CRITICAL STORYTELLING

The Shaping of Professional Identities

Revisiting Critical Event Narrative Inquiry

EDITED BY
Mette Bøe Lyngstad,
Tiri Bergesen Schei and
Elin Eriksen Ødegaard

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FOREWORD

Narrative Inquiry

Storying Who We Are

D. Jean Clandinin and Vera Caine

The invitation to co-author this foreword arrived in the midst of January 2024. As we began to read the chapters and see the names of chapter authors, we smiled, our smiles called forth by memories of those who participated in an experiential weeklong international narrative inquiry course.

> A beautiful May morning in 2019 and we, about 14 of us, are gathered in a room at the Vinzenz Pallotti University in Vallendar, a quiet secluded spot in the German countryside. People, some we knew as former or current doctoral students, were with us. There were others including scholars from Norway whom we met at a conference entitled 'Negotiating Neglected Narratives' that took place in 2015. We knew the relationships that had started long before this workshop were important in this new space in ways we had yet to experience.
>
> That first day we were seated around tables we had placed in a large circle, so we faced each other. We carefully planned the five days to include what we knew mattered: time to write stories alone; time in small response groups to share writing with each other; time to inquire and rewrite stories; time to reshare stories; and time to read the works of authors who informed our ideas of narrative inquiry. The quietness of the forested area that surrounded us was important for the work ahead. We saw it as an invitation to slow down and to think with the stories we each carried and the stories that might have been forgotten or had yet to be imagined. One author, whose work we read during our time together, was Ben Okri, an author whose writing resonated with ours in relation to identity, particularly our writings about knowledge and identity.
>
> In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possibly heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves. We live stories

> that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (Okri, 1997, p. 46)

'We live by stories' expresses an idea about the set of complex relationships among knowledge, contexts, and identities. It is a way of thinking about identities relationally (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). As we shared these familiar words from Okri with the group at Vallendar, we were opening questions about what it means to think narratively, to be attentive to our own unfolding, enfolding, storied lives. These ideas have shaped our scholarly lives and work over many years now. Okri's work reminds us of our journeys as narrative inquirers and of how to encourage those new to narrative inquiry to begin their inquiries into the ways that personal, professional, cultural, familial, and institutional narratives are entangled with how each of us compose and recompose our professional identities. We knew the importance of self-facing, that is, of telling and retelling what we have called hard to tell and hard to live stories, stories that allow us to see ourselves in relation to others and to the larger familial, social, institutional, and cultural narratives within which we are, each of us, entangled.

> The small pond located between the edge of the University campus was filled with frogs, some calling loudly – it was a familiar sound to Vera, who had grown up in the north of Germany. The sound of the frogs reminded her of long-ago spring days alongside her brother catching tadpoles. They rode their bikes to a local pond with big canning jars in tow that would, over the next hour or two, be turned into small aquariums. The calling of the frogs and the stillness of the woods marked a longing to return to a place Vera had called home in her childhood and youth. The quiet writing times were a welcome gift of time to Vera to reflect on her early childhood.

While we know the importance of beginning with writing and telling our own stories, we also know stories can never be retold in quite the same way – they are always changing, new experiences shift not only who we are and are becoming, but also shape the stories we tell about our lives. We intentionally created situations in our days in Vallendar during which participants wrote stories from memory or composed stories around an artifact, such as a photograph. We asked participants to tell a story to three or four members who we hoped would become a response community. We were reminded of Arendt's (1958) writing on spaces of appearance when we attended the *Negotiating Neglected Narratives* conference. As we asked participants to share their stories

we thought of the response groups as a kind of space of appearance, a private but also public space (Caine, Clandinin, & Lessard, 2020). After sharing stories in response groups, we asked people to find alone spaces to write and, possibly, to begin to rewrite the story. Their rewriting was shaped as they thought about the responses from the others in their small group as well as by new memories triggered by the writing. Small response group time, amidst writing alone times, were important to ensure time to come into community, time to help us wonder about who we are, and are becoming, alongside others.

> As Jean and Vera took their early morning walks, and while Vera was reminded of her early childhood in Germany, Jean's thoughts drifted back to stories of growing up in rural western Canada, of long walks in birch and poplar forests, with time to listen to the songs of birds or the crunch of snow. The place evoked memories of familial narratives that who Jean is and is becoming.

The spaces to be alone were times when stories and memories bubbled forward and called us to write. The spaces of sharing our stories, hearing others' responses, and hearing others' stories are all part of becoming narrative inquirers. Learning to listen, to wonder, to imagine as we begin with ourselves are part of the journey in narrative inquiry. While we do not understand our inquiries from within a view of critical events, but rather from a view of lives as enfolding and unfolding over time, places, and relationships with attention to the personal and the social, we see many resonances in the work each of the chapters represent. Our focus is not on retrospectively and systematically analyzing specific behaviours "that cause positive or negative outcomes" (Ødegaard, Schei, & Lyngstad, Chapter 1, this volume) but is on coming to understand that our stories shift and change over time as we continue to experience life in new circumstances. Our insights are always nested in understanding that lives are always in the making, in the midst of complex situations that invite the possibility to retell and relive our experiences.

> Early each morning, before we gathered as a large group, we headed out for a daily walk, following the trails leading from the University, through the gardens, alongside the pond, and into the forest. We saw small groups of chairs in places by the pond and on the grounds of the University. We knew these were the places where members of response groups would gather later in the day. We wondered out loud about what was happening in each group. We wondered about the conversations within each group, and if these conversations were intersected by silences and pauses, by the responses that were composed in the groups, and how they were shaped

by different geographic places. Did being in a new place call people to tell or retell their stories in new ways? In ways that perhaps shaped their telling and retelling of their personal and professional identity making.

As some chapter authors noted, we too acknowledge that "experience is central to narrative inquiry" and that "professional identity-making must be considered as being composed within the experiences of professional education and work, while crossing borders to personal living" (Ødegaard, Schei, & Lyngstad, Chapter 1, this volume). The authors of this book, some of whom were with us in the five days at Vallendar, draw on Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) and share our view that "[u]nderstanding life as a series of experiences told and lived as stories, narrative inquiry is both a research methodology and a way of understanding personal experience" (Ødegaard, Schei, & Lyngstad, Chapter 1, this volume). They, too, wonder about who we are as we engage in our professions, and about how our identities are shaped within particular social, political, historical, and institutional narratives as we learn our professions and as we practice them.

This book, and these chapter authors, help us see the ways that experiences ripple forward in unexpected and unimagined ways in our lives. This complex book shows rather than tells how professional identities are shaped within the narratives of lives.

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Figures

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CHAPTER 1

Beginning with Experience

Introduction

Elin Eriksen Ødegaard, Tiri Bergesen Schei and Mette Bøe Lyngstad

Abstract

This chapter, as the book in hand, written in the spirit of John Dewey, considers personal experience as scientific exploration. Personal growth and formative development are highlighted as important in many aspects of life, including professional work-life. We introduce how professional identities are continuously developed in processes of cultural formation and unpack episodes from various professions. It becomes apparent how personal experience is entangled with the shaping of professional identities. We introduce three questions: Who are we, in relation to our profession? What can we learn about the formation of professional identity from a narrative inquiry? How can we extend our understanding of the formation of professional identity from the perspective of critical event narratives?

Keywords

narrative inquiry – critical events – experience – profession – formative development

• • •

'I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference; namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience' (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 25). When writing these lines, John Dewey was situated in an educational context that did not recognise experience as valuable academic knowledge. The issue Dewey raised concerning experience is relevant for future education today in a global context. Even if we deny that knowledge is static or fixed, if we continue to teach static or fixed knowledge, we continue to educate the learner to stay passive. With this book, in the spirit of Dewey, we consider personal experience as scientific exploration that support growth and formative development in students as well as in lifelong learning. Personal growth and formative development are important in many

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aspects of life, including in professional work-life. To address these aspects, the book adds to knowledge relevant for various professions. We need insights to understand how professional identities are shaped. We also need less rational, more flexible, more local, more triggering, alternative approaches to facilitate professional development in teacher education, health sciences and the arts. We start out with sharing three personal critical events, all articulating uncertainty, and all being formative moments, moments where new insights of self and professional identity where born.

> The uncertainty surrounding my professional identity grew when I, as a facilitator in a meeting with a new group of people with drug addiction, also shared a vulnerable story of my own. I became acutely concerned about whether I had stepped out of my professional identity or not. I was relieved when one of the participants later said that it was in the moment that I also shared a personal story from my own life that I was included and respected. (Mette)

> I was standing in the second row in the choir, and the conductor pointed at me and said, 'No, not you'. Then she pointed with her forefinger at the person next to me: 'You. I want you to be part of the upcoming performance with the orchestra'. This experience in my youth was to become more significant for my professional identity formation than I ever could have imagined. (Tiri)

> Motherhood as an institution with specific meanings is negotiated, changes over time, and will vary in cultures. It was first when I became a mother myself and learned about narrative inquiry that I could explore how mothering children, as experiences in everyday practises, was in fact provoked by cultural scripts, and I could understand my own experiences as a mother as a negotiation of ideas of motherhood and childhood. Narrative inquiry made me see the relevance of my very personal exploration for my professional identity as well as my choices and actions. (Elin)

1 Revisiting the Formation of Professional Identity

Sharing these stories was the beginning of our collaboration about professional identities, which led to this research anthology. Autobiographical memories, like these three critical events, are unreliable in a scientific sense, but they are entangled with the body, emotions, and experiences. As they are

shared, meaning and relationships are created. Even if we cannot transfer my experience directly into your experience, events, as they are remembered and articulated, open up spaces of reimagining and experience (Clandinin et al., 1999). These memories tease out critical events and, among other narrative memories, are further explored in this book.

Critical events in our narratives became crucial to our understanding of how professional identities are continuously developed in processes of cultural formation. As we organise experience in narratives, critical events are helpful in research with aims of new understandings arising from qualitative data. When we can identify a story that reveals a change of understanding or worldview by the storyteller, we can define it as a critical event in narrative inquiry.

In our dialogues, we listened to and challenged each other to share personal stories. We realised that we often negotiate representations of our professional and personal identity, and we encouraged the authors of this anthology to be aware of the critical events in such matters. Our wish was to challenge the participants to investigate their own stories as well as those of others concerning professional identity formation. In this anthology, the authors unpack episodes from working in various professions, and it becomes apparent how personal experience is entangled with how we construct professional identities.

Who are we in relation to our profession? What can we learn about the formation of professional identity from a narrative inquiry? How can we extend our understanding of the formation of professional identity from the perspective of critical event narratives? These questions emerged over years in a network of milieus within the educational, social science, arts, and health fields, all of which also involved higher education and work with students becoming teachers, nurses, and social- and cultural professionals.

Professional identity formation reappears as a never-ending story as new students and educators enter the field and when society and political mandates change. Professional identity is a complex, formative endeavour that is shaped by both personal and professional knowledge trajectories and the conditions in which people live, engage, and work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Writing from experience and leaning on narrative inquiry, the authors of this anthology take a critical gaze at events, actions, and experiences. Experience is central to narrative inquiry. As human beings, we are storytellers who live stories and tell stories about our lives. Bearing in mind that professional identity-making happens over time, places, and social interactions, writing about professional identity-making must be considered as being composed within the experiences of professional education and work, while crossing borders to personal living. Taking this route of departure, professional identity-making is interesting to explore both from an embodied and an ontological

perspective of life experience. Understanding life as a series of experiences told and lived as stories, narrative inquiry is both a research methodology and a way of understanding personal experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

We have challenged the authors to convey their own or others' experiences and highlight crossroads they consider important for professional identity formation. Taking a critical stance on narrative inquiry as such allows us to conduct meta-reflections on how narrative inquiry can be productive for our understanding of professional identity formation. While the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of narrative inquiry are the philosophy of pragmatism, critical event narrative inquiry was inspired by 'critical incident technique' and analysis, which was derived from the field of aviation knowledge and experience (Mertova & Webster, 2020). Incidents of success and failure are retrospectively and systematically analysed to identify specific behaviours that cause positive or negative outcomes. Critical incidents, which was the concept used at that time, typically contained three main features: (1) a description of the situation, (2) an account of the action of the key player or protagonist, and (3) the outcome or result. Critical events in our own lives and those of others may help us understand how professional identities are negotiated, shaped, and reshaped. The human experience can be seen as intrinsically entwined with our relationships with other humans, cultural artefacts, materiality, and landscapes.

The initiative for the book came from the research group Negotiating Neglected Narratives at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) and a network of researchers from universities in Norway: UiT, the Arctic University of Norway, and Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), as well as a branch at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. This network has worked with narratives and stories for many years from a variety of narrative research traditions and the arts of storytelling. Over the years, we have experienced productive and inspiring meetings to negotiate, collaborate, and learn from each other in research. Some of the chapters in this book started as papers in writing seminars led by and inspired by the work of D. Jean Clandinin and Vera Caine.

Our objective with this anthology is to create greater awareness of the continuous processes that occur around identity and that shape all professional identities. We explore aspects of narrative inquiry and self-explorative approaches. Narrative inquiry operates at the intersection of the personal, the political, and the situational. The book attempts to investigate and elaborate on explorations of professional identities and worldviews that can eventually contribute to a deeper understanding of how that which we often consider personal growth – 'Bildung', formative development or transformation – always occurs in relational (social) and situational (time-place) dynamics.

The authors of this anthology have life experiences from living and working in Norway, one of the world's richest countries. We write from economically privileged positions compared to the global south. We also write from a geographically situated position. We live in northern Europe, the western half of the Scandinavian peninsula, a country where about two-thirds of the country is mountainous, with a long coastline, and which shares a border in the east with Russia, Finland, and Sweden. When it comes to cultural influence, which is relevant for understanding oneself and how we form identities, we also note that, even if the economy is strong, the culture is shaped by scarce resources, a harsh climate, and in negotiation with cultures that cross borders. A national identity has blossomed since the 19th century, with efforts to achieve an independent identity from historical occupiers such as Sweden, Denmark, and Germany seen in the areas of literature, language, art, and music. The negotiation of national identity continues today, notably in the Arctic area of the Sami, the Indigenous population.

As we combine the personal with the professional in a self-explorative approach, aspects of living conditions might be visible in some of the narrative inquiries. The process of researching and writing this anthology is an eye-opener to recognising that even if we write from privileged positions, we discover how vulnerable we are as human beings.

Narrative inquiry allows us to present micro perspectives –that is, an individual's worldviews, opinions, perspectives, and ways of understanding the world – alongside our personal and professional stories. However, narrative inquiry also highlights how powerful micro perspectives can be; for example, an incident that may initially seem minor could affect a person's professional life and identity and trigger, empower, and even cause shame throughout our continuous identity processes (Schei & Schei, 2017). When such microperspectives are discovered through narrative inquiry, we find crossroads, critical events, and turning points.

In narrative inquiry, the relationship of sharing stories across time and place means that the author and listener co-compose every story. Narrative inquiry can even explore concerns that are not stated, topics that are difficult to discuss, and issues that are common sense. These narratives can be experimental and explore narrative genres.

2 Intersecting the Personal, the Relational, and the Situational

We aim to contribute to a deepened understanding of how professional identities are negotiated and shaped and how a diversity of life experiences, situations, memories, and modes inform and form the composition of the stories we tell.

The book adopts a postmodern stance, allowing subjectivity and multiple voices, and it incorporates interest in cultural formative processes. Validity and reliability are associated with the meaning the stories have for the reader and whether they come across as trustworthy (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative inquiry operates amid the personal, the political, and the situational, as this anthology illustrates.

The quantity of narrative designs can cause confusion and ambiguity in research projects (Garvis et al., 2015). Historically, there have also been generations of research traditions and turns in narrative inquiry. This group of authors has also negotiated and discussed the narrative methodology and different approaches. The book can be read as an effort to bridge a gap by navigating the borderlands of narrative inquiry. We are aware that Pinnegar and Daynes have presented four thematic turns that indicate 'how fully the researcher embraces narrative inquiry' (p. 7). These thematic turns can also be found in this anthology, and we comment as follows:

1. The attention to relationships among the researcher and the researched, which all the authors of this book note.
2. The move from the use of numbers as the only relevant data source to accepting words and language as data; the book clearly presents qualitative data.
3. A change from a focus on the general and universal towards an interest in the local and the particular; the attentive reader might discover clues reflecting local geography and local culture as relevant aspects of the narrative investigation.
4. The recognition of blurred genres of knowing (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

The chapters might be read as an inquiry into the discovery of knowledge about the entanglement of the personal, subjective processes of personal experience and societal requirements for the professions and the events we encounter in work-life situations.

Some would claim that there is a distinction between the concepts 'narrative' and 'story' (Phillips & Bunda, 2018). There is an etymological difference between the two. 'Narrative' is often used in everyday life, while 'story' is derived from the Latin word historia, referring to an account of what happened (this emerged in the English language around 1200). Around 1500, a distinction was made based on the categorisation that history was truth and that story was imagination and fiction. The Age of Enlightenment appears to be the catalyst for this distinction, and a clear thread that runs from this distinction has silenced many voices and their knowledge that derived from personal experiences, such as stories about the knowledge of people of indigenous heritage, children, and the uneducated population around the world.

History belonged to the privileged, where white archives documented names, dates, places, and roles, not stories. Archives had facts and figures, while stories carried experiences and imagination. Stories come with layered symbolic meanings (Phillips & Bunda, 2018, pp. 5–6). When examining the intersection between the personal and the professional, it is important to remember the history of narrative methodology and what was, and still is, considered truth and what is considered imagination. In some chapters in this book, the distinction is blurred, while in others, often-neglected voices are negotiated through narrative inquiry.

Using the framework of narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2022; Clandinin, 2007, 2019) in our research on common elements of time, place, and sociality, and as an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional group drawn from the fields of teacher education, arts education, social work, and health care, we explore the interface between the personal and the professional through the lens of these simple yet complex questions: Who are we, as persons, in relation to our profession? What can we learn about the formation of professional identity from narrative inquiry? How can we extend our understanding of the formation of professional identity from the perspective of critical event narratives?

3 The Dynamic Perspectives of Forming and Shaping Identities

Professional identity is often described as the keystone of professionalism, but the implication of this for education in the profession is not obvious. Education is often devised in rational ways, and small portions of the knowledge base of the professions are given a place in lessons and curriculum. Personal engagement and a deeper understanding of what this knowledge base means for each student or working professional are often neglected or given limited time. Connecting the past to the present and connecting to local places and experiences from relationships, both personal and work-related, facilitates professional identity-making. A professional knowledge landscape involves knowledge that is transmitted through formal education, training workshops, and protocols. In this volume, the writers disclose that the professional knowledge landscapes shift as time passes. This means that the shaping of identities is seen as a dynamic and never-ending process.

The chapters adhere to views that professional knowledge is historically, personally, and socially based, as in pragmatism (Caine et al., 2022; Dewey, 1997). The negotiation of meaning through narrative knowing, the narrative genre and form, have also been of interest for scholars such as Jerome Bruner, narrative in form (Bruner, 1987; Bruner, 2003). What binds the pragmatist

perspective to the constructivist one is context sensitivity to narrative discourse in everyday life and the argument of narrative knowing as a viable genre for cultural negotiation: You tell your version of what happened, and I tell mine. Narrative inquiry as scientific exploration also crosses scientific boundaries, from education to organisations and future policies (Curthoys, 2002; Czarniawska, 2004). More specifically, it builds on the underpinnings of philosophy that move the thinking between modernism and postmodernism (Mertova & Webster, 2020):

> This image provides the analogy of the ever-changing sea, in which oceans and currents constantly meet, intertwine, and move apart. There is neither a definitive beginning nor an end in this image. Similarly, there is no finite division between the frameworks of modernism and postmodernism. Rather, there is a constant, yet dynamic, motion between the two. (Mertova & Webster, 2020, pp. 25–26)

Postmodernism contrasts with modernism in its approach to defining truth and knowledge. From a postmodern perspective, truth and knowledge, can be seen as co-constructs. Postmodernism argues that each person brings past life experiences to a situation. According to Mertova and Webster (2020), postmodernism rejects the belief that truth and knowledge can be found through rational thought or method. The understanding of truth and knowledge is also evident in Dewey's writings. He claims that by divorcing experience and education, we narrowly define knowledge as that which can be simplified and transmitted easily; it is 'static' (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 19). In our time, when media and politics keep negotiating truth and opinions, and where 'fake news' has appeared as a new, relevant concept, we can remind ourselves of Dewey's views on citizens' critical thinking.

Postmodernism values personal internal processes, or the 'I' or 'we', and puts greater emphasis on human factors relating to continuous identity formation and the acquisition of knowledge that is relevant for the profession. Dewey's emphasis on Bildung demonstrates the understanding of the human being's processes as lifelong and transforming. Writing in the first person, as the 'I', is about writing oneself into understanding the entanglements and complexities of ongoing relationships with others and environments. This allows us to explore the landscape of professional identity formation with a critical, personal-sensitivity approach. Dewey's (1916) pragmatic approach to education emphasised learning based on the needs and interests of the learner, as seen in exploring, experimentation, and trying again and again. We therefore

lean on reading Dewey through postmodernist lenses and beyond. To explain further, classical pragmatism, especially Dewey's, was already postmodern – in fact, post-postmodern – more than a century ago (Hickman, 1997). Dewey's grand narrative was a rejection of foundational certainty and a reinterpretation of philosophy and science, including the topic of global citizenship (e.g., Dewey, 1916). A conception of narrative inquiry as a pragmatic methodology entails experiment and exploration, continuity and commonality, the agentive self, and aesthetic diversity; and pointedly, it is also one of negotiating narrative experience.

Building on this tradition, in narrative inquiry, the researchers themselves are the critical tool through which research can uncover events and relational issues, and experience is at the core of the formation of the author's (researcher's) life experiences as well as the experiences of the persons the authors engage, tell, and analyse. Lived stories, whether told, performed, visualised, or written, can be analysed as critical events in autobiographical ways. The way the person (subject) positions himself or herself reveals a moment of identity. These manifestations often require a critical perspective, as such narratives that reflect on what is worth exploring. When telling stories, people adopt subject positions in a certain space and within certain relationships. Narrative inquiry that pays particularly sensitive attention to these personal (subject) positions may illuminate how patterns of truth – what is taken for granted as normal, correct, good, or bad – infuse everyday life and make us act in certain ways and not in others (Schei, 2013; Schei & Ødegaard, 2017). What the conformity and rules of institutions such as kindergartens, schools, hospitals, residential homes, businesses, and organisations in a wide professional field have in common is that practises and personal experiences are often unspoken. This means that tacit knowledge might dominate these practises. Every culture has strong cultural codes, and these are most often taken for granted and tacit, but they are important to be aware of when we study professional identity formation in narrative inquiry.

Elaborating on personal experience and how people are shaped as individuals and as professionals often belongs to the dialogue of close relationships, in the context of friends or family. Even if many claim that there is a significant distinction between the private and the personal in professional life, allowing people to spend time exploring and challenging the border between the private and the personal can be very effective. When working to transform organisations, change professional cultures and staff milieus, and regulate behaviours, time is essential. When professional cultures are unarticulated, when we are not sensitive to how something is perceived by the persons involved, when we

have not identified the deeper structures of what is considered good, normal, and reasonable, then reflection, action, transformation, and change are effectively delimited.

4 What Purposes Does a Critical Event Narrative Inquiry Serve?

We posit that a critical event narrative is well-suited to addressing the complexities and sensitivities of human experience in professional lives and the process of negotiating identities as they form. When research participants, researchers, and authors engage in the practice of storytelling, this serves different purposes.

Clandinin has suggested justifying research that focuses on the interest of personal experience, where we must attend to the 'So what?' and 'Who cares?' questions in design considerations (Clandinin, 2013). From the perspective of funding agencies and policymakers, narrative inquiry is often regarded as simplistic, anecdotal, and overly personal. However, from the narrative inquirer's perspective, such research is important to understand how we shape professional identities. An understanding of who we are in relation to others and what we educate students for implies that the personal can be valuable and valid for a wider community, as experiences, events, emotions, and changes can be recognisable and prompt reflexivity. Without the reflexivity that shapes our own and others' professional identities, we can easily stumble into relationships with participants without the necessary sensitivity regarding how to design and analyse research.

However, personal justification is far from sufficient, as there is a risk of being too near-sighted or too self-indulgent. The sensitivity developed through deep and reflexive thinking about one's own experience in relation to the self and others becomes valid as research when doing so is fully theorized and justified and can give insights and knowledge about a social problem or puzzle; one relevant example is the concept of 'stories to live by' as a narrative term for professional identity (Clandinin et al., 1999).

In Mertova and Webster's (2020)'s design methodological of processes for critical event narrative analysis, they state that such analysis is an event-driven tool of research: searching for key events and related details constitutes the analysis. Memory is unstable, but the memory of past critical events could be a valuable and insightful tool for getting to the focal point of research. An event-driven approach could also apply to the design of large amounts of data, as critical events are focused. The significance of critical events is profound, as they seem to have important functions for preservation and confirmation.

Critical events assist in understanding and maintaining an understanding of reality in a context of the tension of ambiguous forces. Woods (1993) has argued that working with critical events in professional education and development will achieve the following:

- promote and accelerate learning about self, relationships, knowledge, and skills;
- create pride in craftsmanship and the realisation of oneself;
- restore ideals and commitment for professional ethical codes;
- permit the professional to retain ideals despite assaults; and
- boost professional morale and act as a coping strategy.

Woods recommends we go beyond the neat and tidy symmetry of the critical event and its potential for reflexivity in research. Narrative inquiry can offer a methodology that requires sensitivity to context and complexities. Beneath the surface, indistinct and chaotic human behaviours might emerge (Woods, 1993) and can be explored with critical lenses. We now turn to the chapters of the book.

5 Experiences to Be Continued

We have encouraged a variety of authors across career stages and contexts to convey and illuminate their voices and experiences in their life puzzles. Some threads run through all 15 chapters in this anthology: first, memories from the past that seemed to be highly important for the authors' professional identity formation; second, turning points that resulted from personal and professional meetings; and third, revisiting experience as a crucial matter for professional identity formation. Narrative inquiry is used in both traditional approaches and in viewing postmodern perspectives on how identities unfold and become visible in work life. Sharing stories of embodied experiences might resonate with the power of narratives.

Our contribution with this anthology is showing that the personal affects the professional in ways that are often not reflected upon in relation to professional identity formation. Critical events might create vital turning points in both personal and professional lives, and these can affect identity formation. Understanding how, why, and when these processes unfold in a professional life is a core aim of this anthology.

Chapter 1: "Beginning with experience: Introduction" – This introductory chapter, the editors Elin Eriksen Ødegaard, Tiri Bergesen Schei and Mette Bøe

Lyngstad outline the rationale of the book. The chapter considers personal experience as scientific exploration. Personal growth and formative development. The editors introduce how professional identities are continuously developed in processes of cultural formation and unpack episodes from various professions. It becomes apparent how personal experience is entangled with the shaping of professional identities.

Chapter 2: "Negotiating the cultural script of mothering: Entangling self-explorative narrative inquiry into a professional identity" – the case of negotiating the cultural script of mothering with a professional identity by Elin Eriksen Ødegaard, KINDknow Research Centre, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. In this chapter, Ødegaard conceptualises critical events as knots to disentangle in self-explorative narrative inquiry. She narrates this self-explorative inquiry from the perspective of mothering and what it means to be a child. Even though mothering a child is an everyday practice, she tells the story of how mothering can be experienced as a series of critical events triggered by the cultural idea of what it means to be a child, and therefore, mothering must be negotiated. She argues that self-explorative analysis has a critical potential when situating oneself as a researcher amid events occurring in temporality, place, and relational processes. The key elements in the narrative allow this chapter to explore the landscape of professional identity formation with a critical personal-sensitivity approach. Ødegaard articulates this as a self-explorative narrative inquiry.

Chapter 3: "On the traveling and turns of being and becoming a narrative inquirer", written by Bodil H. Blix, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway. We read about a narrative inquirer in the making. Her journey as a narrative inquirer has involved a series of personal and professional twists and turns. The author draws on the apparent paradox that, every time we perform a turn, we look backwards in order to move forward. Turning points are opportunities for learning and surprise. Her conceptualisation of narrative inquiry contains a commitment to navigating unknown waters – a willingness to inquire into the unknown, into topics often silenced in her own and others' lives. The author demonstrates that dwelling on her own shortcomings and painful experiences is crucial in her process of becoming a narrative inquirer.

Chapter 4: "Beyond personal and political boundaries: Being and becoming a cross-cultural researcher and educator". This autobiographic narrative inquiry was written by Åsta Birkeland, KINDknow Research Centre, Western Norway

University of Applied Sciences. The author participated in cross-cultural research and teacher education programmes in China for many years. Through this long-term commitment and repeated crossing of national, ideological, and linguistic borders, stories have been lived, told, and retold. These encounters with various boundaries have provided fertile ground for making sense of the world and for her to become who she is amid these stories. Participating in cross-cultural research and international teacher programmes is therefore not purely limited to epistemology and the understanding of other cultures in theory; rather, these experiences also provide potential interplay and dialogue between "insiders" and "outsiders" and have shaped her professional identity as a cross-cultural educator and researcher.

Chapter 5: "Am I Sámi enough? Narratives as a means of exploring a Sámi pedagogy for Kindergarten". In this chapter, written by Carola Kleemann, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, the author shows that, in indigenous societies, telling stories has always been a means of transferring knowledge, sharing knowledge of expected behaviour, or serving as a learning experience. From the stories and the process of storytelling gathered during a research project in a Sámi kindergarten department, she explores three themes: language, identity, and Sámi pedagogy as experienced in Sámi practises. Of the process, she writes:

> The stories are not merely material for this chapter, but they have been, and continue to be, a way of making ourselves – the participants – conscious about who has the power of defining Sámi, and how we, with our backgrounds may (or have the right to) work toward strengthening Sámi language and culture in a Sea-Sámi area.

Chapter 6: "The Inherent Power of Teachers: An Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry", written by Tiri Bergesen Schei, HVL – Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. In this chapter, the author writes an autobiographical narrative about how a single episode in her teenage years continues to affect her life. She analyses this topic in depth, examines in detail what she recalls about the physical and emotional reactions she had to the incident, and considers the richness of reflecting upon the experience as a rhizomatic mess that follows in the wake of recalling, deconstructing, and retelling a previous traumatic experience. She introduces a research landscape that exposes her own personal and professional journey from childhood through her studies and into her professional career.

Chapter 7: "A Professional Identity Based on an International Career as Engineer: A Childhood Critical Event Impacting Every Fight for Acceptance" was written by Anna-Lena Østern, Åbo Akademi University, Finland. This chapter is a narrative inquiry into the professional identity of an international structural engineer and IT architect, Gustav, alongside an exploration and analysis of his personal life. Through this research, the author traces the critical incident of Gustav's life to his experience of being patronised, condescended to, or overlooked as a child, which has caused him to continuously strive to prove himself in life – something that has also resulted in his long, dedicated working life. His professional identity is characterised by three words: work, seriousness, and responsibility. His professional identity is so important to him that he never wants to retire. Gustav's story is discussed in light of Honneth's theory of recognition and Brown's theory of shame and resilience.

Chapter 8: "A tender narrative on intra-active identity shaping: A potty enters a kindergarten".

The author is Alicja R. Sadownik, KINDknow Research Centre, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. This chapter describes the author's professional identity formation as a process that occurs through the telling and retelling of a story about a potty, which she, as a (migrant) mother, suggested that her daughter's preschool should use. The rejection of this request triggered her to search for stories that could explain their refusal. The 'unwelcomed potty' is thus told and retold from diverse standpoints and spacetime by diverse people with varying relationships to the Norwegian ECEC sector: a migration researcher, a special-needs teacher, a headmaster of a pre-school, and students on a pre-school teacher training programme. The identity-shaping aspect of this story lies in the continuous search for another perspective, another way of experiencing – an experience that strengthens a never-completed identity and the endless possibilities of re-experiencing and growing as a researcher.

Chapter 9: "She's the Lion King!" In this autobiographical narrative inquiry written by Sidsel Boldermo, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, the author takes us back to her earliest childhood memories at kindergarten, as well as her memories from when she first began as a kindergarten teacher. The narrative inquiry is framed within the three-dimensional space of temporality, sociality, and place. Parallel to re-telling these memories, the author reflects on how the kindergarten as an institution has developed in Norway and on what belonging to the kindergarten can imply for children as well as teachers. By unpacking and analysing critical events based on memories and turning points, the author focuses on the development of her own professional identity.

Chapter 10: "A memory of experiencing milk in Kindergarten". A memory of experiences from a plurality of perspectives is a collaboratively written chapter by Geir Aaserud, Tove Lafton, and Tona Gulpinar from Oslo Metropolitan University. The authors imagine the meal as a feast inspired by the story 'Babette's Feast', written by Karen Blixen under the pseudonym Isak Dinesen. What attracts them to the short story is its focus on Hannah Arendt and her idea that the world will erase itself if only viewed from one angle. Without a plurality of viewpoints, we lack some of what constitutes our understanding of reality. According to Arendt, a common world can only exist from a plurality of perspectives.

Chapter 11: "At the intersection of pastoral and intellectual support: A journey of autoethnographic narratives on supervision". The authors of this collaborative chapter are Rikke Gürgens and Nanna K. Edvardsen, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway. This piece aims to shed light on how poetic narratives constructed based on lived guidance situations can contribute to a stronger awareness of values and settings for dialogical and relational doctoral guidance. With narrative inquiry as an analytical turning point (Caine, Estefan, Clandinin, 2013), five key dimensions of research guidance are discussed (Lee, 2008). The 16 narratives presented in the chapter are developed in a collaborative partnership between the supervisor and the research fellow. Guidance is thus highlighted by the focus on the two parties' narratives in relation to time, place, and relationship.

Chapter 12: "It also applies to you". This chapter was written by Vibeke Solbue, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. The author conducts a critical analysis of the ongoing research on Holocaust education by using her memory as a lens for analysing the research. She focuses on her own research on inclusion and equal education for all, reflecting on why she is drawn to this research and why it makes her concerned for herself and others in the field; she also uses her own experience with this memory to investigate this concern and articulate the critical events therein.

Chapter 13: "The minotaur myth, mimesis and me". This chapter, by Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen, Oslo Metropolitan University, explores mimesis in relation to oral storytelling, placing mimesis in the spotlight through several processes: the storyteller's own narrative, a working process, and artistic expression. Narrative inquiry serves as a framework in which to discuss the idea of mimesis. The research method of narrative inquiry embraces the researcher's own narrative, while mimesis uses clear coordinators to understand the process of a

narrative. The chapter thus examines the author's own narrative as well as the discovery and work of a Greek myth that represents a fictional experience.

Chapter 14: "Q for quarantine". In this chapter by Rikke Gürgens, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, Gürgens presents a professor's narrative as a short story. By living, telling, and retelling, the professor explores a mix of her own lived experiences in quarantine and the fictive worst-case scenario of the pandemic. This chapter thereby focuses on the need for a fictive universe by using fantasy building or narratives created by daydreaming, in this case, as a way to survive the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and to keep the professor's identity and mental balance intact.

Chapter 15: "Using narratives to understand professional identities". In the last chapter, Mette Bøe Lyngstad, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, presents and analyses the life story of a cultural director of a municipality in Norway and the stories that these trigger for the author. She narrates how the director's life story has shaped him as a leader and how the reflection of the past seems to influence his narrative identity. Through the key dimensions of narrative inquiry – temporality, place, and sociality – the author analyses these narratives. She presents specific narratives that exemplify the importance of the director's childhood and his cultural background and explores how this gave him a special interest in bringing the key skills he learned in his life to the various types of work he has undertaken with others. She also reflects on the narratives that this process sparked within her own life.

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CHAPTER 2

Negotiating the Cultural Script of Mothering

Entangling Self-Explorative Narrative Inquiry into a Professional Identity

Elin Eriksen Ødegaard

Abstract

This chapter conceptualises critical events as a knot to entangle in self-explorative narrative inquiry. In an effort to do so, I narrate a self-explorative inquiry into mothering and what it means to be a child. Even if mothering a child is an everyday practice, this chapter tells the story of how mothering can be experienced as a series of critical events – provoked by the cultural idea of what it means to be a child – and must thus be negotiated. By engaging with the ontology of narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2022; Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the narrative term 'stories to live by', and the frame of critical event narrative inquiry (Mertova & Webster, 2020), I suggest that self-explorative analysis holds a critical potential when placing oneself as a researcher in the midst of events occurring in a cultural – historical temporality, place, and relational process. The key elements allow us to explore the landscape of professional identity formation with a critical personal sensitivity approach, which I call self-explorative narrative inquiry.

Keywords

self-explorative narrative inquiry – composing lives – motherhood

1 Introduction: Composing Lives in the Making of Professional Identities

Giving birth to children and mothering them, as well as being a child experiencing mothering, entail key life events, as reflected in policy and philosophical discussions and seen in magazines, novels, poetry, drama series, and television shows, as well as in the therapy room and in everyday gossip. Motherhood as an institution with specific meanings is negotiated, changes over time, and varies across cultures. Mothering children, as experiences in everyday practices,

can be provoked by cultural script, and mothers and their children will continuously reflect on the processes of and negotiate ideas of motherhood and childhood, as well as their personal experiences of living these practices.

Over the years, I have met many mothers. I am one myself, and I have had a mother – a life experience I share with all humans. The experiences of mothering, however, often stay in the private sphere. Some mothers are proud, enthusiastic, and gratified, while others are worried, disillusioned, ashamed, and frustrated. Of course, these feelings can shift as time and events alter life conditions and relationships. The same life processes and feelings I recognise in myself and others have been connected to my professional life as a teacher, an educator, and, later, a researcher. Furthermore, in my life experiences and the teaching profession, I and the people I have met have tasted a range of mixed feelings and ups and downs in motivation, experiencing at times worry, disappointment, pride, and gratification. It is, however, only when time has passed that one can retell the events that were critical for the formation of their professional identity. Some events simply vanish from memory, while others are told and retold in new efforts to create meaning. Those events that stick to the memory are critical and highly likely to be vital conditions for the formation of identity, both on a personal and professional level. It is well recognised that new and surprising events can set off strong emotions that trigger stories (Bruner, 1987).

Whenever we move the dialogue beyond the surface, allowing stories to be told, the landscapes of lives are coloured as they are told. The telling of stories is always filled with possible subtexts, both for the storyteller to express and for others to interpret and understand. Most people I have met, when revealing personal stories, feel that their stories are unique – and they are, because personal stories come from their experiences, unfolding in a unique situational and cultural context. How then can we say something of interest to others? If we agree that we shape our professional identities through telling, how can these stories be relevant to a wider audience?

Personal stories catch identity issues. As humans, we use stories for meaning-making; this begins early and continues throughout life (Ødegaard, 2007a). Sharing stories helps us to validate our experiences and map those of others and gives us the opportunity to support or challenge each other's worldviews, as expressed through the stories we tell.

Within the context of work-life, professional identity entails the mix of personal feelings elicited by events to remember. When listening to or reading other people's stories of life from the private and public lives we are all engaged in, we learn about the critical events of their lives and the outcomes of these events. In this way, we are nourished by other people's stories; we mirror our

own lives against others'. Our professional identities, which are created in relation to a range of other phenomena and conditions, are typically an experience or a feeling of being the same person despite time passing, at the same time as we have the sense of being changed through critical events.

How people create their life stories can be unravelled and composed through narrative inquiry. It is through these articulated stories, oral or in text, that we gather data for research. When enacting a narrative inquiry, the data are core episodes as they are told or written, thematic ideas, and self- reflection. It is difficult to capture reality, as it is not observed by the researcher, so the researcher must be sensitive to the in-betweens, the silence, and the omission of what is *not* articulated.

Against this backdrop, in this chapter, I go down the lane of telling stories of mothering and how these everyday life experiences are negotiated and provoked by series of critical events. These events can seem like micro-incidents, but they nonetheless stick to memory and are negotiated with oneself and others.

2 Enriching Professional Identity by Self-Explorative Narrative Inquiry

In narrative inquiry, the researchers themselves are the critical tool with which research can unfold and wherein events can be untangled. The experience of critical events that are later told and retold is important to the formation of people. Professional identity entails narratives: the stories people tell themselves and others while they make personal and social meaning of ongoing and previous work-life events. Thus, identity formation is fluid and always in the making. This means that our framework takes a postmodern stance, allowing subjectivity and multiple voices in formative identity processes. The world in which the narrative inquiry is nurtured is understood as inter- and intra-related attempts to simultaneously unpack and create coherence in attempts to paint the whole story. Self-explorative narrative inquiry is created in the midst of personal, political, and situational events. It attempts to elaborate on and investigate personal explorations of our own worldviews as entangled in others. In a self-explorative narrative inquiry, the researcher must be open to the world and others' stories and simultaneously sensitive to their own growth processes, strengths, biases, and troubles. Validity and reliability are associated with whether the stories told make meaning to the reader and whether they come across as trustworthy, rather than stable in measurement (Polkinghorne, 1988).

As a researcher of teachers' experience and identity, I am a storyteller. I design and narrate teachers' storied lives and experiences (Ødegaard, 2007b; Ødegaard, & Økland 2015, Garvis, Ødegaard & Lemon, 2015; Schei & Ødegaard, 2017; Ødegaard & Marandon, 2019). In understanding identity formation, the boundaries between what is considered private and what is considered professional are easily blurred. While psychology research tends to treat identity formation and social categorisation as universal processes, the fields of sociology, anthropology, and history have studied the boundaries between the private and the professional by taking up identity symbols, practices, and markers such as gender, sexuality, and class (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). Less research has focused on the impact of how we are entangled in cultural scripts that cross sociological boundaries and are deeply rooted in personal values and experiences that are not universal.

Stories are constantly being negotiated and restructured as we enter new events, and they often constitute personal experiences, some of which are entangled in cultural and professional experiences. Narrative inquiry can concern oneself, others, or a combination of the two as we explore ourselves in relation to others. This has similarities with self-narrative, autobiography, and fiction, created with inspiration from our own lives. For autobiography to be powerful, it must contain and articulate 'nodal moment(s)' (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). All these above mentioned studies reveal patterns in experience and allow a reinterpretation of lives and experiences. To be powerful, this pattern must be portrayed in a way that engages readers in a sincere attempt to bring wholeness to life. This is similar to what I call self-explorative narratives, which call upon critical events (Mertova & Webster, 2020).

3 Negotiating the Cultural Narrative Script

Whenever there is time for stories to be told, written, listened to, or read, whether told as entertainment, gossip, recounts of real-life events, hidden secrets, or explanation, persuasion, or defence, stories are, have been, and always will be nourished by culture and simultaneously shape culture. Stories can sustain and disrupt culture. In this way, we can say that stories create culture.

Sharing stories can be seen as a negotiating practice. Following a narrative inquiry ontology, I understand the inquiry as a negotiated research practice. Experiences are continuously collaborative and negotiated, as people live entangled in relation to people, events, and the non-human world as landscapes, other species, artefacts, and material, resulting in the formation and

change of both people and the world in which they live (Dewey, 1938; Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013). Professional formation is therefore composed and re-composed in relation to others. It is through storytelling that people make meaning and shape their identities (Garvis, Ødegaard, & Lemon, 2015; Schei & Ødegaard, 2017).

My own life as a teacher educator and an early childhood researcher – and simultaneously a mother – has taught me some lessons: there are cultural narrative scripts on what an ideal life is, what ideal mothering is, and what the ideal child is, and there are values and events that urge one to create counter-narratives, but at a cost.

The cultural narrative scripts are strong; they lie in layers of practices, such as habits, spoken and unspoken language, structures, laws, and regulations. It is difficult to see the layers clearly before experiences revolt against the storyteller it is difficult to articulate aspects of them before emotions are faced, and difficult to compose counter-narratives before becoming strong enough to live one's counter-narrative with pride.

I was confronted with the strong cultural narrative of the ideal life, ideal motherhood, and ideal child after giving birth to my youngest child, a beautiful, tiny, premature girl. She was born with Down syndrome, which is associated with stigma and abortion rights in the Scandinavian society where I live. Becoming a mother of a child with Down syndrome was about not only giving birth to a newborn baby but also being a newborn myself, being reborn into a new identity, a mother of a child with a cultural stigma, a mother of a child whom I knew that other women could not face, or would meet with pride. I have met numerous other families with children diagnosed with Down syndrome, but I have yet to meet anyone who avoided the experience by choosing *not* to be a mother of a child with Down syndrome. It is an open discussion in our society that it is the right of women to choose abortion if they carry a child with this syndrome, but it is hidden and private information if one chooses *not* to enter the lifelong experience of mothering a child with Down syndrome. This stigma is narrated as such a serious condition that abortion is encouraged. Knowing this made me alert to my own reactions, being a newcomer in the world of stigmas.

My little girl was already here at the moment of her birth. Her very being as a newborn immediately challenged our family identity and raised a series of existential questions: *Can we continue to live our lives as mountain hikers? Will it even be possible when the syndrome makes her vulnerable in so many ways?* She could easily get infections, and her immune system was not yet tested, but statistics told a story of risk. Another thought forced its way into my mind, provoking the idea of motherhood and childhood: *Who am I now, in relation to the*

difficult question of the termination of pregnancy (*abortion*)*?* The thought was triggered by questions directed to me by people I knew and had recently met: 'Did you know that the child had Down syndrome during the pregnancy?' Why would people even ask me about this, as they did? The question mirrored their thoughts while they met her and me. We must have triggered their thoughts of abortion, and they were curious whether she just 'happened' to be or whether I had deliberately chosen *not* to abort her. I realised very early that this was the cultural script; when people meet the mother of a child with Down syndrome, they start to think about abortion. They might think, by the very sight of a mother and the child, that she (the child) was the lucky one; she survived, a thought that could lead to the next thought: her parents were the unlucky ones. Some people would share their compassionate thoughts: 'She was lucky to come to you. Children with Down syndrome tend to have the right parents'.

Mothers are also citizens. Scandinavian countries have liberal abortion laws. In Norway, the law allows for abortion on social indications, yet access to screening for foetal abnormalities is restricted. The Norwegian regulation of and public discourse about prenatal screening and diagnosis have been exceptional, following a recent opinion study (Magelssen, et al., 2018). The results of a digital questionnaire disclosed that a majority of respondents supported access to prenatal screening with ultrasound (60%) and/or the full genome sequencing of foetal DNA (55%) for all pregnant women. Significant minorities believed, however, that a public offer of prenatal screening for all pregnant women would signal that people with Down syndrome are unwanted (46%) or could be criticised for contributing to a 'sorting society' (48%). This study indicates deeper ambivalence and cultural sensitivity to the ethical challenges of prenatal screening and subsequent abortions. It also reflects my mothering experience of being met with the ambivalence connected to a particular diagnosis. In the culture where I live, there seems to be ambivalence about liberal abortion laws and arguments for women's rights to choose the life she wants to live, at the same time as this right comes with a fear of becoming a 'sorting society' that discards human life due to diagnoses.

The birth was a critical event for me and my family. The memory is like a movie in slow motion; I can remember the first sight of my baby and the facial expressions of my husband, the midwife, and the nurse. The smooth silence in the room, the gentle movement of the people around me, and the soft light of my new child on my stomach. My extended family, my friends, and my colleagues did care, and I mirrored my experience in the way they showed their compassion. Her very being as a newborn challenged my work-life identity: *Could I, or would I, continue my full-time job life? Or was this a turning point in life, an opportunity to be a full-time mother, or maybe have yet another baby?*

My little girl was so tiny, having been born prematurely. She did not express herself by crying the first months; she was so calm; she needed me. I longed for a cry; 'Cry me your song', I said to her. I needed to feed her often, as she was not so interested in being fed. She was so beautiful – the most beautiful baby I had ever seen. The first cry came after three months; it made me cry more than her. I was relieved and so happy for the sign of normality; she was now a person who expressed herself to me; she was a crying child. I could sing, and I could comfort her. She stopped crying, began to wave her arms, and eventually, started to smile and laugh. It felt good; it felt normal.

I met people, and with my nearest, I noticed they sniffed and cuddled her, sang for her, and touched her gently, a small sign of appreciation, love, and acceptance. I met people, relatives, 'Oh, a girl again, well, as they say, as long as it is well shaped, oh!' It was a slip of the tongue, but I could see the cultural scripts and the layers of mentalities in folk language. The most important thing when a child is born is not the gender; it is whether the child is 'well shaped'. It struck me that, in the world she was born into, she was not considered well shaped.

I met friends, neighbours, acquaintances, and colleagues; they wanted to comfort me and support me; 'It will all go well; she has the best parents in the world', they told me. I was challenged; were they serious? This is just a smooth surface, and they do not understand. Motherhood changed me and my world-view. It was different from other life crises I had experienced – was it even a crisis? I started to think, *The culture is not only out there but also within me*. I was confronted with my own reactions. I set the mirror up in my own eyes. *Did I want it otherwise? Was she good enough as she was?* Having such a wonderful child in our lives enriched us; she developed, and we bonded; she was perfect, but a worry was developing: *She will need me her entire life. When my friends' children make a career and give them grandchildren, I will continue to be a mother*. The critical event was about the perspective of long-term commitment.

I met other children, who asked, 'Why does she look like this?' I suddenly saw another perspective than my own. I met healthcare professionals and, later on, kindergarten staff. They told me, 'Congratulations! What a wonderful child!' But I needed to process it. *Do you mean it, or are you patronising me?*

I met a group of families that had recently had children with Down syndrome. They had other stories to tell. I heard stories of faith, miracles, and the sudden meaning of life. I heard stories of depression and divorce: 'He left me because he could not stand up to it'. I heard stories of the need for help: 'We need support; we struggle'. I heard stories of blindness to the syndrome: 'My child will be like any other child, and if not, it does not matter; my child is perfect'.

