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PHOTOVOICE AS DATA COLLECTION METHOD IN A COLLABORATIVE, VISUAL, PRACTICE-ORIENTED INQUIRY ON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS¹

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Abstract

In this paper the arguments for a research theme and a specific research option are discussed. Since pros and cons towards junior high schools in the Flemish educational landscape are subject of widespread policy and societal debates, this research will immerse in the educational processes of five schools, who are implementing practices and ideas of the educational reform in the first grade of secondary education. The strengths and concerns of artefacts, processes and educational practices contributing to a successful junior high school are being mapped by the use of photovoice. Pupils, teachers and school leaders are asked to take a picture as an answer to concrete research questions. Critical dialogue is enabled through focus groups where these photos are brought in by the (young) photographers. By making visible the experiences of all school members, all can have a voice in the exploration and understanding of successful ideas and processes of schooling. Therefor this photovoice research functions as an emancipatory research method.

Keywords: photovoice, junior high schools, educational reform, practitioner research

1 FLEMISH JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS AND / IN THEIR CONTEXT

1.1 Why this research?

A reform of the organization and the curriculum of the first grade of secondary education - called junior high school or middle schools (*'eerstegraadsschool'*) age 12-14 years-, in Flanders will have its take off from 1st of September 2019. From that moment, each individual school will be stimulated – or even urged - to reform their own pedagogical project accordingly to the curriculum targets defined by the Flemish government. At the same time all schools have to reorganize their time tables, study subjects and school structure. Unfortunately, there is not yet a consensus among the educational stakeholders on the direction in which this educational innovation process should lead. The perpetual attempts to reform Flemish secondary school are accompanied by a profound societal discussion on the degree in which secondary education must be developed: either as selective schooling or as comprehensive schooling. One of the main questions in this debate is:

¹ Our very grateful thanks go to Anne Decelle and Alice Dumon for their comments on the text.

should the age of a determining study choice be postponed? Or do we find it more admirable to orient learners at the age of 12 to a specific training and homogeneous classrooms?

Both educational practitioners and researchers have been working for decades on developing education systems worldwide for one or the other model. In a nutshell: Flemish proponents of the selective system argue that an early selection and an early study choice ('early tracking') prepares students better for the labour market or for study success in higher education (Duyck and Anseel 2012). Concerning this argument, a selective school system (e.g. a grammar school) provides economic profit and enables learners to specialize on an early age. Strong vocational study programs benefit from long-term professional activities during school time. Within the same educational system, strong cognitive oriented study subjects benefit from an early start of their academic curriculum. Teachers in a selective school system also often prefer an early selection because it enables them to work with more homogeneous class groups. In addition, motivating students is easier in a chosen subject of training, therefore early tracking is a logical consequence.

Proponents of the comprehensive system, however, stress the importance of equal opportunities and a long(er) period of a common curriculum for all pupils. Since the choice for a certain study subject is also determined by the circumstances in which children grow up (family, home language, neighbourhood, community, etc.) this determinant choice must be postponed for as long as possible (Boone and Van Houtte 2013, Goosen and Boone 2017). In mixed groups, low-performing pupils benefit from working with high-performing students because of peer effects and – however less – vice versa. Therefore a broad orientation in all available choices or possible interest domains should be preferred (Nicaise et al. 2014). Scandinavian countries took a leading role in the development of such a comprehensive education system: pupils are engaged in an equal, common curriculum for up to 16 years and get top scores on PISA tests (Sahlberg 2011).

Not only did 'left egalitarians' but also agencies like OECD argue for this so called late tracking because it ameliorates the performances: it endeavours a broad participation and therefore indirectly ensures economic profitability (OECD 2012). Based on PISA data, Dronkers summarizes this trade-off: in education systems with late selection, the social inequalities are the smallest, while this is not at the expense of a lower average performance of the strongest. High-performing students can also learn at a high pace. Contrarily, early selection at the beginning of secondary education is advantageous for children of the upper class and disadvantageous for students from the lower class (Dronkers 2015).

An additional argument to investigate (the reform of) junior high schools, is educational freedom. Given the Belgian educational context, freedom of education or educational freedom is juridically clearly defined and constitutionally enshrined in article 24. According to the Belgian Constitution, educational freedom encompasses (1) The right or freedom for citizens to start and organize a school (active freedom). Every citizen has the right to establish and create a school, the so-called freedom of establishment ("oprichtingsvrijheid"); the right to organize a school according to one's philosophical, ideological, religious and/or pedagogical vision - the freedom of orientation ("richtingsvrijheid"); and the right to manage a school without governmental interference, to develop a pedagogical project and to act upon this particular pedagogical, religious or ideological vision - the freedom of organization ("inrichtingsvrijheid"); (2) The right for parents and pupils to choose a school (passive freedom) congruent with their religious, ideological or pedagogical view. They can even opt for home-schooling (Belgian House of Representatives 2014, De Groof and Willems 2018, Glenn and De Groof 2012, Veny 2010). Although this might sound thought-out, educational freedom is a persistent theme in juridical, political and policy discussions and also in debates about the funding of schooling and the way education has to be governed and controlled

(Wouters, Geerinck, and Lievens 2017). Because of these ongoing discussions, the current reform involves a considerable responsibility of each individual (junior high) school.

Given the actual tensions and the existing diverse educational landscape in Belgium, one would expect more (collaborative) research on educational concerns, on its trade-offs and on pedagogical opinions related to this reform, however, this is not the case.

1.2 What is the central focus?

Since the actual need for a systematic inquiry into junior high schools, the Teacher education department of the University Colleges of Leuven-Limburg (UCLL) funded a research project dedicated to this topic. This project does not aspire to write an additional meta-review nor to formulate a definitive answer on this educational issue. On the contrary, this collaborative and visual research project admires to contribute substantially to the understanding of the main actors and artefacts of junior high school education and how their actors are dealing with the constitutional right to develop a renewed pedagogical project. Junior high schools take thus a key position in this project and within them, the members of the school – students, teachers and school leaders and the (possible) artefacts that reinforce or hinder the education of the curriculum. The opinions, insights and considerations of the creation of an entirely new pedagogical project embody the core of the inquiry. As it comes to defining the central research question, this practice-oriented research investigates which artefacts, processes and educational practices contribute to a successful junior high school. Therefore, this practitioner research will immerse in the educational processes of five junior high schools, who are developing into a more comprehensive junior high school. Thereby, ‘successful’ is defined as a school (1) in which learners manage to achieve the prescribed learning outcomes; (2) in which learners and teachers develop a positive self-esteem (well-being) and (3) a school that invests strongly in positive orientation of learners in their school curriculum.

In order to document the current changes in the Flemish educational landscape, five junior high schools (‘eerstegraadsscholen’) were selected. The participating schools were recruited on the efforts they make to reform their school system: (1) they take arrangements to reduce the impact of social factors on school success; (2) they invest in the wellbeing of their pupils and teachers; (3) they work on the orientation and self-regulation of their learners and (4) they implement more process and student oriented methods of evaluation. This reform often stands for another organization of the lesson table, for example through a differentiated approach, flexible learning pathways, clustering of courses and learning subjects and the deployment of project based learning. The final selection of the partner schools is based on the additional criteria of a balance between regions and school communities and on the stage of innovation (just started with a new pedagogical project, in the middle of a process or involved in such an innovation for at least five year).

Mapping teaching and learning processes and its meanings and impact requires a participatory, practice-oriented inquiry. Therefore, in this research project each partner school will be investigated on three levels, each involving specific data collection method:

1. On the first level, photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997, Codesal et al. 2017) is used as a data-collection method to gather, share and deepen the ideological, practical and eventual opinions, considerations and critical remarks of the stakeholders. This is done by the members of the school – pupils, teachers and school leader(s), who take pictures and discuss these pictures in focus groups. The research project requires four photovoices in

- each of the five schools: two with pupils and two with teachers and school leader(s). The first photovoice maps the general (dis)appreciation of teachers and school leader(s) towards certain artefacts, processes and practices in their school. The second photovoice focuses on the metacognition of learners and their capability to make well-considered choices concerning their learning process. These photovoices deliver not only qualitative data but also allow schools to work on the quality assurance of their school (improvement).
2. Secondary, the research team engages in collaborative research. Together with the school, the researchers try to narrow down the gap between theory and practice. Since photos are not the only means to envision a successful, the researchers of the university college, explore -together with the participating teachers - literature, resources and good practices and embed insights from desk research into school practice. Through experimenting, the partnership will clarify as precisely as possible which artefacts, processes and educational practices contribute to a successful junior high schools.
 3. Eventually the research team will measure the school performances of learners, by taking a selection of validated survey-tests, called Parallel tests, developed by an academic partnership of a university and the Ministry of Education. These tests are taken at age 14 on the bridge between the second and the third year of secondary education. The tests are subject-bounded and measure the acquisition of the final objectives of the first grade of secondary school A-stream. The results of these tests are at school level and not at the level of the individual: the results of the particular school are situated towards average performances of Flemish schools with a similar pupil population (Janssen 2017).

Since the project consists of five case studies, the scope of this research is limited in time, place and activities (Harrison et al. 2017). It might seem not obvious to generalize conclusions on the basis of these five schools. However, this mixed methods approach allows the researchers to meet the rather ambitious research question. This design delivers on the one hand a detailed description of the processes, artefacts and practices and on the other enables pattern forming. Because of the broad and in-depth analysis of certain processes, this research provides insights that can be, and most probable will be, relevant and applicable to other schools (Flyvbjerg 2006).

2 WHY PHOTOVOICE?

Photovoice as a data collection method is a practice in which members of a community identify, represent and enhance certain processes by taking, sharing and discussing photos (Wang and Burris 1997). This critical dialogue in small inquiry groups delivers in depth insights into ongoing processes. In this research design there were four main arguments which pleaded to choose for photovoice as a research method.

First, photovoice enables people to record and reflect on their communities' strengths and concerns. By connecting images and words to events, the members of the community are enabled to prioritize their concerns and discuss their problems and solutions, which contributes to the empowerment and emancipation of the participants. The experiences of the "unknown" are made visible (Hannes and Parylo 2014). That is why photovoice is often used in emancipatory contexts and finds its roots in critical pedagogy. The discussion on the images facilitates showing ownership of the participants. On a second level, photos taken by participants contribute to a better understanding of the process. They deliver in depth material and unique data (Codesal et al. 2017).

Thirdly, photovoice promotes critical dialogue about important issues through large and small focus groups talks on photographs. This sharing can deepen and broaden the interpretation of their experiences. Participants also create a common understanding. In the end, photovoice is interesting for advocacy. Images can be a powerful way to reach policymakers and other stakeholders. From this point of view, photovoice can offer a new perspective on the discussion in secondary education and the junior high schools. In short, photovoice gives an opportunity to generate new, different, rich, contextualized knowledge (Prosser and Loxley 2008, Wang and Burris 1997).

Pupils and teachers are often portrayed as objects or implementers of a policy (Koro-Ljungberg 2014). Photovoice involves them as active agents for change. The analysis of the pictures and the conversations will lead to evidence-informed policy recommendations. In this process, images can be as much as or (even) more persuading than words. This is a shift from a researcher-centred construction to those of the participants (Savin-Baden and Major 2013). This does not imply that participants have full responsibility for the technical research development, nor that the participants should be active research partners at any stage of the research process, but that they influence the direction and content of the research in different ways. The participants have the freedom to create their own agenda. The researcher does not have complete control over the creation of the photos or over the sense of meaning associated with the visual material because of different reasons. First, participants keep control over the data collection. Second, they are (co-) owner of the research material. Space is also created for negotiation about the use of the material. A fourth reason is that there is talk of building a process with regard to informed consent and the negotiation of power and control over the research. Lastly, time is given to adjusting or questioning the research questions. The unexpected results are not seen as problematic but constitute the enrichment and contextualization of the research material (Prosser and Loxley 2008).

3 HOW TO WORK WITH PHOTOVOICE?

In our view, it is not enough to provide a camera to speak of participatory research. It is also about the way our participants can and want to deal with this instruction and want to share their opinions.

Although photovoices with pupils differ from photovoices with teachers and school leaders, there are a few parallels. In this research, we divided the photovoice methodology into four stages: (1) preparation, (2) dialogue, (3) registration and (4) analysis. During the preparation phase, pupils as well as teachers and school leaders received a concrete question. For instance the learners had to portray the question: "what stimulates you to learn?". During the focus group conversations we connected the photos with their school: how does your school facilitates you in a way that stimulates you to learn? Weaknesses and strengths of processes, school structures, artefacts and curriculum materials were mapped.

During the preparation phase, pupils also received an introduction into smartphone photography. By giving them some background on light effects, framing, selection, disturbing elements on the photo, line proportion, colour use and shape of the photo we tried to augment the quality of the photographs. Beside, pupils were trained to visualize learning processes, by discussing existing photos and quotes.

As it comes to the photovoice with the staff, we asked the teachers and school leaders to take two photos and to discuss the images during one hour. One of their chosen pictures shows the answer to the question: "which aspect(s) of the concept of our school do I translate successfully into practice?". And one picture that shows: "with which aspect(s) of the concept of our school do I experience difficulties in practice?". The concept of the school was specified in the following

aspects: differentiated instruction; dealing positively and systematically with differences; growth mindset (Dweck 2017), with focus on feedforward and feedback (Hattie and Timperley 2007); schools connected to the city/urban location; longer lesson blocks; flexible organization; integrated artistic education; holistic evaluation, with attention to feedback and reflection; focusing on orientation and self-management.

In order to facilitate the conversations on the pictures, we worked with a few techniques, adapted from Ritchhart, Church and Morrison's *Making thinking visible*. A strong technique for introducing ideas and exploring ideas is the thinking routine: "See, Think, Wonder" (Ritchhart, Church, and Morrison 2011). During the first step, participants have to describe what they literally see on the photos. Then they have to talk about questions as: 'What do you think about the photo?' and 'What is this picture telling about learning?' In the end participants elaborated on: 'What questions does the photo raise about learning?'

Pupils also invented a headline for an article in a newspaper. Another association-method that was being used is 'The hand'. In the first stage, by pointing to the thumb, the next questions were being answered: What do you like about the picture? What happens in the photo? In this stage technical elements were discussed. The second stage, called the index finger, was about the following questions: What is the message of the photo? What does this picture teach you? The middle finger was connected to a focus on: What do you find less beautiful about the photo? Technical issues were again being discussed here. The ring finger was the last stage and was related to the following questions: Does the message of the photo match with your vision on learning? Which personal experiences can you connect to this message?

Participants discussed the content and the quality of the photo; especially the light effects and the framing were popular subjects. Some photographs were rather plain: they imagined for example a computer, a piece of paper or groups at work. Others were rather figurative or metaphorical: they envisaged a plant, railway or old building. During the discussion, it is tremendous important that there is an open area to speak; that there is no given direction, no right or wrong.

CONCLUSION

The use of photovoice in our practice-oriented based research is a powerful research method to grasp the opinions of the students, teachers and school leaders of the five schools that participate in the research projects. The photos that are being taken and discussed give insight into the strengths and concerns of practices and ideas related to the upcoming reform in junior schools. Mapping these practices and ideas can function as an inspiration to other schools who have to adapt themselves to the educational reform.

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AN AUDIOVISUAL ANALYSIS OF “AUTUMN SONATA” BY I. BERGMAN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF OBJECT-RELATIONS THEORY

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Abstract

The present study offers insights into the mother – daughter relationship as seen through I. Bergman’s film, “Autumn Sonata”. Combining audiovisual analysis with thematic analysis, and adopting an object-relations theory perspective, it explores the main themes that emerge from the film and highlights the salient elements that characterize the mother and daughter relationship. The methodology adopted offers an innovative way of exploring and understanding artistic audiovisual material and the findings can be used in the context of cinematherapy and cinemeducation.

Keywords: qualitative research, mother-daughter relationships, audiovisual analysis

4 INTRODUCTION

Ingmar Bergman’s film "Autumn Sonata" (1978) presents aspects of the mother-daughter relationship, while it raises questions about themes such as expressing feelings and emotions around the relationship, identity, self-awareness and traumas experienced by each member of the dyad involved. The present study adopts a qualitative methodological research approach and uses an object relations’ perspective (e.g. [1], [2], [3]) in order to capture the mother-daughter relationship as it emerges in the film. The research insights intend to enrich the fields of cinematherapy [4] and cinemeducation [5], and thus can be used for the benefit of people undergoing therapy for difficulties with relationships or for mental health professionals in training who wish to better understand the aspects of the mother-daughter relationship.

It should be noted extensive literature review showed that there are no similar studies either for the “Sonata” or another film. Only one study was found which analyzed “Autumn Sonata” from a psychoanalytic perspective focusing upon the pathology of the protagonists but with no clear mention of research methodology.

4.1 Autumn Sonata: Brief Overview

“Autumn Sonata” describes the encounter of a mother (Charlotte) with her two daughters, Eva and Helena. Charlotte is a piano solist and mourns the recent death of her partner, Leonardo. Her eldest daughter, Eva, hears about the death of Leonardo from a family acquaintance and having not met her mother for seven years, invites her to the home she shares with her husband, Victor, to stay with them for as long as she wishes. On arrival, Charlotte finds out that Eva is also providing

accommodation to her younger sister, Helena, who had stayed in an institution for a long time, in which Charlotte had left her. As the film unfolds, Charlotte and Eva start quarreling, raising issues from the past pointing out each other's weaknesses and needs. In conclusion, the film forms a narrative circle, ending with a letter Eva sends to her mother.

4.2 Psychology and cinema

Cinema as an art form expresses various intergroup, interpersonal and intrapsychic phenomena [7]. On the other hand, psychology as a scientific field is dedicated to the study of these phenomena and the development of theories for their better understanding. Despite the fact that these are seemingly different fields, they both deal with topics such as emotions, human relations and behaviors, motivation and the figurative/metaphoric or symbolic meaning of human experience [8].

Many researchers have attempted to benefit from the audio-visual component of the cinema for the sake of scientific knowledge (e.g., [9], [10]). The result of such an interest was the development of cinematherapy [4] and cinemeducation [5] which use the figurative/metaphoric element of films as a tool in their clinical work and as educational material in the educational framework, respectively.

4.2.1 Cinemeducation

In the area of clinical education, cinemeducation [5] exploits film clips to train clinical professionals in fields such as diagnosis, psychosocial care and the life cycle of humans, while raising awareness of existential issues and other underlying difficulties. As noted before, films provide an exceptional medium for the presentation of clinical cases in a secure environment for the trainees, enabling the open expression of their thoughts and feelings and deviating shyness and hesitation they might feel because of their personal contact with someone seeking counselling [11].

4.2.2 Cinematherapy

Cinematherapy [4] is a therapeutic technique in which people undergoing treatment are invited to attend a carefully selected film and then discuss it with their therapist. Considered as the evolution of bibliotherapy, cinematherapy exploits the same three stages of personal development proposed for bibliotherapy: identification, catharsis and insight ([12], [13]), while the aim of the intervention might be to stimulate discussion within the therapeutic framework or act as a form of figurative intervention [13].

4.3 The objects-relations theory

The term "object relations" refers to different versions of theories of development ([14], [15], [16], [1] [3], [17], [18], [19]) which nevertheless fall within the same psychoanalytical example. As a developmental theory it is based on two assumptions: (a) One's Ego (Self), albeit in archaic mental organization, is there from birth; and (b) the main incentive of human behavior is the need for a relationship with someone (the object of attachment). This is an inherent need that stays with us and continuously triggers our behavior throughout our lifetime [1]. The object here, in contrast with the drive theory, is not understood as a result of the drive activity, but considered from the very beginning connected with it, given that desire is always desire for something [19]. Actually, what introduced the theoretical model of object relations is the assumption that through a dialectical relationship the object participates in the formation of the subject. As Ogden [20] pointed out, in the Freudian theory this dialectic develops within the conscious and the unconscious, while in the theory of object relations "the gradual formation of the subject is connected with its dialectical

relationship with the object, that is an interpersonal development framework "(p. 8) where the mother has the central role.

Another fundamental theoretical assumption of the object relations model is that the personality is structured through a gradual process of internalization of the intrapsychic world of the infant interacting with the people who look after it. In this way, a world of internal objects that act as intra-psychic representatives of the experience with other significant people is established. During this process the infant internalizes, in the form of (partially conscious and partially unconscious) representations, the experience of bonds with people in the family environment. This is a "representational world" [21] which reflects not only the characteristics of objects but also the characteristics of bonds (safe / depressant, stressful / persecutory) that the child is experiencing along with them.

These internal objects act as source of mental reserves, as reference points on which we have recourse whenever we feel the need for safety or comfort, and for this reason they are component parts of individuation [22]. Another function is that these, once structured, define our relationships through the process of their re-projection in our new bonds throughout our life. This projection works as a world-view or as a yardstick by which we shape our expectations of relationships, interpret the behavior of others; ultimately they determine the choice of significant others in our lives, because they form part of the selection "criteria" of people with whom we shall have relationships (partners, friends) insofar as their own internal objects "match" our own ([23], [24]).

4.4 The importance of the mother-daughter relationship

The importance of the mother-daughter relationship, although emphasized by many theorists, has not been studied extensively [25]. Research shows that this is a close bond characterized by closeness and intimacy, which is experienced from both sides of the relationship from the time of birth of the baby until the death of the mother ([26], [25]). Classical psychoanalysis associates this relationship with the oedipal stage, highlighting the difficulty girls (unlike boys) face to withdraw their libidinal investment in the original mother-object. This event may trigger ambivalence in the mother-daughter relationship which can last a lifetime. According to the theory of object relations, the relationship that develops between the mother and the daughter is influenced by many factors. Gender affects mother's projections to her child, namely what it means for her to be the mother of a girl and not of the boy she had been fantasizing (or not) during her pregnancy. At the same time, gender refers the mother back to her own relationship with her mother, but also to the representation of gender in her family of origin.

5 METHODOLOGY

The selection of a film for the study of phenomena such as the mother-daughter relationship was based on the scientific interest of the researchers around the potential, the usefulness and the limitations of arts-informed research [27]. This is a relatively new approach towards research, which is qualitative in nature and attempts to delve into the human experience and emotions by creating new ways of understanding of the process, of the subjectivity, of the role of emotions and of the ethical aspects of the research process ([27], [28]).

5.1 Films as data source and as research tool

The special value of using films and videos for research is their contribution to a better understanding of the qualitative element of relationships, of emotions and of the grain of human nature, since they reveal three significant dimensions of the experience: emotions, thought, and information ([29], [30], [31]). More precisely, cinema represents a rich source of information that

often bypasses the verbal element, conveying meaning and emotions through non-verbal channels [32]. The audio-visual qualitative methods accept the sovereignty of the visual element in the world surrounding us and in the way we communicate, pointing out the useful information it has to offer on a phenomenon, an attitude, but also the position of the researcher alike in relation to the object of his research. Therefore, a methodology that utilises the visual element can enrich our understanding in ways that words alone cannot conceive [33]. For the organization, the coding and the analysis of "Autumn Sonata", the audio-visual analysis [29] and the thematic analysis (e.g., [34], [35]) were used jointly.

5.2 Audio-visual analysis

Audio-visual analysis [29] originates in visual anthropology and suggests the basic rules of conducting an audio-visual study and the main data analysis axes deriving from it ([36], [37]). Collier and Collier [29] propose a process of four stages, which begins with the open engagement and familiarization of the researcher with the data and is progressively organized to yield useful results.

We began with watching the film three times and recording the key points, the dominant emotions, questions arising during the film, points of specific interest, but also thoughts around colors, the music, the clothes and the attitudes of the characters. Moving on to the second step, research questions relevant to the scope of the study were formulated, as indicated below. The first is the main research question, whereas the rest emerged during this step and served as helpful to its reply:

How is the mother-daughter relationship presented in "Autumn Sonata" from a psychodynamic perspective? What is Charlotte's and Eva's emotional load? What themes dominate their relationship and what's left unsaid? What's Helena's role in this relationship and what do the women tell us about the mother-daughter relationship? Lastly, what's the emotional nature of this relationship?

The central axis running through these questions is the quality of the relationship, namely the feelings and thoughts (expressed verbally, non-verbally and in "loud voice" by the director) that dominate the core of the relationship, and the way in which they are expressed in their communication and interaction; behaviors (body language, gestures, facial expressions, etc.), the way each member of the dyad interprets the behavior of the other, the self-image of each woman, and the thoughts of the researchers towards phenomena apparent in the film.

The third step involves structural microanalysis, namely watching the film scene after scene, recording and describing speech, expressions, colors, and generally anything that happens in the film. Since the answers to the research questions were scattered throughout the film, there was no selection of specific scenes (as indicated by Collier & Collier [29]); on the contrary, the entire film was considered as a single setting, which should be studied in a balanced way. Once the microanalysis of the film was completed, the text was submitted to thematic analysis (see below) so as to conceptually organize all the material collected in main and secondary themes around what the film presents about the mother-daughter relationship.

The fourth and last stage of the audio-visual analysis was watching the film once more and selecting specific scenes-images to accompany the main themes that emerged in the thematic analysis (see below). Finally, having used the initial research questions as a guide, the interpretation used as a means of understanding and response to them was assessed.

5.3 Thematic analysis

The second method applied, in order to analyze the material resulting through the first three stages of audio-visual analysis (see above), was thematic analysis ([34], [35]), which aims to identify, describe, report and "theme" repeated conceptual patterns, that is "themes" arising from research data [38].

Here the thematic analysis was approached in an inductive and productive manner. The combination of these two approaches (inductive and productive) allows both the emergence of new issues and the application of an explanatory framework to the understanding of research data [35]. More precisely, in the first place the set of data was analyzed in an inductive way without a specific theoretical orientation (e.g., [39], [34]). Then, drawing from the reference material of object relations, understanding of data on the basis of the concepts of this approach was codified and organized, operating productively (e.g., [40]) and adopting the interpretation of suspicion [41]. A prerequisite for such an attitude of the researcher is the existence of a theoretical and conceptual framework that will give the researcher the basic principles for the study and understanding of the research phenomenon [32]. This descriptive-explanatory approach is not intended to search for cause and effect relations, but to convincingly describe the phenomenon, which will be understood on the basis of a particular theoretical framework [38].

6 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Three main themes emerged, which correspond to each of the three women-protagonists in the film: Charlotte, Eva and Helena. Since the analysis focused on emotions, behaviors and expressions that arise as a result of their symbolic or real interaction and relationship ([42], [43]), every theme eventually describes how each of the three women relates or reacts to the thoughts, behavior, attitude or feelings of the other. To paraphrase Winnicott ([3] 1960, p. 586), "what we call mother or daughter does not exist": Charlotte, Eva and Helena are never 'alone', they think, feel and behave in relation to each other. Here only the first theme, which regards Charlotte shall be presented, with references to the two sub-themes, her relationship to Eva and Helena, respectively.

6.1 Charlotte

The first theme regards the protagonist of the film, Charlotte, and attempts to capture her emotional reactions, thoughts and behaviour (verbal or not) with regard to her two daughters and herself.

3.1.1. Charlotte- History

According to the film's scenario, Charlotte is a woman of about sixty years of age, an internationally renowned pianist. The film depicts a dynamic woman who, as she implies, is "*Dispassionate, straightforward and tough*". She avoids any expression of pain or emotions, as, like she says, "*One can feel pain, but not show it*". In order to satisfy the needs of a sublime self she struggles to triumph through self-discipline. This narcissistic behaviour is assisted by her identification with the idealised object Chopin represents. For Charlotte, Chopin is viewed as the emblem of narcissist competence. She describes him as "*proud, passionate, tortured and masculine*". For Charlotte "masculinity" is contrasted to "silly little woman". These two gender identities match her intrapsychic structure, characterized by the splitting of "altogether good" from "altogether evil" objects [15] that make up and the sublime self the inadequate self, respectively.

With regard to her childhood, we know that she hardly remembers anything. As she points out:

"I cannot recall my parents ever having touched me either with caress or as a punishment. I was completely ignorant of everything about love. Tenderness, contact, intimacy, warmth... I never grew up. My face and body have aged. I acquired memories and experiences, but through all that I was never born. I do not remember faces, not even my face. Sometimes I try to remember the face of my mother, but I cannot see her..."

It seems that Charlotte, a woman who, as a child had never been touched either with caress or as a punishment, as she gets older, becomes "self-luminous", using music as a unique means of emotional expression. Due to the absence of "mirroring" [44] in the maternal gaze, Charlotte had not been able to discover her "real self" and "to start living." Moreover, the absence of the mother, and especially of the "reverie" ([45], [46], [47], [48]) had as a result that Charlotte's needs remained uncontained ([45], [46], [47], [48]), leaving her experiencing the anxiety of seeking admiration and recognition in external objects that acted as "self-objects", as sources of admiration, value, and ultimately, as objects that appease the terror of rejection. She is trapped in her perfectionism, so as to nourish her almighty fantasy of a sublime self, which functions as a defensive shield against the depression that was lurking in connection with the awareness of her inadequacy. Therefore, Charlotte's anxiety is associated with the dominance of her "persecutive" mother inside her, since the absence of her real mother was experienced as a persecutive object, against which Charlotte is constantly in danger.

Charlotte keeps distances from her relations, and her emotional involvement triggers the fear of dependence, since the intrapsychic world is dominated by representations of object relations where the self feels "deprived, furious and empty" in a scary world, because she experiences it as if guided by "envy and revenge" [49], a world where dependency triggers the terror of abandonment. But as Charlotte will admit to Eva, thus confirming the enormous deprivation she felt and also the paranoid/schizoid ([15] Klein, 1946) fear that the object is greedy and will overwhelm her with its own needs: *"I wanted you to take care of me. To hug and comfort me... I wanted to love you but I was afraid of your requirements."*

The defensive protection, which aims to keep in a repelling situation the trauma of the past, sometimes falls apart, and then the pain and suffering comes to the surface in various forms, such as insomnia, phobia for illness and death, and the embodiment of pain with backaches [50].

3.1.2. Charlotte- Eva

Charlotte, seems to be absent from the lives of her children, in the same way she experienced the absence of her own mother. In this way the trauma of abandonment, not mourned in the first generation, is delivered to the second: Eva and Helena are facing a non-grieving object, like Charlotte experienced with her own mother. Charlotte's behaviour towards Eva seems to be dominated by elements characteristic of a narcissistic personality structure. This type of narcissism has many facets. Charlotte either turns the attention to herself, ignoring the lives of others, or presents a constant tendency to avoid unpleasant situations and emotions: *"Of course, there is some emptiness caused by it [the death of Leonardo] but it is not good to fall into melancholy. I remember giving birth to you, but all I know about childbirths is that they hurt. But what is the pain like? I do not remember"*.

Charlotte projects her inadequate self to her daughter, Eva. As a result, Charlotte implicitly expresses some kind of contempt for her daughter, Eva. This appears to occur through a process of nullification and/or rejection of emotions, thoughts, even of the existence of Eva herself: *"[you] should have been born a boy"*. In this way, Charlotte is relieved from her anguish and maintains a sense of superiority. The scene where Charlotte asks Eva to play something on the

piano is typical. When she finishes, Eva brings her fingers to her mouth like a child waiting for criticism from her mother, who asks her to play something else, as if she was expecting her to do better.

Charlotte tends to distort the reality of people, emotions and situations. This distortion manifests itself in various ways, such as contradiction, dramatization, moralization and excuses designed to alleviate her own position and responsibility towards things: *"You blame me for leaving... I went through a lot all those years, my back hurt, I could not do rehearsals, jobs were cancelled, my life seemed futile, I felt guilty for being away from you and dad..."*

Emotionally, Charlotte seems to move in a wide spectrum, which starts from the genuine and sincere joy when she arrives in Eva's home: *"What a beautiful place you have!... I will stay forever..."* and ending in sorrow, shame and guilt: *"And then, guilty conscience. Always guilty conscience..."*

In the presence of Eva, Charlotte behaves in a way that emphasizes the sublime side of herself. So, Eva seems to identify with what her mother refers her to: a timid girl who feels ashamed, as a result of the sense of failure she experiences. In this way, mother and daughter form the two poles of the projective identification that takes place between them.

3.1.3. Charlotte- Helena

The pattern of Charlotte's relationship with Helena seems to follow the standards of her relationship with Eva: absence and distance, along with a sense of guilt and shame, which emerges in her monologues when lying alone in her room and in the expression of shock when he learns that her daughter is there. This repeated pattern of abandonment and distance from Helena becomes apparent both by the history of their relationship and in the way Charlotte behaves (or doesn't behave) towards her. A characteristic point of this mental distance, which reaches up to the complete denial of her existence, is the following:

"I am so glad that Eva takes care of you. I thought you were still in the institution. I would have come to see you. But it's better like this. Now, we'll be together every day. Are you in pain?"

Previously we have watched Charlotte, who didn't even know that Helena is now staying with Eva, being angry and refusing to see her, finally taking a deep breath, as if preparing to go on stage, before entering the room to meet her, completely changing the expression of her face in excitement, joy and love. Charlotte keeps distances from Helena, whose existence seems to be experienced as toxic because of her disability, which converts her into an evil-deficient object, that she cannot stand and which she must isolate from her life.

Emotionally, however, things seem to be slightly different. The encounter with Helena, as a violent impact with reality, seems to remove Charlotte's resistance, allowing guilt and sadness to emerge:

"I held her face and felt the disease penetrate the muscles of her neck"

she says and her look reveals horror and helplessness.

"Why can't I take her into my bed and comfort her like when she was three ... This soft body, this is my Lena..."

she says in utter fear, as if she realised for the first time that she's her daughter and that she is

sick.

In summary, in Charlotte's relationship with her two daughters we can identify a recurrent pattern of mental and emotional distance, abandonment and absence, which she justifies due to her career obligations.

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

"Autumn Sonata", like any other film, is not just an audio-visual way of presenting a written text to the public. Perhaps even more than texts, its strength lies in the image, the colours, the movement of the actors, the distances between them, the layout of each scene, their facial expressions and of course in the sound, which in this case was deliberately excluded from the study. It is these non-verbal components, body language and atmosphere, the optical element that creates, even before words and their pronunciation, a psychological mood and intuitive knowledge.

The connection of the scientific community to everyday life, and of the theory to the experience through alternative and original research ventures is one of the commitments of the arts-informed research [27] and led the rationale of this study, which hopes to enrich the toolbox and the cinematherapy and cinemeducation with a scientifically informed analysis.

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EXPLORATION OF DEATH ANXIETY IN PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC SESSIONS WITH CLIENTS: TRAINEE-COUNSELLORS EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Death anxiety is often a neglected issue in psychotherapy both by theory and research. The reason is that it can emerge in a covert way that requires careful examination. Some studies indicate that death anxiety is the most challenging issue for therapists in training. High levels of death anxiety can trigger defensive strategies from therapists and trainee-therapists when they work with clients who bring issues of death. In psychodynamic theories, death anxiety has been linked with 'fear of castration' (Freud 1923), 'persecutory anxiety' and 'negation' (Klein 1948) and 'fear of breakdown' (Winnicott 1974). Existential therapists have tried to put death anxiety at the centre of attention in psychotherapy. Death is seen as a factor that when explored in therapy can alleviate symptoms that cause distress and can lead to 'authentic' ways of living. Most studies that have explored death anxiety come from a quantitative paradigm, using quantifiable methods such as questionnaires and hypothetical scenarios followed by a statistical analysis of the emerging data. This study follows a qualitative approach in order to explore and understand the experience of working with death anxiety issues as a trainee-therapist. It is a detailed idiographic analysis of trainee-therapists' experience when working with clients who bring death anxiety in therapy. A qualitative interview study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of four trainee-therapists who worked with death-related issues. All participants were females and the interviews were audio-recorded and analysed using the IPA method. Three main themes emerged during the analysis, Inexperience – Incompetence, Therapeutic Frame – Boundaries, and Personal Experience with Death. Participants described challenges when working with death-related issues. The theme Inexperience – Incompetence has four sub-themes that emerged in all or some of the interviews and they are related to the major theme. These sub-themes are: i) Helping Space, ii) Heroic Therapist, iii) Theory and iv) Training. Training and theory are two aspects that teach upcoming therapists to think in specific ways about death issues which are often related to causality by another factor, or connect death anxiety with other issues rather than explore it independently.

Keywords: Death anxiety, psychotherapy, qualitative inquiry

1. Introduction

For centuries, societies and philosophers found the reflection and questions around our own mortality insignificant. Spinoza thought that a free man should contemplate issues of life and not death, while Nietzsche argued that thoughts about life are more necessary than thoughts about death [1]. The dawn of a modernist worldview where the emphasis was put on scientific analyses, progress through reason, and the capacity to control nature and to think about death was diminished both in philosophy and modern societies [2]. However, the worldview about death started to shift in the twentieth century with events like the Great War and World War II. Death became an important subject that arose questions about our own existence [1]. In particular,

existential philosophers addressed the vitality in exploring our own mortality and Heidegger was the first philosopher to present a complete study of the existential meaning of death [1], [3], [4].

Jacobsen [5] writes that the increase rate of suicides might be a message to societies that the “quality of life is more important than the length of life”. He also explains that death has become a taboo in modern societies by claiming that “the health sector has eradicated the death struggle from our culture by means of morphine” and we should start thinking about death anxiety which in fact is anxiety about life [5]. Feifel [6] argues that studies on death were neglected by the scientific communities until the mid-1950s. Feifel [6] writes that “experimental and objective study of behaviour became psychology’s commanding posture, and logical positivism became its dominant notion of the scientific undertaking”. Studies on death have increased over the years due to social issues, such as AIDS, increased rates of suicide, abortions and addictions. It has become clear by the increase of studies that recognition of personal mortality is a major “entryway” to self-knowledge [6], [5]. Subsequently, many studies have explored different aspects of death anxiety. Still, there is one area where research is scarce and still needed which is death anxiety and the impact of psychotherapy [7], [8]. Studies claim that therapists who experience death anxiety to overwhelming degrees tend to be less effective with clients dealing with death issues [9], [10]. In this study I examine death anxiety in psychotherapy with trainee-therapists.

2. Review of Literature

There are a number of psychological theories of death anxiety and mainly those concentrating on the death of the self, however, very few studies have been conducted based upon these theories [11]. Most of the studies focusing on death anxiety have used instruments that sometimes measure different things than those they claim to research [12]. Also, most studies come from a quantitative paradigm where they use death scale instruments to measure conscious levels of death anxiety [8].

One study compared degrees of death anxiety in medical students and counsellors-in-training. The counsellors-in-training had higher levels of death anxiety than the medical students [13]. However, their results did not provide support to claim that the students’ levels of anxiety may have impacted their attitudes with clients. It has been suggested that when people have high levels of death anxiety, it impacts their skills when working with a client who brings death related issues [14], [10], [8].

Another study presented clinical scenarios to 81 counsellors at the beginning of their career and then studied their level of comfort with 15 clinical scenarios. The results indicated that five death-related scenarios that were shown to the participants were among the top eight most uncomfortable situations [15]. This supported the idea that death issues are challenging for counsellors was supported.

Additionally, in a rehabilitation centre, death anxiety among counsellors was studied. The results indicated that 31% of the counsellors-in-training would prefer not to work with dying clients and 75% reported moderate levels of death anxiety. Moreover, it was found that despite the fact that some counsellors-in-training had previous training in death and dying, half of the students thought that further training was necessary to enhance comfort levels and competency [16]. What is more, a study that examined death anxiety and counsellors-in-training attitudes towards disabled people found that rejection of the physically disabled is related to high levels of death anxiety [17].

Finally, a study conducted by Howze and Brossart [8] found gender, religious and death education are variables that might increase death anxiety. Particularly, in clinical scenarios female counsellors-in-training experienced higher levels of death anxiety than their male colleagues. Also,

people who had strong religious beliefs had lower levels of death anxiety than their colleagues who did not believe in any sort of religion.

In this study I explore the experience of psychotherapists who are in training and work with clients who deal with death related issues (fear of death, committing suicide, bereavement and loss). The aim of the study is to provide insight into the complicated and understudied issue of death anxiety in psychotherapy.

3. Method & Methodology

In this study, I focused on the experience of trainee-counsellors who had not been accredited by any professional organization in UK (BACP, COSCA, UKCP). The method used in this study was semi-structured interviews and the methodology used to analyse the data was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Pietkiewicz and Smith [18] explain that semi-structured interviews “allow enough space and flexibility for original and unexpected issues to arise, which the researcher may investigate in more detail with further questions.”) IPA requires a verbatim record of the data collection since it aims to interpret the meaning of the content of the interviewee's account. Data collection and analysis in IPA is not set out to examine hypothesis but it involves a self-reflective process upon preconceptions about the data and attempts to hold off in order to focus on the experiential world of the phenomenon. IPA requires small sized and relatively homogeneous samples in order to access interviewees in depth [19]. Thus, a number of inclusion criteria were chosen. The criteria were: “Trainee-counsellors who are currently enrolled in a training course and have not completed the hours required for a qualification degree (150 hours). Training must be or have been in the UK. They must have had an experience with a client when they felt the topic of death emerged in the session. The participants have not experienced any bereavement in the last year. Fluent or native English speakers.”

IPA of the data was conducted following the guidelines by Smith and his colleagues [20], [21], [18]. In their guidelines, they suggested three steps for conducting an in-depth IPA study. The first step is described as the Exploratory Comments. The researcher reads thoroughly and in-depth the transcripts of the interviews and add comments to what the participants are saying. In the second stage, which they describe as the Emerging Themes, the researcher is advised to work more with the comments and notes rather than the transcripts. Once the researcher feels that some themes have come in place, then, follows the third and last step which is Clustering Themes. At this point, the researcher searches for connections between the themes that emerged in the previous stage and tries to group them together according to conceptual similarities and providing each cluster with a descriptive label. It is important to mention here that each transcript and subsequently each participant should be treated independently and not try to force comments and themes that are not very clear. Following these guidelines, I proceeded to do an IPA analysis with my interview transcripts.

My research was approved by the Ethics Board at the School of Health in Social Sciences at the University of Edinburgh. Before I started recruiting participants, I had to ensure that I would work ethically and guarantee their safety, anonymity and data protection.

Following the analysis of the transcripts, three themes emerged and one of the themes produced four sub-themes that were related to the main theme:

- a) Therapeutic Frame – Boundaries
- b) Inexperience – Impotence
 - i. Helping Spaces
 - ii. Heroic Therapist

- iii. Theory
- iv. Training
- c) Personal Experience with Death

The three major themes were present in all four interviews, while the sub-themes emerged in some of them.

4. Results & Themes

Therapeutic Frame – Boundaries

In all four interviews, participants spoke about challenges that they faced with their clients around the nature of maintaining the therapeutic frame and boundaries. According to Langs (1997), the frame of psychotherapy is the backbone, context and most powerful influence on the patient's therapeutic experience. It is constituted by the "fixed frame" that includes "the office, a set time, frequency, and duration of sessions along and a fee with responsibility for all scheduled sessions" (Langs 1997, 189). I would say that the therapeutic frame is constituted of all the elements that provide a context with boundaries. The most common way that it emerged in sessions with clients was in relation to time and premature ending of sessions and the therapeutic relationship. Most of the participants described their feelings and how it was difficult to maintain the boundaries in the session.

One of the participants, Cate, spoke about her client and one session in particular where she ended the session earlier.

Cate: "And, in fact, there was one session that we ended early because she just, it was like, she just checked out. She was looking at the window and I said...I let her sit and look at the window for a certain amount of time and then I asked what she was thinking about and she said...and I was expecting that she might come back with something profound, you know. And, she said 'Oh, I was thinking I have to take my car to the garage because my spare tire is flat and I need to go and get this spare tire. And it felt...I think I kind of gave up, try to reach her shortly after that. Cause I felt I had made several attempts and I wasn't getting anywhere. And it was around the time when there was a lot of that snow. Basically, what happened Kosmas was that I used the weather as an excuse to let her go [...] And, I said to her 'are you worried about the car and tire fixed and all the rest of it?' and she said 'Yes'. And I said, 'Well if you want to go, you can go'. And she did."

Cate: "I remember feeling this huge feeling of anxiety coming up in me again and I felt paralyzed by it. And I would find myself thinking 'I do not want to do it now. I do not want to say it now.' There was so much death, it was just...it was everywhere, you know."

My understanding at that moment was that Cate finds unbearable working with this client who brings feelings of being paralysed by the overwhelming death that is present in the room.

Inexperience – Incompetence

All participants expressed feelings and thoughts around incompetence or inexperience when working with clients who are dealing with challenging issues around death in the therapeutic relationship.

Marie, had a moment on her first session with her client when she was 'caught off guard' and ended the session 15 minutes earlier. During the interview, Marie described how she felt with this client.

Marie: "You know, I've thought of lots of things, if it's our relationship. Although I do think we have a really good rapport and I really like and you can tell when it's mutual. I have wondered if I have failed her in ways or if I am not doing something that could be more therapeutic for her. And, I don't think I have the answer to that. [...] that's the fear that I've missed something or let her down in some way. It's hard to tell. I find with her hard to tell because she is hard to focus. She is so scattered that it's hard to grasp on her."

When Marie questioned her work as a therapist during the interview, I remember having thoughts that she is doing something therapeutic and her feelings in the session are a material with this client but she could not think of them as a material. I thought that this was part of therapy and of the relationship to let her down and then work with those feelings. It seems that when these feelings arose there was a brief shock that paralysed her and she turned these feelings inwards and briefly against her.

This theme is the only one that has sub-categorical themes similar to the main theme. While some participants clearly spoke about feelings of inexperience and incompetence, others used different vocabulary to describe what seemed to be similar feelings.

Helping Spaces

The first sub-theme related to the theme of Inexperience-Incompetence is Helping Spaces. All of the participants spoke about challenges and how they used different spaces such as supervision, groups and personal tutors. Supervision was the most common helping space, referred by all four participants followed by group supervision and personal tutorials with their professors or helpers on their training. All participants speak about taking the client material to the helping spaces and find it helpful.

Heroic Therapist

The concept of the Heroic Therapist came up in two interviews. One participant, Cate, while describing something else she asked me if I had heard of the Heroic Therapist which I had not. The participants describe this trait as their duty or obligation to fix people when in therapy and when there are intolerable feelings involved. This is a Heroic tendency where a person can transform an experience by fixing the situation. In both cases, this was not possible because their competence was challenged by working with clients who were bringing death issues. Both therapists did not know how to manoeuvre and facilitated an environment where they could feel competent. It is worth mentioning that death in therapy is seen as disempowering the therapist and they feel it as their duty to combat the notion of death by empowering their clients. Yalom [22] writes about the defence mechanism towards death when one feels special. He explains that sometimes we adopt a Compulsive Heroism that "permits one to control that which controls one". A therapist who adopts a heroic attitude in therapy creates an irony in the room because there is this belief that one is not afraid of nothing when actually one is afraid of nothingness [22].

Theory

Participants looked up into the symbolism between death and time and found theory helpful in that aspect. Yet, there is not any clear conceptualisation of how theory is helpful or how theory speaks

into the practice of death. According to Jane, there is an absence in theories [meaning Person-Centred and Psychodynamic theories] and death anxiety. We should keep in mind here that there is not any clear way of examining the questions and issues that death evokes to each person and subsequently to each therapist. In other words, there is an implied meaning that death is associated with something else (bereavement, suicide, fear of loss etc.) and when that feature is missing then the link with death is thought to be absent. Thus, death is only seen in a symbolic way to be associated with an issue.

Training

While Jane spoke at one point about her experience in her training and a death exercise they had but overall, she feels that death is a huge topic and was not covered thoroughly in her training. An important aspect here is that death in the training course is related to endings in therapy. While bereavement and loss have an implied different process. Although it is about death, bereavement and loss are to be dealt with differently than endings, or suicide as an issue in counselling. there is this expectation that theory and/or training will provide guidance and answers to specific issues, in this case, death issues and how to work with clients

Personal Experience with Death

All four participants in the interviews expressed personal experiences with death issues. Clare was thinking of committing suicide at one point in her life, while Cate was involved in a car accident and as an aftermath of that, she developed ideation that she would die in a car accident and young. Jane had severe panic attacks where the idea that she was dying was so certain that she had to call the ambulance each time she would have panic attacks. Marie's personal experience with death was about grief and terminal loss when a close relative was diagnosed with cancer. All participants had memories or flashbacks of their experiences while in the session with the clients. With the exception of Jane, the remaining three participants were working with clients who had similar confrontations with death.

5. Discussion

Therapeutic Frame – Boundaries

The participants described in different ways feelings of unbearable states when working with the clients who brought death issues. These unbearable states impacted their capacity to hold and think about boundaries. In fact, the participants seemed surprised that the loosening of the frame happened but were not interested to explore the matter and what was happening in themselves. According to the participants, the clients were not willing to engage in the process which in different ways led the participants to think that the clients were either not ready or scared. None of the interviewees had thought about the modified boundaries and death anxiety since all these clients were dealing with death issues. As a result, it was not put into perspective about what the therapeutic frame triggers and the client cannot stay with emerging feelings. In other words, what does the therapeutic frame do and prompt to clients that they find continuing therapy unbearable? It is possible that these feelings are mutual between therapist and client when working with death anxiety but the therapist is responsible for holding the boundaries. It seems that the participants were talking about what the clients brought in therapy in relation to death but were not willing to acknowledge that they were also bringing their own materials of death and potentially impacting the therapy.

Inexperience – incompetence

Working with clients who bring death anxiety made the participants think of their inexperience while some, such as Cate, had thoughts of incompetence

The pervasive aspect of death anxiety that was brought by clients made the therapists question their efficacy. Yet, it is important to note here that working with death anxiety made the participants question their experience and competence as practitioners which impacts the therapeutic frame described above

Lacocque and Loed [14] in their study found that therapists tend to think they are omnipotent and they can find a solution to any problem, this is particularly true for practitioners at the beginning of their career. When they feel challenged by an issue they avoid working with these clients because the question of being vulnerable and incompetent emerge while their insecurity for their job increases.

Personal Experience with Death

All participants had an experience with death and it is compelling that their respective clients were going through similar experiences with death. Although the participants were aware that they had these experiences, in some cases memories or thoughts emerged in the session, yet in the interviews there was not an indication that the participants had thought or reflected on it and what does their experience mean for their practice, if it means anything at all. There was a sense of “receding” (a phrase used by one interviewee) when personal experiences were explored. By “receding” I think that all these experiences that the participants had were lived but not reflected on later and were brushed under the carpet. The symptoms disappeared and there was not any apparent reason for revisiting something so painful and distressful. Bringing back these memories is to bring back states of mind that are challenging and difficult for the self as there is a possible ‘fear of breakdown’ that the person’s defences may collapse only to provide uncontrollable anxiety to the person [23]. Thus, no examination or reflection follows. However, for a therapist, this begs the question whether death issues should be explored before or during their practice in order to avoid cases where these memories emerge in the session and they are tangled and confused with the client’s materials.

6. Implications for Psychotherapy

It may be difficult for clients to speak about death anxiety and the degree that the clients may not be able to engage with all therapists may vary. The defensive strategies and mechanisms that clients are bringing should be considered and respected no matter the challenges they bring for the therapist [2]. Moreover, therapists and trainee-therapists should start thinking about death in more broad terms and not wait for the phenomenon to show itself in a descriptive narrative by the client. Discussing death is not an easy task however offering a supportive and constructive environment can encourage a creative session where death can be perceived as an active process rather than as an event that terminates a relationship, a job or a life. Additionally, clients who are hesitant to speak about death may feel the reluctance of the therapist to engage with the issue or the therapist engages in a rigid way that makes the client feel not heard. Hence, therapists should explore where they stand with their own death anxiety before or during therapy. Which takes us to another implication that is training. It is difficult to cover everything in a training course, yet, providing a broad examination of an issue such as death anxiety that provides flexibility in practice is important for training programmes.

All in all, I think that death anxiety and psychotherapy need further examination because it is a complicated issue that has been neglected for years since we thought we had come to an understanding, only to realise that it was a convenient narrative that secured our special position,

this narrative was not challenged by other disciplines (biology, medicine) have provided us with answers and hard facts. It is one thing knowing the facts, knowing that we will die at some point in the future, potentially very old which is a convenient and reassuring internal narrative; yet, it is another thing living with the knowledge that every day gets a little closer to the end.

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COLLABORATION AMONG RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE GENDER SENSITIVE INTERVENTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

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Abstract

The research presented in this paper has been designed in order to explore *gender* in educational services. The aim is not only to identify and focus on stereotypes, naturalization and culturalisation processes and their permanence but also to investigate gender matrix, implicit in the educational interventions as well as in the way practitioners are used to work for and with the users. The purpose is to understand whether and how gender culture influence the definition of educational needs and the structuring, the managing, the evaluation of the educational and social services and the dissemination of their work. In the thirty qualitative interviews conducted, participants were invited to explore both gender and educational problems (such as social exclusion, mental disease, disability etc., their educational services are designed for), trying to link them together and to reflect on *intersectional* understanding of gender and other axes of oppression. The aim of the research is to allow participants to reflect on gender as something that *is done* and not just a neutral biological dimension nor a simple variable. The acquisition of this lens in social and educational services can support practitioners at different levels: to implement educational tools and strategies to analyze and meet the users' needs and to enhance their capacity to take into account the lived experience of each person and the related different forms of oppression across a particular social context; not to confirm or reproduce mechanisms that create gender disadvantages through their interventions; and to use this knowledge in the interest of *social change* in developing more *gender sensitive* educational services and projects.

Keywords: gender, informal education, educational services.

8 INTRODUCTION

Within educational and social services, intervention models and practices – in their theoretical and applied dimensions – are characterised by *gender cultures* which matrix mainly are invisible, informal and not declared, unwittingly performed and reproduced [1]. Professionals that work in these fields are not sufficiently trained on gender education at university where gender studies are not yet widespread [2] but only exceptionally is taken into consideration in university courses. Moreover, with certain exceptions, gender education is lacking in the first and second level schools [3], where societal gender inequalities can be – intentionally or inadvertently – perpetuate through power relations within schools, pedagogy and portrayal of female and male roles in textbook and learning materials [4]. The misalignment between educational practices and theoretical knowledge, concerning the relationship between gender and education – a knowledge that has been

consolidated in the last forty years – invites to explore gender cultures which concretely live in educational services, considering gender a kind of *informal education* [5] that can influence the intentional educational projects, interventions and evaluations. In this frame, the use of a *gender lens* represents an opportunity for the exploration and for the analysis of gender practices acted in educational services at different levels, where become possible to survey and to examine them: from the level of the practitioners and users of educational services to the level of the social needs' analysis and the planning of educational interventions. At the same time, the complexity of the educational services scenario – correlated to the complexity and the heterogeneity of social phenomena – motivates to examine the *intersection* between gender and all different experiences connected to the social fragility (such as disability, addictions, poverty, different kind of discrimination and violence etc.) [6] to which educational interventions are dedicated. In these phenomena indeed, gender contributes in some ways to define people experiences differently for men and women (as causes as in effects), activating, at the same time, different kinds of needs and problems and, consequently, different pedagogical analysis, processes and interventions. For this reason, the exploration of gender practices becomes part of the sense and quality evaluation of the educational interventions to which this paper aims, among other, to contribute.

9 THE RESEARCH

The qualitative nature of this inquiry has been motivated by the previously mentioned lack of a conscious gender culture, which in fact is not acted and promoted consciously (subject to certain exceptions), together with the huge heterogeneity that characterized educational services from different points of view (for instance: the different users typologies and the different kinds of educational intervention promoted; the different professional profiles recruited; the secular or religious matrix of the educational services etc.). The *qualitative approach* chosen [7] allowed to explore gender and some of its dimensions in different educational services (that in particular working with children, adults, elders and also people with experience of migration, school drop-out, detention, addiction, mental disease and disability). It has been collected narratives and reflection of the practitioners that work in it between social policies' mandates, the users needs and the territorial contexts, exploring in this sense where gender is concretely *done* [8], is reproduced, is transformed materially and symbolically. This complexity has suggested to conduct *in depth semi-structured interview* useful to provide information pertaining to participant's viewpoints and experiences with regards the link between gender and education in their working activities. Interviews collected involved thirty participants: fifteen of whom with operational responsibilities and fifteen with coordinating and design responsibilities, both man and women in a ratio of 8:30. In the interviews frame, gender dimensions – which are present (knowingly or unknowingly) in daily educational practices – have been explored with particular regards to:

- the educational interventions promoted;
- the educational work with the users and the educational contexts (from the organizational level to the operative level of the single service or project promoted);
- the educational needs analysis and its role in the services planning (from the study of the link among need, problem and demand to the evaluation and redesign of the educational intervention).

In particular, participants were invited to explore at the same time both gender and educational problems (such as social exclusion, mental disease, disability etc., which their educational services

are designed for), trying to link them together and to reflect on their intersections and not just reductionist understanding of gender [9]. This have had the aim to explore the role that gender practices and gender's definitions play in the declination of the educational practices. This kind of approach aims not only to identify stereotypes and naturalisation and culturalisation processes, which has been confirmed in the recent pedagogical research [10]. The interviews allowed participants to express their views on the theme (for many for the first time), defining their theories on gender (naive or not) and the way to intend this concept in regard to the specificity of the educational intervention's contexts. This not only had permitted to reveal the presence of informal or not declared gender educational interventions but also had facilitated the understanding of what is perceived (or not perceived) priority or that can be omitted in the single educational services agenda: important suggestions in order to identify *levers and obstacles* for the training and the acquisition of analytical skills and of expertise of intervention which allows to use professionally the category of gender and its epistemological potential [11].

10 RESULTS

10.1 The resistance of gender stereotypes

The collected interviews recommended to continue giving attention to gender models and naive theories owned and acted by educators in their professional environment. The well-known issue of gender stereotypes – that educators not only (unwittingly) transmit but also encourage – is still present. In particular, the *problematic continuity* between these models and those who characterizing users has emerged in the interviews as an important theme. The absence of a systematic focus of these connections – which may concern in some cases a problematical consonance – could produce underground interferences with the educational projects, causing relapses that risk to contradict (or which could conflict with) the educational intentional mandate, without educators awareness. For example: how compatible is the belief that boys are, by their nature, more active than girls with educational and formative aims proposed in an identical manner for both? Which kinds of impact can produce the instrumental use of the authority of the male educator to tackle some problematic male users' behaviors? In some cases, the same structural dimensions of the educational services seem to communicate and strengthen a traditional gender order that conflicts or contradicts the educational aims linked (for example) to educational objectives like self-determination or freedom. In this sense, the total gender segregation that characterize some educational contexts (like nursery schools and kindergartens), as well as the female staff predominance (which concerns most of the educational services) foster the risk of care work naturalization. In particular, this occurs where the female professionals that work in these contexts consider the feminization the obvious consequence of their femininity. These material dimensions suggest the necessity to pay attention to the informal dimensions of the educational contexts that coexist with the intentional ones among the professional's theory on gender. Where a lack of attention is paid to the gender issue some other problems seem to emerge. In some of the collected interviews, this lack produces an obstacle to the achievement of a more complex comprehension of some phenomena. The analysis of users' needs shows in fact an obstruction of the targeting of potential users' portion (that could risk to be in this way marginalized or been forgotten, like their needs that risk to be still outstanding) and a reduction of the possibility to

understand and intervene in regard of the social vulnerability that is present nowadays. In fact, gender is connected with other axes of oppression and other social and personal dimensions, resulting a risk or protective factor, that require for this reason new key for understanding. However, as previously mentioned, in this inquiry many educational professionals reported (or only showed) to trying to facing and problematizing gender dimension within their job.

10.2 Gender sensitive educational practices

In some of the interviews collected, intentional educational interventions – that specifically gives attention to the gender dimension – has been relevated. They are present for example in contexts where social, cultural or religious differences make the gender reference model discrepancy clear. It occurs when to users with an Islamic religious background it seems impossible to accept the presence of a women which has an educative role in their regards; or when feminine self-determination aims are not comprehensible in some deprived suburbs; or even when there is a situation or episode of gender violence or gender discrimination that involve users. These, among others, are only some examples that show daily situations that educational equips have to face; they suggest to (and force to) some pedagogical reflections and new strategies. In some cases, an attention to gender dimension has been rilevated as an ordinary part of the educational intervention, even if is not explicitly present in the purposes of service and project. This attention takes the form of the clarification of the gender models of the users, the deconstruction of the stereotypes implicitly present in the way users consider male and female and the relationship between them. These kind of interventions have been mostly mentioned in the educational intervention with adolescent (Italian and migrant), where it assumed the form of a personal growth's support and, in particular, a problematization of which kind of man or woman they want, desire, imagine or suppose to become with a specific focus on the prevention to youth risk behaviors. Another kind of context in which a positive attention to gender dimension has been observed is where the professional segregation has not been interpreted as an obvious consequence of the sexual nature (feminine) of the professionals that work in it. Here as been appeared more clearly the potential formative value of the experience achieved on field by the professional and the margin of refining of their expertise. At the same time, has been occur the necessity to rethink the way that educational professionals and educational services usually consider the gender category, finding – consequently – new modality for the educational intervention and new ways to present and describe these intervention to the users. Some examples regarded has been: how to consider the role of caring if the professionals is a man or a woman? How introduce a man as an educator in a nursery school? And how manage the worries on this new presence expressed by parents or public administrator, provider of the service? In some of the interviews gender category stopped to be considered a fixed dimension and became to appear as a *pedagogical operational tool*, useful to rethink and promote new strategies for approaching less visible users and for communicating with them, focus new kind of needs, planning of *ad hoc* interventions. This interviews prove the great value of the practitioners' point of view. They can in fact observe gender (and doing gender) in the complexity of the social contexts, where it goes through life and educational story of single person, interweaving individuals, social, political and historical dimension. With this close examinations, practitioners can identify the important educative (informal) role of gender and its consequences, present – at the same time – at an individual and a collective level. This confirms that it's not enough to teach gender education to children. Indeed, in the educational services scenario, gender category should be part of a *personal*

and professional knowledge, constantly active, that requires to be introduced, reinforced and supported. But then, what's preventing the achievement of these aims?

