potential is reset to a new current level of development. While children whose first language is English learn rare and sophisticated words primarily from their mothers through elaborative and collaborative talk while engaged in storybook reading, for example (Torr & Scott, 2006), young ELLs as well as other linguistically vulnerable students are dependent on their teachers for this more challenging input and interaction. While ELLs can benefit from collaborative work with their age and grade peers, teachers are in a better position to recognize teachable moments, to make online decisions about the readiness for learning "next words to know," and explain and embed them in meaningful contexts—in this case the students' choices for their storytelling. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of understanding new vocabulary. Baxter (2007) defines teachable moments as follows:

> A teachable moment is an unplanned event during the day that adults can use as a learning opportunity for kids. When a child displays an action or behavior that can be used as a learning tool, parents and providers should capitalize on the moment, and provide the opportunity to extend or expand the child's learning.

Teachers can also use these teachable moments to tune in, actively listen, and be present to a child. Clark (2014) discusses the many benefits to children's development when they are aware that someone is listening to them. This conveys respect and they have something important and interesting to share. This reciprocity develops relationships of trust and builds confidence among young learners, documented as important contributors to children's engagement with school. Listening on the part of teachers affords a window into a child's thinking processes and control over language-in-use—important opportunities for informal assessment.

The importance of vocabulary. Written language is not merely "talk on paper," but rather, offers unique challenges and opportunities to put precision and nuance to the rendered text, perhaps especially in the vocabulary choices. Oral conversational language at all ages depends overwhelmingly on approximately 2,000 high-frequency word families, whereas written discourse at grade four draws on a literate vocabulary of 9,000-word families; at grade 12, this increases to 18,000-word families.

The research community increasingly recognizes vocabulary learning as crucial for children to advance academically (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Biemiller, 2001, 2003; DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker, & Rivera, 2014; Schleppegrell, 2012). A Canadian study (Scott, Jamieson-Noel & Asselin, 2003) notes a paucity of attention allocated to vocabulary instruction by teachers, both in terms of quantity of time and quality of instructional engagements. ELLs and children raised in poverty are most in need of

language learning support in content area instruction. Biemiller (2001) makes the case for direct and explicit teaching of vocabulary, highlighting the need to expand the oral repertoire of students' vocabulary knowledge first. Ulanoff and Pucci (1999) and Van Kleeck (2008) suggest that teachers can have an impact on the development of oral vocabulary and thinking skills by adopting the same types of storybook reading strategies that mothers who engage with their children are noted for, as mentioned earlier (Torr & Scott, 2006). Recognition of the literate form of those words follows more readily. Suggate, Lenhard, Neudecker, and Schneider (2013) echo these researchers' findings, reporting that even in upper elementary grades, students learn more vocabulary from oral story telling by adults than from independent reading. A threshold or critical mass of approximately 9,000-word families—not realized until around grade four—in addition to strong and fluent foundational decoding skills, are needed for students to independently gain meaning from print. This threshold coincides with the "grade four slump," the pivotal point of transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn (Chall& Jacobs, 2003). Scholars attribute the failure to traverse this transition to increasingly demanding text to insufficient lexical knowledge. In the meantime, it would seem that teachers play a key role in developing a robust oral vocabulary. Introducing vocabulary beyond the 2000 high-frequency word families needed to compose or render a simple narrative, therefore, becomes a critical learning need for many young learners.

Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) advance a three-tiered model (see Figure 4) for thinking about vocabulary instruction.

Tier 3: Subject specific words. These are often discipline specific words (often nouns) that have transparent meanings that can be looked up in the dictionary: habitat, mitosis. Literary terms and metaphoric uses of words are much more difficult for ELLs to comprehend and interpret independently.

Tier 2: High utility/general academic words: These transfer across curricular boundaries. These are often verbs, with Greek or Latin roots. They are often words that have to do with procedures: investigate, experiment, analyze, prepare. Teachers tend to overlook these words.

Tier 1: Conversational words: 'here and now' and 'lived experience words'. Children acquire these words through exposure, immersion and daily interaction especially through collaborative and elaborative talk, storybook reading, and guided play with parents and more competent peers.

Fig. 4: Three-tiered model of vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002)

It is the Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary that is important to introduce, teach, and rework with students, affording them multiple opportunities and modalities for hearing, saying, reading, and writing the words they need to engage with the increasingly complex and academically demanding tasks of school.

The foregoing literature review suggests storytelling and co-constructing stories with students for them to write and retell would be an ideal platform for providing exposure and experience to develop vocabulary and to realize the many benefits noted here of students' ownership of the stories they would like to share.

I turn next to teaching implications that emerge from this review of the relevant literature.

Teaching Implications

Teachers can strategically mitigate the various demands that written literacy imposes on learners in the early years, and on ELLs who may not yet be at grade level in their language and literacy development. This enhances the possibilities for stories to find their way from the hearts and minds of the teller into artefacts for sharing that will enrich classroom learning opportunities for everyone. What follows is a series of simple-to-implement ideas for scaffolding learning and providing enriched input that can result in stories worth sharing.

1) Choose anchor books for storybook reading as a launch. *The Swirling Hijab* (Robert, 2002), *Chachajee's Cup* (Krishnaswami, 2003), *Stone Soup* (Muth, 2011), *Grandma's Quilt Tells a Story* (Starnbach, 2008), or *Malala's Magic Pencil* (Yousafzai, 2017), for example, provide a starting point for introducing concepts, provocations, and essential questions around cultural universals and differences. These are intended for students to explore and express themselves further in open-ended ways, but generally do not contain the Tier 2 and 3 words that students need to hear. Teachers need to elaborate these book readings by introducing new vocabulary.

2) Find informational texts to supplement the storybooks to further enhance vocabulary development, or, target the "next words to know" for elaborative and collaborative talk with students in constructing their stories.

3) Use objects, artefacts, and realia to ground the story and encourage direct tactile interaction with materials to support building neuro-pathways between body and brain, and language.

Fig. 5 and Fig. 6: Making soup.

Quilting, for example, provides a tangible context for concepts related to patterns and geometric shapes. Students can make quilt blocks from paper or cardboard shapes and color them, or play with ceramic tiles to make patterns. Making soup offers a context for teaching procedural language and enhancing the words children may not know for chopping, shredding, dicing, slicing (Figures 6 and 7: Roessingh, 2014). The storybooks mentioned are sufficiently flexible to use at different grades, depending on the language and learning goals identified.

4) Exploit the potential of personal relevance, personal connections, and the familiar in making curricular connections at any grade. Target cultural universals that allow for students to make back-and-forth connections in "the third space."

5) Consider allowing for dual-language writing. Even though, increasingly, with the current generation of Canadian born children of immigrants, proficiency in L1 is oral only and used for communicative purposes at home, seeing their L1 in print form is enlightening and can reinforce literacy concepts. When these young students' culturally embedded ways of knowing and being are recognized and valued in the classroom through storytelling, their sense of identity and pride is enhanced.

6) Encourage photo essays/stories, cartooning, drawing, and sketching. As noted earlier, visual information is especially important in constructing meaning: the human brain was never wired to recognize the alphabet! Only much later in the evolutionary chain did the brain repurpose the concepts of shape, size, space, pattern, and sequence to develop literacy. Plan to pair visual information with written information, beginning with the pre-writing tasks.

7) Provide templates, writing frames, or sentence starters to support the writing task. This will be particularly important in the early grades as children must control various skills and mobilize

psycholinguistic and metacognitive resources to produce coherent text. As students transition to more academic modes of expository discourse, these same supports continue to be important.

8) Allow for dictated/co-constructed stories. This will require one-on-one time, or volunteer adults to support the story development, with a particular emphasis on vocabulary learning. Offloading the demands of generating text can enhance the final product. In addition, one-on-one time offers an opportunity for teachers to focus on one child at a time, building relationships that have the potential to be life altering.

9) Share students' stories. Be sure to make provision for various ways of sharing the stories produced, including work in progress. It can begin with an exchange of the photos and drawings with open-ended questions from classmates, for example, or an invitation for extended family members to join the class to demonstrate a procedure (e.g., how to coil and tie a juda) or display a collection of artefacts (e.g., patkas). The class can compile the stories and publish them; create a website; plan for a type of story or book launch event that invites the parents and others in the school to celebrate and learn together (Figure 8). Our website (www.duallanguageproject.com) celebrates our Family Treasures and Grandma's Soup book writing project.

Fig. 7: The book launch celebration.

10) Extend and recycle new words through a variety of engaging tasks. The Internet offers endless possibilities by way of YouTube clips and websites, for example, for students to practice and rework vocabulary through listening and reading, even independently.

A Storytelling Sample: Abhi

The following story was generated and co-constructed between Abhi, a grade six student who comes to my tutoring group on Monday evenings, and me. The goal of this work was to encourage Abhi to use more sophisticated vocabulary by asking for procedural talk associated with an oral recount or retelling, and to understand more of his Sikh traditions. What more personal a topic than how he takes care of his hair?

Abhi was eager to take on this assignment, supplying a series of photos that would support the step-by-step rendering of his retrospective take of his hair care habits and the cultural significance of them. As his partner, my work was to introduce new vocabulary, to provide a structure for the procedural storytelling or recount, and to learn from him. Several of his words did not have direct translations into English; in the six years I have been working with Abhi, I have never seen his hair down. One of the older male students in the group was quick to volunteer a demonstration on his own hair showing how adept a young man can be in fashioning a *rishi* knot.

Abhi's Hair

My name is Abhi. I am 12 years old and in Grade 6. One of my most prized possessions is my hair. By my Sikh cultural tradition, it has never been cut. My hair is now nearly waist length. How do I manage such long hair, you might ask. Let me explain.

First, I undo my hair, shaking it and letting it fall naturally. I wash my hair, never scrubbing one place for too long, or else my hair will be very greasy. I let it air dry. This takes hours, so usually I do this on the weekend.

Next, my mom parts my hair into two sections: one section for the lower braid and the other section, the juda, which will be worked on top. Then my mom braids them and connects them. She then rolls my hair up to make a joora or top knot. It might also be called a rishi knot. Mothers do this for their young sons, but over time, boys begin to be able to do this for themselves. I'm almost there! Braiding and knotting look like a complicated process, but actually, once you have practiced enough, it's quite quick and easy.

Finally, I cover my hair with a patka or rumal I wear to parties and to school. This way my hair stays in place and it stays clean, too. I have many patkas. They are very special because they are made in India. Often, family members travelling to India for holidays will bring patkas back as gifts. I love to receive them! Whenever I go swimming I like to keep my hair in a juda. How do you manage long hair under a football helmet? Some boys simply take their long hair down and let it fly around.

Canada is a diverse country. People come from all over the world to make their new home here. They bring their cultural traditions with them, and want to keep them. Canada includes people who have all kinds of preferences about their hair. Even though most Sikh boys cut their hair nowadays, I make my choice for long hair. I am very proud of my hair. Being different from other boys is very fun. It's empowering to show that I am a Sikh.
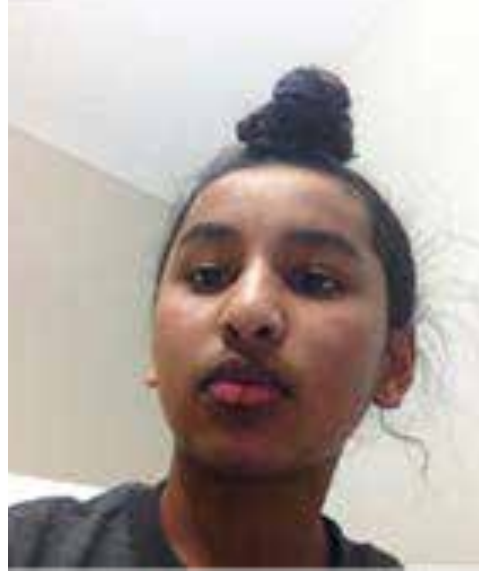
Fig. 8 and Fig. 9: Abhi's hair.

Genre and task requirements constrain student's vocabulary choices. Storytelling is essentially an oral activity that draws heavily on conversational language and high frequency vocabulary associated with Tier 1 in Beck et al.'s (2002) vocabulary framework. Even though engaging in collaborative talk beforehand and deliberately embedding more academic-like word choices such as *manage, connect, process, practice, finally, cultural, tradition, section, diverse, possession, naturally* associated with Tier 2 vocabulary, the overall nature of the text still reflects dependency on high-frequency vocabulary. It is important to remember to offer experience with different genres, especially expository modes, to introduce more high-utility academic words (Tier 2), and- secondly- to continue to place instructional focus on vocabulary teaching and learning in all grades.

It is interesting to note Abhi's spontaneous access across both Punjabi and English, borrowing and embedding words such as *juda, joora, rishi, patka*, and *rumal*. These are all words that do not have a direct translation and indicate his lexical flexibility. Translanguaging is seen as a strength and a resource among bilingual learners, reflecting a nimbleness in vocabulary control, as the speaker must make spur-of-the-moment choices to retrieve the exact word for the exact meaning intended from their integrated sum of lexicon.

Conclusion

Storytelling can advance multiple learning, language, and literacy goals in today's diverse classroom settings. Storytelling can promote cultural awareness and sensitivity, identity construction, and leave permanent artefacts of literacy engagement that can be revisited many times for retrospective insights and enjoyment. Sharing our stories requires active listening and, in turn, builds relationships of trust and respect.

Everyone has a story. Many of them. It is finding the topic, the time, and making the opportunity to turn storytelling into a learning opportunity in the classroom. Often, minimal planning or preparation is required. Few of us will ever become famous. Few of our stories will bend the arch of time, or leave our mark on the human collective conscience. Our sphere of influence might be small, but our stories can nevertheless create small ripples on the ocean of time as those who journey after us discover our stories, become curious, and pick up the threads of what we have left behind, as they themselves see how our stories informs and shapes theirs.

Letters, diaries, scrapbooks and journals, photo albums, and the gift of literacy that both Anne Frank and Malala Yousafzai understood at a young age make possible a legacy of indelible footprints that time cannot erase, ensuring the reach of our being beyond our own lifespan. Our stories might be our most treasured possessions worth sharing.

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Hetty Roessingh is a long-time ESL practitioner in the K–12 system, and subsequently, a faculty member (since 2000) in the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. Research interests have included language and literacy development and longitudinal tracking studies to note how academic vocabulary is learned over time. Of particular interest is how young learners come to "own" the words they know, as this is visible in their written literacy efforts beginning at the onset of literacy learning. For the past six years, Hetty has voluntarily tutored four young Punjabi speakers every Monday evening. She learns and finds inspiration in their energy, curiosity, and endless enthusiasm to learn language.

Storytelling in Teacher Professional Development

Tracy Rosen

Abstract

Teacher voices hold weight for their colleagues. When teachers tell a story of a positive experience with technology (or other teaching tools or strategies), they are showing that it is possible. "Stories, particularly those that are concrete and readily identified with, are particularly powerful for transferring knowledge rich in tacit dimensions" (Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001, p. 105). When teachers share their stories with each other, they create a reality based on concrete possibility. This article will focus on how we use teacher stories and conversations in professional development (PD) to create positive realities for teaching and learning.

> "The truth about stories is that that's all we are." (King, 2003, p. 32)

We are made of story. When we talk to each other, we tell each other stories about what we believe to be important and true (Boje, 1991). Talking to each other is how people think together (Wheatley, 2002), and it is through these stories and conversations that we can build our organizations together. Of course, the nature of the stories we choose to share has implications in this process, as Norum (2006) writes, "If we create our realities through how we talk about them and we have a choice to emphasize the positive or the negative, what we choose to emphasize matters" (p. 110). This article will focus on how we choose what to emphasize in teacher professional development (PD) and how we can use teacher stories and conversations to create positive realities for teaching and learning through meaningful integration of technology.

The stories that I tell over and over again are stories about teaching and learning, specifically about figuring out new pathways to learning when it is seemingly blocked.

Let me tell you a story.

In 2006, I was part of a differentiated instruction implementation team for a school system. We invited experts in to talk about it. We did multiple workshops and presentations at different schools on how and why to differentiate instruction. The teachers weren't following through though and so finally, we asked, why?

The answers were all pretty similar—ranging from different priorities to not enough time for planning. The response that stood out the most for me was that the teachers "got it" on a theoretical level, but couldn't imagine what it might look like in their classrooms.

As a result, I brought a group of teachers on a field trip to a classroom 168 kilometres away, in Burlington, Vermont, to see differentiation in action. Half-way through the morning of our visit, I looked over at my

group of teachers and wondered what they were thinking. I couldn't read the expression on the face of one of the teachers, and I thought that he must have been thinking about all of the work he had to do to prepare for his substitute teacher in order to be away for the day. As the students filed out to recess, I asked him, trepidatiously, "So?" He paused, and then answered, "I think I learned more this morning than at my four years in Teacher College. I can't wait to get back to my classroom to try some of this out."

Fast forward to 2015, working for a different school system with a different focus—the integration of technology—but the context was strikingly similar: multiple workshops and presentations about how to use technology for learning with minimal impact on daily classroom practice. I work with the RECIT network and part of my job entails visiting teachers and adult education centres to see what they are doing with technology in their classrooms. Whenever I saw something great, I thought how wonderful it would be if we could do classroom-visit field trips so that teachers could experience firsthand their colleagues' innovative practices in the area of technology integration. Logistically, that can be difficult to organize with scheduling, traveling to distant regions of the province, and budgetary constraints. At the same time, the RECIT network was starting to look at ways we could offer our services virtually. So, effectively I was playing with two questions at the same time:

1. How can we organize classroom visits between teachers with all of the scheduling and budgetary constraints?

2. How can I offer virtual technology consulting services?

The answers to these two questions merged into the Teacher Story videos.

Teacher Story Videos: Validating Teacher Experience by Listening to and Celebrating Their Stories

So often we focus on what is not happening in the classroom—not enough technology, not enough collaboration, not enough "insert activity here." Borrowing from Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which focuses on the power of generative stories to bring about change through the passion and engagement that already exist in an organization (Cooperrider, 2002), I decided to consciously focus on what *is* happening in our classrooms. I decided to listen to our teachers' stories and to celebrate them by turning them into videos that could be shared with others. In this way, teachers could share each other's stories and visit each other's classrooms without having to worry about the logistics involved with physical visits.

Why the emphasis on teacher stories? I could have chosen to retell their stories in my own words. It would likely have been easier for me to stay in my office and do just that, rather than travel to different classrooms, record teachers, and then edit their recordings into bite-sized pieces. Teacher voices hold weight for their colleagues. When a teacher tells a story of a positive experience with technology (or any other teaching tool or strategy) he or she is showing that it is possible. "Stories, particularly those that are concrete and readily identified with, are particularly powerful for transferring knowledge rich in

tacit dimensions" (Swap et al., 2001, p. 105). When teachers share their stories, they are creating a reality based on concrete possibility. Secondhand stories do not share that same possibility.