I soon realised that my critical life event – giving life to my child and experiencing this series of minor critical events – made me see the cultural script with

wide-open eyes. I was given another identity; it was not chosen but assigned by a random event in life. In any case, what was an experience from the personal sphere was spun into my professional work experience, and thereby my professional identity went into a spin. As the mother of my daughter, I extended my expertise, both in my own eyes and in others. I had not previously seen myself as someone knowledgeable about children with special needs; suddenly, I was asked – and agreed – to lecture early childhood education students about how to collaborate with families with children with special needs and elaborate on the case of children with Down syndrome. I was a mother entering the expertise of the syndrome, and suddenly my private experience could be valid in a professional context.

In my lectures, I wanted to encourage the students so that my story could make them confident, wise, and knowledgeable when engaging in dialogue with the children and families they would meet. I wanted to tell the story of my child as loving and resourceful, so I did, but I could not and would not be blind and escape from the fact that she, by biology, had a condition, diagnosed as Down syndrome. I noticed that the expertise books available at the time took a medical approach to Down syndrome, and I soon found joy in deliberately negotiating the medical narrative. I told small stories of joy, compassion, and playfulness in an effort to change the narrative of children with special needs as first and foremost deficient. In the beginning, I nonetheless found myself trapped in the cultural narrative of giving birth to a child who had a condition that society stigmatised as outside of normality, but when we got to know her, she became our new normal; we could learn from her, and it changed our family for the better. I started to challenge myself. I negotiated with myself how to narrate family life with a child with Down syndrome, as this was what the students should learn to understand. I started to switch between telling sweet stories of a child showing surprising competence and stories of a child being stubborn – stories of mothering being fun and enriching, as well as a long, slow ride of patience and repeated encouragement.

I held these lectures for eight years, until I gradually became reluctant to expose her and me, and when my daughter turned nine years old, I decided not to use my personal critical event narrative in this setting. Now, 18 years later, I find myself writing a self-explorative narrative of this experience.

These first years of mothering a child with Down syndrome also made me aware of another identity transformation. As an early childhood teacher and a teacher educator, I had previously been a child expert. In the private sphere of being a mother of a child with special needs, I suddenly found myself in a risk group, according to the welfare state. I was entitled to special follow-up and a support group, and specialists made themselves easily available. I was

confronted with being the lucky one, living in a welfare society where the support system was on the move, and I was treading into a new world where I was met as the person in need of support. Others were the experts. We met with physiotherapists and were offered family therapy. I learnt that, in our welfare society, there was such a thing as an aid centre. 'Do you need anything special? You can borrow a soft play mat if you would like'. This made me realise that, as a mother, I was no longer the child expert I had previously been by profession. I was now, first and foremost, the mother of a child in need of special care.

I learnt that I had given birth to a daughter who was incredibly kind and compassionate. She could sense me; I could sense her. She enjoyed her life; she explored, played, and learnt, and I learnt from her. I loved my life with her. Later, I realised that if I were to use welfare support and accept aid of any kind, I could not express my relationship to her this way. I learnt that I had a choice. If I were to benefit from the welfare state, I needed to tell stories of being needy and weak, and I needed to express a very challenging life situation with my daughter. I could not tell stories about her resources. It made me sad, and I rejected telling these stories of need. I needed to be strong; I felt I was doing wrong by my daughter if I told stories of her and our needs. When I first applied for the support, I was told that I needed to tell my narrative as I experienced it, but the fact was that our daughter had a diagnosis. Our application was rejected. To be approved for support, the decision-makers needed the culturally scripted narrative of being burdened. I learnt that I needed to be needy, my child had to be a burden, and her cries could not be experienced as normal; rather, the cultural script was that such children were too challenging, so our family needed extra support to cope.

I was confused for a while, but the critical events made me understand that people tailor their stories to the listener. Being a professional, one has rules and regulations to follow. I started to understand that counter-stories do not work in professionally regulated systems. Going back to work, I believe, made me sensitive to students' and colleagues' stories – to what they tell me and what they do *not* tell me – their stories might be tailored for my ears, and they could change when tailored to others. I have often heard friends and colleagues asking me how I cope with my work life. It seems as if they worry it will be too much for me. Over the years, I have wondered how they perceive me when I work too much, when I travel with work, and when I leave my family for conferences. What kind of identity do they ascribe to me as a female professional? Do they also see me as the mother of a child, now a grown young woman with special needs, who challenged the cultural narrative of giving up a carrier when a syndrome came into my life? Cultural scripts are implied in how we perceive and position ourselves in relation to normality and to the expectations of being a mother and a professional.

4 Self-Explorative Narrative Inquiry – A Methodology for the Study of Professional Identity Formation, including a Personal Dimension

Professional identity formation is an ever-evolving process, wherein individuals at any time embody multiple identities in response to patterns of power relations experienced in the world (Gergen, 1994; Schei, 2009; Schei & Schei, 2017). The study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry is an active meaning-making process, such as storying and re-storying. Many researchers across disciplines who engage in narrative inquiry agree on the following articulation:

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as a phenomenon under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375)

This articulation provides consensus around an understanding of experience as a storied phenomenon and narrative research as a methodology for inquiring into storied experiences. In other words, narrative inquiry research appeals to the ways in which sociality, temporality, and place intersect in the stories of participants.

Sociality involves the personal and social conditions of events. In my self-explorative narrative inquiry, I found myself entangled in cultural scripts. Personal conditions include emotions, imaginations, dreams, aesthetics, and reactions, whereas social conditions refer to the environment, forces, and existential conditions we live by. What is also important here is the value disposition of not only the research participant but also the inquirer. Dewey's view on interaction is closely linked to that of the situation:

> The statement that individuals live in a world means, in the concrete, that they live in a series of situations. And when it is said that they live in these situations … it means once more that interaction is going on between an individual and objects and other persons. The conception of interaction and situation are inseparable from each other. (Dewey, 1938, p. 43)

Experience consequently entails a transaction occurring between an individual and what, at a certain time, constitutes the environment. We are entangled in sociality, in cultural scripts, and they come in a series of events, as described in the story of mothering a child with Down syndrome. As we shall see, this draws attention to the place where events occur.

Place encompasses the topological affordances and boundaries where events are occurring. Every story has a geography, meaning that every story has a place; every memory, every experience, is placed (Caine et al., 2022). Migrants' and refugees' experiences can illustrate the obvious pervasiveness of place. The change in where one lives is often a critical event in the lives of many, even if it is just a move from a family home to a rented room for a young person moving to begin a new job or study. As people do relate to places, such as homes, playgrounds, workplaces, and landscapes, the premise here is that the place where a critical event occurs impacts not only the event itself but also identity formation. In my story, I situate myself in the hospital maternity ward and at a university. These two places mark the relationship between the very personal and professional work life. The place must be understood ontologically, meaning that place shapes each person's being, belonging, and becoming at the same time as each person also shapes places. In my self-explorative narrative inquiry, I disclosed a thought about the consequences of mothering a child with special needs, which would mean that I should give up my wildlife and mountain-tracking activities. I realised that I felt like I belonged to certain places in the mountain landscape. This led to negotiating what mothering my baby meant: should I give it up and take responsibility for my child, who had a high risk of colds, or should we bring her with us as a family, taking precautions?

Temporality – Whenever we express verbs such as 'to live', 'to make', 'to create', and 'to build', we take time into implied consideration. Thus, every particular story of an act of making or composing begins and ends at a certain time. When composing longer stories of lives or of professional identity formation over time, the story is instead carried forwards through successive acts or series of events that punctuate its flow. Temporality can be used as a strategy in writing to create distance or coherence. In my story of mothering a child with Down syndrome, I also use temporality. I brought up the inquiry late in life. I am now a grown woman, but the series of small critical events that stick in my memory are still the ones that happened in the first years of her life. Temporality also comes in as an aspect, as I write about how I change and negotiate the narrative over time. I lectured about the topic of collaboration between teachers and parents of children with Down syndrome for eight years, and I deliberately reorganised the events in my story. While the birth event came

early in the first lectures, I later changed the order of events later and started with the current situation and took the narrative backward to better create a self-reflexive turn.

Another powerful example of how temporality is used by an author to create an aesthetic drive at the beginning of the story is the story of *David Copperfield* (Dickens, 2007):

> Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed, and believe,) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night.

This example of an old man looking back on his adventures and his journey, from an unhappy and impoverished childhood to the discovery of his ability to write, can remind us of how we all have the possibility to compose our stories and create meaning. This is a process that begins early and continues throughout life. Being born and the circumstances of the conditions for how life evolves in unexpected ways seem to be crucial for Dickens as an author, and I, as a reader of Dickens and his powerful introduction, was familiar with his book as a child and later read it as a resource for learning narrative composition. This opening inspired me to play with the narrative when I lectured about being a mother to a child with Down syndrome. As stated above, I gradually disclosed how we are all trapped in narrative scripts. Being reminded of these opening lines in *David Copperfield*, I decided that I should take control of my mothering story. I would like us (my child and me) to be heroes of our own lives, and the story I tell on behalf of us both should touch upon heroes. Heroes, for me, do not imply perfection or a narrow understanding of normality but are heroes of life, able to find a good way when being confronted with narrow cultural scripts.

Stories are always nourished by the resources, landscapes, and relationships made available to us. Generations shape culture, and at the same time, as they build upon resources and traditions made available for them, they always have a 'participatory space of action', where they can contradict, negotiate, protest, and slide in order to create new stories and a new version of storied events (Ødegaard, 2007a). The concept of a 'participatory space of action' (Ødegaard, 2007a, pp. 95–99) opens a dynamic space of action for composing stories. In institutions, in work-life where their professional lives play out, power is exercised for the simple reason that professionals have a mandate, call, or task (Ødegaard, 2021). Therefore, professional landscapes define what is possible for individuals and groups to do and not do. How an event will play out and be remembered, told, and retold depends on a range of conditions.

5 Conclusion

Self-explorative narrative inquiry is a way of investigating human self-experience. From an outside angle, human experience can seem insignificant – an episode in one's life, a trivial one. However, it can be powerful when composed as such. A seemingly insignificant event becomes a critical event, the life changer, as one can remember and articulate it as a key to the moment of change. Self-explorative narrative inquiry has the capacity to deal with the issues of human-centredness in a sensitive manner, allowing complexity to unfold in the personal voice.

A critical event refers to an experience where a change in worldviews is at stake. An event becomes critical because it has characteristics such as describing how performance has impacted professional lives. What makes the narrative 'critical' is its impact on the storyteller (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 74), but equally important for research is how we write up a critical event that can be valuable and valid for the wider public.

In this chapter, I have been seeking the keys to how people (in this case, myself) unpack and compose their professional identities with a starting point in personal events, through a narrative of how mothering a child with Down syndrome can clarify how people (me) are related to cultural scripts. In the work of looking for those keys to how people tell, live, and theorise about life and the process of being, becoming, and belonging to a profession, it has become clear to me that consistency in professional identity is very much an illusion. Even if there should be stories of consistency, when working in education for teachers, health, care, and the cultural industry, it is apparent that we are roaming in time. Life can be experienced as filled with repetitions of boredom, as it can be experienced as filled with crises, small events, and seemingly insignificant events which later can be identified as critical events. The world in which we live is nevertheless a stream of change. Changes can float by and soon be lost by memory, but in retrospect, an event can be identified as a nodal moment, and it can become critical if the event, after time has passed, is remembered as having affected one's thinking, behaviour, or mentality. Over time, the mind sharpens crucial details and discards unnecessary ones, and the storyteller might have composed a story, expressing an understanding of how the critical event has caused a crucial experience (Mertova & Webster, 2020).

Against this background, self-explorative narrative inquiry is a research design for describing practices and the formation of identities in the profession without ignoring how the professional is entangled with personal experience. When professionals tell their critical event stories, what is at stake are values, ethical conduct, and descriptions of ways of asking and answering, as

well as ways of approaching the practice of professions (Ødegaard, 2021), all of which provide deeper insight into the shaping of personal character and the formation of professional identity.

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CHAPTER 3

On the Traveling and Turns of Being and Becoming a Narrative Inquirer

Bodil H. Blix

Abstract

I am a narrative inquirer still in the making. My journey of being and becoming a narrative inquirer, so far, has involved a series of personal and professional turns. In this chapter I draw on two painful experiences of shortcoming and the apparent paradox that every time we perform a turn, we are looking backwards in order to move forward. Turning points are openings to learning and to surprise. For me, narrative inquiry involves a commitment to navigate unknown waters, and a willingness to inquire into the unknown and sometimes silenced in my own and others' lives. Dwelling with my own shortcomings, such as my experiences alongside Risten and Maria,[1] is crucial in my process of being and becoming a narrative inquirer.

Keywords

narrative inquiry – experience – turning points – pragmatism – perplexity

1 My Personal and Professional 'Narrative Turns'

Chase (2011) described narrative inquiry as "a field in the making", and I am indeed a narrative inquirer still in the making. My journey of being and becoming a narrative inquirer so far has involved a series of turns. In his reflection on the metaphor of 'turn', Hyvärinen (2010, p. 71) noted that paradox that while a turn "denotes an advance moment every time one performs such a turn", one is inevitably looking backwards when situated at the turning point. At turning points, we look both backwards and forwards, to continue to learn and move forward. Turning points are openings to learning and to surprise.

I grew up in a home with few books and many untold tales, but I always had a strong relationship with narratives. As a child, I entered the public library once a week with a pile of stories that had become part of my ever-growing

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inner library and left with a pile of unexplored adventures. My mother's women's magazines filled my imagination with drama, romance, and glamour. And every now and then, when I managed to make myself invisible, I could secretly listen to the adults' less romantic and less glamorous half-told tales and let my vivid imagination fill the blanks.

I eventually grew up and was privileged to make a living from my fascination for narratives. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to write my PhD thesis about Indigenous Sami[2] older adults' life stories (Blix, 2013). At that point, I considered the older adults' stories as 'data', and I conscientiously sought to engage with the stories in ways that would safeguard the 'quality' of my research. As such, my work was part of the growing body of research following the 'narrative turn' in the human sciences described by Riessman (2008, p. 14) as "the practice of treating narrative as an object for careful study".

In the following years, I was indeed 'careful' in the sense of safeguarding the analytic rigor and transparency of my work as I carefully subjected people's stories to various 'narrative analyses'. I conducted dialogical narrative analysis (e.g., Blix et al., 2012, 2013; Frank, 2005, 2012) focusing on the reflexive interplay between people's narrative practices and their narrative environments (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). I undertook narrative positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997; Blix et al., 2015) focusing on narrative as social action and narration as the practice of constructing selves, identities, and realities (Chase, 2011). I engaged in thematic analysis (Blix & Hamran, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2006) emphasizing what participants' stories 'were about' (Chase, 2011), i.e. participants' everyday experiences. And I conducted narrative context analysis to explore how both the research participants' and my own identities are framed and shaped by the broader stories and discourses that are available in a particular socio-historical context (Blix, 2015; Zilber et al., 2008), and to explore the link between narration as a local meaning-making activity and macro-social processes (Blix & Hamran, 2017; De Fina, 2008).

In other words, I tried out various ways of approaching and learning from narratives, and I did indeed learn a lot from the process preceding each single publication. Nonetheless, over the years, I started to feel unease in the position as a 'narrative researcher' involved in "the collection and analysis of personal narratives" (Atkinson, 1997, p. 325); 'treating narrative as an object for study' (cf. Riessman, 2008). At one point I expressed this discomfort as feeling like an "academic parasite subsisting on other people's stories" (Blix, 2017, p. 29). And I painfully mirrored my dis-ease in Josselson's words about narcissistic shame:

> shame that I am using these people's lives to exhibit myself, my analytical prowess, my cleverness. I am using these people's lives to advance my

> own career, as extensions of my own narcissism, and I fear to be caught, seen in this process. (Josselson, 2011, p. 45)

Moreover, the very conceptualization of the researcher as 'listener' (and 'collector' and 'analyst'), and the participant as 'teller' felt as an alienating construction based on the Western scientific ideal of the researcher as an 'objective' observer.

2 Turning from Narrative Research to Narrative Inquiry

In my ongoing process of being and becoming a narrative inquirer, I identify with Clandinin and Connelly's view of narrative inquiry as "a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). I do not consider narrative as a metaphor for or a representation of 'real life'. Rather, narrative is a way of living and making sense of the world, "a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). Narrative inquirers are relational inquirers (Clandinin, 2013), meaning that rather than standing outside observing the phenomenon, we are part of the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, "the stories lived and told in narrative inquiry relationships are always a co-composition" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 24). In other words, narrative inquiry is not merely about facilitating storytelling and listening, and it is not about scrutinizing the other's narratives, subjecting them to rigorous analysis. Rather, it is about coming alongside, listening, observing, and inquiring into experience as a way to collaboratively make sense of the world.

Clandinin emphasized that narrative inquiry is "walking into the midst of stories" (2006, p. 47), as all those involved in the narrative inquiry process live in familial intergenerational stories, cultural temporal stories, institutional stories, and personal stories (Clandinin, 2013). Hence, narrative is not our 'data', but rather both the method and the phenomenon under study (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Inherent in this understanding is the acknowledgement that the phenomenon under study, the participants, and the inquirer are all changing throughout the inquiry process, which is an ontological and epistemological position radically at odds with prevailing scientific ideals of objectivity and replicability. Moreover, this understanding implies that a narrative inquiry is concluded "still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

In this conceptualization of narrative inquiry lies the commitment to navigate unknown waters, to travel to places and times in others' and our own lives not yet visited, and to come alongside others to form new relationships.

In other words, narrative inquiry always involves 'uncertainty' and an 'openness to surprise' which acknowledges that we "are not fixed in particular constructions of ourselves", but rather "are open to self-construction" (Lugones, 1987, p. 16). As a narrative inquirer, I must be willing to inquire into the unknown and sometimes silenced, both in my own life and in others' lives (Blix et al., 2021). I must be willing to compose new stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

3 Turning towards the World Traveling of Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a turn towards experience. As narrative inquirers we are called to attend to the worlds in which people live their lives. But how is this possible when the worlds we inhabit are different? How can we attend to worlds we have never experienced, worlds we can hardly imagine, and worlds we wish did not exist? We engage in narrative co-composition and world traveling (Lugones, 1987). Through narrative co-composition and world traveling, we create an "imaginative space" (Frank, 2012) that has the capacity to change all those involved. We collaboratively expand an imaginative space in which we can find new ways of being and becoming. Lugones (1987) described world traveling as "a way of identifying with [the other] because by traveling to [the other's] 'world' we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes" (p. 17).

In the following, I will draw on two experiences from my journey towards being and becoming a narrative inquirer. For me, both experiences are painful turning points with openings for learning. The first experience is a meeting with an Indigenous Sami older woman during my PhD work more than ten years ago, and the second is a meeting with a South African colleague in 2019. Both experiences have shaped who I am and who I am still in the process of becoming.

3.1 *Risten*[3]

I met Risten during my PhD work back in 2010. Risten was an Indigenous Sami woman in her 80s. She lived in a remote community in Northern Norway. I visited her in her home, where she served coffee and waffles with cloudberries, and shared stories from different phases of her life. Towards the end of our conversation, I for some reason returned to the story Risten had told me earlier, about the loss of her son, who died in an accident at a very young age:

R: It was terrible. I was angry with God. I told God, when I was alone: "Dear God. Why did you take my son? We have older people. Father, grandfather, my husband's father, he was ill. He was mentally ill as well. So, why didn't you take him? Or my husband's sister, the sick sister? Why didn't you take one of them instead of my son, our son?" And I yelled at God. Can you imagine? That's how life is when you are mourning.

B: Did you ever figure out... Did you find peace why God took your son?

R: [pause] After a while. I used to dream as well. At night, he came to me as a bird. We had some birches, outside. I saw him there, he was there, with white clothes. I used to dream like that.

B: So, you saw him?

R: Yes. I see him. He is there.

B: But you believe you believe in God?

R: I believe in God. My parents were Christians. I believe. No, I don't know... There have been dark moments. They lasted for long. But I couldn't talk about it either. I had to be quiet and try to dampen my thoughts, then, while mourning. When I had put the other boys to bed at night, I cried by myself. In the kitchen. And they wondered. They came out and said "Mother, please don't cry". They were eleven and twelve, the boys.

B: Why couldn't you talk about it?

R: No, it was too heavy. Yes, it was heavy. And then I started to cry too. Yes. I was completely disturbed. I have started talking. But in the beginning, I had to be quiet.

B: Did you and your husband ever talk about this?

R: We talked, my husband. But it was heavy, you know. The sorrow. It lasts for long, you know. At least for five years. After that, it started to wear off. It was heavy when my husband passed away. That was also heavy. But when you lose a child, it's much worse.

B: Yes. Children are not supposed to die.

R: No, they are not supposed to die. And it is as Why, why? Children are not supposed to die! Shouldn't. Should not.

This conversation with Risten has been like a pebble in my shoe throughout all the years that have passed since our meeting. Not as something I have been constantly aware of, but rather as something that suddenly, every now and then, inflicts pain. Repeatedly, I have returned to this moment, wishing I had responded differently, that I had managed to dwell alongside Risten in possible ways of retelling and reliving her story (cf. Caine et al., 2013). I was deeply touched by Risten's story about the loss of her son. And that was probably why I chose to return to this story towards the end of our conversation. Nonetheless, when Risten told me about her loss, I was unable to respond. I never followed

up on Risten's story about the bird. Rather, I chose to return to her faith in God. I also completely ignored Risten's shift in verb tense from *I saw him* to *I see him*. Over the years, I have repeatedly wondered what would have happened if I had taken up Risten's invitation to travel with her to the world in which she still saw her son. What would have happened if I had managed to co-compose and enter an imaginative space we could collaboratively explore? Perhaps that would have given her the opportunity to talk about how she was still living the loss of her son. But I did not. Rather, I talked about her loss as something belonging to the past. And rather than coming alongside, lingering, listening, and inquiring into Risten's personal story, I generalized her experience by stating *Children are not supposed to die*. But Risten was not speaking about *children* in general; she told me the story about one particular child, *her* child. I wish I had taken up Risten's loving invitation to world travel with her. But I did not. And rather than tormenting myself with my own failure, I have committed to learn from this painful experience.

3.2 *Maria*

In early June 2019, I came alongside a small group of fellow narrative scholars from around the world in a quiet German village. For one week, we collaboratively created a safe space for the sharing of meals, thoughts, readings, writings, and silences.

I vividly remember the first roundtable meeting when we all introduced ourselves. One of the participants, Maria, a woman from South Africa, dwelled on her feeling of being in a safe place. At that point, I had no idea how deepfelt that must have been for her.

My quiet room was furnished with a narrow bed, a nightstand, and a desk. The crucifix above my bed, the Bible on my nightstand, and the priest's robe hanging in the hallway didn't speak to me about safety. Rather, for me these items were reminders of how far away from my everyday life I was. Not only was I an atheist out of context, I was also physically and spiritually detached from all my everyday requirements.

At dinner, later that week, Maria mentioned the pepper spray in her office, and the gun she usually carries in her purse. Did she sense my disgust and my resistance? Did she think that I could not and would not understand because our worlds were too different? I don't know, but I do know she gave me the opportunity.

> "Have you ever had fire drills with your children?" she asked. "Have you taught them how to behave to survive a fire?" Of course, I have. "We do that with our children, as well", she said. "And we also teach our daughters how to survive a rape by never fighting back". I had to look away to

> breathe. "We teach our daughters to lie quietly and let the rapist finish, and never ever fight back, cause those who don't fight back may not get killed".

Like my experience with Risten, the meeting between Maria and myself was a meeting between two women who lived our lives under very different social, political, material, and cultural circumstances. Yet, through our narrative engagement, we co-composed a common world we could collaboratively explore. Perhaps based on previous experience, Maria realized that only by traveling to her world could I, a privileged white, middle-aged, scholar living on the safest and richest spot on the planet, be able to understand her life, her fears, and her appreciation of safety. Faced with my dis-ease and resistance, Maria could have presented statistics documenting the prevalence of violence in her home country, and she could have presented scientific facts on the situation for South African women. She could have provided 'evidence' that her fears and need for protection were 'real'. But rather than using statistics as a weapon to disarm my resistance, she invited me into world traveling, to co-compose a common understanding of her life and her fears through narration. Maria helped me to attend up close, to "see big", as opposed to "see small", that is, see her world from "a detached point of view" (Greene, 1995, p. 10). As opposed to what I did in my conversation with Risten, Maria attended to the particular, rather than the general. To compose a common space for understanding, Maria was also willing to travel to my world by engaging with my everyday experiences ("Have you ever had fire drills with your children?"). World traveling is not so much a matter of one of the parties in a relationship metaphorically traveling to the other's world, as it is about the two parties traveling back and forth between each other's worlds. And importantly, through this back-and-forth traveling, new and common worlds are co- composed. In these worlds, the unimaginable may become imaginable (Blix et al., 2020).

4 Turning towards Embodied Experiences

Our experiences are embodied. They "reside in the actual ways the body moves, the voice or artefacts that are used" (Hydén, 2013, p. 235). Moreover, the sharing of stories is an embodied activity, "a bodily communicative event and activity that involves other – embodied – persons and the social and cultural situation" (Hydén, 2013, p. 235). Through the embodied act of narration, life becomes experience, and meaning is created. Our embodied stories shape our opportunities for world traveling between each other's worlds. Sometimes

others' stories resonate with our own embodied experiences, and sometimes they don't. I am privileged to have no embodied experiences akin to those Maria and Risten described. I have never experienced fearing for my own or my children's lives or safety, and I have never experienced the devastating loss of a child. My experience of motherhood, however, is deeply embodied. Perhaps this was the reason for my strong physical response to Maria's story ('I had to look away to breathe')? And perhaps this was also a reason for my generalization of Risten's personal loss ('Children are not supposed to die')?

As narrative inquirers, we need to be wakeful to how our own embodied experiences open up and close down the sharing of others' embodied experiences. Sometimes we are consciously aware of our own responses. However, more often our responses are subtle and unconscious. Through facial expressions, gestures, and movements we unconsciously communicate to the other our openness towards or resistance to the other's narratives. I will never know if my embodied response silenced Risten's story. Other than the painful embodied memory of un-ease, the only physical remains of our conversation is an audiotape that reveals nothing about my facial expressions, gestures, or movements. Looking back on my experience alongside Maria, I realize that she must have 'sensed my disgust and my resistance'. I can only wonder why she chose to persist in her efforts to make me understand; why my response did not silence her narration. The opening to a world the two of us could collaboratively explore was perhaps our shared embodied experience of motherhood, and the mutual understanding that we would both be willing to do anything to protect our children. On the other hand, I wonder if perhaps my embodied experience of motherhood made it particularly difficult for me to dwell in Risten's pain?

5 Turning towards Silence and Silencing

Traveling to the other's world is never easy. Heilbrun wrote that it is "a hard thing to make up new stories to live by" (Heilbrun, 1989, p. 37). I am tempted to slightly paraphrase Heilbun's words; it is hard to co-compose new stories to live by. Citing Frye, Lugones noted that "the loving eye is 'the eye of one who knows that to know the seen, one must consult something other than one's own will and interests and fears and imagination" (Lugones, 1987, p. 8). To see something new, we must sometimes risk losing sight of something else. We must be willing to let go of the safety of the stories we know, the stories we have been told, and the stories we have been living and telling.

Our personal stories are made possible or impossible by the stories surrounding us. Our cultures make available a body of stories, framing and

shaping our individual stories. The plot lines made available by cultural narratives also shape listeners' comprehension of what counts as a story and what counts as significant parts of a story. Frank (2010, p. 55) noted that "Stories not readily locatable in the listener's inner library will be off the radar of comprehension, disregarded as noise". Citing Bruner, Clandinin noted that the stories we tell "reflect the prevailing theories about 'possible lives' that are part of one's culture" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 191). From my experiences alongside Maria and Risten, I have learned that the prevailing stories about possible lives that are part of my culture shape the way I respond to other's narrations and, consequently, which stories I allow others to tell about their lives and experiences and which stories I silence. Loseke used the term 'formula stories' to describe the "collective representations of disembodied types of actors [...] producing such categorical identities associated with families, gender, age, religion, and citizenship" (Loseke, 2007, p. 663). Formula stories see people "small" (cf. Greene, 1995), from a distance and a detached point of view, that impose limitations on imagination.

Did I silence Risten's story about the bird in the birch because the story did not resonate with the stories of my inner library? Did I disregard this story as less significant? Was I more comfortable talking about Risten's faith in God because this resonated with the stories I grew up with? Was my inquiring into whether Risten and her husband ever talked about the loss of their son informed by "the myth of healing" (Andrews, 2007), that is, the dominant cultural narrative that the verbalizing of trauma is significant for healing? I don't know. But I do know that every now and then, when the pebble in my shoe starts moving, I painfully regret that I did not accept Risten's invitation to travel with her to a world in which her son was still present.

Through traveling with Maria to her world, and trying to see the world through her eyes, I have come to realize that my instinctive reaction to her mentioning of the handgun and the pepper spray was based on the privileged experiences of a white, middle-aged, Norwegian woman. This does not necessarily imply that I have changed my opinion about hand weapons. However, I have learned that my own thoughts, feelings, and opinions about hand weapons are based on the narratives I have lived, told, and been told. I have learned that narrative encounters are always charged with narratives beyond the immediate situation. Moreover, I have come to acknowledge that my narratives, my experiences, and, thus, my opinions and values, could have been otherwise. I have come to realize that my imagination was shaped by formula stories composed around very specific plotlines about 'the kind of people who are likely to carry hand weapons', none of which resembled the kind, generous, and loving woman I was fortunate to meet in Germany. These formula stories,

however, were challenged through our narrative engagement because when attending to her storied life, I had to attend up close, and coming close opens an imaginative space with nuances that are impossible to see from a distance. Moreover, by metaphorically traveling to Maria's world, I came to realize that my firm identification as a person who would not under any circumstances be able to carry or use a weapon does not necessarily indicate that I have 'higher' moral standards than those who think and feel differently. When traveling to the other's world, we meet the other, and ourselves, with curiosity rather than judgement.

6 Turning Forward

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) noted that narrative inquiry represents a turn from the universal towards the specific. As a researcher, I'm occasionally faced with critical questions regarding the justification of narrative inquiry. These questions are perhaps akin to what Clandinin (2013) termed the "So What?" and "Who Cares?" questions of narrative inquiry. Apparently, the critique is based on the misunderstanding that narrative inquiry is the study of personal experience (other's and our own) without attention to wider social, political, material, and cultural contexts. The concept of world traveling is a powerful reminder that narrative inquiry is the study of experience "in the worlds the person inhabits and the worlds the person imagines and helps to create" (Caine et al., 2019, p. 5). Reflecting on my experience alongside Maria in the safe space of the German countryside, I am reminded that my own experiences are shaped by the context in which I live my life. And reflecting on my conversation with Risten, I am reminded that my experiences and the context in which I live my life impose limitations on my imagination, curiosity, and courage to engage in world traveling. With this, I have re-turned to the dis-ease with the Western scientific ideal of the researcher as an 'objective' observer that I described above. For me, the world traveling of narrative inquiry opens a safe, yet sometimes painful space 'the participants' and I can collaboratively explore with curiosity.

The American pragmatist John Dewey referred to feelings of perplexity as the critical initial stage of inquiry (Seigfried, 2002). Lingering with experiences of perplexity, as in the case of my experiences alongside Risten and Maria, are openings to learning. According to the American feminist pragmatist Jane Addams, a perplexity "refers to someone's personal involvement in a situation that baffles and confuses her, because her usual understandings and responses are inadequate to explain or transform a troubling situation" (Seigfried, 2002,

p. xxv). For Addams, avoiding perplexities by holding onto what one already knows are missed opportunities for growth. I started out my contribution to this book with a reference to the paradox of turning points – every time we perform a turn, we are inevitably looking backwards in order to move forward (Hyvärinen, 2010). I have shared my own experiences of perplexities, shortcomings, and failures, not to forefront pain and regret, but rather to gain new insights in order to grow. I firmly believe that by looking both backwards and forwards with curiosity, through the reliving and retelling of experience, we can understand ourselves and others in new ways. In that sense, dwelling with our own shortcomings and painful experiences is an important part of the *process of being and becoming narrative inquirers*.

Notes

1 Risten and Maria are pseudonyms.
2 The Sami are Indigenous people living in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The national states have made strong efforts to assimilate the Sami into the majority populations. The assimilation policies were based on a dominant narrative about Sami inferiority.
3 I have previously reflected on my meeting with Risten in the epilogue of the book *Fortelling og forskning: Narrativ teori og metode i tverrfaglig perspektiv* (Sørly & Blix, 2017) as part of a discussion of emotions in narrative research.

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CHAPTER 4

Beyond Personal and Political Boundaries

Being and Becoming a Cross-Cultural Researcher and Educator

Åsta Birkeland

Abstract

This autobiographic narrative inquiry is based upon the author's cross- cultural research and collaboration between Chinese and Norwegian teacher education programmes. Through this long-term commitment and repeated crossing of national, ideological, and linguistic borders, stories have been lived, told, and retold. These encounters with various boundaries have provided fertile ground for making sense of the world and for her to become who she is in the midst of these stories. Participating in cross-cultural research and international teacher programmes is therefore not purely limited to epistemology and the understanding of other cultures in theory, but rather, these experiences provide potential interplay and dialogue between "insiders" and "outsiders" and have shaped her professional identity as a cross-cultural educator and researcher. The professional identity is not a static position but something relational and dynamic in time and place, always on the threshold of a symbolic place of ambiguity and tension.

Keywords

autobiographic narrative inquiry – cross-cultural research – professional identity – critical event – the chronotopic threshold

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> I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another,
> through another, and with the help of another ....
> Every internal experience ends up on the boundary
>
> BAKHTIN (1984, p. 287)

• •
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> I was sitting in my grandmother's best living room surrounded by Chinese porcelain, paintings, and special artifacts that my grandfather, a Norwegian sailor, had brought home from his many years of sea travel between Shanghai and Vladivostok during the Depression years (1928–1935). My grandmother opened a drawer and took out a big envelope, saying, "Here are the letters that your grandfather sent me when he was far away for so many years". She continued: "The first page of the letter was just for me, but the rest of the letter was to be read by the whole family and friends". She opened the envelope and started to read vivid stories about mutiny, drowning and death, Russian communists, beautiful Chinese ladies, and the chaotic life in the Shanghai harbor. It was like a fairy tale.

1 Turning Points in Professional Formation

Fueled by this family story about my grandfather living in China, intercultural education, and cross-cultural research of early childhood education in China and Norway has been the core of my academic interest and identity for the last two decades. I have stayed in China for short and long periods, alone and together with teacher students. These visits have given me the opportunity to study in a multitude of kindergartens and to conduct discussions with Chinese kindergarten teachers, teacher educators, students, and researchers. These collaborations have also given me the chance to host numerous delegations of Chinese kindergarten teachers and researchers coming to Norway to study early childhood education practices and policy.

The continuous crossing of national, ideological, and language borders provides fertile ground for potential interplay and dialogue between "insiders" and "outsiders" for conducting cross-cultural research (Kubow & Blosser, 2016; Maguth & Hilburn, 2015; McNess et al., 2016). This moving back and forth between the busy urban cities of Beijing and Shanghai and the quiet rural area of Voss, Norway, where I live have constituted my storied professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin, 2013, p. 37), a landscape of tensions, ambiguity, and discomfort. Through this long-term commitment and repeated crossing of borders, stories have been lived, told, and retold (Clandinin, 2013). These boundary encounters helped me to make sense of the world and to become who I am in the midst of these stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 47). Doing cross-cultural research and participating in international teacher programs are thus not limited to epistemology and the understanding of other cultures. These experiences also influence my self-understanding and have shaped my professional identity as a cross-cultural educator and researcher.

My research puzzle in this chapter is centered around how such boundary encounters have influenced the relational position of my professional identity. This chapter illuminates how the identity of a cross-cultural researcher is continually in transition by experiencing critical events and turning points (Mertova & Webster, 2020) characterized by tensions and strong emotions. The purpose of the autobiographic inquiry is to challenge the simple dichotomy of insider and outsider positions in cross-cultural education and research (McNess et al., 2016). Self-reflexivity is crucial in any qualitative inquiry. However, for a cross-cultural researcher, self-reflexivity is inextricably linked with positionality, not as a static position but as a relational and dynamic position (Wickins & Crossley, 2016).

As a method of self-reflexivity, autobiographic inquiry demonstrates the relational dynamic position of a cross-cultural researcher. This chapter is based on four stories of critical events (as defined by Mertova & Webster, 2020; Woods, 1993) that represent turning points in my professional formation and a change in my understanding and worldview. These critical events evoked emotions and made me feel uncomfortable, insecure, and desperate to find balance in my professional position and identity. As such, the stories have impacted my performance in my professional role.

This narrative inquiry is inspired by Bakhtin's (1981, p. 157) perspectives on the chronotope of the threshold as a symbol of boundaries and encounters related to crises, visions, decisions, or some sort of turning point and Clandinin's (2013) perspectives on narrative inquiry. The change experiences are studied through exploration of commonplaces such as temporality, place, and sociality/relations (Clandinin, 2013, pp. 39–42). Furthermore, these personal narratives are embedded and analyzed in relation to broader cultural, social, and institutional narratives within the cross-cultural comparative research field (Clandinin, 2013, p. 46).

2 Threshold Encounters

Cross-cultural teacher programs and research are concerned with individuals' or groups' experiences of crossing national, cultural, ideological, and language boundaries and how they are challenged when accommodating cultural perspectives and ways of thinking other than their own (McNess et al., 2016). However, cross-cultural educators and researchers do not merely "cross" boundaries "as if one could neatly fit into another set of axiology and ideology with minimum effort or minor adjustment. Rather, one meets on the boundary as a bridge between disparate worlds" (White, 2013, p. 146).

Boundary encounters as liminal spaces embrace uncertainty as a legitimate, and perhaps even desirable, way to expand and transform.

Bakhtin (1981) wrote that a chronotope is about "how the configurations of time and space and the relations between these aspects are constructed and then shape the meaning of different events" (p. 250). Thus, a chronotope reveals the subject's position, view, and experience in an existential way that shapes meaning and identity formation (Bakhtin, 1981). While Bakhtin characterized different kinds of chronotopes, the chronotope of the threshold is of special interest in the context of formation of professional identity. This chronotope is a symbol of boundaries and encounters related to crises, visions, decisions, or some sort of turning point (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 157). Bakhtin (1981) suggested that it is at this chronotopic threshold where "the sphere of meaning is accomplished" (p. 258). Here, the world is not merely passed over to an individual as a complete whole but through unfolding a sense of what is "real" and by axiological relationships with "the other" (White, 2013).

The route to such threshold encounters is marked by the potential for educationalists to engage with "the other" beyond the limits of their own "coordinates" of time and space (White, 2013, p. 146). The encounters may "replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 252), but they never become one and the same. The notion of chronotopic thresholds thus provides an opportunity to encounter the origin and nature of incommensurable ideas and practice as they are experienced in the social setting: "There are no 'solutions' promoted here as is often the case in dialogues concerning difference. Rather there is an, often uncomfortable, encounter with uncertainty as a necessary route forward" (White, 2013, p. 156).

The chronotopic threshold is therefore not a geographic place but a symbolic place triggered by perspective changes and discontinuity, creating shifting thresholds of meanings and, by such, providing a means of operating on the boundaries of meanings (White, 2013, p. 152). Bakhtin (1981) defined the chronotope of the threshold as representing high emotional and value- laden intensity. The chronotope of the threshold can as such be defined as a critical event with potentials for transformation and formation processes. In my professional formation as a cross-cultural researcher and educator, the chronotope of the threshold has not been the physical meetings/geographical spaces in Norway or China but the symbolic place triggered when I have been forced to change perspectives, experience ambiguity and uncertainty in my educational approaches, and change my professional acting and experience. The events in themselves could have passed without there being any change in experience.

3 Narrative Inquiry

Within the narrative inquiry space, time and sociality are commonplaces (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) and are related to Bakhtin's (1981) concept of the chronotope (spacetime). Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 479) argued that "The study of any one or combination of these commonplaces might well take place in some other form of qualitative inquiry. What makes a narrative inquiry is the simultaneous exploration of all three".

Grounded in a Deweyan ontological and epistemological framework, narrative inquiry is a way of seeing the world narratively and exploring experiences through narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). As Clandinin (2013) argued, "narrative inquiry is a way of studying people's experiences, nothing more and nothing less" (p. 38). Narrative is not seen merely as a tool or representation; "experience itself is an embodied narrative life composition .... Thinking narratively about a phenomenon – that is, about people's experiences – is key to undertaking narrative inquiries" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 38). Moreover, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) argued that "people live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones" (p. 415). Thus, through our stories, we can relate to and make meaning of our experiences.

In this chapter, I study my experiences of being and becoming a cross-cultural researcher, and I use narratives as a way of understanding this world of experiences. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), story is a gateway through which our experience of the world enters the world and by which our experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Thus, narrative inquiry – the study of experience as story – is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience (Clandinin, 2013). A Deweyan view of experience allows for the study of experience that acknowledges the embodiment of the person living in the world. Dewey's conception was that of "a changing stream that is characterized by continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39). However, the focus of narrative inquiry is to not only valorize individuals' experiences but to also explore the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted (Clandinin, 2013). In this perspective, my professional formation is not independent of my initial family story or stories in the cross- cultural research and education field. Personal stories are embedded in cultural, political, institutional, and social stories.

I bring stories of who I am and who I am becoming as a teacher and researcher – all my "selves ... always in the making" (Greene, 1993, p. 213) – with

me into my inquiry. In this way, narrative inquiry is necessarily autobiographical: "Because narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology, narrative inquirers need to continually inquire into their experiences before, during, and after each inquiry" (Clandinin & Caine, 2012, p. 171). Understood in this way, narrative inquiries begin and end in the storied lives of the people involved. In this chapter, the narrative inquiry begins and ends with the storied life I am living. Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling. The experiences can be studied by listening, observing, and living alongside another and by writing and interpreting texts. In this case, I am listening and living alongside my own experiences as a professional educator. Through this inquiry, individuals "seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18). In this chapter, four stories are shared to foreground my experiences in time, space, and sociality as multithreaded and in transition.

4 Narratives from Threshold Encounters

When unpacking stories, my shifting positions as a cross-cultural researcher have surfaced. I am not the same me but different versions of me in time, space, and in my relational landscape when I am with Norwegian students in China, exploring Norwegian early childhood education in Norway together with Chinese researchers, responding to Norwegian students' texts about Chinese early childhood education, writing articles about cross-cultural research, and meeting ordinary people in Norway who ask me why I "collaborate with China".

The following stories of critical events highlight a complexity of tensions and ambiguities in my formation as a cross-cultural educator and researcher. The stories are not incidents that once happened to me and are thus relegated to the past and forgotten. Rather, these stories have been working on me since the incidents, changing me and making me want to be different or to do things differently in my professional life. I use the stories to understand the life I have lived as a cross-cultural researcher (Clandinin, 2013). The stories are field texts that are experiential and intersubjective rather than objective (Clandinin, 2013, p. 46). The composition of my stories is reflective of these experiences, and I interpret my past from my present vintage point (Kerby, 1991, as cited in Clandinin, 2013, p. 195). Freeman (2010, p. 60) called this hindsight. From the present position, I "re-search" (Clandinin, 2016) these relational experiences again to gain a deeper understanding of my identity as a cross-cultural researcher.

4.1 *Suffering and Sacrifices*

A friend and teacher educator in China invited me to her home. Her husband had prepared a wonderful meal with dumplings and other Chinese delicacies. After a delicious meal, she started to tell me her story from the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s:

I was sent to a rural area far away from Beijing when I was nearly 14 years. I did quite well in school, and due to my good memory, I was chosen to teach Chairman Mao's ideology in rural villages. This made me real proud at first of being chosen as a token of being a good student. Very soon I felt lost and lonely far away from my parents and siblings. I did not really understand what I was participating in. My parents missed me and tried to oppose the arrangement. However, they were constantly afraid of doing "mistakes" so that they would be prohibited to see me again.

When my friend was telling her story, I could not breathe for fear of destroying the shared moment. I was overwhelmed by taking part in her story, told with delight, ambiguity, and pain. When I returned to campus that evening, I was struck by how little I knew about the pain and sacrifices that my fellow colleague had endured and by how limited my knowledge about Chinese history and culture was.

At first, I thought this was quite an exciting experience, and I told the story as an exotic and entertaining story from China when I returned to Norway. I found it especially intriguing to tell the story to people of my generation who had been fascinated by the thoughts of Chairman Mao in the 60s and 70s. I was not aware of the immediate and significant change in my approach as a cross-cultural educator and researcher. Later, as this story was retold, I realized that this incident represented a turning point in my professional being. When retelling the story, I could see that my intentions in approaching Chinese early childhood education were good but simultaneously quite naïve. At that point, my knowledge about China as a nation and about the legacy of Chinese culture and history was narrow and limited to the contemporary picture of China as a country in need of international support to develop.

This story has been working on me in all these years and has been blended with later experiences with my friend. To me, this story is not restrained to her personal destiny. It is also a story about Chinese history and the destiny of the Chinese people. The story still opens my mind to the complexity of Chinese history and thereby my continuous acknowledgement of the limitations of my own historical and cultural knowledge. The experience of being an outsider to Chinese history has at times been overwhelming, bringing me to question how I can overcome the gap and reduce my outsidedness. I relive the story whenever my Chinese colleagues who are younger than me explain the lack of trust

among their older colleagues. They underline this by saying, "You know, the Cultural Revolution generation".

Looking back and reflecting upon this story, I can see how this experience was a turning point in my identity as a cross-cultural researcher and educator. My professional responsibility to search for knowledge about Chinese history, culture, and early childhood education has continuously been influenced by this story. Cultural and historical knowledge became a profound grounding for my professional identity. To have knowledge about Chinese early childhood education was far from sufficient. I brought suitcases back to Norway with loads of books about Chinese philosophy, food traditions, history, folk arts, and visual arts; CD s with Chinese music; and Chinese films. When I had jet lag after returning to Norway, I would stay up late at night watching Chinese films. I had an urgent need to know and understand China's history and culture, political ideology, contemporary society, and early childhood education. I worked hard to feel like less of an outsider in my encounters with Chinese early childhood educators and researchers.

Prior to this event, being a teacher educator in Norway, I was quite concerned about not appearing as a Westerner trying to induce the right way of doing early childhood education (Crossley & Watson, 2003). My first meetings with Chinese researchers and kindergarten teachers surprised me with their self-understanding. I was met with utterances like "We have so much to learn from you" and "We are not so developed". In some ways, I was forced into the role of "the expert", which was quite uncomfortable and contrary to my intentions of approaching Chinese early childhood education with understanding, humbleness, and respect to avoid a position of Eurocentrism (Said, 2003), exporting (Ryen, 2011) and colonialization (Bhabha, 1994). Many times, when I was giving guest lectures, people approached me as an expert, and I would think to myself, "What can I say that will be meaningful in this context? My knowledge about this country is so limited".

My relationship with my Chinese colleagues and friends gradually changed when they saw my efforts to read about topics like Confucius' moral philosophy, the changing imperial dynasties, the European and Japanese abuse and colonialization, the communist era, and the thoughts of President Xi. These historical "encounters" gave me broader perspectives on being Chinese and on early childhood education in China. However, this search for knowledge went beyond China and made me want to understand and acknowledge the cultural historical background of Norwegian early childhood education as well.

Moreover, this change experience had an almost immediate impact on the international teacher education program at our university. I was eager to change the program to include cultural historical knowledge and embodied

experiences in workshops practicing Chinese calligraphy, language, singing, and dancing. These workshops were eye openers for understanding aspects of Chinese early childhood education that our students otherwise found questionable. For example, by having workshops presented in the Chinese language and using Chinese characters, the students began to understand why memorization has such an important role in Chinese education. Changing the international program strengthened my identity and had implications for my being and becoming a cross-cultural researcher. My acknowledgment of the importance of having cultural historical knowledge and bodily experiences of the culture to understand its educational practices has been strengthened. This has provided me with a history of approaches and attitudes in the cross-cultural and comparative education field.

This search for knowledge was intriguing and motivating and opened my eyes to the necessity of knowledge. However, this change experience did not really provoke a conflict of ideologies and values, unlike the next story.

4.2 *Being on the Right Side*

We had just arrived in Beijing, two teachers and 20 students. Two days before our arrival, the announcement of the Nobel Peace Prize laurate had been announced by the leader of the Norwegian Nobel committee. The price was given to the dissident Liu Xiaobo from China. We walked from the bus to the campus, tired from the long travel but excited by the vivid life in the street, with sellers shouting their goods on offer and trying to bargain. When we arrived at the gate of the campus, I looked for the traditional red banner welcoming students and teachers from Norway with the Confucian saying: "How delightful it is to welcome friends from far away". However, the banner was not there. I was confused and worried, asking myself, "Don't they want us to come? Are they offended? Will it be awkward to stay here now?" After checking in, we went to dinner. To my surprise, I saw that one of the top leaders of the university was there waiting for us. That was unusual. He shook my hand and said, "How are you? It is so good to see you". Then, he switched to speaking Chinese, and the translator told me that the leader was eager to learn English so that we could communicate. His warm eyes were smiling and looking for my approval. I was overwhelmed with joy and still wondering what he thought about the Nobel Peace Prize. Later during dinner, the leader said, "Let us forget about the Nobel Peace Prize. You are from Bergen, not Oslo, and have nothing to do with this decision. We don't blame you".