10.3 Limits and opportunity

The research has revealed some of the possible factors that would considerably *limit* the opportunity – at a formative and an operative level – of a more competent use of gender category in educational contexts. At the same time, these factors could be considered as transformative *levers* through which it's possible to support a cultural change in educational services for the acquisition of more gender sensitive interpretative and operational approaches. The absence of a positive (namely conscious and critical) gender culture, inside the educational services and projects, produces different obstacles. First of all, the lack of theoretical references to this theme makes the removal of gender stereotypes very difficult; those – in fact – continuing their problematic impact against educational interventions, for example, by reducing the learning transformative expectations, interfering with the declared objectives and the educational practices and, more generally, by limiting the reflexivity and the control on the educational processes. The effects of stereotypes regard not only the way professional usually look at users and related educational processes but also themselves. Frequent is the consideration on the supposed intrinsic problematicity of a professional team only composed by women and on the generally preferably of the male presence. These beliefs undermine the women's professionalism and the recognition of their competences. It is remarkable that, paradoxically, these stereotypes make the choice of a more heterogeneous (for the co-existence of men and women) educational team pedagogically ineffective. Moreover, the poor awareness of the inter and multidisciplinary contribute that gender studies offer to the construction of new perspectives and interpretations useful for pedagogical analysis of social vulnerability results in the consideration of gender as an issue not prominent, sometimes important but always suspendable. Although at the end of the collected interviews, every person has considered as important to activate a reflection on the theme, it seems realistic consider that in-service trainings and workshops have no great value and usefulness where are extemporary. Also where a sensibility or some kind of attentions are paid to gender, the previously mentioned lack of theoretical references reduce the analytical and applicative potential of this category. In some interviews, gender has been considered only as a variable eventually useful to value the outcomes of educational interventions but not as a interpretative tool which can be applied in every single moment of the intervention (from planning to evaluation). In other cases, gender has been erroneously translated as an attention paid only to female users or as the reason for promoting distinct interventions for girls and boys, or men and women and, in this sense, (in some cases) rejected in the name of an educational approach aimed at equality. But where equality is confused with gender-neutral procedures, the possibility to pedagogically focus disadvantages and discrimination is prevented, and educational interventions could – in this way – implicitly reinforce these conditions. Another consequence is the capacity to pay attention to gender dimension only when it's seen as something urgent or problematic (as in the cases of gender violence or gender discrimination), or necessary (as in the case of the sexual growing processes of pre-adolescents and adolescents), and to forget it in the daily life, notably when people involved are little children or elderly people, people with an experience of disability or mental distress etc. The lack of a scientific knowledge doesn't supports the educational intervention daily promoted as some of interesting experimentation on gender dimension presented in the interviews. Indeed, as some educators have declared, in these cases it's difficult to understand what has failed and what has worked. If the evaluation is always a problematic question that regards educational processes – considering the complexity of the variables that intervene – without a clear cognition of what gender is and how it works, it risks to appears a dimension totally out of an educational control and,

paradoxically, problematically closer to naturalization and normalization processes. Knowledge linked to the produced experimentations seems unable to exceed the threshold of a first intuition. In some collected interviews for example, has seemed clear to professionals that most problematic life conditions affect more women than men with experiences of addiction or detention. However in some cases has been difficult for them to understand the reasons of these conditions or to try to apply a gender analysis to the educational needs linked to these conditions, trying to produce a better comprehension and – maybe – a more effective strategy of intervention. Summarizing, in recognition and problematization of gender dimension different levels of competences has appeared. In these terms, personnel selection and the choice of the reference educative figure for users are emblematic examples. Indeed, behind the selection of a man or a woman has been presented different kinds of arguments. Some of these has been drawn upon competences naturalisation: the selection a man or a women as educator represents already a response to the educational needs. Others take into consideration gender as a cultural dimension. Consequently, proposing male or female educators is intended to represent the respect of the differences among the users, the necessity to come into contact with some of them, otherwise unapproachable, but also the difficulties in transforming the gender contents of their culture, where they conflict with democratic principles. Regard of the sex of the professionals, only in few cases has been evaluated the hypothesis that what matters is their competence in the managing of the gender dimension in the educative relationship and educative processes. Where a gender sensibility has been relevated, equally presented has been an awareness about the limits that cultural, social and political contexts can impose to educational interventions aimed to challenge gender order. Practitioners involved in the inquiry referred for example how it's difficult – in the educational intervention with young girls – problematizing and deconstructing gender stereotypes, trying to demonstrate their presence and their informal educational power where the spread gender culture doesn't offer symbolic or material alternatives, credible and feasible for them. Another example has been regarded the resistances (explicit or implicit) of the funding public bodies or their oppositions to project proposals that try to introduce a new gender perspective in educational services (as in the case of a male professional presence in an educational service dedicated to little children). Moreover, in several interviews has been reported that is not present a system of incentive planned for ensuring and promoting gender sensitive approach in educational services. In this way appears difficult at the same time imagine a verification and a monitoring of these services and their interventions and the highlighting and the capitalizing of data, analysis and sperimental interventions that come from the field. Indeed, public contracting authorities, as some social policies, don't have sufficient sensitivity on this theme [12]. Finally, it should be noted scarcity and discontinuity of the economic resources that interest educational non formal system in the Italian context. The short-term that characterize educational interventions funded limits the possibility to transform experimentations in knowledge and competences. The same discontinuous funding regards the promoting of a gender sensitive posture.

11 CONCLUSION

An attention to gender dimension should be part of the education dedicated to new generation but, at the same time, should be part of the formation of a new generation of professionals that will work in the field of education, from school to the non-formal educational system. As previously reminded, gender exists as a part of (and in intersection with others dimensions and aspects) of the social phenomena, contributing – as a social structure – to their reproduction and transformation. In this sense, it can be seen as a formative experience – which has a mainly social nature [13] – that gives its (potentially problematic) contribution to the definition of different and unequal living

conditions which have educational impact – qualitatively different – on the feminine and masculine life stories [14]. For researchers and practitioners become urgent to consider that gender intentional educational interventions doesn't exist in an educational vacuum – which requires only to be filled – but that coexists with this kind of informal education. Educational services represent context through which gender informal education can be observed, explicated, deconstructed, contradicted, by offering the opportunities to understand its contribution to the production and reproduction of social inequalities and to intervene in interrupting it or trying to transform it. For all these reasons, it is fundamental a research that involve practitioners – actively and critically – on the theme of relationship between gender and education. In this way it seems possible to contribute to an in service gender formation using the competences and the knowledge of the practitioners that work in close contact with the specificity and the complexity of the social and relational contexts, as with the concrete gender experiences of the users. As just reminded, educational services are frames where gender *is done* and where it can be done intentionally in a different way. This kind of research can:

- help to illuminate *connections* between gender and educational practices;
- help practitioners to identify *contradictions* among their implicit models and theories on gender and educational interventions' objectives, and to move to a better exploration of the educational needs in order to achieve a more coherent definition (and redefinition) of services;
- help third sector organizations to acquire a more *gender sensitive approaches* (in their services and projects but also in their organizational culture);
- help to develop a gender sensitive approach, becoming at the same time to be able to communicate it to a *political and cultural level*.

In this sense, a research which has the aim to investigate only gender stereotypes that are present in the educational sector is insufficient and inadequate. At the same time, the double focus on the involvement of the practitioners and the gender informal education prevents the research from the risk to promote a naively interpretation of gender dimension in educational services, by forgetting the complexity and the different kinds of limits that educators have to face for the develop of more gender oriented approaches. The attentions to the field remind the necessity but also the fragility of the interventions towards gender education, placed in a frame with a political and economical support discontinuous and inadequate, in which are called to challenge a widespread gender order made of stereotypes and discrimination.

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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING ASSUMPTION IN ANTI-RACIST EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY OF A NORTH EDINBURGH COMMUNITY.

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Abstract

This paper for the 2019 European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry conference responds to the theme of 'Qualitative Inquiry as Activism' by questioning assumptions made in recent and historical anti-racist educational practice within the UK. A retrospective analysis on the author's 2016 research findings on adult perspectives regarding the use of association football in challenging racism and xenophobia in north Edinburgh, this paper opens with a detailed consideration of anti-racist educational initiatives currently taking place in Scotland, before considering the importance of avoiding assumption regarding what works in anti-racist educational practice. In particular, this research presents the results of twenty-eight qualitative interviews with residents (from twenty-two countries) currently living in north Edinburgh.

Conducted primarily through the author's position within a Pilton-based community project, participants came from a broad range of cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, and thus represented a broad cross-section of the contemporary north Edinburgh community (Carrell, 2013; ELREC, 2015; Carlin, 2017). Whilst several research participants were lifelong local residents, of those who had moved to Edinburgh during their adult life, without exception, each was able to recount numerous tales of racist incidents. Thus, this research examined both awareness of contemporary anti-racist initiatives in Scotland - and in particular, those seeking to utilise the profile of association football (Giulianotti et al., 2015) - as well as encouraging the research participants to consider how community educators might best challenge xenophobic attitudes.

This paper responds to the findings from this north Edinburgh community by addressing the need for adult anti-racist education initiatives to be more precisely in how they engage with adult learners. It questions the factors contributing to both the effectiveness and limitations of association football-centred anti-racist education, questioning the contribution such

projects can make dependent on factors such as age, gender, and cultural background.

Keywords: Anti-racism, Edinburgh, community

1 INTRODUCTION

Responding to the ECQI2019 conference theme of ‘Qualitative Inquiry as Activism’, this paper questions assumptions within recent anti-racist educational practice in the UK. Serving as a retrospective analysis of the author’s 2016 research findings concerning adult perspectives on utilising association football in challenging racism and xenophobia in north Edinburgh, the paper opens by considering anti-racist educational initiatives currently taking place in Scotland before investigating assumptions over the capacity of football to serve as an effective medium in anti-racist educational practice. In particular, this research presents the results of twenty-eight qualitative interviews with residents (from twenty-two countries) currently living in north Edinburgh.

1.1 Research Context

Understanding that (prior to ‘Brexit’) immigration and therefore ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity within the UK would continue to rise Chongatera’s [1] observation of higher recorded incidents of hate crime in more diverse communities indicates pressing need for anti-racism education. Breaking with traditional learning models which are evidently failing to address rising levels of hate crime and intolerance, alternative mediums should be sought. As observed by Willmott [2], Henri and Pudelko [3], and Gewirtz [4], ‘communities of interest’ - understood as ‘people assembled around a topic of common interest’ - often transcend differences such as language, race, and religion [5]. This paper positions association football as that common interest.

1.1.1 Conducting the Research

Conducted primarily through the author’s position within a community health project, participants came from a range of cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds - thus representing a broad cross-section of north Edinburgh communities (Carrell [6]; ELREC [7]; Carlin [8]). Whilst several research participants were lifelong local residents, others moving to Edinburgh during their adult life, without exception, each recounted numerous tales of witnessing or experiencing racist incidents regardless of their own ethnic background - echoing [1] and Kennedy [9]. This research examined awareness of contemporary football-centric anti-racist initiatives in the Scotland [10] and encouraged participants to consider how community educators might best challenge xenophobic attitudes.

1.1.2 Research Premise

The research considered the effectiveness of anti-racist education initiatives from organisations including Show Racism the Red Card and the Spartans Community Football Academy [11; 12; 13] - both of which conduct their educational work through football-related activities. This 2016 qualitative inquiry examined the appropriateness of this form of engagement amongst adult populations in north Edinburgh, primarily with those from non-UK backgrounds, questioning the factors contributing to the effectiveness and limitations of these activities. Given increased attention on racism within current Scottish football (including abuse towards Mbule [14], bans for Edinburgh-based supporters [15], and use of ‘blackface’ by Robson [16]) - this research is perhaps more timely now than in 2016.

2 RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY & POSITIONALITY

In contextualising the research project, it is essential to understand the positionality of the researcher [17]. Accounting for academic, personal, and professional perspectives, the following subsection examines the author's relationship to the research topic, geographical area, and research participants.

2.1 Academic, Professional, & Personal Relationships

2.1.1 Academic

The research analysed in this conference paper was produced whilst on placement with the Pilton Community Health Project (PCHP) during the final year of the BA Hons Community Education programme at the University of Edinburgh. Since graduating, many of the researcher's academic projects have focused on the same north Edinburgh communities - addressing social activism, citizenship, and understandings of minority ethnic communities. In addition, further research [13; 18] has built on professional experiences with anti-racism organisation Show Racism the Red Card Scotland.

2.1.2 Professional

Moving to Edinburgh for the aforementioned degree programme, the author's relationship with north Edinburgh commenced through a second year placement with LGBT Youth Scotland in 2013. Subsequently placements and paid practice involved the Pilton Equalities Project, Muirhouse Youth Development, and LinkLiving. Upon graduation the author undertook an internship with Show Racism the Red Card Scotland.

2.1.3 Personal

Since 2012, the author has, at times, resided in the north and north-western areas of Edinburgh - relocating permanently to West Pilton in June 2017. Circa 2013, he participated in canvassing and door-to-door discussions through the Radical Independence Campaign in advance of the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum.

3 PRECEDENT

3.1 Football as an Educational Medium

3.1.1 In North Edinburgh

Association football already serves as an educational tool to support social inclusion and community cohesion in north Edinburgh. Giulianotti et al. [19] note that football is 'simple in its principal rules and essential equipment [and] can be played almost anywhere'. Organisations such as The Spartans Community Football Academy (SCFA; the community division of Spartans Football Club) and the Multi-Cultural Family Base (MCFB) offer football-related activities as part of their educational, physical activity, or youth work programmes [20]; [21]). Based at Ainslie Park, Pilton, SCFA offer several initiatives of relevance to this research - among them, the FooTEA Clubs (run on Thursday and Friday evenings) and the Welcoming Club (offered on Sunday afternoons). Part of their youth work provision, the FooTEA Club offer young people aged seven to fifteen years old the opportunity

to participate in 'multi-sport activities, games or relax and hang out in the youth work space' ([20]), with a healthy meal served to all attendees. SCFA also utilises the FooTEA Club sessions as an opportunity to signpost participants towards 'mainstream youth work and support services that they may not otherwise know about' [20]. The Thursday sessions are specifically targeted towards 'children from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds' [20], however details of the precise methods used in encouraging attendance from children of minority ethnic communities are not apparent from the SCFA website. The Welcoming Club supports a slightly older demographic (ten years old through to age eighteen), however this service is specifically geared towards young people from Edinburgh's Syrian community. In addition, through their Scoring a Goal for Inclusion initiative, MCFB partners with several local football clubs to provide a pathway into structured football for young people from minority ethnic communities [22; 23].

3.1.2 In Ranging Contexts

Football also provides the educational medium for other projects, both physically and non-physically demanding, including adult literacy at Glory and Dismay [24; 25]; social inclusion via The Homeless World Cup [26]; crime reduction through the Bank of Scotland Midnight Leagues [27]; and The Football Memories Project [28]. SCFA even provide a football-centric oral health programme for primary school children entitled Spartans Smilers. That many of these football-related educational initiatives do not demand physical participation is essential in utilising the profile of the sport given that Seefeldt [29] found 'fewer than 40% of adults in the Western world' regularly participate in sport. Though individuals often support specific football teams - at times creating a 'us' and 'them' divide [10] - football as a sport undoubtedly creates what Hoggett [30] understands as a non-place specific form of community. Indeed, the sport's governing body FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), estimate that upwards of 250 million football players are officially registered in part-time or full-time capacities, with a further 1.3 billion people believed to be 'interested in football' [31]. In addition, a majority of football-related revenue has consistently been generated in Europe [32], suggesting a significant level of interest in the sport from those living in Scotland. Furthermore, SPFL Insider [33 cited 18] found that one in forty-eight people in Scotland attend a live professional football match in an average weekend, with further fans participating, watching, or gambling on the sport.

3.1.3 Scotland-wide

Finally, Show Racism the Red Card Scotland, founded in 1996, conduct anti-racism education in schools through Scotland, working with young people whom they believe 'are still developing value systems' [12]. This approach is in-keeping with Patel [34] and Brown [35] who both stressed the 'need to develop anti-racist practice in all communities, whether or not they are predominantly white'. Though arguably the most consistent anti-racist education body in Scotland, early incarnations of learning content identified Germans and Muslims as the two most disliked groups in society. This, was a failing of the educational resources to remain relevant [18]. The materials were dated, arguably even biased towards producing the results it did. Practitioners (across all fields) cannot operate under the assumption that what worked ten or twenty years ago will be as effective or indeed as relevant to learners today. [11] stressed the importance of acknowledging difference and working within education contexts where varied experience, backgrounds, and knowledge are understood. To ignore the difference, they suggest, would 'only serve to allow racism to operate under the radar of football authorities and potentially, anti-racist groups' [11]. This demonstrates the need for educational content that actively seeks to challenge xenophobia to remain relevant to contexts on contemporary Scotland.

4 ABOUT THE PROJECT

4.1 (i) Racism in North Edinburgh; (ii) PCHP; (iii) Positive Images; and (iv) Research Participants

In 2016, as is arguably still the case in 2018, the political far-right enjoyed a rise in popularity [36], with the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) winning their first seat during the 2016 European Parliamentary Election [37]. Public, political, and media discourse largely centred on anti-immigration with the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union set for just a few months later, with the Scottish Refugee Council [38] noting that 'a majority of the British population would like to reduce overall migration numbers'. Similar right-wing ideological movements were occurring throughout Europe during the same period [39] including Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austria), Front Nationale (France), Lega Nord (Italy), Perussuomalaiset (Finland), and the Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden). Citing former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's 'worry that newcomers would 'swamp' the local people and their [British] culture', Yuval-Davis [40] noted that resistance towards multiculturalism and increased cultural diversity in UK politics had been building for many decades. It was in this context that the Positive Images Campaign was conceived. This subsection addresses four core elements of the research by providing context through a brief history of racism in north Edinburgh, and a profile of the PCHP. In addition, it offers insight into the Positive Images Campaign through which the dissertation research was made possible. The section concludes by providing details of the twenty-eight research participants including country of origin, stated gender, self-described nationality, and information regarding the age of the respondents.

4.1.1 Racism in North Edinburgh

Chongatera [1] observed that communities with high ethnic diversity generally recorded higher levels of racially and religiously motivated hate crimes - ranging from verbal harassment to acts of violence. Despite the common misconception that Scotland is free of racism [41], acts prior to the 2016 research (e.g. racially-motivated attacked [42]) and since (e.g. the murder of Shabaz Ali [43]), counter national rhetoric [44]. Indeed, [7] evidenced that Edinburgh North and Leith recorded the highest number of race-related hate crimes in Edinburgh, with three-hundred-and-fifty-four reported incidents between April 2014 and March 2015. The constituency also recorded the second highest number of religiously-motivated hate crimes [7]. In addition, the Muirhouse Anti-racist Campaign [45] was a community response to 'the rise of racial harassment in the Muirhouse area'. Demonstrating Weber's [46] observation that 'those who are obviously different are avoided and despised or [...] viewed with superstitious awe', [45] sought to support local residents from migrants and minority ethnic communities by developing anti-racism education resources that were 'developed directly out of the experiences of the community'.

4.1.2 Pilton Community Health Project

Scotland's oldest community health project [47], the PCHP has supported communities in north Edinburgh since 1984. Currently operating with a staff of circa forty paid workers and around thirty-five volunteers [48], workers support communities in Greater Pilton - an area encompassing neighbourhoods such as Muirhouse, West Pilton, Granton, and Drylaw. These neighbourhoods fall within the 10% most deprived communities in Scotland [49]. Major characteristics of the area include upwards of 19.3% of residents having been born outside of Scotland [50; 6], and 9.1% of the population used a language other than English at home. Whilst Calhoun [51] notes that 'national identities were once taken largely for granted in social science', he observes that 'they are [now] part of an even more complexity 'politics of belonging'' - echoing similar observations [40]. With

Cohen [52], and George et al. [53] emphasising that individuals from minority ethnic community often already face additional barriers in accessing the labour market including language [54; 55] and stigma [56; 57]. Molnar [58], Haskvitz [59] and Barkley [60] also stress that family values influence young people's perceptions of difference. At the time of writing, mid-December 2018, PCHP faces an imminent cut of its entire core operating system funding [48]. At present, unless protest efforts are successful in overturning the recommendation of the Integrated Joint Board for health and social care the health project will cease operations in March 2019 [47; 61].

4.1.3 Positive Images

Intended to mimic the qualitative and highly conversational style of Humans of New York [62] at a local level, the Positive Images Campaign sought to challenge the right-wing narratives of 'the other', which Yuval-Davis [40] suggests has 'tended to dominate our recent political and social history'. Informed by Marshall and Rossman [63], as well as Lincoln and Guba [64], the research sought to explore the recent lived experiences of local residents. Negotiations with the PCHP management team permitted the researcher to introduce additional questions at the end of the interview process which related specifically to the dissertation project.

4.1.4 Research Participants

Project participants were generally identified through the PCHP Chat Cafe. Born in a total of twenty-two countries, many held dual nationality status. The countries of birth included Scotland (two), England, Libya, Eritrea, Poland (three), China, France (three), Egypt, Romania, Nigeria, Gambia, Pakistan, Algeria, (now South) Sudan, Guinea, India, the U.S., Portugal, Italy, the Dominican Republic, Sweden, Singapore, and the Philippines. Six self identified either as Scottish or British (exclusively or in combination with another nationality, e.g. Pakistani-Scottish), regardless of what their passport stated. Seven were aged twenty-five years old or under; seven were also between twenty-six and thirty-five; six were thirty-six to forty-five, another six were forty-six to fifty-five, and just two were aged fifty-six or older. Finally, thirteen identified as male, fifteen were female, and no participants selected 'other' for their gender.

5 CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

5.1 Purpose & Methodology

5.1.1 Purpose

Produced on the back of the Scottish Government's [65] Creating a Fairer Scotland initiative, the dissertation research centred on the dual ambitions of 'feel[ing] safe no matter where I go', and for a society in which 'where you are born, where you live, and who you are doesn't stop you having the opportunity to reach your full potential'. Indications from The Knowledge Exchange's [9] focus group had recently revealed that many residents in the Edinburgh North and Leith UK Parliamentary constituency did not feel safe in their local community - with hate crime a key concern. This research examined assumptions over the effectiveness and appropriateness of conducting anti-racism education through football-related activities.

5.1.2 Methodology

Based primarily in the weekly Chat Cafe - a joint venture between PCHP and the North Edinburgh Timebank - the research involved twenty-eight one-to-one qualitative interviews with cafe attendees and other local people who volunteered their time. The researcher was already present most weeks at the Chat Cafe as part of the agreed degree course placement programme, and had

therefore developed pre-existing relationships with many of the research participants prior to commencing the research project. The inquiry involved semi-structured discussion. A series of demographics questions were asked regarding gender, age, country of birth, and ethnic identity, before a discussion of life in north Edinburgh, followed by a prompt specifically on association football towards the end of each discussion. The football centric questions were multiple choice ('yes', 'no', and 'not sure' in response to 'Can football help promote social inclusion and / or help reduce racism?'); with a follow-up question regarding the impact it could have in reducing xenophobia - 'high', 'noticeable', 'minimal', and 'none'.

6 RESEARCH FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Summaries

6.1.1 Concerns Over Political Hijacking

The 2016 research noted efforts by Police Scotland to increase public awareness of what constitutes a hate crime and the multiple ways to report it would, if successful, lead to a rise in the number of reported hate crimes in Scotland. This would in the long term increase the likelihood of individuals who witness or are subjected to a hate crime reporting the incident, however, so too it could easily be hijacked by opposition parties in government contexts - placing successful racism reduction programmes at risk. ELREC [7] stated that north Edinburgh already had the highest rate of hate crime across all protected characteristics. Given that all research participants stated during their interviews that they had either witnessed or been subjected to a racist attack, the awareness raising and educational initiatives were necessary - particularly for recent migrants or those with limited English language skills. Several participants disclosed that they had experienced what they would now understand to constitute a hate crime, however none of these incidents had been reported to local authorities. This demonstrates a significant absence from statical evidence and official hate crime records, but also revealed that very of the participants felt confident in how to report their experience. It also meant that each of the victims received no support in the aftermath of their experiences.

6.1.2 Awareness of Provision

Awareness of services available for young people, such as the aforementioned FooTEA Clubs and the Welcoming Club, was discussed with interviewees, however whilst a handful of participants were aware of SCFA, none had participated in their activities. None of the respondents were of age to participate in the FooTEA Clubs (with the age capped at fifteen), however two participants were aged eighteen or under and would therefore have been eligible for the Welcoming Club had they come from a Syrian background. In this particular study, however, none of the twenty-eight people interviews were Syrian, though one participant, a seventeen year old from Eritrea (east Africa) had arrived in Scotland as a refugee. It is worth noting that that historically, the Eritrea Government's programme of forced military conscription causes a significant proportion of the population to seek refugee in neighbouring nations [66 ; 67]; whilst Geoghegan [68] notes that in 2015, 'Eritreans accounted for the largest group applying for asylum in the UK, with more than 3,700 applicants.'

6.1.3 Appropriateness of Football as an Educational Medium

The research findings also echoes observations regarding the popularity of association football in Europe, with 69% of European born respondents stating that football could help in promoting social exclusion and challenging racism in Scotland. By contrast, none of the five participants raised in Asia

believed football could have a positive impact in combating xenophobia. With the 2011 Scottish Census [50] placing 'Asian' as the largest minority ethnic population in Scotland with 141,000 people, this result could become significant if representative of a larger sample size. Taank [69], Aarons [70] and Rodrigues [71] already note the limited engagement in association football from people of Asian backgrounds. The gender-based results were interesting, with a slightly higher number of women (73%) responding positively, compared to 62% male. This could relate to experience of participating in other sports in countries where association football is not the dominant sport [60]. It therefore also counters the suggestion that 'football is an international language known to all' [26]; therein countering the assumption that football serves as an effective medium for anti-racism education. Younger people were also more likely to believe that football could be a force for good with aggregated results suggesting 81.7% of respondents aged forty-five years old or under responding positively; compared to just 41.5% of those aged forty-five and over.

6.1.4 Other Emergent Themes

Several other themes emerged during the football-specific element of the conversations. Many of the participants stated that whilst it was not uncommon to walk through green spaces (e.g. West Pilton Park) and witness children, and occasionally adults, playing football in the evenings or at weekend, a casual observation was that it was rare to see more than one child from an ethnic minority community participating. This casual observation may suggest children from ethnic minority communities are less likely to participate in association football in public spaces than through formally organised programmes. Consensus across the interviews was also that adult communities were less likely to be homogeneously white, whilst no participants recalled seeing women playing football locally. Though a casual observation dire under resourcing of women's football in Scotland is increasingly acknowledged [72]. It is therefore important to note that SCFA currently offer gender-specific sessions through their Girls Only Club, Little Miss Kickers, and Senior Miss Kickers programmes [73].

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Findings

7.1.1 Limited Provision & Continued Barriers

The research undertaken at PCHP revealed that engaging adult populations in anti-racist educational conversation is relatively straightforward. Many of the research participants had lived experience of witnessing or being subjected to racist or discriminatory incidents, however these issues became apparent only as a result of the semi-structured interviews. The Scottish Football Association acknowledge many of the barriers to engaging in association football, including 'a lack of role models', 'a lack of resources', and 'disadvantages at various levels (health, housing, employment and education)'. Opportunities to engage with physical and dialogical learning opportunities, related to sport or not and whether orientated towards anti-racism or not, will both be largely dependent on the removal or reduction of the barriers cited by the SFA. At present, SCFA and MCFB both offer provision for young people in north Edinburgh that challenges these barriers to engagement, whilst also fully acknowledging the element of difference. Whilst this research concluded that there is a mixed level of enthusiasm for football-related anti-racist education, awareness of such learning opportunities is also low. Where such provision does exist, to date, it appears limited.

7.1.2 Rhetoric & Awareness

With the then-Minister for External Affairs and International Development Humza Yousaf (2013) suggesting that 'Scotland has had a long history of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers from all over the world', programmes such as the Welcoming Club - along with other initiatives such as United Glasgow Football Club and the Scottish Unity Football League's Annual Refugee Festival Football Tournament - demonstrate efforts to utilise associate football as a unifying and cross-cultural interest, which can serve as the starting point for social inclusion and anti-racism initiatives. A major factor that may limit the success football-related anti-racism initiatives is, within the research participant base, awareness of services such as the FootEA Clubs and the Welcoming Club already offered by SCFA in north Edinburgh. However, we must also ask, how do we define success - long term reduction in hate crime? How does this marry up with the expected increase in reported hate crime that awareness raising campaigns will surely result in? With suggestions from the Yousaf (2013) that 'it is [Scotland's] diversity that makes us stronger and more competitive as a nation', Bilali (2012) stresses that anti-racism education cannot become 'assimilationist' in their educational approach. The FootEA Clubs and the Welcome Club both emphasise the involvement or catering of services towards particular minority ethnic or cultural communities in north Edinburgh.

7.1.3 Opportunities

Thus, initiatives geared towards adult populations should be encouraged. The Adult Learning Project's Multicultural Study Circle brought together adult learners from nine different countries of origins as it sought to 'promote a non-judgemental attitude towards ethnic minorities, to develop harmonic relations between different cultural groups in society and to cultivate a sense of social inclusion and justice' (Norrie and Abdelhay, 2016). Projects such as these, Norrie and Abdelhay (2016) suggest, as a response to the 'enlarged presence of diverse ethnicities [in Scotland]'. At 19.3% [50], almost one in five residents in North Edinburgh and Leith were born outside of Scotland, compared to the Scotland-wide average of 7%. Educational spaces such as the Multicultural Study Circle may serve as 'dialogical site[s]', providing the space for '(re)constructing of social identities in Edinburgh' (Norrie and Abdelhay, 2016), which could perhaps be more age-appropriate for many adults than sporting contexts centred around physical activity. As demonstrated by the Glory and Dismay adult literacy classes [24], association football can however serve as a talking point for adult learning. In addition, the increasing popularity of Walking Football in Scotland (Maxwell, 2018) may yet permit the physical activity side of the sport to create shared experiences and encourage positive relationships between people from varied communities.

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Develop Meaning Making Through Aesthetigrams: A Case Study of a Chinese Art Student in College

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Abstract

This paper investigates the development of the meaning making process of a college art student in China through the qualitative research application of aesthetigrams proposed by White (1998). Aesthetigram is a strategy, based in phenomenology, to help college students raise awareness during an aesthetic encounter. Students are guided to record their ephemeral experiences with a work of art through a visual map. They can examine the experiential moments of the encounter, through categorization and their interrelatedness as addressed in White (2009). The teacher as facilitator guides students to construct their own diagrams and search for their own meaning making process. The view of an active meaning-making process of the learner is well supported in educational research (see Bruner, 1996; Dewey, 1929/1960; and Rogoff, 1990). Through attention to fine-grained qualitative distinctions, aesthetigrams support a qualitative research approach of reporting case study findings.

Due to the rigid educational system, Chinese students are asked to obey what the authorities say and only look for a “correct” answer, including in the field of art, before entering college. They tend not to trust their own feelings, observations and ways of thinking while encountering with a work of art. White’s (2007, 2011) study of the use of aesthetigrams has proven to facilitate students’ sophistication of perception, reflections on their values, and their interest in artworks, but the participants are not college students. In this research, I apply this more systematic approach, aesthetigrams, in teaching to examine how students’ meaning making process develops in response to a work of art.

The research is based on the workshop of aesthetigrams with four college art-majors. The case study presented here provides two clusters of data. One is based on three visits to a work of art in museum. The other is based on three visits to a work of art online. The case study will examine how meanings are constructed from aesthetic encounters, how the process evolves, and then compare the two clusters of data, and study the issues that can be encountered by teachers and students. The research is also an evaluation of my own teaching with the intention to improve my pedagogical and curricular practice as it comes to inspire aesthetic experience. Hopefully, it can further offer insights into the application of aesthetigrams in a larger classroom context..

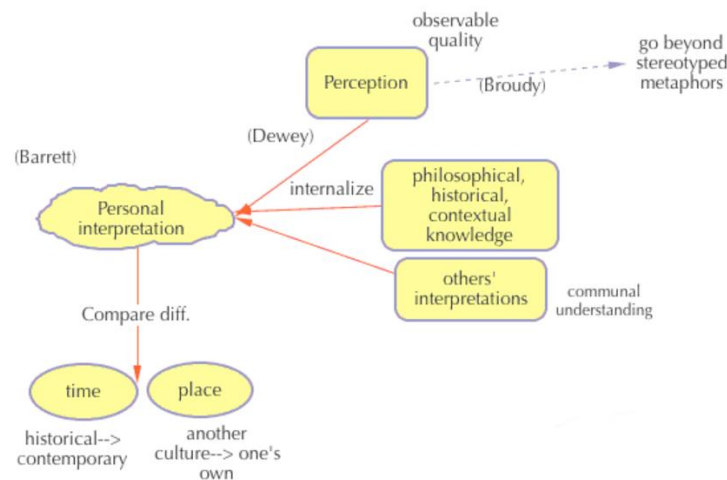
Keywords: meaning making, art experience, aesthetic learning, aesthetigram.

12 INTRODUCTION

12.1 Theoretical Framework

Aesthetic experience is a complex issue, which, from micro-perspectives, involves personal experiences and backgrounds, and in macro-perspectives, involves cultural and social values. Broudy (1972) claims that the cultivation of perception is the very first and essential step in aesthetic education. Based on responding to sensory quality, Dewey (1934/1959) claims that art criticism should evoke the viewer’s personal interpretation of the sensuous experience and also create an awareness of cultural influences. Art is not a static object but a *live creature*, which needs to be experienced. Appreciation of art involves understanding of and insight into human life. Similarly, Barrett (2003) thinks that art cannot always be fully comprehended exclusively through perception. We also need to gain the contextual information of art to achieve a comprehensive process of art appreciation, especially when the art is from other times and differing cultures. In order to comprehensively appreciate and interpret art, one also needs to seek “communal understanding of works of art” and make “personal meaning from aesthetic objects,” (Barrett, 2003, p. 135) which responds to Dewey’s (1934/1959) concepts of art criticism. The diagram below indicates the process of the aesthetic experience addressed here.

Figure 1: Diagram of aesthetic experience



Aesthetigram is the combination of the words aesthetics and diagram. It is a strategy of visual mapping that was proposed by White (1998), and aims to facilitate viewers’ awareness and deepen viewers’ connections and understandings while encountering a work of art. The visual mapping can record the moment-to-moment perceptions, feelings and thoughts, which are fleeting, sometimes wordless and can be hard to capture. However, these moments compose the meaning-making process in aesthetic experiences. The process of mapping also helps the participants later revisit those feelings and thoughts, analyse and organize them into different categories for further interpretation. The tactics consists of five-step continuous process: (1) encounter with a work of art, (2) note writing, (3) aesthetigram design, (4) comparison to Jones’s (1979) model, (5) text writing (White, 2013).

The visual mapping process indicates an approach of meaning-making, which has been a significant thought in constructivism. Bruner (1996), Dewey (1929/1959) and Rogoff (1990) advocate that the learner is an active participant in the construction of knowledge rather than a passive recipient of information. Additionally, Rogoff (1990) and Vygotsky (1978) suggest that interacting with an experienced partner can enhance understanding. Therefore, the constructivist pedagogy advocates a guided and active participation. The teacher as facilitator guides students to construct their own visual map as in this case study and explore their own meaning making process. The teacher and students co-construct the learning environment as Eisner (2002) proposes, and create an interactive and dialogic process. Education should focus on cultivating students' abilities to observe carefully, think critically and independently, and also cultivate their flexibility in dealing with problems. Instead of remembering "facts" (a questionable assertion), students will benefit more from probing how we know the facts and why we believe those facts (Taber, 2010).

12.2 Workshop

Through several studies by White (1998, 2009, 2013), aesthetigrams have been proven to be an effective strategy for promoting aesthetic encountering for college students and pre-service teachers from Northern American and European culture. I find this strategy intriguing and might be an effective tool for Chinese students, too. However, there is little research of aesthetigram done for Chinese college-level students. I would like to incorporate this strategy in teaching and investigate students' learning experiences. The rationale for this research project is: (a) to examine how Chinese students achieve meaning-making through aesthetic experiences, and (b) to investigate the culture factors involved in the meaning-making process in aesthetic experiences. The investigation can further address important cultural and pedagogical concerns for teaching and learning about aesthetic encounters. I hope it can bring a better understanding of the value of aesthetic education in Chinese education at the college level, which has usually been underestimated.

In order to better understand students' responses to the aesthetigram approach before implementing it in a large classroom, I started a workshop with a small case study group composed of four volunteer college art majors. If the process is effective in a small group, it can be reasoned that it might work for a larger group. I also examined the cultural concerns about the use of aesthetigrams and how to adjust the method to better-fit Chinese students' needs. I encouraged the volunteers to reflect on the activities in the workshop. They were not just a test group but also collaborators for this trial.

13 METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this case-study is qualitative as defined by White (2013). It relies on phenomenology as the experiential moments and the visual maps recorded and organized by the selected participant are used as data for analysing his meaning-making process. The data and findings are analysed by me and reviewed by a team composed of one college art instructor and one design PhD candidate. There are two clusters of data. One is based on three visits to a work of art online, and the other is based on three visits to a work of art in gallery. The visits to online artworks were considered as a beforehand practice of aesthetigram process for the gallery visit. Since the work in gallery we planned to visit is an audiovisual installation, the online works I choose for the participants to pick up are mostly installations. I asked them to choose one work, and recommended that they make three visits to the work as White (2013) suggests. I anticipated

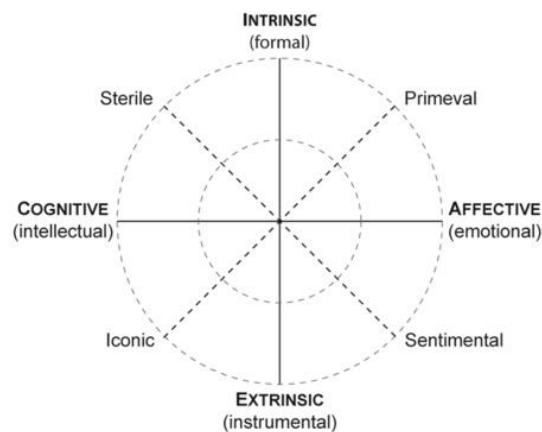
observing how their responses in aesthetic experience evolve and how they integrate their responses to form the meaning-making processes.

Following the five-steps of aesthetigram, the participants were first asked to look at the artwork mindfully, try to immerse themselves into the work, and be aware of the moment-to-moment responses to the work. Second, they record those responses in note-writing. All types of responses are welcomed. Based on the note writing, the participants need to assign each experiential moment to a category. They chose the colour they feel could best represent the meaning of the category. White's (1998, 2009) research does not address the use of colour for each category. I would like to add a more artistic and personal choice in this step. The list of categories was developed earlier in White's (2009) research. Third, after completing assigning moments into categories, the participants demonstrate those moments in a visual map, the aesthetigram. Aesthetigram is a visual form unique to each individual. It shows each individual's experiential process and addresses relationships between experiential moments. Based on the visual map, the teacher can then suggest other possible perspectives for students to approach the artwork.

The fourth step is for the participants to compare the responses to Jones's (1979) model. Jones states that the aesthetic experience has four components, which range across affective to cognitive, and intrinsic to extrinsic content. He demonstrates those components in a cross shape, which is composed of the x-axis and y-axis (Figure 1). A good aesthetic experience should consist of the content of the four quadrants. The participant will assign each aesthetigram moment to the appropriate quadrant in Jones's model. If one finds the encounter does not cover the four quadrants or is not well balanced among them, one needs to balance the responses to gain a well-rounded aesthetic experience. For example, if the responses are mostly affective, then that participants need to pay attention to the rest of the three aspects in the next aesthetigram process.

Last, the participant will review the whole aesthetigram from step one to four, and reflect on them through text-writing. It aims to provide a chance of re-examination and a more detailed explanation.

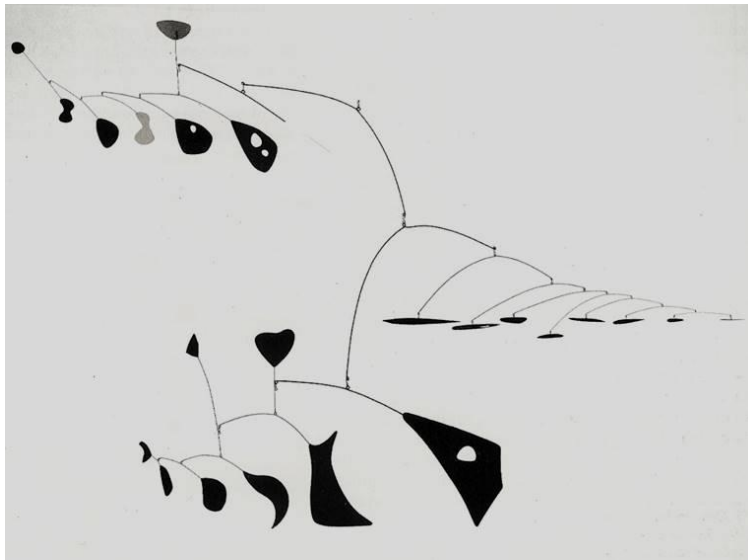
Figure 2: Jones's model of phenomenological balance (cited in White, 2013)



14 DIALOGUE WITH *OBJECT IN Y*

In this case study, I present Qiang's process of aesthetigram. There are four college art-major participants, and two of them did not finish the five steps of aesthetigram. Among the rest of the two participants, Qiang was more enthusiastic and more drawn into the work he chose. He has a more sophisticated sensitivity and sincere responses. These are precious characteristics concerning the learning modes Chinese students had been accustomed to. The participants, though, art-majors, have had few courses regarding art history or art appreciation. Qiang's practice of aesthetigram and his understandings are still work in progress, which can be further developed and discussed for future research in classroom.

Figure 3: Calder's *Object in Y*



14.1 First Encounter

For the online work, he chose an installation by Alexander Calder entitled *Object in Y*. He was strongly drawn into the simplicity of forms and its delicacy. Figure 3 shows Qiang's first aesthetigram on Calder's installation. The various colours in the circles represent various categories. There are thirteen moments recorded, which was assigned to five categories. The size of the circle represents the impact of the moment. The arrow suggests the direction he felt one moment impacts another. The overlapping circles mean that the moments happened simultaneously or "in phenomenological parlance, were co-intended" (White, 2013).

The most frequent shown moments are 'reverie'. He lists seven moments of them. The second popular moments are 'perception'. We should notice that in the first categorization he made, moment 4 should be reverie not expectation. Similarly, moment 3 should be reverie not reflection, moment 8 should be perception not expectation, and moment 5, 6 and 9 are reverie not feelings. He mistook the meaning of expectation, reflection, reverie and feelings. Feelings are affective projection, and reverie is imagination. They belong to affective and imaginative dimension. Expectation refers to previous assumptions, and reflection refers to thoughts about the artwork. They belong to cognitive and logical dimension. After he made the final text-writing, I guided him

to review his previous note-writing and the comparison to Jones's model. So Qiang can see clearly the correspondent position that each moment should belong to in Jones's model, and re-assigned moments into correct categories and positions in the quadrants.

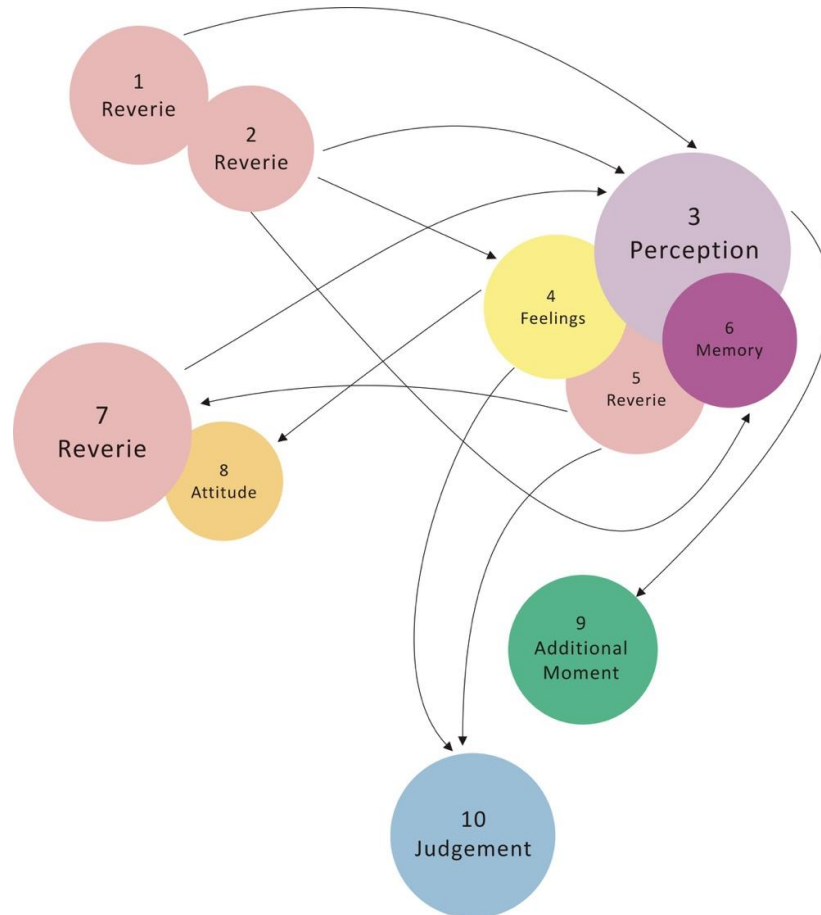
He was very attracted into the abstraction of the work and made a lot of sensational descriptions about the formal aesthetics and the imaginations based on contemplating the formal quality. Although he just saw the pictures, he was informed that it is a mobile installation, which can move around in space. As he moved toward the midway of recording, his perceptions become more sophisticated. From the midway to the end, he moved toward the inner feelings. Moment 9, 10, 11 and 13 together are like the reflections of his inner image, fantasy or nightmare. In moment 13, he brought about the ideas of the cosmic imagery, the regulation of movement, and the nature of geometry. They all relate to the core philosophy of Calder. This moment is not only a reverie but also can be referred to as knowledge.

With more emphasis on affective and formal dimension, there is a lack of judgment, attitude, explanations and knowledge. The lack of cognitive dimension might be related to the educational emphasis in K-12 in China. In the educational system before college, students are not encouraged to have their own ideas and express them. They are educated to obey to the authority and believe in "the correct" answers instead of thinking independently, having an open attitude for various possibilities, and enjoy the journey of exploring. Since Qiang was looking at a work from a renowned artist, he did not think of questioning the work or Calder's philosophy, or looking at it from another perspective. On the other hand, young people are influenced by the fast-food way of assimilating information in the contemporary society that they seldom consider spending time with something, experience it carefully, and think about it critically. As we can see from the workshop, two of the participants only made to the fourth step in the first aesthetigram, and the rest of the two, though a little unwillingly, still finish the second aesthetigram process. During the first mapping process, Qiang showed a sense of impatience in the fourth step, and struggled to reexamine the process in text-writing. The text-writing only extends a little from the previous moments but did not offer any new perspective.

Figure 4: Qiang's first aesthetigram for *Object in Y*

He also made a rough critique at the end. Comparing this installation work with representational painting, he thinks that its geometric abstraction, mobility, and indication of regulation of universe express more than what a representational picture does, like that of da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. Calder's work offers more imaginative room and opportunity for extended thoughts. He concluded that this type of work belongs to *avant-garde*, which can only be understood by a small amount of people. Considering his lack of art history background, it is a good sign that he started to think about the idea of *avant-garde* and compare it to the idea of representational art. However, the idea of *avant-garde* and the content of representational art have richer meanings depending on how we look at them. I encouraged him to dig into the content of *Mona Lisa* and *Starry Night*, study the life of the artists and their philosophy toward art, and also explore more about the historical context of *avant-garde* and its core meanings for the artists and the viewers.

Figure 5: Qiang's second aesthetigram for *Object in Y*

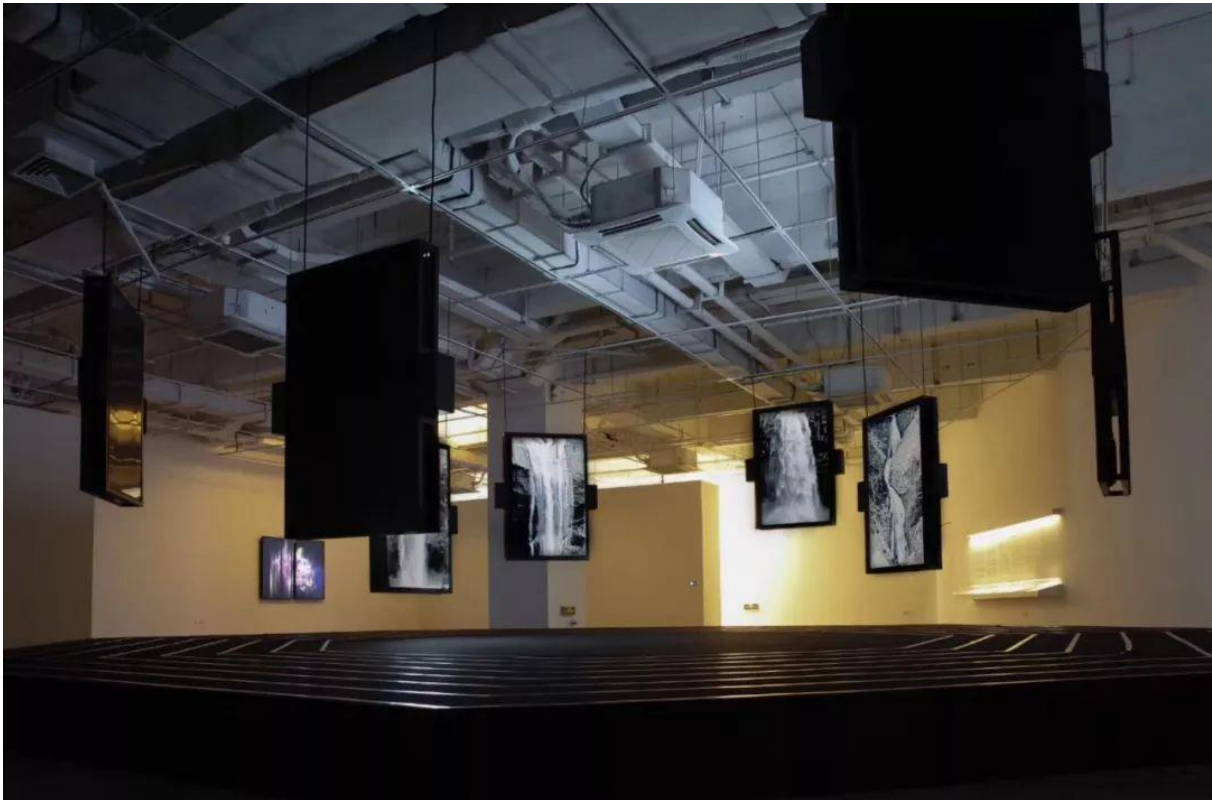


15 DIALOGUE WITH OCTFALLS

A week after the aesthetigram workshop, I brought the four participants to an audio-visual installation exhibition by a Japanese artist Ryoichi Kurokawa. Qiang chose the immersive and tactile

audio-visual work *Octfalls* (2011, exhibited during the 54th Venice Biennale). The composition is multiple tall screens surrounding in a circle. The work brings about the experience of the rhythm and visual impact of water flow to the physical world. Enlightened by ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus's concept of *panta rhei* ("everything flows"), Kurokawa transformed the idea of time and space into an audio-visual dynamics.

Figure 6: Ryoichi Kurokawa's *Octfalls* (2011)



15.1 First Encounter

Comparing with Qiang's encounters with the online artwork, there are a lot more experiential moments recorded. They are 22 moments of them. He spent about an hour just sitting in the centre of the installation, experiencing and recording while spending 15 minutes for the online work. He looks focused and involved with the environment around him. Reverie and feelings take the major role in the encountering, and the second one is perception. The emphasis on reverie and feelings corresponds with the immersive nature of the installation. It is interesting that Qiang categorize some of the moments as both feelings and reverie. He feels that these reveries have many personal affective projections in them. He also refers to a phrase in Chinese poem, which describes the perception of the work but also provide an imaginative scene. He describes a lot about the sensational feelings he experienced, like the moisture and blow of the wind, and the transformation of time and space with the rhythm of sounds and images. Such a transformational experience provides a ground for imaginative journey, in which he characterizes a lot about being with natural forces and being in the outer space. He reflects that the monocolour and the rough grained image

facilitate his reverie. In moment 14, he describes a memory, which can also be seen as a cultural comparison.

Comparing to the colourful image quality of a movie, where the colours of the waterfalls are rich and beautiful, Kurokawa's waterfalls are like those in motions in Chinese Song landscape paintings. The rough grained quality also reminds me of that of black and white TV decades ago.

I did not include comparison into the categories because the participants are new to art appreciation and was not expected to make a comparison. It seems that Qiang can relate the aesthetics of Kurokawa's work to that of Chinese. From moment 14, Qiang was advised to explore further regarding the philosophy of Chinese and Japanese aesthetics and their comparisons.

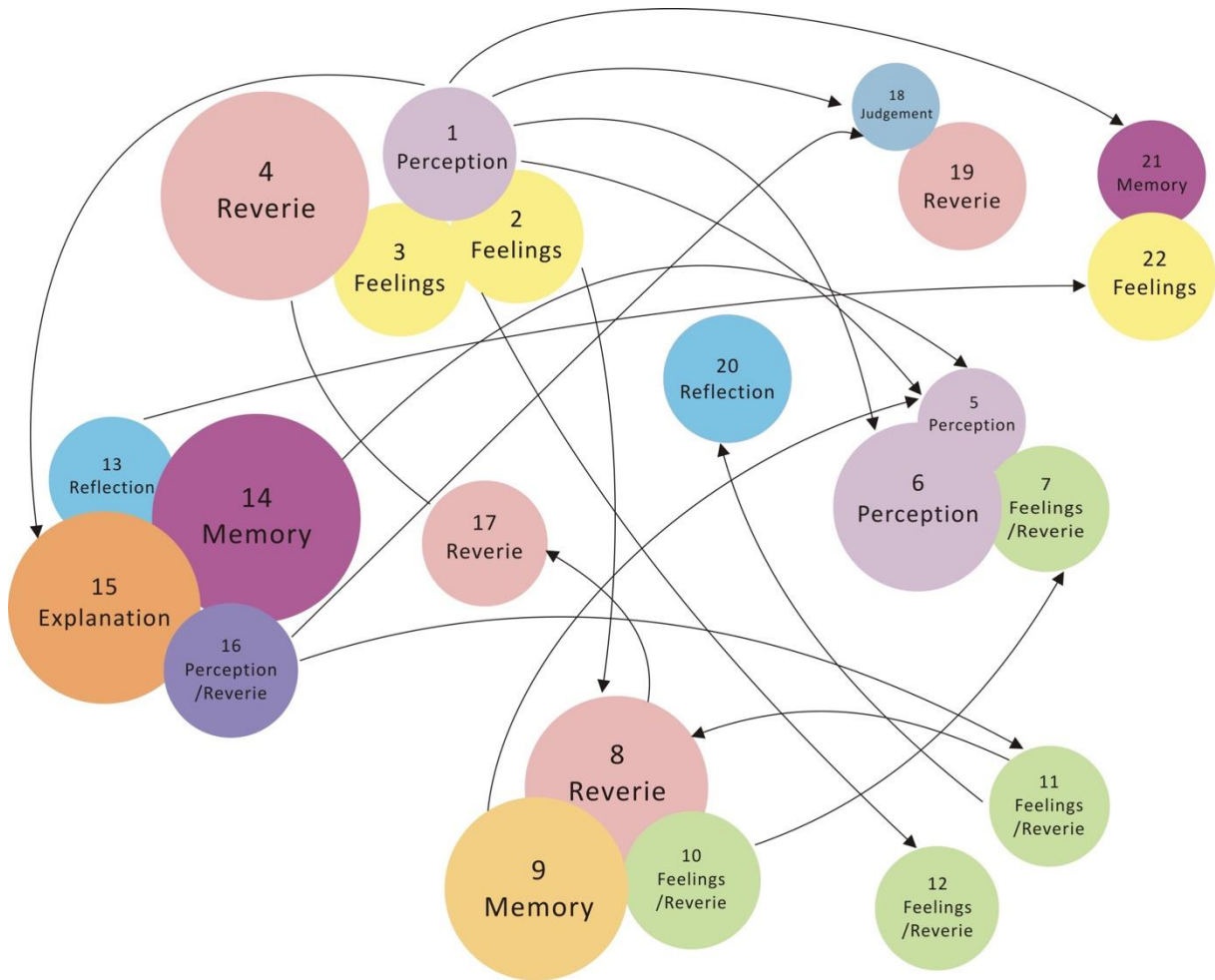
In the final text-writing, not categorized, he compares the audio-visual work to traditional Western painting, discuss how the works relate to the dynamics of the contemporary society, and how the work might reflect the future world. As a beginner to art theory, Qiang started to connect the work to social and aesthetic issues through mapping strategy. He feels that the strategy broadens and deepens his experience with a work of art from both cognitive and affective perspectives. However, he explains his difficulties of completing the first aesthetigram and unwillingness to do the second and third turns. He feels that the five steps process is too complicated. Although comparing to Jones's model (the fourth step) can facilitate more perspectives, he thinks his familiarity with aesthetigram should bring about enough understandings of the work through the first three steps, and can omit the fourth and fifth steps. After reading more about the contextual information of the artist and the work, he feels the need to do the second mapping, but he chose not to because of the troublesome and the lack of time in his schedule.

15.2 Adjustment of Aesthetigram

We can see how his comments on the process relate to the cultural educational background discussed earlier, and we can also see how the aesthetigram might open more possibilities for Chinese students in exploring aesthetic experience. To maintain students' interests and also sustain the journey of exploring, I would suggest to group the five steps of the process into two groups, and guide students to do each group in a separate workshop between a time interval of one or two days. Hopefully, students will not get overwhelmed by the steps they need to complete, and can look forward to the following steps. I also suggest simplifying the three visits of aesthetigram into just one. By discovering interesting issues along the way, the instructor can then guide students to dig more into the issues by examining through contextual knowledge and also by encountering the work again. Encountering the work again does not necessarily mean doing the whole aesthetigram again. The aesthetigram in a later exploration might be a guide according to students' need, and they might want to develop their own process. I was aiming to have students draw a visual response (an image) after they complete visual mapping process. The students felt very intrigued to try it at the beginning of the workshop, but they all started to lose interests in aesthetigram process after the third step, and too tired to do the visual response in the end. I would like to try to guide students to do a visual response after the third step, and see if the creativity of visual stimuli might increase their interests and offer another dimension in aesthetic experience.

What the aesthetigram process offers for students is the idea of the reflection-in-action proposed by Schon (2008). In stead of using a technical rational way of approaching a work of art, students practice on reflecting on a work of art while experiencing it. They learn to allow uncertainty, conflict and uniqueness, and respond to them in a personal way, which will offer them a new insight of looking at the phenomenal world.

Figure 6: Qiang's first aesthetigram for *Octfalls*



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WHO IS YOUR USER?

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Abstract

In this 90-minute long workshop for 20 to 40 participants, Shalhavit will lead intensive discussion and activity on concepts from the field of User Experience Design: How do we design an experience? What do we focus on when interacting with our users/participants/patients? How do we ask the right questions to make a service/process accessible? Together we will introspect on our users and discern why experience-designers prefer to first focus on one user and then broaden their design to others. Participants in this workshop will engage through live exercises on Active Listening and placing oneself in the user's shoes. Examples will be shared from recent research on increasing user engagement in Harvard University's online learning system. We will conclude with a discussion on how one can apply these concepts to his or her own research.

Keywords: User Experience Design, Instructional Design, UX (User Experience), UXE (User Experience Engineering)

16 CONTENT

User experience is the science of listening to your participant, knowing who you are interacting with, in order to create a better experience for him or her.

Active listening (activity). The workshop will open with hands-on learning activity and practicing tools of an engagement atmosphere: Tools from the American founded co-counselling method [1] and using communication elements from the book "How to Win Friends and Influence People" [2] by Dale Carnegie will be used, followed by discussion of how we apply this to science.

Taking these tools to the world of science and industry, we will explore the design aspects which result from active listening: User experience is defined simply as the experience that you design for your users.

Users can be patients, participants, students, listeners, learners, viewers.

The first steps in design is to ask is *who is your user?* Who are you interacting with? In order to develop a good product, a good research or a good experience, we must think first about who are we planning to interact with.



Fig. 1 User Experience Engineering: Designing the Experience for Your User

Participants will be asked, “Have you ever had a bad user experience? Try to think of a parking sign that has so many details negating specific hours and time limitations that you find it overwhelming as you drive by, trying to decide if you can park or not. Or think of a pop-up on your desktop while installing software, and you are asked to click on an absurdly unclear response to the prompt that is entitled, ‘An Error Occurred,’ and you can click on either ‘no’ or ‘ok,’ which doesn’t help.” These are examples of bad user experiences [3].

Several visual examples will be shared in order to explore good and bad user experience designs. Those examples will be taken from the world of education, technology, science, entertainment, engineering, and business.

A user experience designer believes that the user is everything. And that when interacting with people the most important first aid is the usability: if users do not understand your prompt or instruction, they will either not respond, or they will respond incorrectly.

Traditional industries would think and work hard to improve their product and then bring it to market seeking users who would like to use it. Today increasingly more companies and designers realize that it's not the product but the user who they should focus on even before planning a product. Getting to know the user and planning for the user's needs are what will lead to a successful product. What are the challenges, needs and aspirations of your user?

Defining your user (activity) is done by narrowing down and focusing on one user. Although it is possible to reach different demographics when planning research, or a project, product or service, it is best to begin a design by focusing on only one user. Think about chasing a few rabbits: if you

try to catch them all you will miss them all, but targeting one gives you a better chance. When designing a service, the first step is selecting that appropriate user.

Together we will discuss narrowing down our criteria, such as inclusion and exclusion. We may even tap into how it is done in industry using a business school term called *market segmentation*: a systematic categorization of potential markets for your idea. We want to categorize target users, groups that are homogeneous and distinct. The market segmentation process will reveal important differences between seemingly similar groups of target customers. Sometimes you may have an *end user* who you are designing for, and *secondary stakeholders* who are paying for your service or have other hands in your end goals.

Another term to we address is the *beachhead market*. Imagine an army wants to conquer an island. What would be the first area to take over? Right, the beach. A beachhead market is the first section of user type which the designer selects to focus on. This would be a homogeneous group that the designer studies in depth, analyzing their needs and aspirations in order to design a process for them. Only after conquering the beach can the army then conquer more niches. If they instead focus on the entire island all at once, it will be like chasing that group of rabbits which will result in catching none. Focus is the key in the UX process, and selecting the appropriate first user group will enable us to design for it, conquer that niche, and only then potentially expand to impact other users [4].

You'll have to go out and talk to as many prospective target customers as possible. Looking for a homogeneous group of target customers who experience a similar problem, and to whom you could deliver your solution at similar cost, and who would pay similar amounts of money for that solution.

Persona (activity). One of the most important tools used in modern industry's approach to user focused design is creating a Persona Profile. A Persona Profile is a page with a real person's photo, who is or can be your ideal user, alongside several paragraphs or diagrams. It is a brief description page with a visual representation of a person: a photograph, described characteristics, and tag lines about the selected user. This Persona Profile page will hang in your office and serve as the inspiration image for your team to look at, and to go back to, whenever designing an experience or service for the user. It is best if the Persona Profile uses a real person, but it can be imaginative, if it is imaginative by being as realistic as possible, because you are designing for real people. When you look at the Persona Profile page you can focus on the most important aspects in your design. For example, if our user is 68-year-old Arlene, then large fonts and bold contrasts will be more important than a macho style or glittery look. We will brainstorm the ways to build a persona profile. It aims to figure out who your persona is, that is the persona around whom you'll build a strong and sustainable business.