By the end of the 2016 school year, I had a collection of 14 teacher story videos, featuring teachers from across Quebec. I shared the videos in a YouTube playlist (http://bit.ly/TeacherStoryVideos) on social media, my blog (http://PdPractice.com) and on PD Mosaic (http://pdmosaic.com), an online professional development platform. I wanted to make sure that as many teachers as possible could access these stories and I was quite preoccupied with how to use these stories in as meaningful a way as possible (Rosen & Spector, 2016). This question continued to roll around my mind for the next few months.

Stories and Conversation: Using Care to Guide Us Through Change

> The children's television host Mr. Rogers always carried in his wallet a quote from a social worker that said, "Frankly, there isn't anyone you couldn't learn to love once you've heard their story." And the way I like to interpret that is probably the greatest story commandment, which is, "Make me care." – please, emotionally, intellectually, aesthetically, just make me care." (Stanton, 2012)

Let me tell you a story.

A few months before our trip to Burlington in 2006, a colleague and I were asked to give a presentation on differentiated instruction to a group of teachers in one elementary school. The presentation took place at four in the afternoon, after a full day of teaching, and there were about 50 teachers crammed behind student desks in the classroom where we presented. So, we started our presentation with some theory about why they should differentiate their instruction and progressively moved on towards some advice on how they should go about doing so. At one point, as my colleague was speaking, I looked around the room and saw a group of tired, skeptical—even angry—teachers. Some of the less tired teachers were arguing with my colleague about how differentiated instruction was nice in theory, but it couldn't possibly work in their classrooms, with their students. I realized that the theory we were presenting was missing something. I interrupted my colleague and we shifted gears. We shifted the conversation away from the theory and towards the teachers in the room. I asked them to turn to each other and tell each other their stories about how and why they became teachers. Gradually, over a series of meetings over the next little while, the teachers were given the opportunity to talk with each other about their dreams for their students as well as stories of success that were already happening in their classrooms. As the teachers shared their stories, they moved towards concrete possibility.

What was it that had been missing from our presentation of theory? It was Andrew Stanton's greatest story commandment—make me care. By sharing their stories of hope, dream, and success, the teachers were effectively building their realities on hope, dreams, and success. This process brought them to want to learn more about differentiated instruction in order to help them realize these hopes, dreams, and successes. It was their own stories that made them care—not our presentation of theory about why they should care.

Fast forward to 2015, we were working with a different group of teachers with a different focus, but the context was similar. My colleague, Avi Spector, and I were invited to an adult centre to present about using stations as a teaching strategy in adult education. We presented to about 10 teachers at two in the afternoon, after a full day of teaching. We proceeded to present some theory and to talk about the different reasons we thought they should teach in stations. As the afternoon progressed, we both felt the energy waning in the room. A couple of teachers left before the end of the presentation. As soon as it was over we turned to each other and said, "Why were we talking at them about stations? Why didn't we let them experience stations together?"

Once again, I was at a point in my own practice where I was playing with two questions at the same time. Avi and I asked each other:

1. How can we best share the teacher story videos with other teachers?

2. How can we design authentic professional development (PD) opportunities about using stations as a teaching and learning strategy to better integrate technology?

Once again, the answers to our questions merged together and changed our practice.

Sharing Teacher Stories in Professional Development

"Conversation is the natural way we humans think together" (Wheatley, 2002, pp. 42–43)

In April of 2016, Avi and I had the opportunity to design a large-scale workshop in stations at the annual conference of l'Association Québécoise des Intervenants et Intervenantes en Formation Générale des Adultes (AQIFGA). Instead of presenting about stations, we were going to allow our participants to experience stations.

At roughly the same time I was working with Emilie, a teacher at an adult education centre, as she started to use stations in her classroom. At the end of our process, I recorded a conversation we had about teaching in stations with adult learners, thinking that I would create a teacher story video once the AQIFGA conference was over.

Both Avi and I wanted to model an effective use of video during our stations workshop at AQIFGA. As we got closer to the conference date, we discovered that it was difficult to find videos about stations that were appropriate for adult educators. Finally, I realized that we had our videos; they just weren't put together yet. So, with less than a week until the conference, I put everything else on hold and created a series of videos about Emilie's experience with stations and we designed a simple activity around them to use at one of our stations (See Figures 1 and 2).
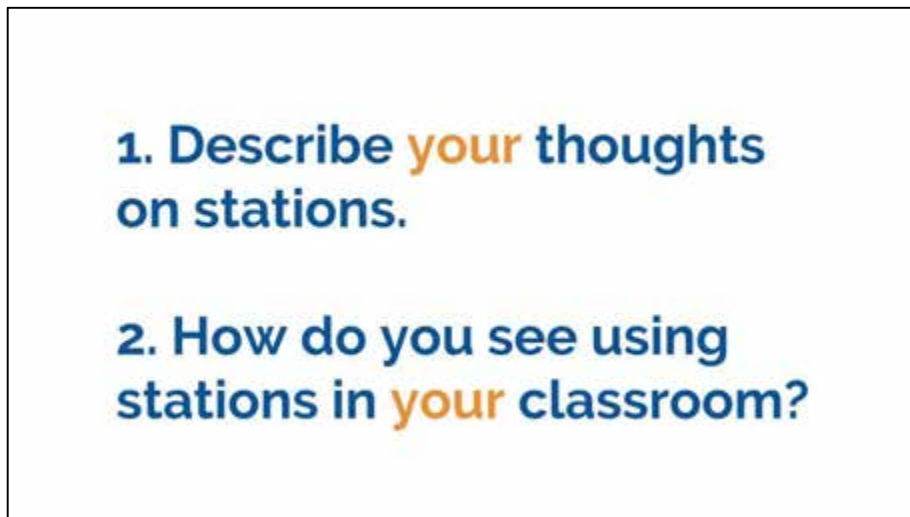
Fig. 1: Video station instruction card used at AQIFGA 2016

Fig. 2: Video station questions used at AQIFGA 2016

The stations workshop was a success. Teachers were actively involved in their learning as they rotated through the three stations: a video station, a reading station, and a teacher station (see Figure 3). It was important for us to model strategies that could easily be transferred to the classroom, so we also had an extension station where participants could access other resources if they finished an activity early.
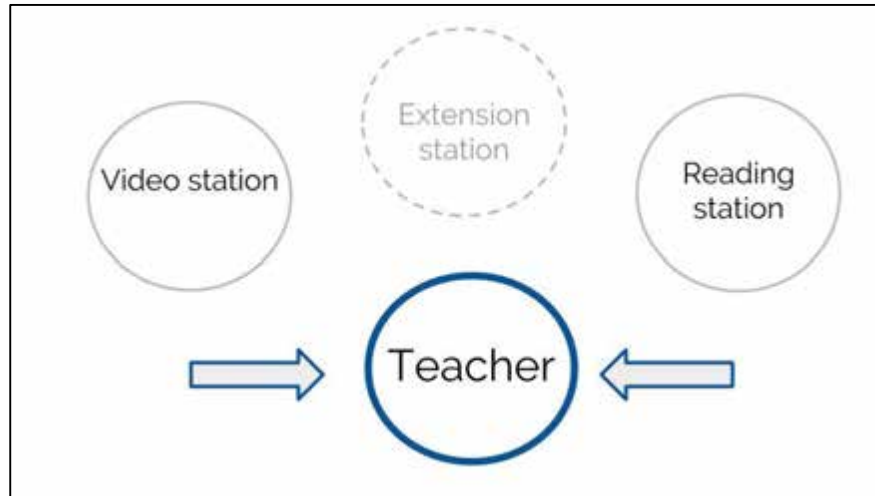
Fig. 3: Station configuration at AQIFGA 2016

A highlight for us, as presenters, was the teacher station where we facilitated a conversation between participants around the subject of using stations in adult education. As facilitators, we were able to stay at the teacher station because of the detailed instruction cards (see Figures 4-7) we left at each of the stations, as well as the ground rules we set up, which included the proviso: help each other (see Figure 8).

Fig. 4: Reading station instruction card from AQIFGA 2016

Fig. 5: Video station instruction card from AQIFGA 2016

Fig. 6: Extension station instruction card from AQIFGA 2016

Fig. 7: Teacher station instruction card from AQIFGA 2016

Fig. 8: Ground rules posted in the room at AQIFGA 2016

Traditional workshops are about the presenter's story. This workshop became about the teacher stories. As they listened to each other and heard the stories of possibility, teachers were inspired to take risks and to effectively build their own new realities. As a result of this workshop, we created three new teacher stories based on participants who went on to use stations in their classrooms. Some of those teachers are now ambassadors who teach other teachers about using stations and other similar strategies in adult education (Rosen, 2017).

Transmedia Storytelling: Teacher Story Videos Are Only One Part of the Story

When teachers share their stories in a public way through video, they are helping to create a practice that encourages risk-taking. When used in PD, the videos generate conversations that help to form a sense of connection between the participants and, in turn, help them to tell their own stories about issues they may not have talked about otherwise. The stories and conversations help teachers to make sense of what they are learning together (Haigh & Hardy, 2011).

Professional development in stations provides an authentic way for us to integrate the teacher story videos into our practice. But the story doesn't end there. The teacher story videos are one piece of the story of professional learning. The activities at each of the stations are intentionally designed to help create a larger story of learning and practice. This is where the facilitator's role in the storytelling process comes into play.

Transmedia storytelling is the idea that we can access a story across multiple platforms in a nonlinear manner (Rodrigues & Bidarra, 2014). In order to make us want to access a story to begin with, Rodrigues and Bidarra explain that a learning experience "…must be engaging, encourage collaboration, [and] develop creative thinking and problem solving skills" (p. 47). The facilitator's role, therefore, is in the careful design of professional learning opportunities so that participants can have access to and participate in the sharing of stories.

Professional development that uses a stations approach is a strategy for transmedia storytelling in itself. When each station is designed to allow access to the same subject in a unique way, participants are able to participate in the storytelling in diverse ways, thus allowing a greater number of participants to identify with their professional development activities than if there was only one way to participate.

Fast forward to 2018

> In organizations, the questions we ask determine the stories we tell, and these stories, in turn, directly and significantly influence our levels of optimism and energy to engage in constructive action...when our inquiry focuses on the very best of the past and the most promising potentials for the future, our stories become increasingly inviting and encouraging, and our energy for action expands. (Ludema, 2002, p. 259)

Two years after our first workshop in stations, we continue to refine how we structure the stations we use. It is an iterative process, based on feedback from participants. The essential elements are the same, however: a handful of stations, instruction cards at each station, and opportunities for dialogue and reflection with meaningful integration of technology. All of these elements help to structure opportunities for sharing stories based on the good that is already happening in our schools, centers, and classrooms. Through these stories and conversations, teachers discover what it is they truly care about.

Trust is another essential element. As facilitators, we need to trust that our participants will talk about what is important to them. We also need to trust that what is important to them is what needs to be talked about. Khalsa (2002) describes trust as a "...huge factor in creating an organization that everyone feels ownership in" (p. 237).

When designing our workshops, we purposely stay away from questions about obstacles or barriers to learning and change. This is another instance borrowed from Appreciative Inquiry (AI). It is not that we ignore the problems, we want to encourage participants to look at them from the other side: the side of hope, the side of what has already worked and then plan to create more instances of this (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). Bushe (2007) talks about this as not so much a focus on the positive as a focus on the generative power of sharing our stories of what already works:

> Actually, AI is different because it focuses on generativity instead of problem-solving. Without common problems and issues people don't create transformational change. Instead of trying to solve the problem, AI generates a collective agreement about what people want to do together and enough structure and energy to mobilize action in the service of those agreements. When that happens, many "problems" get "solved". (p. 7)

The latest workshop Avi and I designed together was on January 11, 2018 (as of the submission of this article on February 1, 2018). We were invited to work with the continuing education community of one school board for a whole day on the subject of flexible learning environments for adult learners. Amongst the participants were the administrators of the different centers at the board. The morning was organized through stations, and the afternoon, through structured conversations to begin planning classroom changes. We gave the participants a planning guide (http://bit.ly/qcspaceplanningframeworks) as a way to structure the afternoon's conversations and to take notes during the morning's activities.

Again, the focus was on teacher stories of what they were already doing in their practice and we trusted them to work together to help each other create more instances of what they identified as successful teaching and learning practice. Our job was to frame these conversations so that, together, they served as multiple access points to the story of teaching and learning in their school board.

We had five stations:

- *A design station*, where participants designed a space based on specific criteria and were prompted to have conversations about their design intentions. They used furniture and technology that we provided at the station.
- *A presentation station*, where participants guided themselves through a slideshow of different classroom examples of flexible learning spaces in Quebec and were prompted to talk about what they saw in relation to their own classrooms and centers.
- *A flipgrid station*, where participants were invited to reflect on the question, "how does teaching change when we change our spaces?" and then record their answers at http://flipgrid.com for others to respond to.
- *A resource station*, where participants were invited to read a selection of resources and then to fill out a KWL chart based on a group conversation about what they already know, what they want to learn, and what they are learning about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and flexible learning environments.
- *A teacher station*, where Avi and I facilitated conversations with participants around the question, "how does our teaching change with UDL and flexible classrooms?"

Each of the stations had an instruction card to guide the participants through the learning process (see Figures 9-13).
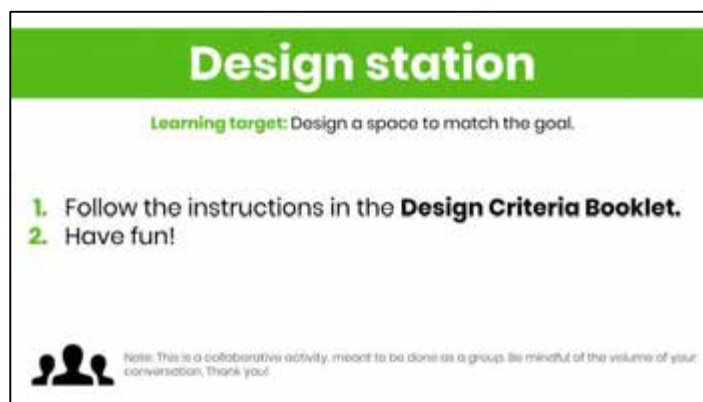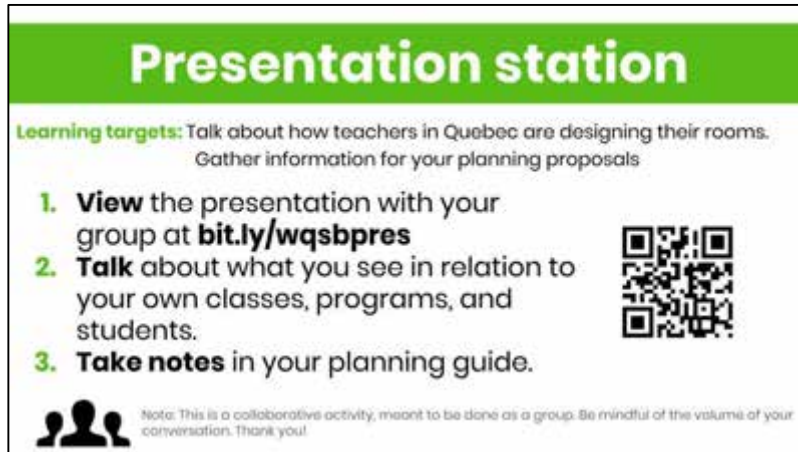

Fig. 9: Design station instruction card, January 2018
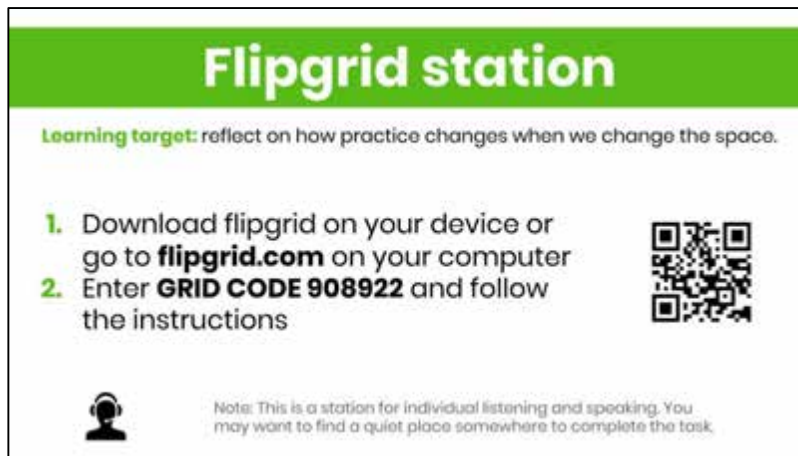
Fig. 10: Presentation station instruction card, January 2018
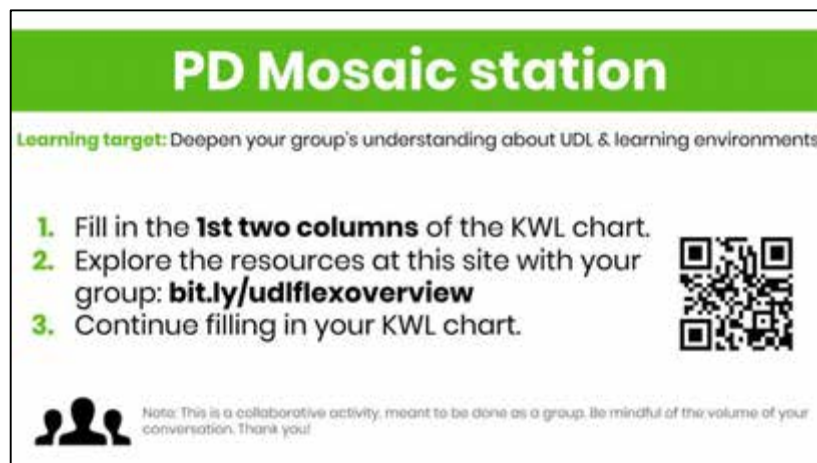
Fig. 11: Flipgrid station instruction card, January 2018

Fig. 12: Resource station instruction card, January 2018
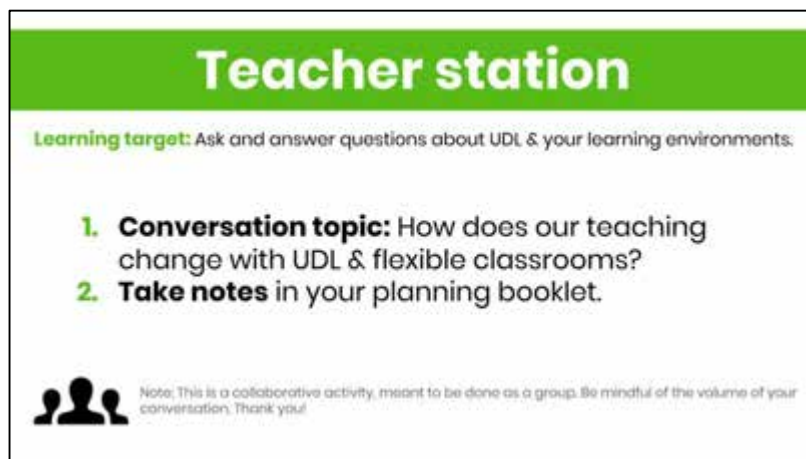
Fig. 13: Teacher station instruction card, January 2018

The participants had about 20 minutes per station with a minute in between each station to allow for a bit of reflection time. Participants could use this time to take notes in their planning guide to be used for the afternoon's planning session or simply to transition to the next station. We asked the participants to create their own groups for the morning, making sure to work with people from other centres with whom they don't usually work.