I can still remember my anxious thoughts and my ambiguous feelings and reactions during the situation. The university leaders told us that they really appreciated the collaboration with us. However, they needed to take

precautions, such as not hanging the red banner outside. Still, they wanted to show us even more honor by sending one of the top leaders of the university to greet us and to share a meal with us. I was afraid that the international program, which we had put so much effort into creating, would be at stake since China was so offended by the Peace Prize. Would we be permitted by the political authorities to come to China again? I was uncertain about how our hosts would meet us as guests. I felt uncomfortable and uncertain about my behavior toward our hosts and how to approach the issue together with my students.

This mixture of feelings was strengthened when my Chinese friend asked me to meet her in a quiet corner of a Confucius temple garden some days later. When we met each other, she shook my hands and said, "Let us still be friends". Her words shocked me. I had not even considered that we could not be friends. But our meeting in the secret corner of the temple garden told me that I had to be careful to not bring trouble to my friend.

My individual story is embedded in the political narratives of the Nobel Peace Prize, China's offense, and the Western belief in human rights. The political layer of collaborating with Chinese kindergartens and universities surfaced during this critical event. As such, this was a turning point in my collaboration with kindergarten teachers and researchers in China as I came to realize the political issues involved. At that time, we were all polite and diplomatic in our approach to each other. The Nobel Peace Prize went unacknowledged completely except for the comment, "You are not from Oslo, so we don't blame you". There was no real talk about it. Any questions of values and human rights were silenced.

This silencing of the human rights issue was quite uncomfortable for me, both in my relations with the Norwegian students and my Chinese colleagues. I asked myself how I should deal with the issue as the head of a delegation from Norway being hosted by a country that felt Norway had embarrassed them by giving the prize to someone they considered a criminal. I was caught in the midst of a worldwide political event that influenced our small-scale social event. These friends were obliged to represent the government's official view. The Norwegian students were concerned about human rights. Simultaneously, I was the teacher of these Norwegian student teachers for whom values, and ideology are crucial. I was stuck between the worldwide perspectives of my Chinese partners and my Norwegian students' grounded values. The tension was emotionally overwhelming.

This incident was a turning point for me in my approach to early childhood education in China and Norway. The political and human rights issues in our collaboration were highlighted. Although we approached the human rights issue when we were in Norway, another issue was how we would meet our

hosts in this situation. It was not just about understanding each other but also about still getting along when we did not understand each other. I needed to accept that we do not share all the same values and do not always agree. I could see an obvious link to parent–teacher collaborations, which my students would approach with an attitude of "we need to talk and agree upon approaches". But in this situation, we did not agree, and our disagreements were silenced. During a class discussion about the political system, we acknowledged that in our collaboration with Chinese early childhood education, we are dealing with a one-party nation with limited liberties of speech. The silencing of ideological differences was challenged in the next story of a critical incident.

4.3 *The Relative Relativist*

I was attending the Organisation Modiale Education Prescolaire (OMEP) conference in Prague together with Norwegian and Chinese researchers, kindergarten teachers, and students. We were about to have a joint symposium to present our project on early childhood education for cultural sustainability. During the opening ceremony, I noticed a lot of disturbance and noise. I turned around and asked some of the delegates to be quiet.

However, they were even more noisy, and it was spreading to the whole conference hall. I was puzzled. Suddenly, one of the representatives from China went to the podium and read a short announcement: "Presenting Taiwan as a separate country is a humiliation of mainland China and is unacceptable. As representatives from mainland China, we want the organizing committee to apologize for this incident". My Chinese colleague grabbed my arm, saying, "What a courageous woman to stand up like that and represent China in such a brave way". I replied immediately saying that this was quite impolite to do and that the Chinese delegation had embarrassed the host. "I really dislike it". My friend was surprised to see my reaction and eager to tell me about the mainland China and Taiwan issue. "I know this", I said. "Still, it does not excuse the behavior".

We continued arguing – almost quarreling – about the appropriateness of the reaction from the Chinese delegation. Both of us were quite uncompromising and did not want to give in. To our surprise, in our eagerness to argue and convince the other one, we both quit being polite and diplomatic. After an hour, we agreed to disagree.

This change experience happened in Prague. My colleague and I were not in China or Norway. Thus, we were in neither one's home territory, and we were not acting as either host or guest for the other. The incident happened after years of collaboration, so we knew each other quite well. The time and space seemed to trigger our bravery to be honest and direct with each other.

The chronotopic threshold was clearly a symbolic space on the boundary between acknowledging the reactions of my colleague and at the same time not compromising in my own values. After calming down and reflecting upon the situation, I tried to take the perspective of my colleague, and I realized the gap between our positions. I also acknowledged the careful and respectful limitations in our former approach. Doing profound and deep collaboration requires confrontations and disagreements. However, I understood that without our solid foundation of trust, friendship, and respect, we would have left each other at that moment and probably discontinued our collaboration.

This change experience had a profound impact on my professional identity. My cultural relativist stance to cross-cultural research and education was challenged. Although my effort to understand and respect Chinese culture and early childhood education is still crucial in my professional work, it is not sufficient. Cultural relativism is just one step in the cross-cultural approach. All education – including cross-cultural education – involves norms, values, and taking an ethical stance. Being on the threshold made me aware of the limits of my negotiations.

Since then, this story has been retold by both of us, together and separately, acknowledging that this incident resulted in a deeper connection and obligation to each other. The silenced story was revealed, and we exposed our limits. In retelling this story, the silenced stories – stories about disagreement and different values – surfaced (Blix et al., 2021). These were stories not yet told. We put words to some of these silenced stories during the Prague conference. Our ethical stance is deeply rooted and demands more of us than polite understanding.

4.4 *Being an In-Betweener*

These three critical events were re-lived when I was invited to take part in the Norwegian royal state visit to China. Together with Chinese and Norwegian master's students and Chinese colleagues, I was asked to organize a program about cultural sustainability for the Norwegian royal couple at a kindergarten near the Xinjiang province. We stayed at the kindergarten for one week in advance of the visit to take part in all the preparations and meet all the different stakeholders involved.

We, Chinese and Norwegian master's students and researchers, arrived at the kindergarten and were warmly welcomed by the principal and the head teachers. The teachers and children had prepared a performance that included important national and local cultural elements such as dancing, martial arts, singing, and drama. After watching the performance and touring the kindergarten, we all discussed and suggested changes to the program. The head teacher listened, commented, and agreed to change parts of the program to

have more interplay with the Chinese and Norwegian teacher students. The second day, the local authorities arrived at the kindergarten. The same procedure occurred, and new suggestions for change were made. The third day, the Norwegian representatives from the embassy and the royal couple's staff arrived. Same procedure with new suggestions for change. The fourth day, the day before the royal visit, the provincial authorities arrived. Same procedure. However, now the atmosphere was tense and quite emotional. The authorities were dissatisfied with the quality of the kindergarten and did not want to use this kindergarten for the state visit. We all faced a crisis, desperate to make the necessary improvements to the kindergarten in less than 24 hours. The fifth day, half an hour before the royal couple arrived, the Norwegian journalists entered the kindergarten, looked around for five minutes, and then started to ask critical questions about what Norwegians could learn from Chinese kindergartens. I was standing among all these different stakeholders, all of whom had a right to be critical and suggest changes without really knowing much about the kindergarten. My body was revolting with an entanglement of anger, disappointment, and shame. I saw how the principal had been taking orders from all the delegations throughout the week, and my temper rose when the journalist asked if we (in Norway) had anything to learn.

The mosaic of stories within this event was a fusion of contradictory and emotional experiences. I experienced different versions of me and a complexity of positions being among so many stakeholders: Norwegian students, delegates, and state representatives as well as Chinese kindergarten teachers and children, students and researchers, and officials. This complexity resulted in a diversity of loyalties and sympathies from my perspective and made me realize the uncomfortable, yet precious position of being an in-betweener. I wanted the Chinese kindergarten to demonstrate that they were moving beyond the Westerners' preconceptions about Chinese early childhood education. I wanted the Norwegian delegates and journalists to see the hard work of the Chinese teachers and their willingness to change, but also their eagerness to be locally situated and their concern about cultural sustainability. I also wanted to share my pride as the Norwegian royal couple showed respect and listened to the Chinese teachers and children.

I relived the suffering of my friend being sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution when I saw the principal's strong emotions during the preparation for the event and her relief after the visit. My living alongside this principal for a week gave me a strong sense of solidarity with her as she negotiated all the demands from different stakeholders. I was torn between my loyalty to the principal's and kindergarten staff's hard work and effort to give the Norwegian royal couple a wonderful experience and my anger toward the

hasty conclusions and preconceptions of the Norwegian journalists. I remember that I wanted to shout to the journalists: "Try to see what kind of conditions this kindergarten is working under! Would any Norwegian principal or kindergarten teacher manage the same kind of pressure that this kindergarten is experiencing? What do you know about Chinese kindergartens?"

I was bewildered when I returned to Norway. I have told and retold this story many times, and I have asked myself what makes this story so important as a turning point in my professional life. Many of my friends and colleagues wanted to hear my story about meeting the king and queen. Of course, it was a big event to meet the Norwegian royal couple under those circumstances. However, this was just a small part of my experience. The more I retold the story, the less it became a story of me meeting the king and queen and more a story about the complexity of international collaboration, the subordinate position of a Chinese kindergarten principal but also her pride, the neglect of cultural knowledge, and how easy it is to confirm preconceptions of "the other". What made this story into a critical event for my professional identity was experiencing how the principal handled being in the midst of all these stakeholders, with the Westerners revealing their prejudices about early childhood education in China and the feelings of shame among the Chinese authorities and kindergarten staff. The critical event was a mixture of cultural, historical, political, and ethical neglect.

This event was still with me two years later when I defended my thesis "Contradictory cultural formation ideals in a time of increased emphasis of individualization – A cross-cultural study of kindergarten practices in China and Norway" (Birkeland, 2020). As I was preparing my trial lecture, I relived the mosaic of stories from my professional life. They were like voices going in dialogue with my reflections and arguments. My preparation was a continuous series of questions. Do I betray my Chinese friends when I tell this story? Where is my solidarity in my presentation? Is it unethical to tell this story? What is my relation to those I tell stories about? Do I tell the story just to be funny and entertaining? Would I have told this story if it was about Norwegians? All these questions came together as an ethos of being a cross-cultural researcher.

My identity as a cross-cultural researcher has become even more of an in-betweener accepting the multi-voicedness of cross-cultural cooperation and education. The state visit was a mosaic of my former changing experiences and my realization of the importance of the cultural historical knowledge, ethical stance, and political aspect of any education. The critical events forced me to be more reflective upon the controversial and political aspects of cross-cultural collaboration. I need to continuously ask who we are collaborating

with and in whose interest when building my arguments. As a cross-cultural researcher, I must defend my stance of keeping the dialogue focused on the people, in this case, Chinese teachers, researchers, and children.

5 Formation of a Cross-Cultural Researcher as an In-Betweener

By making inquiry into the storied landscape of my professional identity, I see how all of my turning points occurred at a boundary that triggered a confrontation between my values and emotions. These threshold encounters have an axiological character of surfacing silenced stories (Blix et al., 2021) about power, political stance, and ethical position. Threshold encounters defy simple juxtaposed positions of being either an outsider or insider. The dominant and polarized assumption underpinning the outsider/insider dichotomy are unitary fixed identities, bounded communities, and – above all – an essentialized notion of identity. However, I have realized that I have always been on the border, acting in the liminal space of in-betweenness (Bakhtin, 1981; White, 2013).

Bakhtin (1981) referred to this position as "stranger knowledge", which requires a curiosity and openness to new understandings and a dialogic form of communication which is "subjunctive and tentative rather than declarative" (McNess et al., 2016, p. 30). This attitude is difficult if you enter the field as the expert outsider, with opinions and values that were developed elsewhere. Rather, it is essential to engage with the perspectives of others as opposed to rejecting them (Delanty, p. 252). Nevertheless, being in this field has challenged this position continuously. The expectations from the field toward me as a researcher was that I was the expert.

Schuetz's (1945) concept of the *homecomer* can give meaning to the experiences that have shaped my professional identity. The Chinese conceptualization of the homecomer is the sea turtle (hai-gui), which was born on the shore but has been across the sea and is now returning to the same shore (McNess et al., 2016, p. 25). The homecomer does not quite belong to either culture. This has been characteristic of my position as I have moved between Chinese and Norwegian kindergartens. Living alongside my Chinese colleagues and listening to multiple voices during critical events has had an impact on how I relate to my Chinese and Norwegian students and colleagues. My self-reflexivity as a cross-cultural researcher is inextricably linked with positionality. This is not a static position but something relational and dynamic in time and place, always on the threshold of a symbolic place of ambiguity and tension.

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CHAPTER 5

Am I Sámi Enough?

Narratives as a Means of Exploring a Sámi Pedagogy for Kindergarten

Carola Kleemann

Abstract

"Muitalus" is "story" or "narrative" in North Sámi. The word is closely related to the word for "remember" – "muitit". The objective of narrative inquiry is to transform those who are participating. Such an enquiry must carry expectations for the future. In indigenous societies, telling stories has always been a means of transferring knowledge, sharing knowledge of expected behavior, or learning experiences. From the stories and the process of storytelling in a research project on language vitalization in a Sámi kindergarten department, I explore three themes in this article: language, identity, and Sámi pedagogy as experienced in Sámi practices. The stories are not merely material for this article, but they have been, and continue to be, a way of making ourselves – the participants – conscious about who has the power of defining Sámi, and how we, with our backgrounds may, or have the right to, work with strengthening Sámi language and culture in a Sea-Sámi area.

Keywords

narrative inquiry – Indigenous storytelling – Sámi pedagogy – language vitalization – experience

1 Introduction

"Muitalus" is "story" or "narrative" in North Sámi. The word is closely related to the word for "remember" – "muitit". In indigenous societies, telling stories has always been a means of transferring knowledge, sharing knowledge of expected behavior, or learning experiences (Smith, 2012). The great Sámi poet, composer and artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, also known as Áillohaš, wrote: "When a Sámi remembered and reminisced, it was not perceived as word art: it was theatre, it was education, it was a social happening, pastime[1]" (Valkeapää, 1982, p. 62).

From the stories and the process of storytelling in a research project in a Sámi kindergarten department, I explore three themes in this article: language, identity, and Sámi pedagogy as experienced in Sámi practices. The stories are not merely material for this article, but they have been, and continue to be, a way of making ourselves – the participants – conscious about who has the power of defining Sámi, and how we, with our backgrounds may, or have the right to, work with strengthening Sámi language and culture in a Sea-Sámi area.

Sápmi, the Sámi homeland and cultural region, transcends the modern borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Dávvisámegiella, North Sámi language, is the majority language of the three remaining Sámi languages in Norway. The Lule Sámi and South Sámi languages is listed as 'threatened' in *Ethnologue*, the Pite and Ume Sámi languages are listed with no speakers in Norway. The Sámi languages belong to the Finno-Ugric language group, together with Finnish and Kven, while Norwegian and Swedish belong to the Germanic language group. The Sámi minority was exposed to the cultural modern nation building processes of the various countries. In Norway, this process is called 'fornorskning', which could translate to *Norwegianisation*. This has led to all Sámi speakers being bilingual in their Sámi language and Norwegian, or monolingual Norwegian (Todal, 1998). To correct this situation, several measures are taken with a goal to *reverse language shift* (Fishman, 1991), among them, creating institutions like indigenous kindergartens to strengthen Sámi language and culture (Todal, 1998; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017; Storjord, 2008).

Within these frames, we were invited as researchers together with the staff members, ECE teachers Anette and JT, and the ECE skilled workers Anja and Lill, in the development of the project "Strengthening Sámi language and culture in kindergarten". In a staff meeting we were discussing: How should we begin? What precisely were our goals and sub-goals? JT said his goal was to develop a local model for strengthening the indigenous minority language North Sámi in kindergarten. We were laughing about the audacity and courage of such a grand goal! This was a model which, as he in cooperation with others spoke it into being, involved local, place-relevant material that was both (1) pragmatic in its goal to have Sámi language-supportive material for projects and teaching when teachers or temporary staff did not have full command of the language and (2) ideological and didactic in its approach to use material relevant to the children, even produced in cooperation with the children. This courage and vision were a wish for, or even targeting, the power of definition related to being Sámi, regarding what should be perceived as Sámi and what is important to the Sámi community. Of course, of foremost importance was their own Sámi kindergarten department here and now and for all future "here and now".

Where did JT get this courage from? Asking and answering this question is important for this narrative inquiry, because after he presented his plan, we began to wonder, aloud, if we were good enough to do this – rather, *were we Sámi enough*? Shouldn't we be properly Sámi to do this? The most devastating discovery we made telling and listening to[2] our stories, was that all five of us had wondered whether we really were Sámi enough. Surely this is our pivotal point, perhaps pivoting again and again: What made us look at ourselves like this, but still sitting here planning to strengthen Sámi language and culture? Did the way we see ourselves change on the way here? Did we consolidate ourselves as Sámi regardless of the doubt? Were we recognized as Sámi by other Sámi people or others?

It was in this context that Anette suggested we all write our stories, as she had for a long time thought about writing to understand why she thought what she did about being Sámi. My former student presented a method for how to understand ourselves and simultaneously perform a research project within a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry always begins with an autobiographic exploration of who the researcher is in relation to what is studied and that this helps justify and form research both theoretically and personally (Caine et al., 2018, p. 140). I had been pointed in this direction – to tell about myself and my ethnic identity – by another Sámi kindergarten teacher during my PhD project in linguistics (Kleemann, 2015). She asked me, "Are you Sámi?" In this article I focus on the implication that it was not obvious whether I was Sámi, and how it did not strike me that my identity had anything to do with my research. Much like I wrote about Latin and Old Norse in my master's thesis (Kleemann, 1999), I continued writing about language alternation between North Sámi and Norwegian in children's roleplay, as if a sociolinguistic study is a physical science study. It was in the nature of my discipline. Anette and the others taught me, since I had not understood it from earlier experience, that research involving others is not nonsubjective and independent of who does the research. It was not as if I would have been allowed to film the children during their free play if they had not accepted me, let me in. If they had not been able to relax in the notion that I, for example, "speak Norwegian, just like my mom", as Joret (5 years old) categorized me, and then he played in North Sámi and Norwegian (Kleemann, 2015). Speaking Norwegian still allowed me to belong in a Sámi context in the Sámi kindergarten.

By challenging us all to tell our stories, Anette helped us create insight based on our experiences that enabled us to define what is Sámi. Relating and remembering episodes that have formed us and then discuss how they can be understood is a sound method both because it builds relationships among participants, and also helps create the individual's relationship to their own

experience and themselves, their identity, and the place they inhabit. This idea is expressed well in Caine et al. (2018), in which there is reference to John Dewey to explicate how the storytelling and narrative inquiry relates to the experiences the stories are based on:

> The regulative ideal for inquiry is to generate a new relation between a human being and her environment – her life, community, world – one that "makes possible a new way of dealing with them, and thus eventually creates a new kind of experienced objects, not more real than those which preceded but more significant, and less overwhelming and oppressive". (Dewey, 1981, p. 175; Caine et al., 2018, p. 135)

For us, and particularly for me as researcher, the goal was to experience the practices in kindergarten and our past experiences as expressions and understandings of a Sámi way of living and seeing/understanding.

2 The Relationship between Narrative Inquiry and Traditional Sharing of Experiences in Indigenous Tradition

Research within narrative inquiry is not actually research on narratives or stories or to bring forth the stories in themselves. It could appear like a paradox that, with reference to Dewey (1938), the *future* is as important as empirical data (Caine et al., 2018, p. 142). While 'living in the midst' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) is part of understanding how any story is open-ended and does not always have a definite beginning, the future is important because the empirical data is what the consequent exploration of narratives has for future practice. Dewey (1916/1922) philosophizes experience as learning when the change that happened through the action is reflected back and the change is a stream of consequences. What possibilities will that yield? (Caine et al., 2018, pp. 134, 140–142) Stories have always been used to learn and to transfer experience, influence the ways in which individuals must behave in life, or just select the right plan and not wade into a treacherous quagmire.

The objective of narrative inquiry is not merely to teach but to transform those who are participating. Such an enquiry must carry expectations for the future. For this project on the narratives of the ones aiming to strengthen Sámi language and culture in a Sámi kindergarten, even though we were not the "iconic" Sámi, the expectation for the future is that we can justify that we have knowledge and that we can identify what knowledge we must acquire to continue our work and do better. By sharing the stories and using them and

making our stories and experiences meaningful, we can understand how to relate to transference of knowledge and strengthening identity in our area.

Another important difference between narrative inquiry and traditional meaning is that the stories in narrative inquiry do not have an ending or even a beginning. They are open and we are in the middle of our story; thus, the story itself and telling the story both have consequences for the story that is being told. The stories are not stories of our life span thus far; rather, they are more like moments or episodes without causal – or even temporal – connections. The Sámi professor Israel Ruong described his text on Sámi identity as a rhapsody rather than a synthesis (Ruong, 1982, p. 33) There is form to our stories, like JT's circularity coming back to being Sámi or Anja's causality in choices for her children's schooling in Sámi and her own experience as a child, or Anette's "in-between" motif showing up repeatedly, or the red thread laid by Lill's agency and curiosity. I had the most control over my own story, which can be said to describe my own developing insight into being Sámi. This development was temporal of sorts, but barely causative. For example, my curiosity for Sámi language somehow was "caused" by my interest in Latin and theories on language contact. It was not my identity-forming need for a language of the heart. The form of my story is more of an apologetic argumentation, leading to a "doing Sámi equals feeling Sámi", where episodes in a rhapsody answer my initial question: "Are you Sámi?"

Sharing experiences and stories was a part of the understanding of where we all came from, what we had in common, and what we wanted to do. It was important that all of us shared something that was intimate in a sense, because this also creates personal bonds: When you know someone's history, you cannot be indifferent, and you have an obligation to treat that knowledge with respect and understanding. Everyone having the same obligation creates some sort of togetherness that is important to develop something together: "To engage deeply with experience, an ontological commitment is, then, a relational commitment. It is a commitment to a form of togetherness in research that seeks to explore how we are living in the midst of our stories" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 576). Employing narrative inquiry is not just using the stories that emerge to learn something, like narratives in a traditional sense appear to have an obvious point to them, a life wisdom, like Aesop's fables. It is more like the stories themselves created and formed the questions and gave direction to or informed, an initial exploration of Sámi child rearing and which parts of a Sámi pedagogy we have within us and which ones we needed to make more explicit: "A narrative ontology precedes the emergence of research puzzles and calls forth obligations and commitments" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 576).

Deciding together what the research is and how to figure that out was a goal, even if the power balance is rather asymmetric when a researcher enters a specific arena. Sharing stories could even the field. However, it appeared to me that it reversed the asymmetry in the knowledge of the language and local practices – it made evident that their knowledge superseded mine, that their competence was fitting. Thus, their practices and experiences could entail the theory we needed. Maybe this is what Dewey expresses:

> An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance. An experience, a very humble experience, is capable of generating and carrying any amount of theory (or intellectual content), but a theory apart from an experience cannot be definitely grasped even as a theory. It tends to become a mere verbal formula, a set of catchwords used to render thinking, or genuine theorizing, unnecessary and impossible. (Dewey, 1916/1922, p. 169)

To find what place the researcher has and what the relationship is among the researcher, research field and participants is part of narrative inquiry: "it is important that narrative inquirers carefully consider who they are, and who they are becoming, in the research puzzle" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 577). By using narrative inquiry, I lost initiative and I was not prepared for how the stories were to be told or what would happen with them later. I got the idea from Anette; to ease into it, I wrote the first text. She was a gentle pusher and ideamaker – she reveals what she is thinking through her actions, formulating things in her head. I hope this work will push her to writing more and publishing her experience.

Anette and I wrote our own texts and then I functioned as sort of "ghostwriter" for the three other texts. I formulated these texts from conversations in staff meetings, hanging around and observing everyday life, and conversations in specially assigned one-to-one sessions that were interview-like. The first drafts of these stories were written during the interview sessions, where they were asked by me to explicate what is perceived as Sámi and what in their background enabled them to strengthen Sámi language and culture. When their voice silenced, I asked questions to elaborate or to remind them about something I had observed or experienced while staying with them. During the conversations, I took notes by hand, as we had agreed that a tape-recorder would disturb storytelling. I wrote the stories as continuous text on the computer in my office at the university the next day.

This implied that I was seeking a good story, which, apparently, I as a narrative inquirer should resist (Caine et al., 2013, p. 538), but could not. I constructed stories temporally and was particularly pleased with how JT's story achieved a beautiful circular form. Thereafter, I sent the texts back and asked them to read them and comment. This was an alienating way of working for them and did not serve the process: The thought of giving written feedback blocked our research relationship and was a mistake I made. We had to meet again, and when we did, we talked about the texts, clarified some aspects, and added some more information. However, the written form in itself could be alienating, and this could have been more carefully planned and more individually adapted.

We had planned to develop the stories during the spring of 2020. Unfortunately, restrictions due to COVID-19 put a halt to our further work on the texts and collective exploration of our own Sámi background until fall 2021, when we could finally meet again physically. A few adjustments were again made to the stories, and the narrative was explicated during our meeting. Even though more episodes came to our stories, they did not want all these stories as part of this narrative inquiry because they also involved others. To acknowledge and act upon this kind of relational ethics in co-construction of stories (Ellis, 2007), is essential in narrative inquiry as well. Still, the stories do exist and are a part of what we all do now, how we think. They are part of this text somehow, even if the reader cannot see them. When we spoke in the fall of 2021, the day before I presented the "findings" at the conference on Sámi education and philosophy, the meanings of our stories had changed, we had changed, and we discussed what was not to be a part of the narrative. All narratives have silence and omitted parts. Nevertheless, I feel that the omitted parts are part of the narrative inquiry as well. It has implications for my future practice as a researcher and it has impact on their professional practices in ways that may never be published or known explicitly to others.

We begin telling our experiences, occasionally detached, occasionally complete, but more as a part of an ongoing story. The stories change their meaning underway; give other impressions, other experiences from old experiences as we tie them to our current project – the right to be the ones that strengthen Sámi language and culture.

3 Access to Language as Pivotal Point

Proficiency in language is one of the aspects that is widely regarded as a factor to feeling acknowledged, or recognizing oneself, as Sámi. Language is power

and, thus, more knowledge of languages should give more power and, subsequently, less knowledge of languages, less power. Anja made the concretization and connection between language and voice: When she told of how she felt that her voice was weaker in Norwegian than in Sámi, that opened up the avenue for the idea that our voices could be weak because we, a few of us for generations, had to use another language. Have our voices been weak because we (over generations) had to use another language? Did we inherit a weak voice in a different language?[3]

Ferdinand de Saussure (Saussure, 1974) said that language is *arbitrary*, meaning that what sounds make up a word in any language is arbitrary; and *conventional*, meaning that a sufficiently large group must agree upon the meaning, and also traditional in the sense that it *traduxit* (transfers). Our varied stories and learning paths to language and our different experiences with being recognized as Sámi and having opportunities to use Sámi can be enlightened by how the use of two languages in the everyday life of kindergarten may produce a third space (Bhaba, 2004). The multilingual practices and the consequences it could have for linguistic and metalinguistic competence in a group of children can be illustrated by a short story where Anette and a girl (aged five years) are sitting around a campfire in the woods near the kindergarten:

> One day we are on a field trip [Norwegian "tur" is somehow more of an everyday activity than the English "field trip"], and Anette demonstrates how we need birch bark to light a campfire. Simultaneously she uses both North Sámi and Norwegian to accompany her actions. Among other things, she puts stress on the pronunciation of Norwegian "never" and North Sámi "beassi" [both meaning "birch bark"]. This catches the girl's attention at a metalinguistic level, and she says "bever", combining the sounds of the two words Anette has pronounced so clearly, and by that accidently saying the Norwegian word for the animal "beaver". Anette laughs and repeats "bever" laughing. Then she becomes a little more teacher-like and leaves the teasing/comic situation with: "Bever lea eallit. Bever er et dyr". ["Beaver is an animal"] in North Sámi first, then repeated in Norwegian. After that the girl looks up, and possibly teasing and definitely definite says, "Bever er faktisk en stein". ["Beaver is, in fact, a stone"] in Norwegian. (From film footage)

To me, this is a story about power of definition, about how language is arbitrary, and about communication and relationship. We as a society must agree on what a word means, and when we have reached an agreement, the agreed-upon meaning must be retained. The bilingual kindergarten has several such

conventions, and conventions do change over time. Language is power, and, in fact, sometimes it becomes important to seize power.

Central in the stories, and to self-esteem, is the feeling of not mastering the Sámi language – a commonplace experience in Norwegianized regions (Johansen, 2008) – and what consequences that has had for the ability to carry language, transfer culture, and conduct research in Sámi kindergartens. The use of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014) or language alternation has been looked down upon: The only goal for the Sámi kindergarten is to teach the children to speak Sámi, a pure Sámi. Ideally, the Sámi kindergarten must be a monolingual Sámi arena to weigh out the input from the majority community (Keskitalo et al., 2014; Storjord, 2008). There are many crossing influxes and ideals for the bilingual dwellers of the Sámi kindergarten. I begin by rendering some of my own feelings from the North Sámi language course held by the Sámi University College as an evening and weekend class in Alta.

> We were ten adults, different ages, and different experiences, trying to claim or reclaim spoken and written North Sámi. Some already could speak but were insecure about forming advanced sentences or which words were allowed, others could speak but not write, and I could do neither. However, I am a linguist, so I went about learning North Sámi much like I learned Latin or Old Norse at university, as it felt more foreign than English or French from school. Imitating the teachers' pronunciation, I suddenly found my grandmothers language melody, like she spoke Norwegian. After that it was easier, although not easy, to speak or at least read aloud. Only after I started this class, did I know that my grandmother spoke Sámi. I was told she would only speak with the children from the nomadic reindeer herding families. All the time Sámi had been around me, but only like a substratum interference, the contact linguistic term for traces of another language in the target language, literally disturbance from under the surface.[4] (Carola: "Are you Sámi?")

This is a common experience from growing up in a Norwegianized Sea Sámi culture (Bjørklund, 2016) and it does lead to difficulties answering the "being Sámi" question. I belong to a second generation growing up without Sámi as a home language, a history known and hidden along the entire coastline of northern Norway. I did not suffer from Norwegianization, but I was the result of it. The silence surrounding our Sámi heritage led me to believe we did not have any other language than Norwegian, and suddenly my father could ask me to pass the butter in North Sámi at the breakfast table after nearly 80 years of Sámi silence.

Since the aim of the project is to strengthen Sámi language and culture, it is important to identify something to strengthen and not recreate. As a substratum interference, both Sámi culture and language exists, but vitalization is necessary. With vitalization and identifying what is under the surface comes the question of identity: Who am I? For me, the actions and practices of learning North Sámi language and *duodji* were essential: The materiality is an important experience. The sounds, the melody, and the meanings of words keep bringing newer and deeper understanding of the differences between Sámi and majority Norwegian. My experience is not unique, and the importance of material experience is also conveyed in texts on Sámi education and pedagogy (Balto & Johansson, 2015; Keskitalo & Määttä, 2011; Norwegian Committee on Truth and Reconciliation, 2023; Sarivaara & Keskitalo, 2016).

We had different paths to go on our language journey. Anja has experienced *Norwegianisation*, not as an official policy, but structurally through learning institutions and the choices her parents had to make regarding her schooling (Todal, 2009). As a child, Anja was monolingual in Sámi, but she was bereft of full literacy in her first language when she began school by being put in a Norwegian class with Norwegian-speaking teachers and very little written Sámi. As an adult, her spoken Sámi, her mother tongue, is still her strongest language, although she speaks Norwegian like a native as well:

> I can express myself properly in Sámi. It is like I have more power in my voice. For example, if I say to my dog: "Ale!", it is much stronger than the Norwegian: "Slutt!" ("Stop!"). There is much more natural authority and security in my voice. Both praise and reprimand in Sámi gives a different gravity. Maybe it is more honest or genuine? It is like I can express much more in Sámi, whether I am sad or happy. For example, saying "mm" is much weaker than "aa" [respectively Norwegian and Sámi for "no", used only colloquially, often in child-directed speech]. (Anja: "Language and voice")

Anja does not feel that her written Sámi is native-like; although she has spent time taking courses as an adult, she still does not feel that Sámi is her preferred written language. This is what led to us deciding I was to write down her text. The threshold for writing about her own *Sáminess* in Norwegian was too high, and it is easy to see the oppression she faces. Another, even more serious, consequence of the *Norwegianisation* she suffered is that she does not feel comfortable writing in her own language either. That is one thing she has been bereft from, as she experienced education as an oppressive experience (Dewey, 1938). Writing one's own story is intimate, it is demanding, and it is exposing. Anja has her heart language intact orally, but she has experienced numerous

hindrances in using it and developing it in every field of her life. The use of Norwegian in certain contexts can be a hindrance for the native language, for example, having Norwegian-speaking friends as a child and family in adult life. Education has been the most substantial hindrance for her language, but more seriously for her voice. When she was a child, education eroded her confidence in her own native language, justifying it with giving her the opportunity to use the majority language at a native-like level subsequently. For her, education was also an oppressive experience. This kind of oppression is almost invisible, as she is doing well, speaking both Sámi and Norwegian native-like. Nevertheless, her voice is not as strong as it should have been.

JT has, as described earlier, a strong voice and makes strong choices for himself. He comes from a bilingual family background in a Sámi dominated town but preferred using Norwegian mainly with friends and family as well as in school. He could speak, but would not; rather, he would avoid it. For him, as for many others, language is closely related to identity. However, it is an identity he does not want. I elaborate on the implications for identity later; for now, I focus on language as a symbol. As language is a powerful material indication of identity, JT chose to silence himself, and silence is difficult to break. It helps to be a confident individual like JT is as to distance himself from being Sámi. As an adult, he has reclaimed the language and recognized what he has to do achieve his goals; thus, he began taking classes in North Sámi during the project period. The community and the Sámi University College has language courses for adults, with classes that give ECT points and thus higher formal education. The structures around him, like ECE teacher education, playing football and working in kindergarten, all built up a positive attitude towards Sámi, and he chose to speak and transfer it.

Further, Annette's mother has Sámi as her first language and her father is Norwegian; this makes their family language mainly Norwegian, even if her mother occasionally speaks some Sámi. Her mother is from the outer parts of a long fiord and uses Sámi with her family; thus, Anette has also had a stable Sámi-speaking element within the larger family group and local community. This community is having preserved a Sea-Sámi language and culture.

> I grew up in a home where mom speaks both Norwegian and Sámi and dad was a southerner. Even though mom knew Sámi, only Norwegian was used at home. I have yelled at her many times for not speaking Sámi to me when I was little so that I could learn the language. She says that because dad did not speak Sámi, it was more natural to speak Norwegian. Every time we were with mom's siblings, she spoke Sámi with them, so I have heard a lot of Sámi growing up. (Anette: "Am I enough Sámi?")

In school, Annette had Sámi and has always been able to write and speak it to a certain level, but never really felt like she could speak fluently:

> In primary and secondary school (classes 1–10), I had classes in Sámi. Even though I have had Sámi in school for many years, I do not feel like I am left with very much of it. I think education had too little focus on oral practice, so I never learned to speak and the threshold to speak Sámi became high. (Anette: "Am I enough Sámi?")

Thus, it is evident that we all have different levels of mastering the North Sámi language. I have a lot of knowledge about the language as a system and its historic entity, but low proficiency in its pragmatics and the use of oral and written language. There is a big difference between the written and oral command of a language. Moreover, the feeling of proficiency also reveals differences in use in kindergarten – for example, in spontaneous production and planned pedagogical use. There is a marked difference between use in routine situations and more advanced conversation with exploration and philosophic wondering. It is both the feeling of having mastered a language and having command over it. Of course, Anja has full command of Sámi and full proficiency in the language in all work-related situations; however, she still feels insecure when it comes to written language. For the two teachers, JT and Anette, it was a goal to improve their spoken Sámi to fit the need for spontaneous speech and to be able to use advanced Sámi language in spontaneous situations, and to be pedagogical leaders in Sámi. Although it is important to acknowledge what capacities we all have, it is equally important to identify exact goals, like improving oneself to be able to deal with spontaneous situations. This has to be done in order to strengthen the use of the Sámi language. People need to be confident languages users, and: with mastery comes confidence.

4 Identity

Being proud of one's own Sámi identity is one of the goals of the project, as perhaps identity is a result of confidence. Everyone had to be adult enough to be able to sort that out. The experiences we have had form the path to Sámi pedagogy for kindergarten and Sámi kindergarten research. I was asked whether I was Sámi; Anette asked herself the question; JT identified himself as "the Norwegian one"; Lill's identity was not recognized, she had to take it on as a young child; and Anja, with her unambiguous Sámi background, was pushed away. Ruong (1982) states that when he writes about Sámi identity, he

expresses his own identity and belonging to the Sámi people. For him, identity is a part of the fleeting now (panta rei) and therefore always changing, but with a firm nucleus. Identity is both what you want to be, and what you are recognized as. JT's story is also about making others recognize the identity that he, at any given time, wants to assume. At the same time, he lets how others identify him also become his own main identity. He describes a childhood where he wanted to be the Norwegian one, felt accepted as that – at least they perform it by speaking Norwegian – and then still he was experiencing terms of abuse about the Sámi people being shouted out at him on the football pitch because he appears Sámi or plays on a team located in Sápmi. One key to identity could be to understand how others recognize you based on biases, and even which biases you yourself have toward ethnicity and identity.

It has not been a rather straightforward process to identify ourselves as Sámi. Not even for Anja who grew up with Sámi as mother tongue and only family language. Being placed in the "Norwegian" class because the children of reindeer herders were in the Sámi class, why did she feel misplaced? Lill seized the language, taught herself, and used every opportunity to listen and learn without explicit instruction. More than encouragement, her story was about thirst for knowledge – laying under the table listening to the adults speak is powerful and so visually striking, a little child seizing knowledge. But somehow, she did not take on an identity as Sámi until she was an adult. It is apparent that language is a means to create identity – it is so visible, intimate, and clear-cut as an identity-marker.

For myself, I had no idea I even had to choose an identity, I was Norwegian, and experienced a substantial identity mix as I have a German grandfather and the legacy of WWII. It was certainly a pivotal moment to be asked whether I was Sámi, more so than enrolling in the Sámi census, which for me was more of a question of place and belonging to Finnmark. What does the question "Are you Sámi?" really entail? I have since then realized that I may be recognized as Sámi, but that other markers, such as language proficiency and mixed heritage, give me an uncertain identity. However, a question like that entails that it is never certain who you are. One analysis is that the teacher who asked the question was surprised that I, a Norwegian, would do research in a Sámi kindergarten. It could be that she wanted to put me in place, do a little bit of "othering" in a space where all others were Sámi. My conclusion was that it was an honest question and she wanted to know whether I was doing research on "us" or "them". Perhaps the reason for her asking, was her answer when I started a conversation with: "You, who are a bilingual …" and she replied: "I am not bilingual, I am Sámi speaking". I should have been more aware. Among so many more, sociolinguist Peter Auer has explicitly (Auer, 1984) stated that

bilingualism is not an identity, it is a practice, although this may be slightly unclear in his subsequent work, where identity is more equaled to practice (Auer, 1998, 2007). One way to identity is language, another is mastering distinct cultural artifacts, like being able to do *duodji*. For example, for me, sewing the traditional Sámi folk costume, *gákti*, was contact with an identity; selecting patterns for the *holbi*, the bottom pattern of the skirt, thinking of how they must have used the materials they had; weaving and braiding every little scrap of yarn into patterns identifying them when tying the shoes – round after round – with long, colorful bands. Dressing up my daughters and seeing them content with, even proud of, their heritage. My grandmother's tongue, somehow, and my foremothers' craft was reached by circumnavigation (*liigemohkki*).

JT's voyage could be described as going from choosing not to identify as Sámi to ending up being a carrier of Sámi language and culture, making a career of being the one who works to vitalize Sámi language and culture. The circular form of his story was an eye-opener and a useful tool for thinking about his right to the theme. JT actively chose not to be Sámi. Growing up, he felt distanced or wanted to distance himself from the Sámi part of his background, he could not find positive Sámi role models. He wanted to tie himself more to being "mostly Norwegian". Many of the values he perceived as Sámi in childhood were values, he did not want to identify with or be part of. Nevertheless, he could use Sámi language with his friends, while identifying himself as "the Norwegian one" – the one you are supposed to speak Norwegian with. Moving to a more Norwegian dominated area for studies and football, his identity or what he wanted others to recognize him as, drifted to "the one with a Sámi background" He experienced being recognized as an asset for the kindergarten he worked in at the time and for the football team he played for. In this period, he was compelled to take a stance on being Sámi and he describes it as a beginning of a change in his identity: "I am Sámi, but" But what is in this "but"? Does it mean that he does not fit in his own stereotypical picture of "a Sámi"? Now his identity is more being a Sámi role model.

Maybe it is the same for Anette when she writes: "It was always a 'but'" Anette uses the metaphor of standing in the middle, not being able to choose, not fitting in categories someone else has defined, or perhaps you feel that their and your own biases or expectations to identities and how they are expressed. She expresses it in the following manner:

> I have always felt a little in the middle of the Sámi and the Norwegian. At school I was not one of those that spoke Sámi. I had Sámi as second language, thus neither one of those that knew the language, nor one of those that did not have Sámi in school. Also, in connection with work I felt in

> the middle of the Norwegian and the Sámi. I have taken a "Norwegian" education, and work in a Sámi department. It sometimes feels as if one stands between Sámi child rearing tradition and the "Norwegian pedagogy". Or is it more about how I do not have all that much knowledge about Sámi child rearing or Sámi pedagogy? A question I have asked myself, is whether I am Sámi enough to work in a Sámi department. (Anette: "Am I enough Sámi?")

There is a change when she gets older, and her story turns into a story about development:

> Now that I am older, I think it is easier to call myself Sámi than it was before. I am immensely proud of my identity and wish to further Sámi language and culture to children so that they too can be familiar with and proud of their Sámi identity. I work to avoid the stereotypical trap when Sámi is mentioned. Often reindeer herding, lavvu and traditional costumes/gákti. I want that we who work with the children shall give them opportunities to get to know more sides to Sámi, both reindeer husbandry and the Sea-Sámi. (Anette: "Am I enough Sámi?")

This is her reason. This is her drive. Her identity as an in-between – Norwegian and Sámi – is a reason for her to work to strengthen Sámi identity. The Sea Sámi identity is in dire need of strengthening; if the aftermath of Norwegianization is allowed to work together with the iconization (Gal & Irvine, 1995) of Sámi, the coastal Sámi will not recognize themselves and be recognized as Sámi.

5 Sámi Pedagogy

To strengthen Sámi language and culture, it is imperative to identify methods, knowledge, and philosophy within a Sámi pedagogy (Balto, 2005; Balto & Johansson, 2015; Keskitalo & Määttä, 2011; Keskitalo et al., 2013; Sarivaara & Keskitalo, 2019; Storjord, 2008). In indigenous minority education, this also entails a non-oppressive pedagogy (Freire, 1999; Smith, 2012). The SáMOS project (Sametinget, 2018) is work in progress to define a Sámi pedagogy for ECE. In the following, I present how a Sámi pedagogy can be read from "inquiring into experience as it is lived and told through and in stories" (Estefan et al., 2016, p. 15). Anette is explicit in expressing that western pedagogy as it is in ECE teacher education lacks a locally relevant curriculum, or at least this was

so when she took her bachelor's degree. The other narratives are more implicit on pedagogy and experience; thus, it is my interpretation or inquiry of the narratives as providing cues and clues to a sense of another kind of pedagogy than mainstream ECE in Norway.

I begin with Anja. Until she began school, she had encountered nothing but Sámi language and culture as well as Sámi child-rearing. This experience is what she wishes to transfer. Paired with institutionalized modern "strong language models", her ideas are what counts as best practice and suit the leading ideology for language vitalization (Pasanen et al., 2023). Strengthening language is important; however, Anja meets resistance in her wanting to use only Sámi only: "When both Sámi and Norwegian is practiced (in a 'one person, one language' model), who will the children go to? It is always easier to go to the Norwegian speaking staff". Anja also related how she expected the children to pick up their own skis in the yard after going cross-country skiing in kindergarten. This expectation is related to inculcating independence (being able to manage on one's own – *iešbirget*) as a crucial factor in Sámi child- rearing (Balto, 1997, 2005; Balto & Johansson, 2008; Balto & Kuhmunen, 2014; Balto & Johansson, 2015). She felt it was a Sámi value to teach the children to look after their own stuff: "Being able to save yourself in difficult situations demands that you can take care of your equipment, that could save you, so you have to know where it is and keep it tidy and functional". Both her language demands and demands related to self-reliance are perceived as alienating and not very helpful in Norwegian kindergarten pedagogy. This is an issue she needs others to support her in, as she has experienced another regime in the department. Another aspect was higher tolerance for noise:

> We do not like more noise than others, but how is it possible to play if one can only whisper? There is a higher tolerance for noise and movement, not because it is a lazy attitude, but because it is natural. One must check on the children, but it is best if they can carry on themselves, in their own tempo and sound level. You cannot go around hushing all day, just small parts of the day, for instance, when it is circle time or time to eat. (Anja: "Language and voice")

One part of her hesitation to follow her inner pedagogical ideals is to dare to use one's own background in institutional settings. Anja is a native-speaking Sámi, brought up in a core Sámi area with Sámi speaking parents. Even she felt she had no actual Sámi background. When they were collecting *sennagress* for lining shoes in kindergarten, her experience was using hay as lining in the same kinds of shoes. While nomadic Sámi followed the reindeer and used lávvu,

her family spent all year in the highlands in permanent small farm dwellings. Anja's story actualizes issues such as hierarchies within minorities, silencing certain Sámi voices, and also some sort of homogenizing or iconification of what counts as the "real" Sámi. These are also questions a Sámi pedagogy must discuss or incorporate.

Since Sámi pedagogy must fit in with the western notion of kindergarten, and the official framework plan for Norwegian kindergartens, Anette's comparisons between Norwegian and Sámi are interesting. Her experience of being in between cultures might have made Anette aware of differences in culture from an early age. In her narrative,[5] there is an episode describing a visit her (Norwegian) father and she made to a Sámi family as a child. The coffee table was nicely set out for the guests. There were lit candles on the table and suddenly the one-year-old living in the house reached for the flame. Anette's father became anxious and wanted to take the child away from the candles. In contrast, the child's father was calm and would not interfere. Anette understood from the dialogue between the adults that the child's father said that it would be quite safe to be burned, or feeling the heat, from such a small flame. The rationale underlying this viewpoint was that by being burned just a little, the child would experience himself that flames are dangerous and painful. From this experience, the child would learn to keep away from flames and know that they are dangerous when the child is alone and does not have others regulating his behavior. Interestingly, Dewey (1916/1922, p. 163) also has an episode about the child and the candle to illustrate valuable experience. Keskitalo et al. (2014, p. 102) formulates the following principle for Sámi pedagogy: "The Sámi way of thinking is child-centered: the aim is to increase the children's abilities to cope in demanding conditions through self-evaluation and independent thinking skills". Following another rationale for protecting a child was when Anette found the mainstream pedagogical training lacking (se also Anja's story above). Her own Norwegian bachelor's degree in ECE did not provide the tools for allowing principles from Sámi child rearing to be part of a Norwegian institution. Of course, there are discussions on the "rough and tumble" play, but the question of experience and danger of getting hurt to learn to survive alone is perhaps not that prominent. The way those part of institutionalized childcare attempt to minimize accidents by "wrapping the playground in Styrofoam" is a poor replacement of the watchful presence of a caretaker.

Further, how Norwegian pedagogy and expectation for normative institutional kindergarten practices can stand in the way of expressing Sámi ways of learning is revealed in Lill's narrative. Lill had a concern with her own way of kidding around with language when the goal was to seriously learn the language. Whenever "learning" is actualized, the focus is on school-like contexts

and expectations of behavior. This is deeply internalized through socialization or even *bildung* in our education system. Lill had never experienced being encouraged, or taught, to have fun with language as a means of learning in institutional settings. In the seminal work *Samisk barneoppdragelse I endring* [*Sámi child rearing in change* (*transition*)], Asta Balto writes about *nárrideapmi,* a way of playful teasing within the extended family group (Balto, 2023). Lill has a playful approach to being with children, always in conversation, participating in play or encouraging play. However, she feels restrained by Norwegian pedagogy or perhaps by her biases and felt expectations regarding how formal pedagogy in a Norwegian institution should be. Thus, she feels that she must (or she feels the expectation to) suppress her own experience with what is interesting in languages and with learning languages. The mainstream language theory on language acquisition and learning clearly states the relationship between language users and a playful approach; the problem is the understanding of learning in an institutional setting. A Sámi ECE must certainly include fooling around, playing, and all sorts of non-serious actions (Balto, 2005) as part of learning. However, the general impression is that "learning" in institutional settings is formal education – it is structured and information-oriented (Keskitalo et al., 2014).