Fig. 2: Example for a User Persona Profile Card

We may touch upon other important execution aspects such as the *hacker, hustler, and hipster* model to build a team.

Lastly, a heartwarming case study of Prototyping will be shared about Hyungsoo Kim, Founder of the Eone Timepieces watch and his iterative service design for blind people [5].

Case studies. Several case studies may be shared from recent UX analyses at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloane School of Business, and the Harvard University Division of Continuing Education, both of which were established by our seminar's presenter.

One case study is of the MITx Global Entrepreneurship Bootcamp based on the MOOC. Professor Bill Aulet's book [3] is highly recommended for those of you who want to move on to building a sustainable vocation or business. If you're not a reader and prefer audio-visual learning (video), you can check out our course, "*Entrepreneurship101: Who is Your Customer*" [6].

Another case study is Harvard University's: *Creating Real-Time Connections in Online Courses*, which was funded by the 2016 HILT Spark Grant. It was a team based within Harvard's Division of Continuing Education's Digital Teaching and Learning. The learning design team worked individually with faculty to design solutions for teaching challenges and to ensure that student experience is top-quality. Through the described interviews, our team was able to pull together the best practices with all *end users* and *secondary stakeholders* in mind. These methods of interactivity take advantage of existing online tools and can be used by faculty across the university and across multiple fields. This study is an example for a design for several users: The students, the faculty, the faculty aids, and the course designers. Each of those users were approached by a design based on learning their needs. A prototype card game was produced in this process for the faculty, based on their needs and time limitation of reading this study's results.

If time allows, points that may be discussed further are from the *Creating Real-Time Connections* project. Even if not discussed, these points can be helpful for you if your project relates to online engagement:

- *Reach Your Students*: Feedback Surveys – think about different purposes, section meetings, virtual office hours – possibly required. Create on-the-fly videos. Sidebar – If you are repubbing videos, consider having web conference sections or other meetings.
- *Foster Peer Connections*: Ice Breakers (discussion boards and say hello). Group work – this can also work for big classes. Ask questions for discussion that connect course concepts to students' lives and experiences. Make discussions for meetups. Incentivize student interaction.
- *Questions*: Q and A Board for discussions, Prep assignments to get students talking – post reading questions. TA can engage during sections (discussions, use quizzes like polls). Sections, Polling, Reflections, and Minute Papers addressing confusion.
- *Feedback*: Give Feedback, Quick feedback, Video/Audio Feedback, Peer Review, Feedback that tells students what they've done well and how they can improve. Public Collective feedback on discussions – with individual call-outs (announcements). Peer review (on assignments or discussions).
- *Accountability*: Timeliness of materials. Set modules and assignments to auto release. Be Accountable, Plan Ahead, Incorporate Interaction into Your Course Plan, Plan for Everyone, Create Transparent Course Policies, Set reasonable Expectations. Use modules to establish familiarity and allay student concerns about missing things. Have timeliness of feedback – don't get yourself into a mess. Think about where auto-graded or peer review would be enough or when students really need feedback from you. Make your grading faster. Follow through. Post expectations somewhere in your course. Syllabus quizzes, Auto-release assignments, Course organization, Build assignments for timely feedback, Manage course expectations for you and your students. Course Organization.

Workshop will end with summary of takeaways and questions.

...So, who is your user?

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A DIARY OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL CLOSURE IN 100 CERAMIC PLATES

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Abstract

In 2011, I spent a year documenting the impending closure of my rural middle school. I became our own artist-in-residence and produced a body of work that would capture and commemorate the school closure and the end of my career as a middle school art teacher. At the back of the classroom, I made 100 commemorative ceramic plates which documented the experience. Exploring an arts-based, autoethnographic approach, I produced nine visual and written sketchbooks to support the plate making. This body of work explored ideas of a community of practice with my students as they all made commemorative plates too. Elements of their work appeared on my plates as we shared sprig moulds of significant objects such as mementoes, toys, biscuits and sweets. We also left behind ceramic murals on the school walls and made a set of commemorative plaques for the school staff. I explored ideas about socially engaged and dialogical art practice in an educational setting and I did this by designing an art project which was open to events within the classroom. The plates literally bore the marks of the environment in which they were made.

The making of the artwork in the classroom was validated by their pedagogical usefulness as demonstrations and modelling. Each plate demonstrated particular material and technical aspects of ceramic practices whilst also exploring more general art practice concepts such as research, art history, autobiography and memory as subject matter. I made the plates in spare moments and at the beginning and end of the school day. The students witnessed an artist committed to practice as they walked past the art room on the way to the playing field and into and out of school.

I made the plates to commemorate and celebrate my career as an art teacher in middle schools. These schools had been creative and progressive places to work in and their closure was an early phase in the ongoing educational changes. My activism was to put the experience on the record as an art work, to use art making as a socially engaged practice and to involve the school community in the project. In 2016, the plates and sketchbooks were exhibited as a unique document which was a cathartic experience for many middle school colleagues. As an autoethnography of an art teacher's lived experience, the project is a contribution to making autoethnography through art making.

Key-words: Ceramics, sketchbooks, school, artist-teacher, autoethnography, art practice

17 A DIARY OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL CLOSURE IN 100 CERAMIC PLATES

17.1 Introduction

In 2011, I was the head of art in a rural middle school, engaged in a research project exploring the functions of the classroom art-demonstration and the role of the artist-teacher. As the school faced closure that summer, I decided that I would explore the idea of being an embedded artist in the community and to make a body of work which would document, celebrate and commemorate the creative possibilities of middle schools, their traditions of creative teaching and learning and my role as an artist and teacher working within them. I resolved to make a series of ceramic plates as a means of developing a deeper understanding of teaching, demonstration and exemplification in learning and creativity.

In this paper I shall discuss the methodology and methods that I used in the research to investigate the development of an approach to creative practice in the classroom. I used sketchbooks as research journals to document creative development and, as the research progressed, these methods influenced the form and nature of the creative practice itself. I then discuss how the idea of being my own artist-in-residence came about and why I chose to use ceramics as the means of expression in the research project. I discuss the subject matter of the plates and how autoethnography influenced the processes of thinking and making. Lastly, I briefly describe the progress of the project and the impact that the work had on the school community as we went through closure of the school.

17.2 Methodology and methods

I was fascinated by the problems and challenges of researching the processes and procedures of creative practice and of exploring an arts-based, autoethnographic approach to research. In this research, the art making took precedence and the methods used supported the documentation and consideration of an art practice. I had been teaching a summer school module on the use of learning journals [1] and this had influenced my approach to both the use of sketchbooks of writing as research. My notes from this period became more diagrammatic and visual and there were frequent references to the sketchbooks as 'tools to think with' [2]. Being able to track the process of making a body of work became clearer to me as the books become a form of 'extended mind' [3] in the making of artworks, allowing me to visualise my ideations and meta-cognition. The sketchbooks became a way to explore and to share the heuristics of making, the pathway to the realisation of ideas.

My sketchbook journals served as depositories of ideas, drawings, notes about artists, cuttings and printouts related to the making of the plates. In eleven A4 hardback volumes I accumulated drawings, designs, information, writings and ideas and they become a rich resource for my own practice and critical reflection. They also became teaching aids in the classroom and this modified their shape and form [4].

17.3 Becoming my own artist in residence

I had carried out a number of projects in the classroom in collaboration with visiting artists and, through a lengthy process of articulation and reflection, I had decided that my work as an artist-teacher and my thinking about what a more artist-focussed pedagogy might look like in the classroom left me in an interesting position. My

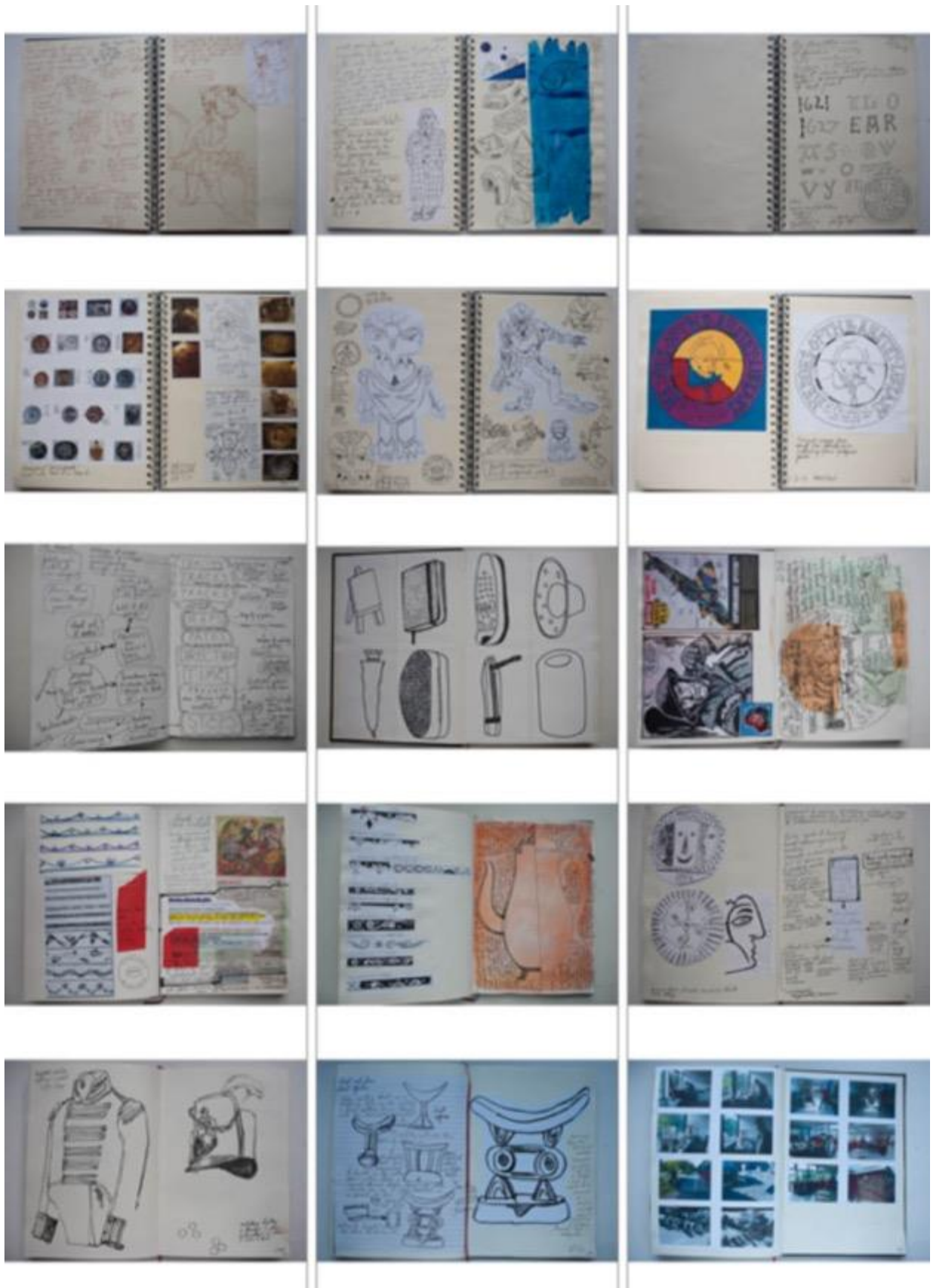


Figure 17 Sketchbook sheets.

experience in the classroom, my 'pedagogised identity' [5], meant that I had particular strengths and skills. I had come to realise that the teacher identity, far from being a problem, the aspect that stopped me being an artist, was, in fact, what allowed me to be an artist within the context of the classroom. Deep familiarity with the constraints and limits of the classroom allowed me to be more creative within them. I now reframed the question to ask if I could take that 'pedagogised identity' [5] and become more of an artist, adopt more of the pedagogy of the artist, as discussed by Pringle [6], Sekules [7], Parks [8] and Thomson et al. [9], and, by doing so, become my own artist-in-residence, to embody some of these artist attributes more explicitly in the classroom. Previously, the body of work that I had accumulated had been a by-product of teaching. What I wanted to do was make a body of work that foregrounded the processes of art making and for the lessons and teaching to be a by-product of that. In the identity of artist-teacher, I wanted to turn up the volume on being an artist and tune the teacher role around the artist role. I also wanted to celebrate the teaching skills that I had developed over years and my ability to share my vision of art practice with students and others.

The intention was to use the classroom as my studio workspace. I wanted to explore working in the role of an artist within the constraints of school timetables, professional requirements, space and materials and to be as much of an artist as it was possible to be. I realised that my 'pedagogised identity' [5] put me in a position where I could foreground the role of artist and maker much more, to allow myself to be an artist within the system. It was my skill, experience and pedagogical theory that allowed me to make art in the classroom with the certainty that I would be able to use it, to validate it, through effective teaching in the school.

17.4 Choosing ceramics

My decision to use ceramics in this final project arose from insights gained over years of making art at the back of classrooms. I had realised from making sequences of small abstract paintings that making artworks in series worked well. It meant that it was possible to make something that would build into a body of work, piece by piece, section by section, in a lot of small inputs. Working on something that was modular, small-scale and in series worked well within the constraints of the timetable. For this research, making a set that built up would work better than making something large-scale in one piece. Whilst both would accumulate over time, the processes of deliberation, preparation and implementation which would be needed for a large-scale work, such as a mural or sizeable sculptural work, would lend itself less well to presenting a timeline or narrative of thought and process.

A series of smaller things made relatively quickly would also be more useful for both facilitating and sharing my learning, which was a crucial idea in this research. I wanted to learn something new and to be able to share that with the students, developing the idea of myself as a student and as a co-learner alongside students. Small works made over time would, presumably, show my increasing skill and understanding, as I got more skilled and found out more about the materials and manner I was working with.

At the end of October, I recorded a conversation in a sketchbook with a friend about the classroom demonstration

Sketchbook notes, 30th October.

If I make a pot to show you how to make a pot does that make the pot a different sort to other sorts of pot? If we take that demonstration pot and put it in an art gallery does it look like a different sort of pot? If I make a pot to show myself something about making a pot does that look different and if so, how?

In conversations about the classroom demonstration, ceramics were often an example of things which one is shown how to make. According to Ingold [10], pots are things that you learn how to make through demonstrations, 'expressive showing' [11], which they have in common with cat's cradle and basket weaving. On the 2nd November, I had made a set of drawings of pots and commemorative plates in the sketchbook journal and I proposed keeping a diary in plates to myself. Another criterion was that the practice project had to yield teaching opportunities in the classroom. Again, this tended to suggest that smaller-scale works would have the most significant amount of educational leverage in the classroom. A final consideration was that the school would be closing and we would have to be packing away the classroom and disposing of materials and stocks over the course of the year. Using things up in the storage cupboards, the long forgotten glazes and mysterious powders, on experimental ceramics seemed like a good idea.

Another criterion for the practice-based project was that the materials and method should be something that I did not know a great deal about, so that I could use the research to extend and share my own learning. This meant that the materials and techniques had to be outside my usual specialism or earlier practice, on the edge of my comfort zone. I knew enough about ceramics to be able to teach it in a middle school, but it had not been part of my personal, creative practice. I had studied the subject at teacher training college and I had been on in-service training during my teaching career to learn more. What I knew about ceramics had come about entirely through teaching. I had a degree of confidence in firing the kiln and in making things that would work with students.

So, I set about producing 100 ceramic plates at the back of the classroom which would document and commemorate the end of the school and of my career as a middle school art teacher. By creatively responding and recording the experience of school closure through art making I was taking an activist approach to a difficult experience. I was trying to make something positive out of the situation, a creative counterpoint to the destruction of the school community. The activism of the project extended beyond my own art making to the school community as the students all made plates commemorating things that were important to them too. The making of the artwork in the classroom was validated by their pedagogical usefulness as demonstrations and modelling. Each plate demonstrated material and technical aspects of ceramic practices whilst also exploring more general art practice concepts such as research and ideation through sketchbooks, art history and autobiography and memory as subject matter. I made the plates in any spare moment and at the beginning and end of the school day. The students witnessed an artist committed to practice as they walked past the art room on the way to the playing field and into and out of school.

17.5 Autoethnography and subject matter in the plates

As part of an autoethnographic approach [12], I wanted to consider the childhood drawing habit that, for some, presages a development into a schooled artist and, for many, is left behind as a childhood activity. In my sketchbook, I listed some of the imagery associated with learning to draw as a child:



Figure 1 A set of the early plates.

*Sketchbook notes, 18th November. A design for a plate
An autobiography in plates. Memories of drawings-things I liked to draw-
those early ideas that fascinated. Napoleonic wars, comics, Sci-Fi, the
Victor comic, horses, drawing manuals, guides to drawing, Van Gogh,
Gauguin. Struggling to figure out what 'good at drawing' means? How
could Picasso and John Constable both be right? The sort of thing you
draw when you're a kid and people say, "You should be an artist, Paul."
Subject matter from Airfix kits, the battle of Waterloo etc.*

During my adolescence, my interest in drawing was both discouraged and encouraged by different groups of adults. I was fascinated by drawing and I wanted to learn to draw 'properly' so I absorbed the drawing manuals in the library and started keeping the recommended sketchbook. By the time I got to art college, the life room had been closed and I was not formally taught to draw beyond foundation course. My well-practiced and very graphic drawing skills were considered more than adequate for art school. The shamefulness of the early drawing activity only emerged when it became apparent to me at art college that owning up to copying 'The Victor' comic as a boyhood enthusiasm was not socially acceptable in the context. I had turned my enthusiasm for questionable source material into a broader drawing skill. Later, I saw my early interests reflected in the Sci-Fi robots and monsters drawn by the students that I taught in the middle school and I wanted to make a connection with that in the plates work. The passage from an interest in drawing through to art college and on to teaching is not that straightforward and depends, it would seem, on factors beyond art education.

I wanted to explore a range of ideas in the making of the plates. One of the reference points was the work of Grayson Perry [13] and the idea of autobiography on ceramics. I wanted to look at the sort of enthusiasms that first got me interested in and besotted with art making and particularly drawing. I made links between the obsessive drawing that I engaged in as a boy and the sort of drawing enthusiasm that I saw amongst my middle school students. I related this to the work of Lily Van Der Stokker [14] and her questioning of gendered drawing schemas encouraged amongst girls. I looked at boys' gendered drawing of robots, computer game and Sci-Fi imagery and related this to my own boyhood enthusiasms for drawing Napoleonic soldiers, Second World War aeroplanes and Sci-Fi and space race imagery.

This was not an unusual way to learn about drawing in the 1960's and 1970's when I was at school. This led to my making plates featuring equestrians, hussars and Victor comic soldiers that explored my own drawing when I was the same age as the students that I was teaching in the middle school. Part of my early art education took place in the Anstey library where I was an avid reader of the art books. I made a series of plates and drawings about the role these 'World of Art' books had on my developing understanding of art making. These became the 'art heroes' plates which ironically describe the lives of the artists as possible role models.

The looking back over my artistic career and what had led me to become a head of art was part of my reflection on an ending of part of my professional life. I had travelled from being 'good at drawing,' to art college, exhibiting, teacher training and a career in art education. The celebration, commemoration and exploration of this pathway featured in the plates. As a subject, this seemed to be an

underexplored area. The life of artists is, of course, often the subject matter of art but the personal experience of teachers is more unusual.

17.6 Closure of the middle school as subject matter

During this research, the middle school I worked in faced closure as part of a reorganisation by local government and this had an effect on all of the people involved. Owen [15] found that school closure has a massive effect on the people in a school community in the years running up to the event. According to Owen, school closure can be experienced as the death of a community and may result in a loss of identity for teachers and others. Disillusionment and considerable sadness accompanies the end of a school community which has taken many years to build. The experience is one of transit, loss, endings and finality:

An Identity – not just an identity - is being phased out, obliterated, lost, killed off and the one thing that might help those going through this painful process would be that it was happening to this organism, the community, the school community. This is not an industrial plant that is being decommissioned, but an organism that is being laid to rest, having its life blood and oxygen slowly being sucked out of it. [15]

The closure of the middle school was an experience shared with others in the school community. The plates were a result of the closure and I could make them due to the continuing encouragement of the school leadership team who had been supportive of my research throughout. The idea of using the commemorative aspects of crockery as part of the subject matter and to commemorate the passing of the school with the students and staff was part of the planning. I made the plates to commemorate and celebrate my career as an art teacher in middle schools. These schools had been creative and progressive places to work in and their closure was an early phase in the ongoing educational changes. My activism was to put the experience on the record as an art work, to use art making as a socially engaged practice and to involve the school community in the project.

17.7 Development of the project

Reflection on the exhibition held at the Halesworth Gallery in 2016 of the 100 plates showed that the work developed over three phases. The first set of plates were exploratory and experimental pieces, establishing the underlying methodology. I had made the first two plates the previous year as part of the body of work exhibited in 2009. These explored the theme of the teacher's voice and used a self-portrait based on an Internet drawing app which made an image out of a choice of elements. These were the seeds of the project which lay dormant for a year. The middle phase were more decorative and I developed the use of sprig moulds. In the final phase, the plates became heavily worked with patterns and textures and the firing and glazing became more experimental. Some plates delaminated and cracks and decomposition became a visual metaphor in the work.

I discussed the idea of making about 100 plates with my classroom assistant and we started a system of making, drying and firing which we developed as we became more practised. To make the plates, we cleared the table at the back of the art room and I used that as my workspace. At this point, I had the use of two classrooms as the design technology room adjoining mine had fallen into disuse. I had a couple of old plaster plate moulds in the cupboard and I made a third plaster mould. We set up the classroom so that it was a clay and cast-making orientated workshop in imitation of an artist's studio. Creating a workspace was part of building a community of practice



Figure 3 Middle period plates with sprigs, art references and a Picasso 'art hero' plate.

around the clay work [16] and consciously exploring the idea of cognitive apprenticeship with the students.

I would roll out the clay into centimetre thick sheets and lay these into the tea towel lined moulds in the morning and trim them up before the start of the school day. I had dozens of ideas to work from in the sketchbooks, generated from my themes of autoethnography, art references and explorations of ceramic techniques and materials. I would work on the plates during break, lunchtime and after school, fitting the work around the requirements of the school day. Some I wrapped in plastic to keep soft for the next day or I would leave them out to dry overnight. These would be leather-hard in the morning and I would be able to move them out of the moulds and onto the side for drying. My classroom assistant got more confident and started rolling out the clay and putting it into the moulds for me, so I always had three plates to work on. We would move them onto drying racks in the kiln room to dry out once finished. We started firing the kiln twice a week as we filled it with my plates and the students' work.

It was important that the clay work was shared with the students and we began to make commemorative plates in classroom projects. We made these in three phases during the school year, to stagger the drying and firing of nearly 500 student plates. Following a drawing and research phase in sketchbooks, students replicated the basic process by rolling the clay out between laths onto hessian and old tea towels. We used paper and plastic picnic plates as sag moulds with tissue paper as a release surface.

The students accessed the project at three points during the year which matched with my increasing sophistication with methods and techniques. The older students had a more complex experience as I had developed an interest and understanding of sprig moulds made with plaster casts by the time they made their plates. I also asked the students to bring in objects and the students found things that they could pour plaster over and take moulds from. They brought in a variety of things, from dog biscuits and sweets to cameras and old phones. These built up into an archive of moulds which we used interchangeably on the plates we all made. Pressing clay into a sprig mould takes nothing away from the person who had lent it. The sprig moulds are indentations taken from the world and the plates took on an impression of the 'lifeworld' that flowed around them.

I wanted the making of this body of work to extend my understanding of ceramic technique and to develop my knowledge of ceramics beyond the base of class-centred techniques that I had garnered during my teaching career. I became fascinated by the history and processes of ceramics. I read extensively about ceramic techniques and recorded what I found in the sketchbook journals. During these two terms of practice I also spent time in the Norwich Castle Museum, the ceramic galleries of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge and the Victoria and Albert Museum, examining the ware and making drawings. I used this information and imagery throughout the project and this research and the subsequent experimentation in the classroom plates helped me extend the possibilities for the students. By doing this, I was using my creative practice and my commitment to the making of the plates to enrich my teaching and the experience of the students. I was using my fascination with ceramics to develop my teaching, making a link between my art practice and my teaching practice.

17.8 Are you a proper artist, Mr Cope?

In 2016, the plates and sketchbooks were exhibited as a unique document of a middle school closure which was a cathartic experience for many colleagues. As an



Figure 4. Late period plates.

autoethnography of an art teacher's lived experience, the project is a contribution to making autoethnography through art making. In this research project, I turned up the artist identity and allowed myself to be a more committed artist in the classroom. By doing this, I could exemplify and model an artist's working method in the school, sharing what became an obsession with ceramics and with developing a body of work. I could be as close as possible to being an artist, committed to developing a personal body of work. One of the themes of the subject matter of the plates was the relationship between my learning and experience as an art student and then an art teacher, a relatively unusual subject in art. Autobiography in art making is common, of course, but the plates adopted a meta-cognitive approach to how I developed the plates and how I had learnt to be an art teacher.

The plates also served a wider function as socially-engaged practice within the school, acting as a focus for a project of commemoration. The exemplification of creativity in difficult circumstances, making a positive statement for the ongoing possibilities presented by middle schools until the very last day, helped students and staff at a profoundly difficult time. Reflecting on the work now, the plates and the project exists as a memorial to a way of working, teaching and learning in middle schools which seems part of a bygone era of education.

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BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN ART, ACADEMIA AND LIFE

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Abstract

The presentation is built upon a performing paper, a mixing of discourses based on a performance about the grieving mother. The presentation will blend a personal narrative with a Norse myth. The two contributors mix personal and academic discourses using temporality, contrasts, interruptions and various physical placements. Through narratives and written and spoken polyphonic utterances, the authors will clarify how the two concepts artistic and art-based research, coming from different academic meanings and focuses, can be blended in a presentation. In the blurring of the lines that separate art, academia and life, a criticism of a tradition, based on discrete disciplinary disciplines and institutional structures, arises. The intention is to contribute to an epistemological plurism that challenges a conventional understanding of the separation between art and academia. Unlike this, the two performative voices, search for the multivocal and simultaneous entrances for creating art, science and methodology in what we call “the third site”. This multilayered encounter between art and academia develop, an aesthetic epistemological position, common for the fields.

Keywords: art, storytelling, research.

Heidi:

11.27 pm my son died in a bed at the hospital

Venke:

11. 27 pm her son died in a bed at the hospital

Heidi:

This presentation is based on a storytelling performance that mixed an autobiographical story with Norse mythology where the theme was about a son dying.

In a myth in Norse mythology, Odin, the one-eyed god, tells his foster son about his two ravens Hugin and Munin. Every day the two ravens flies out into the world. Odin is afraid, he says to his foster son. He is afraid that Hugin, meaning the thought, will not come back to him. But he is even more afraid, that Munin, the memory, will not return. (1)

I am also afraid, I am afraid of losing the painful memory of my son dying, because the pain ensures that he once lived. The memory is blurring of life and death; the body, as in grotesque realism, both carries and explores the memory.

We are going to share with you this moment of now, this blurring, tell you words, images and utterances of something that once happened, something that is happening now. We discover new knowledge concerning life, death, art and academia. This discovery we call the third site.

Venke:

The artist's and the researchers voices emerges as empirical-near narratives with the intent to clarify and argue for how artistic-, art-based- and basic research can intervene. In the blurring of the lines that separate art, academia and life, a criticism of a tradition, based on discrete disciplinary disciplines and institutional structures, arise.

Heidi:

11.53 am.

I had been sitting by my dying son since 11. 53.

On my left side, there was a window.

I looked out of the window.

The window was open. It did not help. Both inside and outside the air was like...

Sometimes I got up and left the small room. So that others could sit down to say goodbye.

Then I sat down again.

Soon he was just a memory.

Death kissed him.

His skin turned grey.

I saw the blue line on his lips.

11.27

the nurse said as gently as she could: "Now he has passed away."

Venke:

I hear the mother's breath, I hear the son's breath, I hear my brother's breath; I hear my heart breathing...

The core of the art-based research is the artistic experience meeting life itself ... the grieving mother with the sounds, her breath, her son's breath ... The layers in the narratives that meet the interpretive heart, body and mind of the researcher. Researchers with a thinking heart do not

believe in pure objectivity ... As Alex Arteaga claimed in 2010: "It is a myth that reflection is only possible from the outside". (2) The researcher's voice comes also from within. The researcher's voice from within is mixed with theoretical and analytical embodied reflections.

Heidi:

In this project, the artistic research looked upon the memory as a resource to the site.

In his incomplete work "The visible and the invisible", the French philosopher Maurice Merleau - Ponty examines the relationship between experience and verbalization of this experience. (3) The experience is surrounded by a silence that the words breaks down. (3) Experience is mute and unaware of its own meaning; the experience makes a call for the language. (3) And in our case, because of the richness in the third site, the language became multivocal.

Merleau - Ponty also introduces the term "the flesh" which can be understood as the living body, the body that looks, feels, tastes and the like. (3) The body is looked upon as something that is aware of its presence. The language realizes this presence. This corresponds to the development of this performance. Through the experience of losing a child, there was a need to make sense of this experience; I could not leave my dead son in silence. There were memories to be taken care of.

Venke:

I work with art-based research. I work with art-based methodology. What are the sources of art-based reflection?

The art-based methodology relates to artistic experience from outside and inside.... The artistic experience brings forth layers of grief, hidden memories. The loss is being processed and present. It brings the loss to exist.... What is real, what can we know, what does meaning mean? These questions are common for art and academia and blur the lines between discipline-based positions. These blurrings offers a third site that is ambiguous, not clear, it is anti-structural rather than structural. With Jacques Derrida's word, this site "does not settle for methodological procedures, it opens up passages, it marches ahead and marks a trail...". (4) This site invites to use new entrances to create new performatives. This site will never see itself in relation to a simple opposition between art and academia. This site is our third site.

In this context, we would like to emphasize that we consider it necessary to be explicit about the theory and methodical awareness in written publications to substantiate transparency in artistic research.

Heidi:

The mixed, the blurring is both the danger and the creative force according to Norse mythology. It is clearly seen in the following story about Loke.

Loke, one day he left the home of gods and went far away to the land of the giants. There he entered a forest. In between the trees, he saw something coming towards him. She had long, long legs like the trunks of the trees. She had long and heavy breasts, and the long hair was blowing, blowing in the wind created by her steps. She grabbed him in her strong arms and said: "I have been waiting for you." Then she kissed him. Her name was Angerboda, which means: You will regret this. Then they started, blending their bodies and exchanging fluid, up along the trunks of the trees, down on the ground, here and there, up and down, in and out.

After a while, a good while, Loke wanted to leave. Angerboda said: "Excuse me, what about the children?" "The children?" This endless activity had resulted in three children. "I do not have time to take care of them," said Angerboda, "I am a busy woman, and I am running my own business. You being a father, you have to take the children with you. Therefore, Loke left with three children. (5)

Venke:

Who were they?

In our wondering inquiry, we relate to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten who already in 18th century derived the concept of sensuous knowledge to describe aesthetic. (6) Meaning that aesthetic is a specific type of knowledge.

We see sensuous knowledge together with the emphasis of the notion of embodied knowledge as crucial, for existing in the gap between words and what we consider as being reality. This understanding of aesthetics opens our story towards phenomenological sensibilities presented in poetic, factual, grotesque and expressive forms that include all senses in our efforts to make meaning in the world we live together.

Who were they?

Heidi:

I will come back to that.

We live in a dialectical relationship between to remember and to forget. In life, it is essential to forget. The author P. L. Travers said: "Perhaps he came to realize that if a thing is to be remembered, it has first to be forgotten." (7) In our project memory can be seen upon as an investigation of embodied knowledge.

Venke:

The grieving mother`s voice and movements lead us into the stories...

This aesthetic experience also becomes a part of the researcher`s experiences.

The performative destabilizes conventional presentation of subjectivity through narrative elements that destruct, at least challenge conventional forms of representation. As the cultural theorist Morten Kyndrup's description highlights the performative character of meaningful action as a performative doing or a performative being that not only points into here and now and the future, but also look back in the archives. (8)

Heidi:

I remember I saw my son die; his body lost what I recognized in him. I saw, heard and felt that there was a different being lying there, not my son. He was an object. My living body reacted to the dead body; it was the sensation of Kristva's Abject (9); the paradox, the beginning and the end. To understand the meaning of this, I had to use my body to enter the memories; I had to use my body to turn the experience into a language of aesthetics. The body is also important for the grotesque realism found in the work by Mikhael Bakhtin (10). The grotesque realism as an aesthetic is the materially bodily principle of life. The body is unfinished as it still creates and is being created. The body reveals its being as an expanding and self-crossing element through acts like intercourse, pregnancy, birth, eating, drinking, satisfaction and fighting with death (10).

Venke:

The grotesque realism used in the third site, offers a narrative modality where the psychological aspects disappears and instead, the cosmic is emphasized. Mikkel Fugl Eskjær says that in the cosmic worldview, the history of the individual is written in the circles of the body and nature. This means that the mourning mother's individual biography is inscribed in cyclical streams connected to bodily desire, life and death and this refers to what Bakhtin describe as our "collective body" (11). The grieving mother's story as an artful production of meaning holds our body and mind in the grip between grotesque irony and fragility.

Heidi:

Degradation is a prominent feature in grotesque realism. Everything that is spiritual, ideal and abstract is brought down to a material bodily level. The second feature is the transcending; it has no clear and normative boundaries between the cosmos, the social and the body (10)

Venke:

Via grotesque realism, we are removed from the actual death happening 11.05.2016 and our own sorrow, - and the death of our beloved becomes situated in our body and soul. As such, the aesthetic experience is based upon both an epistemological and ontological elasticity because the experience demand elasticity. As Della Pollock, that work with performance theory and cultural studies, claims: "Performance writing is evocative, reflexive, multivocal, citational, and always incomplete" (12). For the traditionalists, for the conventional academics these concepts are outside the field of academia.

Unlike this, we, the two performative voices, search for the multivocal and simultaneous entrances for creating art, science and methodology in the third site. In this way the third site invite to transcend disciplinary boundaries – as in our collaboration.

Heidi:

Through his three children, Loke is the cosmos, the social and the body, it is the blurring. First you have Midgaardsormen, a serpent, growing fast, the gods threw him into the ocean. There he continued to grow, until he reached his own tail. He is keeping the world together, if he let go of his tail, the world will collapse, land will sink, water will raise, and you have to find a new place to live. The second child was Fenrisulven, a wolf so big and greedy that he could swallow the moon. They had to tie him with a leach made of the sound of cat's paws, made of women's beard, made of birds spat, made of fish breath, made of the roots of the mountains.

Then the third child, called Hel, meaning whole, funny name for one who is half. Half-dead, half-alive, she is ruling in the land of no visits, no one wants to go there. Queen of death, queen of those who dies of sickness.

My son was sick. He had cancer. I kissed him, transmitted the memories, and created a new being in the retelling of the memories.

Venke:

This multi-layered encounter between art and academia develop the third site and what we will call, an aesthetic epistemological position, common for the fields of art-based and scientific basic research.

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LEARNING IDENTITY: RELATIONSHIPS OF MEMORY, PLACE AND SPACE TO PERCEPTIONS OF FAILURE AND SUCCESS

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Abstract

This study charts the journeys of returners-turned-academics (RtAs) – people whose learning identity may have been compromised during a negative secondary school experience. *What factors contributed to that negative impact, how and why were they overcome in order to re-enter academe? How is their learning journey conceptualised – what is the relationship of ‘place and space’ to RtAs perceived learning identities and how do they describe their iteration back to learning?*

Why are educational success and failure defined so narrowly? This question strikes at the heart of education itself – what might its purpose be? This study focusses on the construct of perceived academic success and failure through a phenomenological lens of a specific sector of society – those who will be defined as ‘returners-turned academics’ (RtAs), an unresearched area in the field of learning identity and access to education.

It explores how the actors, agents and staging points in a negative secondary school experience might have contributed to initial educational ‘failure’ and the perceived power distributions affecting this process. It contributes to the discussion of the ways in which these might be articulated through a re-exploration of the place and space of the participants’ educational experience, together with the relationship of recollection to memory, stimulated by re-entering the space, as a foundation of these perceptions.

Learning identity, learner iteration, memory and place and space

18 INTRODUCTION

This study explores perceptions of success and failure. In the case of this group of respondents, so-called contemporary ‘success’ masks negative lived experience. In revealing their perceptions of power distributions in their memory of place and space and the factors that changed their educational trajectory in later life, it is hoped that the research will inform a better understanding of success and failure than is currently presented through the binary reductionism of the lens of neoliberalism.

I hope to make a claim for an autoethnographic approach to the study, using personal experience to critique and comment on the cultural practice of education. In so doing, I hope to contribute to the creation of ‘particular and contingent knowledges and ways of being in the world that honour story, artfulness, emotions and the body’ [1] (Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis 2016, p25).

The study is in a constant state of emergence. It is dynamic and is continually being informed and re-informed by the narratives (obtained with all permissions and safeguards) from returners-to-academe (RtAs) across different academic disciplines and institutions. It has no end, no rules, no

exclusion, but over time has developed its own autoethnographic protocols or lens which frame the narratives into a coherent story. It is the development of these lenses which I seek to illustrate, to define, and as an academic researcher to critique in the hope that they may help to inform a sense of the possible in academic achievement.

21st century research into formal education institutions has described them as prisons in the US, (Meiners 2007, p27) [2], learning spaces as charged with rising levels of violence (Cowie, et al. 2008) [3], (Agnich and Miyazaki 2013) [4], places where the symbolic violence of imposed cultural practices is enacted (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2002, p167) [5] and students' learning identities thereby compromised:

'At school, I learned that I was stupid.'

'At school, I learned that I should not be there.'

'It didn't feel safe – the atmosphere was aggressive.'

These quotations from participants in the present research pilot form the springboard for an exploration of the experience of a hitherto invisible group of people: in the iteration of memory, how changes might be charted that have enabled them not only to return to formal education in later life, but re-discover a passion for learning that resulted in a (wholly or partly) unexpected career in academe. Human development is pluri-dimensional, therefore, as the experience of a student in a secondary educational institution cannot be described as the only influence on learning identity, respondents' perceptions of the iteration of influences carried to and from school and where the crossovers occur are also of interest.

19 WHAT IS 'EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS'?

'What are people able to do and to be?' This question defines Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach, because 'the crucial good societies should be offering to their people is a set of opportunities, or substantial freedoms, which people may or may not exercise in action – the choice is theirs' (Nussbaum 2013, p18) [6]. Education, one of these opportunities, is a tangle of contest and dispute, even in the UK. Its availability to all is a matter of debate - people's choices are mediated by many contexts and policy pays only lip service to this relatively new approach theorizing society and the economy.

Formal education in the Western world is a paradox. It serves as much as to divide as to build, to 'other' as well as to mediate and equate. It might be argued that this has always been the case, although the importance of current government policies moving the causes of success and /or failure from the system to the individual (Anyon 2006) [7] (Clycq, Nouwen and Vandembroucke 2013) [8] cannot be minimized. In this way, education reflects the *agon* of human existence, of which struggle, exercise and agency of power are integral elements. A person's capacity to make educational choices is fraught with dynamically interacting variables.

Educational success, it is argued, may be narrowly defined as academic achievement. In terms of spatial conception, it's a ladder going up... enabling the climber to reach a series of levels or plateaux to explore. *How interesting might it be if we were to conceptualise this spatially as a horizontal axis, and not a vertical one?* Poropat, in research on the Five Factor Model of personality and academic performance, found that conscientiousness rivalled intelligence, superseding agreeableness, openness, extroversion and emotional stability as the strongest predictor of secondary and tertiary academic success – but not primary (Poropat 2009) [9]. *How then, might this 'conscientiousness'*

evolve or be repressed in secondary school? Might it be described in Foucauldian terms as an operation of the 'technologies of the self'?

...which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality... (Foucault, 1982) [10]

The operations and the states are matters of debate in the many discourses enacted in the school and at home. These cannot but impact on learning identity, influencing individual choices, since freedom to do so is determined within the power structures at play.

Questions arise – *how does conscientiousness as a personality trait develop? What might mitigate against this?* There are, in the classroom, opportunities for both growth and suppression but if the concept of power as medium is used, then a different perspective may emerge - learners are engaged in the *agon*. Power as medium implies a flattening of the order of structures requiring negotiation (without negating the power they possess). Such a perspective might mitigate the linear thinking that defines and establishes a hierarchy and, like the salmon swimming upstream, might result in a material and purposeful strength. This in turn might inform learner behavior, and, like the salmon, encourage a mode of action that is power, actively enabling the practice of freedom, without guaranteeing an end-product.

20 THE LEARNING IDENTITY AND MEMORY

This paper contends that the principal foundation stone of learning is memory. Memory is non-linear, (episodic - one expression of this), multidimensional and multisensory in its dynamic enactment in human development and in the human narrative. It both forms and informs space and place in ways that are usually, in current educational practice, partially recognised, rarely as a whole, and that mostly implicitly rather than explicitly. The roles that space and place in their entirety play in impacting learning identity, how affect might manifest in spaces, through perceived conceptualisations of embodiment are rarely explored from the point of view of memory. There is much research on the space and place elements of pedagogy, the spatial affordances in places of learning (Koutamatis 2011) [11] (Keiding 2011) [12], the contested and mediated uses of space (Grosvenor 2003, 17) [13], and personal recollections of classroom experience from teachers and students (ibid), however, not much charting the move through different learning spaces and consequent observations and reflections from learners who 'failed'. The processes of failure, the challenges of overcoming and the iteration of the learning identity here are invisible, but the stories need not be, in order to better inform the expectations of the next generation.

The learning identity is a metacognitive awareness of what it means to learn. According to Kolb and Kolb, it is an iteration culminating in an understanding of the learning self that 'permeates deeply into all aspects of the way one lives their life' (Kolb and Kolb 2012) [14]. It is a process, not a product. Carl Rogers emphasizes the central role of memory, experience and recall here, as a fluid gauge by which the dynamic process of valuing, an integral element of the learning identity, is engaged:

'the present moment of experiencing the memory traces of all the relevant learnings from the past. This moment has not only its immediate sensory impact, but it has meaning growing out of similar experiences in the past.' (Rogers 1964) [15].

Memory and the learning identity exist in a dynamic relationship. This is autobiographical memory, a combination, according to Williams et al, of episodic - where, when and with whom and semantic – knowledge about the world built from experience - memories (Williams, Conway and Cohen 2008) [16].

Memory, therefore, lies at the formation of our being and is a record of the way in which we have made meaning of or sensed the world. An examination of it is entirely valid, even though the events surrounding the memory might be factually established as different. *What has remained, how it has been ordered, how this process has occurred, what the effects might have been and where these are held* are key questions at the heart of identity formation, with much to say about the learning identity.

‘The ability to mentally travel through time is an expression of the episodic memory system of the brain and is not shared by other systems of memory’ (Wheeler, Stuss and Tulving 1997) [17]

Probing contextualized narratives may enable new insights into the pluri-dimensional and emergent person memory has effected. The process is dynamic and reflexive. This is a profoundly phenomenological way of examining the narrative of the emerging human consciousness – unique to each individual. *Where and what is the role of time? Where and how was this emergence challenged? How were these challenges negotiated? What narrative was constructed, what is its iteration and what is its current form? How do people conceptualise themselves as the learning-child and the learning-adult? What might the relationship be between becoming, knowing and achieving wisdom to the narrative of the secondary school, especially when this experience has been negative? How has this become positive in an adult iteration into academe?*

This investigation takes an autoethnographic approach to exploring stories of embodiment - encounters with space and place in the learning iteration through secondary school, with people whose experiences at that time were negative. Taking the premise that memory of place and space influences the core of our being, I look at the ways in which these memories feed a narrative of later life engagement with academe that might be described as ‘successful’.

‘Through attending to the phenomenon of place, we catch sight of how memory forms an undulating core at the heart of our being.’ (Trigg 2012 p xvi) [18]

The body plays a vital role as mediator between what is here, inside, and what is there, outside. Seen in this way our cognitive and cultural experiences of the world become problematised, and what comes to the fore is the body’s lived, pre-personal experience of the world. In other words, before there is a rationalisation of place into sociocultural constraints, the body is affected by what surrounds it on an anonymous level. (Jones 2013) [19]

Ken Gale conceptualizes ‘becoming’ as the human state of being – it is not static, but dynamic. ‘Becoming’ means not just reacting but absorbing, being absorbed, touching, being touched – a reflexive, almost amoebic picture of the human in flux, losing part of the self, gaining parts, subsuming difference, becoming different through the ‘fluid, affective relationships’ (Gale 2018) [20] that constitute being – Trigg states that because this can happen instantaneously,

...the body embodies the reversibility between the visible and the invisible and so disrupts the distance between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ (Trigg 2012 p159) [21]

Conceptualisation of embodiment, therefore, is complex. It is not boundaried by awareness of physicality. Memory might evoke physicality, but in multidimensional vortices in which definition,

difference and agency mold and meld into each other, impossible to disentangle. As Ken Gale describes in his question concerning friendship 'how do we make ourselves invisible and visible?'

'I see me *as*, I don't see me... there is no me to see, whatever is me is seen *as*, whatever might be 'real' in me is always represented *as*, by that me and the me's [sic] that are my alterity.' (Gale 2018 p111) [22]

In other words, 'I', my identity is fluid – I cannot 'see' myself on my own – my perception of myself requires interaction, influence, the reflexivity of agency, because withdrawing from the 'becoming in relationship' or transferring the 'I' back to a view of itself in mirror, denuded, leaves self-sense in a 'harrowing space of self identification' (ibid). Self perception, identity, is in flux, feeding both from and into the 'undulating core' that, when probed, will yield much richness through the narrative of experience. One's narrative, then, becomes a truth game – mediated and contested by the values circulating around it, being forged, reduced, expanded by the forces interested or disinterested in influencing it.

This paper, therefore, takes a post-humanist, phenomenological and decidedly non linear stance on the issues of memory, identity, learning, failure and success, and place and space through the lens of Dylan Trigg:

An approach to memory can be drawn, which relies less on linearity and more on a constellation of different perspectives, mutually edifying each other. [...] memory diffuses itself in several pathways simultaneously, all of which are experienced from the inside out. (Trigg 2012 p xvii) [23]

Where the value of the learning narrative – basically indistinguishable from the human development narrative but viewed from an educational perspective - is explored in detail, it is hoped that change may be effected:

'Stories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories that individuals or nations live by and you change the individuals and the nations themselves' (Okri 1996, p21) [24]

3 THE RESEARCH PILOT

Five academics were recruited for the pilot, with varying experiences of secondary school. It is hoped that this topic will be interest to others who would be most welcome to volunteer for the project (please contact me!) The aim is to interview participants using photo-recall of their learning places, or where possible physically to re-visit these, to uncover elements of their learning experience that may not perhaps have been explored before, and to interpret these memories through an auto-ethnographic lens.

Participants are of varying ages – the aim here is threefold - firstly to isolate elements that identify a group that might be persuaded back into education; secondly, in recounting their stories to emphasise to the learning community how identities are formed and the importance of the role of memory, (both the effect these experiences have had and the recall process); and thirdly, to challenge the participants themselves concerning the ways in which their memories may be informing their present experience, and how their influence over the same systems might be being informed.

Participants for the pilot have been recruited by word of mouth – an expressed interest in the research aim. There is a sense in which the desire to have one's learning story heard is apparent – not accompanied by a sense of urgency, but a sense of value of that experience. Participants are those whose learning journey has been different from the 'usual' linear trajectory: i.e. not secondary school qualifications leading to undergraduate study, in turn motivating post-graduate

research and a career in academe. These respondents experienced significant challenges in and out of school. These challenges are being explored and analysed with attention to the participants' recollection of the physical and spatial informants of their learning identity. The qualitative nature of this retelling provides a rich and messy context with a grounded theory approach to the themes developing.

Data collection, too, is messy. It is non-linear – we begin with an interview, as unstructured as possible with one main theme – an invitation to remember. Interviews take place in different places – homes, work places, later, it is hoped, in the learning place to which they refer. Field notes and recordings are made to enable constant comparison, identification of themes and a deeper dive at later point. Participants are invited to revisit the researcher's interpretation of what they've said and identify themes themselves for further exploration and analysis. Because this is messy, respondents are also made aware that counselling is available to them should they desire it (independent of the researcher).

I consider at this time that gendered aspects of this impact may arise, but want to move away from an initial presentation that could, arguably perhaps through cultural associations, prejudice some of the findings. This is not to ignore the massive importance of the gender debate in education, it is to attempt to 'make strange' this particular investigation. It is of more interest to me to present the subjects using the third person gender neutral pronouns 'ze' and 'hir' and address the issue of gender later, should the necessity of commenting on it become apparent. Non gender specific names have been chosen deliberately. Using gender neutral language will, it is hoped, 'cast a different light'; making the topic critically more engaging.

4 INITIAL THEMES FROM THE PILOT

4.1 Response to the physical environment of secondary school

Respondents first comments on their recall concern the aesthetics of their surroundings, quite literally the beauty, or not, of the school building. Interestingly, beauty does not feature after the secondary school (in descriptions of higher education institutions) with quite such importance. Grosvenor and Burke's first iteration of the ideal school in 2003 put 'a beautiful school' at the top of the list of desired qualities in a building (Grosvenor 2003, 15) [25]. Why might children be arbiters of the aesthetic in this way – is there an innate sense of the Renaissance 'golden ratio'?

Recalled components of a beautiful place include large windows (a connection with the outside), high ceilings and spacious rooms. The connection with the outside is primarily a connection with nature. Windows seem to mitigate or intensify the size and density of the barrier between the respondents and nature.

Impressions here are visual, although they do not involve colour. People are also aware of smell – usually a negative factor. Olfaction is a very powerful recall stimulant with multifarious associations – Proust and his madeleine, for example. In corridors: 'our school smelled like a hospital' (Lee) – the pungent disinfectant - and the food - 'a smell of fetid mashed potato' – charging the space negatively.

4.2 Pluri-dimensionality of space and place...

What effect then might beautiful surroundings have on a learner's development? Being in a beautiful space does not apparently guarantee a safe or peaceful ambience. This issue will be

probed further to create a map of respondents' considerations regarding multi-sensory beauty of place. What are its dimensions, elements, signs and signifiers?

Some respondents have articulated a sense of revulsion so strong that it engenders a physical response towards their modern, grey, concrete-loaded learning places. This is so strong in one participant that it seems to have communicated itself to hir children – might this be a 'germ cell' trauma transfer (not viral – stem cell), or by association? There is much to explore here in terms of how places and spaces hold and communicate a sense of trauma.

4.3 Cultural capital and social reproduction

Two of the pilot's respondents engaged in activities unusual for the working class (as designated by them, in consideration of their socio-economic, family-educational and domestic background):

'When you're a kid you have no idea of all that...[referring to class and financial boundaries] owning a horse was never an issue. I just wanted to be around them'. (Ray)

These individuals excelled in horse riding and music/ dance - there is no sense in which they were continuing a family tradition. Exploring, the spaces and places of continuing engagement in these pursuits, mediated by human (and animal) encounters and their influence on present and future learning is planned.

4.4 Perceptions and breakthroughs

One participant still carries a sense of shame in terms of hir perceived lack of achievement in hir physically repellent school surroundings. Failure here notwithstanding, outside the school, high level success in music and dance was achieved. The shame then, bears deeper analysis. *Might conscientiousness frustrated present as shame?*

Another participant regarded hir riding lessons as sacrosanct, and although ze worked on Saturdays to earn enough to pay for most of these, expected some contribution from very over-stretched parents. This is recalled now as a possible source of family tension. What is surprising is that this participant had succeeded in gaining admission to the best local school, but was very aware that the cost was prohibitive... and for this reason decided to go to the other one. *What is involved in this type of rational justification?*

This participant accessed higher education in later life, leading to a career in academe. Not having done this earlier is still a source of pain. A belief-barrier stopped hir, still visually present in hir memory. When ze got into university, this image ze shared was not one of overcoming (and I believe this is conceptually significant) – the wall was not surmounted – it shattered in front of hir:

'The wall shattered – crumbled. There was a hole big enough for me to run through, not jump over' (Ray)

The sense of pushing through, the power of this mental image and the shatter factors of that physical barrier, bear further examination.

4.5 Perceptions of embodiment

'Space is mediated by people' said Lindsay. Being present to hir learning environment and in pain meant engaging in disruptive behaviours, managed in a detached and superficial distinctly non-pastorally mediated space.

'I was ignored. They knew I would just get on with it' said Lesley. Educational triage (Gillborn and Youdell 2001, p88) [26] here creates the solid body of the middle ground student – an uncomplaining and largely anonymous (unrecognised) mass, not seen as individuals, moving in and out of classrooms... *What are the effects on embodiment of being 'unseen'?*

5 FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION...

Themes so far are in no way exhaustive. Because of the sensitivity around the invisibility of this group, findings will be handled carefully. However, since the 1990s, the UK and other Western countries have focussed on failure as the responsibility of the individual, rather than seeing a person as caught in a net of challenging influences that distort their choices – 'a pathological analysis' (Apple, Oliver and Zenk 1996, p69) [27]. Pierre Bourdieu himself escaped the exigencies of his upbringing (not his theories) to become the most influential sociologist of recent times. By exploring the respondents' hidden stories of fields of cultural production (Wacquant 2002) [28] and comprehending their negotiation of obstacles through a Foucauldian approach to power, it is hoped that notions of success and failure may be redefined for the benefit of the next generation.

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Understanding educational experience. “Clinica della Formazione” as a hybrid and inclusive research approach

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Abstract

Research in educational and learning studies can not only be theoretical, analytical and descriptive. It has also to be connected with real social and educational experiences, in order to lead the subjects involved in these processes (especially professionals, such as educators, teachers, social workers, etc.) to reflect upon their daily practices and to understand, deconstruct, orient, plan, evaluate, criticize, and theorize them. This implies the need to carry out qualitative inquiry as activism, so as to make the research transformative, situated, positioned, context-sensitive, experience-near and embodied. It is no surprise, therefore, that in the last few decades many types of empirical research have emerged – for instance, participatory action research – with the aim not only to study, but also to change the social and material contexts of education, together with the subjects who experience these contexts every day.

Starting from these introductory reflections, the paper intends to present the “Clinica della Formazione”, a particular theoretical-methodological approach to action research, which is still hardly known in the international debate. This approach was developed in the Nineties by the Italian pedagogist and philosopher of education Riccardo Massa, and is currently adopted by quite a few Italian scholars of education. Although the “Clinica della Formazione” grounds on specific and original theoretical categories, some of its epistemological premises and research and training strategies can interact successfully with current reflective perspectives, such as Transformative Learning and Critical Reflection, and with new materialisms and sociomaterial approaches, such as Actor-Network Theory and Activity Theory. In this sense, the most distinctive aspect of the “Clinica della Formazione” is hybridity, that is, the capability to synthesize theorizations and operative strategies belonging to research traditions that are often considered irreconcilable. This very characteristic makes it an inspiring and innovative perspective, able to contribute significantly to the contemporary debate in educational and learning studies.

After briefly reconstructing the genesis and evolution of the “Clinica della Formazione”, the paper will outline the main theoretical and methodological characteristics of this approach, also showing some possible uses in both research and training of practitioners, and highlighting the points of contact with reflective and materialist perspectives.

Keywords: Clinica della Formazione, reflective approaches, sociomaterial approaches.

5 INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to briefly illustrate the epistemological and methodological cornerstones of a particular action research approach, called “Clinica della Formazione”. This approach originated in the Italian pedagogical context and developed in the Nineties of the twentieth century, above all thanks to the work of a pedagogue and philosopher of education, Riccardo Massa (1945-2000) and a group of scholars close to him [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6]. There are several reasons that led us to present this approach. Firstly, the “Clinica della Formazione” is a perspective that adopts a theoretical apparatus that we deem to be of considerable interest for qualitative research, as it allows to analyze the educational experience in an innovative way, preserving the intrinsic complexity that marks this experience. For this reason, given that this perspective is still unknown in the International educational debate, we considered it useful to contribute to its diffusion outside Italy. Moreover, as first pointed out by the Italian scholar Daniele Sartori, a specialist in Massa’s work, although the “Clinica della Formazione” grounds on specific and original theoretical categories, some of its epistemological premises and research and training strategies can interact successfully with current reflective perspectives, such as Transformative Learning and Critical Reflection, and with New Materialisms and sociomaterial approaches, such as Actor-Network Theory and Activity Theory [7], [8], [9]. In this sense, the most distinctive aspect of the “Clinica della Formazione” is hybridity, that is, the capability to synthesize theorizations and operative strategies belonging to research traditions that are often considered irreconcilable.

After briefly reconstructing the genesis and evolution of the “Clinica della Formazione”, the paper will outline the main theoretical and methodological characteristics of this approach, also showing some possible uses in both research and training of practitioners, and highlighting the points of contact with reflective and materialist perspectives.

6 CLINICA DELLA FORMAZIONE

“Clinica della Formazione” is a theoretical-methodological proposal of empirical research and of “second level” education (that is, “training of trainers”). It has been and is used to research on heterogeneous subjects, to train educators, teachers, parents, to provide pedagogical consultancy and supervision to educational teams at school as well as in other organizations where educational projects are developed.

First of all, it must be specified that the expression “Clinica della Formazione” is difficult to translate into English. The Italian term “Clinica”, although it can be translated as “Clinic”, in Massa’s intentions does not correspond to the common meaning of this word. Massa, as a matter of fact, adopts this word from Michel Foucault’s *Naissance de la clinique* [10], and uses it as a metaphor to indicate a specific pedagogical perspective aimed at nourishing a virtuous circle between theory and practice, investigating the hidden dimensions of educational experiences and understanding what makes each educational situation unique. The etymological meaning of the term “Clinica” evokes the gesture of the doctor who bends over the patient’s body to listen, touch, observe it, and to interpret its symptoms, to know its illness history and develop her/his knowledge of the condition of that subject; this knowledge can be used not only to diagnose the pathology of the patient, but also to identify the most appropriate treatment. The “Clinica”, in this sense, is both a way of knowing a specific empirical reality, and a way of acting on that reality in order to change it. According to Massa, using a “Clinica della Formazione” approach means to bend metaphorically on the educational experience in order to know, analyze, interpret, and try to transform it. The “Clinica della Formazione”, however, is not a psychological or medical approach, it does not deal with pathological or abnormal cases, nor aims to cure people’s body or mind, nor focuses on individuals,

but rather proposes to analyze educational practices in their concreteness and normality. Using the “Clinica della Formazione”, therefore, involves exploring in-depth education, through to the help of conceptual and methodological tools, in order to understand how it works, without considering only the evident aspects, but investigating also and above all the hidden facets. The Italian term “Formazione”, on the other hand, can be translated into English as “Training”. However, Massa uses this word to refer not only to school and formal education, but to all the practices and contexts in which social processes can be defined as educational. For all the reasons explained, we have chosen to leave the expression “Clinica della Formazione” as is, in Italian.

The chief assumption of the “Clinica della Formazione” is that in the educational experiences designed and implemented at school as well as in the educational services, some dimensions that are not immediately evident can be identified. In educational practices, in other words, hidden and elusive forces, which usually are not adequately recognized and debated in research, are actively involved. The “Clinica della Formazione” was in fact conceived to explore these “shady areas”. It involves careful observation of the educational practices, in order to understand the conscious, evident and manifest aspects, as well as the unconscious, submerged and unthinkable aspects at play. The “Clinica della Formazione” also considers education as a complex experience. Not only education is characterized by hidden dimensions, but it is the result of the interaction between multiple factors, both material and immaterial: bodies, objects, spaces, times, discourses, rules, values, meanings, rituals, symbols, knowledge, affections and emotions. Education is made up of a set of relationships between heterogeneous elements, which cannot be conceived separately and studied in isolation from one another. Education is therefore described by Massa as an extremely complex event, which develops through a dense network of explicit and implicit elements of a contextual, cognitive, affective, social and material nature. Hence, thinking about educational phenomena, analyzing, theorizing, and eventually transforming them, implies a close confrontation with a multiplicity of aspects. To account for this enormous complexity, Massa adopts the concept of “dispositivo” (the Italian translation of the French “dispositif”), another notion that the author takes from Foucault [11], [12] [13]. In line with the meanings of this term in Foucault’s work, in pedagogy Massa uses the concept of “dispositif” to: (a) highlight that education is the result of a very diverse networks of elements, which emerges thanks to an anonymous and impersonal system. In order to educate and do research in education it is therefore necessary to learn how to deal with the complexity and multiplicity of educational practices and discourses, without taking for granted that the educator is the only actor, or that she/he is always aware of what is being done or is the master of the educational process; (b) indicate that education is a technology of power/knowledge. Education always implies relationships of power made possible by knowledge and vice versa; (c) to focus on the strategic nature of educational events, that is, the fact that they always imply relationships of strength and the attempt to direct the conduct of the other. However, Massa does not limit himself to using the concept of “dispositivo” to carry out a critical analysis of education as a form of power over the subjects, as many scholars who refer to Foucault’s theory in educational studies do. Thanks to action-research and training-research Massa uses it in order to understand how education is produced as a social, cultural, specific and material phenomenon.

To this aim, in the “Clinica della Formazione” research and/or training processes, participants are asked to produce materials (e.g. written texts, images, drawings, artifacts) having firsthand educational experience as privileged focus. They usually work in small groups composed on a case-by-case basis by teachers, trainers, educators and social workers. This provides individuals and groups a practical tool for questioning the dimensions that orient the ways in which education is imagined, spoken and managed in the specific contexts where they work. This happens under the supervision of one or more trainers. The “Clinica della Formazione”, therefore, is a participatory

research aimed at creating the conditions for those who educate to reflect on the practices in which they are daily entangled, so as to understand and try to change them.

7 CLINICA DELLA FORMAZIONE AND REFLECTIVE APPROACHES

The “Clinica della Formazione” assumes that researchers interact with teachers, trainers and educators, and they help the latter reflect on their own ideas of education, school, educator/teacher, on their pedagogical models and prejudices, on their own educational habits, and on the ways in which they manage power and knowledge. This allows to unveil the implicit premises of education professionals, so that they become more aware of themselves, of their way of educating and thinking about education. Through this process, they can learn from their daily experience in schools and services. As stated by Sartori, these characteristics of the “Clinica della Formazione” allow to associate this perspective to a series of learning theories currently featuring in the International educational debate, which in general terms can be defined as reflective approaches [7], [8].

With the expression “reflective approaches” we intend to refer to a somewhat heterogeneous set of theoretical and methodological perspectives employed in different fields of knowledge, from organizational studies to those relating to adult education [8]. Reflective approaches may include very different authors and theories, such as Schön’s reflective practitioner [14], Kolb’s learning cycle [15], Mezirow’s transformative learning [16], and perspectives devoted to critical reflection [17], [18], [19]. Given the restricted length of this paper, we will only introduce schematically the common traits of these reflective approaches, showing the epistemological premises that they share – albeit in varying degrees – and that lead to a set of ideas about what learning is, can and should be.