After lunch, they shifted into centre teams in order to facilitate planning for concrete change in their classrooms and centers. We asked them to begin working through their planning guide and then to join with another team to get feedback on their ideas.

Throughout the day's activities, participants shared their stories of teaching and learning around the topic of UDL and flexible classroom spaces. Our role as facilitators was in structuring the activities to encourage our participants to talk about what already works so that they could build on each other's energies in order to create more of it. We did this by creating multiple access points to the story of UDL and flexible classroom spaces in adult education.

Including the Teacher Story Videos I wrote of earlier within our stations workshops, as opposed to just keeping them online, is an important part of this process. Dalkir and Wiseman (2004) write about the importance of hearing stories,

> …stories are also best experienced orally. They lose much of their effectiveness when simply read as a text, and they lose even more of their effectiveness when the target audience is a virtually distributed community where stories are simply posted to a shared work space. (p. 70)

By creating a structure for talking about the teacher story videos within the workshop, in this case through the KWL chart activity, we were able to bring outside experience into the room through story. Participants were confronted with concrete stories about practice in other adult education centers and were able to fold these stories into their own stories of teaching and learning.

I must stress the importance of the administrators' presence during this day. An important part of sharing stories to generate change is what we do with them after they are told.

Leaders can "…ride a wave of positive change…" (Van Buskirk, 2002, p. 97) generated by the appreciative images shared through their teachers' stories. It would be a shame to ask teachers to talk about their hopes and dreams for teaching and learning if nothing were to be done about them after the fact. Listening to teachers' stories validates their expertise as professionals; acting on what they have to say respects their expertise as well as the time they take to share their stories (Rosen & Spector, 2016). Indeed, Bushe (2007) points out that one of the best predictors of the success of an AI initiative in education is the quality of school leadership (p. 7).

Conclusion: The Power of Learning From Each Other Through Our Stories

"There is no power equal to a community discovering what it cares about." (Wheatley, 2002, p. 22)

In adult education in Quebec, we are currently witnessing the power of storytelling in professional development. I began this article with four important questions:

1. How can we organize classroom visits between teachers with all of the scheduling and budgetary constraints?
2. How can I offer virtual technology consulting services?
3. How can we best share the Teacher Story Videos with other teachers?
4. How can we design authentic professional development (PD) opportunities about using stations as a teaching and learning strategy to better integrate technology?

The teacher story videos help to solve the first two questions by providing virtual visits to classrooms that are doing innovative things with technology. The next two questions are addressed by using the teacher story videos in PD and by consciously designing teacher PD that allows for multiple access points to stories around teaching and learning, such as with the idea of transmedia storytelling.

The kinds of PD opportunities described in this article call for an implicit use of technology as teachers use a variety of tools to share their stories and learn together. Anecdotally, we are seeing and hearing about how participants in these PD opportunities are subsequently using technology more often in their classrooms (Rosen & Spector, 2016; Rosen, 2017). Further study is necessary to see if there is a direct relationship between technology use in professional development and its use in the classroom.

"Looking at the history of storytelling in organizations; stories have always been utilized; albeit not necessarily as a 'business or organizational tool'" (Kowalewski, 2013, p. 51). By explicitly incorporating storytelling into PD, Avi Spector and I are using story as a tool for individual and organizational learning. Storytelling works because it connects us to why we do what we do. We search for ways "… narrative can replicate our complex emotional, psychological, and intellectual experience" (Turchi, 2010, p. 19) and we use these stories to help us both make sense of our reality and to create positive new versions of it.

PD in stations is not the only way to design professional learning that harnesses the power of storytelling. Conversation-based professional development can take many forms, such as EdCamps, which is participant-driven PD that focuses on teacher conversation about what matters to them in education

(Rosen & Spector, 2017). The key to effective conversation-based professional development is in what we do with the stories that are shared in the conversations. A workshop that invites teachers to share their stories about what matters to them is but one part of a bigger story of change that school leaders will need to negotiate in order to see that change happen.

Thomas King wrote that the truth about stories is that that's all we are. He also wrote that we are as responsible for the stories we hear as for the stories we tell, because once you hear a story, it can't be called back (King, 2003).

I just told how one key to change in education is through storytelling.

You've heard it now. Do with it what you will.

Author Note

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I Wish, I Wonder, and Everything I Like: Living Stories of Piano Teaching and Learning With Young Children

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Abstract

The purpose of my inquiry is to learn more about how young children learn to play the piano through examining my own teaching practice. By using autoethnography as a creative nonfictional form of storytelling, I illustrate my learning journey in search for joyful and meaningful ways of exploring music and piano playing with young beginner students. In writing stories about my learning experiences as a piano teacher, I discuss the importance, value, and need for piano teachers' autoethnographies.

"In the mornings, I just like to fool around and make up my own songs."

In our piano lessons, my students and I like to create our own music. Sometimes, we find inspirations from imitating the sounds of our favorite animals. We play quietly for the little chicks or butterflies, and loudly for the big elephants or bears. Our fingers jump and bounce across the piano keys like the monkeys or kangaroos, and glide across the piano keys like the hissing sounds of the snakes. For the roaring lions, we play the lowest keys on the piano. For the little animals hiding away into the forest, we try to reach for the highest keys. Depending on the characteristics of the animals, we move our fingers as quickly as possible like the horses freely running across the fields or very slowly like the big freshwater turtles. Sometimes, we mix all the sounds of our favorite animals as if we are in a deep magical jungle.

Aside from our favorite animals, we find inspirations from our favorite storybooks. As I read a story, my students happily create wonderful sound effects on the piano.

On some days, we even draw pictures to inspire musical ideas and "notate" our piano improvisations. On other days, we just like to play and make up our own music without referring to any particular ideas or stories. We simply play and let our musical ideas flow as we freely improvise across the piano keys.

Between our creative piano play, we also like to carry on long conversations about music or anything else that captures our imagination.

"You know what? I have to tell you something," my students like to say.

~

In this paper, I use autoethnography (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2014; Bartleet & Ellis, 2009; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2004, 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Richardson, 2000)—as a creative nonfictional form of storytelling—to examine how my students and I have been exploring music and piano playing with one another. By sharing my

piano teaching and learning stories, I reflect on my ideas, questions, and challenges that I encountered in our lessons, and discuss the importance, value, and need for piano teachers' autoethnographies.

Traditionally speaking, autoethnography is a form of nonfiction *writing* [i.e., "graphy"] about the *self* [i.e., "auto"] and one's relationship to *culture* [i.e., "ethno"]. However, in the Greek language, "auto" means much more than self—depending on the conversational context it can also mean *him, her, this, that, those, they,* and *other* (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015, p. 403). For me, learning about those multiple, contextualized meanings of the prefix "auto" opened up a whole new way of thinking about various forms of storying the self (see Leggo, 1995; 1997; 2003).

In other words, while I use a first-person voice to tell stories about my learning experiences as a piano teacher (i.e., "auto"), the conversations and interactions that I have with my students (i.e., "ethno"), and the ways in which they inform my teaching call for a relational approach to thinking, researching, and writing about piano pedagogy (i.e., "graphy"). As I draw attention to particular emotions, objects, and experiences, my engagement and relationships with young children are deeply influenced by my being a part of a particular culture (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015, p. 403). In that sense, as the multiple, contextualized meanings of "auto" are fused with "ethno" and "graphy," the notion of "self" extends beyond the "personal" as it forms holistic, embodied, and relational perspectives about the ways in which the person (i.e., the piano teacher and student) both enacts and writes the story. As an autoethnographic storyteller, I am an active member and partner in the creation, and re-creation of a story (p. 403).

With those ideas in mind, I herein share three stories about my everydayness as a piano teacher.[1] They are my living stories that have no predetermined conclusions or definitive learning outcomes. Rather, I explore, evoke, and share my learning journey, which is still in the process of becoming. They are my metaphorical fragments of my life stories—of teaching, writing, and researching—concerning what it means to be *with* young children when exploring music and piano playing together.

As such, I write about my personal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal experiences of piano teaching and learning with young children by using open-ended, interpretive storytelling. I focus my stories on actions, dialogues, and emotions. To describe the events and situations in our lessons that moved and puzzled me, I write in a style of "small stories" (Nutbrown, 2011) and "tales" (van Maanen, 1988/2011) that draw attention to particular teaching and learning moments and experiences. To recall and describe meaningful moments, memories, and conversations that deeply resonated with me, I write my stories in the present tense to draw the readers immediately into the experiences (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 109).

Writing and sharing stories enable me to connect the "self" with "others" to make meaningful connections between the personal and people (Doty, 2010, p. 1048). By inviting my readers to "re-live" (Richardson, 2000, p. 11) the experiences through emerging themselves in the dialogue and reading the stories as if they are the teacher in the story, I seek to communicate the "truth-likeness" and "verisimilitude" (Eisner, 1997, p. 264).

From that dialogical perspective, the stories that follow may be considered as more than merely a "personal" story of one teacher's journey in learning. As I share my experiences of working with the

beginner piano students, and how they changed my ideas and understandings about what really matters in piano lessons for young children, I wish to encourage and inspire other music/piano teachers to become more mindful of their life stories (see Leggo, 1995). By using my living stories of exploring music and piano playing with young children to reflect on their own perspectives, understandings, and experiences (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 219), I hope that my readers will discover new insights and connections in relation to what they find meaningful in their teaching and learning practices.

Story I: Old McDinosaurous

I met Jimmy[2] about six months ago. He is six years old, and he loves to run. Every time I greet him in the waiting room, he is always ready to race me down the hall to our piano studio.

But, as much as he loves to run, I think he enjoys the winning prize even more because if he wins the race, he can lock me out of the room.

Jimmy is a fast runner. He always wins the race.

As soon as he enters the studio, he sits against the door so that I won't be able to open it. As I start knocking, "Knock, knock, knock … Is Jimmy there?"

I can hear him giggling as he pretends to ignore me.

So, I try it again.

"Knock, knock, knock… Where is Jimmy?"

He continues to pretend not to hear me.

More giggles follow.

He loves that.

He loves to pretend not to hear me. He loves to lock me out of the studio.

He is little but he is determined. There is no way that I can open the door without Jimmy letting me in. I need to be invited. I need his permission.

I know what Jimmy is really waiting for. The only time he ever opens the door for me is if I promise him a story.

He loves to read. He loves stories.

Every week, Jimmy races me to our piano studio and hides behind the door with a storybook in his hands. Every week, I'm always locked out of our studio until I make a promise to him that we will read a story together. Jimmy is always ready to wait as long as he needed to until I say the magic words.

"Knock, knock, knock… Is Jimmy there? It's time for our story. Where is Jimmy?"

As soon as he hears my promise, he happily climbs onto the piano bench ready to begin our piano lesson.

With my promise, he is always ready to let me in.

~

Jimmy's favorite story is the *Berenstain Bears and the Big Road Race*.[3] Even though we have read the same book many times, he always has new questions about the racing cars in the story. He always wants to know more about the *four big cars*, *Orange, Yellow, Green, and Blue*. He especially cheers for the *Little Red*.

When the race begins in the story, Jimmy happily creates the sound effects on the piano.

As I read, *"R-r-r!" said Orange, long and low,"* Jimmy plays the long R-r-rolling sounds on the lower keys of the piano.

When I say, *"Vroom!" said Yellow, ready to go,"* he plays the thunderous chords and freezes in ready position as he waits for the next line in the story.

As I continue, *"Grrr!" said Green, big and mean,"* Jimmy cringes his face as he plays the fast tremolos.

But, when it is time for the *Blue car*, Jimmy likes to beat me to the next line in the story. As he hurriedly places his two little fingers on the two black keys, Jimmy is ready to read about his favorite racing car himself.

As he whispers, *"Putt-putt-putt, said Little Red,"* Jimmy begins to play the two black keys quietly. Just like the sounds of the *Little Red* trolling along the race track, he decides to play the two black keys three times.

And, as we continue to read, Jimmy playfully provides the music accompaniment for our story. When the cars went *over, under, around, and through*, Jimmy's hands crosses over, under, and around the piano keys.

As the cars *went up and down, down and around,* Jimmy jumps up and down from the low to the high notes.

When the cars went *through the town*, he improvises the bustling noises of people walking around the streets.

And, whenever the cars went through the *country scene*, Jimmy is always ready to play his own favorite versions of the Old McDonald song, the *Old McDinosaurous*.

I Wish: Reflecting on "Old McDinosaurous"

The Old McDonald is a very special song for Jimmy. This is not only his favorite, but it is the only song that he ever wants to play on the piano.

Jimmy is neither interested in learning to play the "new" songs nor learning to read from the music books. He just wants to read the storybooks and play his variations of the Old McDinosaurous.

During the weeks when Jimmy started to race me down the hall to lock me out of our studio, I was desperately trying to find ways of connecting with him. I kept asking myself: How can I help Jimmy to gain more interest in piano playing? What can I do to help spark his curiosity about music? How might I be able to encourage more meaningful piano playing experiences?

For us, one of the ways in which we were able to make more meaningful connection to piano playing was with the storybooks. When I related our piano playing to the stories that we were reading together, Jimmy became more interested in learning about the new melodies. He became more curious about piano playing.

For those reasons, storybooks became an important part of our lessons. The stories opened new possibilities for us. Reading stories in our lessons enabled us to find new connections with our piano playing.

For Jimmy, story reading offered more meaningful ways of learning to play the piano. Every time we read *The Berenstain Bears and the Big Road Race*, he happily played the Old McDonald, and gradually, he also started improvising his own variations of the melody. In addition to the farm animals in the Old McDonald, we added our own animal sounds to our music. Jimmy's new Old McDinosaurous is named after his favorite animal, the dinosaur.

But, I knew that we couldn't always just read his favorite storybooks and make up our own songs in our lessons. He is expected to learn the "real" piano music. I am expected to "teach" him how to play the "real" songs.

And, it was during those times when Jimmy and I were discovering new ways of connecting storybooks with our piano playing that I found out about his mother's decision to discontinue our lessons. Because we were not learning to "read" traditional music notation, and spending most of our time making up songs and reading storybooks, Jimmy's mother felt that he was not ready for the piano lessons.

She said, "We'll come back in another year or two when Jimmy is able to better focus and concentrate. We'll wait until he is little older."

~

When I think of Jimmy, I think of all the stories and creative piano playing that we shared with one another. I think of all those times when he ran down the hall to lock me out of the studio. It still brings smiles to my face when I think of all those days when I hopelessly tried to convince Jimmy to open the door for me.

It is true that Jimmy learned only the one "real" song during the year. But, when I consider how much he loved the stories and how they inspired his creativity and curiosity for piano playing, I now wish that I read him more stories instead of trying to introduce "new" songs for him. Rather than trying to "teach" him new melodies that I wanted him to learn, and to "read" notes from the music books, I wish I could have given him more support for his need for the stories.

After all this time, I can still hear him shouting with great excitement, "Again! Again! Let's read the story again!"

From Jimmy, I learned to trust my students' own ways of connecting with piano playing. He reminded me to have faith, courage, and patience in discovering the unknown, endless ways of piano teaching and learning. He helped me to become more attentive to my students' interests, and approaches in exploring music and piano playing.

In writing Jimmy's story, I started thinking about the pedagogical possibilities in the emergent, improvisational moments in my young learners' processes of making music and piano playing.

Reflecting on his story helped me to realize that it wasn't Jimmy who wasn't always ready for the piano lessons. It was me who wasn't always in presence with Jimmy. When he was locking me out of our studio, it wasn't him who wasn't ready to open the door. It was me who wasn't ready to recognize his needs, interests, and joy for learning to play the piano through storybooks.

Story II: Eyeball Song

Every week, I know Karla is waiting for me because I can see her golden curly hair swaying back and forth in front of the little window on my studio door.

When she arrives for her piano lesson, she always checks to see if I'm in the room. Because she is not yet quite tall enough to look through the window on my studio door, Karla presses her ear against the door to see if she can hear me playing the piano. Every week, her beautiful golden curly hair flows across the window on my studio door.

When I open the door, I see Karla smiling with her music bag on the floor. She has many music books—all handed down from her older sisters and cousins from long ago. They are wonderfully messy —all covered with colorful handwritings, notes, and pictures by her sisters, cousins, and their teachers.

But, Karla doesn't like the music books. Whenever I invite her to play a song from the books, she immediately throws them on the floor.

"I want to play *my* song," she shouts with a big smile.

Even though Karla doesn't like to play the songs from the music books, she loves to play her own music. Her favorite is a very special piece called the *Eyeball song*.

And so, every week, Karla moves up and down the keys as fast as she can with using only the two index fingers. She likes to play from the lowest to the highest notes on the piano and loves to move up and down the keys until she runs out of energy.

Aside from playing the notes as fast as possible, she also likes to play them all *forte* too. But, most importantly, she likes to play the piano in the dark.

"It's time for my Eyeball song," she sings as she walks around the room while turning off all the lights.

"Darker! Darker!" she reminds me, "The eyeball is falling out, and it's tumbling down! It can't see!"

Every week, I always look for new ways of covering up our studio door window to keep all the bright lights away.

Whenever Karla plays her *Eyeball* song, we always need to be in complete darkness just like her eyeball tumbling down the piano keys.

I Wonder: Reflecting on "Eyeball Song"

In writing Karla's story, I am reminded of many other similar experiences that I had with young children in exploring music and piano playing. Like Karla, all of my students have their own unique, individual ways and ideas about how they want to "play" the piano.

Sometimes, we just play the piano with one finger. Other times, we like to smash into the keys with both of our fists, palms, and elbows.

From time to time, we experiment with flipping our hands upside down to play the piano backwards. There are days when we play the piano with our foreheads and noses too.

At one time, we even thought of using the right arm underneath the left leg. The young ones always ask about playing the piano with their toes.

For us, playing the piano in a choppy, karate style is a lot of fun. Just like Karla, many children also love to play the piano in the dark—but with their eyes closed.

There are many "new" ways of playing the piano. For young beginner piano students, learning to play only the simple, traditional songs with one hand at a time is not always fun, playful, and inviting. Rather, they love to think of all the "new" and "different" ways that they can play the piano. There are endless possibilities.

For us, there are no "right" and "wrong" ways of piano playing. We always think of more "new" ways of playing the piano.

~

During the months when Karla was only playing the "eyeball" song in the dark, I wondered if I was really helping her to "learn" to play the piano. I knew that she loved making up her own songs. She never wanted to stop. I also knew that she was having a lot of fun trying to play the piano in the dark. However, while listening to her "eyeball" week after week, I felt conflicted about the appropriateness of our lessons. I found myself struggling in what Dewey (1938) calls the "Either-Or" (p. 17) worlds of piano teaching (see Ryu, 2017b).

In one of the worlds, I felt that I needed to continue playing the "eyeball" song in the dark as long as Karla wished to do so. I knew that Karla loved playing in the dark. No matter how long it was going to take, a part of me wanted to wait until she was ready to move forward.