In his narrative, JT is involved in building knowledge. Surmounting language "refusal is part of his movement. To enable himself to create didactical programs for more systematic use of Sámi, he has chosen to take Sámi classes in the evenings, with a goal to also use Sámi in spontaneous situations in the department. That is his answer to whether he can do a sufficiently good job as a pedagogical leader without mastering the language enough. He was recognized by the leader of the kindergarten, who is very occupied with strengthening the identity of Sámi children. When JT began working, he was moved from the Norwegian to Sámi department by the leader When JT began working, the leader of the kindergarten said: "You are to be pedagogical leader in the Sámi department because you are Sámi". This external recognition made him surmount his own language refusal, to overcome "but" and to be a positive Sámi role model, even for himself. This experience is part of his Sámi pedagogy. For him, pride and joy over Sámi words and the Sámi identity is important to display. Their project-making, language-teaching material with pictures of the children themselves is part of placing the child in the middle of the Sámi teaching. To JT, it is evident that strengthening the language is invaluable. But he is not forcing the children in a strong language immersion model to speak only Sámi; rather, he opens to a pedagogical translanguaging practice that is open and inclusive (Kleemann, 2021). Like Balto and Johansson (2008), he expects the children to use the language when they are ready. Thus, Sámi

pedagogy must also include an openness and expectation for the future that children will use the tools, or "learn", when they find these tools useful or when they are older.

6 Concluding Remarks

I was asked whether I am Sámi, which was quite an existential question for me as a person. In developing a professional identity for myself, I ask myself and will perhaps be asked in the future, "Are you an indigenous researcher?" (Olsen, 2018). I ask that if not, or not sufficiently Sámi, can I contribute professionally to identifying Sámi pedagogy? If the answer is no, I do not identify as Sámi? The challenge for me as a researcher with narrative inquiry and finding the clues within myself and others for Sámi pedagogy, has been moving away from my traditional disciplinary view of science. Traditions within linguistics, even sociolinguistics, occasionally believe they (we) are like mathematicians, that we are on the verge of finding a system, a formula, to describe it all. In a disciplinary vein, following Labov, finding the observable is finding what is researchable. Entering research on Sámi ECE, language as it is heard and communication, as it is visible through a camera lens, provided empiric evidence. But what is it I see when I see something (White, 2016)? What do the sounds of the indigenous language in a kindergarten in a Norwegian-dominated place symbolize? They are something else when in language vitalization the participants are vulnerable and insecure in their language choices, and every single Sámi word is a victory. And why do I get to attend and be part of these experiences? An outsider looking at the efforts of the kindergarten teachers will perceive and be perceived quite differently than a person sharing experiences and showing herself as vulnerable, sharing the insecurity. What has been my route from historical linguistics via the desire to study child language like a hidden ornithologist (Toulmin, 2001) to beginning to realize what I and my identity have to say for what I see? With narrative inquiry, one new insight is that my actions and my curiosity have consequences for how I see myself and how others see themselves. Acknowledging one's own experiences as properly Sámi experiences, could contribute to strengthen the teachers' own professional identity as the ones who transfer Sámi language and culture. Giving more attention to previously unattended experiences of Sámi teachers in the form of narrative inquiry provides a polyphonic platform to explaining or contributing to a Sámi pedagogy and culturally sustainable practices in Sámi kindergartens.

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Notes

1 Translated by the author from Danish: "Når en same erindrede og mindedes, blev det ikke opfattet som ordkunst: det var teater, det var undervisning, det var en social begivenhed, tidsfordriv".

2 In North Sámi, this can be expressed better, because dialogue or conversation in North Sámi can be translated as *gulahallan*, which is from the verb *gulahallat*, translating to something like *understanding each other*, *being able to hear each other*, and with 'listening/hearing' as the root (Kåven et al., 2002).

3 The idea of losing a language, or language loss, is described in depth in literature by indigenous peoples. Maybe it is so that another, a colonial, language can never be sufficiently strong and, thus, translating it is impossible.

4 "Substratum interference" is a term in the field of contact linguistics and describes how a language can influence another in a situation of imperfect learning of this language (Romaine, 1989). For discussions of this phenomenon in Norwegian Sápmi, see e.g., Hilde Sollid, 2013; Tove Bull, 2006.

5 This story came up at a staff meeting where we were talking about the experiences with cultural difference in child rearing, it was not part of the text she had written.

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CHAPTER 6

The Inherent Power of Teachers

An Autobiographical Narrative Inquiry

Tiri Bergesen Schei

Abstract

How can one single episode in a young life be a turning point? One might think that turning points are experiences like great losses or traumatic love affairs. However, in this autobiographical narrative, I am going to present and unpack a seemingly insignificant event that was nevertheless very significant for me and for the formation of my professional identity. Yet, it is not simply about me as a person, but rather the emotional and muscular phenomena that occur when sudden and unexpected events become so existential that important decisions about one's professional life end up being made.

At the core of the story is my choir conductor, who behaved and acted as if she had little knowledge about the social processes that shape young people. Her judgement has taught me what is at stake when I, as a teacher, find myself in situations where I could make a misstep and behave in an ethically questionable manner.

Keywords

turning points – professional identity formation – singing – vulnerability – power imbalance

1 A Critical Turn

I was standing in the second row of the choir one early afternoon in October. The warm-up session was over, and the choir conductor stepped forward. She had a message for the singers, she said: "I have chosen some of the *good* singers in the choir to perform with the orchestra next month". She pointed with her forefinger: "I want you, not you, but you and you". She pointed at the person

next to me, then she looked at me and said: "Not you!" The chosen singers, 25 I think, could leave the rehearsal room and take the rest of the day off.

Why do I still remember this so clearly? I can even remember the smell of the perfume of the girl next to me who was chosen for the performance. It was Chanel. The conductor's jacket was brown and blue tweed. I can see the smiles on their faces when they loudly proclaimed that they had gone to the canteen to buy coffee. I recall my sudden headache and the pain in my upper back, as well as the conductor and her efficient instructions to us, the superfluous singers. I did not speak to anyone after the rehearsal. The rain was pouring down outside. I started to walk home. As I walked the streets in the rain, I wondered if the teacher had ever heard my voice. I realised that I had not understood, until that very moment, that the chosen singers had made themselves attractive to the conductor through their behaviour and their loud voices. There was a sudden moment of loneliness with me, about not being seen, heard, or recognised – of not being good enough (Schei & Schei, 2017; Schei, Åvitsland, & Schei, 2018).

I have carried this experience with me ever since, not sharing it with anyone, until I one day met a person who had had almost the exact same experience, and also had not told anyone, until that day (Schei, 1998, p. 84). We shared the secret and the feeling of invisibility that had followed us over the following years. Both of us had chosen to become teachers. The other person became a general teacher in a compulsory school. I chose to study at a music conservatory, and after many years as a vocal performer and music teacher, I did my PhD. Meeting a person who had similar experiences was a relief. I could recognise myself in the other. Sharing the memories was a healing process, and I remember how we both talked about our powerful emotional reactions to something perhaps others did not even notice.

It triggered me to share some of the pieces of the puzzle taken from this episode. Experiences always carry the emotional reactions, expressed in the person sharing the story. It is a process of meaning-making, where the retelling never can convey the event itself, only how one interprets the experience. With that said, reflexivity is required to fully understand how the layers of interpretation are not stable entities, but fluid and influenced by emotions. My intention is not to release my anger toward my teacher, the conductor, rather it is a learning process for me – like a hermeneutic circle where I gain insight into how the memory of this episode, if I dwell and reflect upon it from various angles, and as a critical event in my life story, can initiate a self-healing process. I am acutely aware of the responsibility that narrative researchers have when we use actual events that might cause discomfort if they were not handled with ethical care, as Barrett and Stauffer (2012b, p. 10) point out. The teacher in

my story is not identifiable. Neither time, place, nor names are mentioned. It is me and my reactions that are exposed for criticism.

Clandinin (2013) presents an autobiographical narrative inquiry written by Trudy Cardinal, which confirms the value of sharing stories. In many ways stories validate "the other":

> The importance of stories shared and safe spaces to do this sharing is evidenced when my own personal lived experiences resonate with the stories I hear, in the relief of the listeners as I described my unease, and in the plea for me to tell more so they, too, can feel a validation to their own stories. (Ibid., 2013, p. 186)

I know now that the rehearsal in the choir that October day was a significant turning point for my professional identity formation. I could not have known then, but as the years passed and I returned to this episode again and again, judging myself as not good enough, I started to wonder if the experience was saturated with existential dimensions that have affected me during my years as a classroom teacher, a voice teacher, a performing singer, choir conductor, and as a researcher. The choices I have made have led me into situations where that experience of not being chosen has been living alongside me. It is impossible to detach from it. This story is stored in my memory, and whenever I think of it, my emotional state is the same. The experience is embodied, and I am entangled and trapped within it.

In choosing to unpack such a personal story, my aim is to pinpoint that the phenomenon of being rejected, or more precisely, the *feeling* of being rejected in front of others, as this is an experience common to all human beings. Everyone is equipped with basic emotions. Cultural differences, backgrounds, time, and place are different, but some feelings are recognisable as if they were lived by me, even if they were only experienced by the other. Human beings mirror each other. We can identify with a person's tears as if the grief were our own.

When we highlight a phenomenon saturated with emotional reactions, other stories will follow, as in this autobiographical narrative.

2 Personal Narrative as Inquiry

Narrative inquiry as a theory and method has many theoretical paths that are possible to follow. As a music educator, I place myself in the research field "Narrative Inquiry in Music Education" (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012a; Smith & Hendrix, 2020). When Barrett and Stauffer write about "*how to be* in narrative inquiry

rather than *how to do* narrative" (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012b, p. 8), they strike at the core of what I find important about narrative inquiry research, namely the necessity of *re*-calling, *re*-writing and *re*-telling experiences and discovering new understandings, as reflexivity adds possibilities to *re*-experience events without being back in the situation.

By understanding teacher identities from the perspective of lived experiences through retelling and reliving memories, new knowledge arises. The point of departure in narrative inquiry is experiences, moments that have led to change (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Barrett and Stauffer (2012b) write that "Experience shapes who we are, how we know, and the meanings we make of our worlds" (p. 4). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective on embodied experience helps us to understand that we *are* our bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1982). Body is not simply something that we have, but something we live in, with and through; "We are narrative beings" as Bresler (2020, p. 149) says. We shape meaning through our experiences. Bodies are always the point of departure for understanding ourselves. My physical reaction to not being chosen was immediate, so was my belief that I was not good enough, but could there be other ways of understanding this feeling of rejection? This question is a motivating factor for looking more closely at such a story.

3 The Research Puzzle

I will now unpack this puzzle using my personal story as a point of departure. I am re-composing some parts of the puzzle by using "the three dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place and sociality" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 12) as tools to understand which dimensions of experiences are significant. Will it also be possible to understand, on a meta level, how professional identities are constructed through experiences like this by reflection of memories? As I see it, unpacking processes cannot have fixed beginnings or ends. Everything in life is intertwined. I step into the middle of my narrative as if I am looking at a "multidimensional dynamic map with many beginnings and ends, a complex network of causal roads, suggestive paths, associative bridges and mythic passages" (Irwin et al., 2006; Schei, 2020, p. 231). My story is a personal narrative, and it reveals a range of emotional reactions. Still, it is not about me as a person, rather it is about the emotional and muscular phenomena that occur in every person's audible body (Schei, Åvitsland, & Schei, 2018) when experiences are perceived as so fundamental, so existential that they lead to a turning point where important decisions are made.

Barrett and Stauffer (2012b, p. 4) write that for "narrative inquirers, experience is regarded as both the essence of being and the source of knowing. In other words, how and what we understand ourselves and the world to be are embedded in and embodied in experience". We are continuously experiencing things in our bodily and social relations. This is the very core of being a human being (Dewey, 2005). Memorising and reconstructing episodes from the past is therefore not only important, but also a way of putting together puzzle pieces to understand how and why some episodes, out of millions of experiences throughout life, seem to become more crucial than others. "In the process of connecting to others' voices and narratives, we often connect with our inner selves, a connection that allows us to recognize our independence and shared humanity, wherein knowledge is at the service of wisdom", writes Bresler (2020, p. 161). I allow myself to share some bumps in the road and tensions from my life story to point out that my experiences are not unique, but rather common reactions to what I will today characterise as one teacher's arrogant, ignorant, and unwise behavior towards some of her students. Was she at all aware of her mandate as a teacher, her ethical responsibility to see and care for each student and to behave in such a manner that the best in every student could blossom? She could not be aware of her responsibility. Or was she just unaware of her power to impact students' lives?

In discovering this, I reflect upon the coincidences and the choices I have taken without then being aware of how this episode and other experiences were intertwined and led to consequences in my personal and professional life (Clandinin, 2006, 2013). Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) use of the concept of *rhizome* is useful to understand narratives as puzzles with no beginning and no end:

> Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21)

Rhizome is a biological concept meaning an interconnected mass of roots, used by Deleuze and Guattari as what I interpret as a metaphor for the complexity, the multiplicity, the assemblage, the representation, and the subjectivity of life, described by them using the metaphor of roots: "It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that

everything changes" (Ibid., 1987, p. 23). This is further supported by Barrett & Stauffer who say:

> [W]hat and how we know – even who we are – is as complex as the web of our individual capacities, social relationships, cultural concepts, and physical environments; and, as continuous, fluid, and transactional as the experiences we have in that web. (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012b, p. 6)

The teacher who behaved and acted as if she had little knowledge about the formatting processes that shape young people is at the core of this story. Her poor judgement did not make me who I am, but it has taught me what is at stake when I, as a teacher, find myself in situations where I could make a misstep – like her – and behave in an ethically questionable manner.

4 Dimensions of Temporality, Place and Sociality (Clandinin, 2013)

Using my own experiences as examples puts me in a vulnerable position where the reader might not really manage to detach the subject in the narrative. Phenomenological lenses are useful tools with which to objectify the person, to allow the examples to be recognisable and to be touched by them.

> On the surface, narrative inquiry may seem a rather simple and straightforward matter of gathering and telling stories; it is not. Narrative inquiry focuses on experience; stories are representations of that experience. Stories are shaped by memory, by the relationship of teller and listener, by the frequency of telling, by when and how they are told, by the reasons for telling, by cultural and social norms, and more. Rigour in narrative requires grappling with these shaping forces (predicted and unpredicted) in every phase and dimension of the research process. (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012b, p. 10)

In the following paragraphs, I will draw on episodes from my past that have dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality, different memories brought forward because of my autobiographical writing. All stories presented are entangled with the choir story. It means that they have been significant for my professional identity formation, and it is when I revisit these memories that I understand how they have been important for me and my life.

When I think back, it is not as if I am going back in time to the event, instead these memories are just as vivid as if I were experiencing them today. They are stored in my body, in my muscles, in my posture, in my way of using my breath

support, in the timbre of my speaking voice and my singing voice. The knowledge of how the body stores memories in muscles and breath, as well as in the timbre of the voice, is professional knowledge learned through my music education, where personal work on my body and with my instrument, i.e., my voice, was at the front of my mind for many years. This knowledge makes it natural for me as a professional educator to see the immediate reactions happening in a person when another person behaves inappropriately towards them. I can easily understand the consequences it might have for the person and for the relationship.

Retelling my stories now makes me aware of details in my professional identity that I have taken for granted, such as knowledge about embodied emotions. I, as a professional voice teacher, know that vocal exercises involve the whole body, not just the vocal cords. One becomes aware of the constraints in one's breath when one is unable to sing a phrase without being short of breath. This applies to everyone: to make sound, one is dependent on breath support. The human voice is unique for everyone, like a fingerprint, but also familiar to all of us, because the main function of the voice is to communicate. As a social, relational tool the voice is crucial. This awareness of embodiment is part of my professional knowledge as a voice teacher who has been practicing vocal exercises on a daily basis since I became a student at the Music Conservatory at age 20. I am trained to recognise muscular tensions and restrained voices when I meet with my students. The body, visible and audible, is the point of departure for all activities, for all meaning-making. I am acutely aware of my bodily tensions the moment they occur.

These memories take me back, but they also make me aware of the present moment and what the body is about to do, as well as how I need to be aware of my role as a teacher in that very moment. What is learned through an autobiographical narrative inquiry is, amongst many things, that professional knowledge is not just learned academically, but also experienced through life and stored as tacit and embodied knowledge.

Below is the second story that relates to the theme of rejection and feeling less-than:

> A teacher told me that I was out of pitch when I rehearsed a song together with my accompanist. There was an immediate reaction in my body. The flow of my breath was restrained, the muscles in my upper back tightened and the timbre of my voice changed, with a sound that was unfamiliar and not what I had tried to produce. I was eager to do it right, to be a good singer and to produce good music. But suddenly, I was back on that October day

and reliving the choir-experience. Feelings of not being good enough were stirred, and I directed many negative thoughts towards myself instead of focusing on what the teacher tried to help me with.

Muscles are interwoven with feelings. This knowledge is tacit, embodied, and existential and it might be hidden unless we manage to share such experiences and get feedback from others. When my teacher corrected me, I felt embarrassed, but as an experienced teacher, luckily today I can interpret the state more thoroughly. When I was a student, I felt only shame and wanted to get out of the situation. Whenever I now experience situations where I as a teacher need to make a music student aware of something that he or she needs to improve, I instantly, and without the possibility of preventing it, travel to this very experience. The voyage is so immediate that I can use my embodied knowledge and rely on it to understand what reactions to expect from the student in front of me. The student will probably try to hide these bodily reactions, which is natural, because that is how we have learned to behave. It is how we as social beings communicate. We do not usually reveal our feelings of embarrassment, or feelings of failure or shame to a teacher. Instead, we hide and disguise to protect ourselves. That is in many cases a necessary defense mechanism, but when working with the body and having the body as a tool for producing art, we must learn to cope with such feelings.

Our body can remind us of unpleasant experiences. It is not a surprise that we react physically and emotionally and some of our emotions are necessary defenses that keep us stable and allow us to be social and communicative human beings. Shame is one of these basic emotions. Shame gives us

> direction as we try to navigate between right and wrong, good and bad, worthy and unworthy, in our attempts to be accepted, admired and loved. We are like animals behind an electrical fence; we never touch it, never even think of it, because we do not want that pain. (Schei & Schei, 2017, p. 7)

We live in stories, bodily stories that are cultural, temporal stories. The way we inhabit the world is a product of temporality, of how time has shaped us, both the visible and the audible body. There is a strong focus on bodily perfection in social media, which today is so influential that it acts for some as a substitute for religion. Since I use my voice as a professional instrument, I experience singing as a phenomenological experience with imprints that continuously shape my identity as a professional teacher.

Finally, I will present a third story that brings another perspective:

> I must have been five years old. I was wearing a pink dress I had inherited from my cousin. We were visiting my grandparents and my grandfather said: "I would like so much for you to sing a song. Would you do that for me?" My mother, who always sang, lifted me up and placed me on the table. "Sing for granddad!" she said with a warmth in her voice. I recall considering what song I wanted to sing. I knew so many songs. I remember the dilemma of choosing one of them. There were songs about animals: cats, bears, birds, foxes, goats, chickens, hares, and horses. These animals were my friends and the stories they represented were living in me. It was as if I was one of them in their stories. After a few seconds, I had decided to sing a song about cats, and I remember why I chose the song. It was the song my grandfather had taught me, and I wanted to please him by singing all three verses of the song.

Being five and so convinced that I had to make an impression on my grandfather is a reminder of how the theme of identity runs throughout our entire lives. I am now aware that being accepted and feeling at home in my grandparents' home was immensely important.

When I wrote my PhD, it was about the construction of identity of professional singers within the genres of classical, pop and jazz music, and the demands they felt they had to comply with to be considered "real" singers within their genres by both the audience – and themselves (Schei, 2007). What strikes me is that during a timespan of 40 years I have not actually seen how there is a connection between my early experiences with singing and my choice of theme for my PhD, the construction of singers' identities. In addition, I chose to study singing at the conservatory and to become a voice teacher, a singer, and a general music teacher. How could I choose to go into a professional career where performance was at the forefront, when I had experiences of failure that had really affected me on a deep level, but were tucked away in my backpack?

Exploring my own experiences by retelling these personal stories is not an easy way to gain new insight. Some might also wonder what personal experiences offer others to learn from. I try to frame my story in a way that may resonate with others' experiences of feeling vulnerable, shameful, and invisible. Writing a personal narrative is a way of writing ourselves into an understanding of life's continuous transformation processes and how the personal is always relational, since we tend to perceive ourselves as we believe others see us (Scheff, 2005). Through inquiry processes of reliving and retelling of lived

experiences it is possible to come to a deeper understanding of the importance of stories (Clandinin, 2013, p. 186).

5 I Am Not *That* Kind of a Teacher

The research landscape I have introduced has exposed my personal and professional journey from childhood through my study programme to a long professional career. If you as a reader manage to de-center me as a person and focus on the theme I bring to the table, I hope that you can identify with shared human traits manifested in my ways of reacting, my emotional barriers when not revealing the secrets, and my feelings of vulnerability when meeting situations that challenged my self-esteem. Even if basic emotions are common for all human beings, the way we react to such emotions differs from person to person, from one life situation to the next, since we all have our own unique experiences. Therefore, a personal narrative belongs to the one who owns the story. One could ask whether it was reprehensible of the conductor to choose the *good* singers from her choir to perform with the orchestra or not. Another question to ask is whether the conductor had asked critical questions of herself as a tutor for a youth choir. If she did not know her singers well enough, how could she know who were "the best"? She knew the choir singers as groups of sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses, but not as individual singers. This means that she used other criteria to decide who did *not* fit into the category of being good. This is intricate. She never revealed her criteria, but the effect of making such a judgement easily becomes "the truth" for the person who is not chosen. In that situation, it was me who there and then experienced that I was not good enough in the eyes of my conductor.

Similar situations flourish in classrooms. As teachers, we sometimes forget or skip the vital part of being a caring human being, a professional tutor that sees and accepts the students where they are, and thus fulfils the mandate of a responsible teacher. "It is clear that practitioner judgement lies at the heart of phronesis in professional practice", state Kinsella and Pitman (2012b, p. 165). They use Aristotle's knowledge about practical wisdom, outlined in the concept of phronesis, as a guideline for "scientific, universal, invariable, context-independent knowledge", characterised as "an intellectual virtue that implies ethics" (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012a, p. 2). The work of Aristotle is highly relevant (Irwin, 2019).

> Phronesis is knowledge that expresses itself not in words, but through actions that are fitting, that are good and right in this particular situation. It expresses judgement and character, not only theoretical knowledge,

> and reveals an understanding of the complexity of a given situation, including what may be appropriate goals when things are messy and conflicted. (Schei, 2021, p. 183)

Phronesis is demonstrated through action, in making moral decisions by identifying what is right in a given situation and to act on that decision (Higgs, 2012, p. 79). It was when I read about Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom (Cooke & Carr, 2014; Eisner, 2002; Panpan, 2016) that I realized what the conductor had taught me. What were the characteristics of this teacher? As I see it, she was a good conductor with musical authority, and a professional attitude and approach to the art of conducting, but she had an authoritarian way of engaging with her choir singers. She was dedicated to the music, but *not* to her singers, who were her tool for obtaining good results.

How can we become educationally wise people? Biesta argues that "we can develop our virtuosity for wise educational judgement only by *practicing* judgement, that is, by being engaged in making such judgement in the widest range of educational situations possible". (Biesta, 2016, p. 135). I have realised that the behavior displayed, and the decisions made by the conductor were completely unfamiliar to me, deeply contrasting with my childhood experiences, where singing and self-staging were encouraged by my family and schoolteachers. In school we sang every day in class and with friends. Memories from my school days were saturated with all kinds of songs from various genres. It was as natural to sing as it was to speak, and I do not remember any judgement in connection to singing during my childhood. I am conscious that the teachers' attitude to singing as a natural phenomenon in human relationships contributed to naturalising singing for me – until that rainy October day. That swift shift moved me. It taught me a lesson for life. It slowly dawned on me that *I* could never act as she did. I was not *that* kind of teacher. Since then, my attitude to teaching and my ethical guidelines for teacher-student relationships have been focused on the students' needs and identifying with *their* struggles. Ideally, I should act with high ethical judgement and never point my forefinger at students and say the words, I choose you, you and not you. Sometimes it is necessary, for reasons related to quality, to speak very clearly to a student and guide them in the direction of high quality and hard work, but never in front of classmates.

6 Putting the Pieces Together

My research puzzle in this chapter centres on my wondering why and how one single episode in my youth became so influential for my professional identity

formation. I have allowed myself to go deep and examine in detail what I recall as my physical and emotional reactions to this episode, and I have also tried to understand the rhizomatic mess that follows in the wake of recalling, decomposing, and retelling a traumatic experience from the past (Irwin et al., 2006). It has made me aware that competition and judgement are common tools used by conductors, teachers, and students to position themselves. For me that was a traumatic awakening, coming from a home where this sort of comparison was nonexistent.

I have met many people who willingly have shared stories about their own voice struggles (Schei, Åvitsland, & Schei, 2018). I have gained wisdom through listening to and reading narratives that present a person's vulnerability, resistance and endurance. Such stories seem to follow the person throughout life, but by telling their story they also experience growth, constructing a bold professional identity and a solid pedagogical basis for teaching and coaching.

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CHAPTER 7

A Professional Identity Based on an International Career as Engineer

A Childhood Critical Event Impacting Every Fight for Acceptance

Anna-Lena Østern

Abstract

This article is a narrative inquiry into Gustav's professional life, entangled with his personal life. The analytical question elaborated in the article is: How has Gustav's professional identity been formed and changed throughout his professional life with an initial critical incident triggering the development? The critical incident triggering the development during a long working life is an experience of non-recognition as a child, and consequently a striving to show that this was wrong. His professional identity is characterized by the words: work, seriousness, and responsibility. His professional identity is so strong that he never wants to retire. Gustav's story is discussed in the light of Honneth's theory of recognition, and Brown's theory of shame and resilience. The structure of the article leans upon Ricoeur's three-fold mimesis, and the narrative inquiry is formed according to a three-dimensional narrative space. Gustav's story is transformed into a research narrative about a lifelong strive for recognition professionally and personally.

Keywords

critical incident – professional life – theory of recognition – narrative inquiry – shame and resilience

1 Introduction

In this article Gustav[1] is the teller, and he is now 75 years old. We have known each other since we were eight years old and know each other well (Figure 7.1). We attended the same elementary school, and our teacher taught (among all the other subjects) all pupils to dance, and behave well.

FIGURE 7.1 Gustav and myself at eight years of age

Our fathers fought in two wars against the Soviet Union in the 1940s, both suffering from constant nightmares from the war scenes, and both being wounded with shell splinters in their bodies. We grew up in the same little agricultural village in Ostrobothnia, on the west coast of Finland in the 1950s with ration cards, rancid cod-liver oil, black pudding with lingonberries. Gustav's father suffered severely from the shell splinters moving around in his body, finally coming to his heart, killing him. Gustav tells about the funeral of his father.

2 A Critical Incident

A conversation he overheard at the grave becomes a critical incident in Gustav's life, a childhood scar that maybe never heals.

The coffin with my father's body in it was to be lowered down into the gravesite. I overheard a conversation between two trusted members of the community saying: 'We might as well at the same time bury the rest of this family. They will only become a burden to us'.

Now 66 years later I ask Gustav if he remember what he felt and thought at the grave about the conversation he overheard: "I will show you, just wait and see", he said. The consequences of this critical event would have an impact on Gustav throughout both his professional and his personal life. He became a fighter, a grown-up nine-year-old boy supporting his mother and three sisters living in poverty (Gustav on his father's lap and his family shown in Figure 7.2).

FIGURE 7.2 Gustav with his family about two and a half years before his father passed away

3 Structure of the Article and Analytical Question

In this article I will conduct a narrative inquiry into Gustav's life story. The article is structured in the following way: I first make a short presentation of Honneth's theory of recognition, a theory I will be in dialogue with when developing the field story into a research narrative. A philosophical frame is presented through Ricoeur's threefold mimesis. In addition, I introduce narrative inquiry as methodology based on Clandinin and Connelly's work. I also describe what a critical event/incident might be. After presenting this theoretical framework I then connect with Gustav's life story, presented through turning points influencing his personal and professional identity. Gustav's

story will be discussed using the theoretical concepts I have introduced above. The discussion will center around the analytical question for this study: How has Gustav's professional identity been formed and changed throughout his professional life with an initial critical incident triggering the development?

4 Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition and René Brown's Theory of Shame and Resilience

According to van Leeuwen (2007), Honneth's theory of recognition comprises what he refers to as a formal conception of the good life. Honneth considers the possibility of self-realisation to be central, which predominantly is to realise one's self-chosen life goals. In The Struggle for Recognition (Honneth, 1995) the author states that personal identity denotes a person's practical relation-to-self, that is, the way in which a person evaluates and understands him- or herself in everyday thinking and acting. Van Leeuwen considers a precondition for recognition to be a positive self- relation, namely a degree of trust in oneself and one's abilities to set goals, to embark upon life-plans and to pursue these successfully (van Leeuwen, 2007).

4.1 *Love, Respect, Self-Esteem*

Honneth (1995) divides the concept of "recognition" into three categories: love, which refers to an emotional concern for the well-being and needs of an actual person; respect, which stands for the recognition of the equal moral accountability of the legal person and is expressed in the moral and legal right to personal autonomy; and self-esteem, which is the positive self-evaluation of one's own capacities and achievements. Honneth, thus, recognizes three spheres of human recognition: love, law, and solidarity.[2]

The law provides guidelines to ensure forms of recognition. It also produces the rules that ensure the dynamics between the spheres. Love promotes care and attention. Social valuation is the sphere of solidarity in which the qualities and capabilities of a person in a certain community are recognized. A person needs to feel morally, socially and/or intimately recognized, but belonging to a social group is not directly dependent on personal accomplishments (van Leeuwen, 200, p. 189).

4.2 *The Consequence of Non-recognition Affects a Person's Honor and Dignity*

When people do not feel recognized in their community, their neighborhood, or their work, then the sphere of solidarity breaks. Not feeling like we are a

fundamental part of our daily group produces cracks in our self-esteem and our bond with others. According to the theory of recognition, social bonds are important because they allow people to express themselves in multiple ways. Social attachments cannot be interpreted as the object of choice. People do not "choose" their culture, ethnicity, nationality or linguistic identity, but social esteem is heavily dependent on collectively shared values and goals. Van Leeuwen describes the consequences of non-recognition, as follows:

What this means is that institutions or citizens who deny a person's attachments to a particular culture will not only bring about frustration, but also constitute a type of dehumanization. When we ridicule a person's attachments to a particular social group or tradition, it not only becomes more difficult for this person to attach value to it himself or herself, with an erosion of self-esteem as a consequence, but it can also set in motion the process of a gradual loss of self-respect (van Leeuwen, 2007, pp. 183–185).

Van Leeuwen (2007, p. 199) sums up his discussion of Honneth's understanding of a good life. He suggests that the necessary conditions for a good life include both autonomy and the sense of being socially accepted by the communities in which one lives. van Leeuwen concludes in the following way: "The point is to recognize both dimensions of the person – freedom and attachments – without reducing one to the other".

4.3 *Shame and Resilience*

Brown (2006, p. 43) defines shame as "An intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging". In a study concerning women's shame experience the author has constructed a "shame web" (p. 45) with the following dimensions: what you should be; how should you be; who should you be. Brown finds that shame resilience is developed mainly through experiencing empathy and connection, mutual support, shared experiences, and the freedom and ability to explore and create options.

5 Paul Ricoeur and Narrative as Threefold Mimesis

Ricoeur (1983, 1985, 1988) has written extensively about a threefold mimesis in Time and narrative 1–3. Mimesis 1 embraces the lived life, everyday events, our experiences, that is stories when they are lived, before they are re-told. Mimesis 2 comprises the creation of the work (the story), a creative and forming activity. The content of mimesis 2 is the structuring of the story (the emplotment),

the choice of events, which express the point or theme for the reader or listener. Mimesis 3 covers the reception of the work, a new figuration when the reader or listener interprets the work.

Ricoeur's small ethics comprises self-respect, caring about others, and working for just institutions. The ethical dimension in the narrative, both the fictive and the factual, forms a story, which alters the world of the reader/listener with its norms, values, and view of a person. The narrative in talking about the past forces a person to think about how to live in the future. In this study Gustav's lived life is considered as mimesis 1. Gustav's story as told forms mimesis 2, and the researcher's narrative interpretation of Gustav's story provides bits and pieces for mimesis 3, together with the reader's interpretation of the importance of one critical incident in Gustav's story.

6 Narrative Inquiry as Methodology

"[A]key concept in narrative inquiry is the importance of wakefulness to the uncertainty that lives within lives and within the worlds in which we live" (Caine et al., 2021, p. 161).

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375).

6.1 *Narrative Three-Dimensionality*

Clandinin and Connelly propose narrative three-dimensionality as an approach in narrative research (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). They write about different narrative spaces, or dimensions. They distinguish between the temporal (past, present, future), the personal and the social (communication), and the contextual (situation and place). In an analysis the researcher asks when this happens, who is concerned, and where we are. A narrative analysis then comprises taking in a broader context, deepening the understanding of the dimensions of the story, and finally telling a more complex, 'new' story (cf. Østern & Angelo, 2016).

Caine et al. (2021, p. 20) underline the importance of John Dewey's concept experience:

> Experience is always in the making, being shaped and reshaped over time, as new situations are encountered. Experience understood over time is always in the midst and it is shaped in the making and narratively always in the midst and it is shaped in the making and remaking, in the recollecting of what is past, but also in what continues to live on in future moments.

6.2 *Critical Incident/Event*

The significance of critical incidents in human experience is not new in research. Many authors have written about moments that have enormous consequences for personal change. Webster and Mertova (2007) refer to three types of critical phases: extrinsic, intrinsic, and personal. The authors do not distinguish between critical events (as being more planned) and critical incidents (which are unplanned). Extrinsic events can be produced by historical and political events. Intrinsic critical events can be part of a progression of a person's career. Finally, Mertova and Webster describe personal critical events like family events, illness and more (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 74f). The authors describe a critical event in a story, which reveals a change of understanding or worldview by the storyteller. They mention for example the following characteristics:

It has impacted on the performance of the storyteller in a professional or work-related role. It may have a traumatic component [...] It is almost always a change experience, and it can only ever be identified afterwards (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 74).

7 Gustav's Story

Gustav enjoys talking about his working life. He has had an impressive international career in Turnkey Projects,[3] within structural engineering, as an IT-architect and finally introducing and making business requirement analysis. I will present some main stages in his career, keeping in mind the importance of the critical incident from his childhood, and his reaction: I will show you!

7.1 *Gustav's Formal Education*

After seven years in elementary school Gustav at the age of 16 passed vocational school as a qualified mechanic and graduated at 21 from technical college as a construction project manager (Figure 7.3 shows the young student at work).

FIGURE 7.3 Gustav as student with a summer job in the Finnish archipelago (He worked as project manager until he entered a university of applied science and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Structural Engineering. Later, at universities in Canada he studied computing language APL, fluid dynamics, parametric modelling, and in Sweden general law.).

7.2 *Gustav's Professional Life*

I will break down the overview of Gustav's professional life into several parts. He likes to call the different parts turning points, whenever he encountered a new challenge. The parts I have named as follows: Informal schooling in childhood and youth: self-defense, learning to dance; Military service: work, seriousness, and responsibility; Heavy workload, love and family, International career in Canada: hiring and firing; Am I an IT architect? – back to Sweden, Switzerland and Saudi Arabia; Yes I am an IT architect for a Finnish Marine Power Corporation; At mature age a love story including deacon education; Post retirement work in the Finnish archipelago, Expatriate with a base in a caravan trailer in Sweden; A nomad landing in his birth community: I should never have retired.

7.3 *Informal Schooling in Childhood and Youth: Self-Defense, Learning to Dance*

Gustav's father took the family to Sweden after the war. Gustav lived there from four to eight years of age, after which the family returned to Finland. In the Swedish neighborhood he learned self-defense, and to shelter his sister from bullies. When he returned to Finland to a rural school, he also had to defend himself and others (with his fists). As a teenager he protected the elder sister, which resulted in an iron rod still in his hand following a fight when defending his sister from three men. He says: "If you don't stand up for yourself, people will walk over you".

He learnt to dance (ballroom dancing and folkdance) in elementary school, and throughout his life dance has been a great interest giving him an advantage when engaging with women.

7.4 *Military Service: Work, Seriousness, and Responsibility*

At the age of 18 Gustav was conscripted and spent about one year in the Finnish army (military service in Finland is mandatory).

Figure 7.4 shows Gustav together with his lifelong best friend, my elder brother.

They shared an interest in ballroom dancing and they both had a good time in the army, learning the importance of three concepts that have followed Gustav through his career: work, seriousness, and responsibility.

FIGURE 7.4
Gustav (to the left) with my elder brother, both as recruits in the Finnish army

7.5 *Heavy Workload, Love, and Family*

At the age of 16 Gustav began as a construction worker. He then earned more money than his mother (a widow with four children at that time), which was what he wanted. Before that he was used to doing the man's work at home. Gustav has always regarded education very highly. Saying now: "I could have been a professor because I was good at school. Regretfully I could not go to senior high school, because I had to support my family". He fell in love with a girl from a neighboring village. He met her on the dance floor, got married 1968, and they had a daughter. He built a house for themselves in a small town in Ostrobothnia. He worked a lot, did not sleep much. He continued to study to become a structural engineer. After graduating the family moved to Canada, which was a risky venture, but in no way unusual for people in Ostrobothnia.

7.6 *International Career in Canada: Hiring and Firing*

The family settled down in Vancouver, had a summerhouse by a lake, and could take holidays with their trailer. His wife established a successful hair salon. Their second daughter was born. Gustav worked from project to project. It was as he said, "hire and fire". He said: "You are only as good as your latest project". The family stayed in Canada for about ten years, and his family went to Finland every summer, but he could not accompany them because there was always some new project to take care of. Gustav took many risks and learnt a lot about earthquake analysis, how to design heavy industrial structures, took part in building a coal mine in the Rocky Mountains, and much more. Gustav held jobs as a structural engineer, area engineer and project manager for international turnkey projects. Gradually he also took on consultancy jobs and learnt about computing and building his own computers. He continued to have 18-hour workdays. Finally, he had a period of burn out when he could not look at a computer. He started to go running again which gave him the meditative free space to re-awaken his creativity. He got an invitation to work in Sweden, and the family left Canada.

7.7 *Am I an IT-Architect? – Back to Sweden, Switzerland, and Saudi Arabia*

Back in Sweden the family settled down in Gustav´s Swedish hometown where Gustav´s father had worked in the same company. At work Gustav was elected chairman of the engineers' association. The family bought a house of their own. The marriage was for many years happy and lasted 30 years. Gustav's wife had a severe whip lash injury from a car accident on her last day in Canada after which her health began to decline and she chose another educational work path. Gustav continued in the same way he had done in Canada, with

extremely long working days, much time away from home, and very little sleep. He worked for a major international power generator corporation, also working in Switzerland. After leaving the power business Gustav spent three years in Saudi Arabia as a CIO.[4] His family joined him in the second year. He was a successful man in his professional life but suffered several near burn outs again but not equally severe as the previous. His family claimed, "you are never at home".

7.8 *Yes, I Am an IT-Architect for a Finnish Marine Power Corporation*

Gustav says, "I could not resist the call to develop my professional skills". He gradually moved over to Finland and found a new love (on the dance floor), a Finnish woman, divorced his first wife, and continued to work overlong workdays, most of the time with a fulltime job and then as consultant. The second marriage ended in a divorce for roughly the same reasons as the first.

7.9 *At Mature Age a Love Story including Deacon Education*

Eventually Gustav (Figure 7.5 shows Gustav at the age of 64) had the biggest challenge in his life, falling in love with a new Finnish woman (he met her on the dance floor), who wanted him to become a deacon or preacher.

Gustav worked in the marine power business until retirement at over 65 years of age. He brought some renewal to the company by teaching about the importance of doing process and data modelling. Gustav even introduced business requirement concepts and -analysis.

FIGURE 7.5
Gustav 64 years old (Gustav used five years of spare time to regularly participate in the education to be a deacon with no intention to become one. He says: "It was the best schooling of my life. I learnt about leadership, trauma, psychology and group dynamics". Still, he did not become a preacher, and the love affair also ended in a broken relationship. This was very hard, and Gustav mourned for years over it. Maybe he still does.).

7.10 *Post Retirement Work in the Finnish Archipelago, with a Base in a Caravan Trailer in Sweden*

Gustav did not want to retire for real, so he took a job as an engineer in the Finnish archipelago (where he had worked also as young student). He worked there for three years but had an accident that left him with a lot of back pain. Gustav is 69 years old as he is starting a new chapter in his life. He travels to Spain (where his eldest daughter lives); he goes to Turkey for long stays. He is looking for a place to live in Sweden (where his younger daughter lives), and visits his youngest sister, who wants him to stay in Sweden. For four years his part time home has been a big caravan trailer at a lake in Sweden. His left knee is damaged because of his dancing (a certain genre called hop-polka), and his period of mourning has caused him to gain weight.

7.11 *A Nomad Landing in His Birth Village: I Should Never Have Retired*

Gustav has lived nearly three years in his birth village in Finland. Maybe he has found a chance to return to his roots and heal the childhood scar caused by the critical incident. He has found a special childhood friend (which is me) to spend time with and be comforted by, found some peace, still helping neighbors with their computers, iPads, iPhones and usually spends some hours at a local café together with childhood´s- and recently acquired friends. Gustav is accustomed to nighttime work and normally works and experiments nighttime with systems for different computers (of which he has over 20). He spends a lot of time following current politics, studies history, archeology, and paleontology. His curiosity does not end: "If somebody needs an engineer, I am ready to go".

He shares his credo (borrowed from Steve Jobs) with me regarding his professional identity:

I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. (2005 Stanford commencement address). Steve Jobs believed that his intuition and curiosity would guide him down the right path.[5]

The caravan trailer is not in use anymore (Figure 7.6). Gustav says: "Work has been my passion. I have lived a fascinating, creative life. I have contributed to building the society where I have lived. I have not been afraid. I have taken risks, and challenges. No regrets".

FIGURE 7.6 Gustav enjoying his caravan trailer and Finnish nature

8 Gustav's Story Revisited as a Narrative about Recognition

The analytical question this study aims to give an answer to is how Gustav's professional identity has been formed and changed during his working life. His own story told shows how entangled his personal life and his professional life are. The professional life takes over and the personal life reduces, and he also has this vulnerability from the childhood scar caused by the incident at his father's grave. This is my interpretation, and I still wonder how many emotional locks there might be. He broke up from the women who loved him. I think their mourning and feelings of being abandoned might have been something causing him shame and guilt (cf. Brown, 2006). This also regards his daughters' agony and anger, when the first marriage ended. Something of great importance was at stake with the third woman he loved, as for five years he accompanied her to deacon training. But he could not be the preacher she wanted him to become, and consequently he left. So was one aspect of his intensive working life, that in this area he could realize his full potential? Or might it be the experienced powerlessness haunting him from his childhood scar, and that his resilience brought him to find new places for connection and acceptance?

He was very attached to his mother, and he said you need to respect your parents, which he has done. He has been a man, doing a man's work, living in a man's world. Caine et al. (2021, p. 201) points at social and political contexts that shape experiences:

We are not always thinking of untold stories, that is, of the stories and experiences that have shaped us so deeply that we have yet to find words for them. Often it is the social and political contexts that come into shaping these experiences.

Gustav's professional identity is built upon living up to high standards, learnt from his home, from his elementary school, from the Finnish army: work, seriousness, and responsibility. He takes on heavy burdens, that almost break him. He is not actually a nomad, but is seeking for a place to be recognized, and to settle down, but he leaves if he feels he is not recognized enough. He longs for attachment, but his sense of autonomy comes first: nobody will walk over me. Honneth writes about personal identity like self- esteem, which allows you to pursue your own life goals. Gustav has set himself high life goals and he has reached many of them. Honneth, however, mentions three dimensions of recognition: love, respect and self-esteem or put in another form: love, law, and solidarity.

There is no doubt about that his professional life has been a success story from beginning to end, and that his professional identity is very strong. He has been governed by a sense of seriousness and responsibility, working hard ever since he was a child. The dance floor has been a free space letting him breathe freely and enjoy life.

Still there has been this suspicion within him about not being good enough, not educated enough, a thought which might be traceable back to the misrecognition experienced at his father's grave. When he says I could have been a professor, I think he mentions that because I am a professor, and he knows he was good enough to have been able to achieve such a position. His sense of responsibility for his mother and his sisters, made him choose another path. This path has turned out to be his place for full recognition of his capabilities.

The three women he has loved, have loved him back seriously. Still, it has not been enough. There has been one passion following Gustav throughout his life: his work. There he has felt full recognition, and that he has been contributing to the society where he has lived. He has been a nomad in his working life as well as in his personal life. Why so? It can partly be explained by Gustav's willingness to take risks, and his longing to become even better. It can partly be explained by the bleeding scar from the little boy's experience of total misrecognition, and his words: "I will show you!" He has shown his capability, his Finnish "sisu" to the degree that it almost has broken him in periods of his

life. The words from Steve Jobs explain how Gustav's professional identity has become formed: he loved what he did professionally.

The attachment, the solidarity with a social group, which recognizes him as a person might have been missing during periods of his working life, due to the many transitions in several countries. Now as a retired person he likes to dress like a laborer and sit in the café talking to other men of his kin, feeling recognized as the lively and clever person he is independent of his working career. He comes back to the village, where he got his childhood scar, and he now is recognized, in a rough way, but he is recognized.

As Honneth writes, you cannot choose your nationality or your ethnicity, but it is important in a person's life to be recognized, and to not lose self-respect and honor. Gustav was a child in the 1950s. It was the post-war period in Finland. The ideal was a hard-working person: it was quite necessary. Gustav has shown his capability, but also his flexibility in adjusting to different cultures, to be always willing to learn new things and to maneuver in new contexts. It is not surprising that he does not want to retire, because his working life has given him payback for the experienced misrecognition of him and his family in a small rural village.

9 Epilogue

Gustav likes to watch YouTube videos about lions. There are two especially touching videos, about a lion cub with an injury trying to follow his family, he walks with short whines. Finally, when almost totally exhausted, his mother accepts him. He is fed. He grows up and becomes a leader of a tribe.[6] The other video with the lion cub left behind his flock, and wandering through the horrors of the night, resembles of the period after Gustav's retirement when he was actively searching for a place to settle down close to some family members.

In this article I have shared a story, which Caine et al (2021, p. 201) call untold: "Stories and experiences that have shaped us so deeply that we have yet to find words for them". This narrative inquiry is but one possible story told about Gustav's professional identity, using Honneth's theory, from misrecognition to recognition. I have created mimesis 3 according to Ricoeur, based on my close relationship with Gustav. Just like the lion cub wandering astray in the night, I think Gustav had to leave his childhood village to realize his full potential and become a lion king, and then return, and for the first time in his life allow himself to settle down without an irresistible longing for something more.

Notes

1 The name is altered to safeguard the teller. He has given permission to me to tell his story and share the pictures and accepted the article (He has member checked).
2 This section is based on an internet source without author: Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition – Exploring your mind (retrieved 29.1.2022).
3 Turnkey Project denotes an assumed total responsibility for a project delivery, planning and construction/building including testing and delivery of the project's key to the customer.
4 CIO denotes Chief Information Officer.
5 Steve Jobs Motivational Speech | Inspirational Video | Entrepreneur Motivation | Startup Stories – YouTube. Retrieved January 29, 2022
6 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=032N-UnbyB4; https://youtu.be/qbttwBLUHQA. There are several more youtube clips, where this lion cub's further life is described.

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CHAPTER 8

A Tender Narrative on Intra-Active Identity Shaping

A Potty Enters a Kindergarten

Alicja R. Sadownik

Abstract

This chapter tells the story of professional identity formation by focusing on a non-human element: a potty. The potty's deeply intertwined with different cultural and institutional contexts, becomes a prism through which the author explores different perceptions, experiences and narratives. These accounts originate from an array of social actors, including a migrant mother, kindergarten teachers, sociologist, special need teacher, kindergarten teacher education students, kindergarten headmasters and parents. In line with the theory of narrative inquiry, the author embraces the notion of human experience as a narrative, emphasizing how the multi-perspective storytelling, with its myriad interpretations and retellings from diverse vantage points, contributes to the shaping of one's identity. However, by acknowledging the agency and a great significance of a non-human element (the potty), this chapter extends the ontological boundaries of narrative inquiry into new pragmatism.

Keywords

tenderness – retelling – diffraction – new pragmatism – potty training – fragments – identity shaping

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It's thanks to tenderness that the teapot starts to talk

OLGA TOKARCZUK (2019)

1 A Tender Narrative

When receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2019, Olga Tokarczuk talked about the mysterious, miraculous, and significant figure of the *tender narrator*.

This is a figure who sees, embraces, and articulates the complexity of our world, and who perceives the "systems of mutual connections and influences of which we are generally unaware, but which we discover by chance, as surprising coincidences or convergences of fate" (Tokarczuk, 2019).

"Tenderness is the most modest form of love", said Tokarczuk. "It appears wherever we take a close and careful look at another being, at something that is not our 'self'" (Tokarczuk, 2019). Writing a tender narrative of one's own identity shaping would then demand that one write through a lens other than that of the "self". However, one would still need to return to the "self" at some point. Such a process requires taking the perspective of another body, another element, or another being that, while not being "the self", closely interacts with and constitutes it. In this text, it is the potty that is the connecting figure, figure activating the *tenderness* that entwines all the stories with each other and relates them to my identity.

According to Tokarczuk (2019), "Tenderness perceives the bonds that connect us, the similarities and sameness between us. It is a way of looking that shows the world as being alive, living, interconnected, cooperating with, and codependent on itself". An interaction that constitutes the existence of all participating elements is what the new materialist Karen Barad (2007) calls *intra-action*. An intra-action is a relation in which the human and nonhuman bodies are impossible to separate, and through which every element involved exists and becomes. All together, we/they create a dynamic, ever-changing, and diffracting entanglement (Barad, 2007).