First, reflective approaches believe that educational practices depend on (more or less intentional and conscious) human action, and that such action is closely linked to thought and forms of rationality and knowledge learnt in a variety of contexts, not just at school. Second, they relate to Dewey’s work, particularly to *How We Think* (1910) [20], and interpret it as an invite to emphasize the meaning and value of reflection as a process to learn from experience. Reflection is what allows people to learn from what they do and from the contexts they live and work, and to transform those contexts by improving their living and working conditions. Reflective approaches, therefore, argue that reflection plays a fundamental role in the relations that individuals have with themselves, with others and with the world. Through reflection, as a matter of fact, the human subject is able to know better, at the same time, her/his self, other people and reality; to solve complex problems and face difficult situations, characterized by uniqueness, uncertainty and conflict; to evaluate critically values, beliefs, meanings, social representations, expectations and assumptions that explicitly and implicitly affect individual and collective action; to develop new strategies of action and patterns of creative thinking; and to change her/his assumptions on themes, issues and problems of personal or social nature. Reflection, hence, is a construct that allows us to connect learning and experience, individual and world, mind and action. From this theoretical perspective, educating means creating the conditions for reflection before, during and after action, developing knowledge and learning related to everyday experience and practice. As can be seen, therefore, reflective approaches share many assumptions with the “Clinica della Formazione”.

8 CLINICA DELLA FORMAZIONE AND SOCIOMATERIAL APPROACHES

The “Clinica della Formazione” is not only based on theoretical and methodological premises shared with reflective approaches. In fact, it also pays attention to the materiality of educational contexts [1], [11], [12]. As we have already stressed, according to Massa and other scholars who use the “Clinica della Formazione”, education is a complex practice [21], in which bodies, times, spaces and objects play a fundamental role. Pedagogical research, therefore, cannot be limited to investigating cognitive processes, the implicit premises of educators, and intersubjective relationships, but must also reflect on the material dimensions of the educational experience. This theoretical attention to a more-than-human materiality allows the “Clinica della Formazione” to dialogue with the so-called “sociomaterial approaches” [7], [8], [22].

The popularity of sociomaterial approaches and of new materialisms in the international debate and the paradigmatic change that they are generating has prompted scholars to affirm that a sociomaterial turn in educational research is underway [23]. These approaches – including Complexity Theory, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), Actor-Network Theory (ANT), and Spatiality Theories – open up new research directions and coin a new vocabulary to rethink pedagogy as well as educational practices [24]. They challenge the primacy ascribed to humans in learning processes, and divert the attention from teachers and students to materials and materiality [25], [26], [27]. These approaches analyze learning, knowledge and educational action by decentralizing the focus from the individual who learns, knows and acts. Knowledge and learning do not occur in the mind of individual subjects, but are collective, hybrid events performed in sociomaterial networks, which the researcher has to trace and describe [28]. Education, therefore, is no longer investigated as if it were only a human prerogative, a cultural, social and personal phenomenon, resulting from relationships and intersubjective communication between teachers and students, but is rather conceived as a performance rooted in practice. Education is the effect of immanent assemblages, which include objects, technologies, spaces, times, bodies, organic materials and individuals [29]. Sociomaterial approaches, therefore, focus on relationships that connect a multitude of human and non-human actors. These approaches rely on relational onto-epistemology, emphasize the heterogeneity of the elements involved in the formation process, and avoid separating individuals from things. Sociomaterial approaches also redefine the concept of agency [9], [22], [29], [30]. Although to varying degrees, they refuse to ascribe agency to human only, and recognize the active role of non-human too. For them, material is performative, rather than inert [27]. Namely, things act on and with subjects and vice versa. This specific attention to materiality in action allows to identify what directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly supports and enables learning and is often shadowed by human-centered research [31]. Without completely sharing the radicalism of the post-anthropocentric and post-humanist assumptions promoted by neomaterialist approaches, the “Clinica della Formazione” also urges researchers, educators and social workers to investigate the material aspects of education [7]. This way, materiality turns from matter of fact into matter of concern.

9 CLINICA DELLA FORMAZIONE AS A HYBRID AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH

Research in educational and learning studies can not only be theoretical, analytical and descriptive. It has also to be connected with real social and educational experiences, in order to lead the subjects involved in these processes (especially professionals, such as educators, teachers, social workers, etc.) to reflect upon their daily practices and to understand, deconstruct, orient, plan, evaluate, criticize, and theorize them. This implies the need to carry out qualitative inquiry as activism, so as to make the research transformative, situated, positioned, context-sensitive, experience-near and

embodied. It is no surprise, therefore, that in the last few decades many types of empirical research have emerged – for instance, participatory action research – with the aim not only to study, but also to change the social and material contexts of education, together with the subjects who experience these contexts every day.

In this framework, there is also the “Clinica della Formazione”, an original and interesting proposal that in our view could offer a key contribution to the contemporary educational debate. As we have seen, it shares epistemological and methodological premises both with reflective approaches and with sociomaterial approaches. For this reason, the “Clinica della Formazione” can be considered a hybrid and inclusive perspective [32], as it allows to hold together in a single theoretical framework conceptual premises that belong to separate and often opposed research traditions. If we think that education is a complex, problematic and situated experience [21], we must avoid reducing it to a mere set of values, cognitive processes, intersubjective relationships and power relations, neglecting the tangle of material it is made of. However, education cannot be deeply understood by referring only to bodies, objects, spaces, times and technologies, without worrying about the cognitive and the emotional dimensions and the meanings that individuals give to themselves, to others and to things. In order to do research and to educate, then, we must try to keep together the human and the non-human, the explicit and the implicit dimensions, reflection and action, language and practice, thought and materiality. We believe that today this is one of the crucial challenges that every educational research that aims to affect reality should face. Certainly, it is a challenge that the “Clinica della Formazione” has already faced for some time.

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USING AESTHETIC LANGUAGE TO GIVE VOICE TO EMBODIED TEACHING EXPERIENCE: ACTIVISM AS A WAY TO RESEARCH ON PROFESSIONAL POSTURE THROUGH A VIDEO-PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

In this contribute I'll reflect on the link between Activism, Embodiment and Performative research: to do this, I will present the final part of my PhD research, a participatory, performative inquiry with Primary School teachers, focused on investigating the reflective, heuristic and transformative potential of the embodied dimension in teaching and learning processes. Through the theoretical frame of Dewey's concept of experience in Art, I will re-read a particular moment in my research: when I presented on teachers the video-performance I've realized from the data analysis. This moment made me wonder on the potential of aesthetic perspective in daily teacher's work. In fact the final meeting was a key moment as the participants' reflections transformed "my" performative composition in a shared knowledge connected with all the research process. The results were very interesting both in terms of new questions raised by the teachers and of future research possibilities in the direction of *embodied teaching*.

Keywords: Embodied teaching, Performative Inquiry, Video-performance

10 ACTIVISM AND EMBODIMENT IN MY PERFORMATIVE RESEARCH

There are radical, deeply rooted aspects in common between the macro-paradigm of Embodiment -which represented the main theoretical frame of my PhD work, Activism and Performative research. one of these aspects – even if with significant differences between one or another perspective – is to consider Experience the trigger of knowing and researching processes. The mantra of E-Cognitive science consider knowledge as embodied, environmentally embedded, enacted and extended [1], lies on this basic, epistemological concept: the primacy in knowledge of experience.

The circular interaction between Science of mind and human experience is the heart of "The Embodied Mind", the work that got started the enactive embodiment. The authors - F. Varela, E.

Thompson and E. Rosch – declare their continuity with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective: it's not possible to understand the movement of knowledge without inquiring its "central pivot": the embodiment of knowledge, of cognition and of experience itself.

Valera's enactive embodiment was an important reference in my PhD research, where I wanted to investigate the reflective, heuristic and transformative potential of the embodied dimension in teaching and learning processes. Into the larger frame of the *embodiment* paradigm, in fact, I found a generative common ground for studies and practices connected to heterogeneous fields as cognitive sciences [2], performative disciplines [3], [4], [5], and education [6], [7], and my research lied exactly at the crossroads of these three main areas.

The focus of my work was to investigate teacher's embodied teaching so I've involved a group of Primary School teachers of a public school in Milan, in the north of Italy. The research aimed at exploring their embodied way of teaching, combining a specific somatic approach: Experiential Anatomy, which focuses on the connection between the perception of one's own body and movement. I used auto/biographical methods in order to make visible participants' sense-making processes occurring during the different research stages. The research setting was designed in a way that allowed a multi-layered experience of the body activations in order to let each participant explore her own *embodied teaching*, namely her own personal way of performing teaching. The "co-operative inquiry" theorized by Heron and Reason [8] and Formenti's "Spiral of knowledge" [9] were the two main epistemological pivots in reflecting on the research objectives, as they both advance the idea of research as a co-construction of participatory knowledge. They were also fundamental in order to design the internal structure of each meeting consistently with my theoretical assumptions.

So an active, narrative, participatory perspective led me on the fieldwork.

When I have finished the empiric part of my research, during the data analysis process using N-Vivo software, I realized that the stories, the narratives, that I was collecting were for me so "sensitive data" that I wanted to get in touch with them in the more sensitive and embodied way I know, as researcher, which is body practice, movement and dance. So I turned into a more embodied dimension, taking a performative perspective. Following Haseman, I thought that the research outputs and claims to knowledge should be reported through symbolic language and forms coherent with my practice [10]. "The argue that a continued insistence that practice-led research be reported primarily in the tradition forms of research (words and numbers) can only result in the dilution and ultimately the impoverishment of the epistemological content embedded and embodied in practice" [10].

I felt the need, as researcher, to explore more deeply this performative perspective, diving myself in a completely embodied and embedded research. "Performances and their representations reside in the center of lived experience. We cannot study experience directly. We study it through and in its performative representations. Culture, so conceived, turns performance into a site where memory, emotion, fantasy, and desire interact with one another" [11].

I started my practical, performative, research, going toward the production of a video-performance to present to teachers involved in the research as final feedback moment. This change of perspective required the creation of a detailed embodied research method. This epistemological position of my performative research method was based on the primacy of the practice [12], the primacy of movement [4] and the primacy of human experience in the research process, as active motor of the research. The performance paradigm privileges an "experiential, participatory epistemology". "It values intimacy and involvement as forms of understanding. This stance allows the self to be vulnerable to its own experiences as well as to the experiences of the other" [13].

The performative analysis, documented by 160 video shootings and ended in the creation of a video-performance. My intention was to avoid the idea of "representing data". My intention was

to create a multi-frame video where teachers could enter in resonant with some fragments of our group conversations, observing, contemplating, reflecting together: not an explaining video; a lively material that could get in resonance with the vibrant stories I have collected during the research.

11 VIDEO-PERFORMANCE: ACTIVISM IN THE RESEARCH

“[Art] quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves by finding ourselves in the delight of experiencing the world about us in its varied qualities and forms” [14].

In his “theory of Experience” Dewey put the philosophical and pedagogical bases of his thought. Art is an important part of it because it represents a privileged field to observe and recognize *an* Experience: a way to go deeper into the experience. He believed that some kinds of participation in the arts could be very special type of experience: what he calls “*an* experience”. *An* experience is an event that has its own completeness, involves a build-up and resolution of anticipation. This gives the experience its uniqueness. However, what makes *an* experience truly important is its potential in transformation. In *an* experience, a person’s relationship with the world is transformed as the person comes to see some aspect of the world – which may include other people or oneself in a new way, to find new meaning, for example in his/her daily work. The use of the aesthetic and performative object in my research setting revealed itself as a powerful tool in order to trigger a high level of participation in the group. The final meeting, in fact, was a fundamental moment as the participants’ reflections transformed “my” performative composition in a shared knowledge connected with all the research process. The results were very interesting both in terms of new questions raised by the teachers and of future research possibilities in the direction of embodied teaching. This made me consider what happened to teachers during this final moment as an aesthetic experience or, maybe, *an* experience.

I arrived at the day of the final feedback moment with teachers very nervous and excited: many aspects of my research were at stake. The inquiry process had some difficulties in terms of participation and involvement as for several reasons the six research meetings were spread over six months and this lack of continuity became tiring and produced in teachers a diminished involvement. Nevertheless, I think that this final, performative moment, had the power to consolidate the research process, giving to teachers the meaning of the research.

We saw the video-performance three times, I decided not to say a lot about its content: I wanted to see how it would “act” in the research setting. The first teacher’s reactions were surprise and astonishment; watching the performance again and again the artistic product worked as a power activator because teachers started a rich, deep discussion and reflection on embodied aspects of their job, as they’d never done before during the research. They started to see the connection between the work, our research process and their daily work and they completely changed their posture in a very active way. In this sense, following Dewey, the video-performance was probably *an* experience for them. Expansion of perception is at the heart of Dewey’s aesthetics. Dewey wrote that ordinary living, routine, unobserved interaction with the world causes us to lose touch with the uniqueness and originality found in the world, “apathy and torpor conceal this expressiveness [of ordinary objects] by building a shell about them” [14]. Art, however, “throws off the covers that hide the expressiveness of experienced things” [14]. He continued, “It quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves by finding ourselves in the delight of experiencing the world about us in varied qualities and forms” [14]. But art teaches us to *perceive* objects. It teaches us to go beyond mere recognition and look at objects (and not just art objects) from fresh, new perspectives. This quality is what makes the arts so important in Dewey’s view.

The experience of making the video performance and to give it back to teachers was for me, as researcher, very impressive because I really felt that the aesthetic moment, watching the video performance, made teachers more in contact with their narrated working experiences. I didn't expect such level of participation and this made me think about the use of aesthetic language in school contexts. It seemed to me that the plot I have modelled, and therefore transformed with my bodily composition, was resonant with teachers' narrations. Participants, in fact, reacted with a change in their posture: they start to recognize themselves in my work and this process triggered a collective reflection. This reaction was coherent with my intention: I considered the video a co-construction more than my creative individual action as I composed fragments coming from research process. In the term "transposition" used as following by Giorgia, one of the teachers, is condensed the job of a compositional research [9]:

F.: How you did it?? ... when you were speaking about a "Final feedback moment" I was saying to myself: "What the heck she has to say?" (we laugh)

G.: Transposition... this is the magic. Transposition.

F.: Exactly! When I saw the video-performance for the first time it was like... when you go to an exhibition and you are looking casually... After I said to myself: "Golly! Look all the movements! There's a correspondence!". I recognize myself and my work in your movements... (Transcription of final teacher's meeting)

In conclusion, I will not go into details on my research results in this contribute, but I would like to highlight two issues. First: the aesthetic dimension - and experience – in the research worked as a powerful activator: it revealed itself an interesting tool in order to trigger a high level of participation and reflection in the group. Teachers were in a more active role of research, focused on their embodied style in learning and teaching processes. Second: the performative turn in my work allowed me to change my posture in a more active way. It gave me the courage to dive into an innovative, performative and deeply embodied analysis process. Embodiment, Performativity and Activism were for me pivotal and connected elements in my research experience.

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PROMOTING YOUTH (16-24) WELL-BEING AND PREVENTING MENTAL DISEASE: EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS' ROLE AND PRACTICE TO ENHANCE THEIR ACTIVISM

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Abstract

Based on the assumption that mental health is fundamental in every man's and woman's life [1] [2] (WHO, 2001; UE, 2014), this project focuses on the exploration of educational professionals' role and practice in order to promote youth (16-24) well-being in an Italian metropolitan area [3].

The project will try to explore modalities/strategies that, either implicitly or informally, teachers and educators set up in their professional environments, in order to promote wellbeing and prevent mental illnesses in the youth. Our hypothesis is that expert educators and teachers have developed a tacit knowledge on recognizing and handling, through educational strategies, those young people that show some initial signs of mental uneasiness, such as social isolation, school drop-out, or aggressive behavior. Therefore, with a better awareness, they can actively act and prevent the growth of disease, either in school or wherever they work, with different levels of awareness, planning their actions as primary preventative interventions [4] [5].

Framed in a qualitative approach [6], the research follows a phenomenological-hermeneutical method [7] and a case-study strategy [8]. Three cases are selected, in order to involve educational professionals working in various services, located in different areas of a metropolitan city in Northern Italy.

The project firstly foresees the involvement of participants in a semi-structured interview. Subsequently, basing on the analysis of interviews, participants will be involved in a meeting in order to share the emerging themes and to discuss about about good educational practices to promote youth well-being. Finally, a document will be written, containing ideas and reflections about the projecting and acting of good educational practices to promote well-being and prevent mental disease in youngsters.

Suggestions will be offered about the analysis of interviews, trying to focus on the educational role and practices in order to promote youth well-being.

Keywords: educational practice, educators' activism, metropolitan area, preventing mental disease, youth well-being

12 EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH: EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS' ROLE IN PROMOTING YOUTH WELL-BEING AND PREVENTING THEIR MENTAL DISEASE

The project is based on two principal assumptions: the need for an educational contribution in promoting mental health and its importance in accompanying young people (16-24) in their transition to adulthood, through the practice of educational professionals.

Referring to the Italian context, the concept of mental health is strictly connected with the Basaglia's [9] reform in the psychiatric area: mental disease started to be thought as something linked to existential, educational, social and familiar aspects. This way of thinking allows to propose a strong synergy between psychiatry and other disciplines like pedagogy, philosophy, psychology.

Moreover, this direction made a chance in re-thinking the organization and the setting of care contexts and interventions: the base for organizing the psychiatric sector started to be considered the existential link between life and mental health, not only the pathological characteristics of disease.

At this regard, scientific literature is also nowadays stressing the important role of social determinants [10] [11], intended as protective or endangering factors for mental disease: having a house, a work, social relationships [12] [13] [14]. Referring to social determinants, for example, it's easy to understand the possible richness of educational contribution about the dimensions of living, working, creating and maintaining social relationships.

Deepening the concept of mental health, Saraceno defines the professional practice in this area as "the actions for promotion, prevention and care to enhance, maintain or restore the mental health of a population" (Saraceno, 1995, p.106). In this sense, the concept of mental health includes all the inhabitants of a territory, without dividing them in mental insane or sane, because mental health concerns every man or woman.

Certainly, mental health is fundamental for everyone, in every phase of his/her life. However, there are some crucial and transitional phases requiring a specific attention in preventing disease and promoting mental health. One of these moments, referring to Western culture, is the adolescent phase [15], with a particular reference to the second adolescence (16-24), oriented to the transition to adulthood.

Considering the European context, youngsters are nowadays requested to face their "becoming adults" in very difficult conditions, related to socio-economic aspects, that make complex to live their transition to adulthood (Xie, Sen & Foster, 2014); in this situation can be complex to live existential actions as creating a professional project or a family. These aspects can weigh on youth mental health, especially when they are associated to socio-economic, cultural or educational poverty, gender dimensions or social inequality [3]. In this scenario, youngsters risk to grow up taking for granted the presence of disease, "learning to feel bad" [16], and living educational and existential path centred on these themes.

So, educational professionals' role concerning these aspects can be pivotal, if they are aware and trained about the strong link that Education can perform in taking care and protecting mental health [17] [4] [5], also acting in a preventive perspective.

In every context (Persi, 2013), educators' and teachers' acting can be important in preventing and taking care of disease: being aware and trained on these aspects can represent a valid starting point

in order to thematize, project and propose educational actions of primary and secondary prevention about mental health issues, referring also to school [18] [19] [20] [21].

13 RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The project is based on a principal question: which role and which meaning can educators' and teachers' practice have in promoting well-being and preventing youth (16-24) mental disease?

The primary aim of the research is to highlight and develop awareness about the contribution that educational professionals (educators and teachers first of all) can offer in intercepting and understanding youngsters' signal of disease.

The project is framed in a qualitative approach to research [6], focusing on a human context, intended as a complex research object [22]. The research question is oriented to the study of the meaning of educational practice in promoting well-being and preventing mental disease, so the phenomenological-hermeneutic method [7] seems to be adequate to sketch out the project.

Going on, the project is constructed with the case-study strategy [23] [8]; three cases have been selected: a high school, a social cooperative and an agency offering career counselling and training, all of them located in the Milanese hinterland.

In these contexts, participants have been selected by a sampling operation that involved both "preferential informants", particularly sensitive to youth mental health issues, both professionals working with youngsters, but not specifically concerned with mental health questions.

Basing on these characteristics, the project is a multiple case-study, based on three cases selected by their traits [23]: the identified contexts are different for their users, their mission and their location in the Milanese area. In this way, the research question has been explored in different contexts, considering their similarities and their differences.

Precisely, the following professionals have been involved in a semi-structured interview, between March and July 2018:

- 3 teachers of the high school;
- 4 educators of the social cooperative;
- 5 teacher trainers of the agency.

The interviews explored the representations and the meaning that participants connect to the concept of "mental health", their awareness about the importance that their acting can offer in promoting well-being and the educational practices they used in their work-place in order to prevent youth disease.

14 EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS' ROLE AND PRACTICE TO ENHANCE THEIR ACTIVISM

Interviews have been audio-recorded (after participants signed an informed consent) and then verbatim transcribed.

Coherently with the research method, interviews have been analysed following the model proposed by Van Manen [7]. Particularly, we chose to refer to the "holistic approach" [7], to grasp

the global meaning emerging from every interview, and to the “selective approach” [7], focused on highlighting the meaning represented by every answer.

Two independent researchers analysed the collected material and, subsequently, they discussed every aspect of the process.

The more interesting areas emerging from the analytical process regard the following aspects:

- The meaning of the concept of mental health.
- The meaning of youth mental health.
- The meaning attributed to the educational work, the role and the competences of educational professionals intended as a chance to promote well-being.

Only 4 interviewed people connected the concept of mental health to components regarding ease and well-being; the majority of participants, mental health is linked to aspects of upset, illness and disease.

In this sense, it seems that the concept of mental health firstly calls to mind difficult, impeding conditions related to medical diagnosis, health services; the idea of mental health intended as a well-being situation that everyone can live and that everyone can pursue remains on the background:

“Referring to the concept of mental health, I think about a situation of general weakness” (I 7).

Linking the concept of mental health to youngsters, what we wrote above is emphasized, because participants reported signals and aspects that show a widespread disease, that allows to describe their mental health as fragile and missing:

“The term ‘mental health’ signifies something negative regarding youth...I think about the disease that youngsters live in facing problems, they are not able to manage situations” (I 10).

Referring to these criticalities, the interviewed educational professionals spoke about the possibility to intervene through practices based on “being with”, “creating relationships” with young people, proposing them specific ways of acting:

“If I perceive that a boy has some troubles, maybe I go close to him and I ask what is wrong, or maybe I organize a meeting with his parents...This, I think...We act like this...Then, for specific preventive actions we refer to experts’ interventions” (I 8).

Only 3 participants mentioned specific models as the bases to create educational interventions with the aim of promoting youth mental well-being:

“We refer to the Life Skills model [...] Promoting well-being, preventing disease...how can we do it? Reinforcing youngsters’ social wide competences” (I1).

Moreover, the interviews highlight the recourse to external experts when there is the need to thematise specific arguments related to disease:

“As a preventive action, every year we propose activities focused on gambling, on narcotic substances, on sexuality, but for all these activities external experts come” (I 5).

Particularly, the teachers of the high school underlined a considerable difficulty in defining their role and, more generally, the role of the school in intervening in disease situations:

“I often ask myself which is our role [...]. We mustn’t educate [...] In general I think that school mustn’t aim at resolving the problem of mental disease, but it must make students able to understand and accept the disease situation, perceiving other people not as enemies” (I 10).

Following this direction, interviews show professionals’ difficulty in debating themes close to youth mental health, projecting and implementing educational strategies and activities that they intentionally thought and prepared.

So, it appears a greater attention to identify the components of disease linked to youth mental health, more than the components connected to the possible components of ease; it also seems difficult to mention and thematise instruments and practices intentionally and educationally thought in order to work with youngsters focusing on the aspects that put at risk their mental health [21] [24]. It could be useful to explore the need and the possibility to propose specific training occasions for professionals, focused on the promotion of well-being and the prevention of disease; in this way they could develop strong competences in this area [25].

The more significant reference to material aspects of the work-place that influences the promoting of well-being is mentioned by the teachers of the high schools: they underpinned the difficulty of the school in considering the educational components of the teacher’s role, conditioning the concrete chance of thinking and projecting specific interventions to take care of youth disease.

All the aspects reported above can be deepened and discussed with participants, with a particular focus on the educational practices that can be projected and realized to promote well-being and prevent disease.

A seminar will be organized and proposed to participants (December 2018), in order to discuss the reflections emerged from the interviews and to involve the professionals in a “member check” [22] process. In this way, the knowledge generated from the collected material could be co-created with people living the explored contexts. The seminar will also be projected as a chance to begin a sharing of practices between researchers and practitioners with the focus of the educational work to promote well-being and prevent youngsters’ disease, aiming to create knowledge in a collaborative way.

Basing on what will emerge from the seminar, there is the idea to write a document to highlight reflections and concrete recommendations to project educational interventions, focused on promoting well-being and preventing disease in young people. In this way, the project would create knowledge together with participants, producing an output that can be shared and communicable, potentially useful also for other educational professionals and services.

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NARRATIVE INQUIRY AS A TOOL FOR EXPLORING TEACHING AND EMPOWERING TEACHERS IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Teachers are acknowledged as key actors of Environmental Education (EE) in the pursuit of goals aspiring environmental, social and educational change. To be able to address the various challenges they meet in their teaching practice as environmental educators more qualitative research is needed to explore their 'lived teaching experience' and new professional development tools to help them reflect on and construct their identity as EE practitioners. Our study uses narrative inquiry in this dual role: as a research frame to investigate teachers' practice and identity based on the collection and analysis of their stories, and as a relational and discursive frame offering opportunities for meaningful reflection and empowerment. In this paper we present the preliminary analysis of narrative data collected from conversations with Mario, a Greek primary education teacher who is actively involved in EE. The findings address two pieces of the research puzzle: (a) the boundaries and boundary crossing processes Mario encountered when dealing with some complex and multidimensional concepts of EE, and (b) the identification of the first steps in the process of building a shared narrative space carrying the potential to lead to a mutually empowering research relationship.

Keywords: environmental education, narrative inquiry, teachers, boundary crossing theory, reflection, empowerment

15 INTRODUCTION

Environmental Education (EE) is recognised as a prerequisite for preparing an enlightened and responsible citizenry and building more ecological and viable futures. However, this is not an easy and straightforward goal. For many years, foundational discourses among scholars, policy-makers and practitioners have led to a rich conceptual, theoretical and pedagogical framework to guide EE praxis [1], [2], [3], with formal education and school context to attract preponderant attention and teachers identified as key actors in such an educational enterprise. The recent incorporation of the 'sustainability' concept in EE policy narratives inaugurated new arenas for theoretical and pedagogical considerations. Moreover, it set focus on the need for strengthening teachers' competence in meaningfully engaging with EE practice [4], [5], [6].

Envisioning for teachers, the role of potential agents of environmental, social and educational change in the pursuit of sustainability [7], [8], [4], [9], [10] brings them in front of many challenges. Prominent among them is how to appropriately address complex, ambiguous, context-specific and value-laden environmental and sustainability concepts and issues, both conceptually and pedagogically [5]. To be able to meet such challenges research has to deepen our understanding of EE practice, and teachers themselves need to be supported in developing a reflective stance towards it. Both can be supported, Hart [4] argues, by helping environmental educators story, discuss and interpret their 'lived teaching experience'.

Personal narration is thus viewed as an integral part of teachers' professional development and has been proposed to become incorporated in related activities aiming to aid teachers construct themselves as practitioners [11]. Empowering environmental educators to articulate, share and critically examine their stories can serve as a basis to better understand EE teaching and learning, and for educational praxis to be equipped with more critical and reflective agents [4]. Our study builds on the potential of narrative inquiry as a research frame to investigate the professional identity and practice of environmental educators on a deeper level through collecting and analysing their stories. Moreover, the study goes into exploring whether and how narrative inquiry as a relational and discursive methodological frame can provide a reflective lens and become an empowerment path for EE practitioners.

In this paper we present the preliminary analysis of recently collected narrative data, the focus of which was on identifying the 'boundaries' Mario, a Greek primary education teacher actively involved in EE, meets in his teaching practice, and the 'boundary-crossing' processes employed to overcome them. The concepts of 'boundaries', 'boundary-crossing' and 'boundary objects' are briefly outlined in the following section drawing on the approach developed by Akkerman & Bakker [12]. Attention is also drawn to a core element of narrative inquiry approach, the process of establishing a close and trust researcher-participant relationship [13], which is argued to lead to the empowerment of both sides.

15.1 On boundaries, boundary crossings and boundary objects

The theoretical constructs of 'boundaries', boundary-crossing' and 'boundary objects' were used in our study to scaffold our exploration of the formation and re-structuration processes of environmental educators' professional identity as a result of their struggle to cope with various challenges they meet in their teaching practice. In this section we provide a brief introduction to them.

According to Akkerman & Bakker [12] individuals usually refer to and act within *the boundaries* of an activity system (i.e., a professional domain, a community or social group, or their self). Each activity systems is bound to a set of socio-cultural values, norms and practices, which influence the ways its members understand and act in the world, how they interact with other people and how they relate to each other. When two different activity systems are met or confronted, either within an individual's self or in the interaction between two (or more) individuals and/or groups, the socio-cultural differences already existing between these systems can become potential barriers of action or interaction for the individual(s) but also potential resources establishing communication, collaboration and learning. 'Boundaries' are therefore defined as "socio-cultural differences that give rise to discontinuities in action and interaction" [12, p. 139]. Within a work context, as for example in teachers' professional practice, people may come across different boundaries, such as when teachers are asked to teach new subjects or try innovations in their class, or during collaboration with colleagues of a different disciplinary background/expertise.

The efforts made by people 'at the boundary' to restore continuity in action and interaction are identified as *boundary-crossing* [13]. The very existence of boundaries in one's practice or across practices results to discontinuities which can be overcome only through "re-establishing action or interaction", a process that can lead to learning and identity development and re-conceptualisation [12]. Such processes, involving the negotiation and combination of "ingredients from different contexts to achieve hybrid situations" [15, p. 319], will result in the extension of existing boundaries beyond the *in-field* to an *out-of-field* space [16].

Boundary-crossing processes can be facilitated by the use of specific ‘objects’. As originally coined by Star and Griesemer [17], the concept of *boundary object* was used to define entities of an abstract or concrete form, which are at the same time ‘plastic’ enough to be interpreted and employed by two or more individuals (in their activity systems) in ways that make sense to them, and ‘robust’ enough to manifest a common identity across them. However, what is important is that by being commonly recognised by the various actors, boundary objects can ensure coherence and promote collaboration amongst individuals as they may also foster negotiation. They can thus enable boundary-crossing processes across individuals, their professional communities and their respective practices and cultures [18].

15.2 Narrative inquiry as a space for nurturing empowerment

Narrative inquiry as a participatory approach places equal importance on the relational nature of narrative researchers’ engagement with participants [19]. It is also argued that a quality ‘research relationship’ carries an empowering potential for both sides [13], [20], [21]. Clandinin [21] characterizes narrative inquiry as a ‘relational’ methodology, where the experiences of both researchers and participants meet in a shared narrative space. It is crucial that such space becomes a suitable context of conform for them to host their storied experiences [13], not only to facilitate research procedures and the narrative data interpretation, but also to support personal development for both sides [22].

The narrative research relationship is built ‘in the field’, where shared experience can lead to mutual empowerment [13]. Hogan [23] argues that the basis for developing an empowering research relationship is by nurturing feelings of “connectedness” in narrative spaces where “equality, caring and mutual purpose and intention” prevail (p. 12). Time is also emphasised as a crucial factor for building close researcher-participant bonds [23]. The time perspective allows both sides to realise and reflect on the meaningfulness of the procedure and shared experience.

16 METHOD

The selection of *narrative inquiry* as this study’s methodological approach was opted based on that it provides: (a) an appropriate research frame for us, researchers, to dig deeper into the storied teaching experience of Greek environmental educators, through seeking, analyzing and interpreting the existence of ‘boundaries’ and the employment of ‘boundary-crossing’ processes in their narrative structures [24]; and (b) a shared ‘narrative space’ for building bonds of mutual trust in the researcher-participant relationship, which can potentially function as a reflective lens and an empowering path for both sides [19].

16.1 Participants & data collection

Four Greek elementary school teachers -two women and two men- were invited to participate in the study. The criterion for their selection [25] was that they ought to be systematically involved with EE practice and express a genuine interest in the field. All four participants were teachers in schools of the 2nd Athens Directorate of Primary Education and they were contacted after communication with the EE Coordinator in charge (Dr Dimitris Gkatzos), to whom we express our sincere gratitude for his decisive contribution to this phase of the research design.

Data have been collected in a series of face-to-face conversations between the first author of this paper and each participant. The first meeting took place in mid-September 2018 during which the researcher (first author) informed participants about the research purpose and procedure, the data collection process and the ethics protocol, she answered any questions they had and kindly

asked them to provide their informed consent for participation in the study and their written permission for the analysis and publication of their conversations. In the following 3 meetings (October – November 2018), conversations covered issues of the *teachers' life history and how and why they first got involved with the teaching profession and EE in particular* (1st conversation), their professional life course in EE (2nd conversation), and *the story of an EE project that stands out for them* (3rd conversation). All conversations were recorded and transcribed verbatim. More conversations are planned to take place in the weeks and months to come until researchers and participants alike share the feeling that their stories have been fully told.

16.2 Data analysis

The analysis of the narrative data to be presented here is considered preliminary and in progress. We acknowledge that the process of narrative analysis is not a linear, unswerving and untwisting procedure but rather a complex and demanding path to the composition of the final narrative account for each participant [21]. A series of steps are still to be taken back and forth and the narratives composed at each step need to be brought to negotiation with the participants. In this on-going process all available transcribed texts will be read and reread several times and against the criteria of temporality, sociality and place (the narrative inquiry three-dimensional space) so that the teachers' stories are created and all possible narrative threads connected to the study's research puzzle² [21] are explored. The findings presented and discussed came out of the analysis of the 3 transcribed conversations with one teacher (Mario) and the short reflective texts exchanged with the researcher via mail just after the meetings. They address two threads pulled out of the narrative data and are in the form of notes based on which our first interim narrative accounts are to be compiled.

17 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The narrative analysis presented here attempts to shed light upon the following two pieces of the study's research puzzle: (a) the *boundaries and boundary-crossing processes* Mario, a Greek primary teacher actively engaged in EE, has encountered within the context of his teaching practice in a specific EE program, and (b) how *strengthening bonds* between Mario and the researcher becomes the first step for building a mutually empowering relationship. In particular, findings related to (a) center around Mario's experienced difficulties in dealing with the complex and multidimensional concept of "environmental justice" and how he managed to overcome them. They also highlight how well-structured and flexible pedagogical resources can work as 'boundary objects', thus facilitating communication and collaboration between different pedagogical actors. Regarding (b), we identify how Mario's feelings of trust started to grow in the shared narrative space between him and the researcher and how this signifies the inauguration of a possibly mutually empowering relationship. The section begins with introducing Mario and giving the outline of the conversations with him so far.

² The term 'research puzzle' proposed by Clandinin (2016) is adapted to describe this web of interwoven questionings that frame our research design in lieu of specific research questions which would imply a direction towards certain or final answers.

17.1 Mario, the participant teacher, and his story so far

Mario is a primary school teacher in his late 30's. He was brought up in a middle-class family in an urban context. He recalls having a special interest in nature as a child. As a teacher he is keen and open in trying out innovative practices and has participated in several in-service training workshops. He is active in EE and runs at least one EE program every school-year.

Mario was very positive about participating in the study and contributed greatly to all three conversations. What was characteristic about him is that although he felt passionate about the things he did as a teacher he kept a modest profile. Conversations with him were carried out in a friendly atmosphere with lots of laughing and several off-the-record pre- and post-chats. In the first conversation Mario narrated his life story: his childhood and the school years, the university period, his working experience as a teacher at the foreign community school he is still working. Towards the end of the first discussion Mario described how and why he first got involved with EE. In the 2nd conversation the researcher presented him with a sketched timeline of his narrated story where some of the events and persons he had mentioned were spotted on and asked him to make any corrections, adaptations or additions he felt necessary to complete, so that they could jointly identify and discuss how Mario's relationship to EE evolved over time. In the 3rd conversation Mario was asked to select and talk about one EE school program that stood out for him. He opted for one he had carried out three years earlier at the foreign community school he's still teaching, under the auspices of a European research project (SAMEWorld, <http://www.sameworld.eu>). One of the research project's goals was to support students to learn about 'environmental justice' through the construction of digital stories. Educational activity sheets were produced by members of the Greek scientific/ pedagogical team and a number of partnerships with schools were set up. Mario was one of the teachers who run such an EE program with the collaboration of the EE Coordinator at the 2nd Athens Directorate of Primary Education, who was also a member of the scientific team. By describing the course of this EE program Mario identified and discussed the various 'boundaries' he met and how he came across them.

17.2 Boundaries and boundary-crossing processes related to engaging with complex EE concepts

17.2.1 The boundary

One of the boundaries Mario recurrently referred to had to do with the inherent difficulty of dealing, both conceptually and pedagogically, with the complex, interdisciplinary concept of 'environmental justice':

"I didn't expect that they [the students] would easily understand what 'environmental justice' was about... It is something difficult to understand... I mean, how can they make the connection between the 'environment' or 'environmental education' with 'justice in the world'?... And what does really 'justice' mean?..."
(Mario, conv_3)

Defining 'environmental justice' so that it becomes easier for his students to grasp and using it as a frame to realize the interconnections between the physical and social world and the ethical base of many current socio-environmental issues, was a real challenge to Mario with no readymade solution. His unfamiliarity with the concept triggered feelings of bewilderment and put extra burden to him on how to work on sustainability-related issues to reach the desired learning goals:

“These were difficult concepts... not only for a fifth-grade child but for an adult too... Many adults cannot understand what sustainability is about...or how the economic injustice relates to the environment. How, for instance, a polluting factory in the States might influence people in Bangladesh? Or whose houses are destroyed by a flood?... (Mario, conv_3)

Mario admitted the conflict he felt at a conceptual level, having to deal with new and ‘difficult’ concepts for the first time in his EE practice, and help his students approach them. He shared these feelings of inconvenience with his partner educator, the EE coordinator:

“Environmental justice, as a concept, was something both the EE coordinator and I thought children could not easily handle.” (Marios, conv_3)

17.2.2 The boundary-crossing

This difficulty set them both in front of a barrier but also an opportunity to overcome it through collaboration, “to establish continuity in (their teaching) action” [12]. The ‘boundary-crossing’ was accomplished by combining the knowledge and expertise each brought from their own activity system and the roles they held in the procedure. Mario had a profound knowledge of the students and how to effectively manage a school class (pedagogical expertise) while the EE coordinator had a better understanding of the concepts, the techniques and the pedagogical activities proposed as teaching aids by the European project (scientific expertise). ‘Boundary-crossing’ was thus effectuated through cooperation, communication and the dynamic integration of different kinds of background knowledge and professional expertise put forth by each actor to deal with the specific challenge:

“Each student group had to create a digital story on the general topic of environmental justice and to choose how to present it. [...] I first made a presentation to the students and then they could decide on the theme and construct their own story... [...] Some chose ‘climate change’ [as a theme]... [...], some chose ‘poverty’... [...], some chose ‘pollution’. [...] But it was mainly the EE coordinator who taught them about digital storytelling and how to use the different digital tools, ... and about editing...”.

Both educators added their own piece based on a ‘partnership’ where everyone had a distinct and clear-cut role, while they shared a respect for each other as a result of a long-term relationship and cooperation.

“Together, we worked together... We would talk before [getting to the class]: “You will do this, and I will do that”. We have worked many times together and there were no problem between us. There is this basic chemistry... Ok, sometimes there could be something like... not a conflict... but... For instance, I might want to do something differently... But we always came up with a solution.” (Mario, conv_3)

17.2.3 The boundary objects

This boundary-crossing encounter was facilitated, first, by the structure of the program as proposed by the scientific/ pedagogical team of the European project, and second, by a set of educational activity plans, prepared by the same team. These pedagogical resources were brought along by the EE coordinator, also a member of the project’s scientific/ pedagogical team, to scaffold and facilitate teaching and learning about environmental justice. Mario explained how these resources functioned as ‘boundary objects’, that is as tools for enabling communication and

collaboration among him and the EE coordinator, how they helped them overcome the conceptual and pedagogical ‘boundaries’ and how they supported learning. A distinctive feature of these resources, like of any ‘boundary object’ [12], is that they were well-structured and at the same time flexible enough to be adapted to the teachers’ and students’ needs [26]:

“The structure [of the proposed program] and the activity plans helped a lot... You could also adjust them... [...] We [Mario and the EE coordinator] could change them. [...] And they had a playful character... and so helped the students make sense of these difficult concepts”: ‘sustainability’, ‘environmental justice’, ‘economy’, ‘injustice in the world’, and how all these concepts are interconnected.” (Mario, conv_3)

“The program was structured, although it had to do with some tricky concepts. [...] It [the program] had certain stages and suggested activities. [...] But any time we could make adjustments according the needs of the teams of students or those of the whole class.” (Mario, conv_3)

Mario underlines the importance of this balance between the well-built structure and flexibility in these resources when he talks about the features of the program that stand out for him. It appears that dealing with a well-structured material makes him feel secure, while the possibility to adjust it gives ground to a fertile collaboration with his partner to reach the program’s goals.

17.3 Strengthening bonds as a first step for building an empowering research relationship

17.3.1 Shared feelings of trust and comfort

After each meeting with the teachers we exchanged short reflective texts by email so that each side could freely express thoughts and feelings on the process and content of the conversation. This was conceived as a necessary part of our ethical responsibilities towards participants [21]. Just after the 1st conversation, Mario spontaneously confessed how important it was to him “to join a space” that made him feel comfortable enough to share and discuss his experience and praised the way the researcher treated the whole conversation:

“The discretion, confidentiality and kindness with which I was encountered by the researcher together with the comfort I felt in her presence made me feel conveniently and agreeably to get into and carry on a fertile and creative conversation with her, which I think will be a good contribution to this study. I’m looking forward to continuing the research procedure.” (Mario, mail_refl/1)

That was an overt admittance from the part of Mario that even from the first meeting the research relationship started to grow some roots based on feelings of trust, comfort and mutual understanding, and that this atmosphere safeguarded that research procedures would keep going. From the side of the researcher, a similar expectation was expressed in her reflective text, that the building of a “shared space” would allow the whole research to evolve in a smooth and genuine way:

“That [conversation with Mario] was the third conversation for me within the same day and I was so anxious because he would be the first male participant. But Mario was very friendly and from the start he helped me leave my anxiety behind. I also think

the meeting place [a cozy café] where our conversation took place was decisive in creating that easygoing atmosphere. I had the feeling I was somehow out for a beer with a friend. Our conversation ran so well and in a smooth way.” (researcher, mail_refl/1)

17.3.2 Engaging step by step in a reflective and empowering process

The quality of the inquiry space researchers share with participants and the bonds they develop as they become related to each other seems to be a sine-qua-non condition for engaging in a meaningful process [21]. At another point of his reflective text Mario focuses on how valuable it was to him to have to go back to his life course and narrate his story as environmental educator. Such reflective journey made him think more about his professional identity but also about his responsibility towards the research procedure. Looking back to his long-term engagement with EE, his personal theory and role as a teacher, he felt greater self-confidence and empowerment:

“During our first meeting our conversation centered around my relation to education, the life path of my professional career, my views and my personal course in EE. [...] My long involvement with EE, the personal views I hold about it and my role as a teacher made me feel very confident in my answers.” (Mario, mail_refl/1)

Even though this reflective text refers to the first conversation with Mario, it is interesting how it declares that the initial steps to building a quality research relationship have already been taken. Mario described the conversation as “fertile” and “creative” indicating that the whole procedure was meaningful to him and that a new path of reflection and empowerment had already commenced.

18 CLOSING REMARKS

This paper presents part of an ongoing narrative inquiry exploring Greek teachers’ identities as related to their teaching practices in EE. Although at a preliminary level our in-progress analysis unfolds two threads of the research puzzle, pertaining (a) to boundaries and boundary-crossings a teacher may encounter when confronted with complex EE concepts/ issues, and (b) to the process of building a close, trusting participant-researcher relationship as the first stage of creating a reflective and empowered attitude in participant teachers.

As we find ourselves more deeply involved in this narrative inquiry, we realize how complicated and risky business it is to become a relational researcher [21]. We have also started appreciating ‘*respect for ordinary lived experience*’, which Clandinin underlined [21, p. 18] as the starting and ending point of this method. Conducting research as a two-way learning experience, that is not only useful for the researchers but also meaningful for the participants, has therefore become the main axis of our rationale. Or, as pointed out by Hart [27, p.156]: “*What if we, as teams of researchers and participants, could co-construct accounts that could actually get to the bottom of things and serve to improve our discourses-practices? What if the research is viewed by participants as empowering, as opportunity for deep engagement in critically reflective tasks which values experiential knowledge as a touchstoned method? What if participants actually thanked researchers for the opportunity to talk and to write about the meaning of their lives in their reasons for teaching?*”.

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INCOMPREHENSIBLE AND UNCOMPROMISING: BENJAMINIAN

WAYS OF INQUIRY IN TIMES OF DURESS

Elliott Kuecker

There is a melancholic vignette in Walter Benjamin's memoir, a *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, in which he tells his story of being a child and not wanting to wake up for school on cold winter mornings. He wrote, "The fairy in whose presence we are granted a wish is there for each of us. But few of us know how to remember the wish we have made..." (1938/2006, p. 61). As a child he wishes to "sleep his fill," but laments, "I must have made that wish a thousand times, and later it actually came true. But it was a long time before I recognized its fulfillment in the fact that all my cherished hopes for a position and proper livelihood had been in vein" (1938/2006, p. 63). This vignette is a bit of a childhood story with literary images of cold mornings and cinnamon apples on the stove, but also tells of the failure of an adult; the failure of a scholar. It further contains a theory of the temporality and magic of wishes-- by wishing to sleep his fill thousands of times, he manifested this wish in reality; it came true later in life, when he realized that as an unemployed scholar he could sleep his fill. But the fulfillment of the wish was at the expense of being a faculty member somewhere.

This vignette serves as a good example of Benjamin's way of inquiry and writing, and also a view into how he saw his career. If we look at his writing, we see that his form is literature, the content of the theory is on the temporality of wish making, the methodology is autobiography, and the moral is that he never became the successful scholar he may have had the potential to be. Immediately we see that there is rarely anything didactic in Benjamin's pedagogy, and what's more, playing with form, content, methodology, and the moral are incomprehensible to an audience looking for a story about everyday things, like cinnamon apples, and yet, also incomprehensible to academics, looking for a theory on temporality that resembles something other than Proust!

Some think Benjamin would have been successful in another time or place, but I and others think his work would never appropriately fit academia. Frank Kermode said that if Benjamin hadn't killed himself, he probably would have been a professor emeritus in America in the late twentieth century (1978, *New York Times Book Review*), but this claim takes for granted that Benjamin's way of inquiry was not only incomprehensible with academia *during* Benjamin's time, but also so uncompromising as to not suit our *current* academic forms and culture. Birnbaum wrote that Benjamin's rejected second dissertation (a requirement to be faculty in Germany at the time), would likely never be accepted by academia in any time: "But wouldn't a piece of work as irregular and off-putting as *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* [tragedy] receive the same treatment today?" (2018, p. 157). This is all mentioned in light of some facts many people do not know: Benjamin was never faculty anywhere; he was associated with the Frankfurt School, but was not an official part of it; he attempted to start three journals, which all failed; and he relied on patronage to survive for much of his adult life. In other words, he has been retroactively institutionalized, post death. As Birnbaum said, "Benjamin's path seems once again to confirm the notion that, as far as academic discourse is concerned, the only good philosopher is a dead one" (2018, p. 157).

He began his college career excitedly, deciding to be a philosophy professor, and in fact, his college career was marked by participation in student activist movements. He was soon, however,

criticizing things at the core of academic hierarchy: “Particularly hateful to him was the obligation to raise his cap to teachers, which he did ‘incessantly’; when, a decade later, he zealously took up the cause of academic reform, he embraced the idea of nonhierarchical relations between teachers and students as a central tenet” (Eiland and Jennings, 2018, p. 21). When we look at one of his early texts explicitly discussing academia, such as the “The Life of Students,” we see a complex critique of how academia connects the notion of studying to the season of life that is known as “youth,” and further, that academia too quickly directs us toward an instrument of study, rather than a philosophy of inquiry. He believed that the very foundations of academia were a problem, as all fields should be grounded in philosophy, rather than philosophy being a separate discipline. As a student activist he became less interested in educational reform and more interested in how education could impact humanities: “For if philosophy is made to stand at the center of the curriculum, from the earliest years of schooling onward, then humanity will be changed—or so he argued...” (Eiland and Jennings, 2014, 50-51).

Benjamin moved away from student activism because it was too involved in partisan politics (which he considered to be a choice of the “lesser evils”) and instead moved toward a life/academic philosophy grounded in inquiry for inquiry’s sake, a practice not defined by particular methodologies. Birnbaum asked, “What does it mean not to acquire and inculcate knowledge, but to learn and to study?” (Birnbaum, 2018, p. 160) and connects this to Benjamin’s insistence that good inquiry requires risk (Birnbaum, 2018, p. 160) and comfort in not knowing. Benjamin may be incomprehensible because when we read his enormous corpus, some of his ideas even seem to contradict each other, which I believe was a purposeful method that helped promote what Benjamin meant when he said that student life forces us to “submit to a principle, to identify completely with an idea. The concept of ‘science’ or scholarly discipline serves primarily to conceal a deep-rooted bourgeois indifference” (Benjamin, 1914/1996, p. 38). He wrote we should not “fasten” to ideas: “no dogma, no explicit, closed system, let alone any partisanship, but rather illumination ...drawing ‘the most distant spirit’ into the light” (Eiland and Jennings, 2014, p. 40). Here we see that he believes in what he called “a community of learning” rather than disciplines, which he called “nothing more than vocational training” (Benjamin, 1914/1996, p. 38). And what we also see, in this notion toward “illumination” and the “most distant spirit” an esoteric methodology that does not easily translate to scholarly work.

This esoteric work, inspired by an interest in Kabbalah and astrology, is less known among scholars who know Benjamin casually, but this work can serve those of us who work with different ways of inquiry. McRobbie argued that much of Benjamin’s work is “too obscure and mystical” while other thinkers officially associated with the Frankfurt school offered “useful” concepts and ideology (1994, p. 96-97). At the level of rhetoric things like the “distant spirit” and the faeries become common in Benjamin’s writing, and translated well to an audience of children when Benjamin did his youth radio show. As he noted in numerous places, children love the mythical and the frightening, and they have a broader concept of inquiry than do adults, integrating what Benjamin called “magical experience” into their daily lives.

The main reason I belabor all of this about Benjamin is to ask why would a man who was living during the rise of the Nazi fascism and genocide, who was exiled, and who witnessed a large cultural and industrial shift in German life, focus his scholarship on everyday things like children’s toys, children’s books, trains, prostitutes, translation, cinema, Mickey Mouse, art, photography, travel around the city, libraries, food, criticism, Goethe, and so forth? Why write about the quotidian, interrogate the tiny parts of everyday life during a time of duress and is this a type of political action? Why write it in such strange ways, too? I would answer this by suggesting that there must be something more disruptive in focusing on the everyday, interrogating the most banal, easily

taken-for-granted, tiny instances of life. Benjamin was not given an opportunity to be part of an official academic institution, while others, who are more didactic in their philosophy, more grandiose in their objects of study, more traditionally “leftist” were getting jobs in institutions. Does this suggest a paradox? Clearly, something about what Benjamin was doing, even in all of its incomprehensibility, was uncompromising enough to sit outside of the institution, suggesting that his work has the power to destabilize the institution, and thus they excluded him from it.

This makes perfect sense to me because the interrogation of the banal in the most theoretical and often incomprehensible way has radical implications for questioning the very ontology of civilization, a dangerous thing to play with. At this conference we are exploring what activism means, and I think many times those of us doing work that fits within new materialism or post-qualitative inquiry are often criticized for being a bit incomprehensible or impractical, but instead I think many people in these modes of inquiry are questioning the very ontology of civilization, an important task. We can remember Benjamin was not excluded from academia by Nazis, but by other academics. So, the disdain for difference isn’t out there in the world, among only some enemy, but actually all around us and perpetuating from us. This is why some of our incomprehensible and uncompromising work is very useful, in that it could be extremely disruptive to question very quotidian aspects of our work (such as research method, writing, scholarly publication) and habits of our everyday lives, as we need to poke at the ontology of civilization, and support others who do so. His interest in Mickey Mouse was, after all, how in the cartoons “mankind makes preparations to survive civilization” (Benjamin, 1931/1999, p. 545).

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SPECULATIVE FICTION, EXISTENCE AND INQUIRY OF CURRERE

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Abstract

Every generation has its monsters. They evoke our deepest desires, our fears and our curiosities. They are the unknown ... the uncontrollable; fraught with terror and possibility. Possibility oftentimes emerges through fiction. Fiction is not the opposite of fact, it is the opposite of finitude. While it is defensible to assert that reality exists beyond texts, much of what we think of as “real” is—and can only be—apprehended through fictional texts. Monsters *are us*. They reflect and refract our fragmented collective and individual identities. *Blood’s Will: Speculative Fiction, Existence and Inquiry of Currere* (McDermott, 2018) which is the focus of this presentation, offers a philosophical treatise by virtue of its speculative fiction genre which enables the author and the characters to examine inquiry and existence in imaginative ways not limited by definitive proofs. This narrative inquiry novel centers on a complicated love story between a mortal woman and vampire. But the story is also about free will, identity, and possibilities of existence. The vampire’s existence serves as a fictionalized example of the inquiry of *currere*, and the exploration of “possibility” which depends not on being rationalized, but on being “poeticized,” as happens through speculative fiction. In this story, *currere* is perceived through the role of the author’s own autobiography in shaping the story. Campbell and Finn (the main characters) both explore (process, cycle, examine, and return to) their intertwined life journeys as an example of how fictional characters can exemplify the four stages of *currere* inquiry. Choosing a love-story-in-crisis—between a mortal and supernatural character was intentional, as the options and issues illustrated in their relationship are distinctly different than they would have been had both characters been limited by mortality. The process of writing a work of auto-fiction, as well as the narrative of this story itself, both serve as *process of inquiry as possibilities*, which embodies, “the middle passage, that passage in which movement is possible from the familiar to the unfamiliar, to estrangement, then to a transformed situation” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 548). Given that the vampire “never dies,” one might assume the journey across and between the four stages could go on in perpetuity. What possibilities might lie beyond our current finitudes? The role of un-death provided the trope necessary to examine the more existential questions that confronts us mortals -- the author wrestles with the same questions as the characters. Both the writing process, and narrative product, remind us that, “We are not the stories we tell as much as we are the modes of relations our stories imply, modes of relations implied by what we delete as much as what we include” (Pinar, 1994, p. 218). The role of the novel in inquiry is to implode boundaries, to invite possibility, and offer an example of writing our *ficto-currere*. Campbell’s ultimate “un-demise” embodies the notion of this possibility beyond “freedoms and

limits” (McDonough, 2011) ... a “transformed situation”; her transformation signifying transformative possibilities of inquiry of self and fictional texts.

Keyword keyword 1 vampires, keyword 2 narrative inquiry, keyword 3 *currere*, keyword 4 postcolonialism, keyword 5 fiction

1. Defying binaries: *Currere*, monsters, and fictional inquiry

In the words of Sylvia Wynter, “The future will first have to be remembered, imagined” (2007, p. 3). *Currere* is memory work, and *ficto-currere* defies the binary between memory and fiction- both of which are “unreal” and constructed. There are four different “stages” when engaged in the journey of *currere*: Recalling the past (regressive), being free of the present (analytical), being able to re-enter the present (synthetical), and gesturing towards what is not yet present (progressive). It is important to note however, that these stages are not considered linear or progressive. Rather, they should be understood as a set of interconnected, rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980) moments that “frame” the complex process of conscious self-actualization. *Currere* explores the rhizomatic and emergent nodal interstices of life—and life creates the fiction, cracking open new intersection of possibilities seeking to trouble expectations. *Blood’s Will* (McNulty, 2018) is work of *ficto-currere*, which breaks the preconceived ideas we hold about reality, and the “master plot” (Leavy, 2017, p. 197) we commonly anticipate in a fictional story. Fiction is not the opposite of fact, it is the opposite of finitude. But while it is defensible to assert that reality exists beyond texts, much of what we think of as “real” is—and can only be—apprehended through fictional texts. Barone (2000) too, reminds us that in “this reordering, elements of experience are recast into a form that is analogous but does not replicate an actual experience” (p. 138). Memories reflect the past, but as instruments of the present, they are also catalysts for future action.

As a form of inquiry, fictionalized narratives or *ficto-currere*, are necessary contributions to the disruptions of normalizing and totalizing oppressive discourses produced within traditional frameworks of inquiry. Why? Because, as Wynter writes (citing Ricour), “at conjunctural times of change, utopian or alternative modes of thought arise to ‘shatter a given order’ by the proposal of an alternative order, and that therefore it is the role of the bearers of such alternative utopian thought to give the force of discourse to this possibility,” (2007, p. 158)

Blood’s Will, as Gough (2010) puts it, is “a narrative experiment” (p. 4), a process by which we might question whether it is possible, at least in principle, to establish inter subjectively reliable distinctions between “fiction” on the one hand and particular constructions of “reality” that we can call “factual” or “truthful” on the other. (p. 4)

So, let’s examine the narrative framework of *Blood’s Will* through the lens of *currere*. The two main characters, Finn and Campbell, experience life journeys, (re)constructed through the course of the narrative, embody the four stages of *currere*: Regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetic (Pinar, 1975).

Campbell engages in the regressive step as she recalls her own history as a child, including her first encounters with Finn and the memories of her mother, thus, understanding how the past not only affects her, but the people surrounding her (Pinar, 2004). The reader also engages with the memories of Campbell's friends: Lilly, Sandy and Gillian, each of whom recount the "defining moments" in which the past affects profound moments of decision in the present. Regarding the regressive state, Pinar writes that, "One's past is shared, each in his or her own way, by us all" (2004, p. 135). This story is not merely about Campbell's subjective experience. It is about multiple subjectivities, and as such attempts to contest and, "irreversibly destabilize the phenomenological quest for essential meanings" (Gough, 1994, p. 554).

After meeting again as adults, by chance (or perhaps fate), Campbell and Finn are engaged in step two (progressive stage) of *currere*. Again, each has an opportunity to (re)think the future. As the story progresses, she begins asking herself: If vampires could exist, then what else could be re-imagined as well? The synthetic phase is revealed in the moment of the car crash. Literally and metaphorically, Campbell's past, present, and futures come crashing in upon her in an unexpected way. From this, she is confronted with an alternative reality, and from which the ending is revealed. In Finn's "vampire theory," the reader is brought along through an academic analysis (a moment where research and fiction blend) to consider the most fundamental of human questions.

Currere is a sort of haunting, always at best a sort of ghost story, or tale of otherworldly-ness. We conjure, we recall, we retell our narratives; in each recounting, we re-imagine in spaces that are liminal and which "separates structured and safe notions of reality from a noumenal, insubstantial realm that shadows and haunts the everyday" (Turcotte, 2005, p. 2.) Like our memories, which we exhume, *currere* processes are incarnations of the repressed, like "both ghosts and vampires," which are, "also simultaneously insubstantial and material—able to disappear at will, to dematerialise, but also to manifest themselves, usually in/through another." (p. 2).

Currere as an act of memory reconstruction brings back "to life" pieces of ourselves that, to paraphrase Daspit (1998) in his "theory for living, theory dying", things which haven't died, "they just got buried" (p.1). The truth about the stories we tell ourselves is that we are nothing but the stories we tell ourselves. Therefore, fiction becomes the possibility within inquiry for re-imagining ourselves. *Blood's Will* doubles down on this process by not only being a work of fiction as memory work, but also as a vampire story that invites the reader into the liminal world of post-humanness as a part of our "human" epistemological and ontological becoming. Fiction can write into existence possibilities for humanness and otherness that extend outside the binary boundaries defined by methods of inquiry steeped inside of colonial modernist oppressive language systems. Further, *currere* layers of memory work within a fictional strata of liminal realities and elevates them to the ephemeral fabric we define as "real, here and now." As Turcotte (2005) argues, monsters, like the process of *currere*, "are literally the past in the present, and frequently, they foretell the future" (p. 7).

1.1 Between murder and suicide: Undeath of inquiry

As *facto-currere*, *Blood's Will* blends and blurs the lines between that which is defined as true (or real) with that which is imaginatively constructed. It is a story that belongs to:

A new class of memoiristic, autobiographical, and metafictional novels—we can call them autofictions—that jettison the logic of postmodernism in favor of a new position. (Sturgeon, 2014, para. 3)

Ficto-*curre* in the case of *Blood's Will* involves themes of death and immortality. For Daignault (in Pinar, et al, 1995, p. 76), “thinking happens only between suicide and murder ... between nihilism and terrorism ... to know is to commit murder, to terrorize”. Nihilism refers to the abandonment of any attempt to know. It is the attitude which says anything goes or things are what they are. It is to give up, to turn ones’ ideals into empty fictions or memories, to have no hope. Daignault calls for us to live in the middle, in spaces that are neither terroristic or nihilistic.

Finn’s vampire character in *Blood's Will* deeply engages the reader in an exploration of the contingency of existence, and thus the role of emergence and intertextuality in the making of one’s *curre*. Here is a vampire, with a theory about the origins of vampire existence. A full analysis of Finn’s vampire thesis serves as an exercise in understanding Rorty’s arguments on language construction, meaning-making, irony, and contingency (1989). Finn’s elusive suggestion that vampires are both real and/or not real, based on the language choices we make (which intersect with our beliefs and consciousness), reminds me of Rorty’s statement, “liberal societies ... have produced more and more people who are able to recognize the contingency of the vocabulary in which they state their highest hopes—the contingency of their own consciences” (1989, p. 46). Finn, if he had known Rorty, could have easily agreed that, “changing languages and other social practices may produce human beings of a sort that never before existed” (p. 7), such as the evolution of the vampire.

1.2 Vampire theory as posthuman inquiry

The concepts woven throughout this fictive work, specifically the vampire theory put forward by the vampire character of Finn, reflects (pun intended) the post human, post colonial work of Sylvia Wynter and Franz Fanon. As Wynter’s writes:

Bateson proposed that in the same way as the “physiology” and “neurology” of the human individual function in order to conserve the body and all the body’s physical characteristics—thereby serving as an overall system that conserves descriptive statements about the human as far as his/her body is concerned— so a correlated process can be seen to be at work at the level of the psyche or the soul. (2003, p. 267).