In my other world of teaching, I was concerned about just playing the "eyeball" song in our lessons, and I couldn't help thinking that I needed to change Karla's mind about playing the piano in the dark. I kept telling myself that there must be something more that I could do to encourage Karla to move forward from just playing the "eyeball" song in our lessons.

Even though Karla is now happily learning to play the melodies in her music books, I still wonder about our early years of playing the piano in the dark. While she has long forgotten her one and the only *Eyeball* song, I still think about the pedagogical meanings, influences, and impressions that our lessons may have had in her first year of exploring music and piano playing.

After all these years, I continue to ask myself:

What *is* piano playing?

What *is* teaching?

Story III: Rice Crackers

Jack and I are learning to play the *Hot Cross Buns* by naming all of his favorite snacks.

"What is hot cross bun?" he asks.

"Mmm, hot cross bun is like a warm yummy mini muffin with the shape of a cross drizzled on top," I explain.

"Oh, I don't like mini muffins," he replies without any hesitation.

In hopes of regaining his interest, I ask again, "What is *your* favorite snack Jack?"

Without a second thought, he replies with excitement, "Rice crackers!"

In that moment, I change the words, and sing the song again, "Rice crackers, rice crackers, yummy, yummy, rice crackers."

"I also like strawberry," he smiles.

"Spaghetti too," he goes on. He also lets me know that it is very important to have lots of good meatballs in his spaghetti.

"How are we going to sing the word 'meatballs' for our three black keys?" I ask.

After a long pause, he cries out with great confidence, "Me-eat-balls!"

He then quickly reaches over for my crayons and starts to pick out the different colors for each of his favorite snacks. I help him place all of the pink and red crayons for his strawberry. We then find the yellow colors for the spaghetti and brown colors for the meatballs.

"I like bananas," Jack shouts as he grabs the yellow crayons and places them on the three black keys.

As we place the crayons on the new set of three black keys, we hum along and play the *Hot Cross Buns* melody with different kinds of Jack's favorite snacks.

"Rice crackers ... Strawberries ... Spaghetti ... Me-eat-balls ... Bananas ..."

We continue to play our new *Hot Cross Buns* over and over again as Jack happily sings the names of his favorite snacks.

Then, just before finishing one of his new favorite snack songs, Jack suddenly stops, slowly slips down the piano bench on his own and whispers to me, "Now it's time to go see Mom."

Just like that, our piano lesson was over.

Everything I Like: Reflecting on "Rice Crackers"

Jack inspired me to transform the *Hot Cross Buns* into a much more meaningful music for my students. Before meeting with him, I always used to "teach" the songs with the original words. I neither thought to change them nor considered other possibilities by asking for everyone's favorite snacks.

In my early years of teaching, I was used to "teaching" the music as I knew and learned from my past experiences. Although I always asked my students if they recognized and liked the music that I played for them, I never thought to change the words and create new versions of the melodies according to their interests and experiences.

But, now, we have many different versions of *Hot Cross Buns* according to the various types of snacks that my students like.

Sometimes, we sing, "Cheese pizza, cheese pizza, yummy, yummy, cheese pizza."
Other times, it becomes, "Chocolate, chocolate, yummy, yummy, chocolate." There are days when we sing lollipops, apple pie, and marshmallows. We also think of our favorite vegetables like broccoli, carrot sticks, and potatoes.

When the names of our favorite snacks don't match the three-note rhythm, we create new melodies to match our piano playing. Without using any technical and theoretical terms, we begin to explore the different types of rhythm by figuring out the number of syllables in the words. We like to think of new ways of playing our own versions of the *Hot Cross Buns*. In one week, it is our *Candy*

Cane song. In another week, it changes to the *Macaroni* song. If we don't want to use a particular name of the snacks that we like, there are days when we simply refer to it as our *Favorite Snack* song.

~

In writing Jack's story, I gained renewed sense of wonder, respect, and appreciation for my students' "wonderful ideas" (Duckworth, 2001, p. 181; Duckworth, 2006) about their own ways of learning to play the piano. Thinking about our piano lessons encouraged me to be more mindful of each child's freely moving stories, ideas, and questions. It inspired me to continue researching for more meaningful ways of imagining, understanding, and making connections with music and piano playing.

In storying how my students and I have been exploring music and piano playing, I started examining who I *am* and who I can *be* as a piano teacher. In writing my piano teaching and learning stories, I found a pedagogic space, place, and time for me to reflect on my questions, ideas, and hopes for creating more positive piano learning experiences.

My students encourage me to continue searching for more meaningful ways of nurturing children's joy, wonder, and curiosity for music and piano playing. Each child responds to the music and piano playing differently. I can never assume how they will learn to play the piano.

As a result, my lessons are no longer only about the music and piano playing. We move beyond the "topics" and "lessons" that I may have in mind for my students. My piano teaching approaches remain flexible, and our lessons constantly change and evolve to welcome each child's interests, ideas, and questions. I also give my students my full, undivided attention to all the things that they need to say, feel, and think about music and piano playing. No matter what I may have "prepared" and "planned" for the day, I give precedence to what children wish to share with me at any given moment.

For those reasons, it is critical that our music and piano playing relate and connect to what matters in young children's everyday experiences. All of my students' creative, imaginative ways of exploring music and piano playing, and everything else that they wish, wonder, and like in their lives, are our constant inspirations and foundation for creating more pedagogically meaningful, playful, and joyful ways of learning to play the piano.

And so, writing stories about my teaching practice guides me to develop a deeper awareness for all the possibilities in children's own unique, individual ways of exploring music and piano playing. It inspires me to learn alongside my students and to embrace teaching and learning as a reciprocal, emergent process (Custodero, 2005, p. 47).

Through stories, I am learning to be attentive, to question, to ask, and to listen in new ways. Reflecting on my teaching and learning experiences through stories reminds me that our lessons need to include much more than simply learning to play the notes, reading music notation, and developing strong piano-playing techniques.

Playing the piano in the dark, reading and sharing stories, freely improvising our own sounds and music, as well as making up new words and melodies to the songs are all natural parts of the piano learning process. What may seem "irrelevant" and "distractive" in our lessons could incite new ideas, directions, and possibilities for teaching and learning. Listening to my students and taking time to follow their moving interests, ideas, and stories is as important as listening to them play the piano.

Finale: Value, Importance, and Need for Piano Teachers' Stories

A piano studio is a place with many stories. There are a great number of questions about piano teaching and learning that require in-depth explorations and discussions. That is why I believe that we need more music teaching and learning stories from piano teachers, and propose that piano teachers' autoethnographies—as forms of storytelling and story sharing—can be one of the ways in which we can bring more insights, understandings, and new ways of deeply thinking about piano pedagogy and piano teacher educational research.

For me, writing my life stories of piano teaching creates openness, curiosities, and possibilities to all the things that my students wish to share with me. The creative process of writing about my life as a piano teacher enables me to live meaningful moments, and to think of more meaningful ways of inviting my students to participate in their own musical learning. It moves me to "dialogue about what is it to be human, to grow, to *be*" (Greene, 1977, p. 123).

In writing my stories, I commit to the continuous process of piano teaching and learning. Engaging in an autoethnographic inquiry through storytelling teaches me to approach my piano lessons with more "attentiveness, care, and openness to possibility" (Custodero, 2005, p. 51) that includes all aspects of being in pedagogical presence with my students (Hill, 2006; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

Stories about my everyday practices of teaching, researching, and writing draw my attention to the beauties in our everyday moments that I share with my students. It helps me to find more space, time, and place for me to explore, reflect, and practice more artful ways of piano teaching. Writing about my everydayness as a piano teacher encourages me to cultivate awareness of who I am as a piano teacher, and who I have yet to be (Greene, 1984, p. 123). It challenges me to continue asking more questions about what it means to be a piano teacher. It brings me closer to the "presence of the beingness of teaching" (Aoki, 1992/2004, p. 191).

Writing about my piano teaching and learning is an ongoing pedagogical process of discovery. For me, writing stories is pedagogical because engaging in the process of writing the *self* and the *other* teaches me about my students, as well as about myself as a piano teacher. It invites me to draw my attention to the shared moments with my students. It calls upon me to be mindful of my piano teaching and learning. It encourages me to question, reflect upon, and seek for more artful, educative (Dewey, 1938) ways of thinking about music and piano playing.

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Sharing piano teachers' stories can inspire us to question, evoke, and bring insights to new, creative ways of teaching and learning piano. When I reflect upon my experiences with my students through stories, it provokes me to (re)examine the nature of music and piano learning process for a young child. It engages me in a reflective-reflexive discovery that leads me to think about what it means to play the piano, what it means to learn music as a young child, and how young children acquire piano playing skills. Writing stories opens new ways of (re)discovering possibilities to those questions.

Through stories, we can evoke nuanced understandings of the complex relationships and teaching/learning processes that occur in our piano lessons. By reflecting on who we are as teachers, our relationships to our students and their parents, we can create pedagogic communities of reflective, reflexive, piano teacher-researchers.

In writing and sharing stories about our everydayness with our students, we can join the ongoing conversations about what it means to teach and learn. We can begin a new journey toward practicing more meaningfully pedagogical ways of exploring music and piano playing with our students. By focusing on children's ideas, curiosities, questions, and wonder about music and life, we can teach with newness and beauty, a quality of awareness for our students' creative, imaginative ways of learning to play the piano. As we celebrate all the things that we wish, wonder, and like, we can embrace music and piano playing as an ever-present living practice, a joyful part of our shared teaching and learning journeys.

Notes

1.   The three stories presented in this paper belong to a collection of stories included in the author's doctoral dissertation (see Ryu, 2017a).

2.   All the student names are pseudonyms.

3.   All the italics in "Old McDinosaurous" are direct quotes from the Berenstain and Berenstain's (1987) storybook.

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Stories to (Re)Name By: Relationally Living and Narratively Inquiring Within the Multilayered Midst

Muna Saleh, Jinny Menon, and Hiroko Kubota

Abstract

(Re)telling and (re)living our stories within our response community, we became more wakeful (Greene, 1995) to processes of (re)naming that contoured ways in which we were storied in diverse worlds (Lugones, 1987). We also gained a deeper appreciation as to how we, in turn, (re)named ourselves and others. Narratively inquiring (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) into the stories of our names, we autobiographically illuminate our understandings of our (shifting and multiple) selves and experiences and make visible educative possibilities for educators and others looking to compose spaces of mutual care and understanding within the many worlds we co-inhabit.

> Neither my self nor my narrative can have, therefore, a single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces; and, in any case, I am forever on the way. My identity has to be perceived as multiple, even as I strive towards some coherent notion of what is humane and decent and just. (Greene, 1995, p. 1)

As women scholars of color, Maxine Greene's (1995) eloquent words resonate in profound ways. Over three years ago, we shaped a response community (Kubota, Menon, Redlich-Amirav, & Saleh, 2015; Menon, Redlich-Amirav, Saleh, & Kubota, 2015) whereby we could attend to our stories of experience as doctoral students and narrative inquirers (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) at various stages in our respective research (Kubota, 2017; Menon, 2015; Saleh, 2017). Within our chosen community (Nelson, 1995),[1] we sought to tell and retell our experiences from across the temporal continuum and in the many places we compose our lives. Engaging in autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Saleh, Menon, & Clandinin, 2014) alongside one another, we were often struck by how seemingly innocuous experiences opened up vast fields of inquiry within our response community in which our stories could be (re)viewed "in the light of possibility" (Greene, 1995, p. 22).

As we lived, told, retold, and relived (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) our stories, we found ourselves becoming increasingly wakeful (Greene, 1995) to processes of naming and renaming that contoured ways in which we were storied in diverse worlds (Lugones, 1987).[2] Emboldening upon this concept of wakefulness, we also gained a deeper appreciation as to how we, in turn, named and renamed ourselves and others. In close conversion with each other, we felt that, while our respective experiences with naming and renaming are unique, multiple resonances echoed throughout our stories. What follows is a more detailed account of our storied processes in engaging in this work alongside each other as narrative inquirers and as a response community (Kubota et al., 2015; Menon et al., 2015).

Our (Relational) Autobiographical Narrative Inquiries

As both methodology and phenomena, narrative inquiry draws upon a Deweyan (1938) understanding of life as experience and experience as education, alongside the belief that experiences—indeed, life— are storied constructions (Bruner, 2004; Crites, 1971). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted, "Narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines" (p. 121). Dwelling within metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry spaces (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013) of temporality (time and continuity), sociality (personal and social relationships), and place (contexts), we engaged in autobiographical narrative inquiries alongside one another within our response community which created spaces whereby we could tell, retell, live, and relive our stories.[3]

Narratively inquiring into the stories of our names, and stories of (re)naming, we share select autobiographical pieces that illuminate myriad understandings of our (multiple) selves and experiences which have shifted and continue to shift alongside others. Embracing our embodied, experiential knowing (Johnson, 1989) in the following sections, we attend to and honor some of the multiple and multilayered personal, familial, intergenerational, social, cultural, linguistic, and interpersonal narratives (Clandinin, 2013) about names that are deeply inscribed in our bodies and minds … and within which we continue to compose our lives (Bateson, 1989) and identities. With a profound ontological commitment to take care of our stories and each other (Caine et al., 2016; Clandinin, Caine, & Lessard, in press; Lopez, 1990), we share this deeply relational work in the hopes of illuminating educative (Dewey, 1938) possibilities for educators, community members, and others looking to compose spaces of mutual care and understanding within the many worlds we co-inhabit.

Muna: What's in a Name?

"Mama … why did you have to name me Malak?"

Turning to glance at Malak for a moment on the drive to my parents' house, I sighed inwardly. Her query was not a new one. When she first started to ask one of the many variations of this question, I had thought that maybe Malak's discontent with the name I chose for her would subside with time. But this clearly has not happened, since, for over seven years now, she has repeatedly asked the same question. With each query, I am reminded of Juliet's famous musing in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (Shakespeare, trans. 1913, 2.2.47-48). Although I greatly sympathize with Juliet's dilemma, every part of my being tenses at the idea—while eloquently expressed—that a name is not of profound significance.

My name, Muna, is derived from the Arabic word, "wish"—at least this is the closest meaning of my name in the always incomplete travel between languages. My name's meaning lives somewhere in the spaces between longing and desire. Growing up in familial places, my name was everywhere, often sung by famous Arab singers, longingly voiced by Arab actors, and used in reference to similarly monikered

family and friends in faraway places. At home, I loved what my name signified and was proud that my parents chose such a loving name for me.

The first time I remember wishing (pun intended) that my name was *not* Muna was on the first day of grade 1. My first-grade teacher was an extremely kind woman and I adored her, but on the first day of school she inadvertently said my name in a way that followed me for a long time. Marking attendance that first day, she called out MOOna. This was a surprise to me as I had never before heard my name pronounced other than the way I had learned to say it. I don't begrudge this lovely woman for this inadvertent error, for my parents, newcomers to the English language, spelled my name on my birth certificate as M-U-N-A. Amidst the snickers that echoed in my ears, I recall putting my shaking hand up very slightly, not wanting the other children to know that MOOna was *me*. I also remember how Ms. W paused to ask me if she pronounced my name right? I shook my head and croaked out Muna (Munnah). Ms. W bravely attempted to follow my linguistic lead, but the die was already cast. For the next several weeks in class and during recess, I would be besieged with taunts of MOOna and began to despise my name—wishing fervently for a different name, *any* other name … one that did not resemble a cow's call.

A few weeks into the school year, Ms. W approached me and apologized for not being able to say my name the way that I do. Her concerned eyes told me that she too heard the taunts. She asked me if it would be okay if she called me Mona from now on. I remember a feeling of elation. Mona was way better than MOOna! It was a *normal* sounding name, one that would not result in hurtful taunts. Slowly but surely, the name Mona replaced Muna on all of my school supplies and even in school documents. It was only during my undergraduate days that I slowly began introducing myself as Muna again instead of Mona. I am not sure what precipitated this gradual shift, but I know that it was one that gave me a sense of peace, of coming home.

So, what's in a name? For me, my name holds countless roots, giving a sense of personal, familial, cultural, religious, social, and linguistic stories living within me. My name roots and places me. It continues to teach me about my multiple selves and positionings in the different worlds I inhabit and have inhabited growing up. I am drawing upon this knowing when Malak tells me that she wishes I would have named her differently. Why couldn't I have named her something easy like I did with Maya, her baby sister? She says her name sounds too masculine, too *harsh*, in English. Every time she expresses this I tell her the story of how I had originally planned to name her Hannah—a name that means happiness in Arabic—a name that would allow her to travel with relative ease between the different linguistic worlds she would inhabit as she grows up. I share how that plan changed when I held her for the first time, all seven pounds and two ounces of her, as a 22-year-old young mother who instantly and irrevocably fell in love. Still reeling from a 17-hour labor and delivery, I tell her how I was oblivious to the world around me as I held her, feeling like I was cradling a light from heaven in my arms … and that is why I decided to name her Malak—a word that means Angel in Arabic. She says she loves this origin story even as she wishes that I would've stuck with my original plan to name her Hannah. I tell her that if she *really* wants to change her name then I will honor her wishes … but she always sighs and mumbles, "no, that's okay." After these conversations, I am always left wondering what to do … will she grow to love her name as much as I do? As much as I have grown to love mine?

And what of my dear son Ahmad, whose name is not only a linguistic summersault for non-Arabic speakers, but also a clear marker that often translates into "I am Muslim"—in many ways making him just as visible a Muslim as if he had decided to don traditional religious garb. Although Ahmad has never expressed dissatisfaction with his name, one that is honored in Muslim communities because it is a version of the name of the revered Muslim prophet, I consider the story of a man named Salim Zakhrouf who applied to Cathay Pacific for a job as a passenger services officer at Heathrow Airport (Leake, 2011). He was told via email that he had not been selected for an interview. However, applying 48 hours later as "Ian Woodhouse" with an identical CV and home address, he was invited for an interview by the same personnel officer who had emailed the initial refusal.

I am sitting with these considerations as I ponder Malak's question yet again … and I wonder about the intersections and spaces between parental and child rights, choice, agency, and heritage. I am reminded of Nayyarah Waheed's (2014) short but beautiful poem: "every poem. here. is an unwrite. of all that has been written in me without. permission" (p. 118). And I wonder about my hitherto unquestioned assumption that my children will become strong authors and restoryers of their lives if they are fluent in the stories of their heritage … who has the right to pen their stories before they learn to author the script of their lives? Are my well-intentioned decisions for them, including their names, another form of imposing stories on them without their permission?

Hiroko: Seeing Myself Again in My Name

We always start with a name. Before we recognize, we are given names—a name specially given to each of us—which makes us unique and constitutes plurality in the world. Regarding plurality, it is said "plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (Arendt, 1958, p. 8). As it is further mentioned, "Action without a name, a 'who' attached to it, is meaningless" (pp. 180–181). Our unique names symbolically represent the plurality which underpins and guarantees our distinctiveness and interrelatedness with others in the world.