In this chapter, I will tell and retell a part of this complex entanglement, which consists of the story/stories of my professional identity having been shaped through the *potty*. This means that I write from a position of *New Pragmatism* and thus extend the pragmatic roots of narrative inquiry. *Narrative inquiry*, inspired by classic pragmatism, focuses on the human experience and human story, and even though it sees materiality as inseparable from human experience, the experience remains a human- generated and human-serving phenomenon. Recognising the agency of the nonhuman element – a *potty* – extends the pragmatic base into New Pragmatism, which is open to new materialistic inspirations. However, as this is still a narrative, a story told and retold by myself, other people, the kindergarten staff whom I talked to, and the colleagues and students I solicited opinions from, it is a narrative inquiry into my professional identity shaping.

This means that the stories told and retold by humans are constituted and united by the nonhuman element, the potty, and that we in turn constitute the potty. Through the story of the potty being told and retold from different standpoints and different moments in time, my identity shaping enters diverse SpaceTimes. However, as this shaping has persisted through a never-ending and ever-widening search for *other* fragments that have the power to shed new light on what I thought had been completed, it marked a pattern of telling and re-telling that I still follow along my professional and academic path.

2 The Potty Constituted through the Free Body in a Summer Garden

2.1 *SpaceTime Coordinates: Gdansk Oliwa, July 2013*

M. runs without underwear in the garden of my grandmother. She is playing with water and a ball; she is also runs without underwear in the garden of my grandmother. She is playing with water and a ball; she is also picking and eating all the more or less mature berries growing around. She is asking about the names and ages of the fruit trees that have been in the garden ever since always. Since the weather is stifling, as she moves around, she drinks a lot of water. She feels the cold water flowing through her body and hitting her stomach. "Ohhh, so cold!" she says. Then, she feels and sees her body peeing. As this process is repeated many times during a summer day, she starts recognising the feeling of the pee on its way. In this case, it is a new feeling and sensation "I think I need to pee", she proudly and loudly announces after a few days. Then, she finds herself a place on the grass, under a tree.

The body remembers this feeling indoors. Then, it is the potty that serves as a nice piece of grass under a tree. The potty itself is very different from the nature around it, but the freedom, independence, pride and contact with one own's body seem to feel the same.

One day M. throws an unopen bag of diapers through the window. "The potty told me to", she explains.

3 Telling and Retelling the (Diffracting) Potty

This story is the one that I have in mind when I ask M.'s kindergarten to provide a potty for her. In response, they will serve me a story in which the potty is connected to oppressive potty training and a pedagogy from another SpaceTime. They will connect the potty to other feelings and phenomena. The potty will

become something other than it is to me as it is associated in webs of elements that are from another story that is not mine.

In every story being told and re-told later in the chapter, the potty will be different. Barad (2007) would call such a differentiating process a diffraction, a series of overlapping waves that, despite coming from the same place, are different and spread the difference, like the rings on the water's surface that emerge after a stone is tossed. This would indicate that the stories would be similar in a way. They will be about the potty, but the potty from one story will not mirror the one from the other; in this sense, they will differ.

In Barad's (2007) words: "Whereas the metaphor of reflection reflects the themes of mirroring and sameness, diffraction is marked by patterns of difference" (p. 74). In the told and re-told stories written below, the potty will diffract. It will diffract to the past and will be associated with ways of introducing children to a diaper-free life that are different; it will diffract to temporary kindergartens in Norway that have a lot of diverse potties, and it will diffract back to the garden in Gdansk. The stories are "not in a relation of linear unfolding but threaded through one another in a nonlinear enfolding of spacemattering" (Barad, 2007, p. 244). When enfolding, they will show diverse entanglements constituting and co-constituted by the potty in different SpaceTimes, and these ever-interfering entanglements (and their stories) are paving the way towards the construction of my professional identity.

3.1 *SpaceTime Coordinates: Bergen, September 2013, Monday Morning, My Daughter's Kindergarten*

I have a conversation with one of the staff members at my daughter's unit. It is a unit for older children aged 3–6 years. My daughter, M., is three years old and started attending here the previous month. This morning, I take her inside, and she immediately joins the other children in a puzzle activity. It is good to see her happy after starting kindergarten with the "big children". Seeing that the children are doing well, the teacher comes to me and asks how the morning at home had gone. I say that the morning went well. I also say that M.'s time at home is generally diaper free, as she uses her potty. However, before we left for the kindergarten in the morning, M. asked for a diaper, saying that the toilet there was scary. I ask if the kindergarten could buy a potty, or if I could bring one here for M., so that she does not turn back into being a diapered child solely because of the scary toilet.

The teacher tells me that they have not seen any sign of that M. is uncomfortable with the diaper, and that they are not going to push her to be diaper free. I cannot identify with the idea of a "push", as I cannot remember any kind of push when M. became diaper free in the summer garden ….

3.2 *SpaceTime Coordinates: Bergen, September 2013, Thursday Morning, My Daughter's Kindergarten*

I mention the potty again, which here serves as a continuation of M.'s diaper-free life at home. Another member of the staff tells me that the presence of the potty will only unnecessarily push the children.

3.3 *The Pressure Constituting the Potty and the Potty Constituting the Pressure*

I mention the potty from time to time when seeing that the staff has some time to talk in the morning. M. gets older, and my requests should appear (in my own eyes) to be less and less weird, but instead I can see that the staff start rolling their eyes when the question about the potty slips past my tongue.

"We are done with this conversation", one of the teachers says to me. "In Norway, we do not press the children to be diaper free".

I can feel tell that connecting to potty and my intentions to the phenomenon of the phenomenon of pressure makes me angry. I understand the potty as a facilitator of my daughter's diaper-free life in a kindergarten with a big, old, scary toilet that hinders her from continuing along with the independence and freedom she experienced in the summer garden. Nevertheless, the connection I can see is invisible to the teacher, as is the scariness of the toilet. The only connection they see is the one between the potty and the pedagogy of old focused on pressuring children to achieve the next developmental level. A potty seems to exist in their story only in relation to oppression, and not at all as a possible rescuer, liberating children from the oppression of the scary toilet ….

I insist on the possibility of telling my story of the potty and presenting the connections with which I see it intertwined. My potty deserves to be heard. I ask for a meeting during which our stories and experiences could intermingle with each other.

4 Narrative Inquiry: A Relational Methodology of Experience as a Story

Narrative inquiry grows out of the notion that the human experience of the world is narrative, and that we humans make sense of the world through narratives (Dewey, 1938; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) have noted:

> People shape their daily lives through stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story … is the

> portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. (p. 477)

Experience is, then, "a storied phenomenon" (Clandinin et al., 2016, p. 11), or "a conscious interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39), which is "lived in the midst, as always unfolding over time, in diverse social contexts and in place, and as co-composed in relation" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 575). Thus, the sense that is made out of an experience and the experience itself are inseparable. This unity is, however, dynamic and subject to change, as new or other elements are recalled while stories are told and re-told across social contexts and groups. Narrative inquiry is thus "the study of experience as a story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477).

Narrative inquiry, however, regards individual stories as dialectical and contextual. This means that individual stories are both constituted by and constitutive of an individual's social, cultural, material, spatial, and institutional contexts. Individuals' stories are, on the one hand, framed by their context, but on the other hand, they can change and/or challenge them. In other words, "the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals' experience, but also the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42). Individuals' stories, as told and re- told in different settings, can thus both confirm and/or challenge social, cultural, or institutional contexts.

Telling and re-telling one's own story and one's own experience also prevent the hegemony of one's own story. This particular hegemony can be challenged by any of the three dimensions that constitute narrative inquiry: *temporality*, *place*, and *sociality* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Temporality permits the re- telling of a story at different times in one's own life or others' lives. Those "others" who are somehow involved in our story constitute the dimension of sociality. The people to whom we are related can make their own stories, through which our stories are re-told, or which inspire us to retell our stories. As people and experiences are not only created within a culture and society, but also have a spatial and material anchoring, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to the place as a constative aspect of narrative inquiry. Places inspire and influence relationships between people (*sociality*), and these relationships shape places over time (*temporality*). The dynamics between these three dimensions create a basis for the narrative inquiry's sensitivity and respect for all the (sometimes contradictory) stories of all the humans (and places) involved in an experience.

In this chapter, I propose extending the place to account for *materiality*, as a category that can embrace not only spatial or geographical dimensions, but all kinds of material elements that facilitate and inspire relationships between people, relationships that again can shape and re-shape the materiality. This would indicate that I am redefining the constitutive elements of narrative inquiry in terms of *temporality*, *sociality*, and *materiality*, by which I precisely suggest that narrative inquiry can be inspired by a new materialism, which would allow it to embrace stories that disappear when humans occupy the centre of our focus.

As narrative inquiry builds on pragmatism, the new materialistic inspirations must be first discussed in relation to pragmatism (which has developed recently into the so-called new pragmatism), and then we will turn to narrative inquiry itself.

4.1 *Tracing New Materialism in Narrative Inquiry and (New) Pragmatism*

Pragmatism is clear about the crucial role of the material context and moving bodies in creating (learning) experiences and opportunities for reflection (Lovejoy, 1922). Dewey's (1938) "learning by doing" highlights the importance of interacting with real-life objects and communities when intending to create meaningful experiences. Through this notion, Dewey also redefined experiences. Specifically, an experience was no longer "too casual and sporadic in its occurrence to carry with it any impositions regarding the nature of Nature" (Dewey, 1958, p. 1a), but rather something through which Nature was accessible for human beings. In this way, classic pragmatism became new. This new version was anti-Cartesian, disconnected from the analytical continental philosophy, and brought learning out of sterile classrooms and (back) to the midst of real life, real objects, and real people in their interactions with each other and diverse objects. According to pragmatism, an experience can never happen in isolation from the context, which implies that pragmatism has (always?) assumed the crucial and active, if not constitutive, role of establishing the social and material surroundings in human meaning-making. What is then so new about the New Pragmatism?

It is difficult to say, as New Pragmatism borrows a lot from classic pragmatism such as the importance of context and practical bearings (Malachowski, 2010). However, the *newness* of New Pragmatism seems to lie in its deeper awareness of how the context is perceived, and in attuning to the present-day ethos (Malachowski, 2010, p. 3). New Pragmatism disconnects with the classic pragmatism's anthropocentric account of inquiry (Stout, 2007). Experience as "a set of human activities answerable only to human interests" (Stout, 2007,

p. 8), and serving human needs is seen as narcissistic (Johnston, 1993) and not in line with the ethics of sustainability. Moreover, New Pragmatism is more sensitive to the non-universal character of human experience and is consistent with the notion that experienced truths differ from culture to culture, and person to person (Malachowski, 2010).

Awareness of the limits of classic pragmatism's anthropocentrism and arbitrariness results in an inter-relational perspective of experience, whereby both the materiality of the human body and the materiality around the body, as well as their inseparability, come to matter as crucial for the experience (Grosz, 2017; Kennedy, 2003; Massumi, 2002; Rajchman, 2000a, 2000b). This new material inspiration for New Pragmatism highlights the material nature of experience, which involves biological and molecular events that take place in the body and the physical and imagined space between the person and their materiality. "Affect and sensation are material" (Kennedy, 2003, p. 16), and bodies do have "affective somatic responses" (Grosz & Eisenman, 2003, p. XIV), which means that our experiences do not need verbal/cognitive representation to be real or valid. This (new) material perspective on experience means that New Pragmatism is open to "inner ways of knowing" as "transforming relations with outer events, selves, objects and ideas" (Ellsworth, 2004, p. 8). In such interactions, the distinction between the outer and inner dimensions of the human body becomes blurred, leaky, porous, and less valid; however, the self and the other are still there, intermingling with each other (Hackett et al., 2020), intra-acting, and thus constituting each other's existence (Barad, 2007).

Narrative inquiry takes departure from classic pragmatism, but in its own way of conceptualising experience, it seems to have already made a place for the new pragmatic inspirations, by underlining the importance of nonhuman aspects and actors in storytelling. In fact, narrative inquiry's openness to the story's *temporality*, *place* (materiality), and *sociality* is based on an understanding of experience as a relational phenomenon in which relationships do not only happen at the human-human level, and all the more- than-human elements are ethically responsible for each other (Barad, 2007, p. 294). Moreover, when the experience is seen as a story, paradoxically, it also includes the richness of the unspoken "affective somatic responses" (Grosz & Eisenman, 2001, p. XIV). In my understanding, narrative inquiry, in line with New Pragmatism, welcomes human experiences as intertwining different human and nonhuman bodies, SpaceTimes, and socialities in a tender, generous, and ethical way. However, this openness is underarticulated, which is why I highlight that conducting this narrative inquiry on the theoretical grounds of New Pragmatism (not pragmatism) does not place me outside of the process. Quite the opposite, since taking departure from New Pragmatism, I strengthen the

important assumptions of narrative inquiry, in that a story is a more-than-human phenomenon that is entangled with the complexities of human-nonhuman beings.

4.2 *"It's Not about Me as a Person" She Says. "It Is about the Fear of Toilets That I Had as a Child, and That Many Children Have without Saying a Word", Says M.* (*Ethical Commitments*)

The *tender narrator* is able to go beyond oneself and embrace connections that usually do not (come to) matter in the daily rush of everyday life. Perceiving the connection between the children's fear and the old toilet requires tenderness. "Many children are afraid of toilets", says M., "and many do not say a word about it. I did not either".

A *tender narrator* will be able to present this fear with the greatest respect to the person revealing such an affect. A *tender narrator* will not manipulate the audience by imposing particular emotions, standpoints, or opinions on them. The *tender narrator* would rather enhance curiosity and express gratitude for being introduced to another story, another "knowing", and another way of interconnecting diverse elements in the more-than-human world. In making neglected and silent narratives heard, the act of telling the stories that are not verbalised or do not find their voice in the power- influenced contexts lies in the ethical responsibility of narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2013), as well as the broader tradition of narrative research in general (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). This is what makes narrative inquiry a tender, relational methodology that is sensitive to the diverse connections involved in an experience.

M. sees the connection between the toilet and fear and is willing to share her thoughts: "I think that telling the story may help the kindergartens to think about it … I don't actually think that they think about it very often". She does not see this as a story about herself, but instead views it as a story about an experience of a child-self, the publishing of which is important for the sake of other children, and their kindergartens that want to be good places for them. This is at the same time a story of M., as it is the story of a child's experience. This is a story of me, as it is a story of a migrant parent experience of being misunderstood. I do not anonymise ourselves here, as we have the right to our own experience, just as all other children and migrant parents have the right to their own experiences and should not hide them or attempt to escape from them. In a book relating narrative inquiry to one's own identity shaping, it would, in a way, be unfair to present this story as a story of someone else. Narrative inquiry empowers us to tell our own stories as our own, and with our own awareness and consent, the process is also in line with the Norwegian and international guidelines for research ethics.

By empowering us to tell our stories in the first person, narrative enquiry enables us to relate to others. It is a relational methodology, full of tenderness and respect, and its dimension of sociality embraces M. as she relates to other children and me as I relate to other migrant parents. By telling and re-telling the potty story as ourselves, we intend to extend the kindergartens' perceptions of some of the children's affects/fears and the complexity of parental requests. This story is also told to embrace all the (migrant) parents who have felt misunderstood in their questions and requests, and who maybe did not have the energy or the opportunity to retell their stories and gain access to different, diffracting counter-stories related to their experiences.

Listening to how one's own story is re-told also allows one to rethink one's own ways of telling one's own story. The first responses I received from the kindergarten diffracted my story far away from the intended meaning to the Space-Time of oppressive potty training and the pedagogy of pressuring the children to achieve the next developmental step. Being so misunderstood moved me to prepare myself for the meeting by telling and re-telling my story, so I could begin to understand where and why my story got twisted. Writing the potty story, however, is also based on the intention of allowing the kindergartens to reflect on how their short, summative responses affect the caregivers, and that it needs a *tender ear* to truly understand the complexity of the experience transmitted in a parental request, in a second language.

What limits my tenderness is my inability to understand the kindergarten's point of view. The experience of being so deeply misunderstood affects me, and this affect is material (Kennedy, 2003), physically narrowing my perspective and thus the tenderness of the story as it is told and re-told below.

5 Telling and Retelling the Directing Fragments of the Potty

As it turned out, the meeting with the kindergarten staff (the one I asked for) was not possible within a week. I then decided to ask some of my Norwegian friends and colleagues about their own opinions, stories, and experiences of the potty. As it was a personal issue involving me as a mother, I was trying to approach people who I thought would understand – not necessarily understand in terms of sharing my point of view, but understand in the sense that people may experience a particular phenomenon differently.

5.1 *My Story of the Happy Child Becoming Diaper Free*

A friend of mine, a sociologist of migration and a mother herself, was the first person I approached. I re-told the story about M., who ran without underwear

the entire summer in my grandmother's garden in Gdansk, and who in that context could feel and see her body peeing, and thus simply remembered the feeling of peeing being on its way. "The pee is on its way", she used to say, and after a while, she started asking for a potty instead of watering the trees in the garden. After coming back to Bergen, we continued using the potty, and I could see a child who was happy about feeling control over a new function in her own body and becoming diaper free. This changed, however, when kindergarten started.

I thought that being diaper free would suit the transition to the unit for older children (aged 3–6), but M. wanted a diaper already at the very start. She told me that, before summer, they showed them the toilet at the new unit, and it was so big and a bit shaky, and a boy who wanted to try to sit on it felt in. This had a big impression on M. and scared her. She wanted to stay as far away as possible from this toilet, and a diaper seemed to her to be a good idea …

… While I thought that continuing to become diaper free would be an even better one, which is why I asked the kindergarten for the potty and was misunderstood as asking to impose traumatising pressure on my daughter.

5.2 *A Friend's Story about Migrant Families and Oppressive Toilet Training*

"I think the kindergarten is right here", said my friend, the sociologist of migration.

> In Norway, we don't push children to use the toilet, and they can use the diapers as long as they want, which is why diapers are so cheap here. Even the Swedish come to Norway to buy diapers. Parents from other countries usually put a great deal of pressure on their children to be diaper free, either because of money or other issues. Here, we are done with oppressive toilet training.

As I was hearing this, I must say that it was excruciating … If such a well-educated person, aware of all the diverse cultural ideals of childcare, did not understand my point, I thought that no one would.

The potty diffracted again to the constellation, where it was so closely related to an oppressive and pushy upbringing with which Norway as a nation was done. This repetition made me think that such an interpretation may indeed be the Norwegian way of seeing the potty. As the worst that could happen was only having this constellation of meaning confirmed, I felt more courageous to ask other people for their opinions and points of view. I got in touch with a special needs teacher, Karoline, who I used to work with in my previous workplace, the Psychological-Pedagogical Services, where special needs teachers

are tasked with visiting schools and kindergartens in the entire municipality. In Karoline's story, the potty diffracted to a completely different entanglement, where it was connected to different elements, values, and pedagogies.

5.3 *The Taboo Potty – The Story of a Special Needs Teacher*

Karoline told me that together with the very positive turn in pedagogy – the turn underlying the child as a subject and agent in his or her own development and formation – toilet training had become taboo. The new story of the competent child was implemented in the kindergartens as an appreciation of children-initiated behaviour and a significant reduction in adult-initiated activities. It also ended the power of developmental psychology that, through developmental goals, generated pushy expectations for children of particular ages to be able to do/perform/show particular things. The new story of the competent child thus puts all the adult work facilitating children's development and well-being into the shadows. The competent child silenced the importance of the adults creating explorative and stimulating learning environments, as the child was developing on his or her own terms. This allowed us to think that the child would find the diaper-free life him/herself, and in such a context, the potty became a symbol of pressure rather than an artefact inspiring the toilet-scared children to try a diaper-free life.

The potty as a symbol of developmental psychology and its pressure lives in many Norwegian kindergartens, said Karoline, which is why the pedagogues do not want to be involved in any aspect of helping children to become diaper free. They do not ask how it happened that the potty was connected to pressure. It is simply connected to such pressure, and discussing it, is taboo. This results, however, in many children not gaining access to situations where they can become more familiar with their own body and its functions, such as peeing. Karoline also said that the way I facilitated M's becoming diaper-free in the grandmother's garden was actually very much in line with the Norwegian pedagogy! Karoline did not detect any pressure in my story, but instead only said that I had facilitated the child's access to feeling this function in her body.

Karoline also told me about cases when she, as a special needs teacher, has been called in to work with five-year-olds who had never in their lives had the possibility of being without a diaper … and then both the parents and kindergartens begin thinking that it was high time to be done with the diapers, because school was starting soon. No normal child can start school with a diaper on, the teachers and parents say. In such a context, it is unimaginable for any of them to say, "Let him keep the diaper as long as he wants", as they may realise that they did not provide the child with sufficient opportunities to become diaper free (even though they would not admit it). The shorter the

time to the start of school, the more of an emergency it is. Then, it is the special needs teacher – like Karoline – who has two weeks to fix the problem, and this process starts with giving the child a lot of "saft" (water with a sweet, flavoured syrup) so that they drink a lot. Normally, the "saft" is not allowed in the kindergarten, but becoming diaper free before school is apparently more important than healthy teeth, so it is allowed in. The school start is enough of a reason for suddenly pushing the child and using sugar as an extra motivation. The child can drink more of a sweet liquid than water, so the chance of the pee coming is increased. About 15 minutes after drinking 2–3 glasses, the child and the pedagogue go to the toilet and wait together for the pee to come, so that the child learns to experience the feeling in the body. Then, this process is repeated over and over again, in two weeks, so that the "I need to pee" feeling is remembered. Karoline says that it works, but each day seems to be too long, both for the parents and the kindergarten staff.

Karoline experienced a lot of pressure in this job. "They would tell me that they had a normally developed child, though, and ask me why it is taking so long. In their opinion, it should have happened much faster", she said. Karoline told me that she always wanted to respond to such parents and kindergarten teachers by saying it was they who had made the normally developed child "delayed" in the development by not providing any situations where the child could feel their own body or feel their own pee coming. The reason for such unnecessary "delays" is the potty taboo in some of the kindergartens.

The way the potty diffracts in Karoline's story entwines and overlaps with mine. It also reveals that there is no one Norwegian story about the potty … that within this socio-cultural context, the potty is functioning in at least two constellations, which connect the potty to diverse values and pedagogies. This inspired me to seek out more stories diffracting the potty to more and more different entanglements. As my meeting with the kindergarten was postponed again (because of sickness in the personal group), I had the chance to present the potty story in one of my lectures with second grade kindergarten teacher education students, in which parental collaboration was the topic.

5.4 *Diverse Potty-Entanglements and Diffractive Stories: Pedagogy Class with Second-Grade Kindergarten Teacher Education Students*

As this teaching session was not conducted as a way of "helping me with my case", but was instead a matter of accessing theoretical perspectives in collaboration with parents, the potty story was contextualised with diverse research and reports that created a standpoint from which such an empirical case (i.e., the potty) could be discussed with/by the students.

The theoretical knowledge presented to the students was first related to Norwegian steering documents (UDIR, 2017), which underline the importance of strong collaboration with parents in early childhood education and care (ECEC). The Norwegian Framework Plan for Kindergarten (UDIR, 2017) highlights *cooperation* and *agreement* with a child's home as essential aspects of the partnership between caregivers and ECEC staff. Again, such a relationship facilitates the child's all-round development (UDIR, 2017), referring to their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development and well-being. Moreover, "the kindergarten must seek to prevent the child from experiencing conflicts of loyalty between home and kindergarten" (UDIR, 2017, p. 29), and "the best interests of the child shall always be the primary consideration in all co-operation between the home and the kindergarten" (UDIR, 2017, p. 29). Parent-empowering policies seem to have grown out of general agreement in the international research community on overall learning and well-being related, long- and short-term benefits of parental involvement in early childhood education (Garvis et al., 2021; Sadownik & Višnjić Jevtić, 2023).

Nevertheless, parents from cultural and ethnic minorities and migrant backgrounds seem to be much less involved in education of their children (Leareau & McNamara Horvat, 1999; Solberg, 2018; Sønsthagen, 2020) and are perceived by professionals as more difficult to collaborate with (Glasser, 2018). This is explained by the discourses of the cultural majority underpinning the daily functioning of ECE settings (De Gioia, 2015; Solberg, 2018; Van Laere & Vandenbroeck, 2017; Van Laere, Van Houtte, & Vandenbroeck, 2018), which have been shown to exclude or silence caregivers from minority backgrounds (Sadownik & Višnjić Jevtić, 2023). Thinking of the same discursive mechanisms silencing my potty request, I rewrote the potty story and presented it to the students as a case. Keeping in mind that parental collaboration should focus on the "best interest of the child" (UDIR, 2017, p. 29), I made M. the main character of the story:

> M. is a three-year-old girl who started with a unit for children between the ages of three and six this autumn. She spent the major part of the summer running diaper free in the garden of her great-grandmother in Gdansk. Her mother was happy to see her running and realising how her body feels "when pee is on its way". "Pee is on its way" is what M. started to say before watering the trees in the garden. Knowing that the pee was on its way also made her ask for a potty in due time. After coming back to Norway, she continued to be diaper free at home, but before going to kindergarten, she asks

for a diaper. She explains to her mother that before the summer, the staff showed the children the toilet in the "older children unit", and it was very scary. It was big, and it shook. One boy fell into it when trying to sit on it. M. thinks that the diaper would be the best way to avoid the toilet. Her mother thinks, however, that the possibility of using a potty would be even better, as it would allow M. to continue being diaper free, and at the same time not force her to use the toilet that she is so scared of. The mother takes up the potty issue during an informal conversation with the teacher when bringing M. to the kindergarten. The teacher responds that the kindergarten does not see any sign that M. is uncomfortable with the diaper, and that they are not going to put any pressure on her to be diaper free. The mother feels very surprised with how her potty request was twisted and how the big, scary, shaking toilet is not seen as a problem. The mother insists on a meeting another day, but she wonders how to make her point. What should she consider important? What is it that she doesn't know, and what she should know? What kind of argument should she use, and how should she present it?

Right after this potty story is presented, one student comments as follows: "Something like this would never happen in Norway. We don't have scary toilets for children". Another student adds, "And we help them to become independent, so we will use the potty – that is our pedagogy". The potty diffracts right away from the constellation in which I put it, and it definitely loses its migrant character. The pro-potty and against-potty attitudes turn out not to be aligned with the cultural or administrative borders of the different countries. However, in order to discover this, telling and re-telling and not silencing the "migrant" potty was necessary.

As more and more voices in the classroom point out the unrealistic nature of this case in the Norwegian context, I reveal that this is my own story, and I have a meeting with my daughter's kindergarten the next week. This news completely changes the climate and engagement in the classroom. Knowing that the case is real, and that it is about a real girl, M., the students become incredibly engaged and start discussing the issue in groups very emotionally. Their engagement and affect resonate in the air, and the experience is material. After 45 minutes of group work, they can take a break, but no one leaves the classroom. They continue discussing the potty. The potty keeps them sitting in the classroom and interacting with each other. "Bring us to the meeting", says one student. "We cannot allow the child's development to be stopped because of a shaky toilet and a lack of a potty", says another.

Seeing that the students need some bigger sheets of paper to write down their ideas, I go down to a book shop and purchase some. The discussion groups are supposed to present their ideas soon. In the meantime, it turns out that one student called her mother, who happens to be the headmaster of a kindergarten in another region of Norway. This headmaster now has time to share her opinion with us on the phone, and the student asks if we could get her mother on the loudspeaker. We do, and the potty diffracts again, but this time to another SpaceTime, where it is connected to individualisation and the facilitation of the child's exploration and well-being ….

5.5 *The Rainbow of Potties Enabling Us to Meet Each Child – The Story of the Headmaster*

The soundwaves of headmaster's (Tove) voice entering the classroom through her daughter's phone draw a picture of diverse potties occupying the bathrooms in her kindergarten. They are potties of different colours and shapes, of different heights and textures. They are actually the elements that make the bathroom able to be used by the children. Regardless of recent renovations and everything being small, child-friendly, and brand-new, many of the children are afraid of toilets, which is why the kindergarten invited a diversity of potties. Their colours invite the children to try and explore a diaper-free life on their own premises. The potties are, however, not alone in the bathroom; they are in the company of books. Tove tells us about a bookshelf in the bathroom that makes it easy to grab a book and read something while waiting for the pee to come. Tove is also afraid that such a way of connecting the potty to exploration and individualisation is not the most common, and that she herself, as a kindergarten leader, needed to work with the staff to establish this constellation of meanings.

A potty can be easily associated with the old, unifying practice where all the children were supposed to sit on the potty and pee at the same time, and then one book was loudly read to all of them, she says. This is something that turns out to be traumatising for many children and is no longer practiced. Tove thinks, however, that the kindergartens are not themselves completely pressure-free in this respect. The kindergartens still ask everyone to go to the toilet before going on a trip or before going outside. There are traces of routines and pressure, but the potty is held to be innocent. In Tove's kindergarten, the potty materialises individualisation and the kindergarten's adjustment to the child's needs during the transition from the diaper to the toilet.

We all take notes on what the headmaster says. This turns out to be very much in line with what the groups would present, as they pointed to the

framework plan (concerning all-round development and the prevention of loyalty conflicts) and the literature on spaces and artefacts that stimulate development. The groups also emphasise the importance of the children becoming independent on their own terms, which brings forth the potty as a symbol of institutional adjustment to the child's transition from the diaper to the toilet. I am humbled. I am amazed. I feel thankful for the synergy between the students' and the headmaster's stories, and I feel thankful for the tenderness that allowed the students to understand my story and explain why I might have been misunderstood. I am thankful – both as an academic teacher and as a mother – for the diverse diffractions of the potty that we witnessed and learned from.

5.6 *Potty Diffracting between Kindergarten Staff: SpaceTime Coordinates – November 2013, M.'s Kindergarten*

The kindergarten teacher from M.'s unit meets me at the entrance and follows me to the meeting room. Other teachers and the headmaster are already there. An unusual number of staff members as for such a meeting. The headmaster starts by saying that she knows that something controversial about the potty training is the reason for which we are meeting, and she wants me to present my case, and my reason for asking for this conversation.

I start by explaining how I had asked about the possibility of having a potty for M. in the kindergarten's bathroom several times, but my request was rejected, and I got the impression that I was being misunderstood. Then, I retell the story of the happy M. becoming diaper free in my grandmother's garden. I describe how the diaper-free life continued through the use of the potty indoors. The potty even made M. throw an unopen box of diapers through the window. However, after returning to kindergarten again, M. started to ask for the diaper to avoid the scary, shaking toilet there. I suggest that the potty could work as a supporter in her transition to a diaper-free life.

The pedagogues exchange looks, and some eyebrows are lifted, so I diffract with the potty and tell the past story of it. I tell them that I am aware of the old routine, where all children were to sit on their potties at the same time, peeing or waiting to pee, without being allowed to leave before the book was read through by the teacher. I also tell them about children's fears and how serious they can be, and that being scared of a big and shaky toilet is both real and not unusual. I say that this fear is why M. is so comfortable with her diaper in kindergarten. I try to underline the connection between the diaper's comfort and the fear of the toilet, as in their talks before, they highlighted her being comfortable (not seeing that she seeks this comfort in response to fear). The diaper was the thing rescuing her from the scariest thing there, which was the toilet. I tell them how strange it feels for a mother, who is also a teacher, to see

that a diaper-free child is pretending to be a diapered one in an institution that is supposed to support her all-round development and well-being. I use the quotes from the framework plan selected by my students, and I underline the kindergarten's responsibility for preventing loyalty conflicts. I again suggest the function of the potty as an individualisation of the pedagogical offering in this kindergarten and as a way of helping M.'s transition from the diaper to the toilet.

The headmaster wonders what I heard from the staff before that made me coming so well prepared for this meeting. I say that during the short answers in the wardrobe when bringing or picking up M., I got the feeling that I was being misunderstood, as I was said that in Norway, there was no pressure for the children to become diaper free. The teacher said that they in the staff group thought of pressure and the old routines when I mentioned the potty. They said that the professional team did not reflect on or discuss toilet training at all. It was considered a kind taboo to be covered with phrases like, "We allow children to use diapers as long as they want", or "In this country, we are done with the oppressive toilet training". These phrases, impeding rather than initiating any kind of reflection, allowed for the entanglement in which the potty remained connected to oppression. It goes without saying that we do not talk about it, they admitted, which made me think that indeed, this constellation of meaning attached to the potty was not able to be changed, as it had never been brought to light. The pedagogues then say that after hearing me, they see the necessity of the potty in M.'s case, and that it actually may encourage more children to be diaper free. These children may also be hiding from the scary toilet, and thus not showing any interest in exploring the diaper-free life.

The headmaster nicks her head and states that, pedagogically speaking, it seems necessary, but she diffracts the potty to another dimension (that of the kindergarten's contract with the cleaning services).

5.7 *The Uncleanable Potty*

The potty turns out not to be in the list of elements washed by the cleaning services, and it is the municipality that coordinates this contract. Any changes within the contract will only be possible after the new budget year. They obviously cannot have a dirty potty in the bathroom, and she cannot impose washing the potty on any of the staff either. I ask if washing the potty could be a part of parental engagement. In other words, I was wondering if I could wash the potty when picking M. up or if I could cover this part of the invoice that the kindergarten gets from the cleaning company. The teachers suggested that they could put it in a plastic bag and hang it on M.'s hook before pick-up time, so I could take it home and wash it there. I agreed with this.

From September 2013 to June 2014, I am the mother who delivers and picks up both a child and a potty. The plastic bag always contains a bit of water, as the staff turns to washing the potty themselves. I just sanitise it at home to comply with the hygiene rules that the kindergarten must follow.

5.8 *Potty Makes a New Bathroom*

Other parents, seeing me bearing the potty, ask a lot of questions, and in turns out that there have been more of us with similar issues. In June 2014, the bathroom was renovated and equipped with a smaller toilet, which is stable and nicer. Moreover, a special place for home-brought potties was introduced … M.'s was just the first one, but obviously not the last one. M.'s potty paved the way for many more – as many as the children need on their transitions to a diaper-free life.

6 Identity Shaped in Intra-Action: Let's Trust the Fragments … Let Them Diffract (Us)

I have never seen my identity as something that could ever be completed. It is a process, rather than a thing, a dynamic process rather than a stable one, *ipse* rather than *idem* (Ricoeur, 1995). It is a narrative that changes its flow when meeting a new fragment that opens up new connections between meaning and matters. The potty is an experience that made me aware of myself as a person and academic with particular narrative-seeking behaviour, especially when meeting constellations of elements that differ from mine.

Specifically when confronted with a radically different story, some fragments are necessary to build a bridge, to connect "mine" with the "other" that is so different. It is widely known that to understand each other, we need to talk, and pedagogy is a field where dialogue is appreciated. Narrative inquiry, however, offers a peculiar approach to dialogue as the telling and re- telling of experiences. It is an experience co-constructed in intra-actions among more-than-humans in a more-than-human world. Telling and re-telling such understood experiences allows us to see how codependent we are on each other (not only other humans, but other elements) and how great the need of tenderness is to appreciate these connections.

The story of the potty also shows me the limits of my tenderness. Appreciating some connections that I spotted as marginalised and invisible by the kindergarten, I devaluated those assumed by the kindergarten that day. I had a need "to be right" … and I wanted my, and not any other, story to happen. I did not diffract from my own story in that case. However, seeing the kindergarten

diffracting from their original meaning to the other, I saw that there is no harm in diffracting and allowing new fragments to change my story. This happened to me another time, but the potty story made me especially sensitive to moments when I was diffracting, when I was letting go of the assumptions of my story's hegemony (Ewick & Silbey, 1995), and when the experience allowed me to grow. The kindergarten's way of diffracting from their way of perceiving the potty exhibited a wonderful growth that materialised itself in the new bathroom space and revised institutional practices.

The potty story also made me more aware of my theoretical and methodological diffraction. I understood that my research interest is not only found inside my own head or derived from meetings with other scientists, but that it is co-constituted in the dynamic entanglements with the early childhood education sector's materiality, needs, and taboos, as well as the diverse tensions in the theoretical field. The early childhood education field seems to need diverse theoretical and methodological diffractions to meet the children where they are, both in daily actions and in their sets of connections with the more-than-human world; also, the kindergarten staff need to be met in the dynamic of their work, in their persistent reflection that continuously improves and changes the practice. It is also essential to interact with the spaces of the kindergartens that co-constitute the human experience taking place within them.

I am a diffracting early childhood researcher, continuously intra-acting with new pieces of stories that are never completed, ever-widening, and always waiting for one more fragment to come to make the existing ones "talk" and intra-act with each other.

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CHAPTER 9

She's the Lion King!

Sidsel Boldermo

Abstract

In this autobiographical narrative inquiry, which is framed within the three-dimensional space of temporality, sociality and place, the author takes us back to her earliest memories of being a child – and of being a teacher – in kindergarten. Parallel to retelling these memories, the author reflects on how the kindergarten as an institution has developed in Norway, and on what belonging to kindergarten can imply for children as well as for teachers.

Through the unpacking and analysis of critical events based on memories and turning points, the author focuses on the development of her own professional identity.

Keywords

narrative inquiry – kindergarten – professional identity – children – place

1 Introduction

I am a kindergarten teacher, a special needs teacher and a teacher educator. Through looking in retrospect at my years of working as a teacher in kindergarten, I have realized how a turning point early in my career played a role in my development of a professional identity as a teacher and educator.

This chapter is based on the unpacking and analysis of a personal story of being a teacher in kindergarten. Rather than 'research question', narrative researcher Jean Clandinin used the concept of 'research puzzle' (Clandinin, 2013), which indicates that the process of thinking narratively about one's own experiences is different, and thus offers different entrances to knowledge, from other methodologies.

My overall research puzzle is shaped by several stories of being teacher in kindergarten. I have chosen to tell and unpack one story to analyze how this experience contributed to developing my identity as a teacher and, later, a special needs teacher. Clandinin (2015) observed that a teacher's personal practical

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knowledge is found in her previous experiences, in her body and mind, and in her future plans and actions. Given this, my early experiences as a kindergarten teacher contributed to shaping my personal practical knowledge, incorporating it into my body and mind as something that affected my thoughts and actions in future contexts (Clandinin, 2015; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

2 Narrative Beginnings: Being a Child and a Teacher in Kindergarten

As this autobiographical narrative inquiry of mine focuses on the development of my professional identity, I will start by looking into the past. Clandinin (2013) stated that a narrative inquirer must strive to engage in his or her own narrative beginnings to understand who he or she is (and is going to be) in relation to particular phenomena. The obvious pivotal phenomenon in my professional career is the kindergarten. All my education at higher levels – bachelor's, master's degree, and PhD – is connected either to children in kindergarten or to teaching in kindergarten. The same goes for almost all my years as an employee. Still, it had to start somewhere, and my first encounter with kindergarten as a place and as an institution was not as a teacher, but as a child.

As a child, I attended kindergarten on a regular basis when I was five to six years old. I was not at all happy to be in the kindergarten. I felt abandoned and misplaced. One memory stands out, and I do not know whether it was part of a routine or just a one-time happening: after lunch, we children were sent outdoors to play until our parents came to pick us up. Before we could enter the playground, the teacher gathered us on the stairs, where we were supposed to sit close together with folded hands, singing the farewell song "Ha takk o Gud for dagen" (Thank you, God, for this day). I strongly remember the anxious feeling in my chest and tummy while singing this song, waiting to be picked up and taken home to family and friends.

After leaving the kindergarten at the age of seven to start school and an educational course that would last for many years, I do not remember ever having thought about or reflected upon anything concerning kindergarten, neither as a place nor as an institution, until I somewhat randomly signed up for the education to become a kindergarten teacher. Originally, I wanted to be a librarian. However, at that time, the only possibility for me to attend the librarian study program required moving to the capital, 100 miles south of where I was born and raised. I really did not feel comfortable with that idea, especially since none of my friends were moving in that direction. Then, as a friend of mine told me that she would be moving some 70 miles north of home

to begin teacher education, I joined her. I did not actually reflect on 'becoming a teacher' until several months into the study. This hesitant and distancing attitude (as well as doubt) followed me throughout my years of study to become a teacher in kindergarten.

Later, when I was a young, newly qualified, and newly hired teacher in kindergarten, the responsibility, and the expectations that I should already assume an expert role felt rather uncomfortable. The kindergarten at which I worked was a large, urban, public kindergarten. Due to its central location, children from all parts of the city attended this kindergarten. Thus, there was a great diversity in the families' backgrounds and social conditions. Attending meetings with child welfare workers, youth psychiatrists, speech therapists and psychologists became part of the routine. It was time consuming and overwhelming.

3 Wondering about My Beginnings

The kindergarten as an institution and as a place has been (and still is) the common denominator associated with my professional life. When I attended kindergarten as a child at the age of five, this was quite unusual; in 1975, only about 2.8% of Norwegian children attended kindergarten (Statistics Norway, 2022). Historically, the Norwegian kindergarten's main idea was based on Fröbel's thinking about raising young children in freedom and democracy, and where play should have a fundamental role. In 1975 came the first kindergarten act, and the purpose of this law was to ensure children's opportunities for development and activity in close understanding and cooperation with the children's homes. Further, this law required that leaders of staff should be educated as preschool teachers.

During my first years of working as a teacher, several political changes impacted the kindergarten as an institution, including getting its own curriculum in 1996. In the early 1990s, when I started working as a kindergarten teacher, about 35% of all children under school age attended kindergarten; this increased to almost 60% in 1995 (Statistics Norway, 2022). I was still working in the kindergarten as a special needs teacher in 2006, which was the year when the Norwegian kindergarten as an institution was politically transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education. This transfer implied that the kindergarten as an institution became part of the Norwegian educational system. During the last two years before I left the kindergarten as a workplace, two additional important changes took place within the sector. One change was that, from 2009, attending kindergarten became a statutory right. The second change

occurred the following year, when a new mission statement, based on the same values as those of primary school, was adopted for kindergartens in 2010 (NOU, 2010, p. 8).

Today it has been 13 years since I left teaching in kindergarten, and the kindergarten as a place and institution has changed and developed since then. During my first years of working as a kindergarten teacher, the kindergarten's mandate, according to the 1996 curriculum, was to safeguard children under the age of compulsory education and provide good opportunities for development within close cooperation with the children's parents. Furthermore, the kindergarten should help raise the children in accordance with basic Christian values. According to the current 2017 curriculum, the kindergarten's mandate has totally changed. The 2017 curriculum's core values state that childhood, in itself, has intrinsic value. Further, this curriculum states that kindergarten should work in partnership and agreement with children's homes to meet children's needs for care and play, and to promote learning and formative development as a basis for all-round development.

The verb *to raise*, which was employed several times in both the 1996 curriculum and the 2011 curriculum, is completely gone in the 2017 curriculum. Thus, expectations of the role of kindergarten teachers have undergone major changes.

4 Becoming a Teacher

My narrative beginnings reveal tensions in the forms of doubt, reluctance and lack of wellbeing connected both to being a child, student, and teacher in the kindergarten as an institution. Mello, Murphy and Clandinin (2016) see tensions as spaces with the potential for inquiry and as opportunities to explore 'what is happening here?' Presenting stories of her own narrative beginnings shaped into four temporal sections, Clandinin shares fragments from each section, and, in the section on her period of becoming a teacher, Clandinin writes: "Becoming a teacher. Teachers belong in schools. Leaving one world. Entering another" (Mello et al., 2016, p. 570).

To me, this fragment is perfectly meaningful, because it conveys something fundamental concerning human wellbeing in the process of transitions and taking on new roles. Drawing on this fragment of Clandinin (Mello et al., 2016, p. 570), it is relevant to explore what belonging to the kindergarten implies both for teachers and for the children who belong there. According to the Oxford Lexico UK Dictionary, the verb *to belong* can be defined as to "be the property of", "be a member of" or "be rightly placed in a specified position"

(Oxford Lexico UK Dictionary, n.d.). As the concept of belonging is manifold and has been examined thoroughly by several kindergarten researchers (Boldermo, 2018, 2019, 2020; Juutinen, 2018; Sadownik, 2018), the many various perceptions and interpretations of the concept of belonging are not the issue here. Rather, the dictionary's definition – to be a member of, or to be rightly placed in a specified position – is interesting to ponder.

Clearly, my narrative beginnings reveal both a lack of the experience or feeling of be[ing] a member of (as a five-year-old in kindergarten) and a lack of the feeling of [being] rightly placed in a current position (as a teacher in kindergarten). Today, 97% of all children three to five years old in Norway attend kindergarten (Statistics Norway, 2022), and are thus members of a kindergarten community. The Norwegian 2017 curriculum highlights the kindergarten's obligation to safeguard children's needs for, among other things, care, security and belonging and to promote values such as democracy and diversity. This curriculum also emphasizes the significance of children's belonging to their local communities. Despite this, it is impossible to say anything about whether children truly experience belonging to the kindergarten as a feeling or an experiential state (Boldermo, 2020; Sumsion et al., 2018).

As for today's kindergarten teachers, Gulbrandsen (2018) examined Norwegian kindergarten teachers' drop-out rates from the profession from a historical perspective. He found that the trend has changed from a relatively high drop-out rate up to 10–15 years ago to a surplus of teachers.[1] According to Gulbrandsen (2018), one main reason for this change – from escape from the profession to a surfeit of teachers – is that today's kindergarten teachers stay longer in the profession than they did before. This is caused by the fact that, among other reasons, kindergarten teachers have in recent years received far better salaries in addition to an increased recognition as compared to previously (Gulbrandsen, 2018). Thus, one might assume that today's Norwegian kindergarten teachers, in general, can experience a stronger feeling of 'be[ing] rightly placed' in their current position than perhaps kindergarten teachers did at the time when I started my career in the early 1990s.

Still, for my own sake, I didn't leave the kindergarten until after a total of 17 years of practice as a teacher and as a special needs teacher. Thus, I stayed in my profession for many years, through big changes in tasks and mandate and despite my beginnings as an unhappy kindergarten child, uncommitted student, and reluctant teacher. What happened?

Below, I tell a story from my early years as a teacher that I recognize, in retrospect, may have been a turning point for the development of my professional identity as a teacher.

5 The Story of Line

Line was five years old when I got to know her. She had no friends in the kindergarten and, specifically, the other girls her age steered away from her as best they could. Every daily routine – such as meals, going to the toilet, getting dressed, participating in circle time, or reading books – was troublesome in one way or another, and the noise and sounds as Line's intentions and wishes went against the intention of the situation caused stress and frustration for everyone taking part, and for Line in particular. The other girls seemed to misinterpret Line's intentions; they feared of her, they didn't include her in their role-play and they often complained and signaled discomfort in her presence.

Line was also an incredibly sweet, creative, playful, and physically active girl. She oriented herself towards where play, laughter and fun went on. When there was snowy weather, Line would be the first child to bring her ski equipment to kindergarten, exceedingly enthusiastic. It appeared as if sad episodes on the one day were completely forgotten the next. Line attended the kindergarten with an expectant smile, and she would eagerly shout out the names of the children and staff she met in the dressing area when she arrived. She absolutely loved everything that had something to do with music, movies, theatre, hats and costumes, fairy tales and stories. Although she was unable to sit still or physically near the other children when listening to stories or fairy tales, there was no doubt of her commitment and interest, even if she participated while rolling on the floor or jumping up and down on the mat or just sitting with her back to the group, laughing, looking at her own fingers and making joyful mumbling sounds.

One day, Line came to the kindergarten with a big smile, making sounds and singing something that I did not understand. It was as though she was acting something, and she made dramatic gestures and sounds. A little boy shouted: "She's the Lion King!" Thrilled, Line nodded eagerly and continued her acting. Her mother confirmed that they had been to the cinema and seen the movie several times, as Line was completely fascinated by it, all of it – the music, the dramatic events, and the lions. I had seen the movie myself, and, as I watched Line play out one scene from the movie after another, I realized that she had probably memorized the whole movie, even though she could not express it verbally or in 'normal' interaction with others. She just played it.

6 Unpacking and Analyzing the Story of Line

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and thinking with experience. Clandinin (2013) explains narrative inquiry as beginning and ending in the

midst of experience, and as people in relation studying people in relation. Further, she draws attention to the fact that the told stories of remembered experiences shift over time, place, and audience.

I have told the story of Line many times before to colleagues and to students. The way the story has been told by me has varied with time, place and audience as stated by Clandinin (2013). Very many years have passed since I was Line's teacher, and her whereabouts today I do not know. I suppose my perception of Line and her story has changed over the years, influenced by my own changing points of view, and depending on time and place. Estefan, Caine and Clandinin (2016) argued that, in a narrative inquiry, the stories of experience are understood within a context of place, temporality and sociality. A story of experience always happens *somewhere.* It is temporal in the way that it happens in the present, yet the experience influences the future: what is to come and how the experience is understood in retrospect. And, finally, experience is social, as it involves exchanges between a person's inner thoughts and feelings and his or her social interactions (Estefan et al., 2016).

In the process of unpacking and making sense of my story about Line – and this process includes making sense of my own narrative beginnings – it is natural to conceptualize it within the three-dimensional space (temporality, sociality, and place) described and outlined by Clandinin (2013), and Estefan, Caine and Clandinin (2016). The aspects of temporality, sociality, and place frame my narrative beginnings as well as the story of Line. In particular, the aspects of temporality and place are obvious. My narrative beginnings belong to the past, to another time and to other places, places that don't exist anymore. Taking into consideration the aspect of place – the specific, concrete, physical and topological boundaries of where the events took place (Clandinin, 2013, p. 41): both the kindergarten I attended as a five-year-old, and the kindergarten where I worked as a newly educated teacher and where Line's story unfolded, are forever gone and replaced with other surroundings. They have become new places, distant in time and place from me and my current presence.