Bell hooks () writes, ““Paradox and contradiction are the mysteries of the soul. The weird, the uncanny are sources of knowledge. To know the self ... one must open the heart wide and search every part. This requires facing the unacceptable, the perverse, the strange, even the sick.” Likewise, Kawash (in Turcotte, 2005) says “that the uncanny can be a disturbance to the bordering functions that separate inside and outside.” Similarly, Finn postulates that the vampire defies scientific proofs and modernist paradigms in favor of one grounded in beliefs and notions of the soul. Finn says in Chapter Nine (McNulty, 2018):

You said that vampires aren’t real. I contend they are as real as the soul. Whether the handicraft of God or from the primordial ooze, we are made of real substances: chemical components, H²O, CO², atoms, molecules, muscle ... But, when you wake up in the morning,

what do you think about? What weighs heavy on your thoughts when you think of what matters? Is it the nature of our existence? No, of course not. We are thinking about getting to work, maybe about our failing health, or about our families.

According to Turcotte (2005), the vampire is the figure of choice in decolonization politics in that it “exists between worlds” as a “spectre that threatens the solidity of borders and the reality of a dominant imaginary” (p. 10). Similarly, Finn suggests that the evolution of vampires is something not “proven,” but in fact exists (not only by his mere presence), but via the myths and beliefs we create and pass down through generations. He says:

What matters most isn't the science of it, it's what we believe, not what we can prove. And it's what we believe about vampires that has also evolved over time in various cultures. The evolutionary move wasn't just a biological one. It was also moral and spiritual, for lack of a better word ... We evolved in tandem with human physical and cultural evolution. (McNulty, 2018, p.92)

Finn, as a vampire also homeless alcoholic, represents the liminal “non-human” in evolutionary terms in a humanist paradigm. “The construction of the vampire as the “deviant,” according to Kaiser and Theile (2017) troubles the, “hierarchies established along the code rational/irrational,” and constructs, “people of ‘deviant’ behaviour (in Wynter’s words) not only as ‘Blacks and colonial Natives, but also homosexuals, the jobless and the poor Such persons, in colonial memory are written out of humanness as evolutionarily dysselected or genetically deficient, despite the allegedly species-encompassing biological concept of Man.”” (p. 416)

The vampire theory rewrites them back into collective memory and history. In other words, as Turcott writes “speaking the vampires of Fanon’s work,” the vampire is appealing because, “he or she has no reflection; he or she cannot be reflected, and hence cannot reflect—cannot *mirror*—the concerns of the dominant classes” (2005, p. 10).

Finn’s vampire theory parallels the idea supported by Fanon and Wynter, that:

Humans are always-already both skin (bios) and mask (mythoi) ... humans live in biological/cultural, auto-poietic collectives that are upheld via retrojected origin stories. They/we are ‘a hybrid-auto-instituting-languaging-storytelling species’ emerging out of the neuro-chemical evolution of the human brain and/as the symbolic-semantic evolution of language ... being human as such a hybrid praxis (instead of being human as noun) would imply ‘a mutation of the species beyond Man [Cornell & Seely,] by fundamentally taking into account the ways ‘we’ narrate ourselves. (Kaiser & Theile, 2017)

In Chapter Nine of *Blood’s Will*, Finn adds:

I believe that (vampires) became a physical manifestation that began in our collective unconsciousness at the dawn of creation. Imagine that vampires are a branch of the human race that split off, millions of years ago as our evolution from the primates was just beginning. What if, through the manifestation of all human hopes and fears, practiced through myth and ritual, physical changes began to take place? The loop of mind and

body into a parallel species that feeds off its progenitor. It's not that far-fetched. Humans have a history of becoming monsters, by losing their humanity. (p. 65)

As a fiction of possibility for re examining of death and liminality of existence, he argues:

Maybe the mutation from human to vampire was some deep collective instinctual reaction to a fear of knowing our own mortality. That fear, that knowledge of our own death, has manifested itself in this particular 'strain' of human that could somehow supersede death. A trait of survival. (McNulty, 2018, p. 67).

The vampire as the human/not human, dead-but-not-dead creature embodies the possibilities for the "Other" outside the narrative "norms" labelled as "Truth" or human, defined by the racist colonial project that ushered forth our understandings of scientific inquiry. "In this context" Wynter (2007) explains:

The invention of the global category of Human Others on the basis of the institutionalized inferiorization and subjugation of those human beings classified as Indians, Natives, Negroes ... was indispensable not only to the enactment of the new sociogenic code and its dialectic of evolved/selected "symbolic life" and non-evolved dysselected "**symbolic death**" but also to the over-representation of this ethno-class or Western bourgeois genre or mode of being human, as if it were that of the human itself. (p. 128)

The colonial project, spurred on by scientific inquiry and a mythos of progress, modified the humanness of people of color is to truly dehumanize them. But the vampire, being an unfixed figure, symbolizes not only the relationship between capital, labor, and the means of production in the capitalist system that commodifies the black and brown bodies which become "dead labor" built on a class of vampire bourgeoisie (Marx,). According to Kaiser and Theile (2017) citing McKittrick, the liminal order or space and time invites a deviant perspective of our colonized gaze; one that evokes alternative realities centered in "demonic grounds" (2006). Building on this, I suggest that the inclusion of fiction as possibility, and specifically the vampire (as demon, traditionally understood) evokes and invites an inquiry of *ficto-currere* from liminal deviant perspective.

The narrative construction of the vampire in *Blood's Will* deviates from Fanon's notion of the vampire as terroristic masculine violence (Roberts, 2004). Instead, as a cite of possibility and limitless return, the vampire becomes a form of feminist possibilities countering the totalizing discourse of Western episteme. "We murder to dissect" as Wordsworth once said. By contrast, the vampire cannot die and therefore evades the murderous intent of absolutizing realities that fix margins and centers and discourses of power. Knowledge is emergent, fluid, fictive, and amorphous. Campbell realizes, this and articulates this for the readers on page 189. She says:

What I think is that this notion of feminine time, repetitive and circular, is much more like the existence of the vampire ... the vampire exists through blood ties. It creates more of its own through blood transfers and sustains its life by feeding off the blood of humans. Women, you know, human women, also are linked more closely to life through blood. It is how we are able to create new life ... the vampire's whole existence is for an eternity, so

like, she faces an existence where even if certain events are finite, their whole worldview would be much more circular, because they have no real ending.

The vampire of *Blood's Will* is not the figure of non-existence (Kawash, 2005), consumed by the dominant narrative. Rather it evades dominance (of agency, self, society, or dialogically constructed identity) through the fictions of possibilities in-between the strata of fixedness.

2.0 Conclusion

Campbell's transformation, as the actualization of Finns' theories of possibilities is that she realizes that there exist possibilities now that she had not had access to prior to her impending death. She realizes, while considering the possibility of her own life, death, and invitation from Finn, to become *otherwise*:

Here now was the opportunity she had never imagined possible: to simultaneously die for the love of her children, and to live (again) in the hopes of discovering how to love Finn, and to realize the answer to the question that had daunted her; to discover what her destiny was, what it could be. She squeezed the charm tightly into a weak fist. A chasm of possibilities she could now imagine ruptured and exploded like a million stars. A warmth spread through her body. This revelation signified that this was just beginning for her ... if he could make it back in time" (McNulty, 2018, p. 214).

Cambell's transformation speaks to the role of the monstrous in the decolonization of our inquiry through *ficto-currere* in that the process, like Campbell's process, "is to become something other—something which cannot be contained by discursive structures established by, and hence arguably in the service of, colonialism" (Turcotte, 2005, p. 5).

The novel offers a philosophical treatise by virtue of its speculative fiction genre which enables the author and the characters to examine inquiry and existence in imaginative ways not limited by definitive proofs. Finn's existence, the existence of "possibility" itself, depends not on being rationalized, but on being "poeticized," as happens through speculative fiction. The uses of vampire fiction toward this end serves as an opportunity for extending the complicated conversation of *ficto-currere*. Given that the vampire "never dies," one might assume the journey across and between the four stages of *currere* could go on in perpetuity. What possibilities might lie beyond our current finitudes? Identifying vampires as the "monster of choice" (Gordon & Hollinger, 1997) for such inquiry, Hollinger (1997) writes:

(I)t is the monster that used to be human; it is the undead that used to be alive; it is the monster that looks like us ... the figure of the vampire always has the potential to jeopardize conventional distinctions between human and monster, between life and death, between others and ourselves. We look into the mirror it provides and we see a version of ourselves. Or, more accurately, keeping in mind the orthodoxy that vampires cast no mirror reflections, we look into the mirror and see *nothing but ourselves*. (p. 201, emphases in original).

The disrupting of the possibility of a singular linear reading of the story itself mirrors the disruption of the singular story we tell ourselves *about* ourselves and others, about the possibilities for transformation, and “invites in” a liminal form of inquiry that is both fictive and real, just like the vampires of Finn’s theory and most importantly the monsters we create (or become) through our inquiry practices. In *Blood’s Will* (2018) Finn says:

The vampire is human but not human. The difference is that humans are created ...by God? Maybe... but then they die. And humans die fairly easily because of physical injury or illness, or the body’s gradual deterioration through old age. But the vampire does not. Remember they have a beginning but no certain end. So the contrast is that the vampire can make infinite choices where humans cannot. Any choice a human makes is ultimately about mortality ... To be alive is to realize that for every choice we make, we also make a sacrifice of something else--the results of which we can rarely predict at the outset, and oftentimes produces outcomes we never could have anticipated. The simplest and smallest, the least noticed acts, gestures, turn-of-the-wrist can lead to life-changing, or life-ending occurrences. For the vampire, since there is no death, choice is irrelevant, and sacrifice is non-existent. (p. 115).

I conclude with the words of Sylvia Wynter: “The true leap ... consists in introducing invention into existence. The buck stops with us.” (Wynter, 2003, p. 331).

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HOW IS THE DEFENDANT INDUCTED INTO THE STAGED ACTION OF THE COURTROOM? (HOW MIGHT RESEARCHERS BEST CONDUCT COURTROOM RESEARCH?)

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Abstract

Pat Carlen [1], a seminal voice on courtroom research, was among the first to use dramaturgical imagery to describe courtroom interactions. Her work captured an aspect virtually unique to the courtroom: conflation of experience of observer and defendant, rendered equal in their role as spectators of events beyond their participation or control. Appropriately, courtroom researchers have almost universally incorporated observational methods within their mixed research designs (e.g. [2]; [3]; [4]).

Focusing on the Sheriff Courts in Edinburgh, this research explores the methodologies of ethnography and autoethnography in order to answer three aims and objectives: 1. How is the defendant inducted into the staged action of the courtroom?; 2. Is the language of drama the most appropriate metaphor for explaining courtroom interactions?; And 3. How should we do courtroom ethnography?

The autoethnographic and ethnographic findings both centred around themes of silencing. The pre-court experience walking to the courts on Chambers Street highlighted the age and grave authority of the institution, rendering participants (the spectator, the defendant, the researcher) intimidated even before arriving. Within the halls of the courts I assured that we may enter any open courtroom, and yet the architectural setup contributed to a sense of inaccessibility: there is one small window on the door to every courtroom, positioned so high that one must stand on tiptoes to see. The researcher feels small, hesitant. Upon entering a courtroom and being seated, one feels more relaxed as an observer, yet notices that the silencing passes onto the defendant. Solicitors are angled towards the judge, with the defendant in their dock, behind proceedings. The defendant's story comes not from them, but from the solicitor presenting on their behalf. From opening to closing, the defendant's only words are "yes" – confirming identity.

Despite not being the initial aim, an element of necessary activism emerged from my research. The criminal justice system, the most authoritative and coercive

institution in contemporary society, aims to values of fairness and equality. Instead, individuals are rendered silent, both by intimidation of their surroundings and by a process that forbids their speech. If the stories told in court are not those of the defendant, what is truly being judged?

Keywords: ethnography, autoethnography, courts, courtroom interaction

1 INTRODUCTION

'The play can no more contain the 'Last Judgment' on its own 'story' than can the spectator be the supreme Judge of the play. For what else is he if not the brother of the characters, caught in the spontaneous myths of ideology, in its illusions and privileged forms as much as they are.' Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx* [1]

The following work was conducted as part of a postgraduate Research Methods course at the University of Edinburgh in 2016; the aim was not only to develop an empirical research project, but also to reflect on the research process itself. Pat Carlen [1] introduces her book with the extract above, its importance being twofold to my own research on the daily proceedings of the Sheriff courts in Edinburgh. The first point relates to the collapsing of distance between characters and spectator. If the defendants are characters 'caught up in the spontaneous myths' of courtroom interaction, then researchers, as spectators, are not so misled to use themselves in their analysis. Within criminological theory the courtroom setting has lent itself easily to the metaphor of the stage: actors wear costumes – wigs and robes; there is a particular language used that differs from everyday speech – the use of honorifics and legal jargon; and the setup of physical space as well as the movement of actors are scripted and performed - with judge, clerk, solicitors, professionals, police officers, and accused all having their own space in which they traverse. In this metaphor, the accused is a player who doesn't know his/ her lines, thrown in the middle of a scene. The accused is a baffled and necessarily passive becomes an observer of their own case.

The research discussed in this paper was conducted as part of a time-limited empirical research project examining the role of the accused in sentencing courts on Edinburgh's Chambers Street. It was born from one simple observation: that in these courts there is one actor – the escort officer – who is in charge of telling the accused by gestures what role to play: when to come into the dock, when to stand and sit, when to confirm his/ her name, when to leave. Both guide and guard, the escort officer is the bridge between the real world and that of the court. Expanding from this observation, I sought to examine the role of the accused in more detail, setting out the following observational aims:

1. With whom does the defendant interact? With whom do they interact most?
2. What is the experience of the defendant like?
3. What can I tell about how they feel and think?
4. Are there any differences in interaction depending on severity of cases?
5. Are there observable differences in how officers treat defendants based on gender, ethnicity, or any other visible category?

Due to time constraints and criminological tradition, I chose to conduct an observational inquiry. In a very short span of time, observations led to increasingly reflexive questions, because with every step I'd question yet another term or idea I had previously taken for granted, either on my own assumption or another researcher's findings. The more one does ethnography, the more questions it poses for the practice of itself.

Another unanticipated outcome of this project is that what started as a purely exploratory project became an activist project through no intention of the researcher whatsoever and indeed despite the efforts of the researcher to exclude her own values from informing her observations. Activism is a description of a choice, so much as it is a potential force already embedded in our choices as researchers – our interests, our methodologies, and even our fields.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Courtroom Research

Despite the open access to the courts, there is little empirical research on their daily proceedings. However, a crucial finding is that, although different mixes of methodologies are often used, observational or ethnographic approaches are indispensable. Carlen [1] used observation and interviews with professionals. Rock [2] makes explicit his methodology at the beginning of his essay: 'ideas stemming from a period of observation, interviewing, and documentary research' at one particular court. Mulcahy [3] mainly used secondary but also relied on primary observation: 'I have been questioned about note taking in the courts on several occasions' she observes (p.394).

Despite near uniformity in methodological approach, there is little consensus about how to understand courtroom interactions. One frequently encountered approach is through dramaturgical language and the metaphor of the stage, woven throughout Carlen's work [1]. She herself describes her work as emerging on one hand from a tradition of American court critiques favoring 'dramaturgical or game imagery' ([4]; [5]), and on the other hand from sociological traditions more broadly that approach social interaction as staged. Although the dramaturgical metaphor has at times been challenged, there is little challenge to the technique of the metaphor in order to characterize proceedings. Rock [2], who also makes his methodology explicitly observations, refers to Garfinkel's [4] 'trials as degradation ceremonies' in order to shape his critical language. He consciously uses language of rituals and ceremonies in addition to that of the stage.

2.2 Ethnography

The choice of ethnography is where underlying activist impulses reveal themselves. Why was ethnography the appropriate choice? Looking at Mason's [6] required characteristics, some are practical, e.g. courts are open to the public, there are no difficulties of access, and they are intended to be observed; and there is little research on the daily proceedings of courts, making the necessary data difficult to acquire without first-hand observation.

However, according to Mason [6], the most important reason to select observational methods lie in the characteristics of the researcher. Although criteria slip into the dangerously subjective and even deterministic, it is worth pointing out that I align with his list of criteria: holding a belief that ‘meaningful knowledge cannot be generated without observation, because not all knowledge is for example articulable, recountable or constructible in an interview’; holding value in empathy across barriers of social identity (e.g. race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc.); and aspiring to naturalism by exposing bias rather than trying to eliminate it.

In fact, definitions of ethnography universally carry implied social activism goals. Ellis et al. [7] describe the combination of autobiography and ethnography – autoethnography – as an attempt ‘to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience.’ There is a political drive: supporting marginalized points of view to challenge “master narratives”, and believing in the ability to build empathy across social identity barriers (e.g. race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc.) [8]. Hammersley and Atkinson [9] defines ethnography as ‘participating, overtly and covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period,’ also placing encouragement of empathy across social identity barriers at the centre of ethnographic methodology.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preparation and Theory

3.1.1 How far do I decide what’s interesting before I begin my empirical phase?

Reading inevitably refines or even changes what one is interested in. But one cannot be a tabula rasa for empirical research by simply not reading. My initial interest for this – stemming from my pre-reading – centred on the interaction between the defendant and the escort officer because on a previous visit to court it struck me how the escort was both a guide for the defendant and a force of control. Already decisions are made about what is interesting, based on my own subjectivity. Why would decisions made about what is interesting based on previous theory be somehow less “natural” than my subjectivity; unlike my subjectivity, decisions made based on academic reading can be reflected on with more concreteness. Therefore, we must read, to define our critical language, place ourselves in conversation with theory; and we must reflect to identify bias.

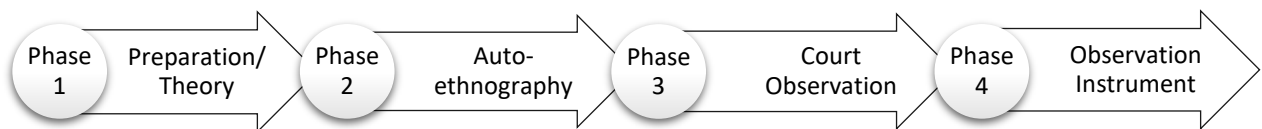


Fig. 1: Model of Research Timeline

3.1.2 The Dramaturgical Framework

One theoretical decision that is inescapable during any level of study of courtroom research is the dramaturgical framework. Therefore, I decided that in order to better orient myself within the field, I must also use this critical language – whether or not I further it or deny it. My initial quasi-*tabula-rasa* interest was in the escort officer, directing the defendant's actions. Carlen [1] provided a context for this metaphor. Court proceedings are costumes, language, and movement scripted and performed by judge, clerk, solicitors, professionals, and police officers. The defendant is the 'dummy player' (p.81) that does not know the play but is still expected to play his/ her role. The escort officer guides the defendant physically through his/her role – when to speak, when to sit and stand, when to exit the stage. However, theory revealed that induction into a role is more than physical, so my interest expanded to the interactions between all other players in the courtroom and the defendant. Who interacts with the defendant? And as for data, what is observable?: gestures, facial expressions, posture, attention, dress choice, words, cues, words.

3.2 Autoethnography

Autoethnography believes in the fundamental possibility of empathy among people despite social identity barriers (e.g. [7]). This conclusion follows by induction from its very definition: assuming the researcher's own reactions and experiences can tell him/ her about the reactions and experiences of the observed. I discovered not just the concept of autoethnography but evidence that it may be particularly appropriate and useful in courtroom observation. More than one commentator – in addition to Carlen's epigraph [1] – has conflated the position and role of the defendant with that of the spectator. Baldwin [10] highlights the similarity of subjective experience between defendants and researchers: 'reducing defendants to such a passive and subsidiary position that they become malleable and acquiescent [...] powerless [...] researchers are in a similar position to defendants [...] sense of exclusion, estrangement, and alienation' (p.345). In Mulcahy's [3] diagram of a Standard Criminal Court, the areas for the dock and for public seating are right next to each other, farthest from the judge. Mulcahy [3] writes about the 'public as irritants' who needed to be 'increasingly contained'; Carlen [1] uses similar language about defendants, writing that 'courtroom ceremony is maintained partly to facilitate physical control of defendants.'

I found that approaching a topic with an autoethnographic mindset changes the usual student inquiry method: rather than asking "what is the significance of" various elements of the court, I found myself asking "what is the effect" of those elements?

3.3 Ethnography: Court Observation

I started court observation as I was doing autoethnography. Over two days I sat in three different courts including the domestic violence court (number 6) and the custody court (number 3); saw four different judges (with an exchange in Court 6); and a total of sixteen cases. I took notes in a notebook and typed them up afterwards.

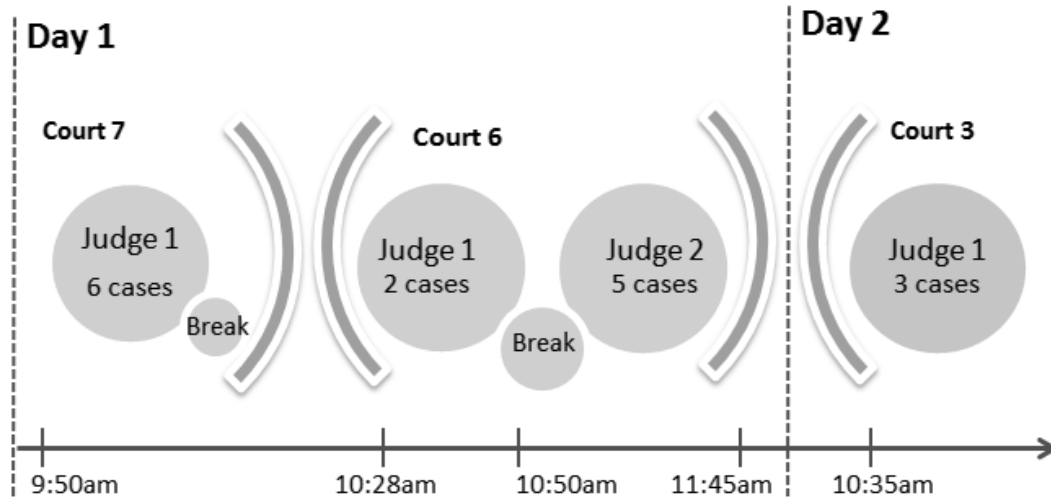


Fig. 2: Model of Courtroom Observation over Two Days

3.4 Ethnography: Observation Instruments

Cases at the Sheriff Courts usually pass so quickly that taking notes caused me to miss things. An observation instrument was an attempt to make note-taking faster and more streamlined. I based my categories on what I observed and found interesting in court during initial observation. Wiersma and Latham [11] evaluate three different types of appraisal instruments. The approach I used constitutes a behavioral observation scale, which they write ‘have been shown to be both reliable and valid’ compared to other scales.

General	Sex	M		F		Other	
	Age	Young		Middle		Elderly	
	Dress	Formality: 1(sweats)		2	3 (jeans)		4 5 (suit)
	Entrance	From public area		from outside		from under dock	
	Pace	Slow		Average		Fast	
Discomfort	Posture	Straight		slouched	stiff	variable	
	Primary focus	On:				variability: 1 2 3 4 5	
	Fidgeting/tics	Describe:					
	Facial expressions	Describe:					
	Arm placement	sides	front	back	variable	other	
Familiarity	Cues responded to	verbal request	Volume change	Physical gesture	Escort judge Clerk Lawyer	other	
	Court orientation	Hesitation tally:					
	Appeal for help	From:					
	Nodding	frequency			appropriateness		
	Speed/ pacing	1	2	3	4	5	
	Gait	Determined			Uncertain		

Fig. 3 Observation Instrument

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

My output from this research has results (which I have interpreted as facts) and discussion (which I have interpreted as processed facts) inextricably tied and I will not artificially separate the two. Ethnographic and autoethnographic research uses as its material personal emotions and thoughts – not measurable scientific experiments – therefore actually separating results from discussion may be detrimental to understanding and coherence. I will nevertheless attempt to highlight the complex relationship between the two in my own research, structuring this section as a conversation physically coming from different sides of my brain – the results (facts and observations) on the left and the discussion (interpretation, theoretical integration) on the right.

4.1 Walking to Chambers Street

Here is an extract of my autoethnographic reflection on the walk up to the Sheriff Courts, written just before entering the courts:

The Sheriff Courts in Edinburgh are located on a wide two-way street, surrounded by the National Museum of Scotland and several old university buildings, including the School of Law.

But this isn't something the average working/ middle class person walking to court for the first time would know, is it? I was tempted to think about the symbolic implications of its location and architecture, but that doesn't help me understand how someone might feel walking to court. What is the effect on one who is not aware of strategic architectural choices? I was perfectly comfortable walking down, but I come from the comfort of those ancient buildings. Would it be intimidating to be surrounded suddenly by buildings of the state, old and full of tradition and authority? Would it cause defensiveness or defiance? Would people be too distracted to notice any of this?

4.2 In the Halls

One of the first aspects about my experience going to court that I thought about was how to dress. As a defendant, I decided I would choose to dress semi-formally –

I was already thinking about the court as a place that belongs to professionals rather than “the people” and I reacted to its authority. It not only has the power to make decisions about my future, but the reason I am there is because I have been accused of

not participating in the social contract; of course I would want to make a “good,” “respectable” impression.

To my surprise, most people dressed quite informally, a disproportionate amount dress in sweatpants.

Does this signify defiance? Or the fact that dress is simply not something people worry about as much as, say, comfort? Or perhaps this is a marker of social class? – My role as a support worker in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Edinburgh has led to the observation that sweatpants are disproportionately worn by working class individuals; and it is a criminological axiom that the criminal justice process disproportionately sees working class individuals go through its halls.

In my interactions, with officers I found that I acted like I knew less than I actually did about visiting the Sheriff Courts.

Both the behavior and my surprise at it are significant. I was playing up the young, middle class, innocent, teachable (female) student role; but the question was why, and why so instinctively? I did this in order to be told and reassured of what I could and could not do – intimidated.

I recognized in myself a combination of intimidation by the atmosphere with infantilisation experienced from having to do things like stand on my tiptoes to see through the small windows in the doors.

I sought constant reaffirmation that I was behaving appropriately. However, I was not alone in constructing this role.

Officers were highly responsive to the role, showering me with information and sudden smiles.

I felt inducted into the play in a certain role myself.

4.3 In the Sentencing Courts

I found myself reluctant to enter a courtroom unless I could see a defendant in the dock. I was relieved and safest once I made it into a courtroom and settled down to take notes

– a familiar role to me, the student. This said interesting things about space ownership. Does ownership change when a case is underway? Did I feel less comfortable because, without a case, the space felt like it belonged to the professionals – and corollary that when it was about ownership was on defendant and equally on public?

On rare occasions, a defendant showed hesitation or misunderstanding. For instance, a man dressed in a suit (unusual),

with a strained facial expression, did not know from which side to enter the dock, did not know which way to exit; and interacted with the escort officer. He was a confirmed first-time offender.

Perhaps his formal dress resembled my thought process as a first-time visitor as well. Perhaps dress in this case signifies a thought process shared by first-time visitors of any class; or a thought process shared by either middle/ upper classes attendants.

Most often, defendants did not appear as immobilized and uncomfortable as Carlen [1] described; they appeared not only familiar with the routine procedure but experts in it. Many responded to very subtle cues from the judge/ clerk and the escort officer: e.g. sometimes the judge simply raising his/ her voice was enough to prompt the defendant to stand, even before the escort.

Repeat defendants know the procedure so well they can anticipate the lines and cues of the play even if they've never been to a rehearsal to this particular play. This is in line with my observation of how quickly I got used to the settings and how quickly I gained confidence maneuvering around the courts.

Other things that stood out to me as contradicting my readings: I found lawyer interactions with defendants very interesting: they seemed quite friendly. E.g. there was fist-bumping in the hallways.

My observations suggested that the defendant is by far not the "dummy" player on this stage; he/ she knew exactly what role to play.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Methodological Limitations

First and foremost, given the time and scope as well as the purpose of this research, this was not a full ethnography – as integrated and lengthy as it should have been. However, the observational methodology has provided some insight into limitations of the ethnographic method particularly in the courts. For instance, although the public characteristic of the courtroom tempts to observational methods, the real physical conditions of the courts are not ideal for observation. The positioning of the public gallery was far enough back that simply hearing proceedings was difficult. Furthermore, although it is a setting open to the public, as Baldwin [10] points out, most of the important decisions go on behind-the-scenes. What you observe is in many ways only what wants to be observed.

Data also needs careful consideration with a method and setting as subjective as the courts. When I decided to use "facial expression" as data, I contended with whether I would use adjectives that contain a judgment, e.g. "looks scared or looks stressed"; or terms that take one step back, e.g. "strained expression"? Adjectives cannot be value-free but they can be more or less interpretive.

Autoethnography is a fine balance between similarity and difference. Significantly more research on social identity and interaction would have to be done in order to do a responsible autoethnography – for instance, on class differences and gender differences of experience in the courts.

5.2 Further Research Potential

Given further time, this research can be developed into important theory in several criminological categories. In terms of the observed effect of upon participants – i.e. silencing, assuming claim over narratives, constructing offender identity – the field that must have a say is the extensive research on the purpose of the courts. Whether the purpose of the spectacle is to deliver justice, deter, educate, etc., what benefit does silencing of participants provide? Other potential applications would be to the study of narrative identity in the courtroom and to the study of secondary victimisation by the criminal justice process – both of which I intend to take further in a doctorate project.

5.3 Activism Emerging from Inquiry

Two years after this research was conducted, my reflection on it has changed; particularly, aspects of what I observed in the Sheriff courts has fueled further interest in narratives in the daily proceedings of the court and how they are arguably “stolen” by the criminal justice process. Normally, activism precedes and informs research – much of the work presented at this conference I predict will demonstrate this. However, my research is an example that the reverse can also happen: out of inquiry done without “agenda” there inevitably emerge values, injustices, and morals – the stuff of activism. In this way, all inquiry is activism.

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MY JOURNEY TO MY STORY: FROM THE POSITIVIST MODEL TO AUTOETHNOGRAPHY.

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Abstract

This paper is an explorative journey of my shift from the positivist model of research, to Autoethnography, in light my research idea; child sexual abuse. It discusses a shift in epistemological and ontological ideas and how, as a result, Autoethnography, for me, has grown to not merely be a methodology, but a way of being. It speaks of my starting point in this journey being disillusionment towards research stemming from my definition of research being limited to the positivist model. Exposure to new ideas, lectures, seminars and writings creating room for subjectivity in experience leads to gradual abandonment of the positivist model, and an attraction in being able to work with myself and my story as means of exploration and learning. Recognition of the uniqueness of experience that surrounds me opens me up to the interpretivist paradigm, and the acceptance of multiple realities. Several pieces of writing exemplify owning one's experience, of the world, oneself and others and taking the position of an un-knower through this. That is when I know I want to speak of what I can know, and what I can know is myself and my experience. This desire of being able to use my own culturally moulded experience as a tool for learning is how I finally adapt Autoethnography. I come across auto-ethnographical works and am struck by the closeness I feel to the writer and their experience. The writers speak of their experience, and I find glimpses of myself and experience in their story. To me, Autoethnography becomes more than a methodology, it feels like a lens through which I look at the world, I am my starting point. I wish to understand the world, but whatever I look at, I will see through the lens of my experience, culture, my story. I know I want to work with myself, before I know what phenomena I want to research, within working with myself. I come across many writers speaking of limitations to Autoethnography, the power that comes with being the researcher, having the voice, and I recognize that, not as a limitation, but a conversation that needs to be created room for in my work. This paper is my journey from disheartenment towards research, to the joy of being able to create learning from my story. With Autoethnography, being an unknower is where I start from.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Child Sexual Abuse, Inquiry, Experience-near, Journey, Ontology, Epistemology, Interpretivist, Multiple realities, Power, Ethics

21 INTRODUCTION

I am a student beginning to dabble with the ideas of research and this is the journey of how I began from deep roots in the positivist model, and in looking for a research idea, found myself being sucked into the world of Autoethnography.

My research idea eventually develops to be centered around child sexual abuse and is rooted in my own experience of abuse starting at the age of thirteen. It has many strands stemming from it; the experience itself, its impact on my personality, and my relationships, the journey of my coping with it; the guilt, the conversations or lack thereof surrounding it, and going to therapy. My cultural experience and upbringing that underpin the constantly changing form take in my life. This is an exploration of how I grapple with the mess I have known research to be, and in that, find my voice, find a way to tell my story. How I find my way to what I understand this research idea to be now.

21.1 From Quantitative to Qualitative Research

I have been raised to respect numeric data, aim for conclusive hypotheses and turn away from research that starts with an "I". I have been the manifestation of "idealization of natural science" (Flyvbjerg 2001, 27), but it has never felt right. I remember the first opportunity I got at research, and how eagerly, stemming from personal experience, I wanted to explore and understand flirting behaviours in men. My desire to understand, when looked through the lens of 'scientific research', got generalized and dried up in ways that made the end product feel so distant from where I had begun. This left me disillusioned by the idea of research.

During our first seminar here, I ask my facilitator, "Wait, so ANYTHING, can be research? How I feel and what I say can be research?" She says yes. They're telling us my thoughts, feelings and experiences, are as valid, as numeric tests (Glasby and Beresford 2006). I remain sceptical. I've about the idea of "practical wisdom" (Flyvbjerg 2001, 2) which have made sense, but surely, they must have their Do's and Don'ts.

In retrospect, I realize it has been a step-by-step transition for me. I come here with discomfort towards quantitative research, knowing it as the only way, and get warmed up to the idea of qualitative research. I have always failed to understand how ideas can be based on assumptions, that overlook unique contexts. Here I begin to learn about research that not only allows room for context but emphasises the need for it (Bondi and Fewell 2016). It attempts to understand the unique meanings (Leavy 2014, Denzin & Lincoln 2005) and goes beyond deriving generalizable truths.

As soon as the idea of context-dependant knowledge is dangled in front of me, I abandon the value I have been taught to associate with predictable knowledge (Flyvbjerg 2001). I'm attracted to allowing room for the intricacies of human experience, that to me have always felt vital to any understanding.

21.2 Distance between Counselling Practice and Research

When applying as a Counselling student, I recall feeling that there was distance between practice and research in the field (Bondi and Fewell 2016, McLeod 2001) and so if I wanted to contribute to practice, research was not the way to go. I now begin to understand how real that distance is; in counselling, a field based on the development of a relational field (Bondi and Fewell 2016), knowledge is being created through numerics and generalisations that feel far away from these unique relational experiences.

I understand what causes this distance through Bondi and Fewell's (2016) distinction of 'experience-near' and 'experience-far' (5) research. It is research that has developed on "denial of wider social

realities, and objectification of personal experience” (McLeod 2001, 5) that practitioners remain vary of, and so I begin to see research closer to experience as a means to bridge this gap.

McLeod (2001) takes this step towards uniqueness of experience (Bondi and Fewell 2016) by bringing light to multiculturalism and the need to cater to cross-cultural factors. This makes me think of how deeply embedded cultural ideas and values are in every aspect of who I am as a person. Can I understand any part myself, if I don’t acknowledge the culture forms me? Can I, then, understand anything or anyone, if I don’t acknowledge the role culture might have played for them? These questions further open me up to the idea of research that allows for the intricacies of being human (Bondi and Fewell 2016); culture, experience, subjective understandings, and all other nuances.

I look at my culture-laden, situational learning through life, and wonder, could any scientific paper have taught me everything I have learnt through experiences (Berwick 2005)? The empathy I am asked to draw on as a practitioner, could I learn from statistics? The learning I continue to develop comes from the experience of living through and living with things or what Flyvbjerg (2001) refers to as ‘practical wisdom’ (2).

21.3 Paradigms, Ontology and Epistemology

As I begin to develop this understanding of knowledge and learning, we are exposed to debates on paradigms, ontology and epistemology. It suddenly feels like I have words for the ideas I have been grappling with. I learn to call the context-independent way of natural sciences positivist and quickly find myself being drawn to the Interpretivist paradigm which allows for multiple interpretations and realities to exist (University of Southampton n.d.).

By believing in the existence of multiple realities, I take the ontological approach of relativism which highlights using interpretations to understand socially constructed individual realities. I have so far been understanding the significance of creating room for uniqueness of experience in research. It ties into the epistemological approach of a subjective co-constructed reality, instead of the idea of knowledge being ‘out there’ and objective. I have not, yet, begun to tap into how vast the debate of power is, so I don’t pay the critical theory paradigm much heed.

Re-visiting the debate of paradigms now, after ample discussion about my research idea, I associate with an overlap between interpretivism and critical theory. I understand the reality of the abuse to be *my* reality, and not the only reality out there. It is knowledge that is developing and altering as I go. I realise how deeply embedded power is in all matters of debate; how this knowledge I seek to understand is constantly being shaped by my power and that of others.

While theoretically the idea of subjective knowledge makes sense at this point, a part of my brain remains sceptical of how far I can take subjectivity. This is when I come across Axline’s (1965) work; “Dibs”. We have several starkly variant readings for this week. Freud (1955), taking a positivist position in relation to his client, Brison (1997) using her experience and that of others in her discussion of the self, shifting between first and third speaker voice, and Axline (1965) talking about her experience of Dibs. It is Axline’s (1965) piece that stays with me.

I go to seminar the next day overjoyed. “I loved that piece so much, I need more of it!”.

In retrospect, I understand Dibs as being one of the two major milestones in my journey. It is the degree to which Axline (1965) owns her experience, that stuns me. She speaks of her experience of

Dibs, not Dibs' experience. She makes no assumptions about Dibs, no interpretations for Dibs. She does not claim to know more than she knows. All she claims to know is herself, in relation to Dibs. She settles my qualms about being able to root myself entirely in my experience as a means of research, showing me what ownership of experience looks like.

She and Freud, are in similar positions, in relation to other people. The stark difference between their works helps clarify my own position with regards to knowledge. Her work is what makes me entirely abandon the natural science model, and wholeheartedly embrace context-dependent, experience-based research.

I read Axline (1965), and I think to myself, 'That is what I want to do. I want to speak about what I know, and what I know is myself and my experience.' I think back to why I started that study on flirting all those years ago. It wasn't to derive a generalizable conclusion, but to somehow create room for learning in my experience. This is the day I realize I can do that through research. I am excited, possibilities seem endless.

That, is how I enter the world of Autoethnography.

22 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

At this point, I haven't yet come across the term Autoethnography. I am delighted by the idea of being able to talk about my own unique culturally moulded experience and use it as a tool for learning.

In discussing research ideas, I talk about wanting to explore how being an elder sibling in my culture has formed me as a person. My facilitator tells me to keep an eye out for the discussion on Autoethnography, and consider if that is something I want to work with.

That is the first I hear of that term. I begin to explore it and quickly develop a fondness towards it.

The instant pull I have towards Autoethnography stems from how close I feel to the writer and the experience in reading an Autoethnography. There's a Spanish phrase, "A flor de piel", which translates to 'close to the skin'. I read Jonathan's (2012) work on Fathers, sons, and losses, and I share his struggle, I read Carolyn's (1995) work on loss and love, and I feel her pain.

It seems to bring together everything I have grown to value in research; the use of self and cultural experience (Holman, Adams and Ellis 2013) as a means of learning and inquiry, the space for subjectivities and relational learning and the acknowledgement of "difference, complexity and change" (ibid., 25) in each story. Autoethnography has one thing that no other research method has, and that is access to "insider knowledge" (ibid., 33). I am my own expert (Bondi and Fewell 2016) – no one else is an expert on me, and I am not an expert on anyone but myself. I value this insider knowledge to allow me to speak the truth of my experience, a truth only I know.

My conversation with a tutor reminds me that Autoethnography has been taught to us as a methodology. To me, that feels constricting. Something that I have grown to understand as a lens through which I am beginning to see the world, seems reduced in being called a methodology.

For me, Autoethnography is more than a methodology. It is the view by which I am learning to live (Gingrich-Philbrook 2005, Bochner 2000, Conquergood 1992), construct relationships, inquire, and understand. It is a way of being, and perceiving knowledge. It is looking at the world and thinking, 'How can I speak of anyone else, when all I really know is me?'

Today, when I am asked to write this paper, my starting point is Autoethnography. I know I want to work with myself, before I know what I want to work on.

I understand that mine is somewhat of a tunnel vision with regards to Autoethnography and recognise the need to engage with the limitations that may exist within it. I make that observation and leave it for a later time.

22.1 “What breaks my heart also breaks my tongue” (Tamas 2009, 4)

I sit down to outline my research idea – I must decide between two; my experience as an elder sister, or that of the abuse.

I come across Sophie Tamas’s (2009) paper. This is the second of the two milestones that I referred to above. Tamas’s (2009) work, brings me face to face with everything that scares me about Autoethnography. I have been blind to how painful this might be.

“The space between what has happened to me and the stories I can tell about it” (Tamas 2009, 3), it says. I curl up and let myself hurt. “What breaks my heart also breaks my tongue” (ibid., 4). I hold myself tighter. I know what hurts; I know what I need to talk about. While my experience of being a sibling is so very attractive and comfortable to speak of, I know that I truly feel the need to explore and understand my experience of having been abused as I child. That is what hurts, and that is what I need to take myself and my reader on a journey of a cultural understanding of.

I sit down and make a flow chart.

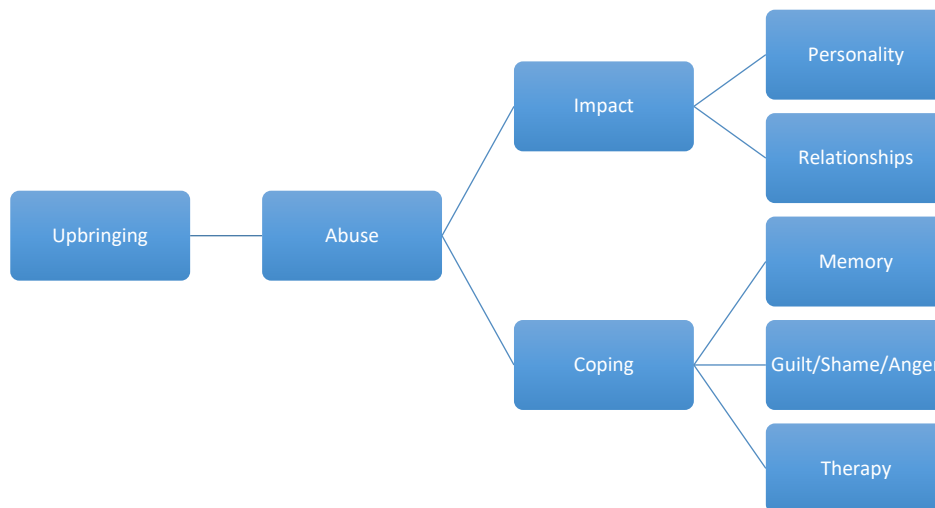


Fig. 1: The event of the abuse in the flow of my life.

Fig. 1 is what the chart looks like when I’m done. The event of the abuse is one point in time in the flow of my life (Holman, Adam and Ellis 2013, 24), but it continues to have ripples to this day. It defines who I am as a person, how I see myself, it seeps into my relationships in unexpected ways and continues to surprise me. I look back and see my journey through it. I watch myself having started from a place of guilt, being culturally taught to believe it was my fault, trying to unlearn and

re-learn that through time. I get angry. I have one foot out the door while the other foot remains strongly rooted in that guilt. I have seen my story change form in the telling and re-telling of it (Brison, 1997). I have seen it alter from the first time I said it out loud, to many hours in therapy that let me say the unsaid (Mair 1989), to those moments in the night when I have been held as I hurt, to right now, in this moment, as I write about it.

I want to explore my experience as part of my life journey, as Metta (2010) does in exploring how memories of abuse continue to shape her work and world view, or as Boylorn (2013) does in delving into how culture influences her writing. I want to do it, but what is it that I am really talking about? Am I speaking about the abuse? Am I speaking about being raised as a woman in my culture? Am I trying to hear my socially and culturally constructed voice (Ribbens and Edwards 1998)? Am I speaking about my lost childhood? Is it the family dynamics that made the abuse seem so acceptable that I wish to understand (Jehu 1989)? Or am I really trying to understand how all of these have come together to form my story?

I turn to how this work has been done; I search the web, I go to the library. The first thing that strikes me is the recurrent use of “CSA”, an abbreviation for ‘Child sexual abuse’ in so many of the writings (Collin-Vexina 2015, DiLillo 2010, Holman 2009). It makes me cringe. It makes me feel like someone put me in a box and labelled it ‘broken’. Does my experience have any room in these well-bounded terms? Where does the manipulation, the cultural upbringing and the relationships fit in? Do they fit in? Is there anything left of my story if you take those away?

I try to look past the term, blur my vision whenever it comes up. I soon realise that most of the work is positivist; it speaks of coping strategies for ‘CSA’ survivors, it discusses counselling in relation to abuse (Sanderson 1990), it speaks of barriers to disclosure of ‘CSA’ for policy purposes (Collin-Vexina 2015), it speaks of defensiveness in relationships by ‘CSA’ survivors through tables (Holman 2009), it elaborates on the role of memory in abuse (Williams 1995). I find “Handbook of sexual abuse: identification, assessment and treatment” (Goodyear-Brown 2011). The numbers and the tables and the coherent methods make me angry. They make me feel like I don’t belong.

Some papers that start with interviews and talk about culture (Lopez 2009, Nelson 2002). I get hopeful, but then they proceed to creating categories, make generalisations, and I go back to not belonging.

Then there are some in which I find some space for myself. There is work that tries to develop an understanding of abuse from various perspectives (Hooper and McCluskey 2000), but what I take the most away from is Ronai’s (1994) autoethnography on abuse. It is not my story, it’s hers, but I can see myself being reflected in bits of it. I can take her story and place myself wherever I want in it, create room for myself in it. I don’t feel like something is imposed on me anymore. I find a place for myself in research.

22.2 My bias towards Autoethnography

I have begun to actively engage with a tentative research idea, so now feels like the right time to go back to my starting point. I have acknowledged my bias towards Autoethnography, and I, now, begin to explore what the other side of this bias may hold.

Autoethnography has been criticized for the authority on knowledge it is assumed to claim. Researchers presenting what they have interpreted, reflected upon, and understood, for the understanding of others is considered problematic (Jackson and Mazzei 2008). Someone speaking from a high horse of awareness and understanding, does sound problematic to me, except, it does

not seem to be a problem with Autoethnography. Autoethnographers, in my understanding, do not take a position of authority; they do not claim to know, understand, or be fully aware. They hope to explore. (Holman, Adams and Ellis 2013, Tamas 2009). My work with my experience is a means of discovery for me and my readers (Richardson 2000). I don't know what may come up. It is a means of finding my way through chaos (Holman, Adams and Ellis 2013). I do not know what my experience means, I am trying to create meaning. I hope to unravel what feels true to me, while leaving room for my readers to create their own interpretation of what I bring to the table, take what they may, and leave what doesn't work for them.

Judith Butler (2005) speaks of self-understanding being limited as a problem in adopting Autoethnography. I fail to see that as a problem with Autoethnography. I am still learning. This is my attempt to begin to understand. I accept my limitation to understand, and I go from there. This acceptance is what allows me to freely explore my own experience, it is where the beauty of the work lies. For me, the problem arises when these limitations are ignored, and a researcher, assuming no limitations, comes from a position of knowing. I do not know, and I don't know if I ever really will know.

Jackson and Mazzei (2008) in their criticism of Autoethnography, blame stories for distorting the past. I agree with them, stories do distort the past, but then I question the need for stories to not distort. If the distortion is my truth today, then isn't the distortion what I am to be speaking of, to be true to myself, and my readers? I am not a thirteen-year old telling the story of my thirteen-year old self, I am a twenty-two-year old telling the story of my thirteen-year old self, and so that lens of memory and distortion is one I feel I need to acknowledge, and maybe explore, instead needing to rid myself of.

They also talk about a concern that resounds with me; the privilege of being the autoethnographer and how power exists in interpretation (Jackson and Mazzei 2008). While they call it a criticism, I call it a concern, because the existence of power, to me, is not something that Autoethnography needs to be written off for, but like distortions, it is something that as an autoethnographer I need to be vary of, acknowledge, create room for in my narrative, and explore.

23 POWER

My understanding of power resonates with that of Foucault, as discussed by Flyvbjerg (2001). I see power to be in everything; in our interactions, our experiences, our voice, in the notions we believe about ourselves and the world. Habermas's idea of a "communicative reality" (Flyvbjerg 2001); the diffusion of power through equal room for conversation, although desirable, seems idealistic in a world that, to me, seems to be formulated upon ideas of power. I praise Autoethnography for the room it creates for this power to be acknowledged, in comparison to other approaches to research, like the medical model that deny this very real power.

I try to look at power through my research idea, and my research idea through the lens of power. I see how deeply power structures are at play in my work. These power structures can never be truly neutralized, as Hebermas might argue, just by virtue of the fact that I have a voice, and I am getting to tell this story instead of someone else. I recognise the inequality of power in my being the autoethnographer, (Bondi 2004), which I further understand by Bondi's discussion of "institutional power" (175); the power that comes with being the researcher. I, additionally, see the power in my perspective of a relational experience, and the fine line that exists between saying 'he made me feel like this' versus 'I felt like this because of what happened'. It is a matter of ownership of

experience, as Axline (1965) did with her experience of Dibs. I recognise the need to constantly remain conscious of this subtly formed power that the phrasing of my sentences holds.

I further realise how deeply my experience itself is enveloped by power structures; the power of my abuser, power in the cultural notions I have embraced, power I lost and struggle to regain, power I have over my abuser in me telling this story. I don't understand the depth and complexity of it, but I recognise the need to remain mindful of it as I progress with my work.

23.1 Am I ethically bound to my abuser?

It is in the attempt of not misusing my power, where ethics come into play for me. Working with autoethnography, I recognise myself to be ethically responsible to both, myself, and others involved in my story. I am not just telling my story, I am telling stories of those who exist in relation to me too. I wonder what happens if I chose to own up to my experience and my identity (Polden 1998). It may reveal identities of those involved; my parents, my siblings, by virtue of them being a part of my story. How do I prevent that?

In my story, these people will be colored and represented through my experience (Clark and Sharf 2007). What does that do to them, and my relationships with them? As I delve into the uncertain, I don't know what I will find. I don't know how it may harm those involved, my relationships, and myself. How do I speak of my upbringing having made me accept the abuse, without breaking my parents? How do I risk my little brother looking at me differently when he finds out? How do I find a way to return to that culture after having spoken up? Am I ready to make myself vulnerable and live with its consequences (Tamas 2011, Bondi 2004)? I don't know.

Do I owe it to myself to protect myself? (Tamas 2009, Bondi 2004) I don't know.

Another question that constantly continues to nag me is; am I ethically bound to my abuser? His identity gets revealed through my story, because of the relationship we have. My voice does not only have consequences for my life and relationships, but for his as well. Do I owe ethical consideration to him?

And then I wonder, is there is a part of me that wants to tell this story because it lets me reveal his identity, it lets me destroy him, it allows me a power over him. I wonder, and I don't know yet. I just know that I need to hold these questions in my mind as I go and find my way through. I fear being naïve enough to tell my story without being ready for it.

I know this is what I want to speak, but I hesitate. It scares me. It knocks the wind out of me. I don't know, but I guess then being an unknower is where I start from.

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NO TIME FOR COMPLAINTS... IN RESEARCH OF STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The complexity of contemporary society is characterised by multiple and intertwined changes at social, economic, cultural and political levels; their constant evolution is challenging because of new educational emerging needs and problems. Pedagogical research can contribute to acknowledge and face them in a proper way: a community-based collaborative approach among academic researchers and practitioners – working in socio-educational services and third sector organizations – is essential in the process of identification of effective strategies to guarantee the quality of educational interventions. The research project *“Assalti al cielo e ritirate strategiche”* [Sky assaults and strategic retreats] has moved in this direction: in a complex system of rules and implicit constraints, that produces dissonances between declared and acted educational and professional practices, how can educational interventions have a real impact on individuals, groups and territories? are we aware of the effects of the prominent economic logics, that seem to give more importance to organizational needs instead of people and their trajectories of life? what is possible to do in order to change this (dangerous) route?

There are many critical aspects of the public social policies – e.g. the progressive reduction of resources and guarantees, the co-existence of multiple social mandates, the disparity of recognition and legitimacy among professional figures working in the educational and social field etc. – that should be analysed at different levels, by moving back and forward between the personal, the professional and the political one.

No time for sterile complaints, but focus on critical issues in order to find different and effective ways to increase the awareness of the social and political meanings, implications and value of socio-educational work.

The exploration of critical issues has been the premise for a transformative research project, that calls for the assumption of a shared responsibility among all subjects that participate (in formal or informal ways) in the process of construction of the meanings and the purposes of education and the professional educators' identity: the universities, the organizations that are active in the socio-educational field, the professionals that define the social policies.

The recognition of the need to deepen the dialogical and collaborative relationship among all these figures leads to the assumption of a collective responsibility, crucial for the (re)construction of a shared culture of education, based on inclusive and participatory democratic values and social justice purposes.

Keywords: socio-educational work, complexity, collective responsibility.

24 SKY ASSAULTS AND STRATEGIC RETREATS

Multiple transformations are ongoing in contemporary society: various changes in the socio-economic and cultural structures of the territories, the individualization of life courses, the welfare crisis [1][2] and the risk of accentuating social inequalities. These are complex processes with significant repercussions on the educational field. In particular, an increasing level of fragility in life stories (of the subjects and the territories) is deeply connected to conditions of economic and educational poverty, that call for a critical analysis of formal and informal educational processes. The outlines of the areas of intervention are changing as well as the framework of knowledge and competences considered as essential for an effective, intentional and pedagogically founded management of new emerging educational needs [3]. The articulation of a complex (rather than simplifying) thought [4] on the concepts of *educational professionalism* and *quality of socio-educational work* is crucial for educators, in order to strengthen their identity and to contribute to the construction of a solid professional culture.

In this direction, a constant dialogue among universities and territorial third sector organizations reveals to be strategic because both of them take part in the process of building the professional identity of educators. Moreover, they proceed to the observation of educational phenomena in different but complementary times, ways and perspectives. The dialogue and the comparison between professional and academic knowledge – besides contributing to a mutual recognition – make the construction of thoughts and theories that support the understanding of social and educational current changes possible. In fact, the territorial organizations intercept them long before university, and can reconstruct the transformative processes in temporal terms – also tracing continuities and discontinuities – in order to identify not only the critical aspects of new constraints but also new sustainable strategies.

On this premise a project of collaboration has been based with some third sector organizations, involved primarily in the traineeship programme of students of the Bachelor Degree in Education [5]. The project started a few years ago from a reflection on the training considered as a formative experience for future professional educators; but very soon it was clear that the point of the discussion could not be reduced to the recognition of the formative value of the already existing synergy among universities and organizations within the training system and not even to a sort of measurement of the distance between the knowledge and skills provided by the universities and those required within educational services. The Bachelor Degree in Education is a three-year course, which proposes some theoretical, epistemological and experiential anchorages, but educational professionalism needs a structural lifelong learning approach. By virtue of the constant evolution of its contents, educators' professionalism is the result of a process of continuous acquiring of theoretical knowledge, methodological tools and experiential skills. The mastery of pedagogical and educational skills comes out from a continuous process of in-depth study and integration of «general culture, psycho-social-pedagogical skills, competences towards particular sectors, and skills related to investigation, observation and research» [6].

This shared awareness has moved the focus of attention from the learning and training programme proposed at university to the more complex and wild process of construction of a solid professional identity, that needs a contextualised knowledge, both specific and transversal skills, ethical and democratic coordinates.

The discussion has shifted to a different level and the perspective of a long-term research project has been opened. It has been meant, first of all, as a space for discussion and reflection, aimed to understand the complexity of the current situation, to make an analysis of problems and to move

towards the research for sustainable solutions, not so much in terms of operativity as in terms of consciousness and meaning.

The title of the project reflects this dynamism of thoughts and problems. At the same time, it represents the attempt to pursue and proceed further away with a deep tension towards a contextualised search for orientations and perspectives for socio-educational work in times of crisis, between the undeniable problems and the necessary development of strategic thoughts, through which it might be possible to counteract the logic of emergencies and to think about new experimental possibilities.

“Sky assaults and strategic retreats” means that educators constantly work on and propose challenges, often seen as assaults upon the heavens. But sometimes they are forced to retreat. Not only lived as suffered defeats, the retreats could also activate new strategic processes and open to different and sustainable designs.

24.1 “The risk of loss of meaning in socio-educational work”

The frightening thought that most strongly emerged during the first discussions was expressed in “the risk of loss of meaning in socio-educational work”, due to the dominant economic logic and the tendency in reducing the complexity of problems and the related possible answers.

The first way to tackle the problem was the choice not to admit complaints and claims, in particular towards politics, even though the progressive reduction of resources and guarantees, as well as the disparity of recognition and legitimacy among professional figures working in the educational and social fields are problematic matters. A diffuse discontent can be considered reasonable and shareable, but it is important to be aware of the risk of an oppositional posture – and furthermore victimisation – that tends to make the situation crystallised and full of conflicts – sometimes useful, but also counterproductive when they create a short-circuit.

For this reason, it has been decided to assume a research stance and to develop a shared responsibility, oriented towards the common goal of structuring a dense thought on educational issues.

Reflections on praxis and concrete dilemmas have enlightened, first of all, the need for effective ways to say and explain the complex meanings and the socio-political value of the socio-educational work. So, the project has promoted an open dialog among all the subjects involved in the educational processes, at reflective, formative, decisional and professional levels: university, third sector organizations, institutions and also the recipients of the educational work. They have been involved not only in order to “give them voice”, but also to produce a reflection on socio-educational work, observed and experienced as recipients of educational actions, indeed, as subjects directly involved in educational processes and therefore able to show their effects and contradictions.

Different languages and perspectives, cultural backgrounds and technical knowledge, explicit and implicit constraints and prefigurations have been collected and have produced multiple questions. For their analysis, some workshops have been structured as contexts of discussion, in which it could be possible to take a proactive approach to problems. The collective discourse on socio-educational work, in this way, has assumed political traits: participants have questioned themselves about “what do they want to do?” and “what can they do?”, “what do they want to change?”.

Educators often put into action forms of resistance against social injustice, that are strictly linked with a problematic distance between politics and the everyday lives of people and territories. They respond to social mandates that seem not to be clear because of a mismatch between different representations of roles and functions, different purposes attributed and recognized to educational interventions. It is widespread that the main problems of socio-educational work are linked with regulatory constraints and with some contradictions existing between the declarations of intent and a system of limits – fixed mainly by economic logic – that have problematical effects on services and on the meaning of socio-educational work.

A complex system of rules and implicit constraints produces dissonances between educational and professional declared and acted practices. It is time for educators and social workers to find ways for reasoning with politics, in terms of critical reflection and social (not only economic) sustainability, inclusive and participatory democratic values, social justice purposes.

Educators involved in the research have declared that – in order to avoid the risk of making this critical point just an alibi – it is necessary to find effective strategies in making recognizable the political dimension of socio-educational work and to develop the ability to seek a dialogue with the institutions. It is necessary to develop an educational and proactive dialogue practice (despite the few or partial answers), around a focus: “How can educational interventions have a real impact on individuals, groups and territories?”

According to «an old-time activist adage, [they] must “think globally” and “act locally” [...] [they] must connect the “macro” with the “micro”» [7]. And it is essential to think about the effects of the prominent economic logic, that seems to give more importance to organizational needs instead of people and their trajectories of life.

It is not easy at all.

25 IN RESEARCH OF STRATEGIES

The shared analysis of the problems that have an impact on educational work has shown the growing complexity of social demands in the face of the progressive reduction of resources; the request for greater and greater flexibility not counterbalanced by guarantees; the difficulty in understanding multiple social mandates (often inconsistent towards purposes of control, compliance or autonomy) to which educators are called to respond, with reduced possibilities of negotiation. The educational interventions are managed according to an emergency logic that imposes to crush on primary needs and on a technical vision of the educational act. The continuous demand for innovation in educational work is sterile when it is not declined as a possibility of adopting innovative strategies, oriented to the search for new possibilities and ways of managing resources, using multiple tools and languages, designing and experimenting with different methodologies. But innovation can also mean taking the time to question personal and professional ways of observing and practicing the educational work, perhaps discovering that sometimes it is appropriate to retreat and re-design.

This analysis is the product of a deeply reflective work made by almost forty academics, educators and coordinators of socio-educational services that met several times, divided into four groups focused on different issues:

- professional problems and “shadow areas” (related not only with the recipients but with the educators as professionals);
- the complex relationship among socio-educational organizations, institutions and politics;

- the innovation in socio-educational work;
- the multiple (formal and informal) educational dimensions of the school, seen as a complex context, in which education is often still considered only as a specific intervention activated in critical situations, rather than as a constitutive trait of the school experience.

Several discussions, some interviews and focus groups, workshops and meetings, also some “pedagogical aperitifs” have been held. Different settings – formal and informal, in small groups and collectives – have been organized as opportunities for reflection and confrontation among academics and practitioners, stimulating the re-reading of processes. Furthermore, the participants have lived this experience as a precious opportunity of confrontation among colleagues, in a sort of “community of practice” [8]. Indeed, they have been engaged in a process of collective learning, by sharing knowledge and competences, points of view and opinions; they have put in common a repertoire of resources, in terms of experiences, stories, tools and praxis. But have also problematised the widespread sensation of loneliness and impotence when facing with increasingly complex and diffuse social problems.

The search for new ways of constructing and disseminating knowledge on educational work has been declared desirable as well as the definition of research projects with explicit transformative intents, whose results could impact with the policies, orient intervention strategies and strengthen the identity and professional profile of educators. This is a long-term project, but this posture makes it coherent with an «ethically responsible activist research» [9].

The shared acceptance of the responsibility to build knowledge on socio-educational work has asked everybody to go beyond the narratives about good local practices, but to deeply explain and make clear the objectives, the assumed risks, the thoughts that have guided the processes, the underlying meanings, the knowledge and the social value that have been produced. This posture invites to assume the perspective of transversality and makes possible for the experiences of individuals to become a common heritage and form a pool of critical, contingent reflections and perspectives. Besides, the individual experiences can be transferred to other contexts, going a little further than the specificity of the actions, but investigating their meanings and strategic worth.

With no doubts, the members of the group have made the experience of «the role of reflexivity and the importance of questioning and challenging boundaries as they appear in everyday lives» [10]. They have become aware of the importance of acquiring the ability to make visible the strategic value of socio-educational work, both in its social dimensions and in economic terms. In fact, a possible countermeasure (albeit partial) to the multiplicity of constraints and contradictions seems to be the recognition of the need to deepen the relationship among socio-educational professionals, institutions and politics, by moving from the level of economic-organizational needs to the recovery of shared meanings of education. Moreover, educators have recognised the necessity to identify non-negotiable conditions of (self)protection of their professionalism and to guarantee the quality of socio-educational work.