Yet, until recently, I have not paid particular attention to my name. I remember well when I asked my parent about the meaning of my name, my mother awkwardly replied, "It is a girl's name, Hiroko. It doesn't have a specific meaning." The sound of Hiroko was a typical girl's name in Japan a few generations before mine. Usually, each Japanese name is assigned special characters called Kanji to identify its particular pronunciation and meanings. However, the Kanji assigned to my name does not also bear meanings that are instantly appealing to my childhood heart. Since I realized my name did not have a special meaning, I felt less attachment to my name, just regarding it as a labelling to introduce myself.

Now, thinking about my name gives me an increased sensitivity to think about my life again. This one permanent name has continuously been shifting along with time, places, and relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through reflecting on who called my name and how my name was called in different places at each moment in my life, I could also look back on who I was and how my life has been

changing. This reflection further encouraged me to see in a new light about how my identity has been transformed with my shifting impressions toward my name. As Carr (1986) elaborated, "We are composing and constantly revising our autobiographies as we go along" (p. 76). I hope this process of recollecting my life through my name would give me different perspectives to (re)tell and (re)live my life.

Hiroko can be divided into two syllables, Hiro-ko. A "ko" suffix means "a child" in Japanese and is normally attached at the end of girl's names. However, in my elementary school, I only found few girls' names ending with "-ko". I did not like my name attached by "-ko" because it sounded out of date. My mother told me that she thought she was going to have a boy and was thinking of a name starting with "Hiro." Because I was a girl, she added "-ko" at the end to shape it as a girl's name. I was always called "Hiro" by my family. Regardless of my discouragement and my innocent wish for a fancy name, I always liked the sound of "Hiro" because it always came with the warm and loving voice of my family.

In Japan, people usually call each other by their last name in formal occasions. After I started working as a nurse in Japan, I was called "Yamane-san," which is a formal way of calling a name in Japan; "san" is a suffix to express respect to others which is similar to "Mr." or "Ms." in English. Whenever patients called me "Yamane-san" in a friendly voice, I was simply happy because I appreciated how they recognized me as a person, not just as a profession. Most patients addressed me as "nurse," that is "kangoshi-san" in Japanese, but I preferred to be called "Yamane-san." Also, I made a concerted effort to call patients by their names to avoid putting them into a category of patients. Calling patients by their names helped me attend closer to them in relational ways which could mitigate their uneasy experiences in an unfamiliar hospital setting. As a nurse, I recognized how important it is to respect patients as individuals, part of which was demonstrated by calling them by their names.

When I was 24 years old, I made a decision to come to Canada to study in the master program in nursing. As this was my first experience living abroad, everything was new to me. I remember I had a strange feeling when people called my name with an unusual accent of "hi-RO-ko." In Japan, my name was pronounced "HI-ro-ko," with less emphasis. I assumed it might be easier for people to say my name with this pronunciation; I even started to introduce my name as "hi-RO-ko." While adjusting myself to my new name and the new environment, I found my identity was also shifting.

For the first few years, I was thinking of adopting an English name as many people kept asking my name again, but I decided not to take away my name. After living in Canada for several years, I came to realize that my name is my home. Living far away from my family, my name has become a mental home to me, which, like a thread, connects me with my cherished memories and relationships. Eventually, my name has built a coherence and foundation on which my stories develop and has become interwoven with my future stories and stories of others. As I got used to the new pronunciation of my name in Canada, I have come to appreciate my name because "Hiroko" represents who I am, my unique identity in Canada.

After coming to Canada, I met my husband, who was also from Japan, and we married. At the time of marriage, my family name was changed from "Yamane" to "Kubota." It is the common practice in Japan for a woman to take the man's family name after marriage. Although I do not say my last name often in Canada, whenever I introduced myself with my last name to Japanese visitors or wrote down my full name in official documents, I had a feeling of alienation in my name. However, with my new last name, I am grateful that my sense of family has expanded to include my husband's family. For me, changing my last name was a transitional moment in my life; I was surprised how much my new last name changed my impressions of my life.

Although I have been called differently in respective moments, my name stays unchanged like a cornerstone of my life. My name is a gift from my family and is a way of honoring them. My name also signifies connections with people who appeared in my life and who shared their love, protection, teachings, and care with me. Except when introducing ourselves, we do not say our names aloud. Yet, we more often hear others calling our names. When recalling people who lovingly called my name—my grandfather, grandmother, mother, sister, teachers, and friends—I could immediately travel to these loving relationships. "Hiroko, everything will be fine"—I still remember the gentle encouraging voice of my grandfather who passed away five years ago. I strongly wish to be called my name again by him, but it is no longer possible. In the memory, his voice and his compassion will ever stay in my mind and be engraved in my name. As I continue my life, I am sure my name will be continuously called by many people in various ways. I wonder what new journeys my name will take me on in the future and what stories I will tell about my name. Now, I proudly say "Hiroko Kubota" is my name—my important gift and place where my memory and identity will continue to grow. My name embodies itself throughout my body and how I live my life.

Jinny: (De)scribing Names

> Entering the diner, I made my way to the table, aware of pointed glances. And that's when I heard the slurs, Darkie … Paki.[4]

Growing up with an Indian name in Alberta, it was routine for me to hear my birth name distorted, sometimes with a nod to its "exotic-ness" paired with kindly attempts to pronounce it, which I appreciated. Other mispronunciations were less benign. Huber, Caine, Huber, and Steeves (2013) affirm: "Our very identities as human beings are inextricably linked to the stories we tell of ourselves, both to ourselves and with one another" (p. 214). In my doctoral proposal (Menon, 2015), as I reflected upon my name and the ways in which I named and was, in turn, named, stories of identity, citizenship, home, and (be)longing emerged. I wrote:

> As a child and a youth, my name had been the albatross that hung heavy about my neck. It weighed me down and added to the innate differentness of who I was in relation to my peers. It was an indelible reminder, if I needed one, of how I was perceived as *not* Canadian by some. A Canadian would not have such an odd name. (p. 12)

In elementary school, I learned my name was a jail word—a word that did not follow the spelling rules. Drawing a series of bars, my teacher "imprisoned" my name on the board.
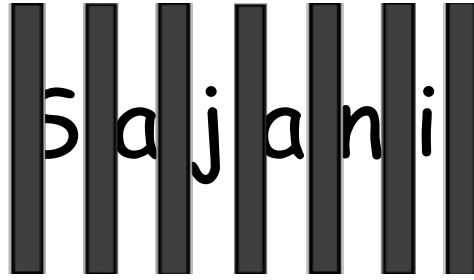
Fig. 1: "Jail girl": "Imprisonment" of my name

This confused me. I wondered what I had done wrong. Fellow students were likewise discombobulated, and I remember being called "Jail Girl" by some classmates. Subsequent grades in the same school had peers mispronouncing my name daily with an agreeable sort of consensus. I got used to it. It was my name, sort of. Even so, when substitute teachers taught class, I dreaded roll call. I could pinpoint when the instructor reached my name on the list. Pausing, no doubt inwardly cursing, he or she would then make for gold. The utterance, typically, a mangled version of my name hurriedly voiced, or the ensuing default, a slow evisceration of it—left me wanting to slide under my desk. Students who accompanied me in previous grades would gallantly call out in chorus to the ruffled teacher, "No, her name is Sajani!" and proffer the now standardized anglicized version of my name.

In Junior High, when a teacher informed me he couldn't say my name and therefore would shorten my name, I was taken aback. Released, from the word jail shaped in elementary school, my freedom seemed short-lived. Even then, I recognized that my name was too foreign for him. Unaware of my angst, my favorite junior high teacher called me *Saj* throughout the years, encouraging students and other teachers alike to pick up the habit. Again, I felt confusion take root in my thoughts. Who was I in other people's stories of me? Who was I in my own stories?

By the time university rolled around, I thought I had heard all possible distortions of my name. I was wrong! I recall a moment in my undergraduate educational ethics class. I was awaiting my turn to make a presentation, when the instructor called out, "Sir Johnny! Where is Sir Johnny?" Looking about the room in hopes I heard wrong, I realized she meant me. Thrown off-balance, I made my way to the front and mumbled that was not the way to say my name. At her blank look and in the midst of erupting giggles from the class, I rushed through my presentation, thoroughly mortified. Being labelled a male and knighted, albeit unofficially, had not helped my self-esteem.

Completing my Education degree, I moved to Japan to teach English in a town alongside people from the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and England. There too, colleagues struggled with my name. Named by some as gaijin (foreigner in Japanese) and coupled with an "unwieldy" birth name, I had to repeatedly spell and pronounce my name for people. At this point, I figuratively threw up my hands. I dropped the anglicized *Sa* sound from my name, shortening it to *Jinny*—which many were already using.

Everyone found this most agreeable, some even saying, "That's much easier," with me quipping lightly, "For whom?" Named for love and goodness by my mother, I felt a sense of loss, that some part of me had died. This demise was made all the worse when returning home, people who knew me by my birth name queried in horrified tones, "What have you done?" Ascribing meanings to what this name change meant, the belief was that I had "sold out," that I held no pride for my roots. This, of course, was ludicrous. As a child, I hated how my name was distorted and wished for a name which rolled off people's tongues and didn't proclaim me as stranger.

Sharing these storied moments, I closely identify with the words of hooks (1989):

> One of the many reasons I chose to write using the pseudonym bell hooks, a family name … was to construct a writer-identity that would challenge and subdue all impulses leading me away from speech into silence …. I claimed this legacy of defiance, of will, of courage, affirming my link to female ancestors who were bold and daring in their speech. (p. 9)

Gloria Watkins, in scribing bell hooks, discovered freedom in her multiplicities. Similar to hooks, this (re)naming of myself was profound. Sometimes we strive to live up to our names, especially those given to us composed in love, while other times, we try to flee from them when those names harbor ill will. This choice to (de)scribe myself is simultaneously an act of resistance and empowerment. Like my birth name, Jinny, too, is simply and complicatedly, "a new spelling of my name" (Lorde, 1982, Title).

Ruminating upon how names and the processes of naming are indelibly intertwined with the stories that we tell ourselves, the stories we tell others, and the stories others tell of us, I harken back to my current multiperspectival narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013) alongside South Asian girls, their mothers, and teacher.[5] I wonder about the stories which live in them and are lived by them. In our conversations, (un)healthy naming stories alongside stories of being named and of naming have come to light. These stories we have shared, and still others yet, deepen my knowing that names inscribe stories within stories. Clandinin, Caine, Lessard, and Huber (2016) explain, "As we engage in narrative inquiries alongside children and youth, we too become part of these interactions" (p. 97).

Boxer Muhammad Ali, feeling disrespected by his opponent who refused to call Ali by his new name, famously challenged him (Nelson, 2009). In between swings, Ali demanded, "What's my name?" Revisiting the moment when the slurs of *Paki* and *Darkie* were spoken, I accept I am a person of many names and that, we *all* are people of many names. Even as the names I live are plotlines inscribing my former, present, and forward-looking lives, so too are names for others. I think about Muhammed Ali's question, his insistence on respect, and his question's continued relevance today. Yet I wonder too, if we also took time to query of one another, "What's your name?" not merely by means of introduction, but repeatedly, and in different ways, across myriad contexts throughout our relationships, would we be free then, to embrace the humanity in each of us?

Fig. 2: Freedom to embrace the humanity in each of us

(Re)imagining Possibilities for (Re)naming Ourselves and Others

> Women have always had a particularly close relationship to changeable terrain. In their quest for self knowledge, boundaries, and names, women have found themselves between varying cultural demands …. [however], when recognized, liminality offers women freedom to become themselves. (Heilbrun, 1999, preface 1)

Perhaps inevitably, inquiring into our experiences within our response community involved tensions when different ways of perceiving our experiences bumped up against familiar personal and professional plotlines. These tension-filled moments often made visible for us liminal spaces—spaces characterized by unsteadiness and, simultaneously, possibility (Heilbrun, 1999)—whereby our stories could be (re)imagined alongside one another. As we worked together amidst this uncertainty to attend more closely to the multiplicity of our being and becoming, we also recognized that we are each in the midst of living in relation to multiple personal, social, cultural, linguistic, familial, intergenerational, institutional, and interpersonal (Clandinin, 2013) narratives inextricably intertwined with our everyday lives and experiences.

Over the years, scholars across different disciplines have discussed the significance of names in relation to personal and social identity (Deluzain, 1996), future success (Mehrabian, 1992), likeability (Laham, Koval, & Alter, 2011), employability (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Cotton, O'Neill, & Griffin, 2008), delinquency (Kalist & Lee, 2009), and school achievement (van Tilburg & Igou, 2014), amongst many other areas of study. Our stories, however, foreground how the bestowal of a name can be received in much the same incandescence as a much-treasured gift from an individual or not so happily received— whereupon a name is thrust upon a person without her consent and becomes an indelible source of pain. We understand that, in these dynamic processes of naming and renaming, there exists much potential for violence. At the same time, we find there are also *just as many* possibilities for demonstrably showing care for one another.

Living nuanced and complicated lives, we contend, entails a certain ethical obligation to see all people in their beautiful, messy, (un)easy diversity. Being wakeful (Greene, 1995) permits us to gain a deeper appreciation for the humanity—the sacred humane—that lives in all of us. That is, in this particular instance, being wakeful to how naming stories and the underlying processes of (re)naming ourselves and others have both the power to uplift and the potential to destroy. However, this is an ongoing life

endeavor, and is in no way an easy work to embody. Yet, as Audre Lorde (1984/2007) movingly conveyed, "The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives" (p. 36). It is our hope that, by illuminating our experiences, we can cocreate invitational spaces for others to actively (re)imagine how the worlds (Lugones, 1987) we construct and inhabit alongside others might be (re)viewed "in the light of possibility" (Greene, 1995, p. 22).

Notes

1. Drawing upon the work of Marilyn Friedman, Nelson (1995) differentiated between "found" and "chosen" communities by asserting that we are all members of found communities—that is, communities within the places we find ourselves, such as schools, workplaces, and nations. However, Nelson illuminated the transformational possibilities of communities of choice, particularly for women.

2. Lugones (1987) clarified, "a 'world' need not be a construction of a whole society. It may be a construction of a tiny portion of a particular society. It may be inhabited by just a few people. Some "worlds" are bigger than others" (p. 10).

3. Clandinin (2013) explained that

   people *live* out stories and *tell* stories of their living. Narrative inquirers come alongside participants … and begin to engage in narrative inquiry into our lived and told stories. We call this process of coming alongside participants and then inquiring into the lived and told stories *retelling* stories. Because we see that we are changed as we retell our lived and told stories, we may begin to *relive* [Emphasis added] our stories. (p. 34)

4. A hostile rhetoric towards perceived difference seems to be normalized for some individuals. See: CBC News (2016), for instance.

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Muna Saleh recently completed her doctoral program in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. Her two-year doctoral research, a narrative inquiry into the experiences of Canadian Muslim girls and their mothers, drew upon Muna's experiences as a Canadian Muslim woman, mother, educator, and researcher mother alongside six other Canadian Muslim women. Before her graduate studies, Muna was an elementary and secondary school teacher and leader. Muna is currently an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Concordia University of Edmonton.

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Hiroko Kubota is a post-doctoral fellow in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta, where she recently graduated with a PhD. Her doctoral dissertation is titled, "A narrative inquiry into the experiences of people who are homeless in Japan." As a nurse who studied narrative inquiry, Hiroko is interested in exploring how people who are often marginalized in society experience their health across various social, cultural, institutional, and geographical contexts and how to improve their experiences of life and health.

Storytelling as Self-Study:
Exploring the *Bildungsroman* of Teacher Educators

The Self-Study Group

Abstract

This article presents the reflections of *The Self-Study Group,* a community of teacher educators and scholars. In this article, we utilize the theoretical framework of *Bildung* and the literary genre of *Bildungsroman* to explore the work of being a teacher educator. Drawing upon the results of a narrative self-study, we explore how, for individual teacher educators, the significance of teacher education stems from one's life story, including lived experiences from being a child, being a student, and being a teacher. We argue that the acts of authoring and telling of stories have the potential to illuminate the interconnected nature of the personal and the professional dimensions of teacher educator self-formation.

Teaching and teacher education are endeavors that require professional judgment and expertise (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Sato, 2014). At the same time, however, the work of being a teacher and, likewise, the work of being a teacher educator, are highly personal projects (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Korthagen, Kim, & Green, 2013). By drawing on the results of a narrative self-study of 11 teacher educators working at Texas Tech University, a large university in the Southern United States, we will, in this article, argue that, for teacher educators, the personal and the professional are intertwined through a process of narrative meaning-making.

A robust body of evidence supports the significance of self-study as it relates to teacher educators' professional development (Beauchamp, 2015; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015; Zeichner, 2007). Some of this research underscores the manner in which teacher educators' professional growth is rooted in the personality traits and strengths of the individual teacher educator (Evelein & Korthagen, 2015; Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen et al., 2013). Other research emphasizes the significance of teacher educator autobiography in shaping teacher educator identity (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Elliott-Johns, 2014; Williams & Ritter, 2010; Wood & Borg, 2010). In this article, we will add to the tradition of self-study research by applying the philosophical framework of *Bildung* (the cultivation of the self) and the literary genre of *Bildungsroman*. We believe that, through storytelling, teacher educators can deepen their appreciation for the ways in which their personal journeys have formatively shaped their professional commitments.

Narrative Thinking

While generalities and abstractions are useful tools in human thinking, human thinking does not always operate in these terms. In his seminal book, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Bruner (1986) argued that human beings operate according to two complementary modes of thinking: the paradigmatic mode and

the narrative mode. The paradigmatic mode of thinking relies on logic and empirical evidence, whereas the narrative mode of thinking employs stories to understand the meaning of human actions and experiences. While the paradigmatic mode emphasizes objective, generalizable knowledge, the narrative mode highlights the subjective truths that are revealed through particular stories (Polkinghorne, 1995).

The paradigmatic mode of thinking is not, itself, problematic; however, this mode of thinking is problematic when it eclipses the significant role that narrative thinking plays within human experience. Unfortunately, much social science and educational research (implicitly or explicitly) asserts the superiority of generalizability over the meaning to be gleaned from personal stories (Biesta, 2007; Crotty, 1998). In this article, we wish to reassert the significance of narrative thinking within the genre of teacher educator self-study.

Bildung and Narrative Inquiry

The goal of narrative inquiry is not to discover objective truths that can be verified via empirical method but, rather, to provide insight into what is most vividly lifelike. Stories, compared to empirical data, have unique properties (van Manen, 1990, p. 70, italics in original), including the following:

- Stories provide us with *possible human experiences*.
- Stories enable us to experience life situations, feelings, emotions, and events *that we would not normally experience*.
- Stories allow us to broaden the horizons of our normal existential landscape by *creating possible worlds*.
- Stories can appeal to us and involve us *in a personal way*.
- Stories allow us to turn back to *life as lived.*
- Stories evoke the quality of vividness in *detailing unique and particular aspects of a life*.
- Stories *transcend the particularity of their plots and protagonists*.