The concept of place itself is part of the way we see, research, and write (Cresswell, 2015). What do my narrative beginnings and Line's story together tell us about the kindergarten as the place where Line's story unfolded, other than it was large and had an urban location and that this concrete urban location enabled close monitoring by school psychology services and such, as well as offering the possibility of enjoying outdoor activities, such as skiing? Cresswell suggests that, instead of asking what a place is like, one could, within a phenomenological approach, ask what makes the place a *place* (Cresswell, 2015, p. 38). Now, this is an autobiographical narrative inquiry, not a phenomenological study; however, such a suggestion opens new possibilities. As the

concept of place can be understood and constituted through various persons' different stories (Boldermo, 2019), alternative narratives of happenings (and of happenings told as narratives) can make one's perception of the place where the narrative happened also change in retrospect.

In retrospect, Line's story carried with it an opening, a turning point, a glimpse of something else that also happened.

When rereading the story and thereby revisiting the time and the place, trying to analyze 'what happened', the chronological order of the story told is worth pondering, as it reveals something about the narrator's perception of the kindergarten. The story as it has been told by me, the narrator, consists of three parts and has a chronological structure; first, the two parts presenting Line and her situation in the kindergarten and then the turning point starting with 'One day …'.

In the story told, Line is presented in a way that first and foremost, describes the challenges, the difficulties, and the shortcomings. Line's incredible sweetness, creativity and playfulness come secondly. Rereading these parts of the story critically, one could get an impression of the kindergarten as the teacher's (and narrator's) institution rather than the teacher's and the child's common *place*.

Then, the story continues, 'one day' something unexpected happened in the kindergarten. Ødegaard and Økland (2015, p. 36) explain stories of 'turning points' as stories about unexpected happenings that challenge your preconceptions or make you think twice about a phenomenon. Further, Ødegaard and Økland (2015) state that such an experience of a 'turning point' also may inspire a wish to tell about it.

As mentioned earlier, I have already told the story of Line several times before. Although the story has been told by me in various ways, I have had the perception that the 'turning point' had something to do with Line and the movie "The Lion King". And it is true that, from that day, Line's playful enthusiasm for The Lion King inspired playful activities among the children in the group, resulting in recurring moments of community and fun in which the point of departure was the movie's intriguing storyline and fascinating characters. And this emerging community included Line. Her everyday life in kindergarten changed.

However, in this process of rereading and unpacking the story, I have realized that perhaps the unexpected happening was not caused directly by neither Line nor the movie. Rather, the unexpected was sparked by the attentive little boy who immediately *recognized* Line, shouting "She's the Lion King!"

In retrospect, trying once again to retell this story, I can see how the little boy's recognition allowed Line, the creative and playful child, to become visible

in my perception of her. Probably, this did not imply an immediate change or some sort of revelation. But it was an eye-opener, and this experience stayed with me, and it made my perception and understanding of the kindergarten as *a place* different than before it happened.

Obviously, Line was a child who received special aid due to the challenges she experienced, which were related to her (future) diagnosis. In retrospect, pondering this experience and my narrative beginnings, Clandinin's (2016) fragments emerge as relevant once again: "Becoming a teacher. … Entering another world" (Mello et al., 2016, p. 570). Thinking within the dimension of sociality about my own thoughts and expectations and what I perceived as the expectations of colleagues, parents, and special educators in the process of entering the world of the kindergarten, the reality of becoming a teacher became quite different from what my three years of study had prepared me for. What I perceived as Line's shortcomings and difficulties overshadowed my ability to recognize Line as a playful and creative child in my care. Instead, still in retrospect, I wonder if I rather viewed her as a case. As these shortcomings and difficulties became a large part of what my and my colleagues discussions revolved around; finding solutions or effective measures to solve them unconsciously became part of what I perceived as my role as a teacher. Consequently, entering the kindergarten as another world (Mello et al., 2016, p. 570) became, for me, entering the kindergarten as an institution. Not as a common place, shared between the children and staff who belonged there. Norwegian kindergartens are, of course, institutions. But, for the children who attend and inhabit them, kindergartens are important and significant places that convey experiences of social relations and play, which again may generate senses of group belonging and community (Boldermo, 2020). To think with Cresswell (2015, p. 38); that is what make the kindergarten *a place*. Line was no exception; she, too, was a child entering the kindergarten every day with enthusiasm, eagerness and great expectations of play and community. Perhaps the change that the little boy shouting 'She's the Lion King!' triggered did not have much to do with Line. Rather, it caused a new understanding in me and thus of my professional development in becoming a teacher. The little boy's obvious recognition made me, too, recognize Line as what she was all about: not difficulties and shortcomings, but, like every other child, playing, having fun, and seeking community. And, for the children that were in my care to be able to do just that: play, have fun, and experience belonging and community; my perception of the kindergarten as a *place* had to be revisited and rethought. Such a rethinking did not happen all at once; the change in my mindset developed over years after this turning point early in my career. It led my professional interest in the direction of taking a master's degree in special

needs education, eventually becoming a special needs teacher in kindergarten. To return, once again, to Clandinin's fragment on becoming teacher and entering another world (Mello et al., 2016, p. 570), my entering the kindergarten as a special needs teacher many years later, thus differed considerably from my beginnings as the newly qualified teacher who met Line for the first time. Truly understanding that children, no matter what kinds of follow-up needs they may have, are first and foremost *children*, with the same fundamental need for experiencing belonging and community, as well as engaging in play and having fun as all children, has thus become the most important pillar of my present professional identity as a teacher educator as well as a researcher.

Currently, Norwegian kindergartens are exposed to an increasing demand to prepare children for school, to map children's skills and shortcomings, and to scrutinize potential defects in their development. It is probably done with the best of intentions, and I do not have the answers as to whether it is the right thing to do or not. I worry, however, that such practices come at the expense of the kindergarten as *a place*, which according to the value base described in the curriculum of 2017 should emphasize diversity and community and assert the intrinsic value of childhood and play.

As a teacher educator, and a researcher, I am concerned that the framework of what is considered normality in kindergarten should be as broad and as well- examined as possible and that, in our search for shortcomings, we do not lose sight of the creative, playful Lion King that exists within each individual child regardless of how he or she is located within or beyond the spectrum of 'normality'.

Note

1 In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, this situation has seemingly changed. The number of applicants for teacher education has decreased, and several kindergarten teachers have left the profession.

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CHAPTER 10

A Memory of Experiencing Milk in Kindergarten

Geir Aaserud, Tona Gulpinar and Tove Lafton

Abstract

The aesthetic and performative aspects of professional identity are closely linked to what we sense through taste, smell and sight. In this article, we discuss professional identity narratively, and memories of experiences as tools of professional development. We question how time, space and imagination shape the authors' professional practice. Our past and present subjective experiences are revealed through a personal narrative. As an opportunity to grasp and understand professional judgement through taste, smell and sight, Babettes feast enters the discussion.

Keywords

the unexpected – the unpredictable – plurality – experience – judgment

1 Introduction

Food and the role of the meal in kindergartens in Norway are examined from several perspectives, from a pedagogical view underlining the possibilities of learning and interaction (Bae, 2009) via didactical perspectives focusing on nutrition, taste and knowledge of food (Langholm & Tuset, 2021) to what kind of food children choose and prefer during kindergarten meals (Wergedahl, Fossgard, Aadland & Holthe, 2020). No matter how we perceive the meal, the kindergarten teacher will have an important role in this established everyday situation. Everybody has a relationship to food, and we will use the meal as a means to discuss how personal and professional experience impacts our understanding of professional identity.

In this article we imagine the meal as a feast, inspired by the story *Babette's Feast* (Karen Blixen, writing under the pseudonym Isak Dinesen). What attracts us in this story is how Babette invites a very diverse group of people to partake in a meal that invites dialogue and togetherness drawing on earlier experiences and positions – very much like the meal in kindergarten. In addition, *Babette's*

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Feast relates to Hannah Arendt (1996) and her idea that a common world can only exist when there is a plurality of perspectives. The world will erase itself if only viewed from one angle.

Without a plurality of views, we lack some of what constitutes our understanding of reality. We therefore examine what might happen to our perception of the reality we lived during early childhood if we move through a diversity of viewpoints on the professional performance of the early childhood teacher at a routine event such as a meal. In this article, we thus examine the experiences that become visible in a personal narrative from one of the authors childhood memories to discuss collective narratives about meals in kindergarten and discuss professional identity narratively and memories of experiences as tools of professional development. As a means of investigating the idea of professional judgment connected to the meal, we think about the meal in kindergarten as a feast where different perspectives meet. What will be at stake when we invite flavour, taste, children, liking, disliking, touching and hearing to participate in the unfolding event?

Developing one's professional identity is a process which includes not only theories and professional knowledge, but also the experience of once being and living as a child and connecting this to plurality and Arendt's view from different angles.

We think of our critical events as moments in between the professional and the personal, woven together in the web of professional performance. In such a sense, our understanding of critical events differs from that of researchers who draw clearer lines between different kinds of such events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In our opinion, the effect of critical events on our professional lives cannot be placed on a linear timeline and made to depend on how long before or after our graduation they occur.

Describing time as a cyclical and undirected movement, we are open to consideration of how both the future and the past contribute to constructions of identity that we are not able to foresee.

2 Experiencing Milk

> It is said that my grandfather tamed the most horses in Norway. When I was four, my mother had to go to hospital, and I had to stay with my grandfather in his big house which always smelt of fish. I do not remember how he got me to kindergarten. But what I clearly remember is this: when we were going to eat in kindergarten, it turned out that my grandfather had heated milk for my breakfast, and he had poured the milk into a plastic bottle wrapped in a woollen sock. I had never seen anything like

> it before, so when I folded down the woollen sock and the milk came out, I was surprised. The milk tasted like something I had never tasted before. 'Aunt' Åse, who worked in the kindergarten, made sure that I drank all the milk before I could leave the table. I sat there with the lukewarm milk and watched the other children leave the table one by one. The next day my grandfather sent the same bottle and the same woollen sock to kindergarten breakfast with me. I do not drink milk – I do not like milk – for many years, I told people that I was allergic to milk.

We tell this story as an introduction to how our narratives can reflect experiences and understandings in encounters with children. This narrative also shows how an experience like this, of a meal at nursery, can leave a physical mark on children. In this case, the aversion to milk intensifies when the child is pressured to drink something it does not like and has no experience of. In that way, the body and mind create an understanding that the child does not like milk. The child carries the traces of the experience with them as a truth throughout their life until that child, who is also one of the authors of this article, met her own experiences in her own narrative and through her own profession.

Babette used her profession to explore tastes and possible combinations of tastes in the search for exquisite food experiences. In *Babette's Feast*, the food has a kind of magical effect on those who eat it, when they eat food with many flavours for the first time in their lives. It makes them lose their inhibitions. The flavours are experienced so strongly that the people start smiling and talking to each other, something they do not usually do during meals. They begin to move their bodies, slurping and spilling, eating so gluttonously that the food is smeared across their faces from ear to ear. In addition to being flavoursome, the food is aesthetically beautiful: the inhabitants of a small place are served the opposite of what they usually eat, which is grey and tasteless porridge. Babette's meal stands in stark contrast to the white milk in a plastic bottle that the child in kindergarten is served. It lacks colour and taste, and therefore has something in common with porridge. Reading *Babette's Feast*, awoke Tona's memories of the white milk.

Thinking temporality in relation to memory raises questions about what and whose narrative we make visible, according to Cain, Clandinin and Lessard (2022, p. 75). They raise the question of which events in a life we cover and which we omit within life stories. A question like this is an important part of narrative inquiry and can help us to understand how we develop our professional identity. Narrative methodology entails constructing an ontological and epistemological framework in which the individual's experiences in the world are studied narratively by listening to, observing and interpreting both oral and

written texts (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18). This methodology has a long tradition in educational research (Clandinin, 2013; Craig, 2007). Narrative research is well suited to exploring professional practice and professional development and is increasingly used in studies of pedagogical experiences (Clandinin, 2013). The narrative focus works as both a research object and a research method. Experiences are the focal point of meaning making in this methodology (Clandinin, 2013).

Having access to stories from other parts of your life can contribute to knowledge about why and how you perform professionally as a kindergarten teacher. Performing as a professional is never static and repetitive, but is developed in meetings of the past, present and future. As an idea for understanding professional identity, the concept of judgment is often proposed in light of Aristotelian phronesis (Grimen, 2008). Hannah Arendt's work proposes two distinct views on judgment, based on her idiosyncratic reading of Kant and Aristoteles. Arendt introduces both the sense of taste and the power of imagination when she explains the concept of judgment.

According to her, the power of imagination is a prerequisite for being able to judge. We choose to start this article with a short explanation of two concepts, imagination (Arendt, 1996) and making-kin (Haraway, 2016), before introducing how we are situated in narrative inquiry and how the notion of critical events is made use of in this study. Then, we build the text as a feast whose menu consists of different perspectives on a narrative from childhood. As we proceed through the menu, we provide the reader with different perspectives on the not yet known regarding how such a meal can contribute to professional identity. Other relevant theoretical aspects will be introduced as they enter the discussion.

3 Imagination and Memory of Experience

> Each experience takes something from past experiences into future experiences, as one becomes otherwise in the future. This idea of continuity over time, albeit with breaks, gaps and ruptures, is a key idea in narrative inquiry. At any point in time, experience is always something on the way. Time, therefore, is something in the midst. (Cain, Clandinin, & Lessard, 2021, p. 63)

According to Vera Cain, Jean Clandinin and Saan Lessard, experiences of time is always in the midst of something. Experience of a memory from the past can help us to understand the development of professional identity. In this article,

an experience from Tona's (one the authors) childhood can be an example of how experience carries something from the past into future experiences and impacts our professional identity and imagination. It is by using our own judgment that we orient ourselves in the world, according to Arendt (Mahrdt, 2011, p. 153). Imagination has a central place in how Arendt writes about judgment. As such, memory will become a central part of how we see things and a part of how we can imagine our common world.

Leonard Webster and Patrice Mertova (2007) use the term 'critical event' as a method of analysing narratives. They direct our attention to certain criteria that must be met for an event to be described in this way. A critical event reveals a change of understanding or worldview by the storyteller and includes some of the following characteristics: it has impacted on performance in a professional or work-related role; the event may have a traumatic component, attract excessive interest from the public or the media or introduce risk in the form of personal exposure, whether illness, litigious action or another powerful personal consequence (Webster & Mertova, 2007, pp. 73–74). Tona's experience of a milk bottle in a woollen sock can be described as a powerful personal experience that had an impact not only on her relationship with the taste of food and drink, but, most of all, on her view of what food looks like in terms of colour and composition. This early experience with food, which is so closely linked to some of the most important things in life, will colour her understandings and encounters with children and food. Tona had almost forgotten this story, but as she began to tell this narrative, new understandings arose of her longing for an aesthetically appealing meal rather than colourless food.

Specific events are key determinants in how we recall our life experiences. Our memory of past critical events often leads us to adapt strategies and processes to new situations. Because events are critical parts of people's lives, using them as the focus provides a valuable and insightful tool for getting to the core of what is important in research (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 71). In the citations from Webster and Mertova in this paragraph, the web, as a metaphor for experiential processes, can contribute to illuminating and emphasising the significance of the actions for narrative investigations. As Cain, Clandinin and Lessard (2022) observe, 'while time is a critical element, it cannot be understood as a linear concept that shapes experience' (p. 23).

Cecilia Sjöholm (2015) points out that for Arendt, a critical event is described as the point(s) in a story revealing a change of worldview or understanding in the storyteller (2015, p. 73). We are particularly concerned with how stories have changed our professional performance because of the impact of an event. Thinking about Tona's experience of childhood, we can see how past, present and future are woven together temporally, as are personal and professional

identity. Looking at a plurality of experiences over time can illuminate several aspects of a person's identity development and suggest that professional development is about more than professional knowledge. Andrew Estefan, Vera Caine and Jean Clandinin point out that it is problematic that we do not train a spotlight on the whole person in education.

When we understand that who we are as professionals is profoundly shaped by our experiences over time and in multiple relationships and places, notions of boundary become problematic (Estefan et al., 2016, p. 28). Narrative is an event-driven tool of research. Various events throughout life affect our identity development: 'stories of who we are, where we came from, and what we do pervade professional education contexts and are, in part, what sustains, shifts, or freezes practice over time (Estefan et al., 2016, p. 16). Telling life stories enables us to see which events contribute to our identity, and the narrator can become aware of the significance of the events and how constructive they are.

In order to create meaning in everyday life, we relate not only to what is present here and now, but to the past, present and future. Our experiences are based on past experiences, and we try to create the meaning of the present in relation to the past and how events in the past and present will have an impact on the future. Birth, childhood, adolescence and different periods of adulthood affect perceptions of our life history and ourselves. Our narrative identity and life story are shaped by stories about us told by others, from birth and childhood, that over time become narrated by ourselves and a part of our life story (Baddeley & Singer, 2007, p. 177).

Let us stop and think from the perspective of Tona's grandfather. He has spent his whole life working with horses, and Tona can add new layers to the story when she tells us how he always related to horses. Turning back to how Baddeley and Singer (2007) present our narrative identity as shaped by stories about us told by others, the grandfather's identity must have been shaped by his knowledge of and experiences with horses. His past experiences are embedded in an understanding of what is good for horses.

The horse, as a caretaker, makes sure the foal gets milk directly from her. As the horse's milk is lukewarm, it would have been logical for the grandfather to provide his granddaughter with lukewarm milk when he took over as her caretaker. As Estefan et al. (2016) points out, the grandfather's relationship with horses in the past and present will, although he does not realise it, contribute to how Tona feels about milk as part of a meal. Milk becomes the grey porridge we recognise from the movie of "Babette's Feast". The grandfather was not given the opportunity to see this, because he was not present at the situation where the milk was experienced. According to Arendt's thought, the

grandfather was left with his own perspective of the world, and when this was not challenged, he continued doing the same.

The narrative representation of our lives consists of many events and experiences and is to be found in stories. History gives life to stories, but stories also give life to stories. Narratives pervade professional education contexts and are, in part, what sustains, shifts or freezes practice over time (Etherington, 2006). Narrative research helps to illuminate the field of practice and how reality appears to those who move in this complex field of human actions when the relationship between learning and action is articulated in stories influencing the practitioner's own learning (McNiff, 2007, p. 319). In this sense, narratives from practice become important to our research when they are included in an understanding of professional identity.

Narrative is thereby not a simple retelling of facts but contains a way of thinking that meets experiences of past and future and is derived from all the curvatures and obstacles into which they are woven. Thus, it becomes not only an account of an event, but also a web of various events that helps to shape our history (Sjöholm, 2015, p. 66). When stories are told in retrospect, they are not necessarily directly linked to our professional lives. When we examine the gaps between articulated professional knowledge and professional doing, however, it can become clear how stories have affected our performance as early childhood professionals and researchers (Aaserud, 2022).

Returning to Tona's narrative, Aunt Åsa is also a prominent character. The narrative is an example of how we, as readers, understand our narratives in-between past and future experiences. In kindergartens at that time, all early year's educators were called aunts, whilst today we are in the middle of a discussion of professionalism and how preschool teacher professional identities are constructed. Aunt Åsa makes sure that Tona drinks up her milk before she leaves the table. We can recognise this idea of being an adult, namely 'doing the right thing'. This narrative dates to almost 50 years ago, in a time quite different from today. How early years teachers look at children has developed considerably since then, as has the relationship between children and adults. As a kindergarten teacher today, however, Tona is integrating her ideas of early childhood with this feeling of not being seen or understood.

Nonetheless, if we see the situation from Aunt Åse's perspective, she probably had no intention of ignoring the child. She probably just wanted her to acknowledge the value of finishing what you started – in this case, finishing your milk. Reading *Babette's Feast* alongside Tona's narrative creates an understanding of how lukewarm milk or grey porridge can contribute to silence. What is presented in the meal and how the meal contributes to our senses are closely intertwined with how we relate to each other.

Cain, Clandinin and Lessard (2022) stress that experience is always a sense that life is all around us, that it is always evolving and that it builds upon further experience: 'Experience, then, is something always in the making, being shaped and reshaped over time, as new situations are encountered. Experience is neither fixed nor certain' (p. 15). In this view of experience, as a sense that life is all around us, imagination and judgment can be understood as temporal concepts.

> In narrative inquiry we understand that imagination and memory are fused in ways that leave gaps and silences, that can erase events and happenings, that allow us to reinvent what we remember, while lamenting the loss of what we once knew. It is here that we turn towards the believed-in imaginings. (Cain, Clandinin, & Lessard, 2022, p. 145)

Tona's narrative from childhood can open up the possibility of thinking about professional development and professional practices in a routine event such as a meal at kindergarten and how experience impacts our imagination and memory.

4 Imagination and Making-Kin

Experience and judgment are two important concepts in Arendt's political thinking. In order to exist and contribute to developing a living democracy, human beings must think, and we must use our judgment. A reflective judgment is based on our ability to envision views of what has not happened or of those who are not present. Arendt bases her writing on the sense of taste but emphasises that taste is not the same as judging. If we are to use our sense of taste to judge, two additional abilities must be present: common sense and imagination. Plurality and a historical past are necessary parts of human identity. Another way of looking at things is imported into a common world, but for Arendt, it is necessary to think with ethical judgment (Arendt, 2012).

Haraway (2016) builds on the ideas of, amongst others, Arendt and introduces ethics as necessary in human encounters with kin. By kin, Haraway points to those who have an enduring mutual, obligatory, non- optional, 'you-can't-just-cast-it-away-when-it-gets-inconvenient' relatedness that carries consequences. In this sense, kin can be anything, other people and other-than-people, but making-kin connects to a common ethical responsibility to take care of each other in equal relationships, implying you cannot position anyone or anything above anyone or anything else (Lafton & Hauge, 2022).

In our work, making-kin will be the relations developed through professional identity – an identity which becomes visible through the kindergarten meal.

The story of something is different from the truth of something; however, the story can be linked to speculative fables and to Arendt's imagination: 'the slight curve of the shell that holds just a little water, just a few seeds to give away and to receive, suggests stories of becoming-with, of reciprocal induction, of companion species whose job in living and dying is not to end the storying, the worlding' (Haraway, 2016, pp. 118–119). At such moments, those who collaborate and are part of the story become important, but not final. Nor, if someone disappears from the story, will they be lost, because their place as part of the story has created traces.

One idea of how storytelling can be non-linear can be found in Haraway's introduction of 'the sack'. Unlike the traditional chronological order in the narrative, where one action follows another and there is a clear beginning, middle and end, she puts the elements of stories in 'the sack' and invites us to investigate what is there together: 'no adventurer should leave home without a sack. How did a sling, a pot, a bottle suddenly get in the story? How do such lovely things keep the story going?' (Haraway, 2016). The questions are linked to the not yet known; the stuff surprising us as important; the things or meetings or people creating and relating to each other in developing professional identity. In order to investigate Tona's narrative through one more perspective, we turn to artwork as a thought-thing.

5 The Feast as a Thought-Thing

Sjöholm (2015) cites Arendt when she presents artwork as a thought-thing, 'irreducible in terms of a dialectic duality between object and subject [...] It belongs to the field of plurality, situated in a field of shared perspectives, usages, and impacts' (p. 33). In this section, we connect the meal to artwork through these ideas of duality and plurality. Conceptual art can be characterised as an idea-based artistic activity, because the idea behind the artwork is considered more important than the craft or visual execution of the work (Gade, 1994).

Through happenings in the 1950s, there was a redefinition of the static image, which only gave the viewer one opportunity, namely, to see the image from the front and from one position. One wanted to experience an image through events and activities, where the viewer was present with this whole, being part of the event in the room. In the 1960s, these tendencies in the art experience were also linked to the time it took to experience the work, as well as to the actual way the work was organised (Jalving, 2011). The work was thus

activated only at a meeting with the audience. Ideas about the space between the work and the subject arise and are closely linked to how the subjects in our narrative experience the world in a meal of plurality and mutual, relational meetings.

Art curator Nicolas Bourriaud (2007) arranges dinner parties as art, where it is not only the room itself that matters or the aesthetic encounter with the table or the food, but also the conversations that arise between those who share the meal in the staged space. Bourriaud calls this relational art, based on Richard Schechner's (2002) ideas that relationality concerns the viewer's participation in the work itself, where art arises in the space between work and the viewer, which he calls the art of space. Actions, interactions and relationships are central to the thinking of Schechner (2002). His thinking is linked to performance, as he claims that a performance is the spectator's art form since the viewers' meeting creates art. If one is to read performance based on the viewer and not only as the art form of the moment, but also as the action and the moment, one can say that performance is the spectator's art form as art is created by the viewer meeting the work (Gulpinar, 2022).

Children and professionals in kindergarten will perform a meal when their mutual experiences take shape and arise in the space between the child, the food, the conversations and the professionals. By inviting examination of the feast as a thought-thing, we are forced into discussions involving the non-observable that arises between participants. Just as in artwork, the meal can evoke disgust, lust, liking and dislike.

Schechner (2002) also describes our everyday performance through comprehended behaviour, referring to the fragments of performances we make again and again in our daily work, such as how we dress and use our voice. Arendt writes of 'the dead zone of the present – the in-between of the past and the future, which tends to slip away as we attempt to conceive of it' (cited in Sjöholm, 2015, p. 66). We dare to challenge the focus on nutrition and didactical perspectives in today's mealtime pedagogy and invite readers to imagine what can be created when we open up to a wider range of interpretive possibilities. As we read Arendt, we realise it is this conceptual thinking that inspired her to promote the concept of thought-thing about the abstract drawing that arises in the face of an object: 'Art is not merely a form of appearance. It is a form of thoughts. There is not one life of the mind but many' (Sjöholm, 2015, p. 49). Art opens us up for a meeting with many perspectives, and, as we read Arendt, we realise she means not only many thoughts, but the thoughts of many. Her political point is that rather than promoting 'possessive' individualism, art and cultural objects ought to resist ownership and promote plurality

(Sjöholm, 2015, p. 37). Even though we participate in a shared reality, we will all have our own understanding of how this reality affects us.

6 Re-telling through Re-visiting the Narrative

When Tona, as a kindergarten teacher and researcher, regards herself from a retro perspective, she can see a child sitting alone drinking lukewarm milk, colourless and with a taste that arouses discomfort. Still, she knew that her grandfather loved her; he just did not know that milk in a plastic bottle wrapped in a woollen sock was unknown to her. Making-kin with milk, the not yet known is not only about the milk that was new and surprising, but also about the constitution of Tona as a child and her future likings and understandings of how taste can frame you as a person. This experience made her aware not only of the taste of the food, but also the aesthetic side of food. As an adult, she thanks her grandfather for making her realise how taste and aesthetics are closely related. As an adult, some of Tona's happiest moments are when she is sitting around a table with good friends and good food.

Arendt's concept of a thought-thing (Sjöholm, 2015) is connected to art objects. If we transfer her thinking to Tona's encounter with the everyday object the milk bottle, this encounter has can be entered in two ways: the aesthetic encounter with the object itself, the milk bottle, and the thoughts and reflections that arise in the encounter. That is the dialectic duality between object and subject that Arendt connects specifically to art objects. If we also bear in mind Arendt's thoughts on plurality, then this meeting is also a meeting with the kindergarten institution of the time and the truths that were then valid about how children should be brought up – which were about eating the food and drinking up the milk as the goal of the meal. From a contemporary perspective, this narrative makes us see the meal in a light where the aesthetic has a place and interpersonal encounters are made through the conversation, which are the same ideals that Arendt promotes in an encounter with art in the community. The story of the milk bottle in a woollen sock is a part of Tona's life story that impacts her professional development and identity. Her attention to how food is served to children in kindergarten is attuned, as is her understanding of children's need to get used to new tastes. In this context, new flavours can be read as the aesthetic: how the food looks and tastes. This experience with the milk bottle, which occurred after a not-yet-known meeting, took Tona completely by surprise, and it appears to be an important event. It is these encounters with things or people that create and relate to each other which develop professional identity (Haraway, 2016).

Tona's narrative has another aspect, namely the experience of being left alone at the dining table, which can be experienced as a feeling of being abandoned. This has influenced Tona's professional understanding that food tastes different to people when they are sitting together in a community. No children in the kindergarten should eat alone. There are aspects of democracy and likings associated with this narrative. Different cultures have different inputs and understandings about how food should be presented and how it should taste. The kindergarten teacher can seek this openness and understanding of the different food cultures children bring with them to the kindergarten.

7 Re-telling through *Babette's Feast*

Babette's Feast (Dinesen, 2013) is a tale about Babette, a former chef at the famous Café Anglais in Paris, who is forced to move to a small place by a fjord in northern Norway. The community is puritanical, and the sisters for whom Babette works as an unpaid housekeeper consider food as something of a necessity: they eat as if they had never had any sense of taste. The milk bottle in the narrative can function as a picture of the Puritan idea of food based on the fact that milk is nutritious and Aunt Åsa's idea of finishing the milk is in line with eating up what you have without expecting to enjoy it too much.

The two sisters in *Babette's Feast* think of the tongue as merely a small muscle, not as a tool for sensing and tasting. As participants in the kindergarten meal, the preschool teacher, the children, the food and the interior are making kin. As in the story of the milk bottle, kin are often quite the opposite of kind. Being related implies belonging within the same common world without being 'the same'. Such an understanding of the gap or the relations has consequences. If I am making-kin with the child and the milk bottle of an early childhood setting, then I have accountabilities and obligations that are different than if I were making kin with a child and a drink in another place. As a professional, you cannot be kin to everything, but the kin networks can be full of attachment sites found through stories from both personal and professional life.

What Babette brought with her from her role as a chef a high-class French restaurant to that of housekeeper in a poor home in northern Norway was a taste for food and an interest in making the best out of the ingredients to which she had access. Babette's making-kin in between personal perceptions and the idea of plurality, as presented by Arendt, is of great importance to the critical event in her life. She did not abandon her knowledge of taste when she entered a new arena, but translated it into the groceries and the people she related to. The difference between the two worlds can be compared to the differences in

backgrounds and connections to food inhabited by all children today. Returning to how Cain et al. (2022) describe experience, Babette integrates something from her past experiences into the future of her cooking. One question that arises is how we make such experiences possible in early childhood education and the professional identity constructions of kindergarten teachers.

Babette can be considered an artist due to her knowledge and the artistic tricks she uses to make eating an aesthetic experience. Can a pedagogue in early childhood education also be an artist in terms of staging a meal as a feast? The meal has never been given much attention in pedagogical terms (Balke, 1995). Making-kin with children's liking and disliking is seldom discussed in the pedagogical literature. Babette wins the lottery and decides to use all the money to create a meal for the sisters and their guests. Even though they do not intend to enjoy the feast, due to their fear of the feelings such joy can evoke, they are persuaded by the smell and taste of both food and wine. When Babette's guests are served the most beautiful cuisine, an ethical dilemma arises. According to their religious beliefs, the enjoyment is shameful, but the delicious, beautiful food evokes an aesthetic experience in the guests, and they are not able to hold back.

Tona, on the other hand, is less than persuaded by the smell and taste of milk. An ethical dilemma arises in her narrative as well. How the story is told contributes to our understanding of why the narrator never tells children to finish up their food. Even though there is a limited focus on the pedagogy of the meal in early childhood teacher education and praxis, several strong discourses advocate the need to taste new sorts of food several times before you may like them, how to sit and act during meals and the idea of finishing the food on your plate in most kindergartens. Such discourses frame what the actors can and cannot do (Lenz Taguchi, 2005) and create routines for meals. According to Arendt (2012), people will not understand each other without equality, and, at the same time, plurality or inequality are necessary to create a democratic site which depends on language or action for communication. Is there room to communicate about likes and dislikes at a feast in a kindergarten? In the narrative, there was little room to discuss the dislike of the milk brought by Tona's grandfather, just as in *Babette's Feast* the meal becomes a memory of past critical events, leading to strategies for new situations (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 71).

In addition, our strategies are developed through layers of experience. The critical turning point appears when the memory is being retold as a narrative, and the experiences children bring with them into early childhood settings and connect in an understanding of different layers can develop when the preschool teacher functions as an artist making room for diverse experiences,

tastes and feelings during meal time. The narrative can open up new ways of understanding the event itself in retrospect. Tona's narrative was trigged by the grey porridge and the rules about eating that became visible and very prominent in the literary work *Babette's Feast*.

Through re-visiting the narrative with other perspectives, the article has opened up the narrative about milk and transformed it into a possible space where there is room for imagination, making-kin and plurality. In the space between the artistic expression of *Babette's Feast* and the researchers, our conversations, reflections, ideas and narratives create other stories and suggest how aesthetic experiences may contribute to professional development.

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CHAPTER 11

At the Intersection of Pastoral and Intellectual Support

A Journey of Autoethnographic Narratives on Supervision

Rikke Gürgens Gjærum and Nanna Kathrine Edvardsen

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how poetic narratives, created based on lived experience of supervision, can contribute to raising awareness of the involved parties' professional identity development, as well as of values and premises for dialogic and relational doctoral supervision. Applying narrative inquiry as the analytical entry point (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013), five central dimensions of research supervision are discussed (Lee, 2008). The 16 narratives presented in this article have been developed through a creative co- design partnership between the supervisor and the research fellow. Supervision is illustrated by concentrating on the two parties' narratives relating to time, place, and relation. The article focuses on the most primary dimension, the relational, which is linked to vulnerability in life. Methodologically, the article moves autoethnographically between performance and sensory ethnography (Pink, 2015; Denzin, 1997) as its scientific theoretical foundation.

Keywords

guidance – narrative – relation – time – place – hierarchy – dialogue

1 Introduction

This article illustrates how poetic narratives, created based on lived experience of supervision, can contribute to raising awareness of the involved parties' professional identity development, as well as of values and premises for dialogic and relational doctoral supervision. The aim is to transform personal, relational lived experience of the research fellow and the professor from disconnected private testimonies and emotional accounts into universal narratives that others can relate to or make use of. Therefore, the text is performatively

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developed through roles and rituals that constitute the fundamental premise of supervision which is to see, to realise and to be seen as a human being (Denzin, 1997). Narrative inquiry can be understood as a "/…/profoundly relational form of inquiry" (Clandinin, 2007, p. xv) accounting for thoughts and feelings in our lives and enabling us to share stories about meaningful experiences. According to Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, pp. 42–43), narrative inquiry is "/…/not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted". As nonfiction writers we use Sarah Pink's (2015) methods of 'sensory ethnography' that highlight how diverse smells, flavours, sensations, and thoughts are connected and peculiarly intertwined in research processes as well – when we do not do research on but with people and real lives.

This article defines poetic narratives, constructed based on lived experience of supervision, as stories written in poetic form aiming to lift life experiences, in the role of supervisor and research fellow, where professional identity, body, emotion, and vulnerability plays a greater role than in a purely academic analytical text. The 16 narratives presented below have been developed through a creative co-design partnership, on a narrative journey, between the supervisor and the research fellow. All verbal or visual narratives are tied to time, place, and relation, and contain traces of lives. Lives that can be recounted and interpreted, in the same way in which the photograph below displays a moment captured through the lens of artist Britt Marie Bye (2020).

FIGURE 11.1 "Traces of Life?"
PHOTOGRAPH: BRITT MARIE BYE

These traces of lives imply that narratives are corporeal as well: "It is not narratives that shape experiences but, rather, experiences that structure narratives. Experiences are the sequence of events that give structure and content to narratives" (Menary, 2008, p. 79). This article exhibits traces of real life in which the body in a place at a time in relation to someone else emerges at the centre.

2 Context: Place, Time, Space, and Relation

In recent years, academia has become a space largely influenced by a New Public Management-inspired (NPM) measurement system. As researchers, educators, and supervisors, we are living in a time in which the world is impacted by so-called "counting edges" (Kjær & Martinsen, 2015). Therefore we ought to adopt a self-critical and introspective attitude to our own field of work, and critically consider how this measurement regime affects us as supervisors over time. Tom Kjær and Kari Martinsen (2015) make a point to remind us that knowledge and processes that cannot be counted or measured nevertheless remain meaningful in the meetings between people. Supervision processes consist of these types of meetings that can be interpreted as relational games that shape both parties' professional identities, in which the interchanging closeness and distance between supervisor and student contributes to building student independence through a slowly emerging formative process.

Doctoral supervision involves partially slow processes that often are not in line with NPM – personal processes shaped by relations over time that can be understood as one of life's "big spaces" with its own speed (Kjær & Martinsen, 2015).

The renowned educational researchers Per Lauvås and Gunnar Handal (1998) point out that students place more emphasis on emotional and motivational support than supervisors do. This demonstrates that we must deliberatively turn our focus towards this form of support if we are to succeed in creating good supervision moments that build a feeling of "mastery". Firing et al. (2013) describe ideal supervision as something they call mastery meetings. Hence, good supervision occurs when the so-called pastoral support from the supervisor appears equal to the intellectual support (Lee, 2008), i.e. when guidance is balanced between the professional and the personal.

The Professor: Pastoral – she savoured the word and looked out the window. What concerns the idyll of country- or shepherd life comes from the medieval Latin word 'pastoralis'. Thus, that which

> belongs to a priest's profession or mental health care. She immediately felt the lump in her stomach mixing with the devil on her shoulder. Can you do this – are you good enough... Are you going to be a caregiver now as well? She pushed the devil off her shoulder and looked in the mirror. There she saw a 25-year-old version of herself and opened a window to her past. The memories resurfaced. About how, during a supervision meeting, she didn't dare tell her professor that she didn't understand the words he kept using, 'nomothetic and ideographic science'. She recalls running home and reading and reading and reading. Desperate, to avoid appearing stupid.[1]

The stage artist professor Tore Vagn Lid points out that:

> Between the society and the school system's traditional, humanistic ideals one the one hand and the stories or images of reality that are conveyed to young people through culture and the youth industries' own media on the other – there rests a contradiction. (Lid, 2020)

It is precisely this contradiction that we as supervisors must attempt to crack. One way to do that is to take action, personally. Consider, document, and analyse our own experiences of meetings with young people in education. Through scrutiny, supervision can be developed into a real, safe relationship in which vulnerability appears through dramaturgical analysis of the basic elements of the supervision scenario: fable, figure, time, and space. The aim is to develop a mutually formative process between the student and the supervisor, as demonstrated in the following two narratives:

The professor: The hope of a new future did not let go. Although every breath ached and the world outside continued as if nothing had happened, hope lay waiting. Most things had been put on hold when the professor suddenly fell to the ground. The bike remained in one piece. Not the head. Months passed; the weeks slowly dragged on. But the headache didn't let go. Letters still rolled over the pages and were impossible to catch. The days of the big conference in Helsinki were approaching. While the professor was still lying horizontally with a headache that overshadowed the whole world. Why didn't I wear my helmet, she thought. It was too late to regret it. Still, hope lay waiting, the hope of a new future.

FIGURE 11.2 "Living is wondering"
PHOTOGRAPH: BRITT MARIT BYE

The research fellow: On the other side of town, the young research fellow had moved into a four-person house. Straight from the big city to this village in northern Norway. She sat waiting for the phone to ring, an email, or a sign of life. Not much happened and the days eventually had to be counted as weeks, months and soon enough the entire autumn semester had passed by. Without any sign of life from the professor. The trip to Helsinki came and went. The hope for a shoulder to lean on and a nodding smile during lunch had long since withered away. The research fellow sat alone and had to roll up their sleeves to seize the future. Alone. Strong and ready. But lonely – and possibly abandoned. All thanks to an all-too-short bike ride to work on a hot day in September.[2]

These narratives are autobiographical texts. We choose to share these to show the people behind the relations in a doctoral supervision relationship that meet in a place at a given time in life. For 'pastoral support' and 'relational development' to be meaningful in supervision, it is important that we consider

the human narrative nature (Blix et al., 2020). We are complete human beings, we do not have a body, we are bodies (von der Fehr, 2016), and we understand our lives through narratives that create significance (Caine et al., 2013). From a feminist perspective (Kassah & Kassah, 2010) we consider it important to contribute with alternative narratives about supervision. This involves displaying different scenarios to the traditional ones (Beauvoir, 2001), in which the professor is an older white man, with gray hair and decades of experience, while the research fellow is a young ambitious man or a single young intellectual woman. Our stories, on the other hand, are constructed based on the life of a female professor in her 40s and a pregnant female research fellow in her 30s who has a child.

3 Supervision Theory

Supervision can be claimed to be an "…/educational and relational process with discovery, learning, growth, and development as the goal, in which the learner is at the centre" (Tveiten, 2002, p. 24). The ego is the narrative aspect important to the sense of the student's self-perceived life experience in relation to that of the supervisor. In their study of Norwegian students, Firing, Klomsten and Moen (2013) find that supervision can be categorized into two primary dimensions: the academic and the personal. The supervisor's personal skills are necessary for the student to gain "mastery" confidence (Bandura, 1997), and thereby be able to release their potential connected to the academic skills. This involves care and personal commitment on the one hand and commitment to academic goals on the other. It is important to be aware that supervision is essential to a successful writing process (Dysthe, 2002, 2003), and that writing is a creative process in which the research fellow's personality and communication skills are constantly developing (Lie, 2012).

However, in our experience, supervisors tend to overly focus on progression, flow, while underestimating the social and psychological aspects of the conversations with research fellows. Perhaps this is due to working in a "counting edge system" where we are measured based on our own publications in relation to career development and credit building, and thus tied to the institute's productivity. We know that the purpose of the New Public Management-inspired measurement system was not to create a square, one-sided, output-oriented research and education sector, but nevertheless, the consequence appears to be a working climate increasingly characterized by the measurement of results, rather than a broad focus on education and research as formative processes (Loge, 2019; Tønnesen & Schei, 2019).

The purpose of actively utilising different dimensions in supervision is to contribute to the student developing their own repertoire, a mix of actions and responses, so that they can become more flexible when they face varied situations. However, being able to discover different dimensions of one's own supervision practice requires, first and foremost, the will and ability within the supervisor to conduct a type of self-reflection and: "…/requires a holistic teaching and learning approach from the academic" (Lee, 2012, p. 1). Thus, it requires an ability to consider the supervision relation and the supervision situation from a meta-perspective, and this is where narrative inquiry can be a useful tool. Being a significant other for a research fellow is not just a job, it is a formative task that is both demanding, and also personal. The poet Kolbein Falkeid (1979, p. 45) reminds us that we, as fellow human beings, have a job to do: "That's why life has you on its crew list". As a doctoral supervisor, you are part of the crew list and you must step into roles and solve tasks for which you have not obtained any formal education through your academic degree, nor have been trained in by the university as an employer. As a supervisor, one must nevertheless be a source of intellectual inspiration, an administrative research manager, a co-author, an application writer, a personal motivator, a course leader, an academic writing teacher, a career guide, and a network builder (Bartlett & Mercer, 2001). It is demanding that as a supervisor, one should set out to discuss and agree on expectations from the start, be aware that different "supervision styles" do not always suit the individual student's needs, be willing and able to adapt from the beginning, and be aware that the student's needs may change throughout. As a supervisor, one must discuss how well the supervision is going and expect to "calibrate" the way this happens at regular intervals based on current needs, as well as being aware of institutional guidelines and procedures in case problems arise. Furthermore, as a supervisor, one will take on numerous roles such as: leader, God, mum & dad, facilitator, advisor, friend, doctor, and lawyer, according to Nina Wisker (2013).

4 Performative Narratives

The research fellow is now back from parental leave. She enters the final phase of her thesis work. The timing is good for reflection. Just before her parental leave, we carried out a mid-term evaluation and it is now time to assess the supervision process itself. A life cycle presents challenges for all humans, but we wonder whether we manage to use the phases of life as a resource to build a relationship. 'Ideal' and 'reality' is a dichotomy we must all relate to in life. While Lee's (2012) five guidance dimensions (structure, becoming part of a professional

FIGURE 11.3 "Every view is a new perspective"
PHOTOGRAPH: BRITT MARIT BYE

community, critical thinking, independence, and relational relationships) represent a form of 'ideal', we will now proceed in an experience-based manner to narratively consider 'reality'. Supervision, as it is experienced, is a form of facilitated assistance. "Helping is about entering spaces using one's imagination, in to the other in the space, to be in a space, in the fictional space of understanding" (Kjær, 2012 in Kjær & Martinsen, p. 13). We are different and see the world from our own points of view or spaces in life, as the following two narratives illustrate:

The research fellow: Every morning, the nausea came for the research fellow. Not like yesterday, but worse. These horizontal weeks disappeared as the fetus secured itself to life. The world outside was like cotton. Hope was like an invisible voice far away – barely there. But behind the nausea, hope still lingered.

The professor: It's in the bond between us, thought the professor as she poured another cup of coffee. Didn't dare think about what the gastroscopy would find. Still took a big sip – even though she knew she shouldn't. It had been weeks, months since she had seen any signs of life. Nevertheless,

she did not give up on the hope of a new future. When one day they would both be at the institute, building the future – together. She grabbed her phone, dialed the number, and hoped that the research fellow would answer today.

5 The Narratives of Vulnerability

Vulnerability rests in the bonds between people. By looking the other in the eye, truthfully seeing one's own anxiety, that is when the relationship can be built on a reliable foundation. The professor sees herself in the research fellow, vice versa. Judith Butler (2020) is concerned with vulnerability and community, and uses narratives from her own life when she tries to describe how the 'ethics of vulnerability' is a premise for all community. Supervision is a form of community that is constantly developing: "As humans, like all other beings on this planet, we are entrusted to others from the beginning" (Butler, 2020, p. 15). The stories, interpretations and linguistics of our experiences influence our life choices, including supervision and the development of our professional identity.

"To tell a story about oneself is not the same as giving an account of oneself", claims Butler (2020, p. 68). A story has a narrative form, but it is not dependent only on our ability to convey a set of sequential events. As Butler highlights, it is also dependent on a narrative voice and a narrative authority. In supervision, one must empower the student to develop their narrative voice and their narrative authority – i.e. to take responsibility for their own vulnerability and their own actions so that in the long term they can develop an independent professional identity (Butler, 2020, p. 68).

6 Time as Structure

In supervision, structure appears in various manners and in different phases. Regarding structure, it is important to set up a solid project and a good process with clarity at all stages, creating predictability. And also, to distribute the work evenly over time and ensuring regular evaluation each semester so that the research fellow feels safe and comfortable in their own project.

The research fellow: The informal. That which does not take place in previously agreed and formal forms. She felt safer here. In the

> spontaneous, anchored conversations, full of optimism and faith. About the project, about her. Where the thesis was a mere gleam of "the Soria- Moria castle" in the distance. Where things weren't set in stone – where there was still a sea of possibilities. She looked disapprovingly at the hundred pages – like laundry that had not yet been sorted and folded. Shame mixed with her inspiration. She couldn't possibly send something like that, could she?

The stories we tell ourselves during the process are an essential part of supervision. The experience of a text being like laundry that has not yet been sorted and folded, illustrates the uneasiness of living with uncertainty.

The research fellow: "A dynamic structure with room for guidance when 'things go south', rather than a static plan, has worked well for me – though maybe it hasn't worked as well for you?" (she said carefully).

The professor: "Yes, I actually believe that the conversations while waiting for the coffee to brew are just as valuable as the appointments booked in the calendar".

The research fellow: "It has been important for me to have these short anchoring conversations to discuss and get quick feedback on ideas, situations and various challenges", (she continued, quite relieved).

After having taken a breather, we both see that in the future we need to set clearer deadlines to regularly submit text, especially now that the monograph format will be finalised in the final year. Working with structure involves both plans, agreements, dates for evaluations, and deadlines, but also structure regarding regular feedback on written text. However, in that case you have to dare to let go of the text and send it away. Part of the challenge in supervising this research fellow has been that she is somewhat reluctant to hand over text. It was only during the mid-term evaluation that this knot really loosened and that the research fellow saw the importance of collecting the text and sending it off.

The Professor: The stack of papers that I'm waiting for. It's not coming. She talks. She writes. She reads. She rewrites. Re-thinks. Again and again. But pressing print – or send. That hurts the research fellow. I go down the stairs. Knock on the door. A hello and

a coffee, and another refusal of the request. We talked about letting go – that it's not that big a deal. It doesn't hurt. Not in that way. I look her in the eyes and say – you have to trust me. She nods and laughs.

7 Places for Professional Community

The professor: "Being part of a professional community is, as I see it, extremely useful for PhD students and it enables progress in our work!" the research fellow states enthusiastically. The professor recalls. The loneliness, no one at the institute studied the same subject. An eternal struggle to be understood by colleagues. The battle of the reading list, the tug of war, and the gossip. The loneliness still stays with her. But now – now it's over.

Lee (2012) also claims that becoming part of a 'professional community' as a research fellow is important. For the professor, the job at the beginning of the research fellowship involves changing the relationship from a student-relation to a form of colleague-relation. A research fellow is an employee in Norway, not purely a student. But the research fellow still holds both roles at the same time. Ensuring that the research fellow gets involved in a professional community requires inviting them to various professional activities. From the supervisor's perspective, it is important to invite her to conferences by planning trips and e.g. write abstracts together, but also developing workshops, courses and papers together as a team. It is thus about participating together in various professional networks, as well as about proposing interesting developmental challenges at the institute that the research fellow can contribute to solving. However, perhaps the most important of all is to be generous in sharing personal experiences of where one has failed, thus sharing one's own vulnerability (Ørbæk & Engelsrud, 2019). We have all been freshers at one point, and it is therefore essential to dare to speak about the experience that completing a doctorate is an educational process that takes time and maturation. Thus, no one can research independently when they start, but they must learn to research, gradually and together with a senior partner.