It depends on contextual conditions – the relationship between regulatory constraints and socio-economical characteristics of local contexts, as well as the coherence between the socio-educational mission and the style of governance of the organizations –, but the quality of interventions comes out, first of all, from the mastery of a mature professionalism. Many different anecdotes have been collected during the research process, related to personal and professional trajectories of life; from the narratives it has been possible to identify some crucial steps that seem to define the traits of a solid professionalism:

- the exit from the self-referentiality;

- the adoption of an “ecological sensitivity” [11] in order to manage a wide range of possible interpretations and meanings, to connect technical skills and pedagogical competences, to recognise educational needs in multiple contexts, and then to design appropriate interventions and provide suitable responses to contemporary social problems;
- the acquisition of a research stance, through which educators can be able to make a difference [9] in the lives of people and territories, but also in the orientations of social policies.

But most of all, the experience in the field makes possible to acquire the awareness of the strategic function of reflective spaces and tools, so that professional training and supervision in the helping professions [12] and, in particular, pedagogical supervision [13] come to be considered as essential.

Nevertheless, the comparison among generations of educators – when considered as an intentional and focused object of attention and reflective analysis – is seen as an opportunity for opening up spaces of mutual learning, particularly with regard to the assumption of awareness of the political value of educational work and the need to develop a propositional and dialogical practice with politics.

In fact, the drift towards a self-entrepreneurship of the third sector organizations, impressed by the progressive contraction of public institutions, introduces technical-organizational corrective measures that influence the meanings and the effectiveness of socio-educational actions. It is time to develop a critical posture against the dominant economic logic, which has (non-ignorable) effects on the educational culture. The definition of thresholds that cannot be negotiable downwards is essential in order to find a balance between economic needs and an ethical position that underlies an authentic social attention.

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HOW A HASHTAG MATTERS: RECONFIGURING RESEARCH-ACTIVIST ENCOUNTERS TO ADDRESS SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PRE-TEEN PEER CULTURES

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Abstract

Inspired by feminist new materialist ethico-onto-epistemology, this paper explores how sexual harassment in pre-teen peer cultures was reconfigured for ethical and political engagement through an entanglement of children, the arts, a hashtag, research-activism, and Valentine's Day cards. This study draws on *#MeToo Postscriptum*¹, an arts-based, research-activist, participatory intervention to address sexual harassment in pre-teen peer cultures, implemented as an unexpected offshoot of broader research on child peer cultures by one of the authors—and of a booming debate on sexual harassment in the public landscape. The intervention in question was based on arts-based workshops with children from ten to twelve years of age, in schools in a northern Finnish city. Built around Valentine's Day, the idea was to create, with those children, cards for each member of the Finnish Parliament, reminding them of the need for consistent, systematic work to address sexual harassment, which affects not only adults but also children. The campaign acted to raise awareness of the hidden, normalised nature of harassment in pre-teen peer cultures and its intricate entanglement of pain and pleasure in the lives of children. Applying the feminist new materialist ethico-politics of response-ability, as discussed by Barad [1] and Haraway [2], we trace the "MeToo" hashtag as it intra-acted with our negotiations of engagement, with the children's crafting of Valentine's Day cards, and with the landscape of the wider public. We focus in particular on the capacities of such intra-actions to generate possibilities for participants—researchers and children—and others to "know otherwise" and, as a form of "response-ability," to resist sexual harassment in pre-teen peer relations. Grounded in our ongoing research, this paper aims to contribute to "phematerialist" discussions about what research can *do, be, or become* [3] and, in particular, to how research becomes, attending to how human and more-than-human others converge to reconfigure possibilities for ethical and political engagement, *within* and *through* arts-based research assemblages.

Keywords: arts-based methods, children, feminist new materialism, research-activism, sexual harassment

26 INTRODUCTION

Since the "MeToo" hashtag became viral in 2017, sexual harassment has been brought to public attention, to political debate, and to everyday activism in a widespread, if also contested manner [4], [5]. Beyond the media coverage of harassment by high-profile men in—for example—the entertainment industry, drawing attention to the prevalence of sexual harassment has also acted

to engage decision-makers in those discussions. This is the case in Finland, where the MeToo campaign inspired politicians to contemplate actions to eradicate sexual harassment in Finnish society [6]. While the campaign has offered a stark reminder of the need to acknowledge, voice, and address sexual harassment systematically, it has only scratched the surface of the complex phenomena of sexual harassment and sexual violence and abuse (see for example [5]), remaining mostly blind to the manifestations and mattering of sexual abuse, violence, and harassment in the everyday lives of children. In effect, studies have shown that harassment mediates young peer cultures in multiple, contradictory manners [7]-[11].

In response to this lack of scope and attention, we, the authors of this paper, arranged an arts-based, research-activist, participatory intervention, aiming to increase awareness about and bring public attention to the hidden, less-often-articulated manifestations of sexual harassment in the peer cultures of pre-teen children. This paper considers that intervention. In approaching that intervention, which we entitled *#MeToo Postscriptum*, we focus in particular on how children, academic work, public debate, and creative methods intra-act to generate possibilities for research and activism to coalesce. Through that focus, this paper connects to recent calls by feminist new materialist scholars for researchers to move beyond describing the state of things to seeking and opening up actively to the potentials of transformation in the gendered and sexual force relations of young people [3]. Such “phematerialist” [3] discussions have emerged from a wider interest in affect, materiality, and relationality—as captured under the rubric of new materialisms [12], [13]; through posthuman and new materialist activist philosophies [14]; and through consequent methodological interest in moving from oral and talk-based methods towards experimentation with creative and arts-based modes of engagement and inquiry [3], [15].

Inspired by this body of work and by the current activism around sexual harassment, working with five student teachers, we designed and implemented a participatory research intervention to address sexual harassment in the peer cultures of pre-teen children. The intervention was an offshoot of an ongoing larger research project by the second author on arts-based methods and on gender-based and sexual violence in the relationship cultures of primary school children (see, for example, [8]). The research project comprised ten creative workshops attended by 120 children aged ten to twelve from schools in a city in Northern Finland. During the workshops, the children discussed topics related to gender and power, to friendship and romantic relationship cultures, and to issues that might feel painful and pleasurable in those relation(ship)s. Occurring in the weeks approaching Valentine’s Day, the two-hour workshops were designed around making Valentine’s Day cards. The children had the possibility to write about their experiences of harassment as “P.S. notes” in their cards and to choose a member of the Finnish Parliament to whom the card would be sent.

The research project generated rich data on the uses of creative methods and on children’s experiences of gendered and sexual harassment as written down in the cards in question—and as discussed among the participants. The process of assembling and implementing the project itself was “captured” in the researcher notes, in audio recorded reflections by the researchers and student teachers and re-iterated in this paper by its authors through a collective, analytical mode of storying.

This paper explores the intervention as it emerged as an entanglement of the arts, children, public debate, academic inquiry, feminist activism, and accounts of sexual harassment, reconfiguring, in turn, possibilities for the participants—children and researchers—and others to come to “know otherwise” and to resist sexual harassment in pre-teen peer relations. By tracing the *MeToo* hashtag analytically as it becomes reconfigured in our negotiations of engagements, in children’s crafting of cards, and in the public landscape, we offer an account of what else research can *be* and *become*,

and how it becomes, focusing in particular on the human and more-than-human others that interact to generate sites and spaces for ethical and political engagement.

27 CONCEPTUAL COMPANIONS

This paper is inspired by feminist new materialist ethico-onto-epistemological thinking. Through that inspiration, we foreground affect, materiality, and the relationality of human and more-than-human others [12], [16]. In particular, we are inspired by the seminal works of Karen Barad and Donna Haraway. According to Barad [1], the world is an ongoing reconfiguring. Bodies, objects, and abstractions do not pre-exist their relating, but rather come to matter [17] through ongoing iterative intra-activity of moments, things and places. The practices of knowing occur also *within* and *as part of* the world in its ongoing dynamism. In other words, “[w]e do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because ‘we’ are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming” [17, p. 829].

Importantly, this ongoing motion of mattering does not only suggest the vibrant, co-constitutive processes of being and becoming; it marks an important encounter with ethics. The processes of being, knowing, and mattering are imprinted with responsibility and accountability [1], [2]. As Barad maintains [1, p. 394], “[o]ur (intra)actions matter—each one reconfigures the world in its becoming.” Each intra-action is a matter of care, response, and responsibility, or, to distract and diffract this proposition from the anthropocentric legacy of ethics, a matter of “response-ability” [1], [2], of an ontological, always-already ethical relationality of response and responsibility, constituted not through conscious intent, but “through the various ontological entanglements that materiality entails” [1, p. 393].

The above thinking helps us to examine, in our study, how objects, bodies, histories, futures, and abstractions become entangled and how *in* and *through* such entanglements, some things come to matter while others are excluded from mattering [1, p. 394]. In the context of this study, this invites an exploration of how diverse entanglements of human and more-than-human others co-constitute conditions for sexual harassment to be addressed, communicated, and engaged with. More importantly, we become attuned to how each (intra)action matters; that is, to how the unfolding sites and spaces of research-activist intervention are co-constituted by—and are co-constitutive of—continually reconfiguring response-abilities.

In the following, we resist aiming to know what research does and is, attending instead to the moments when academic inquiry invites, reconfigures, and co-constitutes conditions for response, resistance, and activism. Our analytical approach is inspired by Haraway’s [18, p. 3] string figuring, “plucking out fibres in clotted and dense events and practices...try[ing] to follow the threads where they lead in order to track them and find their tangles and patterns.” Analysis becomes a simultaneous move of picking a “thread,” a “yarn” to hold, value, wonder at, and care for; and making new patterns. The thread we pick is that of the hashtag, which, in our new materialist framework, becomes a “sticky object,” thick and loaded with muddled histories [18], carrying affects [3], [19] and inviting a response. Tracing the hashtag as a mode of thinking enables glimpses of response-abilities as they reconfigure in affective human and more-than-human assemblages, *within* and *through* our research-activist engagements.

28 #METOO POSTSCRIPTUM

By tracing the hashtag as it traversed and was reconfigured within our research-activist project, we chose five encounters that invite, oblige, and enable response and response-ability. The *first*

encounter emerged as academic research and a televised political debate coalesced. The *second* encounter is an invited pause as a team of researchers and student teachers became entangled in the abstractions, conceptualisations, and embodied histories of sexual harassment while planning the workshops. The *third* analytical pause shows how the reconfigured hashtag intra-acted in child-Valentine's-Day-card assemblages during the workshops. The last two encounters capture the reconfigured hashtag as it travelled to a university café and, finally, to the landscape of the wider public.

28.1 Reconfiguring a Hashtag

The first encounter occurred in mid-December, when the Finnish parliament held a debate on sexual harassment in the Finnish society [6]. The discussion, influenced and prompted by MeToo activism, was broadcast on national media and followed closely by Tuija, the second author of this paper. The “viral” hashtag, television broadcast, political debate, and Tuija’s long-time research on gender-based violence in young peer and relationship cultures—see, for example, [8]—became entangled with experiences of her previous arts-based workshops with pre-teen children on similar topics and with child-led activism conducted in Wales [20], engendering, importantly, an invitation to respond. Through this intra-active engagement, marking the “beginning in the middle” of our participatory intervention, the MeToo hashtag became reconfigured in the P.S. sections of Valentine’s cards in our attempt to disrupt silences around sexual harassment in pre-teen peer relations.

Touched by the hashtag, propelled by the public debate, and in order to act upon the acute possibility of engaging in that debate, the participatory research intervention was arranged in a period of a few weeks in early January. We recruited five student teachers to assist in the project. The research team convened to plan the structure and activities for the creative workshops, to recruit the schools, and to prepare the information and consent letters for the participants and their legal guardians.

Around the meeting room table, more-than-human others intra-acted to reconfigure sexual harassment in pre-teen peer relations as a “matter of concern” (see, for example, [23]). For instance, while we had an extensive history of working on gendered and sexualised violence, most of the student teachers did not. These knowings and not-knowings became re-animated as articulations and abstractions of childhood, sexuality, and harassment crowded the meeting room—and as traces of the student teachers’ own pasts were “pulled in” [8], materialising as stories of once-felt discomforts and ambiguities of childhood relation(ship)s. While those encounters did invite new modes of knowing about sexual harassment, they were also contentious, caught in powerful, affective discursive practices of how childhood, sexuality, harassment, and activism can or cannot be communicated. This affected the wording of the research consent letters, such as in weighing the use of the word “sexual” as referring to harassment and by situating the research intervention carefully in relation to the MeToo movement. It also materialised in how the members of the research team negotiated between articulations of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and between research and activism. Attending to these encounters sheds light on how research becomes activist through moments of response involving human and more-than-human others—and how those unfurling “(intra)actions” [1] engender possibilities for sexual harassment to be recognised, resisted, and communicated.

28.2 Child-Valentine’s Card Intra-Actions

During the subsequent weeks, the research team implemented two-hour creative workshops for ten 5th and 6th grade school classes in a city in Northern Finland. The workshops began with the

children sitting in a circle while the student teachers made research-based statements related to children's peer relations and romantic relationships. If the children agreed with the statements, they would change seats; if not, they would remain in place. The workshops, held separately for boys and girls², enabled the normative modes of "doing" a boy or girl to begin to reverberate. These reverberations unfolded, for example, as unrest that spread into the bodies-in-circle in the boys' workshops, or as joking—pulling boys into the contradictory tensions of, on one hand, reasserting masculine credentials and, on the other, exploring anxieties about cultures of sexual harassment.

Towards the end of the workshop sessions, the participants wrote about their experiences of harassment in P.S. notes such as, "I have been pressured to snog or to grab a girl by the butt" (a P.S. note from a boys' workshop, Fig. 1), "One boy always came too close it was upsetting" (a P.S. note from a girls' workshop, Fig. 2), or, "One boy tried to kiss me, chased me around and when I stopped, he held my head and said 'head up, we're kissing now'" (a P.S. note from a girls' workshop, Fig. 3).

We propose that these intra-active entanglements of arts, abstractions, and the embodied histories of harassment engaged children in micro-processes of change, in "minor gestures" [22] through which sexual harassment began to reconfigure "otherwise," disrupting normative ways of knowing and opening alternative ways of "doing." Agreeing with Barad [1] and Haraway [2], we find that the ability to arrive at these ethico-political responses was not in the individual but co-constituted within dynamic entanglements of human and more-than-human others. Moreover, writing about experiences in the Valentine's Day cards—and passing that writing on to others—allowed those minor gestures to become part of wider change-making assemblages against sexual harassment, as elaborated on below.

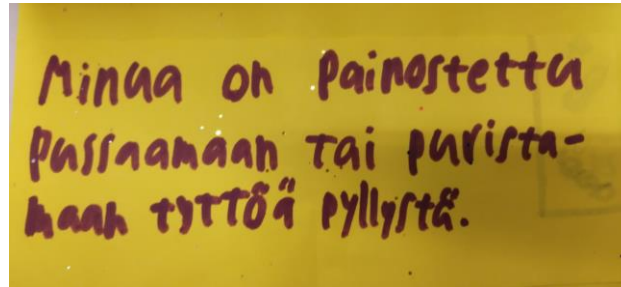


Figure 2 "I've been pressured to snog or to grab a girl by the butt" (a P.S. note from a boys' workshop)

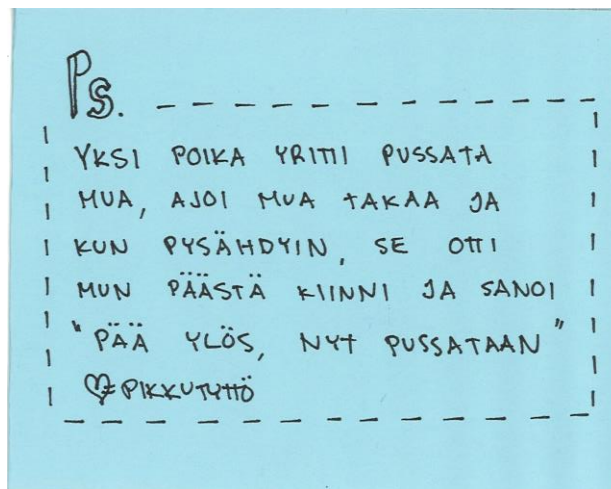


Figure 3 "P.S. One boy tried to kiss me, chased me and when I stopped, he held my head and said "head up, we're kissing now" Little girl" (a P.S. note from a girls' workshop)

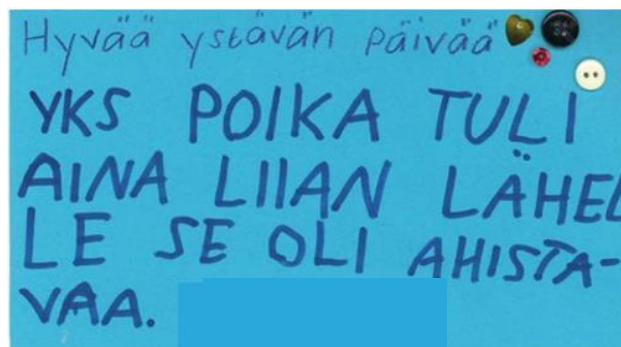


Figure 4 "Happy Valentine's. One boy always came too close it was upsetting" (a P.S. note from a girls' workshop)

28.3 Going Public

As the Valentine's Day cards became entangled within the research-activist constellation, they became agential, or, to echo Renold [3, p. 38], "d/artaphacts...crafted from and carrying

experience.” Moreover, one might speculate that the cards did not merely carry experiences; they also crafted and co-constituted “response-abilities”—capacities to be touched and to touch in return, to be invited and obliged to care (see [23]).

One such site for response emerged through a “pop-up” stand assembled in a university café, partly parallel to the children’s workshops. The idea to build the stand came from the student teachers, iterating their own childhood encounters of sexual harassment, as illustrated briefly earlier in this paper. Faculty staff and students were encouraged via email lists to take part in the project and to share their own childhood experiences of harassment.

The stand brought the MeToo hashtag, pinned brazenly to the partition wall (see Fig. 4), within the physical area of the university. We argue that the entanglement of café, hashtag, bodies passing by, sexual harassment, and children’s experiences—shared on the partition wall—invited passers-by to pause, sit, and press pen to paper; to make a lingering past material in the present. The stand evoked moments of acknowledgement, recognition, and also discomfort. Those experiences were shared with us in everyday encounters with students and co-workers, mentioned in passing as afterthoughts; disclosed memories of personal experiences or contemplations about one’s own children “at that age.” The stand also engendered resistance and questioning, reminding us of the uneasy and contested alliances of childhood, sexuality, and harassment; and of research and activism. Examining the encounters at the pop-up stand offers an insight into how invitations to respond were reconfigured through dynamic constellations of moments, places and things, as well as into how the sticky hashtag and promiscuously travelling affects [19] reiterated and reconfigured new possibilities for response.



Figure 4 A pop-up stand in a university café in February 2018

After the workshops, the research team collected and compiled the cards so that at least one unique card would be posted to each member of the Finnish Parliament by Valentine’s Day of that year. The cards were also collected and published online [24]. A press release was issued just before Valentine’s Day, evoking a rapid response (see, for example, [25]). During the following weeks—

although the timing of the press release was misaligned, causing the “charge” of attention to subside before the cards were received by the recipients—the cards continued to travel as the press release and subsequent news articles were published in national and local media outlets. We received interview requests and were contacted directly by people who had encountered our project. The campaign merged through those means in wider activist assemblages against sexual harassment, in contemporary political landscapes, and in embodied histories of harassment with effects and affects, we might never really know, but which might nonetheless recraft new “touches of response-ability.”

29 GLIMPSES OF RESPONSE-ABILITY

The above research-activist project originated in the “touch of a hashtag.” This hashtag is marked by feminist digital activism, (histories of) sexual violence and harassment, and (histories of) activism, politics, and resistance. Examining the touch of a hashtag as the beginning-in-the-middle of our research-activist project offered insights into the possibilities for research and activism to coalesce as emergent and co-constituted with companions both invited and unforeseen. As the research-activist projects evolved, the touch of the hashtag began to traverse our research-activists encounters; in doing so, it iterated, affected, and reconfigured, (re)crafting and (re)laying an invitation to react, respond, and take action.

Through the *#MeToo Postscriptum*, the children could address and communicate such parts of their lives that most often remain side-lined in an educational setting or addressed exclusively in a normative regulative framework. With its activist agenda, the intervention allowed the children to become part of a wider change-making assemblage, as they passed their experiences to us to curate and to share with politicians and the wider public. For the two hundred members of the Finnish Parliament, the recipients of the Valentine’s cards, the campaign acted as a reminder of the complex, often hidden and silenced ways in which the phenomena of sexual harassment matters, even in the peer relations of pre-teen children. While we cannot ever know everything that emerged through the intervention, we suggest that, beyond the easily discerned moments of an invited response, tracing the MeToo hashtag helps shed light on how each intra-action—each entanglement of cards, children, parents, schools, a hashtag, researchers, future teachers, academics, histories of harassment, and histories of resistance—matters, affecting and effecting, reiterating and reanimating possibilities for response, recognition, and resistance.

NOTES

¹ We would like to thank our collaborator, visual artist Anna Koivukangas, for suggesting this name to us when we were planning the project.

² “Boys” and “girls” as used here to refer to the gender expression the children preferred to use.

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THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT THROUGH PEDAGOGICAL INQUIRY: PROMOTING A RESEARCH STANCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD³

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Abstract

This paper, through the presentation of an ongoing pedagogical research, describes the experience developed by an academic research group providing the cooperation among students of the Bachelor's Degree Course in Education, junior researchers working as educators, PhD Students, a Research Fellow and a Professor of Social Pedagogy.

The research group has multiple finalities: an explorative aim, a didactic purpose and a transformative tension that are intertwined and mutually develop across the process. The research questions aim to explore models and values of the young generation, according to a social pedagogical framework that has a specific interest in informal education and in the analysis of the societal influences on men and women's pathways of life. Considering the growing individualism that is affecting contemporary biographies, Social Pedagogy recognizes in active participation and cooperation two fundamental formative experiences for every citizen in the contemporary society: they could sustain a deeper awareness around the own educational biographies and supports emancipatory processes regarding societal influences and structures which may limit biographical opportunities and personal choices [1]. For these reasons, educational practices and pedagogical inquiries which elect Social Pedagogy as theoretical reference, consider the promotion of active participation at several levels as an important and transversal aim, always accompanying the specific object of an intervention or a study.

According to these assumptions, the research process provided the active involvement of different actors of the educational scenario: the *practitioners* who work in socio-educational services addressed to young people and their *users*, young boys and girls from the suburbs of Milan. Furthermore, the research activities turned out to be an important opportunity to involve some students, future educators, in a training experience on research skills and on the educational profession.

In this sense, the project goes towards the constitution of a generative link between the university and the territory where it is placed, between researchers and practitioners and, after all, between pedagogical theory and educational practices.

In the first section of the work, we introduce the research project and the history of the research group named "Vite di Città"; the second section focuses on the participation of young students in the inquiry and in the didactic training; the third section illustrates the involvement of adult privileged witnesses and the collaboration with practitioners; finally the last section focuses on the involvement of young men and women, users of educational services.

³ This paper is the results of joint reflections by the authors, with the following contributions attributed to Giulia Pozzebon (Abstract and paragraph 4), Matilde Pozzo (paragraph 3 and conclusion) and Marialisa Rizzo (paragraph 1 and 2).

Keywords: Social Pedagogy, Participatory research approach, Research stance

1 A UNIVERSITY RESEARCH GROUP FOR PEDAGOGICAL INQUIRY: “VITE DI CITTÀ”

In the framework of the academic course of Social Pedagogy, a self-formative group – whose name is “Vite di Città” – arose in 2012 in order to involve students in a research project dedicated to the pedagogical exploration of the important changes that recently affected the area where our university is, and their consequences on the educational biographies of its inhabitants [2]. At first, the group was composed by a Professor of Social Pedagogy, two coordinators (Research fellow and PhD) and six senior students of the Bachelor’s Degree Course in Education. The good pilot experience opened a second ongoing phase in which a new group of students has been involved, alongside the old members, now working as educators or PhD Students (from now on referred to as “junior/young group” and “senior/old group”).

Active participation is important for students’ training, especially in contemporary society, where the widespread individualism, the “liquid” biographies (including students’ ones) and the erosion of common paths and aims [3] [4] force youth to build their knowledge in a solitary way. Therefore, the students’ participation in a collective project can re-activate a sense of responsibility, connecting the personal with the political and stimulating the acquisition of a *sociological imagination*. Co-working can be a particularly formative experience because it can bring to live the democracy in daily life [5]. These experiences are important for all citizens, especially for future educators, who are trained to design and implement educational interventions [6].

In order to train young current students that will be future educators, we decided that the aim of this group could be the production of learning, connected with the pedagogical theme of the research: the educational biographies [7] of young women and men living in the suburbs of Milan. At first, we tried to encourage a re-reading of students’ biography just as young men and women. Starting from these reflections (about their and today’s young’s role models), we introduced the junior group in the research into suburban areas of Milan, often socially disadvantaged, where professional educators work on the promotion of socialization and well-being. In these territories the senior group has been accompanied by the junior one during the collection of some semi-structured in-depth interviews to adult privileged witnesses: educators, social operators, some representatives of socio-educational institutions and few people with a recognized role as informal educators. Initially, these interviews were made and recorded by the senior group members, while the juniors assisted the conductions and transcribed the recordings. They have been trained for the method of transcription and, subsequently, they made in autonomy other interviews to other adult privileged witnesses, after a further period of study and reflection on the literature. In total, we met twenty-one adult privileged witnesses in different peripheral territorial contexts. While the junior group has been trained for thematic analysis of these interviews, the senior one conducted some focus groups with some adolescents and young people, users of educational services. However, before directly encountered them, we involved the junior group in a probationary focus group, in which we could test the track and promote once more the students’ reflection on their informal educational paths as young current women and men. After this first focus group, we collected the voice of the users of educational services, with the help of some responsible adults of each context. At this stage we are accompanying the young group to reflect on the educational acquisitions related to the participation on the research process, while the senior group is analysing data. An important aim, for the future, is the restitution of the results and the learnings not only to the multiple actors involved, but also in public meetings, to all interested people.

2 STUDENTS' CO-PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH GROUP

As has been mentioned, in spring 2017 nine students enrolled in second or third year of the Bachelor's Degree Course in Education (University of Milano-Bicocca) embraced the proposal of involvement in a research project and in a particular didactic training and became the junior group of the research group, "Vite di Città".

This proposal of participation was made in a specific period in which in Italy the professional profile of socio-pedagogical educators was defined by law (Law n. 205/2017, comma 597), assigning to the University the responsibility for their vocational training. Therefore, on the one hand, the involvement of students in their training and in production of critical thinking is postulated by Social Pedagogy, and on the other hand this particular proposal corresponds with a new specific academic responsibility.

The historic juncture is related to the professional development of future educators, but also to the social current context, that is characterised by an increasing complexity of daily life, the experience of a democratic crisis [8] [9], a widespread individualism and the crisis of common and public good [6]. These junctures are not irrelevant for educators who now seem to achieve a social recognition and who have a social and democratic responsibility [10]. Therefore, even though this responsibility might be restored and taught by University, "democracy cannot be taught, it must be lived" [11]. The proposal to future educators of a co-participation in a research group aims to promote this kind of "lived democracy", in which not all people have the same responsibility, but everyone has the possibility (and the responsibility) to contribute to generate knowledge about the complexity of current informal and social education.

The discussion, that has a social and a cognitive role in facilitating the relationship in-group and the co-construction of knowledge [12], was promoted on different levels: between students and coordinators, between young and senior students in a sort of tutoring [13], among different students. This methodology could contribute to reinforce the critical thinking and the singular participation in a common project. The discussion was concerned with the research contents (the role models of young men and women in suburbs of Milan), as well as the methodology and the process. If the discussion on their own models could promote a reflection on personal biographies, the analysis of the interviewer's role and the means of communicating could enhance reflexivity about personal communication and relationships styles. These issues and reflections are essential for educators, that have in the relationships with others a primary tool of their work. Therefore, these experiences could sustain some crucial competencies of educators, who must be reflexive on their way of live and be [14].

Furthermore, the research has given to future educators the opportunity to come in contact with their future job – with different actors, services, educational contexts and educational challenges – and to produce knowledge, directly and indirectly, related to their work.

The participation for the students has been voluntary; this choice represents a further training proposal: to learn practical research skills is very important in the educational and social work (e.g. tools for exploring and inquiring the territory, for analysing educational needs, for reaching users and giving them voice). In this path, in a dynamic movement "in and out" of the classroom, by facing educational experiences in the field, students can learn and adopt a research stance, important for their future professional work [15] [16]. This experience could train these students to be active in social space as today's active citizens, taking their responsibility and participating in common life, but it could also train them to be active as educators with a social responsibility. These aspects are

also intertwined with the possibility to learn some soft, transversal skills (as flexibility, adaptability and the analytical skill of different contexts), now requested by current social context and labour market in constant change [13].

An important perspective for this formative work is the Student Voice, proposing a participatory methodology to do research with, and not on, students. Here this “umbrella-word” [10] takes on different meanings: it proposes a listening of the voice of students to experience new training methods, but also to document and evaluate the training process, through participation in common research project. Indeed, at the end of this experience, a focus group was realized with students to reflect on the training acquisitions, as students, as future educators, as citizens [17].

3 THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF PRIVILEGED WITNESSES: COLLABORATION WITH PRACTITIONERS

The other important subjects involved in this research project are *practitioners* working in socio-educational services addressed to young people, *informal educators* working or volunteering in informal territorial services dedicated to youth and *institutional figures* that have a role in youth policy.

According to a participatory pedagogical research approach [18], the involvement of privileged witnesses who daily have to deal with educational processes, needs and problems represents an essential step towards a kind of inquiry that has not only informational purpose, but also a transformative tension [19], [20]. Practitioners are not executors of theories and knowledge built in other space and time: they are actors and producers of “local theory” on the issues they meet in their practice and on the broader context in which their practice is placed. In this sense, the focus promoted by Social pedagogy offers a useful lens. This discipline in fact has a specific research interest in informal education, considered – also institutionally – as a “learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure [...] often referred to as experience based and [...] accidental learning” [21].

The attention to the role of different “educational climates” orients pedagogical research towards objects that are part of the “widespread, relational, not intentional, spontaneous, unconscious, territorial, social education” [22], that “occurs” throughout people’s lives, that takes place in every context, not only in the ones dedicated to, and that is not only virtuous. This is one of the assumptions that guided the identification of the research questions around the educational biographies of young women and men growing in suburbs area of Milan: what are the models of these boys and girls? Where these models take shape? Which experiences and which contexts participate on the growing processes of these young population? Where and how they learn to be the young man and woman they are? The attention necessarily goes not only to formal educational experiences lived by young in institutions, projects, services or other intentional educational chances, but also to the multiplicity of informal learnings they can meet in many other fields and experiences, from the cultural panorama to the territorial landscape.

The theoretical framework and the research questions suggest to engage in the research people who, for his/her professional experience, have direct contact with young or with the theme of young people growth: practitioners of educational services, teachers of high schools, social projects designers, coordinator of youth centres, and informal educators who play their educational role in informal contexts such as catholic parish youth centres: privileged witnesses of the young people educational stories, of the (formal and informal) educational processes they live. This choice has

some significant implications on different level: for the research, for the academy, for the research participants.

At the research level, the involvement of privileged witnesses opens a meaningful dialogue that enables to deeply explore educational phenomena, while connecting the quest for theories with the living knowledge of the social and educational services' practitioners, considering the needs of the educational field and redistributing the power among the different involved subjects. The collaboration between practitioners and researchers may represents a significant goal for both of them: the precious experience of the witnesses and the questions that arise from the practice meet the research and training skills and competences of the researchers, giving birth to a joint effort to develop meaningful knowledge and transformative learning.

For the academic world, the collaboration with professionals and informal educators represents an important chance to build a common project of training of the students in education, being in touch with the concreteness of social-educational work and problems.

The most important impact of practitioners' and informal educators' involvement in the research concerns the privileged witnesses themselves. The request to reflect on the experiences lived by the young people they work with, recipients of their interventions, and, broadly, by the contemporary young generation, opens spaces and times to suspend the action and reflect on the life stories of young women and men, and, in a broader meaning, on the complex biographies of the current times. The engagement in the research is not limited to the narratives on their practice and the knowledge about it – that is an important line of participatory research – but it aims to promote in the witnesses an active reflective role on the unavoidable complexity of educational phenomena situated in the equally complex and uncertain contemporary world. The proposal to participate to a research on themes that are closely related to their professional daily practice, but not limited to procedures, methodologies, tools and activities, represents a chance for the involved witnesses to cultivate a research stance. A research stance is an important and transferable competence that every educational practitioner should have in order to tackle new and widespread educational needs, designing interventions that can have positive effects for the people for and with they are implemented but also for the broader social context.

The cooperation between researchers and practitioners in the educational field reveals all the value of reflexivity, especially when it fosters the inquiry about the relationships between education and society, the analysis of societal influence on life paths, the connections among individual biographies and social and cultural contexts they live in. This critical and reflective attitude towards pedagogical issues, limits and possibilities of educational practice in our historical, social, cultural and political context, represents an essential skill for an educational professionalism capable to face contemporary challenges [23].

4 PROMOTE ACTIVATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE: FOCUS GROUP WITH BOYS AND GIRLS FROM THE SUBURBS OF MILAN

After a first phase of data collection through semi-structured interviews with professionals and practitioners, the research group "Vite di Città" started a second phase of data collection, which directly involved about 70 boys and girls, aged 17 to 22 years old.

They had been contacted, engaged and met into the schools or into the educational services normally attended (from now on referred to simply as 'services'). The choice of the services involved

has been made considering the geographical and urban position (city centre or suburban areas) and the typology of each service (formal, non formal or informal educational service). In total, the study involved four high schools (two trade schools and two lyceums), three youth recreation centres, one catholic parish youth center, one prison and one foster care home for unaccompanied foreign minors, all situated in the city of Milan and its hinterland. In each service, one professional (teacher, professional educator, priest, coordinator or volunteer) was in a cooperative action with the research group, to involve and motivate young people in the study. Some of them were the same adult privileged witnesses involved in the first phase, while others had been contacted especially for the second one. In each service, one or more groups of boys and girls had been individuated and involved in a *focus group*. Some groups were homogeneous regarding to participants' gender (in total three female groups and three male groups), while others held boys and girls together, to explore also gender variability in responses. In total, eleven focus group had been conducted by the researchers of the senior group of Vite di Città as moderators, accompanied by students of the junior group as observers. Each focus group, lasting around two hours, had been audio recorded and then verbatim transcribed.

The aims of this second phase were, once again and according to the broader research structure previously described, explorative and transformative at the same time. For this reason, the data collection has been chosen: as Kamberelis and Dimitriadis said, in fact, focus group is a multifunctional and prismatic object, "a key site where pedagogy, politics and inquiry intersect and interanimate each other." [24]

The primary finality of the focus group was the exploration of young men and women's own role models and values. In order to achieve this objective, the research group elaborated a focus group outline [25; 26] able to stimulate participants expression and reflection about their personal experience of life and their representations of the "young generation of today" considered as a whole, explaining divergences and convergences across this population.

The educational and pedagogical relapse of the activity is evident considering the experience lived by participants [27]. The choice to meet young people in a group context and not through individual interviews offers to participants an occasion of reflection and sharing with peers around themes linked with their own daily lives, such as the personal biographies and life paths, the values and models shaping their own "way-to-be-in-the-world", the influences of the social context on personal choices and expectations. This knowledge and experience-sharing, that can stimulate young people in deepening their self-awareness around the dynamics they are into, is not usually permitted to young people [28] in a "safe" and not-judging place [29; 30]. Furthermore, the choice to encourage the debate by using visual materials and activations meant that participants were encouraged to speak during a "fun" and pleasant moment [31]. Extra care was directed to keep the discussion "open" to suggestions coming from the participants, without censuring digressions from the focus track, in order to allow the articulation of themes consider as relevant by the young people but not previously identified by researchers and to offer them an experience of authentic listening. In this sense, focus group can be considered in itself "pedagogical" and "educational": it facilitates in participants the development of awareness about the intertwined influences of the personal initiative and the social context in their growth [31] and of the *sociological imagination*, considered as the capability to read their own personal and unique experience strictly linked with the peers' ones and with the collective history [32]. In addition, the involvement of educational services, their practitioners and their users, in a pedagogical inquiry may represent an occasion to see the same boys and girls in new and unedited forms of activation and discussions, and suggest to educators new ways and practices to work with them.

In terms of political function, it is appreciable the capability of this kind of focus group to democratize the research process, by diluting the unequal relations of power among the adult and “coming from the university” researchers and the young participants, most of them belonging to socio-economically disadvantaged contexts. In this sense, focus groups “allows participants more ownerships over the research process and promotes more dialogic interactions and the joint construction of more polyvocal texts” [1]. Giving voice to young people potentially at risk of social exclusion - whose voice remain often unheard - permit to amplify their needs and thoughts, bringing their instances to educational designers but also to political and public advisors. It can have as relapse a possibility of a more informed and adherent-to-real-needs educational and social design. In this sense, the involvement of young people in a research project permits them to active participate and express themselves not only around activities, interventions and policies they’re recipients to, but also around the broader educational challenges of the present time, in which they are directly involved.

30 CONCLUSION

The research project presented in this paper intends to be an exemplification of the value of a participatory inquiry approach that provides the involvement of different actors of the educational scenario. The collaboration among academic researchers, students of the Bachelor’s Degree Course in Education, practitioners working in socio-educational services, and their users, engaged in researching on current pedagogical issues, may represent a useful way to support activism on different levels.

The intertwining of the voices of those who daily make experience of educational needs, those who are called to design and implement interventions capable to face them, and those who study and develop pedagogical knowledge, makes possible the goal to tackle educational issues with a multidimensional and comprehensive gaze, leading academy to be in touch with the concreteness of socio-educational work and problems.

This sort of participatory research approach, in fact, through the engagement of different subjects can promote critical thinking on the links between individual lives and social structures, encouraging the reflexivity on the connections between the own private experience and the social world in which it takes shape. Open spaces for a critical stance may develop opportunities of action and new directions for social change:

“all forms of cooperative educational research have the potential to alter the social life of individuals and institutions. That is, to the extent that educational research involves cooperation between researchers, practitioners, students, or other subjects, it also provides those individuals with opportunities for new revised forms of social life, regardless of what the research is about” [33]

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TRUMP'S NEW TOWER: THE WHITEHOUSE AS A POTEMKIN VILLAGE

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Abstract

During the reign of Catherine the great, Minister Grigory Potemkin became a governor after the annexation of Crimea. On a six-month tour of the war-torn area, it is said that Potemkin created village facades to impress Catherine the Great. These villages, complete with actors who portrayed noble peasants, were moved along Catherine's route and rebuilt as if they were a new, and different, grateful village. In a modern day political context, the Potemkin Village has come to mean a hollow or false construct, physical or figurative, meant to hide an undesirable or potentially damaging situation. If the Potemkin Village is a performance that physically propels the narrative of "grateful subjects who adore the leader," we propose that Trump's staff also performatively serve as a "paid actors" in Trump's White House Potemkin Village. This is exemplified, for example, through videos of cheering fans at Trump rallies that focus on the supporters and conveniently omit the protestors. As such, we will reflect on how resistance activism pushes back against this performance.

Keywords: Potemkin Village¹, Trump², resistance activism³.

31 INTRODUCTION

While nationalism has countless occurrences around the world, it has been ambiguous in America. But on Wednesday morning, November 9, 2016 a new era of politics embedded with nationalism and populism, disguised (to some) as patriotism, solidified its stronghold in Washington. Confusing to Americans, Donald Trump's campaign, and presidency--a full blown nationalist movement--is a phenomenon that Europeans easily recognize. Throughout his campaign, Trump's rhetoric defied any modicum of grace by casually insulting and degrading people who represented the liberal-elite, as he formed allegiances with a self-described "forgotten people" (predominantly white, working class people from Middle-America) promising them change. His lack of governing experience--his outright ignorance of the daily operations of government--was deemed irrelevant. To his supporters, he was the proverbial knight in armor. It did not matter that his armor was tarnished.

Donald Trump lost the popular vote in the 2016 presidential election by nearly three million votes, yet won the election through confirmation by the traditional U.S. Electoral College. At the time of this presentation, Trump's approval rating is around 40%, with a disapproval rating in the mid-50s percentile. This has not changed much over the duration of his presidency. However, what might not be as evident, until closer observation, is the *polarization* of these numbers. According to Pew Research Center, Eighty-four percent of republicans approve of the president's job, while only

seven percent of democrats agree. But what is most notable in this trajectory is that while Trump's disapproval numbers have increased, so has his impatience, his insults, and his petulance.

While there is obviously no direct comparison to media messaging between now and the time of Catherine the Great, it would be remiss to ignore the relationship between media outlets and the White House. It is reported that President Donald Trump told veteran journalist Lesley Stahl why he discredited the media. According to Boston Globe reporter Dan Mangan, "At one point, he started to attack the press," Stahl said. "There were no cameras in there. I said, 'You know, this is getting tired. Why are you doing it over and over? It's boring and it's time to end that. You know, you've won ... why do you keep hammering at this?'" Stahl recalled. "And he said: 'You know why I do it? I do it to discredit you all and demean you all so that when you write negative stories about me, no one will believe you,'" (2018)

32 METHODS

We use Kenneth Burke's Pentad of Dramatism to structure the comparison of Trump's White House to the alleged Potemkin Village. Burke suggested that any discourse should be questioned to determine its motive. In short, why do we do what we do? As archived in *The Eye*, "Burke believed that all of life was drama (in the sense of fiction), and we may discover the motives of actors (people) by looking for their particular type of motivation in action and discourse" (n.d.)

Burke's Pentad asks the following five questions of any discourse:

1. **Act:** What happened? What is the action?
2. **Scene:** Where is the act happening? What is the background situation?
3. **Agent:** Who is involved in the action? What are their roles?
4. **Agency:** How do the agents act? By what means do they act?
5. **Purpose:** Why do the agents act? What do they want?

For the development of this project, and due to our time constraints, we will focus primarily on the Scene, the Agent and the Purpose. The Act itself is the White House conversion to Potemkin Village. It is noteworthy that Burke said of dramatism, "If action, then drama; if drama, then conflict; if conflict, then victimage," (Burke, 1945).

Also, the use of current news reporting as support is purposeful. Beyond the lack of current scholarly research in regard to the parallels we draw, equally important is the use of current news reporting as an artifact perpetuating Burke's Dramatism. Media outlets play a significant role in the Potemkin storied narrative of the Trump administration.

32.1 Scene I: Background of the Potemkin Village

Politically or economically speaking, a Potemkin village is "a false front or construct, which hides a damaged and unseemly reality" (Davidson, Chiasson & Ruikar, 2006, p. 328). The term is derived from narratives of supposed portable village façades commissioned by Grigory Potemkin for the purpose of impressing Catherine the Great during her journey to Crimea in 1787. Despite modern historians finding the accounts of this portable village to be exaggerated, the term "Potemkin village" has become part of our political and economic landscape.

If Trump's cabinet are merely the façade of the White House as a Potemkin village, then there is indeed an assault on a progressive agenda including social justice concerns. The "village" agenda is based more on nationalism than on an empirically justifiable model. The consequence of Trump's authoritarian practices and the prevalence of the players involved in the White House as a Potemkin Village is the inability to serve the broader social good. "Trump's political power is constructed in his name and personality. Donald Trump is an icon, and he was created by his

campaign team” (Glynn-Farrell, 2017) who have turned the White House into a modern day Potemkin Village.

32.2 Scene II: The White House

Politically or economically speaking, a Potemkin village is “a false front or construct, which hides a damaged and unseemly reality” (Davidson, Chiasson & Ruikar, 2006, p. 328). The term is derived from narratives of supposed portable village façades commissioned by Grigory Potemkin for the purpose of impressing Catherine the Great during her journey to Crimea in 1787. Despite modern historians finding the accounts of this portable village to be exaggerated, the term “Potemkin village” has become part of our political and economic landscape.

If Trump’s cabinet are merely the façade of the White House as a Potemkin village, then there is indeed an assault on a progressive agenda including social justice concerns. The “village” agenda is based more on nationalism than on an empirically justifiable model. The consequence of Trump’s authoritarian practices and the prevalence of the players involved in the White House as a Potemkin Village is the inability to serve the broader social good. “Trump’s political power is constructed in his name and personality. Donald Trump is an icon, and he was created by his campaign team” (Glynn-Farrell, 2017) who have turned the White House into a modern day Potemkin Village.

32.3 Scene III: The Agents

Narrowing down the ‘Agents in the Act’ was no easy task, primarily due to difficulties in keeping up with President Trump’s Reality-TV-like response to staffers who do not indulge his ideas. It is only a slightly tongue-in-cheek retort that “you’re fired” is as common at today’s White House as it was on *The Apprentice*. Reuters reports, “But, at the White House, he has often outsourced the job of booting employees to his chief of staff - and then announced the departures via Twitter,” (Factbox, 2018).

The Miami Herald reported, “The president is replacing aides who have tended toward caution and consensus with figures far more likely to encourage his more-rash instincts and act upon them, and he is frequently soliciting advice from loyalists outside the government,” (Rucker, 2018)

However, there are still loyalists within President Trump’s staff, who are not (yet) casualties. They seem somewhat enigmatic individuals, undaunted by his behavior and they have various tenure in the administration. With a long list of possibilities on whom to focus, the loyalists who interest our research most are White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee-Sanders and Campaign strategist and Consultant to the President, Kellyanne Conway.

33 AGENCY AT WORK

33.1 Sarah Huckabee Sanders

33.1.1 *October 29, 2018: White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders stated that President Trump won the presidency by an “overwhelming majority of 63 million votes.” While the number was accurate, the number does not represent the “overwhelming majority.” Clinton won the popular vote by 2.9 million votes.*

33.1.2 *October 29, 2018: In the wake of another massacre (referencing the Synagogue shootings in Pittsburgh), Huckabee Sanders stated “The American people reject hatred, bigotry, prejudice, and violence.” However, Trump has not rejected any action listed by Huckabee Sanders. I suppose the Potemkin Village (a.k.a. White House) is working under the premise that if you deny something, then it isn’t true.*

The first item Sarah Huckabee Sanders mentions is HATE. Trump consistently encourages chants of “lock her up” regarding Hillary Clinton. He has consistently demeaned and demonized other political foes by name-calling and bullying. He made a statement regarding Charlottesville, VA white nationalists when he noted they were “very fine people.” Additionally, Trump has repeatedly called the media the “enemy of the people.” While the majority of the American populous rejects hate, this administration clearly does not.

The next items Sarah Huckabee Sanders mentions are BIGOTRY and PREJUDICE. Trump pushed the racist birther conspiracy theory about former President Barack Obama. He claimed an American federal judge could not be impartial because he was “Mexican.” He has targeted certain Muslim countries as enemies and pressed for a ban on Muslim travelers to the United States. His immigration policies has separated children from their parents. Clearly, this president does not adhere to the words of his press secretary.

Lastly, Sarah Huckabee Sanders mentions is VIOLENCE. Trump praised a Republican congressman for assaulting a reporter. He told supporters at several rallies that he would pay their legal fees if they engage in violence against their supporters. On March 9, 2016, a protester was sucker-punched by a Trump supporter as he was being escorted out of the rally. The man who threw the punch was arrested. The Trump campaign released a statement that “We obviously discourage this kind of behavior and take significant measures to ensure the safety of any and all attendees.”

33.2 Kellyanne Conway

33.2.1 *Kellyanne Conway defends the lies of President Trump against the accusation by Chris Cuomo by calling Cuomo’s calling Trump a liar a slur. She stated, “You took a shot at the president tonight. You called him a slur I’m not going to repeat.”*

33.2.2 *Trump has many instances regarding statements made that have been proven to be lies. This evidence makes Conway’s use of slur hypocritical. This is especially so due to the previously mentioned name-calling by Trump toward political foes. Kellyanne Conway has repeatedly helped spin a narrative that refuses to acknowledge offensive statements made by President Trump.*

34 THE FINAL ACT

If our social interaction is performance based (Goffman, 1959), what does the mainstream acceptance and celebration of President Trump's political incorrectness mean with regard to what we, as a country, find acceptable in our domain? Trump's neoliberal, racist interpretation of truth has been rationalized and thus normalized by a large percentage of the populous. Due to this normalization of political incorrectness, the probable possibility that the creation of neoliberal policy will continue to perpetuate a racially stratified nation has become a reality.

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RESEARCH AS (AN ACT OF) RESISTANCE

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Abstract

This paper represents a story about talking *with* women who were part of narrative informed groups that I have co-facilitated in small communities in different locales within the UK. These groups were/are for women who have experienced sexual abuse.

'Acts of resistance' (Allan Wade, 1997) [1] speaks to social justice, and an explicit challenge to dominant discourses that might otherwise oppress and maintain stories of shame for women who have experienced abuse.

In this paper I discuss in brief the co-construction of group work as an intervention into (and a resistance against) discourses of individualised psychopathology and I will discuss in depth the research I designed to inquire into the impact of these groups, itself an act of resistance to the status quo.

Designing my own research method and method of analysis rather than choosing an "off the shelf" option is part of the story, but I also acknowledge that I borrowed heavily from both narrative inquiry and autoethnography. Blending these methods helped to frame the conversations I had with women; and helped me develop the five-step process I used to inquire into those conversations and into my own practice- a process I have called a *responsive, temporally framed narrative inquiry*.

Throughout the research, I made explicit connections with my ongoing practice as a psychotherapist and the current cultural/political contexts which helped shaped the inquiry within a temporal and cultural frame. In particular the #MeToo campaign provided a political and cultural backdrop to the sharing of my own stories of abuse and oppression; how I worked with those throughout my inquiry and how I connected with other women with similar experiences, affirming the research as an act of solidarity as well as an act of resistance.

Key words: Narrative, resistance, solidarity

1. Introduction

As I progressed through my doctoral research project, inquiring into groupwork with women that I had previously facilitated- acknowledging the impact on myself as well as others involved- I allied myself with autoethnography as part of the overall methodology, to 'reveal myself to myself' in a research context (Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner, 2017) [2].

This was an ethical choice. Throughout the inquiry and in associated papers (Salter, 2015:2017) [3,4,5] I have exposed *some* personal stories about myself, my family of origin and my practices. Most notably I shared some of my own experiences of abuse and oppression; one of which entered the public domain when I was a young teenager. A male music teacher who had taught my friends and I was arrested for sexually abusing children – boys and girls. He was prosecuted at the age of 76. Being transparent about his event was one way to connect locally with the women I was talking with and more globally with the ongoing #MeToo campaign that was in full swing at the time of the inquiry.

This story is not ever present in my thinking and is not distressing but it *is* an *uncomfortable* memory to access. Some research models might frame this as problematic, but I chose to view it as the opposite; taking up the invitation to go to more *uncomfortable* places in order to enhance reflexivity within a frame of relational ethics.

Wanda Pillow (2003) [6] notes a shift in research towards more reflexivity and transparency but also critiques '*comfortable* reflexivity' which relies on a gentle exploration of self. She calls instead for more '*uncomfortable*' reflexivity, fore-fronting complexity, as a '*disruptive*' rather than '*transparent*' process. Daphne Patai offers a similar critique of the emphasis on reflexivity as a methodology and argues that "*...we do not escape from the consequences of our positions by talking about them endlessly*" (Patai, 1994, p.70) [7].

Whilst I think this is a helpful critique and encourages me to keep challenging my intentions I also agree with Wendy Lutterell (2000) [8] who calls for '*good enough*' qualitative or ethnographic research, advocating for the tensions and crises within feminist informed research (as does Lather, 2007; and Doucet and Mouthner, 2006) [9,10] to be made *visible* as part of doing '*good enough*' research. My transparency is bound up in this aim and my relationship with social justice. Throughout my career (and life) working with, for example, families who are socially and economically disadvantaged, marginalised young people and women who were sexually abused as children, I have been preoccupied with power and injustice. This inquiry and my doctoral research journey cannot be separated out from that. They are enmeshed.

1.1 The relevance of narrative

Narrative therapy (White and Epston, 1990; Freedman and Combs, 1996; White, 2000) [11, 12, 13] has, for me, been a way to challenge injustice. As a researcher I am particularly concerned with relational ethics and the power of research to be an act of '*resistance*' to oppression (Wade, 1997) [1]. Of course I am also interested in this as a practitioner.

It has been suggested that narrative (as inquiry) is "*more art than research*" (Lieblich, Tuval-Masiach and Zilber; 1998, p.1) [14] but I do not agree. Rhodes and Brown (2005) [15] suggest that it is legitimate to question why art is seen as not having '*value as knowledge*' and why this is often assumed rather than backed up. I agree. For me, narrative research connects me with how I am as a narrative informed systemic psychotherapist. I feel that this fit, in part, serves to validate it as a form of research as it is part of a wider relational story. It is authentic. It pays attention to '*stories lived and stories told*' (Pearce, 1994) [16] which is part of how we make sense of ourselves as

human, relational beings. I find myself agreeing with Denzin and Lincoln (2005) [17] who suggest that narrative inquiry can '*advance a social change agenda*'.

1.2 Group work with women as an act of resistance

Systemic/ narrative practitioners Allan Wade (1997) [1] and Vikki Reynolds (2013; 2014) [18,19] have inspired me to be curious about women's everyday acts of resistance in the face of (privatising) experiences such as sexual abuse, intimate partner violence and wider experiences of oppression.

Setting up the groups that are part of this inquiry was part of a story of resistance and of moving from the private domain of therapy to a more public context of solidarity through being with other women who have similar experiences. There isn't space in this paper to describe the groups in-depth but the ethos could be described as relational and focused on 'coming together' rather than 'teaching skills'. Both groups were inspired by narrative practices and an expansion of the concepts of solidarity and 'being with', in the wake of abuse and oppression. In this way, addressing stigma, shame and isolation is explicit, not just incidental, and is both a purposeful act of *resistance* and of *solidarity*.

2. The inquiry:

2.1 Conversation as (a method of) inquiry

The inquiry followed a particular structure- talking with women who were participants of the groups I had set up; and talking with women I have co-facilitated groups with. This was always intended as the main structure of the inquiry. I also had a conversation with my clinical supervisor and one with my mother, who shared her own stories of oppression and injustice.

There were eight conversations in total. Some group and some one-to-one, which were later transcribed. Most conversations were recorded using an audio recorder, other than the large group ones which were recorded using large paper and pens (at their request).

2.2 Practice inquiry

The first phase of the 'fieldwork' was talking with colleagues in the two different practice contexts, which I have called 'practice inquiry'. These were all female practitioners who I have previously worked with, within these group contexts. Julia, Lucy and Janey are my conversational partners in this context.

I see my role as an 'intertwiner' rather than an interviewer. I was not sticking to a script or specific structure but weaving in to the conversation areas that I had/have become interested in throughout the inquiry. This is similar to my practice as a family therapist, where I might have ideas about how the session might go, (some 'hypotheses' about what is going on for the family); but I remain open to hear and notice important and subtle utterances that might take us in all sorts of different directions.

2.3 Collaborative inquiry

This next aspect of inquiry was a retrospective inquiry of/with groups I have previously been involved in, by talking with women who were part of those groups. This could be described as a 'focus group' model, but I think it is better described as 'collaborative inquiry groups'.

As per the practice inquiry, these collaborative conversations took place in two locations, one being my then current working and living context in a British island community and the other being my previous work context, in a Welsh valleys community.

There was intentional mirroring of the original group process by offering the opportunity for women to draw/write and create, which had been an aspect of all the groups. Pens, paper, and other art and craft materials were available for women to use. In audio recording the conversations (if consented) I was able to listen back to the recording and I sought permission to take some photographs of any material produced such as pictures, any words written etc. We also met in the place where we originally came together, to support comfort and safety.

The group conversation includes Laura, Anna, Linda and Lucy. Anna is the youngest of the group, in her early 20s, and Linda the eldest, in her late 50s. The group preferred to have me write down their words as we spoke rather than use a voice recorder. I wrote their words verbatim wherever possible.

2.4 In-depth dialogues

This stage, could be described as developing 'case studies' to build on the group conversations. However, I am not comfortable with that language. I relate with the women in this inquiry as neither cases nor objects of study; and so I have called them 'in-depth dialogues', in order to honour the relational discourse.

The dialogues in this stage were relationally framed. With our pre-existing relationship often being explicitly attended to. It was also (as with the other conversations) followed up with additional contact via phone, face-to-face meetings, emails, letters etc. as a way to ensure that people felt that they had said (and I had captured) what they wanted to say and how they wanted to say it.

2.5 Personal inquiry

To broaden the inquiry or (perhaps) to bring it full circle, I extended the inquiry to include two other important conversations. The first was with my clinical supervisor, Billy, who I have known since training to become a systemic psychotherapist. I audio recorded this conversation to capture some of the transformational learning that I was experiencing- a paying attention of the 'becoming' process.

I also then had a conversation with my mother, Jude. This was not planned for but I think it also should take a place in the methodology as something that I would advocate for. If talking with my supervisor grounded the research back into practice; then talking with my mother grounded me back into the personal, which is also (as we know) always political. (Carol Hanisch, 1970) [20].

My mother talked with me about gender and about inequality, connecting the personal to the political through a temporal frame also. Interestingly, my mother questioned whether our conversations and her letters to me had any validity in the inquiry, questioning whether it

constituted 'knowledge'. I think this mirrors some of the themes from the research and once again troubles preconceived notions of knowledge and know-how.

Transcribed words from *all* the conversations I was part of were treated as 'knowledge in themselves' (Etherington, 2004) [21], honoured for what they contributed. However the transcriptions are also as part of a narrative inquiry which speaks to something wider and helps to connect again local and global issues of social justice. Developing a way to inquire further into the transcripts then was not intended to diminish what people said to me but to highlight their significance beyond what was said.

3. Responsive, temporally-framed narrative inquiry – a five-step model

This five step model then developed as a way to honour those conversations and take them further. It formed (what would be traditionally called) the 'analysis' (or what I have thought of as an 'in depth engagement') stage of inquiry.

I used the same approach in how I treated each conversation I had been part of and had recorded; transcribing each one before engaging in these five steps. This evolved over the time of the inquiry and was, in itself, an engaging, relational, responsive, *and* reflexive process.

Simply looking at 'themes' did not feel quite 'enough'. I decided therefore not to engage in a pure 'thematic analysis' as I might have chosen to do, and I did so with consideration.

Braun and Clarke (2006) [22] suggest that thematic analysis should be seen as a first 'go-to' (my wording) method for qualitative analysis; and highlight its flexibility as well as its simplicity. However, I did not feel that it would be 'enough' to 'do justice' to the stories that I had heard. Stages two to five were all developed in response to that; as follows.

3.1 Stage one: emerging themes

Although I was not planning to engage in a thematic analysis per se, I chose to begin by noting key words and themes that were prominent in the transcripts. I pulled out from the written transcripts, words that were **emphasised** in the telling, sentences that seemed **key** to the conversation (which had moved the conversation on in some way), and **ideas** that I remembered as being central.

Whilst this was helpful and highlighted the following eight themes; I also recognised that I still felt dissatisfied, and found myself looking for other ways to feel a 'good enough' conversational partner.

The eight themes were:

- *deconstructing roles and rules*
- *doing solidarity*
- *co-constructing preferred futures*
- *'going on' from legacies of abuse*
- *challenging 'them and us' thinking*
- *unpacking power*

- *doing justice*
- *doing research (as an act of resistance)*

By moving on to the next stage then I am not intending to discredit the process of pulling out themes. At the very least it offered some structure. I am, however, acknowledging that this first stage did not feel 'complete'. Of course, we can argue that inquiry should/will never be 'complete', but it also did not feel 'good enough', or questioning enough of my own assumptions embedded in the process.

It is also relevant to *question* this notion of 'knowing' which could also be viewed as being situated within a wider or (what Nowotny et al., 2001, have called) [23] a scientific elitist' backdrop. Because I am involved in learning environments and in a medical context where 'science' is privileged, this felt relevant.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) [24], and others, have also challenged the position of research as privileged knowledge and critiqued the notion that research is something to be done to 'others'. As a Māori woman she suggests that research has become a 'dirty word' for indigenous peoples whose experience of colonialism and marginalisation is continued by such a discourse, under-privileging different forms of 'knowing and 'know-how''.

The next stages were, in a subtle way a way to honour more relational and tacit ways of knowing; continuing to frame research as an act of resistance and solidarity.

3.2 Stage two: stories told

In this stage, instead of thinking about being analytical, breaking things down, getting in to the minutiae, I reconnected with narrative inquiry as an *exploration* of 'stories lived' (Pearce, 1994) [16] or 'stories we are' (Bamberg, 2012) [25] and 'stories told' (Pearce, 1994). I am not looking *into* particular words and particular themes but giving myself permission to get a bit more 'lost' in the words to feel/hear/see the narratives within, to use all my senses. Bamberg (2012) tells us that "...everyone not only has a story but also has a right to tell their story". (Bamberg, M., 2012, p. 79) [25].

So in this process, I deliberately try to be 'in the flow' of the storytelling and listening and not fixated with 'component parts'. I make note of what I think are the main stories being told or the key narrative. I then begin to tell a story about that. This was an important stage as it allowed stories of abuse to be heard and validated but also provided space for stories of resistance and resourcefulness. "Double listening" (White, 2004) [26] in this way added to the richness of the inquiry but also speaks to the potential of research to be transformative for all those involved- to impact those taking part as well as a later audience.

3.3 Stage three: stories lived (local stories)

In the next stage I felt that it was important to pay attention to the *currency* of relationship. I felt that, so far, I had responded to the 'back stories', the legacies of abuse and other relationally framed narratives. But I felt that I had not touched on the stories that were embedded *within* the nuances

of not what was said but *how* it was said, the subtleties that say something about the relationship of the two (or more) people within the conversation. As Michael Bamberg voices, '*what narrators accomplish with their stories is first of all highly local business*' (Bamberg, 2012, p. 83). [25]

The focus here, Bamberg tells us, is of storytelling as an 'activity', not just as a collection of words, but a *performance* of telling. I am not just paying attention to the narrators of the story, but also to their relationship with me, the conversational partner. In this stage then I start to note down what I notice about what the words (and how I make sense of them), how they were voiced, and what they may say about the relationship between the people in conversation. It also helped me pay attention to power and how I might have been positioning myself in relation to those I am talking with. It is maybe worth noting here that I know all the people involved in this inquiry well. Some I have had a relationship with for over twenty years (as colleagues) and some of the women who attended the groups I might have known for five or so years. Being an insider researcher or practice-based researcher does not let you off the hook in terms of attending to power. The (relational) responsibility of the "researcher" requires centralising and this stage helped me in that endeavour.

3.4 Stage four: local, present tense, embodied narratives

This next stage was a response to what I felt I needed to bring the inquiry up to date, to move in to the present tense, in an embodied way; and also to pay attention to my own processes. I became interested in what was changing *within* me, not just in my practices but in how I was moved by the process of the inquiry, what I noticed 'happening'. I wanted to pay attention to what I was feeling, as well as what I was 'thinking', if indeed these can be separated out.