These features of story extend to the German philosophical tradition of *Bildung* and the literary tradition of *Bildungsroman* (see Hardin, 1991; Kim, 2013; Kontje, 1993; Pinar, 2011). *Bildungsroman* narratives focus on the cultivation and education of the self, highlighting the ways in which individual maturation and personal growth occur. Importantly, the theoretical framework of *Bildung* assumes that the actualization of potential requires more than the manifestation of innate talent; rather, *Bildung* assumes that maturation requires willful self-cultivation (Wahlström, 2010). The concept of *Bildung* asserts that the formation of one's self occurs throughout one's lifetime and through one's interaction with the social world (Mortensen, 2002; Schneider, 2010). *Bildungsroman* are the specific narratives that communicate these processes of personal growth and self-formation. In other words, it is through our own personal *Bildungsroman*—that is, the narrative of self that we author throughout our lives—that we carve out our place in the world.

Methods

In order to explore the manner in which the philosophical framework of *Bildung* and the literary tradition of *Bildungsroman* illuminate the self-formation of teacher educators, we, a group of teacher educators working at a large Southern university, individually responded, in writing, to the following prompt:

> What was your journey towards becoming a teacher educator? How did your past experiences (for example, your past experience in schools) shape your journey? What are some specific moments that shaped who you became as a teacher educator? What does it mean to you to be a teacher educator? Is being a teacher educator personally significant work to you, and, if so, in what ways? How are who you are as a person and who you are as a teacher educator intertwined? How has your work as a teacher educator shaped (and continue to shape) the person you are becoming?

After composing these narratives, we shared these narratives with each other, looking for common features among the stories. In this article, we will present particular sections from the collected narratives in an attempt to connect the data in such a way that we are able to present the reader with a coherent, overarching story (Kim, 2016). As the overarching theme, we found that our own personal and professional challenges played a significant role in shaping our commitments to our work with teacher candidates. We focus on three dimensions of lived experience that illuminated this theme: being a child, being a student, and being a teacher.

Being a Child

Shannon writes,

> One of the first things I do with my new cohorts is to have them write about their "why"—why they want to teach—and I try to get them to make that emotional connection that will sustain them through the tough times because teaching is hard work. I model writing about their why for them by reading mine to them….[The] truth is, [when I was a child] school was my escape, my place where I trusted the adults to make me feel safe…All that mattered is how I felt when I was at school. It was my escape and it was my way out, my opportunity to create a different life for myself. My teachers were my positive adult role models that I needed and that all students need, that all students deserve…[Therefore,] in much the same way that I [as a teacher] could connect with many of my middle school students given my [personal] background…I can connect with my pre-service teachers, as many of them have faced challenges themselves.

Yvonne writes,

> My personal experiences define me as a person and teaching became intertwined with who I am because teaching has always been a part of me from a very young age. It was the dream of becoming a teacher that kept me focused and became my escape for survival. My personal struggles and victories as a child in classroom environments dictated what I would fight to stop or what I would work hard to accomplish when I became a teacher. My mother's example of perseverance gave me the daily strength…The personal experiences of growing up in poverty… in a single parent household helped define who I am today. Practicing my dream of becoming a teacher by playing pretend school in my backyard with my neighbors and brothers helped me

become a teacher educator…Pretending to be a teacher gave me the motivation and strength to focus on that dream and not on my hardships…Being bullied and laughed at in school for bringing burritos for lunch and feeling like an outsider also helped me become an effective educator… I tell my students and parents at the beginning of every school year, that I am a mother first, then a teacher…I want no child to ever feel they do not belong, I do not want them to ever feel afraid and isolated when they are in a classroom. I want every child to feel that the teacher cares.

Elizabeth writes,

My personal home life when I was in junior high [influenced my decision to become a teacher]. This was a time when being at school is when I felt the safest. I clung to learning and reading was my passion. I realized later after I began my teaching career that this time in my life influenced my desire to be a teacher and specifically a middle school teacher because I wanted to be there for students that were experiencing struggles and who needed someone to care for them…My life as a child was chaotic and I had to learn to be very aware of my surroundings and learn to read people in order to know how to interact with them…This quality carried over into the classroom where I learned that maybe the most important thing I could do for my students was to make them feel safe and loved.

Being a Student

Linnie writes,

I was extremely shy as a child and lacked confidence in all settings outside of my home and family—particularly in the school setting...I often felt anxious at school…I coped with my anxiety by learning to blend in and go undetected in classroom settings. I seldom talked to my teachers and they seldom engaged me directly because I was not disruptive and I received good grades. Then, in middle school, I had a teacher who noticed that I didn't talk in class and he continually put me in situations that required me to speak. He was subtle about it initially and would incorporate little tricks such as giving me a heads up that he was going to have me answer a particular question or have me read or explain a passage to the class. Over the course of that year, he made a point of speaking to me outside of class and would ask me about things that interested me. Without me even realizing what he was doing, he created opportunities for me to feel comfortable in his classroom and I gradually gained confidence to instigate conversations with my peers and to participate in classroom discussions. This was the first time that I remember thinking that I wanted to be a teacher. This teacher helped me find my voice and it fundamentally changed my life…My own experience as a struggling student led me to discover that all students can learn if they have the appropriate support—both emotionally and academically. My dedication to teaching was set.

Ana writes,

My older siblings…unable to speak any English, were thrust into a school setting in which they were not valued, their culture and language were not respected, and in which they were subjected to outright abuse by teachers for not knowing how to speak English. Most of my brothers dropped out of school, and I always wondered what would have been if the school system had respected and supported them…I realized that I had [to take] on the responsibility to make sure that children would never be treated the way my family and I had been…My anger at [the school] system and at authority figures that tried, even now, to use the color of our skin and

the language we spoke to deny us—Latinos, other ethnic minorities, people in poverty—opportunities that could have transformed our lives, fueled my practice as a teacher educator. Every time I thought of my own school experiences and those of the people I loved most in this world, I told myself that this had to change, and I made it my mission, my life's work, my obsession…I worry that if I do not advocate for [these] students by preparing the teachers who will serve them, no one else will.

Cheryl writes,

As a child I hated school…I survived [my teacher's] daily ritual of humiliating children in my 6th grade class…These were the personal issues I had with the institution of education…But there were also social injustices that a child should not have had the ability to recognize—but I did… In examining my autobiographical memories…I can mentally see the little girl I used to be and the teacher events that made me feel invisible…My autobiographical educational experiences, and my love of learning in this context has been difficult and painful for me. To remember being…treated invisible brings forth my deepest sadness that penetrated my youth… My experiences developed an empathy in me for what students may feel in the classroom.

Being a Teacher

Aaron writes,

When I became a teacher, I quickly learned how I had been largely mistaken about my assumptions about teaching. The job is not 9 to 5. Instead, I worked from 7 am to 11 pm each day. The job was much more time-demanding than I had anticipated. I also realized that there is more to teaching than showing and telling (despite the fact that the majority of the teacher colleagues in my department did, in fact, teach by showing and telling). Nevertheless, while this instructional approach works for *some* students, it does not work for *all* students. And, when you are a teacher and your teaching fails, all of the blame falls on you…Feeling overwhelmed and feeling like a failure made me feel awful… Now, as a teacher educator, I am often struck by the fact (the irony?) that I am teaching future teachers, when I have no credentials to do so, other than the fact that I have been a teacher in the past and that I study teaching and teacher education as an academic…I truly believe that there is no job as difficult or as potentially frustrating as being a teacher…So, there is certainly a sense of humility—maybe even shame—that comes along with my identity as a teacher educator—i.e., I do not feel worthy to teach novice teachers how to teach…At the same time, however, I am very proud of my identity as a teacher educator, precisely because I appreciate how difficult teaching is and how complex schooling, teaching, learning, and education are…I am, therefore, grateful for the fact that I have the opportunity to help pre-service teachers and early-career teachers to appreciate this complexity. I am hopeful that the more they recognize the complexity inherent in teaching, the less they will blame themselves for their failures (as I did).

Discussion

As we authored our *Bildungsroman* related to teacher education, we found that our journeys from child, to student, to teacher, and, ultimately, to teacher educator, were littered with struggles, difficulties, and painful memories; and, yet, these past obstacles and their lingering pain served to inspire our self-cultivation into professionals who would advocate for future generations of students and teachers.

For example, feeling invisible as a student inspires the commitment to train future teachers to teach and reach all students; experiencing school as a nurturing safe space as a child illuminates the critical importance of cultivation, within future teachers, the disposition to manifest care towards all students; struggling through the unexpected complexity of teaching instills a motivation to help future teachers to anticipate and prepare for this complexity. In other words, by conceptualizing our personal and professional journeys—from child, to student, to teacher, to teacher educator—as projects of growth and self-cultivation—that is, as *Bildung*—we were able to see how, throughout our unique individual journeys, we transformed our challenges into motivations and our weaknesses into strengths.

The narrative genre of *Bildungsroman*, therefore, serves a unique purpose within the context of the self-study of teacher educators, for at least two reasons. First, while other scholars (Korthagen et al., 2013) have explored the value of having teacher educators reflect on how their personality strengths manifest within memorable positive moments of professional practice, the *Bildung* framework affords teacher educators the opportunity to reflect on how both positive *and* negative experience have formatively shaped their work and identity. As illustrated in the narratives presented above, struggles, challenges, disadvantages, and pain all seem to have a significant role in the authoring of meaning in the context of teacher education.

Second, the theoretical framework of *Bildung* illuminates the manner in which a teacher educator's professional practice is necessarily situated within the context of the story of the teacher educator's own life. As Elizabeth writes,

> My identity as a person and [my identity] as a teacher educator are very intertwined. I could not possibly separate my teacher self from my total self. But, why should I separate the two in the first place? I cannot compartmentalize feelings of vulnerability, fulfillment, self-doubt, and accomplishment…I am always in flux, and the feelings within are just intertwined.

As Elizabeth's words articulate, a narrative understanding of one's professional practice is necessarily linked with one's own holistic sense of self. The authoring and telling of stories related to our personal lives and our professional lives—and, furthermore, by highlighting the connectivity between these two dimensions of lived experience—may be able to help teacher educators to crystalize and to reorient themselves towards the personal mission inherent within their professional work.

Narrative Inquiry as a Complement to Professionalization

As the narratives presented in this article demonstrate, being a teacher educator is a role that is both professionally *and* personally significant. Hence, we believe that while the field of teacher education requires shared, professional standards (see also Ball & Forzani, 2009; Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Sato, 2014; Zeichner, 2007), we encourage educational researchers and teacher educators to be open to narrative inquiry as a way of cultivating their holistic sense of self as a teacher educator (Kim & Zimmerman, 2017; Kubota, Menon, Redlich-Amirav, & Saleh, 2015; Williams, Ritter, & Bullcok, 2012). We conceptualize narrative inquiry within teacher education as a vital complement to the professionalization of the field.

Rather than delineate meaning within teacher education through exclusively professional, empirical, and paradigmatic terms, we advocate narrative inquiry as a possible entry point for the exploration of subjective truth. Through the authoring and telling of stories, self-study can serve as a meaningful way for teacher educators to think beyond professional standards and to root the significance of their work within the context of their lived experience. Furthermore, while each teacher educator has a unique story to tell, we were, through the collective inquiry presented in this article, able to distill common threads of meaning: Challenges fortify commitments; weaknesses can be transformed into strengths; the personal informs the professional, and vice versa.

We will close by presenting one more narrative. Shannon writes,

> Fast forward…to 2001. Those of us old enough to remember immediately think of 9/11. I, however, remember that year for more than just that. January, my mom passed away after a battle with cancer. July, I was laid off which was expected due to a corporate restructuring, something I knew was going to happen, but still a big blow. And 9/11, a birthday forever ingrained in my memory, a birthday with little celebration, numerous tears, tragedy, unbelievable images and a search for answers. How could I celebrate my life when so many people's lives were taken away? If I died today, would my life have been worth it? Was I making a difference? Unfortunately, the answer to those last two questions was no. I was working all the time at a job I didn't particularly like…I was a mom of two elementary-aged children. I was a wife, a sister, a daughter; the list goes on, but was not fulfilling any of those roles to the best of my ability…Honestly, some of them were being completely ignored. Worst of all though, I was going through the motions in every sense. I had no focus, no purpose. No, I was not making a difference. It was clear to me and I decided to change that... "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I asked myself that question once again and the answer was an emphatic, "I want to teach." So I did.

In this passage, Shannon asks an existential question: "If I died today, would my life have been worth it?" In other words, is my life something that I want to live for? When I die, will I regret the choices that I did (and did not) make? Asking and answering these questions can help individuals to gauge the meaningfulness inherent within their personal and professional lives (Längle, 2003; Pines, 2002; Tomic, Evers, & Brouwers, 2004). We have found that self-study through the authoring of *Bildungsroman* has helped us to recognize that the professional and the personal are always intertwined and always wrapped in autobiographical and existential questions of significance, purpose, and meaning.

Each person's life can be understood as a story, and the story that we choose to tell about our lives and about our work helps us to understand who we are in the world. Note that this understanding cannot be dictated or mandated. Not even the most erudite educational experts can tell us how to derive meaning from our past or how to chart a meaningful future. Instead, such meaning must be willfully authored, using the text of lived experience.

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The Self-Study Group is a collection of 11 teacher educators and scholars who work at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX. We have carved out the time and space to reflect on our individual and communal experiences in an attempt to better understand the significance of teacher education in our lives. Group members include: Aaron S. Zimmerman, Cheryl A. Bottoms Brewer, Linnie Greenlees, Elizabeth Isidro, Zinab Muñoz, Yvonne Cásares Khan, Ana Torres, Shannon Watson, Elizabeth Woodall, Amani Zaier, and Xi-aofang Zeng.

My Sister's Voice: Guiding My Hope as a Teacher and Teacher Educator for Teaching and Learning

Remonia Stoddart-Morrison

Abstract

Schools are relational places where the meeting of characters, stories, experiences, and understandings move about each other daily. In the busyness of school life, time is usually not taken to listen to, observe, and share the stories and experiences of others; to shift from a condition of moving about to a place where we are walking alongside. The narratives provided here are reflections on my experiences of my time in school as student, teacher, and administrator. I write these to honor my sister's voice and the many voices that fueled my hope as a teacher and teacher educator for teaching and learning.

Background

In his book, "The Courage to Teach," Parker J. Palmer (2007) posited that teaching is a profession that attracts people for reasons of the heart and because of this, teachers sometimes lose heart. They continuously ask themselves how they can regain the hope, passion, and zeal they once had so they can contribute effectively to teaching and learning within their classrooms. I propose that this can be achieved through recalling and confronting one's experiences and stories of the past, present, and the yet to come (Yoder & Strong-Wilson, 2016), and by identifying that which guided their aspiration and desire to follow this path and contribute to this profession. In so doing, teacher educators and teachers will open the space up for the stories of others (students, colleagues, family, friends, strangers) to be layered and nested within their own stories, which will allow for the "and yet" (Aoki, 1996/2005). "And yet" signifies possibilities, multiplicity, divergence, and the not-yet considered, thus forcing us away from a one-eyed view of teaching and learning into a multi-lens view.

Voice in the Present

Teacher educators and teachers are encouraged to be strong poets. Barone (2000) defines strong poets as compelling storytellers who can continuously revise their stories based on their own experiences and those of their students. Strong poets are those who can work through mental defences and see students as having a story of their own to be told or to tell themselves (Cavarero, 2000). Strong poets are also those who can embark first on an inner journey, since teaching is a human activity that projects the conditions of the teacher's soul onto their students, what is being taught, and the different ways of being together (Palmer, 2007).

Born into a country where only 10 percent of the population pursues postsecondary education, and in a community where the girls complete high school but without acquiring high school certification or they

drop out of school due to pregnancy, my sister's voice was my guide, my facilitator, my coach. My sister was the first of eight children—I was the seventh. She was 16 years my senior and wasn't shy about talking. No matter what the topic was, her voice could always be heard, even when she was miles away.

As a child, while she combed my hair, she would constantly remind me of how beautiful I was and how I could accomplish great things. I loved hearing her say that, and even though I did not necessarily believe it at the time—since I was filled with sores all over and my mother seemed to always forget that I existed— hearing my sister utter those words gave me hope. My care, and that of three of my other sisters, fell to her. Even with all she had to do, she took very good care of us with the little means she had. She ensured that we were fed, had clothes on our backs and, most importantly, attended school. She firmly believed that attending school was of utmost importance because if you were not there, then you could not learn what was being taught.

What are those things that shape, encourage, or give hope in teaching and learning? Farrar (as cited in Sandel, 2002) encourages beginning teachers to listen to and project the voice of hope. She noted that they should have the hope of protest. It is this hope that allows a teacher to go against all that says students are failures. A hope that is rooted in the emancipation of students. A hope of power which comes from students finding their voices—voices of distinction, diversity, creativity, and liberation. Hope brings possibilities and possibilities bring change; therefore no one should be without hope. Teacher educators and teachers must endeavor to make their classrooms spaces of hope.

My sister's methods of discipline were always strict but loving; she talked more than she punished and at that time it did not seem to work, as I often returned to doing the exact thing she warned against. I have found, however, that as I grew older, the lessons have stuck with me and have helped me to navigate many of the obstacles that I encountered on my journey. I recall wanting to go to a party and being told by her I wasn't allowed to go, so I snuck out of the house during the night to attend the party. I had a great time and thought that I would sneak back in without her noticing. She had awoken long before, checked, and found that I was gone, and was awaiting my return. I did get a beating, but then she spoke gently to me of all the things that could have happened to me, the dangers I could have encountered, of how she panicked when she realized that I was not in the house and of how happy she was that I returned safely. Now that I have kids of my own and my students at school, I understand how important it is to guide our children in the right path and how terrifying it can be when it seems they could come to some harm.

As teacher educators and teachers, how often do we allow students the time so that lessons can be learnt? It is so easy for us to feel like giving up, to want to let go and declare that we can't save them all. However, we do not need to let go; students will eventually let go as they leave school sooner or later. When caught in a situation where teachers want to give up on a student, they should consider one of their "screen memories" from earlier life, those closed-off, life companions that dwell both inside and outside the classroom; this will open up narrative spaces (Freud as cited in Britzman, 2004) where strength is achieved and aid offered.

My sister's words of encouragement were as consistent as she was. She fully expected my sisters and I to work hard, which she insisted would help us get to a better station in life. She worked hard and always reminded us that working hard was also important since all good things take time and effort. I always admired how she never gave up, how she did short programs part-time in order to be better qualified for the job she was doing. I was constantly reminded that if I stuck to it and got up each time I fell, I would definitely make it. Through her life and voice, she shared with me the power of persistence and perseverance.

Is this the same support that teachers are expected to offer to students, and, if so, how do they get to the point of being able to offer that kind of support? Noddings (1984) noted that teachers were to regard students as being "infinitely" more important than the subject matter being taught. When students are considered as such, teachers will put the effort into helping them achieve their potential. To do this, teacher educators should engage in conversations with teachers about them not seeing students as "subjects" and what they do with them as "treatments," but to see them as human beings to be cared for and nurtured (Noddings, 2005).