The research fellow: The calf stands up and runs away on wobbly legs, barely one hour old, accompanied by Sir David Attenborough's familiar voice. It has no choice if it is going to survive on

the savannah full of predators, the research fellow thinks, straightening her suit jacket. Soon it is her who will be going for a run. Equipped only with a script and a PowerPoint in a room full of politicians. Tromsø might as well have been the Serengeti. But she is prepared: they have written and practiced it together, the professor and her. And unlike the calf, she will have opportunities to build muscles as well as networks, expanding her horizon and, not least, communicate and further develop her project. It will make the run worth it. Even if it's scary. She shakes her head. Surely, she's not standing there comparing herself to a wildebeest, she thinks as she looks at her own reflection.

In our communication about the meaning of 'professional community', we realise that subjects differ by nature, and that our theater subject is collective by nature – and thus the professional community may become even more important.

The research fellow: It's January, and the nausea has finally let go. The professor, on the other hand, keeps a firm grip of her arm as they slip and stumble down the hills. The research fellow with what is now a visible bump. They are on their way to a social evening: one of many that the professor has invited her to. She often does this, the professor. Connects the research fellow with unknown colleagues, points out and encourages her to participate in conferences, seminars, and gatherings. Proposes excursions and dialogue across both subjects and parts of the country. As theater researchers and educators, you profit from this, thinks the research fellow as they carefully make their way down the hill while staccato skating. For what is art, if not encounters between different people and perspectives? The research fellow feels that she both masters and values these meetings more now than at the beginning of the race, and she knows that this is partly due to everything she has been included in. Ops! Careful! The ice lurks under the thin cover of snow, but the Professor has walked this trail before.

8 Relations

In the collaboration between research fellows and supervisors, the 'relation' itself is the success factor for good supervision, as we experience it. But the type of relation can vary from one supervision relationship to another. Kvalsund and Allgood (2009) describe three different types of relation: (1) dependence, (2) interdependence and (3) independence. In what is defined as the 'dependency relation', the research fellow is completely dependent on the supervisor to reach their goal. The so-called 'interdependence relation' is characterized by the fact that the research fellow and the professor are mutually dependent on each other to develop their roles towards one another. Whereas what can be called the 'independence relationship', it is accepted that the research fellow no longer needs help (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2009). In the supervision of the research fellow on which this text is based, we find that we travel between these relationships depending on the situations in which we find ourselves. When she is preparing for something that she is hesitant about, such as the mid-term evaluation, she is more dependent on the supervisor, while when she is conducting analyses in which she deep dives into data and theory, and then has to present these, she is very independent. However, when we co-wrote an article and a chronicle together, we were mutually dependent on each other to reach the goal (Gjærum et al., 2019). We believe this alternation between relation types throughout the supervision is healthy for both parties.

In the role of research fellow, one is often concerned with the "personal relation" to the supervisor, claim Lauvås and Handal (1998, p. 153). Thus, as a professor one must be aware that professionals are people and that relations between people are the bonds that make the work appear motivating in the long term. We must remember that: 'no man is an island', and that relationships are important for our mental health.

> Central to a healthy relationship between student and academic is the issue of trust and a belief in each other's integrity. These are elements which are both reputational and revealed over time. Both student and academic will have reputations to be created and developed, and these are nurtured through a positive regard for each other. In practice this means that a healthy relationship is developed when each keeps their promises. (Lee, 2012, p. 117)

Raising awareness among supervisors of relationship building is therefore important. Anne Lee (2012) claims that we must account for both the cognitive and the social aspect of supervision. The research fellow this text is based

on is creative and aware of her own learning process, and thus also of the importance of being innovative, especially focusing on her research design. The research fellow herself is very concerned with the relational aspect of the supervision relationship and describes it as follows:

The research fellow: "The Gangsås hill during lunch?" The message from the professor comes one morning in March, 2021. The research fellow has just changed places with her boyfriend in the home office, but the breastfeeding brain fog still sits like a helmet on her head. The baby is screaming in the living room and the waking nights are numerous and lonely. "Yes please! Coming to yours at 11.00 blunders, and missteps, makes it easier to relax, to take constructive criticism without getting defensive – or into the fetal position. The professor opens the glove compartment and reveals two soda cans. Coke and Fanta Lemon. "Now we're just crazy", she laughs. "But we've deserved it. After all, we abseiled down a mountain at lunch!" That's important, thinks the research fellow, as she tucks in her oldest child the same evening. That someone is eager to show you that they see and listen. Is committed to -, stands up for – and cares about you.

The professor and the research fellow have on several occasions discussed the fact that life as a researcher must be a full and rich life if one is to persevere with its high work pressure and difficult academic challenges.

The research fellow: "It is possible to switch off the machine and go home at 4 P.M., even as a research fellow", she hears the professor say to the new employees. A message she herself has been served repeatedly during her research fellowship. The professor has instilled that message in her, both through words and actions. She smiles to herself – and knows it's true. There is no point in digging a hole for oneself and becoming apathetic when the thesis is not progressing as planned. After all, there is a whole world of relations and experiences outside of it, and life goes on, even if the cursor in Word is standing still.

9 Independence

In the beginning, research fellows must develop ownership to their project and learn to work independently and purposefully, dare to stand on their own two feet and use their voice. As a supervisor, one should contribute to the research fellow developing as an independent researcher during the research fellowship: "Enquiry-based learning engages the teacher initially as a guide and later as a collaborator, it encourages students to become actively involved in designing the questions, researching and constructing knowledge" (Lee, 2012, p. 96).

Already as a master's student, the professor experienced the research fellow as unusually independent. She shows an ability to structure, think, and explore the research from different angles and is very good at observing in the field. The supervisor's job has therefore often been to stand behind her and ask questions rather than coming up with clear answers. We often discuss ethical research dilemmas or ways of understanding a situation, more in the role of colleagues than as teacher and student. Supervision entails a "/…/ process that involves self-reflection, the creation of a personal record, planning and monitoring progress towards the achievement of personal objectives" (Lee, 2012, p. 96). Thus, all forms of supervision will inevitably be person-oriented and varying. The form of supervision that ensures the development of independence involves facilitating a process where the candidate is given the space to develop their autonomy and gain faith in themselves, like in Peter Pan: "You can fly, you can fly, you can fly!"

The research fellow's email to the professor:	"… and therefore I have decided to change the problem statement" (like you suggested a few months ago).
The research fellow thinks:	I'm not going to write that last part. I'll just make a mental note of it. One is allowed a small sense of pride. Besides, I know she won't point it out. This is her method. She gives me the freedom to explore and figure things out for myself. Applauding progress. Even when I take "detours" and still end up where she suggested I could have started. She encourages and motivates – perhaps

> even expects – a great degree of independence. That makes me want to show myself worthy of her trust. Become more independent and believe that I can – that I can fly on my own.

The research fellow determines that supervision in which a large degree of independence is expected works well for her. And the professor knows that, when meeting with other research fellows, she could never use the same strategy. Everyone differs.

10 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is one of six components of what are called 21st century skills: (1) collaboration, (2) creativity, (3) critical thinking, (4) citizenship, (5) formation and (6) communication.[3] Critical thinking involves evaluating information and arguments, creating connections, and identifying patterns, creating meaningful knowledge and experimenting, reflecting and acting in society based on ideas and theories. "Critical thinking is often described as a metacognitive process, consisting of a number of sub-skills (e.g. analysis, evaluation and inference) that, when used appropriately, increases the chances of producing a logical conclusion to an argument or solution to a problem" (Dwyer, Hogan, & Stewart, 2014, p. 2). Critical thinking is a core skill that a research fellow should develop. The research fellow is particularly concerned with critical thinking through the "action research's" opportunity to participate in changing discriminatory practices in accordance with the CRPD,[4] and designing new forms of inclusion together with fellow researchers and the festival management. As a supervisor, one should contribute to developing the research fellow's critical thinking skills by: showing resistance, questioning their reasoning, asking for connections, helping to identify patterns in data or theories, and enabling the research fellow to create meaningful knowledge, for instance by experimenting in practice and then reflecting on the outcome. Because it is essential that the research fellow themself develops internal critical thinking, which is balanced, and does not take over. If one becomes too critical, it inhibits thinking and writing, but if one has an appropriate amount of critical thinking, one will be able to reflect and further develop research in the field.

The research fellow: When she looks back and studies the map she has drawn in the sand. She can see that the terrain has changed. Where the landscape was once soft, lush meadows and gurgling streams where the trees eagerly dipped their branches into the water – soaking up everything – it is now steeper, rougher. It's mixed with a good dose of critical thinking. They have been on many walks in this landscape, the professor and her. They have turned over the rocks, examined the tree trunks, and dug their fingers into the soil. And the professor has asked her about what she sees, hears, and thinks. Asked her to formulate questions, about everything, to everything, by everything. Had conversations where she felt that the goal itself was to ponder, to be critical.

A supervisor should not be very critical in the beginning, she writes in an email to the professor. "I think it is wise to gradually become more critical. In line with building the candidate's academic self-esteem".

The research fellow: Yes, the landscape has become rougher. She can see that. But she also knows that beneath the surface, deep down in the earth, where you can only get with a hoe, a shovel, and with precision – that is where all the cracks and cavities are filled with water. Some research fellows are so critical themselves, that the supervisor's job is to praise, reassure, and validate that what the candidate is thinking is both wise and innovative, according to Ferguson & Bubikova-Moan (2019).

11 Conclusion

> I cannot tell a story, I cannot tell a story, because the story about me is not one, but many. And when they lie to each other – it feels as if they are lying to me, in me and through me. (Lid, 2020)

Throughout this chapter, we have seen what supervision and the supervision relationship contribute with in a person's narrative journey of life. The intention was to transform personal, relational lived experience from disconnected private testimonies and emotional accounts into universal narratives which hopefully have been recognisable to the reader.

Supervision is best when the five above-mentioned dimensions are internalised and expressed in real, human encounters with the student, which can contribute to meaningful narratives about life. We must emphasise that the dimensions presented in this article should not become prescriptive, but rather inspire a personal, relational, and narrative process, so that "education can be a liberating, humanistic, self-actualising endeavour" (Lee, 2012, p. 8).

What we physically experience, remember from real life, suppress, or choose to share and recount shape us as fellow human beings, and also contribute to developing our professional identity. Our experience is that good guidance can be developed through narrative inquiry – where time, place and relation is central. It is in the relation that one can develop mutual understanding and learning within both parties, thereby promoting well-being in the project that contributes to the development of the subject as well as of society. We must be mindful to not simply hang nice moments on the walls of our minds, embellishing them with our longing. Together, we must dare to take on life, exploring the scarred everyday and using it for something constructive. That's why life has us on its crew list.

Notes

1 "Forskerdagbok", autumn 2020. Inspired by definitions from "Norsk akademisk ordbok" and "Store norske leksikon", 24.04.2021.
2 "Forskerdagbok", April 2020.
3 https://www.npdl.global/
4 CRPD: https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/likestilling-og-inkludering/likestilling-og-inkludering/konvensjoner/fn-konvensjonen-om-rettar-til-menneske-med-nedsett-funksjonsevne-crpd/id2426271/

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CHAPTER 12

It Also Applies to You

Vibeke Solbue

Abstract

In this text, I will perform a critical analysis of some of the ongoing research on current Holocaust education in Norway. I will also focus on my own research on inclusion and an equal education for all. Lately, I have been reflecting on why I have some misgivings around both my own research, and that of others in this field. By using autoethnographical narrative inquiry, my own memory will come into contact with my professional life. I think of it as using the feeling of concern as a critical lens. By using my own concern to look at these fields with a critical eye, I have arrived at the following three themes I want to discuss in a critical light. Those are:

– An equal education for all
– The education about evil
– The feeling of shame

By discussing these three elements in light of theories of education on the Holocaust and my own research, I want to look more closely to see if the concern experienced can tell me something about the existing knowledge in the field.

Keywords

autoethnographical narrative inquiry – holocaust education – intercultural education – education about evil – shame

1 Introduction

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, Norway declared itself neutral, but on 9 April 1940, German troops invaded the country. King Haakon and the government refused to surrender, but after two months, the Germans had conquered the entire country, and from then until liberation in 1945, Norway was under German occupation.

The occupying regime's repression of Norwegian society was carried out by replacing the diversity of democracy with ideological and political alignment. Only one party was allowed, and there was only one official ideology, the Nazi one. Newspapers and magazines were censored and were only allowed to print what the regime permitted them to. In the autumn of 1941, radios were confiscated to prevent people from listening to broadcasts from London.

In Eastern Europe, people were persecuted, oppressed, and killed because they belonged to what the Germans perceived as inferior races. The Norwegians belonged to what the Nazis considered the highest race of all, and therefore it was primarily active opponents of the regime who were persecuted. There was nevertheless one important exception to this, the Norwegian Jews, who fell victim to German racial policy. In the autumn of 1942, 773 Jews were arrested and sent to Germany.

I was born 22 years after the end of Second World War in Larvik, a town in eastern Norway. I grew up with my sister, my Norwegian father and my German mother and grandmother. I was 14 years old when we read a book at school titled It also applies to you (Det angår også deg) written by Arnold Jacoby and Herman Sachnowitz. It is the story of Herman Sachanowitz who was deported together with his family from Larvik to Auschwitz during the Second World War. When they arrived Auschwitz, his father and three sisters were gassed to death, while Herman and his four brothers tried to survive. However, only Herman survived and returned to Norway.

When reading this story, I became very attached to the people in it and it made a big impression on me. Back at school, I remember the teacher was reflecting on the book, and I sat, as usual, quiet at my desk, listening to him. Then I remember him saying that he felt rage against the Germans who were able to commit such cruel acts, and that all Germans were to blame for what happened, including their descendants.

I remember the feeling inside me when he said this in the classroom. That I, with a German mother, was in a way partly responsible to the death of 6 million Jews. I just wanted to hide. Hide myself and hide this experience. So, I did.

40 years later I was involved in a research conference about prejudice. Part of the conference was about education on the Holocaust and why it is important for it to be taught in school. While listening to the researcher, the memory of my own education in the Holocaust came back to me. I remembered it all. The classroom, the teacher, the book, and most of all the feeling and the shame.

In this text, I will perform a critical analysis of some of the ongoing research on current Holocaust education in Norway. I will also focus on my own research on inclusion and an equal education for all. Lately, I have been reflecting on why I have some misgivings around both my own research, and that of others in this field. By using autoethnographical narrative inquiry, my own memory

will come into contact with my professional life. I think of it as using the feeling of concern as a critical lens.

2 Research on Holocaust Education

For decades, education on the Holocaust has been presented in the Western world through programmes that reflect a view of the Holocaust as having global relevance (Bromley & Russel, 2015). One of the perspectives used in education on the Holocaust conceptualises the Holocaust as having a universal moral relevance. It is understood as a global cultural symbol of evil and is used to establish an international human rights regime. Bromley & Russel (2015) claim that this is a new form of Holocaust education, where previously a more historical view of the Holocaust was taken where it was conceptualised in society as a historical event central to the moral narrative of the Western world.

In this presentation of education on the Holocaust, I will not present the whole spectrum of education on this topic, but only focus on the perspective relevant to my own experience and current research on education on the Holocaust in Norway. The historical view says that one of the purposes of studying the Holocaust is to prevent future human rights violations. When drawing general lessons across space and time, we can see that "it can sensitize young people to examples of injustice, persecution, racism, antisemitism and other forms of hatred in the world today" (Salmons, 2003, p. 139), and this is a key motivation for teaching pupils about the Holocaust (Bromley & Russel, 2015). This is a normative view where we can't see a direct connection to global implications for proper civic behavior or an explicit conceptualisation of the Holocaust as a violation of universal principles of human rights (Bromley & Russel, 2015). I think we can place this perspective on education about the Holocaust in connection with the education I received in the Eighties. The content of the education involved reading this book concerning a Jewish experience, pointing out the cruel German Nazis who committed these violations against the Jewish people, pointing the finger of blame at the bad Germans, and hoping that the students learned that we should never follow a similar path in our lives. I cannot remember any reflections on, for instance, how people could do such cruel things to other human beings, or how they could perform such evil actions in the name of the law. Neither can I remember any reflections on the active role the Norwegians had during World War II, when in reality it was the Norwegian police force who deported the Jews from Norway.

Education on the Holocaust in Norway has changed, and attempts have been made to give it a relevance to the students' understandings of global principles of human rights. Students at schools today no longer have parents

or grandparents who lived through the war, and, at the same time, they lack knowledge about the Holocaust.

Fred Dervin (2015) claims that we saw a new phenomenon in the Nordic countries at the turn of the century, which he calls the "cosmopolitansiation" of Holocaust Remembrance. The Norwegian Research Centre for Holocaust and Religious Minorities was set up in 2001. About 10,000 students go and visit an exhibition at The Holocaust Center in Oslo with images, sounds, films, items, and texts that document the genocide of European Jews and the Nazi State's regime of mass murder (Dervin, 2015).

It is common for Norwegian pupils to travel to former concentration camps to learn about their history. This school trip is called "the white busses" and is very popular for classes at secondary school. "The white busses" is a foundation that organises school trips to former death and concentration camps. According to Kverndokk (2007), 25% (about 40,000) of students at secondary schools in Norway make this journey with "The white busses" or similar foundations (p. 13). "The white busses" explain on their website that their educational plan focuses on human rights, the protection of human lives, and anti-racism (Hvite Busser, 2022). Their goal is that students should remember and not forget these cruel events (Kverndokk, 2007, p. 13). Kverndokk (2007), says that this is a part of a collective remembrance. A collective remembrance is often expressed through simplistic terms and highly value-laden interpretations of the past, as is the case with the memory of the Holocaust. Today, the Holocaust is a dominant cultural narrative that draws the original actions out of their historical context, making them symbolic representations of absolute human evil (Kverndokk, 2007, p. 16).

Stevick and Gross (2015) write that: "In 2005, the United Nations encouraged its member states 'to develop education programs that will inculcate future generations with the lesson of the Holocaust in order to help prevent future acts of genocide'" (p. VII). Sæle (2021) has done an analysis of four history books used in education for students in upper secondary school in Norway. The story of the victimised Jewish people and the cruel and evil actions from the Nazi's is a dominant theme. Sæle (2021) then tell us that the story of the Holocaust in Norwegian textbooks is the story captured in the history, as a relevant example we can learn of. He concludes that the story of the Jews is then stated as an example where the students can learn about the dangerous consequences that racist ideology can have in society (Sæle, 2021).

It is not the purpose of this article to understand and see if education on the Holocaust in Norway has succeeded in providing relevance to the student's understandings of global human rights principles, but Sæle's analysis can give us the impression that it still has a way to go to accomplish this.

3 Research on Inclusion and Intercultural Education – My Own Research

My own research focuses on inclusion and intercultural education. Solbue's (2014) dissertation "Dialogue that erases categories" discusses the challenge of creating a school that provides everyone with an equal education regardless of their background. One of the criticisms leveled at the school is that too much of the work is based on a pedagogy where we classify the participants in the school and categorize them. There is a danger that the principle of equality (Gullestad, 2002) will outweigh other factors when working from such a starting point. This means that the participants who are equal to the majority are those who receive equal rights to education (Pihl, 2010; Solbue, 2014).

After observing what I called 'the intercultural class' in my fieldwork in upper secondary school, I used the theory of intercultural education to analyse the interactions in this class (Solbue, Helleve, & Smith, 2017). In intercultural education, the focus is on the relational aspects of the dialogue between actors (Portera, 2014). Intercultural education is based on the idea of going beyond passive co-existence to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies. This will be possible when we create respect for and dialogue between different cultural groups (UNESCO, 2006). In intercultural education, we do not understand identity and culture as rigid structures, but as dynamic possesses that are in a constant state of change (Portera, 2014). In our society we don't understand factors such as diversity, difference, immigration or living in a complex society as factors of risk, but as possibilities for enrichment and growth (Portera, 2014).

When analysing the data material for my PhD thesis, I had to work with my own preconceptions (Solbue, 2011). When working with my own prejudices, my preconceptions were challenged in a research community through a critical appraisal from a friend that challenged my own attitudes (Solbue, 2011). This in turn has led to work within school-based competence development where teachers have used a critical appraisal from a friend in peer mentoring to develop a critical view of their own preconceptions (Solbue, 2016). In this work, I use the theory of intersubjectivity to understand the importance of the ability to understand the perspective of others in dialogue (Solbue, 2014). Rommetveit (2009) claims that the intersubjective space is a space were different opinions and perspectives do not have to lead to conflict, but instead contribute to the creation of new knowledge (in Solbue, 2016, p. 70). In the intersubjective space, the goal is not to agree, but to understand the other's perspective. This is a basic principle in intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1974, in Solbue, 2016, p. 78). In my work, I argue that intersubjectivity and the ability

to understand the perspective of others is an important factor in what Portera (2014) calls intercultural competence. This competence can be developed by participants who live in a complex society containing diversity, difference, and immigration (Solbue, 2014, p. 79). Further on in the article, I will present narrative inquiry and autoethnographical narrative inquiry. The critical analysis will highlight my worries about my own and others research on racism, integration, and intercultural education, and on education on the Holocaust.

4 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative Inquiry is the study of human life, where we understand that lived life is an important source of knowledge and understanding (Clandinin, 2013, p. 17). As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) claim:

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative Inquiry, the study of experiences as a story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. (p. 479)

That means that the researcher must be aware of how they interpret the stories told by people of their experiences of their lives. We must understand how a person interprets their own stories, their own experiences, and to make that possible, we must understand how we as researchers interpret a world made of told stories.

Narrative Inquiry is complex, with many factors to be aware of when engaging with it. It is a way of understanding people's experiences, which are seen as narrative compositions. It is not an analytic or representational device; it is an embodied narrative life composition. The key to understand narrative inquiries, is to think narratively about a phenomenon and about people's experiences (Clandinin, 2013, p. 38).

5 Autoethnographical Narrative Inquiry

"Who are you in this narrative inquiry?" is a question Jean Clandinin ask narrative inquirers to imagine in a narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013, p. 81). With this question, she wants the narrative inquirers to understand who they are in

relation to the research puzzle. This question also helps us to understand who we are in the midst in the inquiry (Clandinin, 2013, p. 81), by which she means to be "in the midst of researchers' ongoing personal and professional lives" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43). In this research puzzle, the narrative inquiry is my own memory meeting my own professional life. The midst in this project is very much what Clandinin (2013) notes in this extract: "narrative inquiry always begins and ends in the midst of ongoing experiences" (p. 44). I am in the midst of my own personal and professional experience, woven together.

I started this article with a memory from my past that I remembered many years later at a seminar. Clandinin (2013) claims that our memories are recollections, not exact duplications of original experiences. This is central to how narrative inquirers make sense of past events (p. 194). In the puzzle of this article, the focus stays on the inquirer. The research puzzle is my own memory, and how it has impacted my own professional development. Clandinin (2013) calls this an autoethnographical narrative inquiry. She cites Freeman (2007) who says "the interpretation and writing of the personal past [...] is [...] a product of the present and the interests, needs, and wishes that attend it. This present, however – along with the self whose present it is – is itself transformed in and through the process" (p. 192). This is consistent with what I am doing in this article, where I use my memory as a critical moment in my life and try to understand its impact on my own professional development as a teacher and researcher.

6 Turning Point in Narrative Research

In narrative research, turning points can be defined as an action or an event in a person's life. The narratological definition is of a structural nature, where one looks at an event as a marking of whether the goal is within reach or not. Here, it is the relationship between the element of the text that determines what is a turning point (Prince, 1987, in Johansson, 2005, p. 319). Denzin (1989, in Johansson, 2005) provides a more phenomenological/hermeneutic definition. Here we see that the event that is the turning point is of a decisive nature for the life story and can be a crisis or a decisive event in a person's life. Here, the subject's interpretation is at the centre. The turning point is then seen as socially created and bound to a context. That is, the turning point is constructed in a specific narrative and in a specific situation with certain narrative techniques (Johansson, 2005, p. 319 ff).

In this chapter, I will look back to the experience at the conference where I remembered the teacher making the comment in class about the Germans. In

what way is this a turning point in my professional development? It is not an obvious turning point, as in changing my life, or my direction in research. It is more of wonder, a worry, that I am reminded of.

7 Using the Feeling of Concern as a Critical Lens

Through experiencing the memory of my own Holocaust education at the research seminar on prejudice, a concern grew in me. It has made me ask some questions about not just current teaching on the Holocaust, but also my own research on integration, diversity, intercultural education, and prejudice. As researchers, we are constantly on the quest to understand the field we are researching, and challenging existing theories brings research forward. I can relate this to my previous research on my own preconceptions that also started with my concerns when faced with the data material. By using my own concern to look at these fields with a critical eye, I have arrived at the following three themes I want to discuss in a critical light. Those are:

– An equal education for all
– The education about evil
– The feeling of shame

By discussing these three elements in light of theories of education on the Holocaust and my own research, I want to look more closely to see if the concern experienced can tell me something about the existing knowledge in the field.

8 An Equal Education for All

In education on the Holocaust, we can see a normative view on what effect the education is supposed to achieve. When drawing general lessons in the study of the Holocaust, it is supposed to make young people more sensitive to injustice, persecution, racism, antisemitism, and other forms of hatred in the world today. In Norway, education on the Holocaust attempts to make it relevant to the students' understandings of global human rights principles. In my own research, I am concerned with issues regarding how to create an equal education regardless of background, where I use intercultural education as a tool to avoid what is called the principle of equality.

What is my wonder and the worry about? Is it about an education with equal rights? When we have this as a goal for our schools, schools that provide equal education for all regardless their background, isn't that a good goal to have? Well, the worry comes from who decides what the ideal is. It is based

on, among other things, research done in this field. An important question is if our research is a part of an echo chamber. When our research is based on earlier research that uses relevant theories used by other researchers that confirms our own research, we can be faced with the challenge that we never look outside of this research field to find other answers to our findings. One example of this is research that claims that children from immigrant parents archive at a lower level than children of parents from the majority (Bakken, 2003). This has had a big impact on research, particularly in the field of immigration. When you look into the statistics, you see that the factor 'immigrant parents' often don't have no education or higher education at all. That means that the factor 'level of education among parents' has a greater significance on pupils' achievement than immigration. So, immigration itself is maybe not a risk factor for low achievement, and a confirmation of the finding that immigrant children often achieve less that the majority. This will have impact on how we think and understand schools in terms of providing an education with equal rights. Another part of my worry is who decides the factors of equality? This is not so easy to answer. We often say that schools should work in the best interests of the child. We have human rights children's rights legislation and the Education Act of Norway all of which point to the overall goal of education being that each individual child's abilities and possibilities should be maximised so that they can fully participate in a responsible way in a free society (Lile, 2012 p. 508). This overall goal for the school leads to the question for the research in the field of inclusion of: how do we achieve this, and what is the situation in today's school? My worry is about the equality factor. Equivalent to what? And who benefits from this goal? In the research field of inclusion, we often refer to the terms "us" and "them". When researchers (such as myself) represent the "us" doing research on "them", how do we avoid making the gap between differences bigger and avoid just confirming and strengthening those differences? When starting from a perspective from one group, be it minority or majority, then will the other group not be excluded? What do we mean by diversity? How to reconcile diversity and inclusion with equal rights? Does it have anything to do with morality?

9 The Education about Evil

Another part of my worry is education about evil. In Holocaust education, we can see that in Norway the story of the victimised Jewish people and the cruel and evil actions of the Nazis is a dominant theme.

We have seen that much of the education on the Holocaust is based on the history of the actions conducted by the Nazis, told by Jews. The heinous acts

are difficult to grasp, it is difficult to understand that people can commit such acts. Humanising the actions of evil people during the Holocaust is difficult. This, however, raises the question: How will we be able to understand how people can commit such atrocities?

Hanne Arendt shows us some of the mechanisms behind these evil actions in her book Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the Banality of Evil (den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015). In this book, she doesn't understand the Nazi logistical manager who facilitated the Holocaust as a demonic force. She thinks of him as a thoroughly mediocre bureaucrat. The actions of an ordinary citizen had massive repercussions. "For Arendt, evil is not only organized, industrial-level violent against targeted groups, but also the bureaucratic and banal "non-thinking" routines that underlie such violence" (den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015, p. 86).

Passive participation can be just as destructive as active participation, as can being unaware of the repercussions of our actions or inactions. In her examination of Eichmann, Arendt finds that many of the Nazis were "terrible and terrifyingly normal" (den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015, p. 87). They weren't perverted or sadistic. And Arendt claims that this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together (den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015, p. 87).

> Although a controversial argument for Arendt to make at the time, she refused to ascribe genocidal evil to religious of a priori grounds. In her work on Eichmann, Arendt was at pains to point out that we are not dealing here with transcendent evil but with the banal everyday choices to not question or think. (den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015, p. 87)

She faults Eichmann for his obedience, his lack of critical distance, and his failure to think (Butler, 2012, in den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015, p. 87).

Maybe, in education about the evil, it is important to humanise the actions of those people. To understand that there are mechanisms in the human psychology that we all have within us and that we all must be aware of. To avoid evil actions, we must recognize and understand human behavior. I know this is done in many ways in our education system where critical thinking is a key focus. However, in my small review on education on the Holocaust in Norway, the historical view of evil actions and people is the focus in this narrative.

10 The Feeling of Shame

The last theme I will focus on is the feeling of shame. In my memories, I can remember the shame I felt on the behalf of the German people. I mentioned

in a comment at the conference that in the name of doing good when teaching about these evil actions from the past and about antisemitism, they also place a feeling of shame on a group of students in our schools. How is the feeling of shame related to education on the Holocaust?

It is interesting to learn that Holocaust education in Germany relies on building from a continued shame and shared responsibility of the German people (Ortloff, 2015). I have never gone to a German school, but because of my parents, I was raised in the German narrative of World War II. I find one extract from a teacher interview in the study of Ortloff (2015) interesting:

> One must give them both sides. One must say: you are not guilty, you were born much later, you have not done anything. But you will, forever, as long as there are Germans, have to help carry this package. We must stand by it, because otherwise the world will not recognize us. We are lucky that the people of the world even acknowledge us now, because of many years it did not look like they would, and we must be careful not to destroy this accomplishment. There are two sides that belong together. When the media say that we should draw a line under this history, I say we can never do this. Because we are Germans, and we will always have it in our baggage. And the students understand this well. (p. 217)

Ortloff's findings in her article '"They Think It Is Funny to Call Us Nazis": Holocaust Education in a Diverse Germany' (2015) show that despite German schools placing a strong focus on Holocaust education, they are not capable of linking it to diversity and inclusion in school. For instance, the teachers claim that it is only the Germans who can relate to the common national shame in the Holocaust education. It means that non-ethnic Germans are excluded from the discussions of Holocaust. Ortloff's analysis reveals:

> In terms of both state policy, as represented by state-approved textbooks, and teacher reflections on their practice, Holocaust education and multicultural education are often intertwined to the point that a truly multicultural education is truncated. … the idea of the Holocaust and shame is put forward, especially by the teachers, but also in more subtle ways in the textbooks, as something uniquely German. Non-ethnic Germans cannot be included in this education because their ethnicity bars them from engaging in the shame discussion. (p. 219)

To round off these discussions, I will draw the lines from my perceived concern to the idea of equality and an equal education, education about evil and education with shame.

To begin with the research on the field of diversity: do we fall into a trap where we, through reproducing ideas within existing research in the field, do not look beyond the thinking the theory represents? What if we only reproduce differences between groups in our quest to include?

In education about evil, we dehumanize the evil actions and do not take Arendt's thinking into account. In the well-known essay by Theodore Adorno (1971) 'Education after Auschwitz', it is claimed that all political education is aimed at preventing a new Auschwitz. But we are not capable of connecting the evil actions of the Nazis with something that lies within us which is purely human. Even though we know in reality that people in groups can perform evil actions. Belonging is more important taking the right action for fear of being excluded from the community.

In Germany, shame is central to the settlement with the Holocaust, but still, even though in Germany the focus is on education about the Holocaust throughout the school year, they fail to transfer this reflection to education about evil actions, violence, bullying and exclusion.

Could it be that we fail through our approach by understanding culture and cultural contradictions and communities? Is it the way of the human psyche we should go? Maybe we should dissolve the starting point of research through ethnicity and culture to understand how people act the way they do.

11 Conclusion

By addressing my strong reaction to the conference on prejudice in this article, I have managed to explore a concern that arose in me. By using an autoethonographical text in a narrative inquiry to understand the phenomenon, I have challenged both my own research on diversity and inclusion, and existing research on Holocaust education. Working in such a way, where I use my experience og concern as a tool for analysis, is both challenging and exciting. It shows a path for further research in the field of inclusion. It challenges the existing echo chamber within research. It challenges my understanding of the filed, and my prejudices. Thus, I can argue that working further with an academic concern and by using the concern in the analysis, has helped me to reach a turning point in my own research. I will continue to challenge existing theories and try to seek answers by examining the field from other points of view than what I and large parts of the research field have done before.

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CHAPTER 13

The Minotaur Myth, Mimesis and Me

Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen

Abstract

This chapter discuss mimesis in relation to oral storytelling. The question: *what possibilities does the concept of mimesis offer in terms of understanding the relationship between experience and story, and how does mimesis affect my narrative identity?*

Mimesis is placed in the spotlight through several processes: the storyteller's own narrative, a working process, and an artistic expression. Narrative Inquiry serves as a framework around the idea of mimesis. The narrative inquiry research method includes the researcher's own narrative, while mimesis uses clear coordinators to understand the process of a narrative.

The chapter looks at the author's own narrative, as well as the discovery of and work on a Greek myth that represents a fictional experience.

Keywords

oral storytelling – narrative – myth – mimesis

1 A Greek Myth

> He is standing there, in the middle of eternal darkness, he cannot see. If he could see, he would have seen the dark walls with stains surrounding him. ./ … /. He can feel, he feels that now his time has arrived. (Dahlsveen, 2021)

My subject area is oral storytelling and the above quote, which here serves as an opening and a bridge to the topic of this chapter, comes from a digital performance in autumn 2021 in which I told a Greek myth. The performance did not start with the beginning of a story, but with a scene from the myth towards the end of the story from which the above quote is taken. By starting the performance in this way, I hoped to invite the listener into something sensual. My choice to start a storytelling performance in this way reflects a desire to create an artistic signature that, in turn, is based on a personal artistic identity. The

personal identity is both constant and changeable at the same time, and the narrative identity arises to mediate between the two (Synnes, 2010, p. 130).

I am a performing storyteller, as well as teaching the discipline. In this chapter, I will not address teaching oral storytelling, but concentrate on how performing stories has formed my personal and professional life as a performing storyteller. Oral storytelling is described as a vivid, contextualised and situated event influenced by those present (Lwin, 2010) in a storytelling situation. By storytelling situation, I simply mean that a storyteller tells a story to a listener who is aware of the performative happening.

I believe that all stories have the ability to be related to experiences, even traditional narratives such as folk tales and myths, which constitute the main material in my repertoire as a storyteller. Traditional stories carry historical truths with them (Propp, Martin, & Martin, 1984) and there are connections between traditional narratives and concrete historical experiences (Hodne, 1990). Traditional stories point to beliefs, communities and cultures that once were. When I tell traditional stories in the present, I use my own experiences to understand both the story and the present. I even wonder whether the traditional stories have become part of my narrative identity. According to Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), a narrative can be regarded as a laboratory for imagination (Synnes, 2010, p. 138) and, to me, the imagination is highlighted in the traditional narratives. These stories portray a character in a story world quite unlike the world we normally inhabit as human beings. The world of this myth is contrasted with gods, creatures and human beings.

This chapter is based on a long-term relationship with a particular Greek myth. Through the story, I will try to understand my own profession as a storyteller by focusing on mimesis and its relationship to experience; this focus is also a path towards an understanding of narrative identity. The preliminary endpoint of the myth was an online performance called Embroidery and Storytelling November 2021.

Narrative Inquiry (hereinafter referred to as NI) considers research as a place for negotiation (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 576) and the principle of NI is to generate new connections between human being and context (Clandinin, 2013, p. 14). I choose to consider my presentation and telling of the myth as a relational place of negotiation about mimesis, where the personal, professional, the intimate and the public, and the aesthetic meet and are reflected in interaction. Furthermore, NI shows that there are many topics that can be extracted from a story, and the place you are, temporally and socially, during a research phase can help to determine the selection of topics (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 577). My focus in this chapter will be on the idea and the concept of mimesis. The question is therefore: *What possibilities does*

the concept of mimesis offer in terms of understanding the relationship between experience and story, and how does mimesis affect my narrative identity?

The myth, told as interpreted by me and used here, is the myth about the Minotaur in a maze or labyrinth. In short, it is about Crete and King Minos who breaks a promise he has made to the gods to sacrifice a white bull born out of the sea. A curse is cast on Minos, which causes his queen to mate with the white bull and then give birth to a boy who is half-human and half-bull. The architect Daedalus builds a maze in which the boy is placed. Finally, the monster Minotaur is killed by Theseus, a young hero. The performance in November was performed in an online space.

2 The Name-Giving

The origins of the Greek myth about the Minotaur may lie in the long-gone Minoan culture and/or bullfighting, and the narrative arose to commemorate Minoan rulers. The Roman poet Ovid (43 BC–17 AD) is an early written source of the Minotaur myth. Another source is a vase painting from about 500 BC. The vase contains a depiction of a being that is half-human and half-bull. In the painting, the Greek hero Theseus grabs the creature and sticks a sword into its neck. There is something powerful and striking about the myth that may have helped to ensure its survival.

In the myth, the queen, the mother of the Minotaur, calls him Asterius, his birthname. How many people know about this? There is something fragile about the fact that we do not use the character's real name but know him as a monster.

My name is Mimesis, a name I have given myself based on an avatar. It may seem ridiculous, or childish to name oneself in this way, but technology has entered my life. Technology or an idea of technology made it possible to imagine a cross between human and animal. Both mimesis and telling are about 'an extended naming' of the reality that surrounds us.

I choose to call mimesis a concept, due to the different understandings associated with the word. Dealing with mimesis offers a wealth of possibilities and ideas. Much of the challenge lies in the interaction between the Platonic and Aristotelian understanding of the concept (Halliwell, 2002). The term mimesis is of unknown origin (Willbergh, 2008, p. 11). The word derives from Greek antiquity. Although variants of the word mimesis are found in early sources, such as the Greek poet Homer (928 f.kr.), Plato (428 BC–347 BC) was the first to explore the idea of mimesis theoretically (Halliwell, 2002). Both Plato and Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC) have influenced how we understand the concept today (Willbergh, 2008, p. 11). Mimesis is usually understood to mean imitation

or representation (Halliwell, 2012), which in itself is a challenge, since representation is time- dependent and will be different at different times (Nyrnes, 2002, p. 256). For example, elements of the myth of the Minotaur represent a reality that is not applicable today.

According to Ricoeur, Aristotle's mimesis relates to *poiesis*, meaning art, and that it is therefore only within art that mimesis is effective (Ricoeur, 1991). Mimesis is an artistic process that helps to clarify the work leading up to a performance. Mimesis is a way of connecting text and experience, and is associated with ethos – what concerns the teller (Nyrnes, 2002, p. 236).

Essentially, for me, mimesis is a concept that concerns choices and means of creating closeness and a dynamic in a narrative. Mimesis is also a process consisting of phases that follow each other temporally. Ricoeur's triple mimesis can be used as a methodological tool that moves from an experience to narrative, and an experience for the listener, through three phases. In this context, it is important for me to emphasise that I see a narrative as a form of construction based, among other things, on experiences, and that experiences in themselves do not necessarily have narrative structure (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 451).

3 Another Beginning

Research in NI begins with a beginning, with the researcher's starting point and the edge of the researcher's own narrative (Mello, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2016, p. 568) as input to the topic.

I remember how I came across this myth, which I am returning to. I think the reason I am looking into mimesis is related to my first public storytelling performance. Back in 1996, I also told a Greek myth. I retell the event as follows:

> In the spring of 1996, I performed my first story in public. It was a mandatory storytelling night in the study programme 'storytelling', and it was a sad experience. I had processed a Greek myth and 'engaged in historical vandalism' in the 'here and now' situation. My knees and my jaw shook, I was lisping, but the worst thing was a hand that appeared in the corner of my eye when I told the story. I jumped, it was my own arm that had begun to live its own life. (Dahlsveen, 2008)

In this short narrative, I have configured an experience I had into a narrative. In the process from experience to story, I have made some choices to make a point. That is not to say that the narrative is less true than the experience I had or, to put it another way, that the narrative has become the experience. The little story is a core story in my identity as a storyteller. In the perspective of

looking back, not being able to tell, or to configure an event into a narrative, is a loss to the narrative identity (Synnes, 2010, p. 139).

As a starting point, I draw a distinction between diegesis and mimesis. To simplify, one can say that diegesis is to tell, while mimesis is to 'dramatize' the material. One can also say that diegesis is when the voice belongs to the storyteller, while mimesis is when the voice belongs to a character (Berger, 1994, p. 416). These two concepts can be traced back to Plato's Republic, where Socrates explains different ways of presenting a story (Halliwell, 2013). Mimesis consists of the steps and choices I make, and the means I use to create closeness and dynamics in the material and make the story live in the imagination, so that the listener can rest in a story world.

When performing my first story in public, I see in retrospect that I had no control over diegesis, but perhaps even less of mimesis. If mimesis can be regarded as representation, one can say that, at that time, I did not have the skills required to tell that story. I knew very little about Greek mythology, and had never been to Greece. I believe that I lacked the basic experience to tell this story as well as mimesis, in the sense that I did not have the skills to create a performative expression.

The process of turning an experience into a story requires some knowledge. For example, one must be able to see semantic connections between the events an experience consists of (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 453). I must be semantically creative and be able to use my imagination.

Imagination is necessary for meaning to be produced, interpreted and understood (Bjørsnøs, 2012, p. 68).

Piet Verhesschen claims that an understanding of Ricoeur's triple mimesis could be a help in NI in terms of understanding the process that takes place between experience and a narrative (Verhesschen, 2003). The first area – mimesis one – is the living life, (Willbergh, 2008, p. 87); it is here the preconception is found (Bjørsnøs, 2012, p. 68). This is where the potential of an event is discovered, where a structure the narrative can have is seen, where the elements that make up a narrative are recognised, such as temporality (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 453). The narrative above, which builds on what, for me, was a decisive event, could have had several variations depending on what I want to achieve with the story. I could have gone into more detail, embroidered the story, talked about who was present. Instead, I have chosen to turn the spotlight on what I experienced as a physical presence. This is because I use the story to talk about what can physically happen when you are nervous about performing. The story reveals shortcomings I had, which I later considered necessary competences to be a performative storyteller.

Verhesschen claims that researching narratives must also be related to narrative identity. The narrative identity is constantly changing (Verhesschen, 2003,

p. 459). This means, for example, that the narrative above will naturally change as I change. I would not have been able to tell the story above right after the incident that occurred in spring 1996. It was not until years later that the event could be turned into a 'narrative', because I am now more confident about what I am doing when performing.

4 Fictional Experiences

According to Ricoeur, the narrative is necessary for our existential confirmation (Bjørsnøs, 2012, p. 66), telling stories about life is to be a co- author of the meaning of life (Synnes, 2010, p. 142). A long time has elapsed between a Greek myth told in 1996 and the tale of the Minotaur in 2021.

According to NI, we live our stories in connection with different temporal places that are divided into three: the cultural, the institutional and the personal (Clandinin, 2013, p. 22). My encounter with and work on the myth touches on these three areas.

Despite the obscure origins of the myth, the narrative is widely used. Not only has the myth inspired art, but it has also been used as a metaphor in, for example, medical science (Tilney, 2003) and humanitarian aid (Warner, 2018).

When I told the myth in 2021, after the opening of the performance, I told the following:

> To understand what goodness is, one must understand the vulnerable. Take Crete, for example, imagine Crete. Maybe you have even been there. An airflight, slept under the sun wearing a newly purchased bikini, been to a restaurant, filled up your plate and ate half of it. After all, we have oil. Once Crete was the centre of the world, there were merchants there from all over the world. In Knossos, women sat on balconies and looked down at the fully loaded ships. The streets were filled with smells of spice and at the market you met strangers who had the strangest things to tell. Here reigned a king, Minos. (Dahlsveen, 2021)

In the quote, I describe, stereotypically, how Crete is perceived today, and in the quote, there is a transition from 'today' to the mythical time in which myths took place.

This move says something about me as a storyteller. The transitions between concrete experiences of lived life and what I choose to call fictional experiences are something I often use as a storyteller to highlight the current aspect of a traditional narrative. In this move, I reveal myself as a storyteller. I take a position that can be criticised, the danger being that I interpret the material for the listener. I

want the myth to be representative and make what I might call a mimetic move. I blend contemporary experiences with fictional experiences. Fictionalisation can be understood as 'as an intrinsic quality of a text' (Gjerlevsen, 2016) depending on a specific context, which, as mentioned earlier, means that a Greek myth will today be perceived as not real, and the term also means an intended invented action (Gjerlevsen, 2016). The above- mentioned move also points to my narrative identity. The way I compose and structure the narrative comes from the specific background I have (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 459).

Jean D Clandinin encourages people to be 'attentive to the three- dimensional narrative inquiry space with its dimensions of place, temporality, and sociality' (Clandinin, 2013, p. 143). In this context, this means that I want listeners to be aware that the Greek myth comes from a different time and place, while at the same time seeing a connection to their own time. Ricoeur emphasises the importance of fiction and imagination to a narrative. All fiction is about an embedded world of reality (Bjørsnøs, 2012, p. 68).

Receiving a narrative, as a listener, is to be subjected to the power of transformation that springs from the imaginary (Bjørsnøs, 2012, p. 71).

If I return to the idea of triple mimesis – the process of mimesis, in the telling of a story, I have left the area of mimesis one. The story has been through a process, this process is to be found in *mimesis two*. (Willbergh, 2008). In mimesis two, operational actions are taken to 'bring about a synthesis between heterogeneous components like actors, means, purposes, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results and so on' (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 453).

This means that telling a narrative is not just about the content of a story, or who I am, in which context a story is told, but also about how this narrative is constructed, what choices I have made at the expense of what, and how I deliver on these choices in an artistic expression. In NI, two strategies are used when analysing stories: 'thematic and structural. Thematic analysis is most common in narrative inquiry' (Bailey, Montgomery, & Mossey, 2013, p. 272). But meaning can also be found in the structuring of a story, because, as a storyteller, I am aware of what rhetorical strategies I use to build a narrative.

5 The Personal Experience of the Myth

In the myth the king, Minos, is given a gift – a bull – by the sea god Poseidon that he is going to sacrifice to the god Zeus. In the performance, I relate the following:

> Minos walked the bull through the streets of Knossos to show it off. He locked it in his own garden. There he was standing looking at the bull.

> As he stood like this, he thought, 'What a beautiful creature. It would be a shame to sacrifice such a bull. I think I will sacrifice my own bulls!' No sooner said than done, Minos sacrificed seven of his own bulls, the sacrificial smoke rose heavenward and the people partied after the sacrifice.
>
> Gods cannot be fooled. That night, the sea god Poseidon rose furious out of the sea, with his fierce fork. His shadow lay over all of Crete, and using only his gaze, Poseidon put a curse on Minos.
>
> Once I was in Athens, I was there on a job and the commissioners wanted me to see some of Athens. It was January, it was raining. We went up to the Acropolis and all the way, the commissioners told me about Greek history. I was both tired and lightheaded by all the talk, what was the point of dragging me all that way up for me to see a ruin in grey weather, rain, and fog? (Dahlsveen, 2021)

The quote from the performance shows how I combine the Greek myth with an autobiographical episode. The transition is abrupt. Such abrupt breaks between fiction and my own experience were used in several places throughout the performance. In the quote, there is a personal event, a desire to create a connection to the myth so that it relates to others as well as myself. The motives in the narrative are not only action-bound by a narrative structure, but can account for something outside the specific storytelling world that is formulated through the myth. In the process of working on a narrative like a Greek myth, I use motifs, actions, characters and the like to evoke memories of my own experiences – first freely, then searching for correlations and contrasts, then with scepticism to see what works. I then recycle these experiences back into the narrative, where I deliberately seek such abruptions. As mentioned earlier, one should be aware of such choices, as they place me as a storyteller in the material. This work takes place in the second area of mimesis – *mimesis two* – 'where multiple incidents are transformed into one narrative' (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 453). The mixing of the autobiographical and the traditional or mythical is an operational method I use in most of my performances. I cannot trace this method back to one incident, but it might have something to do with how I came across this myth.

Although the origin of the myth is unknown, I have a clear recollection of my own first encounter with it. The first time I found the myth, I was in my late teens; I remember standing in the library, filled with concentrated tranquillity, in Fredrikstad, a city in Norway. There, I found the myth in the form of a novel by the author Tor Åge Bringsværd. I did not know at the time that I was going to

be a storyteller. The day I started primary school I more or less stopped talking, I only spoke at home … with sheep. This was not seen as a problem, I was simply a silent child. I grew up on an island and not many people lived in my local area, except for a multitude of sheep. Stories in books became my world and, as I got older, I travelled as often as I could to the nearest city to borrow books. That is where I found the myth. It is not so strange that I then fell for the myth. I spent a lot of time with animals, fantasising about myself with animal traits.

I used the myth of the Minotaur as a story I told around 1998 when I was working as a storyteller at a primary school in Oslo. My version of the story is strongly influenced by Bringsværd's version, where the focus is on how a monster is created. I processed the myth in terms of a particular boy in a class. At that time, this boy was considered to be 'violent' by the teachers at the school, yet every time I told stories, he sat quietly. Admittedly, he did not want to sit in the storytelling circle with the other students, but he listened and could always retell the stories I told. The last time I worked in this boy's class, I decided that he should get a narrative about being trapped in a role, which is what I regarded the Minotaur myth as being about at the time.