I practiced some meditation (I used a self-directed body scan, a meditation recognised in mindfulness practice) before once again re-engaging with the transcripts, embracing an invitation to be moved, to be vulnerable and to notice my own vulnerability. In doing so, I re-engaged with the transcripts, not reading them word for word this time, but holding them, touching them, breathing on them, living with them. After a 20-minute meditation practice where I remained in silence, I then wrote down the words that came to me, from all my ways of 'knowing'. It is probably self-explanatory but what I was paying attention to in this stage was my embodied 'in body' experience.

This stage was important, I think, not only to do justice to the complexity of the conversations we were having and the relationships they represented but also for me to take stock and to connect with my experience of being part of this. This, in itself, is valuable.

3.5 Stage five: stories that 'take us on'... a free writing exercise

In this stage, I again re-engaged in the words from the conversations in a tacit way, not re-reading every word, but (re)visiting my memory of the conversation and how I felt at that time; and my feelings now at this point having read and re-read them so many times.

This idea is taken from creative writing and storytelling traditions, which I have been influenced by, in my practice. The idea was not to get bogged down with what I felt I *should* write which may have taken me to the familiar, the clichéd and the places that silence or restrain me, where my critical voice is at its loudest. I wanted here to trust my intuition and be free to write in a way that perhaps

I (and others) may have been unable to in conversation. I imagine, as I did so, that I was engaged in a future-forming activity, constructing new stories that may take me (and others) on. I also imagined this would help move me to the next main phase of the inquiry, the writing phase. This connects me with Ken Gergen's (2015) [27] naming of research as '*future forming*', or as a move from '*mirroring to making*'. This is where I paused and took stock. I had eight different conversations transcribed in front of me and five different sets of notes from all the stages outlined above. I felt ready to begin working with those notes in the writing stage of the inquiry. This in itself was part of the methodology, framing writing as a form of inquiry. Gail Simon (2011; 2013) [28, 29] and Laurel Richardson (1994) [30], for example, have written eloquently about this and I would recommend their work for those interested in developing this further. This is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this short paper.

4. Summary

I have tried, in this paper to make visible the stages of inquiry I followed in my research and offer it as a model that could be replicated by other reflexive researchers. I have tried to briefly demonstrate the ethical dilemmas that this kind of inquiry brings forth for the reflexive researcher, which are multiple and complex. I have 'gone to' the uncomfortable places that such an inquiry invites in terms of self-reflexivity, as well as tried and tested (more comfortable) ones.

As suggested, it would be possible, I think, for the five parts of the conversational inquiry to be replicated. This would include- talking with colleagues; talking with group participants; talking in an in-depth way with some members of those groups; talking with someone who has been part of the researcher's professional development (for me- my supervisor) and talking with someone who has been part of the researchers personal development (for me – my mother). The way I developed a way to work with this-the five step inquiry (or what would traditionally be called analysis) could also be replicated for others to follow *if* that felt right for them. However, this was not the goal. I did not set out with the intention to *create* a new methodology or a new form of analysis. I set out to pay close attention to (to honour) the important things that women shared with me, to be moved by this, and to notice that movement. The five steps were organic in nature, developing as I did, to be responsive to what was happening *within* me as well as responsive to the conversations I had been part of. However I have been able to conceptualise it as a five step model which hopefully will support others to either replicate it or to develop it in their own way. The five steps enabled me to take what I felt I had learnt through the conversations, and through my engagement with the transcripts, to inquire *further* into and write about/into that, writing itself part of the overall methodology.

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CAN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SAVE LIVES? THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF TRAINEE THERAPISTS WORKING WITH SUICIDAL CLIENTS

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Abstract

This paper is based on a dissertation that uses hermeneutic phenomenology to explore the lived experience of trainee therapists working with suicidal clients. After conducting semi-structured interviews with three trainee therapists, I transcribed the audio recordings and then analysed the texts, drawing out four themes: “thrown in at the deep end: burden of responsibility and inadequacy”; “nauseous and stirred to the core: helplessness and not knowing”; “reaching towards stable ground outside”; and “building inner ground: acceptance of limits, wonder”. I discovered these themes had a temporal flow and began to consider the trainee therapist’s experiences as a journey. I conducted a literature review centering around trainee therapists’ experiences of suicidal clients, looking at phenomenology and studies using other qualitative and quantitative methods, and “mapped the field”. I found similarities and differences between my research and the literature review. These results had more of a phenomenological than a psychological feeling, which is consistent with my research method. I found that many of the feelings found in the literature review such as shock, fear of blame, anxiety were consistent with my study. I found that none of my participants mentioned shame and guilt and consider this to be an advantage of a space that provides open and non-judgmental support to therapists. I concluded with an ethic of ambiguity, understanding and care which recommends a therapeutic framework that puts the safety and autonomy of therapists and clients at the heart is needed.

Keywords: suicide, psychotherapy, phenomenology.

35 INTRODUCTION

“Love authorizes severities which are not granted to indifference.”

-- De Beauvoir (2015, p149)

In exploring the question: can qualitative research save lives? I was led on a journey which has taken me into grief and despair in recently losing a friend to suicide who I felt the mental health system had failed. Similarly I worked for a suicide prevention phone line, which I felt was failing to meet the people desperately in need, like my dear friend.

This led me into taking an extreme path against prevention: autonomy at all costs, choice at all costs. In the beginning I refused to look at any literature that wasn't anti-prevention. I rebuked my supervisor's attempts to offer other perspectives. Grief carried me to the extremes. I found myself in a parallel process with my participants, who found themselves on a parallel process with their clients, whose supervisors who found themselves on a parallel process with their supervisees - all embedded in similar overlapping interrelating life-worlds. I began from a position of grief, a projection of anger overflows, a closing up, a moving away from the many perspectives from understanding of tensions and paradoxes.

As I surrendered into a sober acceptance of limits, I accepted my vulnerability and began to see a wider picture. Nietzsche (2010, p119) writes: "There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective 'knowing'; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity', be."

In delving into the inferno, into death, I found life. I found perspective. From here, I developed my ethic of ambiguity, understanding and care.

36 RESEARCH METHOD: HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

In Van Manen's words (2014, p27), hermeneutic phenomenology is "more a method of questioning than answering, which aims to grasp the exclusively singular aspects (identity/essence/otherness) of a phenomenon or event...phenomenological reflection and analysis occur primarily in the attitude of the epoché, the reduction, and the vocative." This method holds the tension of reaching towards the phenomena but never completely finding it. Hermeneutic phenomenology aims to hold an experience without constructing positivistic meanings with the aim of stripping away and revealing the eidetic meaning that exists behind positivistic structures.

Blanchot's literary philosophy further enriches van Manen's approach and is particularly relevant to this project; in writing about Blanchot, van Manen (2014, p139) describes how "words may turn into images just like artistic objects that lack semantic clarity and yet provide us with fundamental insights into the nature of the real, life, and the mystery of meaning." For me, this was especially relevant to researching the lived experience of working with suicidal clients because it involved how explorations of death - concrete and actual - interacted with meaning-making processes. In Hillman's words (1976, p88) "Like the Shaman, he [the analyst] has already been to death himself' for the dead can best communicate with the dead...by confirming the psychic death, it can be released from its organic fixation."

I conducted 50-minute, semi-structured interviews with three trainee psychotherapists. These interviews were recorded and later transcribed. I considered how I could best ask questions in keeping with the phenomenological stance of openness and exploration. I identified participants'

interpretations and constructs and layered them with my own understandings and interpretations that emerged from the interview.

37 LITERATURE REVIEW

Although suicide is no longer a crime in the UK (Smartt, 2009), the idea that suicide is wrong pervades Western society. As an example, Mersey Care NHS released the following suicide policy (Martinez, 2016, p2):

Mersey Care takes the view that suicide should be regarded as an avoidable death, which is both preventable and amenable to care. This policy sets out the standards of care that will be offered to all service users who express suicidal ideas to ensure they have the highest quality assessment, support and treatment until they have recovered and are safe.

Szasz (1986, p806) argues that the idea of suicide as a crime originates from the Judeo-Christian [and Islamic] idea that only God is life- "giving" and "taking"; to take one's own life is a crime against God. Szasz (1986, p806) believes that the State's goal in combating the "disease" of suicide, is a modern secularized version of Western religious dogma, which reinforces the negative evaluation, or "stigma" of suicide. Szasz warns the professional against operating from a paternalistic, coercive, and controlling position - the mask of prevention strategy - which takes away the freedom of an individual who has capacity to choose life or death. Snati (2009, p93), a psychiatrist writing for South West London & St George's Mental Health NHS Trust presents the view that an institution should not exert control over whether a person should live or die, highlighting the experience of a Holocaust survivor who was sectioned for his suicidality, after which she accused UK Mental Health Services of being akin to the Nazis. Snati (2009, p93) maintains that there is no a priori reason why psychiatrists should always find themselves bound to treat suicide.

Similarly, Hillman compares the analyst and the medic. The medic sees suicide from the outside and wishes to cut it off like a maladaptive tumour whereas the analyst sees the patient's suicide as something he's personally in a relationship with. He considers the medical view that quantifies life, as aligned with a theological dread to the body and death, which equates "more life = good life" (Hillman, 1976, p35). This equation prevents a barrier to exploring death from the inside, objectively, with the patient. He argues that the analyst should be "not for or against suicide, but what it means for the psyche" (Hillman, 1976, p37). Hillman (1976, p76) states: "Where an analyst's understanding may have the effect of prevention, this understanding may not lead to explanation, or give information to others which may be useful in their search for causes and prevention." He takes the position that it is the journey of exploration and discovery which is individual to this specific case and situated as a function of the relationship or connection. He argues this cannot be extrapolated to become a statistic, tool or strategy. Hillman (1976, p81) reforms the understanding of responsibility: "We are not responsible for one another's lives or deaths; each man's life and death is his own. But we are responsible to our involvements."

Further, Bell (2001, p35) states that we "need to be able to stand failure so that the patient can improve for himself, rather than experience the need for progress as a demand from those caring for him. More than anything else, staff morale is the vital therapeutic ingredient, a morale that needs to be robust and not dependent on any individual patient getting better." Bell (2001, p35) concludes: "To insist that mental health personnel accept a level of responsibility that is quite unrealistic, seems increasingly to be a part of mental health policy. Such policies, based less on

thought and more on the wish to project unmanageable anxiety into those faced with an already very difficult task, set the scene for a deterioration in the real care of these patients”.

In her clinical psychology doctorate, Pillinger (2007) conducted an IPA study on clinical and counselling psychologists’ experiences of responding to expressed suicidal ideation in their therapeutic work with older adult clients. She found that, more important than the standard risk assessment tools, was the interaction and alliance of therapist and client factors within the therapeutic relationship Pillinger (2007, p1) notes that “research literature has demonstrated that the therapeutic relationship is a primary factor in effective approaches to therapy with clients who feel suicidal. However, expressed suicidal ideation during the course of therapy has been found to make therapists’ actions defensive, focused solely on risk assessment rather than therapeutic change.”

38 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

“I emerge alone and in anguish confronting the unique and original project which constitutes my being; all the barriers, all the guard rails collapse, nihilated by the consciousness of my freedom...I have to realize the meaning of the world and of my essence; I make my decision concerning them without justification and without excuse.”

--Sartre (2003, p63)

Suicide as journey

Hillman proclaims that a non-literal exploration of suicide is an opportunity to move out of the collective stream into a discovery of individuality. Hillman (1976, p63) states: “A main meaning of the choice is the importance of death for individuality. As individuality grows so does the possibility of suicide...until we can say no to life, we have not really said yes to it, but have only been carried along by its collective stream...the death experience is needed to separate from the collective flow of life and to discover individuality.” The trainee therapists I interviewed did not choose this collective stream. Death refuses all rules and regulations, it collapses in the face of the beyond, the ultimate unknown:

“quite out of the blue...that he was in a crisis...that he had a date in mind...and a methodology and the means...I honestly felt quite panicky...but then I immediately suppressed that...”

Theme 1:

- **Thrown in at the deep end: burden of responsibility and inadequacy**

Gorner (2007, p73) says that being a therapist has a “historical web of significance” which is learned by the therapist on their training and provides a frame of safety and security for trainee therapist and client. My participants found themselves ripped from the safety of their usual therapeutic framework and plunged into the social-cultural setting of risk and responsibility. This can be illuminated by Heidegger's term thrownness: the shock of the client sharing suicide throws the therapist into another world: one of fear, risk, responsibility, danger. Gorner (2007, p73) describes thrownness:

“I find myself existing and with the responsibility of existing. Mood, my affective state, discloses ‘that I am and have to be’ in a way that a purely cognitive state could never do...The world in this sense determines which possibilities of being are open to me.

Although I can choose which ways of existing I will realise I do not choose which possibilities are available. This is determined by the world I find myself 'in'. But I also find myself in the midst of, and depending on, just these entities other than myself."

As explained by Gerner (2007) these feelings are felt by the trainee therapists from within. They reveal to the therapist the uncomfortable reality of the situation they find themselves 'in'. Coming into a relationship with this, caused my participants panic and self-doubt. A feeling of responsibility outside of oneself that one is not able to control. One participant said: *"like it's out of control but also really wanting there to be something that I could do...and so my mind was often racing with sort of...trying to find things that I could do..."*

Bell (2010, p36) comments on the influence of the social-cultural setting on this: "To insist that mental health personnel accept a level of responsibility that is quite unrealistic, seems increasingly to be a part of mental health policy. Such policies, based less on thought and more on the wish to project unmanageable anxiety into those faced with an already very difficult task, set the scene for a deterioration in the real care of these patients". In recalling an interaction with their supervisor, a participant recalls: *"she would say things like well y'know as long as he contacts his GP, then it's his GP's responsibility, it's not your responsibility...if his GP knows about it it's then...it's up to his GP to take responsibility y'know...and sort of so she was I guess trying to...well I dunno trying to make me feel better by saying...not your responsibility...not much you can do...you've done everything you can but at the same time...that's not how it felt...it very much did feel like...like I had a responsibility."* Rossouw et al (2011, p6) illuminates the therapist's position in the face of this conflict: "Their powerlessness to assume this responsibility created turmoil and conflict for the therapists. They felt burdened by a Sisyphean sense of responsibility, convinced with scientific faith that they could overcome the impossible with will and idealism, only to find the reality of their human frailty sometimes haunting them in guilt and fear."

Thrown into this system that demands the therapist assume responsibility for something outside of themselves, can create an impasse in therapy. The pressure to achieve heroic feats and achieve "standards of care that will be offered to all service users who express suicidal ideas to ensure they have the highest quality assessment, support and treatment until they have recovered and are safe" (Martinez, 2016, p2) places undue pressure upon trainee therapists. In the impossibility of reaching these heroic feats, the participants were left feeling inadequate and doubted whether they should be working with this person as a trainee.

Theme 2:

- **Nauseous and stirred to the core: helplessness and not knowing**

Feeling strong emotions in the intensity of the life-world of their client, therapists feel stuck between the horizon of risk and the horizon of despair. On unlevel ground, the therapist feels nauseous, a reluctance to accept their helplessness in its facticity and contingency. Sartre (1968, p50) describes:

"A dull and inescapable nausea perpetually reveals my body to my consciousness. Sometimes we look for the pleasant or for physical pain to free ourselves from this nausea; but as soon as the pain and the pleasure are existed by consciousness, they in turn manifest its facticity and its contingency; and it is on the ground of this nausea that they are revealed."

This sense of nausea is well-described by one of my participants: *“oh god...is [she] going to be there...is she going to be there...is she going to be there...is she going to be there...is she going to be there...getting there and have that feeling of like my heart beating”*. The inescapable facticity of not knowing, wanting to know, wanting to free oneself from this uncertainty, and this being impossible. Participants reported a feeling of unnerving helplessness that stirred them to the core of their beings, revealing their raw vulnerability-to-consciousness from within.

Theme 3:

- **Reaching towards stable ground outside**

The participants find themselves reaching towards a ground that will save them from their nausea. They look towards their supervisor for an absolution of tension, they seek a tool or a method that will provide certainty. In the nausea, in the certainty the therapist finds themselves in a regressive place of a need for relief of tension, an unconscious flight from pain and want. This mirrors their client's experience. The trainee therapist seeks this nirvana in the certainty of a tool, the client seeks this nirvana in the certainty of death.

Leach (2009, p6) writes that:

“The womb provides the id [instinctual drive] with a refuge, a state of placid protection and constant gratification. With birth this freedom from disturbance is lost forever. Yet the memory of this period in the womb remains, and subsequent life is governed by a desire to regain this lost quietude, this lost paradise. Life is dominated by a regressive compulsion, a desire to return to the womb. This striving for integral gratification dominates all subsequent life. Thus, for Freud (1984, p329), the drive toward equilibrium that results is none other than a “continuous descent toward death,” where death finally provides that longed-for resolution and quiet. According to Marcuse (1969, p29) “The death instinct is destructiveness not for its own sake, but for the relief of tension. The descent toward death is an unconscious flight from pain and want. It is an eternal struggle against suffering and repression.” From this drive towards equilibrium, Freud develops the “nirvana principle”- the urge to return to the nirvana of the womb-which becomes for Freud (1984, p329) “the dominating tendency of mental life, and perhaps nervous life in general.”

Pillinger (2007) reports *“suicidal ideation during the course of therapy has been found to make therapists' actions defensive, focused solely on risk assessment rather than therapeutic change”*. Rogers (2004, p7) took a view that crisis-intervention models prevented therapists being able to engage with suicidality: *“a meaning and contextual-based discussion of suicidality is taboo and...this message tends to continue into more long-term psychotherapeutic approaches”*. From my participant's point of view, this taboo was visceral: *“I honestly felt quite panicky...but then I immediately suppressed that...which...you know...maybe I should have said something about that but anyway I just kept...I went into work mode...not counsellor mode...I went into a kind of work mode...coping...”*

Theme 4:

- **Building inner ground: Acceptance of limits, wonder**

After some time had passed, the participants fell into a sober acceptance of their limits, their powerlessness and the otherness of the other. The confusions, projections and transference of responsibility fell to ground and the participants received real emotional support in supervision and

training. There was a freedom in the acceptance and knowing of their separateness. Acting from this place they formed connections and made meanings out of the suicidal content that touched the essence of pain and suffering. They accepted their true existential responsibility with confidence.

One participant noted *“that felt reflective of the relationship we'd built, he felt safe enough not to have to put his sunglasses on, not having to hide behind...that not have that shield...that barrier between us...and also I wonder whether that, I do wonder...whether it was the relationship that made him stop coming back...y'know I worry that...he stopped coming because...because he was aware that...I was becoming another person that might, that cared for him...”*

Rossouw et al. (2011, p7) describes how therapists “were confronted by their own humanness and mortality, which lay concealed under institutionalised models of care and challenged with what they understood regarding the meaning of life and death, not only the life and death of a suicidal client, but also their own life and death.” As Levinas (1985, p86) describes: “The skin of the face is that which stays most naked, most destitute.”

Absence of guilt and shame

I found that the phenomenological method can hold a non-judgmental place with an openness that mitigates and works through the guilt and shame. My participants found the semi-structured interview a supportive non-judgemental place they could explore and make meaning.

Participant: No I think that's it...I appreciate actually...the opportunity and it has made me realise...something...which is..

Interviewer: What's that something?

Participant: Something that it was about me.

Interviewer: Yea as well.

Participant: As well my own fear...of suicide...that I'd not considered...at all...it just kind of makes me think...hmmm...I should find out more about that...so thank you.

39 CONCLUSION - AN ETHIC OF AMBIGUITY, UNDERSTANDING AND CARE

*“a man whom I snatch from the death which he had chosen
has the right to come and ask me for means and reasons for living
...the more seriously I accept my responsibilities, the more justified it is.
That is why love authorizes severities which are not granted to indifference.”*

-- De Beauvoir (2015, p149)

My literature review revealed the many schisms between methods of psychotherapy. Zalsman et al (2016, p646) found that no particular method is superior to others which turned my focus to the therapist and the particular experience and interaction with the client rather than any particular method. It was found that when faced with suicide therapists are in particular need of security and understanding in supervision, rather than just a focus on risk and action. Pillinger (2007) found that even in behavioral interventions the protective measure is being found to be the therapeutic relationship.

I found that when trainee therapist's emotions were held and were provided a non-judgmental holding support, limits can be accepted, the individual responsibility can be returned to the individual, the therapeutic responsibility can be held without guilt and shame. Along with Hillman (1976), Rossouw et al. (2011) and Rogers (2004) when autonomy is held alongside support, exploration of suicide can be part of a meaning making transformatory process for therapist and client. Participants found this research project to be part of their meaning-making processes.

Therapists are faced with a the paradox of respecting the client's autonomy and choice offering a perspective that goes beyond where they are in the suicidal mindset. Carrying a professional duty to take some kind of action if a client presents with suicide and a plan, usually to contact the client's GP, creates conflict. De Beauvoir (2015, p149) elucidates: "To want to prohibit a man from error is to forbid him to fulfil his own existence."

If a therapist is going to offer something other than death they take on a responsibility to explore reasons to live. De Beauvoir calls this an ethic of ambiguity in highlighting that if we go towards either aesthetic ideal of prevention at all costs or autonomy at all costs we lose our humanity which lives and breathes in the grey in between - it's contingency. Hillman (1976, p81) names this from a psychoanalytic perspective: "the position of one-foot-in and one-foot-out must be held. Both feet out is non-involvement; both feet in is unconsciousness of the responsibility. We are not responsible for one another's lives or deaths' each man's life and death is his own. But we are responsible to our involvements." De Beauvoir (2015, p170) points towards an existential responsibility, a responsibility that is built upon the foundations of inner freedom rather than outer constraint: "Man is free; but he finds his law in his very freedom."

In discussing the medical model, Hillman (1976, p36), points towards the dread of the collective in accepting suicide as choice:

"Their main concern is with suicide prevention because their models are tinged with a dread of death. This dread arises from their not having adequate place for death within their present models of thought. They conceive death as exogenous to life, not as something lodged in the soul, not as a continuous possibility and choice. By admitting this they would be admitting suicide, thereby threatening their own foundations. Neither Society, nor Law, nor Church, nor Life would then be safe."

How can an atmosphere be set that authentically and genuinely holds the dread of death without fleeing towards a nirvana in seeking either pole of risk management/denial of responsibility? In a movement towards quantification and risk we are in danger of losing meaning, both the therapist's meaning and that of the client. If therapy services increasingly pander to state interventions that demand quantification of risk and happiness in heroic attempts to reach an aesthetic of absolute safety, zero suicide, perfect balance, then there is no space to make meaning and sit with despair. If a service surrenders their autonomy to the state, what hope is there for the supervisor, for the therapist and ultimately the client to maintain/respect their own states of being?

Rossouw et al (2011, p1) proclaim that "the time has come for the profession to care for its own in order to allow the therapist, in turn to care for (and about) the vulnerable other". Jones (2015, "Blog post") warns of the danger in psychotherapy getting caught up in collective neurosis and acting out institutional anxieties rather than approaching and exploring human reality and caring for its therapists:

“Freud treated hysterical symptoms and neuroses and in so doing created a vocabulary for understanding individual and collective human experience, which revolutionised attitudes and social norms far beyond the clinic. A century later, rather than revealing the psychological realities in our society, the counselling and therapy professions are being increasingly coerced into repatriating people silently back into the very social malaise that is making them ill.”

In answer to the question “can qualitative research save lives?”, I challenge: can qualitative research sit with death? To sit with death is *untimely*. If a psychotherapist takes on this challenge they become both therapist and activist: an activism that challenges the popular need for scales and certainties. A demand for multitude and ambiguity which stays committed to the individual and their particular meaning.

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A COMMON RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTRAST 'EDUCATIONAL POVERTY'.

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Abstract

The paper aims to describe the first findings of my actual research directed to deepen the different characteristics of the term "educational poverty", drawing a pedagogical perspective on it. Presentation gives importance to the dimensions of inquiry that explicit the characteristics of a collaborative 'educational community' [2] [3], where each member can have a strong role in activating educational opportunities for young generations.

At first the dissertation gives evidence to the main concepts to describe the phenomenon, especially reconstructing strategies and activities that make possible, in Italy and Europe, to contrast 'educational poverty' building a common educative responsibility between adult educators (parents, teachers and social workers) and offering qualitative educational experiences [15]. This theoretical framework includes an exploration of different dimensions of the topic, a broader definition of poverty in terms of possibilities and functioning [11] [12] and the pedagogical proposals, that, traditionally, have found solutions 'from the bottom' for poverty and social fragmentations [17] [18].

These concepts are reference points to generate an operative definition of 'educational poverty' and its multi-dimensional shape [10]. The paper considers this operationalization and the first findings of an 'holistic case study' [19] based on the educative project "Sulla buona strada" and its activities in a disadvantaged area of Genoa city (Italy). This is my actual field of study. The participants are parents, social workers, policy makers, teachers and school managers. Using in depth interviews and focus-group, the research wants to developed a situated and context-sensitive description of the term 'educational poverty' and the possible role of participants in contrasting it.

Reinforcing the importance to really understand a topic, starting from the concrete experience of people involved into the research, the paper tries to open some questions as: what are the policies that a territorial community address to young generations? What are the characteristics of schools? Are there free time and cultural activities to reinforce the impact of schools and to support parents in their role? Is it possible to improve them, activating the whole 'educational community' and realize a collaboration between adults (parents, teachers, policymakers...)? Can they collaborate and open perspectives to children who come from disadvantage backgrounds?

The paper aims to show how it is possible to engage the whole 'educational community' to organize strategies and activities to realize 'a high educational impact territory' and give opportunities to children and youngsters to really develop their personhood, despite difficult starting points.

Keywords: educational poverty; common responsibility.

40 INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to describe the first findings of my current research aimed to deepen the different characteristics of the term “educational poverty”, drawing a pedagogical perspective about it. The research is both explorative and empirical. The explorative side aims to conceptualize the phenomenon, the empirical implies an ethnographical inquiry on the educative project “Sulla Buona Strada”, in Genoa (Italy).

What does “educational poverty” mean? According to Save the Children [1], this topic deals with lack of educational opportunities in four areas: to know, to be, to live together and to do. At the end of 2016, Italian government approved an experimental provision to contrast this issue (n°280/2015 law): a three years fund, feed by bank foundations. The provision is enacted by a social entrepreneur, ‘Con I Bambini’, who launches calls for projects to improve collaborations between institutional stakeholders in the field of education and citizens. The objective is to reinforce a common responsibility between educators and develop ‘educational communities’ [2] [3]. ‘Educational community’ is a term to identify the totality of institutional actions and people who are involved in educating children at schools, in families, in cultural and free time activities: «Being educationally poor also means being denied the opportunity to know, to be, to live together and to do through sport, contact with nature, culture and beauty, and positive relationships with families and friends. The so-called ‘educational community’ plays a crucial role in preventing – or conversely reinforcing – educational poverty» [1].

41 CONCEPTUALIZATION

Can common responsibility and “educational community” be ideal solutions to contrast the phenomenon of “educational poverty”? To understand their impact, the paper presents the connection of these concepts with the conceptualization of the term “educational poverty” and the first results of the ongoing empirical research on the project “Sulla Buona Strada”.

The literature review depicts different meanings of the term “educational poverty”. The fund to contrast educational poverty is part of the Italian legislation, the result of proposals to promote children and adolescents’ rights (law 285/1997 and law 328/2000). At European level, the Lisbon Strategy [4] defines benchmarks to reduce this phenomenon. The economic research stresses the importance to promote better educational outcomes to reinforce the future employability [5]. Allmendiger et al. [6] and Lohmann and Ferger [7] emphasize the strengths of promoting educational outcomes throughout equal inclusive provisions in welfare systems. The psychological discourse takes into consideration the effects of poverty in broad terms: the concrete effects of poor incomes, poverty as social disadvantage, as individual condition and a factor of exclusion [8].

Stating these starting points, the lack of a specific pedagogical perspective on this phenomenon comes up. It means to consider educational experiences as instruments to contrast educational poverty as part of a multidimensional concept of poverty. A multidimensional definition of poverty implies «poor health and education, deprivation in knowledge and communication, inability to exercise human and political rights and the absence of dignity, confidence and self-respect» [9]. According with the World Bank, quoted by Botezat [10]: «poverty is not only a problem of low incomes; rather it is a multi-dimensional problem that includes low access to opportunities for developing human capital and to education». The multi-dimensional idea of poverty connects the topic with the “capability approach” [11] [12]. «The core characteristic of the capability approach is

its focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities. [...] Sen argues that our evaluations and policies should focus on what people are able to do and be, on the quality of their life, and on removing obstacles in their lives so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life that, upon reflection, they have reason to value» [13].

The multi-sided character of poverty justifies the necessity to involve different actors in projects to contrast it. This is the basis of a common responsibility and a sense of “educational community”. Vergani [14] considers responsibility an ethical choice to act in the modern sociological landscape. It can be the answer to social fragmentations, individualization, precarity, extreme flexibility and difficult connections between people. Responsibility, from a pedagogical perspective, means to face “educational poverty” offering qualitative educational experiences [15], to enlarge children’s perspectives and their opportunities for the future [16].

According to that, the institutional actors, as policymakers and school managers, can play a fundamental role to recognize the efforts for contrasting “educational poverty”. They can work with associations, cultural realities, private sector, experts, families and children. They are important to emphasize the sense of “community”, offering a set of possibilities to contrast the lack of opportunities to know, to be, to live together and to do, as the definition of the phenomenon states. The in-depth analysis of the terms common responsibility and “educational community” should include strategies and activities on the basis of pedagogical proposals, that, traditionally, have found solutions ‘from the bottom’ for poverty and social fragmentations [17] [18], to enhance the engagement of citizens (parents at first) in this common project of cultural and educational improvement.

These theoretical reference points (the capability approach; the concept of responsibility; the quality of educational experiences; the traditional solutions for poverty and social fragmentations) support the ideas of common responsibility and “educational community”. The empirical part of the research is fundamental to understand concretely these and the whole concept of “educational poverty”.

42 OPERATIONALIZATION: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Moving from the study of the concepts of “common responsibility” and “educational community”, the paper presents an operationalization of them. This is part of a general approach to the topic of “educational poverty” and its multi-dimensional shape [10]. Doing that, the paper presents the first findings of a *holistic case study* [19] based on the educative project “Sulla buona strada” and its activities in a disadvantaged area of Genoa city (Italy): «if a single-case study only examined the global nature of an organization or of a program [...], a *holistic design* would have been used. [...] The holistic design is advantageous when [...] the relevant theory underlying the case study is mainly of a holistic nature» [19]. Enlightened by the theory on “educational poverty” described above, the operationalization tries to answer these questions: “What does “educational poverty” mean in this area and how is it possible to engage the whole “educational community” to contrast it?”; “Is the project promoting a common educative responsibility?”

To answer that, an empirical research is ongoing, using a case study, «as empirical method that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. [...] You might pursue a *constructivist* approach in designing and conducting your case study – attempting to capture the perspectives of different participants and focusing on how their different meanings illuminate your topic of study» [19].

To really understand a topic, starting from the concrete experience of people involved, the research poses some questions about common responsibility and “educational community”: what are the policies that a territorial community address to young generations? What are the characteristics of schools? Are there free time and cultural activities to improve the impact of schools and to support parents in their educational role? Is it possible to enhance them, activating the whole “educational community” and building a collaboration between adults (parents, teachers, policymakers...)? Can they collaborate and open perspectives to children who come from disadvantage backgrounds? Does the project impact on the lives of family and children?

Data collection and interpretation use ethnographical sources, because it is important to investigate this case understanding the different meanings that came from different actors: «research takes place in everyday contexts, “in the field”; [...] data collection is – for the most part – relatively “unstructured”; [...] analysis of data involves interpretation of meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices» [20]. The main sources of data are: depth interviews; focus group; participant observations.

43 THE PROJECT: ACTIONS AND ACTORS

The project “Sulla Buona strada” was born in 2016, funded by “Con I Bambini”.

It is settled in an area called “Valpocevera”, along the Polcevera river, in Genoa (Italy): it is a post-industrial settlement, where the growth and the closure of firms has caused the loss of the sense of community. It has been characterized by two main immigration movements: the first, from the South of Italy, in the middle of the 20th Century, and the recent one, from the Eastern Europe and South America. Nowadays, People who come from abroad are numerous in this area. Considering the rest of the city of Genoa, Valpocevera has an important growth rate. Internet connection is spread and people commonly use it.

These features motivate the project design: the main aims are to find solutions to connect people and allow to build a real common responsibility and “educational community”.

“Sulla Buona Strada” offers activities to youngsters and their families, reinforcing parents’ skills to support children’s future development and creating more cultural and leisure time activities in the area. It uses both a real and a virtual connection: a little truck goes around Valpocevera, offering free time activities to children; a group of experts goes around by the truck and helps people to find services and aids for their problems, presenting database and websites.

Another fundamental characteristic of the project is the kindergartens’ participation. It involves seven infant schools (*scuole dell’infanzia*) (for children between 3 and 5 years-old), which are considered important places to observe the territory and point out its limits and resources.

The project involves different actors:

- institutional stakeholders: a member of Genoa city’s school sector and school managers;
- teachers;
- social workers from the so-called “third sector”: educators who work for social inclusion, special needs educators; experts on early childhood education;
- workers of culture: actors of theatre for children, experts on children literature.

“Sulla buona strada” has eleven actions. (1) The truck: an electric van meets people and understand their needs, in terms of free time activities and support. (2) Data collection and disseminations of local opportunities and activities (services, events...). (3) Working groups at school that aim to plan individual supports for children. (4) Teacher support to improve school wellbeing. (5) Parents

support (for individuals or groups). (6) Training activities for teachers and social workers. (7) Thematic meetings, workshops and events between different actors of the project (teachers, parents, social workers). (8) Outdoor activities for children to better know the town. (9) Governance, coordination and communication, data management and administration. (10) Supervision/Monitoring. (11) Impact evaluation.

The actual stages of research are to define the context, considering the actors' perspectives. The participants are mainly policymakers, teachers, school managers and social workers. Later, it will be important to involve parents and citizens. Using in depth interviews and focus-group, the research aims to develop a situated and context-sensitive description of the term 'educational poverty' and the possible role of participants in contrasting it.

Considering the first findings of this research it is possible to say that this "educational community", to improve a common responsibility, needs:

- to move from a concept of schools as isolated systems, to the idea of schools as an "observatory" to read the territorial community and interact with other services and experts;
- to promote engagement between people, giving them voice, and transforming their implicit needs into practical questions to pose to educational services and institutional stakeholders;
- to find solutions for second-generation migrant children, to improve their abilities and to offer them concrete solutions for a satisfying future, despite their difficult starting point.

All the project activities aim to improve the connections between citizens and experts. Moving from schools, supporting teachers, it is possible to read their needs and their point of view on families' limits and resources. Direct connections with families, thanks to outdoor activities promoted by the small truck, can improve family's *expertise* and create a common responsibility and a valuable "educational community". Municipality's participation gives to this system an institutional reference and make possible a future development, in terms of cultural and financial support.

44 FUTURE OUTCOMES

To better understand this project and to develop an inner point of view about specific activities to contrast "educational poverty", the research needs to reinforce these aspects:

- The citizens engagement in research design: can people be part of the research design and improve the sense of common responsibility and "educational community"?
- The comparison with other projects. This is the aim of another social entrepreneur, "Compagnia di San Paolo". It is creating work-tables between actors who are involved in projects to contrast "educational poverty".

Considering the "case-study" research's intent, the «goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations). [...] The goal is to do a "generalizing" and not a "particularizing" analysis» (Lipset, Trow & Coleman, 1956, pp. 419-420 [19]). The research draws a picture of this project from an inner point of view and it will be important to consider other realities. The aim is to show how it is possible to engage the whole "educational community" to organize strategies and activities in order to realize "a high educational impact territory" and to give opportunities to children and youngsters to really develop their personhood, despite difficult starting points. If children and adolescents' rights become really important for public and city engagement, the social impact of this kind of projects can last. «We

need to rethink the city territory from educational needs, to make cities as educational places, to make them educational communities and high educational intensity territories» [21].

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SUPERVISION BEYOND BORDERS: PERSPECTIVES ON A MUTUAL PROCESS OF BECOMING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

In the context of problem-based higher education, students are typically supervised by a person variously referred to as either a teacher, a tutor, or a supervisor. Importantly, however, even though she may sometimes be called a teacher, the goal is not to *teach* students in the sense of lecturing. On the contrary, this person's role is to guide students through the process that is characteristic of the particular kind of problem-based learning that is practiced at the institution where they are enrolled. Thus, the supervisor's job is to try to facilitate students' learning—most prominently by asking questions that will allow students to reflect and become active participants in the construction of the knowledge, skills, and competencies that they need to acquire. That said, supervision comes in many different shapes and sizes.

The purpose of this paper is not to provide readers with a set of guidelines for how to supervise students in the context of problem-based higher education. Rather, we merely strive to show that even within the confines of the neoliberal university, there is room for maneuver to resist the status quo of commoditization, and we encourage others who are involved in supervision to seek out spaces within the institutional structures they inhabit that will allow them to carry out oppositional practices that may ultimately result in transformational learning in students as well as supervisors. What is more, such practices may be used to challenge hegemonic discourses and contest the legitimacy of the structures governing higher education today.

Drawing on examples of narratives about supervision, some of which were created by each of us individually while others were brought to life through collaborative efforts, we aim to describe a particular process of supervision that significantly affected the both of us... academically as well as personally.

To accomplish this goal, we have *not* collected any data, we have *not* analyzed any data, and we have *not* interpreted any data. In fact, we *have* no data in the traditional understanding of this concept. What we have are scattered stories interspersed with theoretical considerations and analytical reflections; a collection of entangled narratives told from different points of view and rhizomatically connected. We are trying to produce the kind of writing that is not constricted by the standards of conventional ways of structuring research. We hope this will make for an interesting experiment.

Keywords: Higher education, collaborative writing, supervision, problem-based learning.

45 FROM UGANDA WITH LOVE

I'm at a local bar in Ntinda, Kampala, Uganda, 6616 km away from home, enjoying the view of a group of passionate Ugandan men in a variety of Premiere League jerseys. Suddenly my phone vibrates to let me know I have an incoming message. It's from my supervisor in Denmark. I'm surprised... well, actually I'm not surprised that she texts me on a Sunday at 23:45 because our way of communicating while I'm doing fieldwork in Uganda is not exactly conventional. Skype, Messenger and regular phone calls have become our preferred ways of communicating. We don't email much anymore. I open the message. I'm always curious when she contacts me. Her passionate approach to my research, our way of discussing and sharing ideas and reflecting together is beyond what I have ever met in my whole life as a university student. We have talked about it, this collaborative relation with regards to supervision and research and I still remember her words about supervising being something requiring mutual involvement and affecting the both of us... academically as well as personally. John Law's [1] words about methods creating realities ring loud in my head. I get the feeling that my supervisor's approach will somehow change my future realities.

46 ROOM FOR MANEUVER

It is a funny word. Supervision. Or super-vision. Or super vision. Or super(-)vision. No matter how you decide to write it, when you repeat it to yourself and listen carefully, it ends up sounding like some kind of exotic superpower. I can just imagine how it would be something bestowed on a select group of particularly gifted individuals whose superior sense of sight would allow them to see straight through walls and other solid objects as if they were made of clear glass. If I remember correctly, Superman has this power, which lets him see what remains hidden to ordinary people when happening behind closed doors or drawn blinds. I think we can all agree that having this kind of superpower would be quite helpful in many situations... especially if you are the nosy type. Anyway, while supervision, of course, is a noun, it has a closely related cousin in the form of the verb 'supervise'. To supervise. Being a verb, the word 'supervise' clearly signifies that it is something you *do* rather than something you *have*. In other words, whereas the noun seems to signal that super(-)vision might be an innate superpower that is only the exclusive privilege of a select few, the verb 'supervise' seems to gesture in the direction of a different understanding, one not nearly as elitist as the former. In this sense, 'to supervise' seems to indicate a commonly occurring democratic activity that may be taken up by just about anyone who feels she has a desire, need, or professional duty to do so.

In the context of problem-based higher education, students are typically supervised by a person variously referred to as either a teacher, a tutor, or a supervisor. Importantly, however, even though he or she may be called a teacher, the goal is not to *teach* the students in the sense of lecturing. On the contrary, this person's role is to guide the students through the process characteristic of the particular kind of problem-based learning that is practiced at the institution where the students are enrolled. Thus, her job is to try to facilitate the students' learning—most prominently by asking questions that will allow the students to reflect and become active participants in the construction of the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to acquire. Even though this is how the role of the supervisor is described to students who are exposed to problem-based learning, students will often regard the supervisor as someone who is indeed endowed with superpowers, that is, as someone who has all the right answers and always knows best. Depending on the supervisor's

personality, these expectations may result in different feelings ranging from a great sense of pleasure to a great sense of frustration.

The purpose of this paper is not to provide readers with a set of guidelines for how to supervise students in the context of problem-based higher education. Rather, we merely strive to show that even within the confines of the neoliberal university, there is room for maneuver to resist the status quo of commoditization, and we encourage others who are involved in supervision to seek out spaces within the institutional structures they inhabit that will allow them to carry out oppositional practices that may ultimately result in transformational learning in students as well as supervisors. What is more, such practices may be used to challenge hegemonic discourses and contest the legitimacy of the structures governing higher education today.

47 BEGINNINGS AND BECOMINGS

47.1 Nomadic roaming

Simon and I quietly roamed the endless, dull hallways of the building that housed the Department of Health Science and Technology. We were looking for inspiration. I had high hopes, higher than Simon anyway, that we would find it somewhere in one of the offices lining each side of those endless, dull hallways. I was on the lookout for something that would be able to light my fire. I was tired of listening to supervisors' same old, boring lectures about the same old, boring theories and methods. There had to be someone in this department who would be open to my crazy thoughts and ideas. Simon suggested that we swing by Kathrine's office. I had never heard about her. Never even seen her but she had supervised (and surprised) Simon two years ago and had apparently left an impression on him.

47.2 Rendez vous

We first met in January 2018 when one was enrolled as a student at Aalborg University in Denmark and about to commence the second semester of a master's program in sports science with the Department of Health Science and Technology and the other was one and a half year into a Ph.D. program offered by that same department. We had never seen each other before that afternoon when two timid-looking students carefully knocked on the door of the Ph.D. office. The other student introduced us to each other and at first there was nothing unusual about this first meeting except maybe for the fact that the two students had shown up unannounced. However, as the conversation gathered speed, we gradually came to realize that we shared an interest for doing things differently, that is, for experimenting with new and unconventional types of research as well as for alternative forms of representation. "Do you like to write?" the Ph.D. student ventured about half an hour into the meeting. "I love to write!" the student answered and that seemed to seal the deal. It came as a surprise to both of us.

47.3 The turn

"But what do *you* think, Lasse?" she says looking intently at me. Since when has that been a relevant question to ask? I think to myself. What is it she wants me to say? Does she expect me to come up with an answer based on some obscure philosophical theory that I have no clue about how to decipher? Just as I am about to throw in the towel and admit to the fact that I am utterly ignorant with regards this matter, she beats me to it as if she has read my mind: "No, what do you, Lasse, believe? You yourself?" This moment constitutes one of the greatest milestones in my time as a student at the university. Here's a supervisor, a person, a woman who confronts me head on and

seems genuinely interested in listening to what I think and have to say. On previous occasions, I have often felt like my opinion didn't matter unless firmly supported by research literature or the statements of established scholars. But here all of a sudden an opportunity presented itself for me to make my personal opinion count. Thinking about that moment still gives me the chills.

47.4 Exploring exploitation ethnographically

Ethnography is not an innocent practice. Our research practices are performative, pedagogical, and political. Through our writing and our talk we enact the worlds we study. These performances are messy and pedagogical. They instruct our readers about this world and how we see it. The pedagogical is always moral and political, by enacting a way of seeing and being, it challenges, contests or endorses the official, hegemonic ways of seeing and representing the other [2].

The project Lasse is working on is about talent identification. More specifically, it is a critical ethnographic study of a Danish football academy in Uganda that specializes in talent development. As part of his project, Lasse spent three and a half months doing fieldwork in Uganda far away from the safe and well-known context of Aalborg University. Lasse's fieldwork involved visiting different football academies, investigating how children are treated in talent development programs, and how practitioners—coaches, scouts, and academy owners—articulate and justify their actions. Furthermore, Lasse also became interested in studying how his methodological choices affected the outcome and potential consequences of his study. In the course of doing the fieldwork, Lasse realized that what he most aspired to do was to try to create alternative stories about talent development. Thus, he ended up telling dangerous stories about a specific Danish football academy in Uganda, El Cambio Academy. Experimenting with different forms of textual expression, he gradually grew more and more willing to take risks in his critical writing. His heartfelt hope was that his texts would inspire new ideas and be able to contribute to bringing about specific social changes that would eventually allow football and talent development to become catalysts for positive change rather than factors enforcing stigmatization and the negative implications associated with (post)colonialist thinking.

48 CRAFTING MONSTERS

Based on our own experiences, we try to describe how we have experienced what we have come to refer to as a mutual process of becoming. To accomplish this goal, we have not collected any data, we have not analyzed any data, and we have not interpreted any data. In fact, we have no data in the traditional understanding of this concept. What we have are scattered stories interspersed with theoretical considerations and analytical reflections; a collection of entangled stories told from different points of view rhizomatically connected. Furthermore, we try to produce writing that is not constricted by the standards of conventional ways of structuring research.

But let us be clear: This is an experiment! At the moment, we only have a rather faint idea about its trajectory and as far as the final result is concerned, we are utterly destitute. As a matter of fact, we are not even completely sure about what it is we want to say. We take solace in the idea of writing as a method of inquiry and trust that if we only keep going for long enough, writing from different and shared perspectives will eventually lead us to insights we could not have foreseen before we started writing. Some of this writing may turn out to be monstrous in the sense that it

“[...] seems opposed to the logics of clarity, concision, precision, directness, and brevity [...]” [3]. Still, what we present here might not nearly be monstrous enough to deserve that label, not least since we have chosen to structure our paper the traditional way, that is, in neatly ordered, and ordering sections numbered and labeled according to their content beginning with the introduction and moving on from there to a section about the background of the study and from there on to a section in which we describe our method and so on and so forth. Nevertheless,

No longer are we caught hovering over our Procrustean table, ready to slice away the complexity in order to fulfil the haggard criteria of what constitutes good (Vitruvian) knowledge for the academy. In the process of creating research the researcher becomes aware of their complicit entanglement with a whole host of phenomena, with their participation in the creation of a phenomena via their very studying of it [4].

Ours is not a narrative of progress. It is not meant to be a Bildung story. In that sense, what we present here resembles what Laurel Richardson [5] calls a pleated-text; it is made of experimental texts and texts about those experimental texts folded into one another. What is more, there is no splendid conclusion to wrap everything up at the end and once and for all nail down the message and meaning of what we mean to convey. Rather, it is an assemblage of multi-voiced, collective stories with jagged edges.

49 SUPERVISION BEYOND BORDERS

49.1 Forbidden territory

This is so much fun! I think to myself as I return to the space allotted to my writing in our shared document on Google Drive where I have just finished commenting on the thoughts presented by Lasse about the first few pages of the book we have decided to read together. Alas, it takes a lot of time, but it also inspires new thoughts and ideas and I can honestly say that I very much welcome the chance to practice my academic writing skills in a safe and supportive forum. I wonder if Lasse feels the same way. I hope so. But I still have to supervise Lasse’s project and thus we are not just two random students sharing our thoughts on some trivial matter. Should I worry about my ability and responsibility to keep a professional distance and try harder not to get overly involved in the project?⁴ I think of Cahn’s words: “[...] surely professors, like physicians and attorneys, should be expected to adhere to high standards of professional conduct” [6]. I guess so. Maybe. Maybe not. Nevertheless, I must remember that it is not my project. I am merely the supervisor. Of course, by now, because I have already written about and made public these worries of mine, I have already transgressed into forbidden territory. It is too late to turn back now, however. And on closer inspection, maybe the fact that I cannot undo the writing I have just done, does not have to be considered a problem. On the contrary, if I am truly committed to the ideas I hope to convey to students and the methods I value about equality and the value of sharing and collaborating, I should not strive towards sustaining the status quo that is characterized by asymmetric relations of power that serve to keep a particular hierarchy in place and me in a hegemonic position. Instead, I should practice what I preach by thinking of the relationship between a student and his supervisor as one

⁴ This piece of text is copied verbatim from the document we shared on Google Drive. It was written on August 6, 2018, that is three and a half weeks before the beginning of the semester when the project was set to commence. It was part of an experiment to try to explore the possibilities and potential of a collaborative form of reading and writing.

characterized by mutual respect and a shared sense of genuine curiosity towards the topic of the project. Perhaps this is in fact what Taylor is getting at when she writes that there is a “[...] need to install an ecology of ethical relations at the centre of educational practice in higher education” [7]. Maybe this alternative approach to supervising will constitute my own private little contribution to those endeavors going on within the field of higher education that testify to the fact that there is “[...] a widespread interest in ways of ‘doing’ pedagogy that contest the commoditisation and instrumentalism of learning and teaching that marketised assumptions presume [...]” [7]. This is such a hopeful and optimistic way of thinking about higher education!

49.2 Reading together, writing together, thinking together

I SLAM THE DOOR.

I SLAM IT AS HARD AS I CAN.

I SCREAM. I SCREAM FROM THE TOP OF MY LUNGS:

“NO WAY!! NO WAY!! NO WAY!! THAT’S JUST NOT POSSIBLE!!”

Again and again.

Louder and louder.

Until I’m all out of breath and have to continue in a whisper:

“You realize that you are selling children?!”

“How can you not see that?”

“How the hell can you live with yourself?!”

“This cannot be real!”

This cannot be real.

It’s not. Luckily. Unfortunately. In the real world, I control myself. I curb my feelings of disgust and anger. I keep my voice down and politely ask my host to explain it to me again.

Who wrote this? Who is this ‘I’ speaking thus? Is it the same ‘I’ as the ‘I’ writing this sentence? I am not sure that I can answer these questions. If by speaking you mean the person in whose head these thoughts occurred, then the answer to the second question is Lasse. I had these thoughts. And if by writing you mean the act of typing the letters, then the answer to the first question is Kathrine. I wrote it. But that does not seem to matter anymore. Does it matter to you? As with some of the other pieces, this text exists in a liminal space between us where it no longer makes sense to talk about you or me, either or, because our ideas and our words have joined and become fluid no longer belonging to one or the other but rather to both.

49.3 Thinking of ourselves as nomads

[...] nomads deterritorialize space that has been territorialized, charted, ordered, and then shut down. Nomads search for mobile arrangements of space where thought can settle for a time and then multiply and recombine, always displacing the sedentary and unified [8].

This is how I... you... we came to think of us and what it is we are doing and becoming. In line with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s [9] figuration of the nomad and nomadic inquiry, our project may

be described as an attempt to deterritorialize the space that has been territorialized as supervision. As researchers practicing nomadic inquiry, we try to pry open and challenge the conventional way of thinking about supervision as something going on between a student or a learner who has all the questions and a supervisor or a teacher who has all the answers. In the words of Elizabeth St. Pierre [8], our research process (which hardly deserves this epithet in the first place) may be characterized as “[...] a nomadic adventure that cannot be defined in advance because it takes advantage of flows and multiplicities and disjunctions to make a different sense in different ways or to refuse to make sense at all” [8].

50 NAKED LUNCH

Unfortunately, the story does not end there, on an optimistic note, that is. As much as I would like to forget about the fact that this story is not a fairy tale, I just can't. It wouldn't be fair to leave you with the impression that we have discovered a miracle cure for the ails of supervision. We haven't and thus we always have, in the words of Michel Foucault [10], something to do.

We had just had a meeting, an excellent meeting, in my office. Lasse and I. But when it was time for lunch Peter knocked on our door and asked if we were going to the cafeteria. “Are you eating today?” he asked but by ‘you’ he clearly did not mean everybody in the office. His question was directed at Niels and I. Not at Lasse. Nobody seemed to think twice about this rather odd exclusion of Lasse and we all got up to go have lunch. When we had picked out and paid for our meals, Peter, Niels and I went to sit at our usual table in the farthest corner of the huge common room by the window. I don't remember what we talked about on that particular day, I don't remember what we had to eat, just as I don't remember what the weather was like. It was a normal day, just like any other. What I do remember, however, is how I felt when I passed the table where Lasse and Simon were seated on my way out of the cafeteria.

We had just had a meeting, an excellent meeting, in her office. Kathrine and I. We hadn't seen each other for two months and so for two months we had only talked to each other on the phone. It was nice to be back in her crammed office where she had somehow managed to squeeze in a sofa while I had been gone. There is just something about being in the same room, the physical presence, that changes the interaction. We were pretty good at sticking to one common agenda for once. Usually, I will have my own agenda in my head while she has another in hers. But this time, we worked quite efficiently. I left the office feeling really good about what we had already accomplished. I went to the cafeteria to have lunch with Simon. We sat by ourselves at a big table with lots of empty chairs when Kathrine, Peter and Niels entered. The small party of staff members chose a table in the farthest corner of the huge common room by the window. Far away from us which struck me as the most natural thing in the world at the time. In fact, it didn't strike me at all until Kathrine mentioned it to me a couple of days later when I visited her at her home.

“Why didn't we sit together the other day?” she asked. At first, I didn't even know what she was referring to.

“What day? Where?”

“On Wednesday. In the cafeteria.”

“But didn't you sit with your... colleagues?”

“Yes, but why didn't we all just sit together? You and Simon and the rest of us?”

“Oh. You mean after our meeting?”

“Yes, why didn’t we all sit together?” she asked again.

Sitting here in her private living room surrounded by her personal things—books and photos of her daughter and souvenirs from around the world—I could suddenly see the irrationality very clearly.

“Yes! Why didn’t we?” I asked back.

I never thought about this before either. In fact, I think I would have felt quite uncomfortable if I had had to sit with some of my teachers or supervisors to have lunch when I was a student. Nevertheless, on this day, it bothered me that we had not eaten with Lasse and Simon. It made me feel ashamed and snobbish... and a little disappointed in myself that I would allow such an absurdity to take place. Why hadn’t I done anything to object to this idiocy? Was it really so utterly unthinkable for students and staff to interact outside the formal setting of the offices? Right then and there, I decided that I was not willing to pay the price for professional distance that was being asked. I did not want to sacrifice a personal relation for a professional one no matter if the unwritten rules inherent in the institutional structures make it difficult to think and act in ways that defy the status quo.

51 BEGINNING AGAIN AND ANEW

We could have written so much more. We could have written something else entirely. We could have ordered our stories, reflections, and considerations differently. We ended up with these pieces of text ordered this way not because we had a clear idea of where we wanted to end up but rather because we followed the path laid out by our collaborative efforts. Writing this paper has inspired new ideas and caused new topics for conversation to emerge. Prompted by others’ readings of drafts of this paper, we have had to revisit our writing as well as our thinking about the nature of our relationship and so the end feels like an opening, a new beginning. And so, we begin anew with this quote from bell hooks:

Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom [11].

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THE PLAUSIBILITY OF COMBINING COLLABORATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND FEMINIST ACTION RESEARCH TO FOSTER THE RECOGNITION OF WOMEN TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL AGENCY

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Abstract

Although, educational institutions traditionally are seen as institutions of the state or of other powerful social groups, they can also be viewed as social spaces where social action for change can happen, i.e. the strategies of civic groups can be utilized - along with the existing teaching techniques - in schools so as to give students a chance to shape their individual and collective identities, as well as to learn how to become socially sensitive citizens. In order to be able to realize this initiative, however, first, the teachers themselves should become aware of their own capacities. So as one could find out about the plausibility of this kind of awareness-raising the mixed method of collaborative autoethnography and feminist action research can prove to be women teacher friendly tools.

Keywords: professional autonomy, teacher research, social change

52 RECENT CHANGES IN EDUCATION AFFECTING TEACHERS' AGENCY

52.1 Altered Functions of Education

52.1.1 Skills Needed by the Economy

In the past few decades the global economic and social changes have radically altered the functions of education, as well as the required knowledge and skills in the teaching profession. Education has become more of an institution whose primary goal is to teach practical knowledge skills (competencies). These changes raise new expectations from the teachers as they are supposed to adjust their professional performance to procedures, such that are standardized and measurable, while subduing the use of their life experiences and accumulated personal-professional knowledge.

52.2 Issues of Professional Agency

52.2.1 Diminished Value of Agency

In an education system where the standardized procedures and attainments are in the focus teachers' collective and personal professional agencies appear to be of little significance. This neglect of the value of the teachers' cultural and political identities in education becomes highly problematic in many ways, influencing not just the quality and the prestige of the teaching profession in general, but also - because teaching has become traditionally a predominantly

feminized profession since the second half of the 20th century -, this phenomenon may contribute to the persistent devaluation of women's work in society. Consequently, the diminishing professional autonomy and agency of women teachers may also affect women's status in society in a broader sense. The shift in the value orientation in education may create a backlash to those achievements of feminist pedagogy, which earlier succeeded in restoring humanistic values in the teaching profession.

53 TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

For the purpose contextualization it may be useful to give a brief account of the educational research traditions which tend to jeopardize the possibility of renewing the field in a bottom-up fashion - mostly detached from political influences attached to economic power politics.

53.1 The German Tradition and the Soviet Tradition

53.1.1 Adaptation vs Inclusion of the New Social Research Discourses

While having the purpose of discussing topics and designing research in education which are internationally and interculturally relevant today one cannot help noticing that the mainstream Post-Soviet Central European educational research scene follows a conservative and traditional path. It creates a contradiction that the educational needs of the new globalized societies and the related theoretical discourses on education very often emerge in such a way that they are interpreted as harmful when looking at them through the lens of the past traditions. As a result, the new internationally discussed academic research problems are adapted in a calculated manner rather than included. This attitude also appears to be valid in the case of the selection of the social and educational research methods (particularly the interdisciplinarity and the acceptance of subjectivity of the qualitative methodologies are approached sceptically). Traditionalism and conservatism mostly result in such views that the teachers' - and especially the women teachers' - position remains to be regarded as a low position when it comes to research. Teachers are judged to be incapable of doing academic and theoretical inquiry and to be in need of guidance as practitioners by two "strong" discourses: the political and the academic.

53.1.2 Educational Theorization on Raising/Educating Ideal Individuals

The German tradition of educational theorization is deeply rooted in philosophy and produces reformed theories originating in the history of education, rather than encouraging researchers to get engaged in empirical inquiry into the everyday reality in culture and society. Therefore, research predominantly focuses on reproducing knowledge on the ideal person who – as a result of education – will become a disciplined citizen possessing ideologically preferred values. This predominant preference for the historical-traditional theories on education entails that education research remains to be a largely self-contained field within social research. The academic research community conveniently distances itself from the reality of schools (teachers and students and school knowledge), claiming that empirical social research would pollute the validity of scientific research. When examining the themes and research methods of the dominant academic knowledge production, one is puzzled to be able to identify the choices, as most often their relevance is not explained by the authors. In short, educational research appears to be peculiarly kaleidoscopic while selecting traditional and occasionally non-traditional ideas on education and while attempting to adjust the research projects to the postmodern diversity that is seen internationally, nevertheless educational research can be described as non-responsive to the social and cultural climate it is embedded in.

53.2 The Researcher's Identity

53.2.1 The Academic Researchers' Culture

The community of researchers insists that the hierarchical distance from the realities of schools – teachers and students – guarantees the scientific validity and objectivity of their work. In their view, it is rather the political arena that provides information on new agendas for research. But because the academic scene cannot survive without maintaining some dialogue with its international counterparts, the researchers need to provide an explanation for their choices. Elliott's (1994, 135-136) observation – though dated from the 1990s - still holds true for this type of traditional milieu: "(the researcher) gains salvation from guilt by romantically identifying with the teacher culture as the big brother or sister who mediates through their research skills the 'voices' of teachers. The researcher casts him or herself in the role of the mouthpiece of an oppressed profession."

53.3 Quantitative Inquiry and Policy Research

53.3.1 Policy Research – Out of Necessity

More relevant research is produced by international surveys and other statistical data production in the context of policy research, with the purpose of fulfilling international obligations, rather than parts of carefully prepared research agendas which reflect the local social conditions and the contemporary educational scenarios, reflecting reality.

54 IS RESEARCHING TEACHERS THE SAME AS TEACHER RESEARCH?

54.1 Researching Teachers

54.1.1 The Problem of Institutional Hierarchy

Educational research (by academic researchers) has produced abundant literature about the beliefs and assumptions which inform teachers' pedagogical practices as well as about the professionally ideal identities/personalities of teachers or teachers' roles. However, one can argue that the institutional power hierarchy which places academic researches above teachers in schools will distort the research findings and will remain partial, since their epistemic standpoint is rooted in the theories on teachers and teaching. "Limiting the official knowledge base for teaching to what academics have chosen to study and write about has contributed to a number of problems, including discontinuity between what is taught in universities and what is taught in classrooms, teachers' ambivalence about the claims of academic research, and a general lack of information about classroom life from a truly emic perspective."(Elliott 1994, 136)

54.1.2 Research into Teachers' Thinking

Although in the international literature it is largely proven that probing teachers' beliefs and assumptions will not yield data that could go beyond what observations or case studies could provide, yet, this mode of inquiry seems to be persistent. One can speculate that this kind of research exists as a substitute for involving the teachers themselves, which would loosen up the control over the research process and would also expand the area of educational research by including experimental and qualitative methods with all the subjectivities that this move would entail. Involving teachers in collaborative research and allowing for their active participation would provide the opportunity for teachers to construct the scientific representations of their practical knowledge. Still, researchers trained in the conservative ethos, as well as the politically active

biased academic researchers (in power) seem to be reluctant to acknowledge the fact that the inclusion of teachers can rejuvenate educational research.

54.2 Teacher Research

54.2.1 “Islands of Partnership”

For the purpose of giving some background and moving on to the claim which is to be highlighted in this paper, it is useful to remind ourselves of the novel or even revolutionary idea of collaborative action research and teacher research. In Stemmel’s words (2007, 3): “For both epistemological and strategic reasons, the model needs to change from one that is top-down and broad-based, to one that privileges the formation of islands of partnership, where grass root groups of teachers and schools work together collaboratively around specific projects and goals, developing knowledge that is context-specific in response to local challenges. Educational research developed in this manner needs to be designed in ways that respect the knowledge, insights, and expertise of the different players. Researchers who participate in these ‘islands’ are not a separate breed that has the esoteric knowledge that they bring to bear on the ‘poor’ efforts made by teachers. Rather, the different perspectives, perceptions, and skills – including in-depth knowledge of a particular context – are brought together in a partnership that strives for the co-production of knowledge that works in the best interests of the student.”

54.2.2 Conceptual and Empirical Teacher Research

It is worthwhile to point out that while teacher researchers extract data from their lived experiences in ways that a theoretically minded researcher would not be able to do, teacher researchers also need to be appreciated as producers of theories. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990, 2) points out that “conceptual research, which is theoretical and philosophical, includes teachers’ essays, conversations, stories, and books that represent extended interpretations and analyses of various aspects of teaching.” Thus, the voices of the teachers themselves, their research problems, and interpretive frames become unavoidable by the academic community of researchers. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990, 3) also emphasizes – similarly to Elliott (1994, 136) - that teachers’ full involvement in research projects and their research results has the potential to fill out the void of knowledge “from a truly emic perspective”.