When my sister spoke of other children, it was always with affection, sympathy, or both. She always found the best in them, even when others thought them to be out of control or "bad." With the little she had—and having to take care of my sisters and I—she always found some way to help another child. She took two children from the rural community in which she grew up, to live with us so as to give them a better chance of succeeding and being able to help their families in return. I remember her saying that children can do remarkable things, but they needed someone to be behind them, to hold them up and light the way when things seemed dark. In other words, each child needed a champion (Pierson, 2013).

Not having the time to attend meetings with teachers or get involved in school events and activities was always worrying for her. She thought that teachers were more responsive to students with whose parent/guardian they had positive interactions. She was always quite critical of this because she noted that most teachers did not take the time to know or understand students' particular situations. She felt if they did, the interactions between them would have been better. When we lived with our aunt and she kept us from school for over three weeks, no one came to find out why we were absent, and, on our return, no one asked what happened. My sister believed in being our brother's and sister's keepers and reminded us to be concerned about the well-being of others at all times.

Responsibilities for student care extend well beyond the classroom. Noddings (2001) speaks to the caring responsibility of teachers requiring profound attention. This encompasses careful attention to students' gestures, body language, and their state of being, which includes both their physical and mental health. Jardine, Friesen, and Clifford (2006) also add that teachers need to draw closer to the students and direct them as they share their individual and combined experiences in the "lifeworld."

My sister got married and had children, and after a while her husband did not like the fact that she was responsible for my other siblings and I. Though it pained her, she sent us to other relatives, since my mother was living in another country and did not offer any help for our care. My sister contributed

financially to our care and made sure we were still attending school regularly. However, she could not see us often as she had to work. My aunt, with whom we were living at that time, treated us horribly. I didn't tell my sister about it because she had done so much and was going through so much. I didn't want her to blame herself for leaving us with our aunt. She eventually found out and took us from our aunt, which caused additional problems with her husband. She decided that she would not allow anything to hinder her from being there for us and helping us to achieve our full potential.

Dual Voice (Between the Present and the Distant)

My sister worked at the University of Technology, Jamaica (formerly, the College of Arts, Science and Technology [CAST]) and when it was summer and other holidays, she would take me to work with her. There were times that I resented it because we had to leave home early to get to the university. She was the supervisor in the cafeteria and had to oversee the preparation of breakfast for students and staff. She did this because she wanted me to get a feel for the university and a sense that I too could be a student there. She would urge me to walk to the various departments and see the summer program students in classes, to see those on the track and in the pool, to look at brochures and get familiar with the course requirements. This made me believe that I had a place in the university, that I had a right to be there when the time came.

While I was in high school, I got into an argument with a classmate (who was from an affluent family). It was the vice principal's professional opinion that I was out of line for even thinking of arguing with this student. She looked directly at me, told me that I was nothing and asked how I could have the cheek to address this other student in that manner. She told me I came from nowhere and would be nothing, as opposed to the other student who was already somebody and would become somebody later in the future. I felt demoralized, but I went home and waited to hear the voice that would reassure me, the warm encouraging voice that would dispel the negativity that I heard earlier. My sister reminded me that I was created for a special purpose, and the sad thing was that some individuals are blind, therefore they cannot see it. How very melancholy it is that persons who are set in a position to guide students and should have sight are the very ones who are visionless to the potential in students. I returned to school the next day, empowered from the words spoken by my sister, ready to take on the challenges of school with renewed vigor.

Justice for youth and advocacy by teachers for students is an important aspect of education, more specifically, teaching and learning. Teachers advocating on behalf of their students help students make the pain they feel bearable; it clears up confusion and makes them stronger (Quindlen as cited in Gruwell, 2007). Social justice and advocacy is about treating people ethically, and if teachers are to impart that to students they must be able to not only speak of the concepts, but also model them. Being ethical towards others means being mindful of the words we utter. Teachers educators and teachers make intentional word choices (Rosado-McGrath, 2016) so that their words will echo in students and create goodness as they speak.

While in university, I did not talk with my sister as often, but the advice and direction her voice gave were still in my memories and would continually guide me. When I failed a course, I did not feel daunted as others did because I could hear my sister say: "It's not the end of the world. You are alive. Your journey to greatness isn't over. Try again." I was confident that I would complete university because she had set the stage by pushing me forward, just like a mother goat with her kid, pushing him up the hill to get him to the top.

Being proud when I finished university and always grateful for the support I received, my need to give back was always at the forefront of my mind. In the summer after completing my studies, I conducted a class in my community for children. I saw them playing daily in the street and offered to teach them to use the computer in the evenings. Parents agreed, and my sister allowed me to use a space in our home and thus the classes began. Not long after we started I was approached by a teacher in the community wanting to join the class as her school had just acquired some computers and there was no one there who was able to operate them. The training and experience she received in the summer allowed her to not only teach her students to use the computers, but also her fellow teachers. And the gift goes on.

Sharing our experience and passing on what we know is a powerful tool in helping to refuel the passion of teacher educators and teachers (Rosado-McGrath, 2016). Interacting, collaborating, and sharing with colleagues and students is seen as an integral part of professional development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

A Far-Off Voice

Moving away from home after finishing my degree and after a year of working, I began my life as an adult. I was no longer in the presence of my sister, but her voice was still in my head, and, of course, it comes through the phone when she calls. As I worked as a teacher, I would remember my sister always talking about her disagreement of some policy that my school and others had. She would complain of the senselessness of keeping students outside of school when they are late or the suspension of students for various misdemeanors. She also knew when to be quiet, but even in her quietness her voice has always influenced my conscience, prompting me to act in the students' best interests.

Other quiet voices teach us as teacher educators and teachers (Gruwell, 2007). Parents, students, colleagues, friends, and the media can all be considered teachers and teacher educators (The European Commission, 2013). I sat in the boardroom of my school as part of a disciplinary committee, meeting to discuss and accept (as we had already decided) the recommendation for a student's expulsion. The case was read aloud, and the evidence and actions taken were outlined to the parent in the presence of the child. After all was said, the mother quietly thanked us for all we had done. However, she declared that while we were at the point of giving up, she, on the other hand, would not. She noted that she would try to her last breath to save her child. All the voices—the stories of support my siblings and I had from childhood, from my sister, teachers, and adults in the community—came flooding back to me. I couldn't vote for expulsion and asked that the child be given another chance; I was determined to seek the help of other people who could help him. Three years later at graduation,

the mother hugged me, and we cried. She thanked me for helping her son, but I was one who was grateful to her for being such a good teacher educator. She had taught me well.

When it seemed that I had to follow the policies outlined by the School Board, I recalled how my sister breathed life into me against all odds and how she gave me chance after chance whenever I erred. She believed in me and would never give up on me, even when it meant giving up something that she wanted. To deal with difficult, uncaring, and uncooperative parents, I recalled my sister saying that I didn't have a choice in who my parents were, which helped me to focus on helping students and doing my best to get through to the parents, working with them for the benefit of the students.

Teachers struggle with students who come from different backgrounds, especially when those backgrounds are different from their own (Rosado-McGrath, 2016). With these different backgrounds come certain unwanted behaviors and difficulties. To deal with these, teachers resort to enforcing institutional rules. A student's parent ran onto the school compound with stones in her hands as students were leaving. She was shouting the name of a teacher and stated that she was going to punish him with the stones since he had punished her son. Her son had used his cellphone (which was not allowed in school) to call his mother. The teacher she was looking for had already left and although it took a long time, we were able to calm her down. The teachers were furious as the incident had put them and other students in danger. They believed the student should be suspended or expelled as he had used a cellphone, which was against school policy, in addition to the fact that someone could have gotten hurt.

This placed me in an awkward position, a borderline place amidst ease and dis-ease (Lugones, 1987). I knew what the parent did was wrong and dangerous, but I did not agree with the action they were suggesting for the student. Teachers expressed their displeasure of my not expelling the student, stating that this showed that I was uncaring for their safety, was being too lenient on the student, and that this would open the opportunity for other students and parents to do the same. I realized that this reaction from the teachers stemmed from the fear of having a live encounter with "otherness" (Yoder & Strong-Wilson, 2016) in students and because of this fear teachers move to recommending a certain pedagogical treatment for students' conditions and behaviors (Palmer, 2007). Palmer advocates that rather than "rely on stereotypical interpretations of student behaviour, we need to understand their marginality and decode the fear that often drives their lives and ours" (p. 38). Instead of seeking "self-protection" we should choose "generativity," which is described as "creativity in the service of the young" (Palmer, 2007 p. 40). Aoki (1996/2005) also supports this view as he noted that teacher stories, nested with those of their students, allow the teacher to move away from a place of self, a place of anger and fear, and move to a place where the focus is on the subject (student) where we would be able to linger a little longer to contemplate our actions moving forward.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

Stories teach us, not only the hearers, but also the tellers: those original to the story and those who will tell and hear them as they are retold. They teach lessons of hope, empathy, values, and morals. Storytelling has a mysterious quality which allows it, from a single story, to move across and inhabit the

minds of a great many people (Okri,1997). Sharing the stories of my experiences within schools and the experiences of those directly and indirectly connected to my life in and out of school has taught me to reflect on and contemplate how teachers teach and how students learn. As teachers, recalling and sharing experiences through stories with students encourages students to tell and retell their own stories. Retelling involves seeing things in a new light (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It encompasses a change in understanding, a change in thinking, a change in behavior, and a change in attitude.

As teachers, the traditional narrative is that we are the experts within the classroom (Britzman, 1986). With that narrative comes the notion that we have all the knowledge and our task in teaching is to disseminate that knowledge to our students (Britzman, 1986). This narrative requires teachers to talk more than they listen. Storytelling and sharing has an exceptional ability to change that traditional narrative. As we can learn from the experiences of others, both teachers and students have knowledge to share and gain, thus teachers are not burdened by the pressures of having to be the sole experts in their classrooms. Storytelling and sharing makes us better listeners (Cole, 1989, as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As we listen to experiences being shared in stories, we are forced to listen and re-listen to what is being told. Winslade and Monk (2013) call it "double-listening," which is when we can recognize other stories that are parallel to the ones being told. The focus of double-listening is not getting to the "truth," but to build understanding, respect, and collaboration—traits that fully support teaching and learning.

A change in overall attitude can positively affect teaching and learning outcomes. Through stories, teachers can gain an awareness of who students are inside and outside the classroom. Stories provide teachers the opportunity to recognize and appreciate students' unique and collective struggles and how they influence students' learning. Teachers can then direct their classrooms activities and lessons in such a way that will guide students to be tolerant, resulting in more collegial interactions in classrooms and lowering the need for teachers to spend time dealing with conflicts.

Our lives and those of our students may differ. However, these are pathways that must be brought to light through narratives so as to recover a sense of "the possible" (Yoder & Strong-Wilson, 2016) in classrooms where teachers and students teach and learn. My sister's voice has become my voice, as daily I encourage teachers to see the possible in each student and in each situation. Moreover, I encourage them to try and be the champions for those who have lost their voice through the sharing and nesting of their stories and those of their students. All this with a view to nurturing hope and excellence into the precious souls that are entrusted to our care—and opening potential for continuous teaching and learning.

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Using a Narrative Tool to Help Quebec English-Speaking Students Produce Personal Histories of Belonging

Paul Zanazanian and Nathalie Popa

Abstract

This article introduces Jörn Rüsen's concept of narrative competence as a useful pedagogical framework for operationalizing a remedial narrative tool designed to help make room for Quebec's English-speaking minority in the teaching of school history. Developed through empirical research and representing a schema-like narrative structure, the *Narrative Template Tool*'s aim is to assist students to produce and validate personal (his)stories of belonging through conducting original historical research. To counter the dangers of indoctrination, the tool moreover employs a feature of the *orientation* component of narrative competence—use-of-history—as a means of helping students account for their emerging perspectives.

Background

This article introduces Jörn Rüsen's (2005) concept of narrative competence and employs it to operationalize a *Narrative Template Tool* designed to help English-speaking youth in Quebec produce and validate (his)stories of belonging through the teaching of school history (Zanazanian, 2017a; 2017b). The way narrative structures historical consciousness offers a unique opportunity for giving a voice to English-speaking youth as members of a misunderstood historic minority and, by extension, for strengthening their community's weakening vitality. If used carefully, the narrative tool can make room for students' lived experiences within a larger understanding of their community's history. In offering a narrative framework whose inner stories are empty and waiting to be filled with content, students are given the necessary resources, skills, and autonomy to freely develop personal histories in well-informed and well-reasoned ways. Comprising a schema-like narrative structure, the tool has been developed empirically and serves as a cultural script or "receptacle" for clasping together the fragmented bits of information of English-speaking Quebec's past that students may possess and further gain through inquiry-based research projects. To counter the dangers of reifying the past and indoctrination, the tool's operationalization moreover enables students to account for the perspectives they put forth when transforming these fragmented histories into meaningful and usable narratives of the past (Zanazanian, 2017a; 2017b).

In what follows, we first set the stage justifying narrative's role and relevance for helping make space for English-speaking Quebec in the teaching of history, and, by extension, for other historic minority communities, whose realities and experiences may also be excluded from school history programs. We then define the notion of narrative competence, and explain each of its three sub-competencies: *experiencing* the past in the present; *interpreting* evidence of the past in the form of history, and using

historical knowledge to *orient* oneself in life (Rüsen, 2005). Next, we describe the tool, what it is and how it functions, and detail how it can be operationalized via Rüsen's (2005) narrative competence lens. We conclude by elaborating on the concept of use-of-history, a feature of the third sub-competency of *orientation*, for getting students to account for their positionality when producing their histories.

Why Narrative for Making Room for English-Speaking Quebec in School History

Concerned with the social justice implications of historical knowledge and its impact on human agency, the *Narrative Template Tool*'s aim is to populate students' cultural toolkits for giving meaning to their social reality as English-speakers and to hence inform the workings of their historical consciousness. The tool seeks to create space for students' lived community experiences within a historical framework from their own perspectives, where they account for what they produce, and not something that is imposed on them. Such an approach provides an important avenue for accessing and assisting students' sense-making processes for remedial purposes of fostering social change. It is known that the content and form of the narratives humans use for making sense of reality, including understandings of the historical past, affect how they perceive, explain, and give meaning to events and life experiences. These narratives further influence the manner in which they negotiate coherency, connectedness, situatedness, belonging, and intentionality for living their lives (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Straub, 2005). This is especially the case when acting as members of self-identifying collectives through time. It is through offering English-speaking Quebec the necessary mechanisms for organizing their life experiences in meaningful ways, to then independently channel their ideas to successfully unify and mobilize as a group, that this use of narrative as a historical resource tool can be attained.

Despite its exploratory nature, the tool's structure and logic are nonetheless grounded in strong theoretical and empirical scholarship in the areas of history and memory studies, with cross-disciplinary roots in cultural psychology, sociology, historiography, and the teaching and learning of history (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1990; Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann & Czaplikca, 1995; Wertsch, 1998; Rüsen, 2005). Introducing narrative as a pedagogical device can provide cultural scripts that enable students to develop coherency and meaning as well as an ability to recount and verbalize life experiences. Based on our cross-disciplinary approach, narrative's strength particularly lies in its ability to structure and give order to social reality for purposes of knowing and acting in time. It helps give meaning to experiences of change and contingency that would otherwise overwhelm users and confuse and disorient them. Such an affordance is, however, not without its limits and dangers. Lacking awareness of this "simplification" process—and its centrality in how humans employ narrative for purposes of organizing knowledge—can be detrimental to fostering openness to differences in and beyond the classroom. If not used properly, narrative, as a mode of thought, can hamper intercultural dialogue and instead reinforce boundaries between individuals and groups. As a countermeasure, the key would be to activate curiosity to limit such negative potentials and to teach students about the practical, political, and cultural workings of narratives, their relationship to historical consciousness,

and their particular relevance for navigating the world. This requires an open use of the narrative tool to ensure that students are able to take critical distance from their knowledge claims.

The tension between affordance and limits/dangers comprises a sort of paradox that the narrative tool and its operationalization try to address, especially for making room for minority experiences in the teaching of history. The tension lies between promoting the need for presenting the past as complex—which is what many history teachers strive to do to prepare critical and autonomous thinkers—and fostering a common narrative identity to the ends of helping a weakening community know, see, and recognize itself as a historic entity for purposes of group vitality. In line with the Quebec history program's promotion of the historical method/historical thinking, the paradox arises when looking at the limits of disrupting master narratives in classroom settings. It is generally understood that room can be made for historic minority communities when teaching history by bringing in a disciplinary-based understanding of how history works. The idea is that master narratives are ultimately constructed, and can be disrupted (in a rigorous manner) to show that they mask diverse realities, perspectives, and nuances. By transmitting elements of the historic method/historical thinking, students are to exercise and develop critical thinking skills and to eventually come up with well-informed and well-reasoned conclusions on the past based on evidence. Although such an approach highlights the complexity of master narratives, the question remains whether it can really make room for historic minorities, who may feel marginalized. Historical thinking may open up pre-given understandings of the past to bring in minority perspectives, but a sole reliance on it when reliable content knowledge on such groups (where they are the protagonists of their story) is greatly missing, as is usually the case, is questionable.

Notwithstanding teachers' own sense of purpose or motivation, the challenge then is that of making room for English-speaking Quebec when adequate content knowledge on their various histories is absent, while also facing pressure to promote a form of "national" Quebec identity. Core researchers in the field of history education have suggested that if teachers, when problematizing and presenting official state or master narratives as complex, do not bring in some form of narrative framework that can help (minority) students clasp such a deconstructed complexity, the dominant group's power, norms, and narrative control of history will inadvertently be reinforced (Epstein, 2008; Barton, 2012; Létourneau, 2015). In such instances, making space for English-speaking Quebec would only be superficial. The assumption in this article is that historic minority youth (who feel/are marginalized would) need readily available narrative scripts or templates to help grasp together what is broken and to help their developed perspectives fit into a larger picture—one that works and one that is not imposed.

The usable narrative framework, conceived as a form of a narrative template, as we propose here, is important for making room for minority communities who feel excluded from the school history curriculum. What we suggest can nonetheless be likened to the *Historical Narrative Inquiry Model* developed by Colby (2008). This instructional model aims to teach procedural knowledge, enhance interpretative skills, cultivate historical perspectives based upon evidentiary history, and encourage student authorship of historical narratives. The model includes a cyclical six-stage process: contextual beginnings, in-depth questioning, secondary source analysis, primary document analysis, student authorship, and philosophical/argumentative reflection. The model supports small- and large-group

activities, including oral presentations, discussions about primary documents, and considerations relative to the creation of written history. The purpose of Colby's (2008) model is to encourage analytical thinking and facilitate students' historical understandings by developing more empathetic perceptions of the people of the past. Our pedagogical tool is based on considerations similar to those underlying Colby's instructional model, but focuses more specifically on promoting history teaching that supports students in developing narratives of belonging.