NI emphasises that we should be observant of what shapes us as researchers and that the researcher's own narrative is part of the reflection. By showing this, the researcher shows the reader that she/he is connected to the material in more than just an academic way (Mello, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2016, p. 569). Because I invest much of my own memories of experiences in the story, mimesis becomes a reflective process. I choose the traditional material based on my own experience. This gives me more memories from my own experiences and the narrative becomes a place for negotiation about this process. This cyclic process between my experience and the fictional experience creates a wealth of opportunities that are made visible by telling the traditional and autobiographical stories in combination. How this is completed first reveals itself in *mimesis three*. Here, the field opens out even more, because 'Our transformed actions and experiences will call for narration and this will lead to different narratives' (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 454). According to Ricoeur, it is not only the revelation that occurs in mimesis three, but also a transformation, and it is in a fusion between the two that the narrative identity is created. In this sense, I can say that my professional identity as a storyteller is built on both real and fictional events.

6 Mimesis and Desire

> Minos was furious when he learned of the kind of monster born at his castle, by his queen. He ran to Daedalus and said, 'You, who do you think

> you are? You who cross the boundaries set by the gods. You must destroy the monster you have helped create'. 'So, so, O King', Daedalus said, 'this is science. Can you not see that the monster you hate will serve you well?
>
> O King, do you not see that the monster you fear will become your most powerful weapon?
>
> O King, do you not see that the monster you find hideous will adorn you?
>
> O king, leave him to me and I will build a building the world has never seen before. And the monster will be named after you. His name should be Mino's bull, Minotaur'. (Dahlsveen, 2021)

In the quote above, I begin by describing what happens and then I lend my voice to the architect Daedalus, thereby leaving diegesis and entering into mimesis.

Narrative inquiry uses narratives to understand experiences (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 575), and considers life lived to be a source of knowledge and understanding (Clandinin, 2013, p. 17). Experiences interact and lead to changes in people and the context in which they are situated here and now (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 576). Although the myth of the Minotaur is not a personal narrative, it consists of personal choices, and I believe that the myth, as it lives in me and my choices, reflects the institutional, the cultural and the personal. In the quote above, the king, Minos, accuses the architect Daedalus of creating a monster. What Daedalus says is my interpretation, my narrative and not something I find in a written source of the myth. My interpretation of the myth has changed over the years – from a picture of myself, to a picture of a certain boy in a primary school, to an interpretation of the pursuit of good. Not only does the interpretation change, but also how I express this interpretation in a performative expression.

Ricoeur claims that mimesis is a chain of actions related to practice (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 139). The process requires an understanding of what can serve as a choice of artistic expression (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 140): 'Mimesis is this preunderstanding of what human action is, of its semantics, its symbolism, its temporality' (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 142).

Ricoeur's triple mimesis is seen as a process that proceeds from experience to an artistic experience through three phases.

In the last stage of mimesis, the past is made present in the presence (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 55). This means that I tell the story in a way that allows listeners to see the events in their imagination and perhaps discover something

they have not noticed before. Ricoeur calls this a poetic mimesis (Verhesschen, 2003, p. 456).

The listener's presence influences my identity as a storyteller. The listener's ability to imagine what is happening in a story or to enter a storytelling world is helped by the storyteller's use of varied language, visual, verbal and vocal (Aadland, 2016), where the listener is present through inner participation (Nagel & Hovik, 2016).

The quote from the story above comes at the end of the performance, I tell it differently as listeners are different. Not only the words said to the king, created by me based on various impulses I have received, but the words will change as I meet the listener and intuitively interpret what they need in a situation. When mimesis works, it will open new narratives, in the listener and in me as the storyteller.

NI considers a narrative to be a three-dimensional place with 'its dimension of temporality (past, present, future), sociality (with attention to the personal and the unfolding existential events), and place (the topological geographic places where events including inquiry events take place)' (Mello, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2016, p. 567). This place is filled with tensions. Can this also include mimetic desire? The idea of mimetic desire was developed by René Girard (1923–2015). Our desires 'exist only in relation to others and thanks to them' (Tomelleri, 2015). Desire is part of the dynamics of the relational.

Envy is an example of desire, but it is not necessarily something negative it can 'be a stimulus to improving oneself, looking for a better job, changing our general situation in life' (Tomelleri, 2015, p. 79).

The mimetic desire is linked to my own narrative, and my development as a storyteller. My desire to be better has been a driving force, taking me from a clumsy situation in 1996 to the performance in 2021. In my own professional narrative, desire has characterised the narrative I have carried to become a storyteller.

7 Conclusion

NI presents a method for understanding one's own professional and personal development. In my case, I want to turn the spotlight on mimesis, because it touches so many parts of being a storyteller.

I opened the chapter by asking *what possibilities the concept of mimesis offers in terms of understanding the relationship between experience and story, and how mimesis affects my narrative identity?*

Mimesis is about making a story come alive in a listener. This means that I as storyteller must make some choices. These choices, I believe, refer to my own experiences, some preferences I have acquired during my career as a storyteller. Because of the narrative identity, the stories will always change, as the experiences change.

Mimesis is a focal point for understanding the storyteller's development, the process of working on a narrative, as well as the artistic expression.

Mimesis can be linked to my desire to constantly develop, i.e. to make sure that I gain experiences that provide new competences and skills. Mimesis can also serve as an artistic process that moves a narrative from an experience to a performative expression. This performative expression becomes someone else's – the listener's – experience.

Mimesis is also about my narrative identity, an identity undergoing constant flux and shifts.

Mimesis is a diverse concept that I want to explore further, which is where the possibilities lie. So, mimesis is an idea, an opportunity and a focal point.

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CHAPTER 14

Q for Quarantine

Rikke Gürgens Gjærum

Abstract

This chapter focus on the need for the fictive universe, using fantasy building or narratives created by daydreaming, as a way to survive the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. A professor's narrative is presented as a short story. By living, telling and retelling (Clandinin, 2013) the professor dive into a mix between her own lived life in quarantine and the fictive worst-case pandemic scenario.

The chapter builds on Denzins (1987) 'performance ethnography' used as a tool to stage the professor's identity development through a life crisis caused by a global pandemic turn in human beings life condition in 2020–21. From living in a small calm village the professor's life suddenly changed, the village turned in to a city of contagion.

The professor's life story in the COVID-19 pandemic actually represent a universal story – that probably will shape our personal- and professional identity and self-understanding for years to come (Lindberg, 2020). The author sum up the chapter by viewing the short story as part of a larger global trend of COVID-19-narrativesharing in higher education and in the Arts (Satyavolu, 2021).

Keywords

performance – ethnography – narrative – corona – isolation – storytelling – monologue – COVID-19 – pandemic

1 The Opening Act

As an applied theatre director and professor, 'performance ethnography' (Denzin, 2003) frames my teaching, publishing and engagement for the local community in the circumpolar north where I live. Denzin claims that: "The performance text is the single most powerful way for ethnography to recover and interrogate the meanings of lived experience" (Denzin, 1997, pp. 94–95). Ethnodrama and Ethnotheatre (Saldaña, 1998, 2005, 2011) has provided me with opportunities of the last 20 years to research that empowers, transforms

and transports the everyday life of people who struggle, into performances that communicate directly to politicians, youths, elderly, parents and teachers (Gjærum, 2013a, 2013b). During the COVID-19 isolation my own everyday life suddenly transformed in to a phenomenological 'lived experience' (Matthews, 2002) in the need of performative and narrative interpretation (Clandinin, 2016) – though a fictive universe. I became my own informant. A need for a renewed connection to my (distant) network gave me an extraordinary force into fantasy escape – while my everyday life remained uncertain. I began to write a narrative as a short story manuscript, not about my own life, but about 'life' in quarantine. I dove theatricality into the text universe as 'me' – 'not me' – 'not not me' (Gran, 2004). Drawing on my own multisensory life experience, everyday perception, academic knowing and dramaturgic practice, I found myself living and telling, at the same time, inspired by Sarah Pink (2015).

2 The Narrative

"Who is going to inherit the pearl ring – the one I got for my confirmation?" She looks out over the greenhouse, thinking out loud while she pours another cup of Kombucha tea. Glances down at the long list. Every property is listed. Some things are easy to give to new owners. She recollects that one of the kids when they were small had asked: "When you die mommy, can I get your pair of golden shoes?" "Of course, you can honey – they will be yours one day!" she had answered with a lightness in her voice, because it was so far ahead. Now, the time is here. However, without sorrow, she writes a list of everything she owns – even the golden shoes.

This new era has lasted a while already. Everyone is used to the so-called new restrictions. We barely remember our lives before the 'shut-down' – before the new era. So much has happened since the outbreak in Wuhan. The world has started to spin again, but slower – with less people, narrow margins, small radius, rapid heartbeats. As if we were frozen in the moment it all broke out – just like Pompeii, she thinks.

Previously, the world was fleeting, impulsive, raw, quick, shifting. Now we must plan, calculate distance to each other. Stay clear of infection. For a long time, they said a vaccine was coming. The disease spread to every social class, to all regions. No nation was spared. As soon as we thought the end of the Pandemic was near, another wave came upon us. Back to the start. New quarantine, new isolation.

It has lasted so long. No one longed to go back anymore. Because it was hard to remember what to long for. She shook off her gloomy thoughts and kept on

planning for the times to come. The will started to take shape. Soon she was ready.

She wondered, should she write him into the will – or not mention him at all? During the will reading session, it could perhaps cause indignation if they heard his name on the list. She felt the pencil burn in her hand just writing his name, letter by letter. Shaping his initial. A – for André.

It all began innocently enough. He gave her a ride one late afternoon, when the rain was pouring down and made rivers of the streets. The manhole covers didn't manage to hold back. It was a great relief she got a lift this very afternoon, still ignorant to how fatal this very trip would be. It was a cliché: but who are we when our sexual desire is tramped on, when hugs are only a vague memory and kisses are something we barely remember? Who are we then? Humans – a shadow of ourselves?

She had felt the loneliness for a long time, an emptiness between them. The days went by. She only hoped he would wake up again. Become the person she knew he could be. With that twinkle in his eyes, warmth in his body and blood pumping through his veins. However, each morning she was just as disappointed. This odd new era didn't give any room for her complaints. She had no right. Many had less than she did. She had a salary, house, health and food on the table. Her husband had not been corona-laid off. Who could complain – about longing for a kiss? She didn't dare to speak out loud. Besides, traditionally it was men who complained about women's lack of sexual desire. No wife, with respect for herself could tell anyone: "My husband doesn't want me anymore". Who are you then, if you admit that? Ugly, fat, stupid? Every prejudice growing inside her own thoughts just spun and spun. In the end they all became one big tangled mass of yarn.

What really hurt her was that his warmth still lived inside of him – but only in front of the children, colleagues, his mother, every random neighbour or passing stranger in the supermarket. She found new hope, looking at him playing along with the others, but the looks he gave her were just as cold. That was what really hurt.

This rainy afternoon when André came driving, had been like God´s gleam of light. Her prayer was granted. Soaking wet, cold and confused she glanced under that dripping hood. But every time gleams of light witnessed the headlights of another car, anxiety caught her. Who was the driver of the car? Could she hitchhike? Was this safe – yes, even in such rough weather? She slowly hid her thumb in her pocket, waited and saw only the red taillights in the distance. She had given away yet another chance. The missing courage knocked her down every time.

Suddenly a pickup pulled over anyway. The driver rolled down the window, while her heart pounded in her chest. She had read far too many crime stories,

she told herself. Behind the window was a man in his forties with a curly mane of hair and kind eyes. She didn't dare to meet his glance. Nevertheless she decided to take courage and realise that she needed help on this wet dark country road.

The first 15 minutes were quite tense. She constantly glanced at him to be sure. André sat quietly and drove with both hands on the steering wheel, except from when he changed his snuff, and then he actually steered with his knee. She found it a little bit odd, but he appeared to have control. After a while she began to relax, listen to what André said and gaze out of the window. She lost control of time. His voice had a calming effect and almost massaged her head from the inside. The words floated like velvet and the sentences created little ripples in her thoughts. André gave her new thoughts she didn't know she could think. André dug in under her skin, oiled her canals and woke a desire deep inside her.

The shame came abruptly from behind, like a beast who sneaked in on her. Showed up like monster from the deep blue ocean. The shame beat up her forebrain and scraped out her eyelid from the inside. Shame hammered her new thoughts into pieces. She sat back, silent and skinned.

She only saw the taillights blinking a warm goodbye while she lifted the bag up on her shoulder and began the uphill journey to her house. She walked all the way up to the garden fence without turning around. She closed the garden gate, peeked down at the road to ascertain that the pickup was gone. Maybe forever.

The days became weeks. The weeks became years. Empty weekdays with no gleam of light between newspaper pages that filled the breakfast table. She hid behind those thin pages, if only to avoid the facing his cold eyes on the other side of the table. This quarantine, the isolation had killed all the feelings between them. In this little house with the garden fence, which had once been a love nest, the virus had managed to enter from every nook and corner. When the door to the outside world closed, they were the left alone. Him and her. Lonely and skinless – side-by-side – not together.

It feels like endlessly long ago that the world was in order. When people didn't consider everyone else as a source of infection, but as fellow men. So much has happened since then – she says out loud to herself: "Time is eating me up alive. She is hungry, so she eats continuously. She chews at me on the side, bites me in the neck and drools in my hair. I am disgusted, ashamed.

Because I could say: No – enough! And yet I don't. Maybe she eats me for a reason. The neighbour is without any bites …" she wonders – while she still dreams of another life.

She gathers the papers from the table as she realizes that the dream about André will stay a vague memory of something that perhaps never happened.

She remembers sadly what Enquist wrote: "One day we die, but every other day we shall live".

Those days are over now, the list is ready. She seals the envelope. Leaves the breakfast table. Glances at him as he stares into his iPhone. Should she try one last time – make one last approach? She takes two steps towards him and for a moment, she feels a willingness to let go … to forgive herself and start over again. She seeks his glance for one fragile moment.

She turns, walks out the porch door with white airy summer curtains flickering in the wind. Leaves the envelope behind and disappears.

3 The Closure

This is not my narrative nor your narrative – it's our narrative. The professor's life story written during the COVID-19 pandemic represent a universal narrative that probably will shape our personal and professional identity and self-understanding for ages. Some will claim that people who lived through this global pandemic is scared for the rest of their life (Satyavolu, 2021). "Dealing with death is not easy or comfortable. Nor is it a new and contemporary issue. People have been fighting with the notion of mortality, and search for immortality, for as long as humanity has existed" (Fleseriu, 2021, p. 1). The Swedish philosopher Fredrik Svenaeus (2020) deduce that the pandemic can affect our life in three possible painful ways; through either *sickness* (e.g. virus, grief, anxiety), *everyday pain* (e.g. not being allowed going to work or visit friends) or *existential pain* (e.g. missing dignity and meaning of life). Many of us recognize some of these three pains in our own family as a pandemic effect, while others experience this historical epoch as a break from an extraordinary stressful life with meetings, travelling and fully booked calendars. Because it actually also exist positive effects of COVID-19 such as a more sustainable flight traffic, less pollution, increased digital competence, less crime, less accidents and reduction of others contagious illnesses.

We can choose to bear our diverse experiences with COVID-19 with a portion of curiosity to our common destiny, instead of carrying our experienced global crisis deep inside us as a trauma. I willingly choose curiosity.

At the same time as the professor at one place on the earth wrote her narrative, scholars at the catholic Seton Hall University in New Jersey also tried to survive by reconnecting to anther reality than social distancing due to the spread of the coronavirus that had scattered their local community. On the university's webpage, you can read:

> To reconnect as a community, we seek your stories of what this time has been like for you. We hope that sharing these stories with one another will bring us back together in a new way, through sharing our personal experiences of this moment. When we move forward, because there will be a time when we move forward, we plan to listen to these stories together as a community, reflect on what we have learned, and let them guide us into the future.[1]

I find this task tempting and feel that by living, telling and retelling we all shape not only our personal life and professional life at campus, but also the global narrative of our common future in an ecological sense. By sharing life experience through shaped narratives made universal, we enable us self to reconnect to other people across the planet in a new way. Perhaps COVID-19 did contribute to postmodern alienated citizens with a new understanding of the importance of relation, embodied meetings, live conversations, face-to- face teaching, concerts, theatre and hugging (things we during the lockdown really missed).

Writing narratives as a way to deal with difficulty caused by COVID-19 is a trend in both higher education and the Arts. Nevertheless, we don't read literature to recognize our own thoughts but rather to get new perspectives on what we already know or understand a part of the world that until now has been unknown to us (Lindberg, 2020). On Uma Satyavolu's course, Literature and Medicine, at University of Pittsburgh in 2020, did Cara Fleseriu claim that: "Especially during times such as these were we feel as those we are cut off from the world – and having to face scary new realities such as mortality all on our own, literature can offer us hope" (Fleseriu, 2021, p. 7). In Norway at the same time as Umas students wrote their narratives in Pittsburgh, 24 adolescents form 13 til 20 years old shared autobiographic narratives, experiences, thought and impressions from the first strange lockdown spring in the book *Virusvår* (2020).

Would *you* like to contribute to this (post) pandemic reconnection by sharing your own life experience by telling or retelling a narrative perhaps. Write your own narrative or try to answer some of the questions asked by our fellow scholars at Steton University by diving into a narrative inquiry:[2]

1. What has been most challenging about this time?
2. What do you miss about your life before COVID-19?
3. What is COVID-19 making possible that never existed before?
4. What good do you see coming out of this moment?
5. How can we re-frame this moment as an opportunity?

Now, tell your story – or share a narrative from your everyday life day dreaming, as I did with the story about the stranger André.

Notes

1 https://scholarship.shu.edu/covid-19/
2 Submit your narrative: https://library.shu.edu/remotelibrary/narrativeinstructions

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CHAPTER 15

Using Narratives to Understand Professional Identities

Mette Bøe Lyngstad

Abstract

This chapter presents and analyses the life story of a cultural director of a municipality in Norway and the stories that this brings out in the author. How has the director's life story shaped him as a leader, and how will the reflection of the past influence his narrative identity. Through the key dimensions of narrative inquiry, temporality, place and sociality, the author will analyse these narratives. She presents narratives that exemplify the importance of the director's childhood and his cultural background, and how this gave him a special interest in bringing the key skills he learned in his life to the various types of work he has with other people. She also reflects on narratives that this process has started within her own life.

Keywords

narratives – life story – narrative inquiry – key competencies – cultural director

1 Introduction

He stood alone on the big stage and his voice filled the whole hall. His stories were taken from everyday life as the center coordinator of a sports and cultural centre, the Ny-Krohnborg Centre, which is located in a multicultural district in Norway's second largest city, Bergen. He spoke about encounters between people and cultures, personal encounters that created turning points in both his and other people's lives. He was a brilliant communicator, and his personal stories moved me. He was concerned about diversity and dignity, and the values he conveyed struck a chord in my heart. I became curious about who he really is and what made him who he is. It was time to listen more closely to his experiences and learn more about his key competencies.

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As a researcher and storyteller, it was both the form and the content that engaged me. I was also fascinated by all the similarities we apparently had, such as the fact that we both work closely with people, love our jobs and being creative in our work, create cultural meeting points, and listen to committed young people. We both moved to Bergen because of work but are equally concerned with creating something in the local environment we have become a part of, as well as building bridges between people and cultures. There are, however, also significant differences that are important to take into account. I am a woman, and he is a man. I am a few years older than him. I am not native to Bergen and instead moved there from another county in western Norway, while he is an immigrant from Kenya. He came as a professional handball player, while I came as a drama teacher.

Vincent Mrimba has been working for almost 14 years as a centre director in a socially exposed area on the west coast of Norway. He has taken care of this centre, and the people that has used it. He has daily contact with the pupils and has often been in contact with parents and others in the community. He is well known for his work and for the results of his work in this community. Several politicians and leaders have visited this centre to learn more about his work and to get inspiration. I am curious as to what made him into the leader he is and how his life experience has influenced him in his work. This was also why we invited him to speak to teacher students, which is where I got inspired, as the story below explains. My work as a professor in drama and applied theatre also includes working on a project aimed at creating more "Mangfold I Lærerutdanning" (MIL), or "diversity in teacher education". We supervise role models with the hope of inspiring more men and people from immigrant backgrounds to apply for teacher training college. Mrimba's work has been successful in the most multi-cultural part of our city. It is therefore of particular interest for my professional life to learn more about his work and the shaping of his professional identity.

Since I first got interested in his work, he has changed his job to become the director of the cultural department for the Bergen municipalities. His work experience is diverse, and he has, amongst other things, led 128 teachers in a Bergen cultural school, led a cultural programme for children that included initiatives such as "culture Saturdays", a youth club, cultural centre and cultural buildings. The website for Bergen Municipality described Mrimba as follows:

> Vincent Mrimba is not a 'boring bureaucrat', but above average creative and innovative – a person who thinks 'outside the box' and who is able

> to motivate others. He is committed to creating excitement – both in colleagues and in the local cultural life.

Through this narrative inquiry, I have listened to Mrimba over the course of a year. Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and studying experiences (Clandinin, 2013, p. 15) through stories, and in this chapter, I will analyse some of Mrimba's experiences. Narrators reconstruct their experiences in relation to both the other and to a social milieu. As a narrative inquirer, I listened to Mrimba's lived and told stories to get a better view of his understanding of his own experiences, and I then analysed them through the key dimensions of narrative inquiry, temporality, place and sociality (Clandinin, 2013). As Clandinin puts it, "Narrative inquiry comprises a view of experience as composed and lived over time, as studied and understood as a narrative phenomenon and as represented through narrative forms of representation" (Clandinin 2013, p. 15). In the tradition of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013), I have been listen to Mrimba's narratives over a long period of time.

In narrative inquiry, telling, retelling, writing, and rewriting, living and reliving is essential. It is both interesting and challenging to follow research participants while they reflect and relive their own stories through telling and retelling them. "In addition, re-storying is a process that occurs over time as participants reflect on their own major life experiences and reframe them" (Leavy, 2009, p. 31). According to Jerome Bruner (1987), these narratives can be both privileged and troubled since they are reflexive: "The narrator and the central figure in the narrative is the same. This reflexivity creates dilemmas" (Bruner, 1987, p. 693).

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) highlight four turns that the researcher completes when they turn in to narrative inquiry. However we become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which what we know is embedded in a particular context, and finally that narrative knowing is essential to our inquiry. In narrative research we do study stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007, p. 5 and 7).

I have held several interviews with Mrimbra over the course of a year. Some of the interviews were tape recorded since they are also going to be used in the national MIL project. In most of the interviews, I wrote down what was said word by word in order to preserve the calmness and presence in the conversation and let the knowledge come to me through a physical approach (Horsdal, 2017).

2 Narrative Interviews

In a narrative interview the focus is on the stories, and it is therefore different from traditional quantitative or qualitative interviews with an interview guide. In most of the interviews with Mrimba, the focus was on his life history. According to Horsdal (2016, p. 105): A life history interview is a story that extends from the narrator's earliest memories or from events that he or she does not remember but has been told, and up to the present day, to the time of the narrator himself (My own translation).

The narrative interview has a more open form of dialogue. It is up to the narrator to choose what parts they want to share, as well as how and when. There are only a few questions prepared in advance for the interview because it all depends on the narrator and how the on-going dialogue proceeds. This type of interview can be both exciting and challenging. It is important to create a situation where the narrator feels comfortable; "Interviewer's openness and situational awareness, and showing IT enthusiasm and interest, help to establish the situation and mutual trust necessary for the project to succeed" (Horsdal, 2016, p. 107). As part of someone's life story, there will normally be several turning points that take the narrator's life in new directions: "Turning points are often vital to participants' structuring of their narratives and the experiences to which they attest" (Leavy, 2009, p. 31). According to Horsdal, "Turning points can both be positive and negative" (2016, p. 124). I will focus in particular on turning points in Mrimba's narratives to see if and how turning points have led his life in new directions. "Turning points are often vital to participants' structuring of their narratives and the experience to which they attest" (Leavy, 2009, p. 31).

In the conversations, Mrimbra shared some vital parts of his life story, mostly chronologically. Nevertheless, it is from his current perspective that he speaks about his upbringing. In his stories, he chose to link the present to both the past and the future. This ability suggests that Mimbra possesses a central narrative competence which Horsdal (2016) also highlights as important.

3 Narrative Competences and Narrative Identity

"Narrative identity are the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and for others" (McAdams et al., 2006, p. 4). According to Bodil Blix, humans have multiple identities, which are in a state of flux as they are created, changed and maintained through the stories people tell about themselves (Blix, 2017, p. 64).

"Through the narrative, a link is established between things that happen, between one's own and others' actions" (Horsdal 2016, p. 125, author's translation). My own stories can also become clearer to me by listening to the recognisable aspects of other people's stories. According to Horsdal, by listening to other peoples' narratives, you will interpret the stories in relation to your own life experiences, and it is therefore important to be aware of your own interpretations. In getting to know the narrator better, you may also better understand your own narrative identity.

Bruner (2004) highlights that the narrative inquirer will, through listening to narratives, better understand the narrator's identity, and thereby also themselves. The interaction through these research process, where we mirror ourselves in others' stories, will therefore be part of framing my own research puzzle (Clandinin, 2013).

4 Researcher-Researched Relationship

Kirsten Thonsgaard (1998) highlights the stories created in the meeting between the narrator and the listener, and that the listener helps to interpret life stories already interpreted by the narrator. Bruner states that "The story of one's life is of course, a privileged but troubled narrative in the sense that it is reflexive: the narrator and the central figure in the narration are the same. The reflexivity creates dilemmas" (Bruner, 1987, p. 693), which means that in my conversation with Mrimba, our narratives meet. In the space between the narrator and the listener, new stories are created.

"According to Bakhtin, individuals exist through their relationships with others. The words expressed by the person are not from a single person, but out of a dialogical relationship with others" (Blix, 2017, p. 68). As long as narratives are socially constructed, the listener will have an impact on the stories, which means that I as a researcher will also take part in the shaping of the narratives that I am researching.

As a researcher, I position myself (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk, 2007, p. 463) so that the analysis becomes clearer and more transparent. In my narrative research, I did not aim for neutrality, but to be more in the thick of things and be conscious of my own preconceptions and backgrounds for understanding and interpreting the narratives. As a narrative researcher, I am familiar with analysing lived and told narratives. According to differences between the narrator and me as the narrative inquirer, it is important to be aware of that and to be transparent in this research. Even though I will also bring in some of my

own thoughts and narratives, I need to be aware of the ethical nature of how prominent my voice should be, and how I am perceived by others.

In this article, I will use the narrative method as a "collaborative method of telling stories, reflecting on stories, and (re)writing stories" (Leavy, 2009, p. 27). I will take a closer look at parts of Mrimba's life stories and those connecting to time, place and sociality (Clandinin, 2013, p. 39). According to Horsdal, "through stories, you constantly ensure that you find the best possible understanding of new and unexpected events in our lives in relation to our previous experiences and experiences" (Horsdal, 2016, p. 11, author's translation). As a narrative inquirer, I will again interpret his interpretation of his experiences against my own experiences. I will also learn through underhorstanding the way he chooses to portray himself in terms of his stories. When I was in the process of analysing and rewriting his stories, memories of my own stories started to come to the surface. Therefore in this chapter, I will present narratives from both of us, so you can understand the filter I see his narrative through and in this way see how our narratives shape our professional identity. After presenting and analysing the narratives and summarising the connection to time, place and sociality, I will try to examine whether there are any key role categories or key competencies that emerge from these turning points.

5 Time, Place and Sociality

> Mrimba wants to be interviewed at his previous workplace since he is going to train some girls in the sports hall straight after. It is nice to see him in his element. It feels like a second home to him, and his home is his castle. He acts so naturally at the centre, greeting everyone, and seems to delight people with his mere presence. Just after we entered the room where the interview is set to take place, the new centre leader enters to give us a coffee. Communication is so natural between the two of them, and this is clearly a safe space. Not everyone would be happy about the previous boss showing up now and then, but here it seems natural. The new centre leader seems to know that Mrimba supports him.

It may seem that several places and events have helped to shape Mrimba's identity. Through his stories, he helps to create both meaning and connection between different places, people, and actions distributed over a long period of time. Here he connects both the past, present and future in his stories (Clandinin, 2013; Horsdal, 2017, p. 25). I want to highlight these turning points in his life and take a closer look at what challenged him, what changed him and

led his life in new directions. Being able to identify the turning points is therefore a central part of my analysis tool. Turning points can be both positive and negative, and often go hand in hand. From the many and long conversations I had with him, I have systematised the material and highlighted three turning points that have been significant for him and who he is today. They have been selected from over a long period of time, one from childhood, one from adolescence and one as an adult.

Mrimba interprets his narratives in the present. This means that even if some events are older than others, due to the nature of the event, they can still be brought up more clearly today.

6 The Church as a Space of Opportunity

> There was a solemn atmosphere in the church, the pews were full to the brim, and all eyes were facing forward. Up at front next to the priest, the altar boy stood ready to do his part for the very first time. As he glanced out into the church, he caught sight of his grandmother. He noticed that she was moved. He felt his excitement at the honorable task he had been given, would he be able to fulfil it ….

Mrimba's experiences in church seem to have shaped him at an early age. I understand that it was his role as an altar boy that became a turning point. Before this he was one among many, but here he felt chosen. The trust he was shown in the church seems to have given him greater respect both for the church itself, his faith, and the people in the church. They became decisive protagonists in his life. The fact that he was so young may have helped to build trust in older people. Mrimba appears grateful that his grandparents took him to church and for the conservative upbringing his grandparents gave him. However, it also led to a critical turning point in his life when they chose to move to a village after retiring, and they left him in the care of his alcoholic uncle. For Mrimba, this seems to have resulted in his total abstinence from alcohol, which seems to have been advantageous for his work, as far as creating a safe platform for the children in the area in which he has worked is concerned.

Mrimba´s connection to the church may also have led to another critical turning point in his life because he ended up developing a bad conscience for not attending church regularly enough, which is something he struggled with in his adult life. Freeing himself from his bad conscience can be seen as a critical turning point in his life. This has given him experiences, which he seems to

have taken with him into his profession, where he positions himself as a bridge builder between different ages, cultures, and religions.

I identify with Mrimba's stories, and they bring up my own experiences, which is a natural part of narrative inquiry (Horsdal, 2017 pp. 204–205).

> I stood at the front of the room at the prayer house ready to sing a solo for a packed hall, we were at a family reunion at the children's association, and my father was sitting in the hall. At first, I sang loudly and clearly: "Daddy, I'm tired of the game, can I sit with you, Will you find our Bible and read a little for me" before the nervousness took over, I started crying and shouted "Daddy" as I ran down to him and threw myself around him. I don't remember much of the minutes afterwards, but one thing I remember clearly is that my friend's mother praised me for being brave enough to try and sing a solo.

Our narratives both seem to have been key turning points (Clandinin, 2017) in our lives. His experience of the events in church, through being taken on as an altar boy, made him proud, and influenced his values. He states: "It is the kind of upbringing that has created my identity. I learned the values of respecting people, speaking the truth, and not least helping those in need". This matches up well with Clandinin's (2013) theory that the narrative identity is in constant change and is created through struggles between people. Through receiving the honorable task of being an altar boy, he was shown trust at a young age, and he gained experience of making a difference in his community. He also became interested in rituals, and in adulthood, he indicates that he misses these rituals.

Mrimba also seems to have taken the cohesion and sense of community further into his work, as well as the importance of showing young people confidence, and giving them meaningful tasks to lift them into, what he regards as, the light. I also learned from standing in the spotlight that day at the prayer house that I was not ready for a solo career, but equally that I should not leave my dreams untested. So, the next route that presented itself to me as a means of getting on stage was as a mediator and narrator. Mrimba's guilty conscience for not being in church enough is also something that I can recognise and relate to and calls for action, in the same way that my path from being a conservative to a liberal believer required a liberation. The world has, in different ways, revealed new paths to us both, but it is we ourselves who have had to walk them.

The stories from his childhood and the feelings they evoke in me also give me flashbacks to my many trips to Kenya, as a young girl on a trip with the scouts, on a work trip as an adult, and on a tour with my family for cultural exchange.

My encounters with Africa gave me new perspectives on time – time is not something that passes, it is something that comes. This is something that I have included in my work.

7 The Sports Arena That Challenges – Time and Sociality

> The whole group of friends were excited when they saw the postman coming towards them on a bicycle. Was he bringing the package they were waiting for? After many long handball training sessions, they were hungry for more information. Except for within their immediate environment, handball was a little-know sport at the time, but this group of friends wanted to change that. As matches were not televised, they had to think creatively, and they were completely taken by Mrimba's idea: "Let's get hold of a video recording of a professional match, watch it repeatedly, and learn from how they play. We can make it happen if we want to".

There seem to be several turning points related to Mrimba's position in sport. At first, he had to deal with not being allowed to join the football team because he was not good enough. Then he turned that defeat into starting a handball team with his friends: "Throughout those four years, we won every school championship in the country, and we ended up playing nationally". The fact that he started handball because he couldn't get a place on the football team seems to be the underlying factor, and he put wind in his sails: "I went to a school that was unknown, but it became nationally known because they got so good at handball. Everyone trained". When Mrimba points out the gender bias in youth sports as only the boys played, I understand that he is still upset about it even to this day, and this may be the underlying reason as to why he took the initiative to offer handball to girls from any background in his job at the centre and why he maintains his role as coach even after taking up his new role as the cultural director.

Sport created a turning point in his life and gave him new educational opportunities. As a boy who grew up in poverty, he initially did not have the opportunity to pay school fees for further education, but he was inspired by other people and took a chance on his future. There are therefore several people who have had an impact on Mrimba's progress, and even today, Mrimba is adamant that education is vital and that it must be linked to discipline.

Furthermore, his sports career shows how willing he was to learn, and how creative he was to be able to acquire this knowledge and obtain a position in the field. However, it also shows how visionary he thought he was, and how

much work he put in to achieving his goals. He was good at school, sat on the student council and was president there. This was noticed and is something he believes helped him get a scholarship to study abroad.

Mrimba's involvement in and talent for handball would prove to have a major impact on his future career path, and is what ultimately gave him the opportunity to move to Norway in 2000. He and his friend were the first two Kenyans to play handball abroad.

8 In the Boss's Office

> "Vincent! Is this whole office just for you? Is it your office chair?" The pupil was excited, and Mrimba answered him: "Oh, yes. You can sit on it if you like". The door to Mrimba's office was always open because the children should know he was always there for them. He is aware of his position as a role model, and that influences him in his work. I meet him at his former place of work, and as we arrive, several of the kids come running towards him. He pauses and has a chat with them. He asks if they have done their homework so they are ready for training. He is positive and playful, while being clear and strict.

Mrimba appears in his role as the centre director as open and dedicated. His office door was always open, and many a child visited him. In his meetings with the pupils, he got close to the children's life situations outside the school. He often called parents if required and vice versa. He talks about some parents who got in touch because they thought their child was sitting around at home too much. They took Mrimba seriously and invited the student along to activities, where they were also given a special task. In his work, he was concerned that the pupils should be given trust and tasks to feel that their efforts were important. Not long after, the student's parents contacted him again and said with a smile on their face: "What have you done Vincent? Our child is hardly home anymore".

Accompanying him to the room where we were going to have the interview takes time. Everyone approaches him with a smile and wants to have a chat. His handball students seem to have arrived very early, and Mrimba tells them that they must do their homework first if they want to join in the training session.

In my own work, I have taken the initiative to organise groups of girls in school to explore various dilemmas through art and train them to become the protagonist in their own lives. Primary school management has been positive, but girls' groups have not yet been established. After the dialogue with Mrimba, I will take up this thread again and try to make progress in this work. It is

interesting to experience these sidelined initiatives of mine come to life once again when he shares his stories. According to Horsdal, this may be because by listening to other people's stories, "connections in our brain are activated, which are linked to simulating movement patterns and accompanying emotions from our own repertoire of experiences" (Horsdal, 2017, p. 204). Mrimba seems somewhat ambivalent about his educational grants from anonymous donors. On the one hand, he has not felt a responsibility to give something back to the person who contributed the money, but still emphasised that he wants to give something back to the people. On several occasions he has sent money home and happily met with people for educational purposes on his trips back to Kenya to give people hope: "Have you sat in a room and seen that there are many people around you who are better than you, then 10 years go by and then it's different". This suggests that for many, both sports and school are an important way of getting out of poverty.

Mrimba completed his further education in Norway, and eventually acquired two master's degrees, while taking on many jobs on the side. He passed with good grades, but still found that he was ignored in his professional life by not being called in for interviews and jobs in the same way as his colleagues were. This was a turning point in his life, which had at that point being moving along a positive trajectory for some time, but he was now seeing the past catching up with him again. He had to work purposefully and in a structured way to persevere.

Mrimba's visions of the future are today linked both to his work and his own academic interests. He appears both inquisitive and curious, and this also seems to have an impact on his current position as director of the cultural department in the Bergen municipalities. Here he points out that his previous visions in his job as the centre manager can be carried out to a greater extent in his new position, as he now has greater influence on decision-makers. Mrimba has taken several master's degrees himself, but equally emphasises his interest in studying more, and he eventually wants to become an academic. Perhaps our paths will cross again there.

9 Summing Up Time, Place and Sociality

After going through data material from the conversations with Mrimba and analysing these related to time, place and sociality, I have found several interesting aspects. Several of the places that have been important for the development of Mrimba's identity in the period from child to adult are largely linked to public spaces, such as the church, the sports arena and the school as an educational arena and workplace. At all these places, he has been given meaningful tasks,

shown trust, and given responsibility. Mrimba shows a narrative competence that in one and the same story he links the past, the future, and the present together in a larger unit. There are several events that appear to be central to his identity development, and which appear to be turning points for him. Although significant, they are not necessarily critical turning points, at least not initially, though some will be. This can be seen, for example, in his role in the church as an altar boy, which gave him a sense of belonging and of meaning something to others, though later in life it gave him a bad conscience if he didn't visit church often enough, a bad conscience he later managed to get rid of.

He reversed a couple of critical turning points, such as when he did not get a place on the football team as he started a handball association with his friends, which gave them all more opportunities for their futures. He was then able to train at an international level and came to Norway as a professional handball player.

The last critical turning point that is highlighted in the chapter is when, in contrast to several other student friends with the same education, he did not get a job in Norway related to sport, but instead took several alternative jobs and positions in various committees, before he finally got the job as the centre director. This shows that in the face of the resistance he encountered, he gained a will to fight, which he has used to engage with parents and students in the multicultural district he works in, and where he also established girls' teams and engaged young people by pushing them to make their own educational choices, often in opposition to the preconceived expectations they encountered at school.

Mrimba is the protagonist in his stories, but he also presents many antagonists, such as his grandmother, the coach, his fellow players and the students he works with. Those who are highlighted in our dialogue are those who, in different ways and in different phases of his life, have had a unique meaning for him. They vary in terms of being around for longer or shorter periods in his life. While some are in his family, others have been very important in his leisure activities. They have all seen him, paid attention to him and treated him with dignity.

10 Key Roles

Through analysing Mrimba's life experience with a special focus on his turning points (Denzin, 1989), I have identified several key roles that seem to be crucial parts of his professional identity as a director. Within these roles, attitudes emerge that emphasise various key competences. Many of these resonates

with my own experiences and makes me recall my own practice and expand my own understanding of identity. I will therefore take a closer look into these competences to better understand his work, as well as my own identity processes and research puzzles (Clandinin, 2013).

11 Being a Bridge Builder

There are several points in Mrimba's narratives that show that he is non-traditional in his thinking. He seems to build bridges between the community and the bureaucrats by creating excitement – both in his colleagues and in local cultural life. He shows dignity and respect in both places.

In his work as centre coordinator of the Ny-Krohnborg Centre, he seems to have been central to much of the goings on. He was the link between school, culture and sports and between parents, the school and the local community. He was in dialogue with both the students and the parents on a regular basis, and especially when issues escalated, And parents seem to trust his actions. My life motto as a parent has long been that it takes a village to raise a child, and I feel that Mrimba seems to come from the same tradition.

The fact that Mrimba is so skilled in conveying his stories both when meeting others and with me helps me to identify with his stories both physically and emotionally(Horsdal, 2017). I also see the importance of being a bridge-builder not only between subjects, cultures and generations, but also between different religious communities. In my work with interreligious dialogue, I find it important to highlight the similarities between the religions and to cultivate the peculiarities as the unique, to train them to live in a community of disagreement (Iversen, 2020) through exploring in collective creative processes. Guiding different narrators in conveying their faith story, taking part in a performance with people from different religious backgrounds, and showing the performance over time to several thousand young people has been a very educational process for the participants, for me and for the audience.

It seems important for Mrimba to be active in the local community. He sets clear goals and achieves them, and the same goes for the activities he has started, although it takes extra effort to keep up with them in his new job. "I'm going to start up and see how it goes. I come every afternoon to train them, but I haven't found anyone who can train them afterwards", he says while indicating that he plans to quit as soon as he finds a suitable replacement. He is keen to maintain a lot of discipline, and he will not train them if they do not do their homework. He has always had a close dialogue with the school, and he contacted the teachers about bullying. Working so closely with the students means

that he gets to know the environment very well, gets a better understanding of the challenges and builds more trust among the young people there.

Mrimba wants to give responsibility both to those he works with and for. He creates new arenas and adapts the map to the terrain. This is also something I strive to do in my work. A recent example is when, in my work with people with drug addiction through the Dream Catchers project, I led a storytelling workshop in collaboration with an experienced consultant.

Mrimba is also particularly keen that people follow the motto, "You must take responsibility!" This applies both to taking responsibility for oneself and for others. This is something he was used to in his childhood, and as a director, he must follow up with those involved and respond to the various levels of responsibility. "We had an aim that you should be busy, have something to do", this thinking is clearly seen in his job as centre director, and it is emphasised in his statements that pupils need to be involved in activities beyond school, saying that "Students here need something to do".

This is consistent with his emphasis on school as an arena of formation, and demanded that he, as leader, had to act if the students were absent or the parents were concerned about their level of inactivity.

Taking responsibility has also been something I have been concerned with as someone who has moved to Bergen. I took the initiative to start a cultural school in my local area, when I discovered there were no cultural activities in the valley. I entered into a dialogue with the principals in the valley to convince them that this was something worth investing in, and this has given many freelance musicians a place to work. Similarly, I helped establish an association on a municipal farm, as a hub between three school districts close to where I live. This experience has further had an impact on my own professional work, as well as on the many enthusiastic volunteers who have taken part.

Mrimba points out several times that many children in the district where he works have the same home situation that he himself once had. Some children live here with single parents, and there are often five children living in a home of just 60 square meters. "The children need other challenges. Here they can work on homework, school, train", he says, and his own upbringing in poverty has clearly given him inspiration to act differently; it motivated him to be active and do well at school.

This also helps to guide his practice as cultural director, as he is still close to the young people, which helps him to better understand one of the target groups he is trying to help. It will give him first-hand knowledge of the field. Several also contact him directly if there is something they are wondering about.

I have great respect for Mrimba's availability and have experienced it myself both in connection with this research project and in his willingness to come

and meet my students who are on weekend courses. He supports work with a focus on diversity. This is also a goal of mine for my work as a researcher, communicator, and initiator of various projects in the applied field.

12 Being a Role Model

Mrimba believes that students need role models. It is important for young people in general and for immigrants in particular to see someone who chooses their own path, preferably a non-traditional one, and who succeeds. "Someone saw something in me that I didn't see in myself: GIVE ME A CHANCE", this characterises him both at work and in his private life and makes him stretch further: "Perhaps there is something I can give back, which can be of great value". This aligns with my experiences with my inquiries to him about talking to students involved in the MIL project at HVL, and he has offered his knowledge both in the evenings and at weekends. This also gives us a greater understanding of why he is so keen to give responsibility and take responsibility. He is aware of his own role as a role model. He is keen to be clear and aware that if they work hard and are patient, they will be able to succeed. This may also seem to have been his own strategy, as on the one hand he is clear about what he wants, but on the other hand has taken the opportunities that were in front of him. I see this in my own life as well (Horsdal, 2017). At MIL, we have trained male students for a number of years in both primary school teacher training and kindergarten teacher training to become role models in order to recruit more male students. Some of the role models with an immigrant background say that they never came across teachers with a foreign background in their schooling, and that this motivated them to think differently.

Being part of a team has shaped Mrimba's way of thinking: "On that occasion, I made real friends. I keep in touch with them. We trained together every day. Fell in love together. We learned a lot. We became a family". It looks as if being in the same situation, with the same goal, led to these friends developing in the same direction, where they found each other due to their common goal. This team spirit persists. They support each other in grief and in joy: "We cheer each other on. We didn't have permanent jobs. We save money to pay for university ourselves, we have been there to support each other". This has influenced him in his work to work to create a good learning environment both at school and at work.

Mrimba's connection to his friends, and their ability to support each other in their professional lives is something I see in my own life, where I have a wide network of colleagues and friends from different places and with different

backgrounds. It brings a lot of joy, but also a lot of worries. Being close both in your own and other people's lived lives and sometimes sad stories is strong: "The identification with someone else's story is in a certain sense both bodily and emotional [ ] and that is why we can be so affected by stories" (Horsdal, 2017. pp. 204–205).

Through analysing the conversations with Mrimba, I find a consistency over r a long period of time and in everything he does that he is conscious of being a role model. In Norway, the context has changed to be particularly linked to integration in society. Mrimba learned Norwegian in the sports environment: "That's where I became known. The integration began there. That's how I built networks". Mrimba worries more about where the integration will take place in others: "Ask me today, where will they be together with Norwegians. They live in the same place as others [i.e., immigrants]. Where do they use Norwegian? In the shop or a job interview? They speak Norwegian with people at NAV and the social welfare office". Through sport, he also got job contacts: "My father can get you a job there, or laundry help here". Everyone he met said he had to go to school. Mrimba believes that coming to Norway can be a culture shock for many people, and that one must therefore find ambassadors who can convey important information, such as information around vaccinations.

Mrimba emphasises that most immigrants want to be integrated and to get a job. According to him, they are embarrassed to go to the hub, even when they have a skill. They ask, "What should I do?" He emphasises that the work with these people is particularly important: "We have to take them in, so that they see that someone sees them, knows who they are". Mrimba is concerned that Norway must agree to have refugees, but they must also have a plan.

It was just before the asylum reception centre was to be opened in the old premises of the college. Time was short, and my self-appointed mission important. I had taken both children out of school to carry out the secret mission of drawing the welcome greeting on all the boards in the dormitories in the building. Little did we know then that I would later establish a storytelling group at the asylum reception centre, and that among the participants there we would gain an extra son who stayed in Bergen and who calls me his Norwegian mum, and now grandmother to his newborn child. Hassan has taught me a lot about inclusion and integration, which I take with me in my work.

"I was supposed to be the link between everything. I built it all, here is my signature and my blood. My energy, my baby". He worked as a centre manager for nine years and believed that he learned a lot. He appears brave and was not afraid to speak in front of powerful people and to make a difference. He emphasised his hunger for knowledge: "How did the municipality work? Who

can you call to get things done, interdisciplinary collaboration, etc.". Mrimba emphasises that the centre was a pilot project: "We have never had a model that combines school, culture and sports in the same building". His driving force was, among other things, that he thought it was a difficult job, which he did not think they would be able to do: "This became a driving force for me [...]. This is linked to my background. I come from a place where there is very little. We are in a place where we have everything. The only thing missing was young people". He received support from the headteacher and the head of culture: "They gave me confidence and complete freedom, a full mandate to run the centre as I wanted it. I was lucky for nine years". In the course of this work, he received great recognition for his work and became a role model for far more people than he had intended: "Officials from Bergen municipality came along, the prime minister wanted to come as well, and several politicians came to visit. They say laud. We must have Vincent".

According to Mrimba, the transition from centre director to the job of culture director is extensive. He thinks it will be difficult at first, and that it will take a while to get used to, but he claims that he has everything he needs: "I can do much more in my role now, and I want to enjoy the role more". His experience as centre director is important to take with him in this job: "I know where the issues are. I have been there. I miss the youngsters screaming. I will continue to walk its halls and be present there. I will participate. It gives me energy". Even though he misses large parts of his job, he believes that he can do more in his job now than in his old one. It may take time, but he is patient.

13 A Personal Comment

At this very end, after years of interpreting and reinterpreting the dialogues between Mrimba and me, I have some closing reflections that concern both of us. I have been encouraged to take up management roles at my own institution, or to apply for other cultural leadership positions in society, but I feel a greater connection to working closely with different groups in the applied field, such as pupils, and teachers in primary schools, as well as students and professionals in the university field. In recent years, I have been particularly concerned with working with artistic processes in marginal groups, with a focus on dignity. It is precisely here, in this work, that Mrimba and my thoughts have encountered each other, and our experiences have at times been able to mirror each other, while at other times they have needed to be bridged, and this is a bridge built out of respect, equality and dignity.

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The Shaping of Professional Identities

Revisiting Critical Event Narrative Inquiry

Mette Bøe Lyngstad, Tiri Bergesen Schei and Elin Eriksen Ødegaard (Eds.)

This thought-provoking research anthology adopts a postmodern stance and fills in a gap of knowledge for the education of professional development in teacher education, health sciences, and the arts. Allowing subjectivity and multiple voices, the authors add to the intimate and negotiated knowledge of being and becoming – Indigenous, architect, mother, teacher, health researcher, and supervisor. In fifteen chapters, the authors share knowledge of pain and reward in critical events in the realm of professional identity formation. The book provides a selection of personal and far-reaching stories and adds to the reflexivity of memories of critical events.

Mette Bøe Lyngstad is Professor in Drama and Applied Theatre at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. She is a research leader of the research group Negotiating Neglected Narratives that initiated this research anthology. She has written several research articles about narrative work with marginalised groups.

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