The Workings of Narrative Competence

Over the past few years, researchers in the field of history education have increasingly given attention to the implications of developing young people's narrative competence for life orientation purposes. They have developed models of historical sense-making based on the notion's component parts (Körber & Meyer-Hamme, 2015; Eliasson, Alven, Yngveus, & Rosenlund, 2015; Waldis, Hodel, Thünemann, Zülsdorf-Kersting, & Ziegler, 2015). Their work is notably influenced by Rüsen's (2005) theoretical account of the concept, defined as the ability to narrate a story by means of which "practical life is given an orientational locus, or a place, in time" (p. 36). In this process, learners discover who they are as individual users of narrative and, moreover, grasp how historical consciousness influences their decision-making for navigating the world. Rüsen (2005) outlines three fundamental elements of any given narrative—content, form, and function—and three corresponding dimensions that underlie the guiding function of narrative competence—experience, interpretation, orientation. Building on this, educational models of historical sense-making have particularly integrated research findings over the past several years on students' historical thinking (Köster, Thünemann, & Zülsdorf-Kersting, 2014; Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg, 2000; Wineburg, 2001), as well as literature on historical consciousness (Ahonen, 2005; Angvik & von Borries, 1997; Lee, 2004; Seixas, 2004, Wilschut, 2012) for expanding the concept.

Drawing on this scholarship, narrative competence in this paper involves three sub-competences: *having experience*; *actuating interpretation*; and *enabling orientation*.

Experience is achieved through developing students' sensitivity to the presence of the past around them. Key to this is recognizing the past's temporal quality and how its realities are different from present-day ones. *Experience* involves expanding students' awareness that the past permeates their lives in ordinary and unexpected ways, and that the distances between past and present are not necessarily fixed by chronology, but can be subjective and malleable. This requires guiding students to come into contact with and relate to many prior events and to see the past in and of itself for its intricate details and complexities. Using material, visual, or textual objects as prompts can help with this, which can be found in family history, community heritage, architecture, museums, popular culture, or public sites of memory and practices of remembrance. These encounters are mostly experiential, and encourage students to see, touch, and feel traces of the past. Learning history in this sense appeals to students' curiosity and imagination, their sense of discovery, wonder, and emotional engagement with historical content, which they will use for providing their own perspectives of the past (van Boxtel, Grever, & Klein, 2016).

Interpretation refers to the ability to find meaning in the past and to organize such acquired historical knowledge into a comprehensive whole or "picture" of the past that can later be employed for reflection and argumentation. *Interpretation* specifically involves portraying or making newly gained experience look plausible in the first, above-mentioned, sub-competence through espousing a rigorous methodology for transforming and narrativizing how things could have happened. Learning history in this sense involves delving into the methods and habits of historians' minds, and the creative procedures they go through to construct meaningful histories. In this process, students become familiar with historians' tools of inquiry as well as with the role of historical empathy and the structure of historical narratives (Barton & Levstik, 2004). To do this involves: posing historical questions; examining historical sources as evidence to formulate historical arguments and critically analyze historical claims; recognizing and applying such historical thinking dimensions as historical perspectives (including the avoidance of presentism), historical significance, and change and continuity (see below); and examining key features of narrative, including, cast, setting, sequence, emplotment, and underlying related schematic templates.

Orientation holds as its objective the ability to use the "pictures" of the past developed through interpretation as a means of reflecting on one's positionality in present times. It relates to understanding the different uses of individuals' interpretations of the past for navigating their everyday lives, which intimately involves getting students to reflect on their adopted historical point of view (VanSledright, 1998). Students are thus given opportunities to *do* something with history, namely to relate gained historical knowledge and understanding to their own life and society, and to further employ this information to inform personal standpoints on present situations and future possibilities (Nordgren, 2016). Key, however, is for learners to grasp the historicity of both themselves and their world, and to employ this insight for authoring their agency. As we shall see below, learning history in this way can encourage students to see the reasons for using history for orientational purposes: to explain the surrounding world, to form identities, and to exert influence (Nordgren, 2016).

Description of the *Narrative Template Tool* for English-Speaking Quebec

School history programs in many western countries make it their chief goal to transmit usable master narratives that configure coherent historical understandings of national pasts. The content of these usually reflects the main identity markers of a given state's dominant group and can be influential in how young people employ history when negotiating their sense of national identity and agency (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Carretero, Asensio, & Moneo, 2012; Carretero, Berger, & Grever, 2017; Clark, 2011; Epstein & Peck, 2017; Zanazanian & Moisan, 2012). In this process, as part of the "nation-building" format, historic minority communities can nonetheless be easily left out. Sentiments of alienation can result and can become all the more amplified when reduced group depictions contradict a minority community's self-awareness and relegate particular simplified roles to its members.

Quebec provides a similar context regarding the politics of narrative control and inclusion in the teaching of school history, especially regarding its historic English-speaking minority and Indigenous populations. One important challenge when seeking to make curricular space for these excluded groups from the

program is to help them find a voice—a voice that permits sharing information about their presence and contributions to the state as protagonists of their story and one that enables their youth to know and act as members of larger society in their own right as individuals from legitimate historic communities (QCGN, 2009; Canadian Heritage, 2009; Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, 2011). Caution, however, is needed when proceeding in this manner. This is important given Quebec's context of history teaching and contested identities between its French- and English-speaking communities, including the ongoing limited treatment of the province's Indigenous communities as well as the "silencing" of the core historical experiences of various historic groups, such as the Irish and Blacks. As such, the *Narrative Template Tool* addresses the English-speaking minority's absence from Quebec's official state history program, seeking to encourage sentiments of group identity, belonging, and valued inclusion among its youth, while also respecting the past experiences and memories of Quebec's Francophone, Indigenous, and other minority groups (Zanazanian, 2017a; 2017b). Given the Francophone majority's own concerns of linguistic and cultural fragility in North America and the general attachment to their historical memory for forming the program's main storyline, the intent is to further make room for English-speakers' diverse presence and contributions by complementing Quebec's official history program, and not by replacing it through the use of the narrative tool (Zanazanian, 2017a; 2017b).

Inspired by the ideas of cultural psychologist James V. Wertsch (1998, 2004) and by those of Quebec historian Jocelyn Létourneau (2006; 2014), the *Narrative Template Tool* comprises a core skeletal storyline or narrative script, specifically drafted for producing and promoting much-needed coherent identity frameworks among English-speakers' increasing cultural, regional, and generational differences. Based on Wertsch's (1998; 2004) notion of schematic narrative templates, the tool's template-like structure can be defined as: *a culturally available skeleton plot of generalizable storylines that provides a core narrative framework for underlying many instances of a broad range of community narratives that group members may recite and relate to*. In offering a basic, workable plotline that resonates with group members' experiences (and, by extension, those of Quebec's Francophone majority), English-speakers would be better prepared to give meaning to the past for guiding their sense of identity and civic engagement in the province.

In following this logic, the tool is designed to work as an interactive framework. The intent is for teachers to engage their students in learning the history of English-speaking Quebec, with the main objective of having students use this narrative structure to produce their own stories of belonging through investigative historical research. To these ends, the narrative tool's cultural script acts as a "receptacle" for clasping together and framing students' researched perspectives within a larger understanding of the history of the English-speaking community, thereby aiming to offer them coherency, meaning, and an ability to narrativize and verbalize their (historical) experiences.

Designed by Paul Zanazanian (2017a; 2017b), the *Narrative Template Tool*'s script was created based on empirical findings from a research project that examined the workings of community leaders' historical consciousness and its impact on shaping their strategies for helping vitalize English-speaking Quebec. As part of this study, participants' historical memories were looked at, the main markers of

which were produced through analyzing the data in a rigorous manner following a narrative approach and espousing at least two methods of analysis for triangulation purposes. Community leaders are important trendsetters holding the strong potential of informing group members' toolkits for knowing and acting as English-speakers. An official report by the Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages (2011), outlining a call for both English and French speakers in the province to specifically work together to address their respective vitality issues, moreover provided the legitimated direction needed for framing the tool.

As part of this study, participants answered an open-ended historical writing task, where they narrated the history of English-speaking Quebec from the very beginnings until current times. This method was adopted from Létourneau's (2004) own research on Francophones Quebecers' historical memory and served to develop the template's schematic structure. Content analysis was used to analyze the data and a narrative data reduction technique served to help triangulate the findings. The analysis permitted attaining input regarding the main dates, events, actors, and periods as well as central turning points and structural narrative patterns that emerged in participants' histories. The main turning points that surfaced were placed in chronological order and the emerging narrative threads that were the most conducive to fostering a positive sense of Self and living together with Francophones were specifically selected. The *Diversification through immigration* thread as a thematic undercurrent of participants' narratives and the smaller theme of *Working together with Francophones to build a common civic project* were favored over *Group duality* representing a history of two homogeneous entities in constant competition. The English-speaking Quebec template was then segmented into the following periods chronologically, viewing the two adopted themes as threads interlacing across them:

(1) *Beginnings* (From New France to the Change of Empire, prior to 1760)—a period in English-speakers' history that represents initial contact with Francophones and Indigenous populations in Quebec.

(2) *Presence and Contributions* (From the Change of Empire to the Quiet Revolution, between 1760 and 1960)—a period of the past that refers to English-speakers' arrival, diversification, eventual development, and ongoing practice of responsible government.

(3) *Change and Challenges* (From the Quiet Revolution to Current Times, between 1960 and the end of the 1990s)—a period of social realignment, resulting in the protection of French as well as in the exodus of many English-speakers from Quebec, eventually placing those who remained at a crossroads to figure out how to deal with their changing realities.

(4) *Adaptation* (Current Times)—today's moment and potential of embracing new realities, and collaborating with Francophones (and other communities) to make things work.

(5) *Promise* (The Future)—important moments that are to come and serve as opportunities for forging a common civic project based on mutual respect and dialogue (including the need to redress grievances of Quebec's Indigenous populations).

In employing this schema-like framework, teachers can guide students to develop their own histories by helping them to think and weave their stories like historians do. Conducting original historical research and using the narrative tool to produce a resulting history would allow students to develop their own opinions about the past, rather than bathing in those presented to them by authority figures who may have their own personal agendas. By engaging in the process of producing their personal narratives,

not only would students learn about history and how history is done, but they would also learn about how their society uses historical narratives, what the different benefits and drawbacks of such uses are, and how these can influence their historical positionality as group members and future citizens. Students would furthermore be made aware of the importance of being accountable for the choices they make in producing their narratives of belonging. This would allow them to validate their stories of belonging and to also better understand and be more open to the history program they are being taught.

How the Tool Functions via Narrative Competence

In terms of employing the *Narrative Template Tool* with narrative competence, the constructivist and dialogic pedagogical approaches are most appropriate (e.g., Phillips, 2000; Renshaw, 2004). Constructivism is based on the assumption that learners need to build their own understanding of new ideas by drawing on previous knowledge and new information, and this process of constructing knowledge, rather than acquiring it, is contextualized. The constructivist teacher sets up problems and guides student inquiry in a way that encourages learners to actively construct meanings by getting their feet wet, rather than passively receiving ready-made meanings. The role of the teacher, thus, is interactive—to facilitate and support students in using prior knowledge to build new knowledge. Constructivist teaching and learning strategies include employing case studies, role-playing, and graphic organizers like concept maps, because these offer opportunities to demonstrate or perform what students know, thus making understanding more explicit.

Dialogic teaching uses dialogue, or talk, to stimulate and extend students' understandings and learning. It is based on the assumption that knowledge means different things to different people, and in different contexts, and the dialogue between these different perspectives leads to new knowledge and understandings. Learning through dialogue involves constructing meanings from the inside, that is, within a community of learners, rather than having meanings imposed from the outside. From this perspective, what drives much of classroom instruction is not direct instruction, but rather skillful questioning. That being said, the teacher's questions should not probe for set answers, nor should they close down exploration. Instead, they should expose tensions and contradictions in students' thinking, and strive to elicit new thinking. In addition to thoughtful questioning, a dialogic perspective promotes careful listening, as well as opportunities for respectful and open-ended discursive interactions, and welcomes student input regarding content and assignments. Dialogic teaching strategies include discussions, collaborative learning, and regular teacher feedback.

Such an initial mindset to teaching and learning is helpful for employing the narrative tool presented in this article. Rüsen's (2005) narrative competence framework provides further insight into how to concretely put it into practice and into how to draw learning experiences from it for students. In basing the tool's use on the *experience*, *interpretation*, and *orientation* format described above, teachers can sequence their teaching in the following manner.

The first level of narrative competence as outlined in this paper has students looking for connections between past and present, and seeing traces of the past as living history. One way to pique students' interest and get them personally involved in *experiencing* the temporal quality of histories in their environment and culture is to take students on a fieldtrip to a museum, or to organize activities that incorporate objects and photographs into lessons. Either way, students could be asked to pick an object or photograph that in their view is related to one of the first three periods of English-speaking Quebec's history as outlined by the narrative tool (*Beginnings*; *Presence and Contributions*; and *Change and Challenges*), then to reflect upon their personal relation to that object, and explain to others how that object or photograph speaks to the last two periods of English-speaking Quebec's history (*Adaptation*; and *Promise*). Teachers could raise questions and encourage students to develop cognitive and emotive understandings about these objects or photographs, and could finally be asked to develop their own historical questions, the choice of which could lead to the construction of a perspective from which the past can be seen and used as a stepping-stone for conducting students' eventual history research projects. This first level of narrative competence not only helps teachers to tap into what students think and feel about the topic at hand, but also stimulates student motivation for the following level, which takes more of a disciplinary-based approach.

At the next level of *interpretation*, students could be asked to probe their historical experiences by working on procedural concepts of historical thinking (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Over the past years, Canadian researchers working on the *Historical Thinking Project* have developed a specific model of historical thinking that comprises six such second-order concepts (Seixas, 2015; Seixas & Morton, 2013). To illustrate, Seixas (2015) outlines the concept of *historical significance*, which seeks to help students understand that something becomes historically significant, or worth knowing, only in relation to contemporary questions and concerns that depend on one's particular perspective and that necessarily change over time. There is also the concept of *evidence* or the use of primary sources, which is meant to enable students to contextualize the content and context of primary sources, that is, the people and circumstances of the past they refer to, as well as the present-day questions and scenarios that guide the inquiry and analysis of those sources. Another concept is that of causation (from *cause and consequence*), central to narrative competence, which promotes students' abilities to view change over time as shaped by a complex interplay of human freedom and agency, and to contextualize human decision-making in a way that communicates choice and intention, while accounting for larger social structures and conditions. Guiding students to work on these three concepts could help learners conduct original historical research using source-based evidence. For example, students might be introduced to the *Narrative Template Tool*'s thread, *Diversification through immigration*, and asked to examine a given set of primary and secondary sources with the help of guided inquiry activities. Having assessed these sources for their reliability and validity, students would next be given the means to employ them as evidence to explore historical perspectives or to build historical explanations, thus furnishing the *Diversification through immigration* thread with their own narratives. At the end, students would write up a research report summarizing their main findings.

The goal of instruction at the third level of narrative competence is that students transform their research reports into histories for reflection and guidance, thus giving an orienting function to the historical knowledge they construct. One way of doing this is simply by asking them to associate the elements of their research to the five elements of Kenneth Burke's (1969) *Dramatistic Pentad*: 1) Act, i.e., what happened; 2) Scene, i.e., where it happened, including circumstances, location, and time; 3) Agent, i.e., who is involved; 4) Agency, i.e., how it happened; 5) Purpose, i.e., why it happened. Teachers could have students combine their five elements in a narrative as part of creative writing tasks, using either one of the tool's two narrative themes and its chronological order for helping frame their resulting histories. By determining their guiding threads and which of the five periods of English-speaking Quebec's history they mostly focused on, students, together as a group activity, and with the teacher's guidance, could compare and contrast each other's narratives. Important to this discussion would be raising students' awareness of their authorship and positionality as well as comprehension of what their developed understandings of their community's past imply for civic action in the present.

Conclusion: Promoting Autonomy and Open-Mindedness

The central purpose of the *Narrative Template Tool* presented in this article is to function as a springboard for students to develop their own narratives of belonging to Quebec through investigative historical research. Through employing the tool, the point is to enhance English-speaking students' sense of group presence, coherency, and contributions. The intended outcome is to give them a sense of self-confidence and motivation for engaging in Quebec society as an empowered historic minority. Yet, despite its remedial intention, the tool's underlying script also runs the risk of being misused, especially if it is not employed flexibly. Given the nature of narrative and its political uses and abuses, there will always be a danger of promoting simplified stories to negative ends. Reducing the realities of past complexities, while necessary for grasping English-speakers' lived experiences, can also inadvertently lead to differentiating, distancing, and stereotyping Francophones and other minority groups in the province.

Bailey (2010) reminds us how "indoctrination [can] foster a certain style of belief that makes autonomy and open-mindedness unattainable" (p. 277). To counter indoctrination, the key is to foster a sense of autonomy among students to lead them "to make and act on well-informed and well-thought out judgments about how to live their own lives" and open-mindedness, or "a willingness to challenge or revise one's beliefs in certain circumstances" (p. 270). In order to implement the *Narrative Template Tool* without reinforcing group boundaries, a mechanism is called for to explicitly avoid closed-mindedness and indoctrination. The point is to help students freely develop their narratives of belonging without any interference from individuals in positions of authority, nor from the overpowering influence of pre-given narrative structures in the community that also risk producing such an outcome.

As an extension of the third sub-competency of *orientation*, the key here is to activate students' curiosity and to teach them about the practical, political, and cultural workings of narratives. This requires an open use of the narrative tool's core narrative script (i.e., the two themes and chronological structure) to ensure that students are able to develop well-informed and reasoned arguments for supporting their

narratives of belonging, and to moreover be able to take critical distance from their resulting perspectives. This process also allows for the freedom to historicize and criticize the tool itself. Exercising students' understanding of *orientation*'s key feature of "use-of-history" represents one such open-ended way of concretely employing the narrative tool. Through it, students would learn to see the benefits and drawbacks of developing community narratives (Nordgren, 2016). As a result, they would become informed and able to accept, reject, or adapt the general historical visions that narrate their community and its relations with other groups. They would also be able to position themselves and see where they stand vis-à-vis the production of their own stories of belonging.

In following "use-of-history" as a method of analysis, students would thus be able to (Nordgren, 2016; Nordgren & Johansson, 2015): 1) *Explain the surrounding world*, where they learn to explain how differing groups use history to describe the world and give meaning to social reality. 2) *Form identities*, where they understand how these same differing cultures employ history for building and reshaping group identities. 3) *Exert influence*, or inform the surrounding world, which involves understanding how societies employ history to affect various (socio-political) situations, to act upon the world around them, and to promote social change.

In following this logic, "use-of-history" ultimately offers an opportunity for viewing history as basic to life orientation, where students see that they are an important part of history and that they consequently are their own authors of progress and change (Nordgren, 2016; Nordgren & Johansson, 2015). Through grasping "use-of-history's" core workings, such an approach would serve to reinforce students' critical gaze and self-reflection and would foster their potential of being accountable for their differing positionalities. This would offer opportunities to assess the soundness of their produced histories at a larger, societal level of belonging. They would come to question what their narratives and underlying viewpoints expose and obscure about the world they live in and where they stand in light of it all (Freedman, 2007). Ultimately, they would be able to weigh the pros and cons of what they are actually saying, and also negating, in terms of the perspectives and ideas they put forth.

Acknowledgments

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