55 “PROFESSIONAL IS POLITICAL” – WOMEN TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS WITH AGENCY

55.1 Educational Action Research

55.1.1 Action Research Affects Teachers’ Identity and Political Awareness

Action research is already a well-known social science research practice. However, it is not often discussed how the process of this kind of research shapes the teachers’ professional identity and agency when it is applied in educational research. One may argue that this omission occurs because – especially in the European and in the Post-Soviet Central European context it is linked with the issue of women’s professional identity and women’ agency within a context of top-down politically controlled changes of practices in education. However, Hardy, Rönnerman and Edwards-Groves (2018, 424) draw our attention to another kind of political dimension of action research, when it is engaged in introducing changes directly and locally “rather than waiting for someone to implement changes based on a conception of research as external to the practice of the practitioner”. In this

way, action research tends to be viewed more as a tool for producing knowledge for civic purposes, thus coming into conflict with the official educational policies: "Action research is also a form of research that addresses the specific context and programmes at hand. Action research has become part of professional learning whereby curriculum is created involving research skills applied to developing practice at a more local level, including under these more globalized policy conditions. In this way, a sense of personal, professional and political agency develops and is evident in more agentic 'activist' professional approaches more broadly." (Hardy, Rönnerman and Edwards-Groves 2018, 424)

55.1.2 *Feminist Action Research in Education*

From the above, it follows that while performing educational action research social and political issues of women teachers should become integral elements by admitting the contributions of women's perspectives and also by recognizing the political advocacy content of action research – albeit at a local level. Additionally, the articulation of the gendered nature of any educational activity, i.e. revealing the - often hidden - gendered socialization practices can lead to a preferable early awareness raising of the students – coupled with human rights education - about how gender influences people's thinking and actions. As it is suggested by Davis (2008, 79), this would require integrating gender theorization into action research.

55.2 Making Women Teachers' Voice Heard through (Collaborative) Autoethnography

55.2.1 *Autoethnography – Using Narratives in Educational Research*

Sheridan (2012, 13) points out that "autoethnography is a relatively new research method that includes the researcher's personal experience and his or her observations about the group or individuals who are being researched." Ellis (2004) defines autoethnography as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political." As we can see this method fully foregrounds the researcher herself and provides professional and personal freedom by allowing for using narrative, photographs, drawings, even poetry as expressions and representations of their professional experiences. This approach is radically different from those research methods which are based on the positivist or empirical methodologies in as much as it does not prompt the researcher to neglect details that she may find relevant personally, as well as it opens up an avenue for including affect in social research and educational research. When producing the narrative of personal observations, thoughts and feelings appear in perceivable forms of representations at the level of awareness and can lead to such new knowledge which could not have been produced in any other way. When doing autoethnography, one does not just tell stories based on their experiences, but they also analyse their narratives and find a matching form of representation. Consequently, this analytical approach can ultimately become inductive to produce theorization.

According to Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010, 2) "many of these scholars turned to autoethnography because they were seeking a positive response to critiques of canonical ideas about what research is and how research should be done. In particular, they wanted to concentrate on ways of producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience, research that would sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in silence, and to forms of representation that deepen our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us."

At the same time, as we all know, autoethnography is a highly controversial method, as it allows for a lot more subjectivity than any other qualitative inquiry. However, combined with more solid methods it can extensively enrich our understanding of teaching and learning.

55.2.2 Collaborative Autoethnography – Revealing Women Teachers' Collective Identities

Since the teaching profession is typically practiced not in isolation but in institutions one should not lose sight of the fact that ideally teachers work in collaboration. It is, therefore, puzzling that when it comes to researching teachers' praxis or identifying them as researchers who take part in action research, there is no question raised about how they fit in the community of teachers they work with every day. In other words, there is little knowledge available about how teachers relate to each other, what is the nature of their cooperation, or whether the organizational setting can be characterized by strictly hierarchal or democratic relations among teachers.

While many qualitative methods could be utilized to find out about the school cultures, yet most of the established ones would create the power relation of the researcher and the researched – as this issue has been already problematized elsewhere mostly by feminist scholars-, thereby restricting the scope of the knowledge that could be gained.

Teachers in the same school are exposed to the same institutional culture and institutional expectations, consequently it may seem sensible to claim that along with individual autoethnographies they could also benefit from creating their own shared collaborative autoethnography. While doing so by sharing reflections on each other's performance, strengths and weaknesses, through writing their shared narratives of their professional community, the outcomes and the results of this process can be very similar – and therefore empowering - to those of the feminist awareness raising groups/communities. While the women teachers are engaged in identifying their common obstacles and common successes, they also support each other in developing a common professional agency, which is empowered by a strong group identity. As a powerful social group, they can create such a social space where social action for change becomes possible.

56 CONCLUSION

I propose to conclude that both feminist action research and collaborative autoethnography provide the opportunity for women teachers to tell about and share their personal experiences as actors in the education sphere in their own rights. These research methodologies encourage the participants to vocalize their beliefs and offer opportunities to reflect and act on their experiences. The accumulated (self)-reflected knowledge on women teacher's own identities and competencies can enhance both their self-perceived professional identities and can make their collective agency socially visible.

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BACK TO THE FUTURE. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

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Abstract

'Qualitative Inquiry as Activism' covers our work as policy advisors in the field of educational and research quality. We feel it our duty to make our colleagues active in warranting the quality of educational and research activities. Our main purpose is to inspire the level of ambition of our colleagues at the HAN University of Applied Sciences. Their ideas should be future-minded having learned from the past. The competences our colleagues show are dimensions in the development of research and education enabling change and innovation in the professional fields our research and educational programmes cover: technology, economics and management, education and healthcare and welfare. Whatever activities students, lecturers or professionals execute they are in one way or the other effective to relevant stakeholders.

Although it is easy to build an educational or research programme for future developments we also need a 'playground' to test the effectiveness of outcomes of education or research to see if there is still a fit between what is constructed by researchers or in classrooms and the developing practice, having certain needs. This playground is the foundation for a way of thinking which is on the one hand inspired by our work as policy and quality advisors and on the other by a closer look at the work of the Italian philosopher and legalist Giorgio Agamben (Agamben 1999; De Boer 2015). Agamben encourages his readers to look for open spaces between opposites (man-woman, voice-language, politics-law, exclusion-inclusion or man-animal). Here, they can exploit possibilities and impossibilities and make decisions what to and what not to do. They are not per se linked to systems, norms or linear thinking but are challenged to be creative, innovative, open or focused on new hitherto unknown moments. It opens up a revolutionary (im-)potential which is neither part of the extremes nor of the open space itself. What is created is a 'now-time', a moment, where you have to grasp the instance as such.

In our work we want to attain a certain activism which makes educational professional enthusiastic about what they do, stand for and want to attain, covered by uncertainty, because no one *owns* the open space. How to handle this perplexity is one of our main challenges in advising educational programmes and research units.

Keywords: Agamben, appreciative inquiry, kairos, open space, proflection

1. INTRODUCTION

Being and feeling partially responsible for the quality of our research and study programmes we are struggling with the question why we should feel responsible at all in our work which is to contribute to the quality of these programmes, without, however, having any responsibility for what is happening in education, teaching or research in all sorts of different practices (what lecturers, students, managers or researchers actually do). Aren't our colleagues not themselves responsible for what they do and what the quality of their work is? If things go wrong it is quite often attributed to advisors, the system or politics. But if things go well and even better than that, the credits are for those being responsible. What then might be the role of policy advisors within developments in education and research not being peers or experts on the fields which are covered by educational and research programmes?

We do know what the frameworks or standards are within which education and research should proceed and be designed and how their quality standards should look like. Our expertise is linked to quality standards according to which educational and research achievements are judged. Thus, we as well in one way or the other could judge the quality of the output, processes, professional integration or testing and monitoring the progress made by study programmes or research units.

There is, however, one issue which is quite relevant here: the uncertainty if one looks into the future and reconsiders possible developments in professional domains in general these must be linked to the professional practices in particular. We might conclude that it is hard if not impossible to educate and thus teach professionals a certain profession. On the contrary. It would be unwise and make educators feel uncomfortable about what they might do in class and for what purpose. This is a first paradox in our educational setting: we teach what in the end should not be taught, because what is taught, has been made up from past experiences of teachers and practitioners alike. And what we want is our students to be the relevant players in future professional practices. Thus...

2. THE OPEN SPACE COMES IN

We will defend an approach which is open towards the future and takes into account our experiences from the past. Acting and activist subjects are our core business when reconsidering the context of professional activities, now and in the future. From a structuralist approach we feel that professionals in whatever professional context continue using skills and knowledge they have learned when studying, doing their placements or graduation research. They have learned how to "do" this without questioning whether the professional environment at any time asks for what has been done. Most of the time the results or recommendations are confirmed and leads to "new" professionals which might respond (or be responsive) to what practices ask from them.

We will argue that future education could profit more from being open to the unknown and thus does not focus on knowledge *per se* but on a particular professional attitude. We feel that students could profit more from experimenting within different situations which appear when playing than stick to what has been hand down to contemporary professionals in terms of textbooks, procedures or technicalities (tools and accepted technology). Learning or growing in uncertain, or perhaps better: unprecedented settings seems to be a possibility to grow into unknown professional settings. Starting off with possibilities (or potentialities) rather than what seems too obvious might from a didactical approach be rewarding in educating the future professional.

The "now" then seems to be the open space between what makes us feel secure and certain – we exactly know what to do, what we might expect according to fixed models, research, textbooks and

experience – and what might be called future events or expectations, which ask for a different professional attitude. In a way it is what the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben analyses as a state of exception (cf. Agamben 2003/2005), which follows unnecessarily from the situation we are professionally working in. The “new” professional becomes a ‘homo sacer’, an excluded professional, who does not meet the standards we have set up and follow from a professional point of view: he or she could even deny to necessarily perform in a way, prescribed by laws or norms up to now. By creating and experimenting within their own playground they oppose as it were the ordered and regular ways of performing according to current professional vows.

3. THE PLAYGROUND

The open space is a vacuum, an in-between but a realm of possibilities, where the past is known as well as the ways we educated and did research. If we claim that to be open to the future it is no longer possible to stay on the safe side and to go along as we have always done but to create activities which on the one hand contribute to social, organizational and political developments and on the other hand create opportunities for students, lecturers and researchers – and of course the professional world – to test and experiment, to create new contexts which as such are not fixed but liquid. Because the future professional world lies ahead of us and not in the past a fundamental question is: how to prepare our students (and ourselves) for this uncertain future? And are, as we experience today, 21st-century skills the appropriate skills for this liquid and uncertain future?

While playing in class new situations occur. We are convinced that changing the conditions under which the playground (the classroom) can be entered will necessarily change contexts, professions, work, personal development, etc. Now, entering the playground is no longer paying a certain amount of money and go inside but because it is still unknown what one might be confronted with it is first of all daring to jump over the fence and to meet the unexpected. In a way, jumping or leaping as such (or finding a way to jump), is the first and erstwhile last “step”. What comes after this jump is what we in this paper will be addressing: mainly questions concerning:

- The stability of where we will probably land (or not);
- The time it will take to get into the future or just stay behind;
- The distance of the jump off (and to be sure (?) that we don’t need any tools to make it and to feel secure);
- What we need to get somewhere without pre-knowledge (which still seems to be common practice in research and education);
- The predictability of what we aim at when we finally jump off.

These questions do not make sense if we know in advance what we can expect (to us: the unexpected) and they do make sense if we, today, feel uncertain about the future and its impact on society and human beings as such – in which education is just a small but for developing a rather relevant part next to what we have systematized up to now like politics, health, social security or resources (fuel, drinking water, mobility, employment, etc.). The playground “becomes” a virtual place without anything fixed but full of challenges which lurk behind a veil of ignorance. Similar convictions have been uttered by Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017) in his studies on liquid modernity. It becomes more and more important that we create a new personal and social attitude consisting in training and developing to keep up what we ask from ourselves and what society wants us to be and to do without knowing whether there will be a clear alignment between society and human actions. If we refuse to do so, which is of course an option, a possibility, we have: not to keep up with, not to learn and do research and it seems to be fairly human to decide to not to. We then are

confronted with Agamben's 'homo sacer': we split natural or bare life (*zoè*) and political life (*bios*) and have to live in the in-between:

Zoè is life. Simply, it is existence. Mankind, gods, animals all share *zoè* – it is indistinct and vital. It is also unqualified, and this is key for Agamben. It exists prior to language and community and is therefore the substance out of which we emerge.

Bios is, if you like, what emerges from that substance. As humans we go beyond *zoè*, reaching into the sphere of *bios* where we attempt to construct life beyond *zoè*, a collective and qualified life. The space of *bios* is the *polis*, the collective political space which was the basis of ancient Greek ideas of democracy. (Murray 2010: 61)

Zoè is prelinguistic in the realm of the voice or the inarticulated, *bios*, however, is the linguistic, structured part of the realm of discourse or articulated, meaningful language, figuring in social, political or religious life. In the end we derive our actions from what has been successful in the past, although a *mer à boire* but will, for obvious reasons not do in future life. This is where the vacuum, the split or the paradox comes in. In language we are able to address past experiences but unexperienced experiences in the future do not fit into any discourse yet, because its meanings are not included in our world of experience if we let go the past and jump or leap into the, what we call from a linear point of view: the future. The (extended) now, extending over our past and our future, however, does not really play an important role in education and research.

4. THE KAIROLOGICAL MOMENT

If we take the notion of *Kairos*, meaning the right time and moment, opening up towards the future and the past, it signifies attention, a moment of rest, possibilities, the right moment which opens up in a split second but will encourage action, doing what is at this very moment possible. To Agamben *Kairos* means:

[emphasizing] the disruption of time and man's fulfillment as resurrection or decision in that moment. The model for this conception of time, [Agamben] suggests, is the notion of *cairos* (*kairos*), 'the abrupt and sudden conjunction where decision grasps opportunity and life is fulfilled in the moment' [...]. Represented as a young man running on his toes, with a long forelock but bald at the back of his head, *Kairos* personifies fleeting opportunity, which can be grasped as it approaches but not once it has passed. Opposed to time as *chronos*, *Kairos* signifies the propitious and fleeting moment that one must take hold of or forever let pass; it is a 'between time' which is nevertheless full of possibility. With this rejection of chronological time in favour of the kairological as the moment of authentic history in mind [Agamben turns to a messianic dimension, which he first and foremost finds in the work of Walter Benjamin]. (Murray/Whyte 2011: 131)

Thus, *kairos* creates an opening in the *chronos*-line and negates time as we would normally understand it. In a liquid moment of time, opening up towards what still lays bare in front of us the necessity to experience bareness as a true option in our acting and leaving the secure playground we have known for quite some time. Thus it becomes urgent, in some sense, to address our potential actions and the impotentialities which are as well part of the right moment and to be aware of the visionary dimension of kairological time: the key here is that we do not *plan* the future but to discover something in an unexpected way (in a serendipical way, so to say). An example here is the discovery of penicillin by Alexander Fleming when he discovered something in his laboratory what he was not consciously looking for. He wasn't looking for this "medicine" but he was able to see the possibilities of what he had discovered (cf. Hermsen 2014: 12f.). But then, if our starting

point is that discoveries, developments, growing or digging into the (im-)possibilities of what we aim at, if “aiming at” is as such part of our moments of attention and focus, perhaps we might look in the periphery of what we pay attention to; to what does not seem to be quite obvious at first sight. Can we and do we create these moments or should we act in line with *chronos* which seems to be just following patterns or tracks and stick to norms, rituals or criteria which are overarching education and research.⁵

Taking *Kairos* more seriously would mean then not to fill up and fill in our curricula but to create moments of rest, attention or deepening without, however, directly wanting to explain and fixate what is happening or is experienced and to look for e.g. standardization. A virtual playground without any stereotypical swings or seesaws doesn't need to be realized; it appears as a possibility which we do not need to make use of; we may choose not to. But then again, what do we actually need to enable and to cherish kairological moments and how do we build them in into our chronological ways of structuring our curricula and our methodological proceeding in research? It is, from our point of view, a standstill and a moment of change and growth without, and this is the main argument we would like to defend here, any plan, any criterion, any standard which clearly belong to current curricula in the Netherlands. It is an open, perhaps even dangerous place, where we can only rely on....the aporia of what is unknown, uncertain, unfixed, untimely and inimitable. It is a disruptive moment in normal(ized) patterns, approaches, processes or developments which as such is unplanned and unforeseen but enables moments which are from a systemic point of view unexpected, unpractical and unuseful. Thus it seems a moment of disrapture if in education and research there is a way to create new und up to now undiscovered possibilities and contexts in forgetting about the past without, however, forgetting about the past. To Agamben:

not the search for a cause or an origin, but the exposition of a fracture – produced [in infancy] through the discontinuity between language and speech, the semiotic and the semantic (in Benveniste's terms), sign system and discourse in [Michel] Foucault's [1926-1984] terms) [...]. Only because of this discontinuity – the split between speech and discourse at the site of infancy, the transcendental origin of the human – is man a historical being [...]. Unlike the animal, at one with his life activity and undifferentiated from nature (Marx), the human becomes a historical subject by removing himself from his wordless experience, by abandoning his infancy. This speechless moment remains in discourse as its condition of possibility, as the passage that shows the 'fall' from pure language to the babble of speech. The enigma of infancy catalyzes thought by designating a *limit* : the transcendental experience of the difference between *langue* and *parole*. This limit, the transition from pure language to discourse, this very instant , 'is history'. (Murray/Whyte 2011: 92)

History thus is a discursive, cultural phenomenon which brings people together, make them feel that they belong to a specific group with its own history, which has started with this limit experience of the voice or spoken utterances towards written or fixed language, discourse, voice

⁵ The difference between playing and following structure or ritualizations is addressed in a chapter in Agamben's *Infancy and History*, "Reflections on History and Play" (Agamben 1978/2007: 75-96). Infancy refers to a beginning, a prehistoric phase which is a necessary part of any historical development, history is part of our cultural life and discourse:

Playland is a country whose inhabitants are busy celebrating rituals, and manipulating objects and sacred words, whose sense and purpose they have, however, forgotten. And we should not be amazed if, through this oblivion, through the dismemberment and inversion of which [Émile] Benveniste [1902-1976] speaks, they free the sacred, too, from its link with the calendar and with the cyclical rhythm of time that it sanctions, thereby entering another dimension of time, where the hours go by in a flash and the days are changeless. In play, man frees himself from sacred time and 'forgets' it in human time. (Agamben 1978/2007: 79)

thus becoming something memorable or memorized (part of cognition) and thus part of a range of rituals which determine a particular society.

5. THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF LEAPING: HANDLING THE UNKNOWN

Culture and cultural phenomena, as Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), one of Agamben's sources of inspiration, has interpreted them, do need a critical approach showing his contemporaries that what is needed is a moment of distinction. History, art, literature, movies, research, education or anything that we relate to culture is in a way politically motivated: it is part of our context, our world, where we live in, but might be an undertow or upstream of what we more or less consciously observe or experience.

Take for instance the developments in technology we nowadays face or still are unaware of (the potentialities which are opted or not opted for, because of particular reasons but we still are unable to even fancy what these developments might mean to a coming community, cf. Agamben 2001/2003). In this community it is the "whatever singularity", not what is included in or part of a community's identity or one's belonging to a community is at stake here but examples which/who do have their own existence without being particular for a community. The example has its own potentialities and possibilities to become, whatever their becoming might look like. Thus becoming does not address a particular future. It contracts past, present and future in an inoperative moment where it is, aporetically, a kind of opening up:

The 'coming' of the coming community is thus an 'always coming', and its politics finds its place neither in the romanticism of the past nor in the yearning for an utopian future, but rather in a messianic presentness in the realization that within the present lies the possibility of change and transformation. [...It is] 'inoperative.' As 'potentiality', the coming community already exists, here and now; we just need to take a little break from the world and let it 'come.' This implies rendering inoperative all historical and present projects; redemption is not *opera*, work, but rather 'a peculiar sort of sabbatical vacation' [...]. Its figure is [Herman] Melville's [scrivener] Bartleby, who opposes this 'I'd prefer not to' to all demands of the world and thus restores the world to its potentiality. (Murray/Whyte 2011: 45f.)

In fact, what we maintain in line with Agamben is that there is a kind of re-beginning in taking a leap towards the future. It is what Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), one of the sources of Agamben's thinking, calls the natality of living beings: the serious issue is not dying (disappearing in the open space or within the playground) but coming alive or being born (a renaissance over and over again). We never reach the moment of final wisdom but re-enter the state of 'beginning' which as such seems to be more rewarding and inspiring than an end (or 'death' in terms of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) or Agamben). Being born and dying thus can be considered concepts giving space to first and foremost bare life which as such seems to be the source of all potentialities and impotentialities (decisions not to act) and only after that to society, political and ethical life, language (and discourse), economics or religion – to name just a few realms of discourse which seem to be decisive in how and why living beings (man, but also gods and animals) create their "environment" and are taken in when they do perform according to the rules, norms and regulations "inside". "Being born" now is one of the fundamental conditions of live, it is also indicative of creation and innovation which seem to be overarching future developments without indicating what it exactly is what we could expect (or not).

Benjamin's messianism comes in here as well. This phenomenon has nothing to do with "the long and ever-postponed arrival of a remedial agent expected at the end of time", nor with "the hope of righting of what had gone wrong before" nor "a programme-generating promise" but "an unexpected incident" (Murray/Whyte 2011: 34). It is an experience, which "interrupts or brings to a halt the unwinding of history's series of increasingly catastrophic events" (Murray/Whyte 2011: 34). It is not possible to characterize precisely this messianic time because of its emptiness, a state of exception one is inclined to say, which necessarily disrupts the legal state which is chronologically and procedurally ordered. In fact it is a not-being, a potentiality or impotentiality popping up as options but do not relate to their actualizations (*dunamis* versus *energeia*). Therefore, there is no goal, no world full of objects and realized ideas or thoughts, even no history or end of and in history. The disruptures in kairoic experiences initiate discontinuities, empties the material world and leaves us with a rest, which is abstract and formal and thus leave us with points of indifference which as such show the messianic potential. In the end this leads us to forms of life which do not claim any worldly relationships or inclusion.

It is the main concern of Agamben's work, from an interdisciplinary point of view, to relate forms-of-life in relation to messianism and potentiality. "[Form-of-life] names both a critique of a particular structure (ontological, temporal) and opens up to a condition beyond those structures where the separation upon which they are based will no longer exist, and a new life will have emerged. Life, beyond the capture and control of the biopolitical and anthropological machines, remains [Agamben's abiding concern]" (Murray/Whyte 2011: 73)

We see the leap as a necessary moment showing itself as an event, which you cannot avoid. It is necessary to deal with these events, the action becomes unavoidable, otherwise you will be caught up with the future. Certain issues (or problems) pop up and ask for an adequate reaction being, because of the unknown future and the unknown effect of one's actions, at least uncertain. Education and research could proffect new perspectives on the situation then, where there is a clear split between the past, conservative positions and future professional attitudes. We could highlight past events which have led to new futures in the past. Take for instance technological discoveries, social developments, new jobs, hitherto unknown, or political revolutions which have not always led to an intended outcome. It is mainly working with a new mindset which means learning to deal with unforeseen developments, which not always seem to follow from what would reasonably be expected. From an educational or research perspective we should allow lecturers, students and research to use their imagination; and to prevent them from explaining in advance what their plans are and to judge these plans, e.g. on their feasibility.

6. CONCLUSION

As we have shown in this paper we see many possibilities to innovate our educational system and the ways in which research at Universities of Applied Sciences is done nowadays. Many philosophical, educational and sociological studies opt for a new way to approach education and research. The obvious reasons for this are that many social, psychological and institutional challenges are waiting for new or disruptive approaches (events), without, however, being optimistic about the options following from leaping activities, leaving behind the past as such and creating new spaces and challenges to overcome the threats we see in many forms of appearance. Furthermore, to turn to the opportunities which seem hidden in the open spaces which we have up to now not exploited seriously. Thus, the "process" is a kind of unfolding (*dépliage*) of what has been folded in over time, encompassing past, present and future. 'Unfolding' might be a helpful metaphor here to unearth or open up the spaces or splits which are hidden unless we carefully look for disruptures in past and present education and research.

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THERAPEUTIC PRAYER

--My exploration of prayer with EFT techniques as a Chinese Christian

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Abstract

My personal development journey during counselling training revealed the effectiveness of both EFT (Emotion-Focused Therapy) and Christian prayer. What intrigues me are the healing mechanisms of EFT therapy and Christian prayer. One of which is a subset of human science about people and relationships; whereas the other is about God's participation in a person's life, which might contribute to personal healing. Many researchers have made attempts to link psychotherapy with Christian prayer (Gube 2008, McFee and Monroe 2011 and Tan 2011).

There was something akin to a 'dim light' that attracted my attention when I explored the integration of EFT therapy with Christian prayer. The search was exciting, yet at times horrifying when I had a number of 'lost' experiences. Influenced by heuristic inquiry (Moustakas 1990), Autoethnography (Ellis et al. 2011; Tamas 2011; Wyatt 2012) and writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre. 2017), I found myself using prayer as an inquiry—constantly conversing with my Lord while groping in the darkness, looking for shiny beautiful stones.

In the past few months, I had some exciting discoveries on this research topic both on self-reflection and interacting with others. However, I am discouraged when I heard feedback such as 'how can you research about God as people cannot see God?' As an ethnic Chinese—a minority ethnic group in the UK, I have experienced tremendous cultural shock while studying here. As a Christian, I often feel that I have lost my voice, perhaps also while being an actual minority in the UK.

In times of difficulties, I would turn to my God and apply what I am researching in my own prayer, to tell Him my fear and helplessness. 'Imagine if God is here physically, how He would respond to you?' is an EFT technique called imaginative confrontation or empty chair work. I am curious about how He would respond to me as I am heading off to the unknown using prayer as

Keywords: emotion, prayer, therapy.

This anxiety had been torturing me often, but I do not understand it. It is so horrible and dark and urgent, and unknown. I want to understand it. I want to be healed by the Lord and I cannot hide my curiosity on how He would make it happen. That is my research. That is my life.

“Lord, please help me visualise a structure for this paper. My thoughts and emotions are flowing like a gushing stream, just like my tears.”

“Lord, I am lost in the ‘search’, I am horrified. Please help me.”

*“The dim light that attracted my attention seems brighter. I have found some rough stones
.....”*
--(My prayer in my personal journal).

Note: I understand people might have different concepts of God. In this writing, God refers to the Christian God.

Introduction

My personal development journey during counselling training revealed the effectiveness of both EFT (Emotion-Focused Therapy) and Christian prayer. I would like to focus my research on these areas. What intrigues me are the healing mechanisms of EFT therapy and Christian prayer. One of which is a subset of human science about people and relationships, whereas the other is about God’s participation in a person’s life, which might contribute to personal healing. Many researchers have made attempts to link psychotherapy with Christian prayer (Gube 2008, McFee

There was something akin to a ‘dim light’ that attracted my attention when I explored the integration of EFT therapy with Christian prayer. The search was exciting, yet at times horrifying when I had a few ‘lost’ experiences. Influenced by heuristic inquiry (Moustakas 1990), Autoethnography (Ellis et al. 2011; Tamas 2011 and Wyatt 2012) and writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre. 2017), I found myself using prayer as an inquiry—constantly conversing with my Lord while groping in the darkness, looking for shiny beautiful stones.

‘Prayer can be broadly defined as any kind of communication or conversation with God, including focusing attention on God and an experiential awareness of God’ (Hall & Hall 1997). Prayer healing (or Inner healing) is a type of Christian prayer, which is often applied for the healing of memory (Hall & Hall 1997, Tan 2011), whereby ‘the therapist uses guided imagery of Jesus, who is invited to be present’ (Hall & Hall 1997,94). Tan (2011) demonstrates a 7-step inner healing prayer. From my perspective, Tan’s (2011, 346) ‘wait quietly upon the Lord to minister to the client with his healing grace and truth’ is similar to Gendlin’s (1981) focusing technique, whereby the mysterious ‘felt sense’ speaks truth to a client. The truth revealing process in both counselling and inner healing is similar to Rogers’ term - awareness of ‘conditions of worth’ (Rogers 1958).

EFT is one of the PCE (person-centred/experiential psychotherapy and counselling) approaches that 'integrates active process-guiding therapeutic methods from Gestalt therapy, focusing within the frame of a person-centred relationship but gives emotion a central role in therapy...' (Elliott & Greenberg 2016, 212). EFT is well researched with evidence of highly promising therapeutic effects (Elliott 2013,2016; Elliot et al. 2013).

I have applied prayer that have incorporated EFT techniques, which I termed as *therapeutic prayer*, in my personal life and explored them in this writing. In a therapeutic prayer, EFT techniques such as focusing, systematic evocative unfolding or chair works help me to access my emotions which facilitated me to be authentic with God. Then EFT techniques such as empty chair work or imaginative encounter allow me to wait and receive responses from God, who speaks truth, comfort and deep healing.

My struggles and change

I observed myself being tense while attempting to distance myself when people got close to me. Past wounds made me fear emotions. In order to protect myself from feeling the hurt, I had numbed myself to prevent myself from getting in touch with my feelings (Wolfe and Sigl 1998, 276). The price of such staunch defence is the shrinking of a subjective experience of myself. I felt lonely.

I struggled when I tried to 'improve' my relationship with God. I was taught that it is important to spend time with God by spending 'devotion' or 'quiet time' with Him. However, I felt bored as often I could not sense much connection with Him. Gradually, I gave up, blaming myself to be of little faith, and believed that God showed favouritism to others who seemingly had more meaningful and closer relationships with Him. Part of me had been wondering if there was something wrong with me, that it was just difficult for me to build up intimate relationships.

Chinese culture values emotional self-control (Jim & Pistrang 2007). I have experienced first-hand from others higher expectations for women to be gentle. There is a saying in China that goes, 'men are not allowed to express any feelings except anger, whereas women are to express any emotion except anger'. When I was young, I was often reprimanded and would be ashamed of myself for being bad-tempered. Subsequently, I was happy to see myself as a mature lady with good temperament who had been 'slow' (which I now see as suppressed) to anger.

Receiving training in a foreign culture had catalysed awareness of my 'emotional block' and fear

Scene 1

In an EFT training session, I was facilitated to discover an 'emotional block' in a 'two chairs' work. 'Two chairs' work can be applied to differentiate different internal selves, e.g. the critical self and the experiencing self, by imagining them in different chairs, subsequently having dialogues between them (Greenberg, Rice and Elliott, 1998). While I was in the inner critic's chair, I could feel the emotions of the experiencing self and vis versa. I suspected that my emotions

Subsequently, in a Christian inner healing session, the counsellor instructed me to ask Jesus to reveal a vision of the 'emotional block'. In my vision, the 'block' was a cute little girl (about 3-4 years old) with an apologetic smile. She was trying in vain to restore the fence destroyed by a sudden flood (of emotion). The counsellor prompted me to submit the 'emotional block' to Jesus. I felt attached to the little girl who had been working very hard for me, but I had the sense that she would have a better life with Jesus. I therefore prayed the prayer of submitting her to the Lord's hand and asking the Lord to help me create a new defence.

The apologetic smile of the little girl reminded me of my desire to cheer my angry dad up when I was young. In most of the occasions, I was not successful in doing so. This made me think that I was not good enough. (quoted from my journal)

In the inner healing session, I believe Jesus helped me to access my memories by revealing the image of the little girl and flood. Damasio (1994, 107) proposes that 'the images that we reconstitute in recall occur side by side with the images formed upon stimulation from the exterior', though they are comparatively faint compared to those generated by external stimuli. EFT therapists apply a 'systematic evocative unfolding' task to facilitate access to those 'faint' images or memories (Elliott et al. 2003, Paivio 2014). In the prayer healing session, Jesus was the one who revealed the image, which facilitated the drawing out of hidden memories related to my 'emotional block'. Subsequently, I believe this memory was modified or transformed after the prayer.

In the following week, I was puzzled as I found myself moody over trivial things that I would not notice at all previously. It was a good problem. I was irritated by trivial things, but I was happy that my senses are coming back.

Horowitz (1991) believes that emotions are the connective tissue which motivate connectiveness between self and other. Without expression of congruent emotions, I could not get close to people nor God. When the 'emotional block' was discovered and submitted, it was a turning point in my life. As a result of the dissolution of those conditions of worth such as, 'you cannot contain intensive emotions. You would be better off not to feel them', my feelings have been more accessible. My relationship with God improved because I was able to tell Him congruently about my feelings. Subsequently, I could experience His unconditional love for me. With this renewed secure attachment, my relationship with people changed as well.

Scene 2

I volunteered as a client for a demonstration in another EFT training. Robert Elliott the trainer was demonstrating systematic evocative unfolding of a confused feeling of myself. Paivio (2014, 200) proposes guidelines for memory work, the first being bringing the situation alive by systematic evocative unfolding when the client has troubling reactions.

'I can feel the tiredness in my stomach...It says this tiredness may not be physical, that it could be psychological...It says that you have a lot of work to do, and that you are lagging behind.' Robert asked me to go back to where it was and sense the feeling again. 'It is strange that I

could not sense it here now, as if this sense is a mischievous little girl who plays hide and seek with me. I cannot find you, where are you?' While I was wondering aloud, I almost envision a 6 or 7-year-old version of me in front of me to the left of Robert.

R: Can you see her? (Robert gestured to the size of a young girl using his two hands)

R: What does she look like?

J: She seems shy, she might fear of being not good enough. She wants to hide, and I have a sense that she needs reassurance.

As the 10 minutes drew to an end, I said to her, 'don't worry. I will come back to look for you, you are good, I will not forsake you. You are good.'

A lost child

I wondered about my anxiety and fear of making mistakes. A few months ago, a deep reflection using focusing technique revealed that making a mistake meant life and death. This was recently linked to an experience of being lost when I was two and half years old, one of the earliest memories that I have.

I was so alone, so desperate, crying and walking frantically, looking for my way back.

I applied imaginative confrontation or empty chair work (Greenberg, Rice and Elliott, 1998) in my prayer (conversation) with God to re-experience the traumatic event.

L: Darling, can you remember that you were crying and walking aimlessly because you had totally lost your sense of direction? Yet suddenly you returned to where you were, and you saw your grandpa stretching out of his neck looking for you. Had it been a mystery for you how you managed it?

J-researcher: Lord, you mean you were the one who guided me back? That makes perfect sense now. I had no idea how I managed to find my way. You did not forsake me.

A recent experience of being 'lost'

I had an unpleasant feeling, my stomach felt tight, my chest felt tense. Before I opened the online system to view my last result, I told myself that 'soon I will be able to feel relief'. When the mark popped up, my heart sank. I had failed. I could not believe my eyes.

Shock, anger, fear...I felt the need for flight.

Lost and bewildered, I tried frantically to look for signs and confirmation from God. I talked about the decisions with friends and family; I prayed about it. God gave me several answers. For example, during my prayer, a song spoke of entering the promised land. A sermon spoke to me that I am blessed, that I will be tested and that I will become a blessing to many through Jesus in this program.

Lord, in the search, discerning if the voice is truly from You had not been easy. I may never fully be certain, but I trust You will confirm if that is from You through various ways.

A little girl seeking assurance and acceptance - The Lord's face

One of my concerns is my writing skill in a second language. How I could convey my ideas clearly without being misunderstood? After encountering a harsh marker in the program, I have lost my confidence in writing.

Scene 4

J: Lord, I want to see your face.

I waited in silence, growing impatient and wondering if He would ever show His face to me.

It was then, all of a sudden when my mother's face popped up with bright smile — 'Honey, you are my blessing, you have introduced the best gift to me (she meant heaven & eternal life)' (this was a conversation in her final days on this Earth.) I then recalled her comment about my good grasp of Chinese language demonstrated in my writing to her. Both my parents were Chinese language teachers who introduced me to excellent pieces of reading material since young.

According to Fairbairn's theory, that a person's personality is a combination of object relationships, in another word, internalised interpersonal experience, Jones (2007) argues that the internal representation or IWM of God are carriers of early relationships.

Rizzuto (1979) researches into an internalised God image, which is about relationship. Her research implies that the construction of a God image is far more profound, which could not be transformed by merely cognitive means such as preaching, debating or reading.

Linking external and internal reality, the transitional experience surpasses the clear distinction of objectivity and subjectivity, for it is an "intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 2). Inner world is both found and created, experienced and made sense of.

Spero (1992) believes the infant has a preverbal sense of God's existence, somewhat relates to Bollas' (1987) 'unthought' known, which he believes is caused by the movement of an external God object. Further, Spero argues that Christian believers relate to God in the same way as they relate to their parents.

Counted (2016) demonstrates early attachment influenced attachment with God in both compensation ways or correlational. In my experience, it is the combination of both. God

provided a corrective experience for me, so I became less insecurely attached, while my parents' love for me grew affirmatively. *God's Love Meeting*, 2019

J: Lord, I am surprised that my mum's face showed up when I asked to see your face. I am sure you are as compassionate and warm as my mother and her affirmation of my ability. What a timely encouragement and powerful reminder.

Silence

Scene 5

Shortly after I had settled down in my decision and believed that the Lord had approved it, my fear was once again heightened after I met a discouraging tutor. I prayed and asked for more signs and confirmation.

No more signs. It was a very quiet day. I became more restless and frantic, wondering what this means. Is this doctorate a totally mad idea I created for myself? Had I put myself in trouble? What about His earlier signs and confirmation?

I continued to hope for more signs of confirmation while doubts lingered in my head. As I looked at the blooming flowers in the garden. I smiled and spoke to myself, 'you want to stay and continue the study, don't you?'

L: Darling, you know I have approved of your decision. I want you know that you are allowed to play and adventure and your desire to learn matters to me too. It is ok for you to ask for what you want.'

J: Lord, I am very thankful that you provided this silence for me so that I could search from within and listen to myself. You know how hard it is for me to express what I want.

In psychotherapy, silence is often used therapeutically, by providing space for the client. Here, the silence from the Lord served a similar purpose for me. I felt so pampered by Him knowing that what I like matters to Him.

Therapeutic prayer with my father

Scene 6

Dad was sick, terminal cancer.

D: My condition is still the same. I did not get better.

J: Are you disappointed and frustrated?

D: Yes.

J: Can you tell God how you feel? (expressing emotions including negative emotions to God)

D: (passionately) Lord, I have faith in you. I know you are able to heal me if you are willing.

J: (being deeply touched) How do you think God would respond to you if He is here? (Imaginative)²⁵⁴

D: He would answer my prayer.

J: What is his facial expression to you when he is answering your prayer? (imaginative

D: He looks at me in a loving and affectionate way.

J: (being deeply touched) If he answers your prayer and looks at you in a loving and affectionate way, what is it like for you? (focusing on emotions)

D: (affectionately) I am very grateful, very grateful. (Imaginative confrontation is very effective in arousing emotions with secure attachment figures for my father here. One of which is God, and the other one is me)

J: (deeply touched)

...

J: I have a few essays and reports to complete. It seems quite difficult.

D: Lord, please help my daughter. May you not lead her into difficulties so that she could complete her studies smoothly, amen.

My father hardly talked after his stroke 10 years ago. He did not express his emotions except anger before his stroke. I was amazed that he could express his feelings with God and pour out his heart to Him when his life was near the end on earth. When I visited home one month before his last day, he told my sister, 'JM is coming back. This is the happiest thing.' He had never been as alive.

Message from my siblings: Dad passed away!

I was shocked and devastated as I could not find a ticket to reach home on time for his funeral.

J-child: (angry toward father) why did you not give me a sign earlier so that I could be with you

J-rational: How can I be angry at my dad? He did not know when his time was.

J-child: (angry towards God) Lord, certainly you knew, you should have been able to arrange a timely trip for me!

A soft voice within me spoke, 'my child, do you not know that I am sovereign? This is My sovereignty.'

Instantly, my anger dissipated. 'Yes, that is Your sovereignty. I don't know my own time, nor my family members. The limit of my knowledge about my family's and my own time of death humbles me and reminds me to cherish them each day. Understanding the boundary and role of God as the Father and me as a child makes me accept that You are external of me. You are omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, not me.'

Subsequent to this anger expression to God, I had a few more angry confrontations with Him about healing and suffering, at one of the confrontations I almost denounced my faith. His acceptance of my anger with His supreme presence comforted me.

I became emotional and wanted to cry even at the time of writing. Although I could not see the big picture and do not fully understand what happened to my father, I know that the Lord is kind to him, He has stopped my father's suffering and brought him to a safe place, one that is definitely a better place.

The ability to express anger to God shows my development in congruence, according to Rogers' 7-process scales (Rogers 1958). God who is empathic, congruent and with unconditional acceptance provided a safe space for me to know myself and Him, leading to a development of trust of myself, Him and the relationship. He is a perfect parent—similar but superior to Winnicott's (1965) good enough mother concept from my view, in that He is God.

'Hugged' by the Lord

Scene 8

I joined a women's retreat to seek clarification from God in my bewilderment. One of the activities during the retreat was to imagine that Jesus was sitting in the chair in front of me, then focusing on His company and conversing with Him. The instruction of the activity was quite the one-way communication, but I knew I could do it differently, because I believe that God would respond to me from my experiences since I started this research.

I knelt down in front of the chair and prayed, 'Lord, I just want you to hug me. I am so scared.' Tears began streaming down my face while I was waiting for His comfort. Suddenly, my face and head were flushed with heat. 'That must be your hug, oh, Lord'. I was deeply touched and was filled with peace, sitting there like a content baby in her mother's breast.

A kick

As I mentioned earlier in this writing, I was surprised to see the little girl again in the training for I thought I have 'submitted' her – the 'emotional block' to the Lord. My trainer Robert Elliot asked me a few questions which helped me to review the previous image with the little girl, fence and flood. Searching and pondering in my prayer, I suddenly realized that the little girl may not be the emotional block, rather the fear of the 'flood' is, whereby I believe the 'flood' symbolizes strong emotions such as anger.

Reflecting further on the image of the little girl and the flood revealed that my father used to blame my mother or us children for his bad mood. I was influenced by the emphasis on filial piety and hierarchical relationships in the Chinese culture even as a child (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999; Sue 2003). My father was a traditional Chinese man who did not express his emotions except anger. I believed that it was our fault and tried very hard to cheer him up, sometimes by telling jokes.

Scene 9

J-child: (trying hard to find a joke, acting like a clown, laughing a little bit uneasily) Hahaha, I almost injured my eyes, hahaha.

Dad: (who had lost one eye due to an infection during the war and was taunted by peers as a teenager) Other people laughed at me, and you are laughing at me too! (His face was torn with hurt and kicked me indignantly).

J-child: (frightened, speechless, holding her tears in with disbelief. Later, crying and speaking to herself, 'You've made a mistake. How did you not see that it would cause a misunderstanding? You are not a humorous person. Don't try it again. You will just mess up').

I have never told a joke in front of him ever since then.

Scene 10

In this scene, I observed myself speaking from the different configurations of myself – the inner critic split (Greenberg et al 1998, Elliott et. al. 2004) in a conversation with my supervisor.

J-inner critic: I told a lousy joke. I made a mistake. No wonder he was angry.

Supervisor: But it was not right for him to kick.

J- inner critic turned into J-child: (sobbing) I have never blamed him for the kick. I thought I had deserved it. (Fairbairn (1994) believes that blaming self is less frightening than accepting an unsafe world but at a price of one's inner security).

Supervisor: He should not kick you. You were trying to help even if it was a mistake.

J-child: (feels understood and relieved)

J-inner critic: (softening) I was surprised that I lost my voice. I could have told him, 'dad, that was not my intention. I was trying to help, not to hurt.'

Supervisor: Of course, you had lost your voice. You were kicked and still under the shock.

J-child: (tears streaming down silently) And I was a kid. (the inner child's voice was able to come out).

(In another setting) *Tutor L: Your father was an adult, it was his responsibility to take care of you when you were a kid, not the other way around. You are good. You were a counsellor even when you were a kid.*

J-child: (deeply moved by Tutor L's words, her generous affirmation was a different experience for me. I had less doubt that I am good).

Scene 11

Another kick

I experienced another kick in the program, my being compassionate to and not fearing of a client was questioned.

I lost my voice. My heart races, I felt anger rising inside me, I could not speak, I was close to fainting. Finally, I was able to steady my breath and talk.

J: You can't tell me how I feel. There is nothing wrong in being compassionate and wanting to help them. A tutor needs to make an effort to understand their students, not to impose their opinions on them.

I was surprised by my change; the little girl's voice came back. She had grown up. A gentle Chinese lady regained her voice, being congruent and able to express her anger in front of a power figure.

Conclusions:

In this paper, I have attempted prayer as a method of inquiry, to explore how prayer incorporated with EFT techniques became therapeutic for me and my father. The process of personal healing indicates the effectiveness of EFT techniques in promoting emotional connection with self, others and God, whereby He responds to the prayer with therapeutic impact.

Disclaimer:

I have no intention to reduce God to merely my imagination as I believe God is external, internal and inter-relational to me. As a human being, I may not be fully certain what I received are from God, myself or elsewhere. I am open to His confirmation or disconfirmation.

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SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY AT THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE

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Abstract

Arts festivals can support social integration through creative and social engagement. However, they also sit within a wider cultural and political landscape that has critical sociological problems; examples include dominance of privilege, the reinforcement of social class disparities, declining rates of social mobility, hiring as a process of cultural matching and unpaid labour. Thus, the aim of this ongoing doctoral research project is to use qualitative data to identify the processes of social integration and social inequality within the context of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to explore how it might be possible to reduce inequalities and enhance sense of community. Ethnographic data was collected as part of a pilot study across Summer 2018 and analysed with inspiration from sociological theorists such as Becker, Wynn and Bourdieu. Initial results revealed three overarching themes: collective action, social inequality and the role of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society. A recurrent theme was the importance of possessing certain kinds of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital, whereby these capitals provided a means to support collective activities, whilst also marginalising those who were not a part of the 'core' of the Fringe community. For example, financial support is needed to take part, personal social connections to secure invitations to exclusive events and cultural competence to navigate the thousands of events that take place at the Fringe. Through collaborating with the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, the next stage of this project is to further unpack the role that the Society plays in tackling these inequalities and to explore whether additional qualitative research can be used to support reducing barriers to participation at the Fringe, thereby enhancing social integration. This paper will summarise initial findings and discuss avenues for future work.

Keywords: cultural sociology, arts festivals, ethnography

1. BACKGROUND

Broadly, the festivals literature can be divided into two: 1) work examining traditional festivals in primarily rural areas, taking a view of festivals as celebratory events which usually have a spiritual or religious focus, and 2) studies exploring contemporary

festivals which showcase a range of artistic or sports events and activities. Traditionally, the former have been of particular interest to anthropologists, adopting a broad conception of culture as a way of life whereby the researcher is interested in topics such as ritual, kinship or religion, paying attention to how a festival is situated within its social and cultural context. Research in this area has been coined 'the classical discourse', relating to roles and meanings in society and culture [1]. The latter have tended to attract those from cultural policy, business, tourism and event management studies, often viewing festivals as causal events producing specific impacts to be measured, such as economic impacts. Thus, although two key texts exist [2,3], there are relatively few studies adopting a sociological perspective to examine the complexity of contemporary arts festivals, and there is a gap to explore them in greater detail.

1.1 Cultural production and cultural consumption

Taking a sociological approach to arts festivals sits within literature examining cultural production and consumption whereby a cultural product is analysed within its social context and viewed as a synecdoche, representative of a total social experience [4]. Festivals are relevant to explore from a this perspective because they sit within a wider cultural and political landscape that has critical sociological problems; examples include dominance of privilege [5], the reinforcement of social class disparities [6], declining rates of social mobility [7], hiring as a process of cultural matching [8] and unpaid labour [9,10].

Although sociologists share an understanding of the need to explore social experiences, there are numerous ways in which they have chosen to do this; however, scholars have leaned towards adopting either a symbolic interactionist or a structuralist approach. The former is associated with American sociologist Howard Becker's publication *Art Worlds* [11] where he explores 'patterns of collectivity', the complexity of cooperative networks and how people make decisions based on conventions, viewing sociology as how people do things together, leading to the notion of 'collective action' [11]. Building heavily on the work of Goffman, Jonathan Wynn also adopts a similar worldview in his analyses of music festivals, suggesting that the easiest way to think about festivalisation is to focus on four kinds of resources, categorised as *economic*, *physical* or *spacial*, *social + cultural* and *symbolic* [12,13]. By contrast, structuration theorists have relied on Pierre Bourdieu's *Field of Cultural Production*, drawing upon his notions of *taste*, *field*, *habitus* and *capital* [14,15]. Whilst there is not space to examine these theories in more detail here, what is important is the following distinction:

The basic question of an analysis centered on the idea of world is this: Who is doing what with whom that affects the resulting work of art? The basic question of an analysis centered on the idea of field

seems to me to be: Who dominates whom, using what strategies and resources, with what results?
[16]

Namely, Becker paves the way for discussion concerning *social interactions* and how people *work together* employing resources and conventions, and Bourdieu raises concerns over social and cultural conditioning, and therefore *power struggles* and *inequalities*.

Given the lack of sociological literature examining contemporary arts festivals, this pilot study sought to explore how sociological theory could be used to examine the world's largest arts festival: The Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This annual festival was originally set up in reaction to the perceived elitism of the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) in 1947, with the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society constituted in 1958 to support performing companies. Today, the Society seeks to support and advise industry professionals, provide information for audiences and ensure the Fringe is accessible and sustainable [17]. To give an idea of the scale of the Fringe; in 2017, 3,398 shows were presented, with 2.7 million ticket holders [18].

1.2 Research questions

As a pilot study, this project was exploratory, with a primary aim of being immersed in the environment of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to explore how the festival operates and the role of the Fringe Society, viewing this context through a sociological lens. Questions included:

- What signs are there that people collaborate in a way akin to Becker's depiction of *Art Worlds*?
- How might power dynamics and hierarchy marginalise certain people at the Fringe, similar to Bourdieu's *Field of Cultural Production*?
- What is the role of the Fringe Society?

As an exploratory study, the intention was to adopt a range of perspectives which could inform future avenues, and it was acknowledged at the outset that these questions can be interpreted as having different ontological assumptions.

2. METHODOLOGY

All of the questions of this study are open questions denoting a qualitative design. They also demand an understanding of socio-cultural context and how people interact indicating an ethnographic approach. That is, ethnography attempts to 'explore the beliefs, language, behaviours and issues facing the [cultural] group, such as power, resistance and dominance', seeking to describe and interpret 'shared and learned patterns' [19]. Ethnographies have been framed within a range of worldviews which have led to varying degrees of theoretical insight, but anthropological studies have

tended to lean more on *inductively* collecting data and seeking to describe phenomena, whereas sociological work has placed more emphasis on interpreting data and relating it to wider socio-political factors, adhering more closely to a form of *abduction*. The latter is relevant to understand and interpret data in light of sociological theory and was therefore chosen alongside thematic analysis for this study.

2.1 Methods

Characteristic of ethnography, the primary methods for this study were researcher observations, journal entries and document analysis. In addition, Day Experience Method (DEM) [20] was used by the researcher and one member of Fringe venue staff. In total, between January-September 2018 (leading up to the Fringe and during it), 33 journal entries were written, 17 audio recordings and 196 photos taken, 14 newspaper cuttings collected, and 6 days of DEM carried out. In addition, the researcher attended 21 performances at the Fringe and 1 show at the EIF as an audience member, attended 8 events at Fringe Central (see overarching theme 3) and performed in 2 choir concerts which formed part of the *Just Festival* at the Fringe [21]. Ethical approval was granted via the Edinburgh College of Art PGR self-audit ethics process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the data revealed three overarching themes and fifteen subthemes, each of which explains the processes of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and, in some cases, reflects sociological theory. See Table 1.

3.1 Collective action

The first overarching theme drew upon how Fringe participants, arts organisations and production companies worked together to ensure the smooth running of the festival akin to Becker's 'collective action' [11]. Firstly, these groups were seen to *maximise resources* (subtheme 1.1). Drawing upon Wynn's framework for a Sociology of Occasions [12,13], it is possible to see these resources in light of four categories: economic, physical or spacial, social + cultural and symbolic. There are many financial assets relating to the events leading up to the festival, during the festival itself, and following it, spanning both direct and indirect economic exchange, with suggestions that the festival adds £313 million to the Scottish economy [22]. Throughout the festival itself, there is a large flow of money relating to the production side of performances such as marketing materials, tickets and salaries and indirect money tied to the wider experiences of the festival, including for eating-out, tourist activities and travel. Physical or spacial resources may be public such as streets and parks or private such as concert halls and bars, and may be 'purchased, rented, donated or occupied' [12,13]. In some ways, the whole city is used for the Fringe because there are so many people visiting it is difficult to find a location that has not, in some way, been affected by it. Social resources are also evident, including on a group level whereby organisations interact with each other, or seek to represent and bring together the sector such as the Federation of Scottish Theatre, and on an individual level such as Fringe

participants building networks using personal online social media accounts. This *collaboration with others* (subtheme 1.2) is of particular importance within the Fringe context because social resources can be used to attain opportunities for participants, such as networking to achieve a future job opportunity, a review from a respected newspaper or an invitation to an exclusive event. In relation to cultural resources, the Fringe Society are a central source for information, as are performers and audience members who have been to the Fringe many times before, communicating with newcomers about how to navigate the Fringe or to succeed as an artist. Moreover, examples of symbolic resources can be seen through the employment of branding and slogans. Each organisation that manages a group of venues has their own distinct, colourful branding; examples include the 'Big Four' organisations of Pleasance, Assembly, Gilded Balloon and Underbelly who have a different colour each to represent their organisations (yellow, red, pink, purple) used across printed and online marketing materials, staff t-shirts and lanyards, together with language of ownership used to re-brand public spaces, evident in terms such as 'Pleasance Courtyard' and 'Assembly Gardens'. The Fringe Society also have a strong brand, notably visible through the large distribution of the Fringe brochure and the Fringe app which lists all of the shows on throughout the festival, as well as through their use of slogans to engage participants and audiences. For 2018, their slogan was 'Step Into The Unknown' (also used as an online hashtag), used to create excitement around the Fringe as a 'a place where new discoveries wait around every corner' [23]. Through careful organisation, these resources cluster together, enabling individuals and groups to cooperate with one another on a large-scale to create productions at the Fringe [11].

Overarching theme	Subtheme	Description
1. Collective action	1.1 Maximising resources	Organisations maximise use of material resources and personnel to ensure the smooth running of Fringe activities. People and organisations work with one another to achieve greater social, economic, cultural and symbolic resources. Participants network to try and access the 'core' of the Fringe, connecting with others to increase networks. Individuals and organisations share their knowledge and experience of the Fringe with one another to increase cultural competence.
	1.2 Collaboration with others	
	1.3 Networking	
	1.4 Knowledge exchange	
2. Social inequality	2.1 Cultural competence	The 'right' cultural competence is needed to know what to see, where to go and who to network with. Social and symbolic capital is needed to access exclusive bars & functions, award ceremonies, VIP events etc. Venues and companies have specific branding which represents where one belongs and the access within the Fringe available. There is a cultural knowledge of a hierarchy of venues with 'the big four', Traverse and Summerhall denoting prestige. Viewing practices of less prestigious venues are relaxed/informal, whereas more prestigious ones are formal/don't allow re-admittance. Individuals in management of venues have the potential to promote a standard of 'no pain, no gain' to staff and colleagues. Sell-out shows, economic gain, awards and 5* reviews act as markers of success, with participants competing to achieve.
	2.2 Difficulty gaining access and exclusivity	
	2.3 Branding	
	2.4 Hierarchy of venues	
	2.5 Hierarchy of viewing practices	
	2.6 Power	
	2.7 Competitive environment	

<p>3. The role of the Fringe Society</p> <p>Table 1. Overarching themes and subthemes constructed from thematic abductive analyses</p>	<p>3.1 Providing support and advice</p> <p>3.2 Making time and space</p> <p>3.3 Communication</p> <p>3.4 Advocating diversity and inclusivity</p>	<p>The Society provide practical and moral support, a base at Fringe Central for networking & events, and share resources and knowledge.</p> <p>The Society support venue schedules and clashes, and manage performing spaces on the Royal Mile and the Mound.</p> <p>The Society communicate with venues, theatre companies, participants, the local council, charities and critics.</p> <p>The Society advocate diversity and inclusivity, including through events such as talks on access and inviting inspirational speakers.</p>
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Interlinked with the first two subthemes, the third subtheme within this category explores how people *network with one another* (subtheme 1.3) to try and access the ‘core’ of the Fringe, connecting with others to increase personal networks and maximise potential for critical acclaim and social resources. Previous studies [24–26] have suggested that festivals may have core-peripheral structures whereby networking with key people is essential to success, and this seemed to be the case at the Fringe. Several people said that they had found paid jobs through networking with people at the core of the Fringe, with one member of venue box office staff explaining how she believed she had only secured her job because of her previous experience at another venue where she had built-up her professional network (personal communication, 4 August 2018). The Fringe Society also actively try to connect performers and production companies to ‘key industry experts’ at their ‘networking brunches’ and with media representatives at their ‘meet the media’ event [27]. This supports wider literature which suggests that networking with others is an essential component to success in the creative and cultural industries [28–30].

The final subtheme in this group is interconnected with the notion of cultural resources and explores *knowledge exchange* (subtheme 1.4). One audience member that I spoke to explained that when he had first arrived in Edinburgh he had chosen what to see based upon ‘what timings worked’ (personal communication, 25 August), but then realised that he wasn’t seeing the shows that were interesting to him. He therefore recognised that he needed to gain more information about what to see and why, so he began to ask people who were returning to the Fringe from previous years what they would recommend. Navigating the Fringe and its content therefore requires a certain amount of understanding of its operations, and this is also facilitated by the Fringe Society who share information via the Fringe brochure and their app, as well as having staff based at key locations to speak to visitors (see overarching theme 3). This knowledge exchange is also evident amongst performing companies, such as those who contact the Fringe Society in the lead up to the Fringe to learn about how to put on a show [31]. There is a therefore a kind of ‘cultural competence’ [32] needed to navigate the Fringe and to succeed as an artist within it and this knowledge is essential to maintaining collective patterns of activity.

3.2 Social inequality

Whilst it is clear that the Fringe can provide opportunities for those who exploit resources and connect with others, festivals can also be viewed as sites of power relations. In relation to the *cultural competence* mentioned in the previous overarching

theme, this competence has to be the 'right' kind (subtheme 2.1); that is, a performance at the Fringe can only ever have meaning to one who has the cultural capital to understand it [15]. Drawing on Bourdieu's interpretation of taste in his seminal work *Distinction* [15], taste is not an objective concept that can be acquired through learning, for example a universal concept of 'good art' which can be taught, but a long process of inculcation from class systems and domination [15,33]. In this sense, performers at the Fringe do not therefore start out on a level playing field with the same opportunities ahead of them - some know what to see and who to network with and others don't - and success is based upon legitimated social differences. One performer explained to me that he had come from America to the Fringe and that it was his second year, stating that 'the first year I don't even count because it is only now that I am really able to understand the Fringe' (personal communication, 19 August). In order to have access to the 'core' of the Fringe it is necessary to learn how it operates, but this knowledge is gained through networking with the 'right' people, watching the 'right' productions and going to the 'right' events.

Furthermore, it can be difficult to access this 'right' competence as many parts of the Fringe are purposely exclusive (subtheme 2.2). For example, each of the 'Big Four' venues at the Fringe have an exclusive bar where only their performers and their contacts are able to enter. This therefore cultivates environments where only those already networked into the Fringe can connect with others to increase their resources and opportunities. This may reinforce social inequalities as those attending the Fringe at smaller venues with few professional contacts can never gain access to the places that they need to. Those who are networked become more embedded within core groups and their resources increase, whilst those at the periphery continue to struggle and cannot break in. This idea of there being multiple groups where some belong and others feel marginalised is also reinforced by *branding* (subtheme 2.3). Many venues provide colourful lanyards which correspond to venue branding which allow access to certain venue-only areas, displaying publicly who is a member and who isn't. It is well-known to those who attend that it is more prestigious to perform at one of the 'Big Four' venues when compared to smaller, independent venues and each of these venues are represented by a colour which is worn by those who perform there. Accordingly, there is a *hierarchy of venues* (subtheme 2.4), but this is not a hierarchy that can be learned through reading about the Fringe as it is an unwritten knowledge learned through experience and networking. Interconnected to this but nuanced from it, there is also a *hierarchy of viewing practices* (subtheme 2.5) where more traditional spaces and companies demand formal viewing practices and smaller spaces accept more informal consumption. For example, when attending an intimate pub-comedy performance just off the Royal Mile with only 8 other people, audience members watched the performance with drinks from the bar and chatted to one another, could leave and come back, and interacted with the performer; whereas, at a National

Theatre of Scotland performance at Summerhall audience members had to sit silently in the auditorium to watch the actors, without directly communicating with them, and when I left mid-way through, I was told that there was no re-admittance.

Connected to hierarchy and Bourdieu's understanding of *power*, there also appeared to be a message of 'no pain, no gain' communicated by venue management to venue staff (subtheme 2.6). One member of venue bar staff told me that she was 'the most tired' she had ever been and that 'this year has been the busiest Fringe', going on to explain that she hadn't had a day off and would be working an overnight shift from 9pm until 6am (personal communication, 23 August 2018). When speaking to venue staff about time off, they explained that they felt they couldn't take time off because they needed to 'just show that they were working all the time' (personal communication, 24 August). A member of office staff explained that she didn't need to be in the office 'all the time' but she had to be there to show management that she was a hard worker. Others explained that they earned what they perceived to be low salaries and worked long hours, but were 'made to feel lucky' when they received non-monetary benefits such as access to exclusive events and free drinks (personal communication, 24 August). Due to precarity, scarce resources and limited opportunities, an environment is cultivated that makes individuals feel that there is an expectation of long working hours, including opting out of the government's working time regulations, which can lead to risk of exploitation.

Given limited opportunities, production companies also displayed *competitive behaviour* (subtheme 2.7). Throughout the Fringe there are numerous markers of success such as audience numbers, awards and 5* reviews. These markers are used to display prestige, with venues pinning up top reviews in their entrances and companies using phrases such as 'sell-out show' and 'critical acclaim' in their marketing copy, seeking to show that their production is 'the best'.

3.3 Role of the Fringe Society

The role of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society has been mentioned briefly in relation to how they facilitate the flow of resources; however, the Society also actively seek to reduce the social inequalities mentioned and ensure that the Fringe is accessible. Analysis of the data revealed that the Society implement a number of 'interventions' to support accessibility and creative freedom. Firstly, it could be observed that they provide a huge amount of *support and advice* (subtheme 3.1). For example, the Society provide a physical space for support: 'Fringe central' based in the university-owned Appleton Tower as 'a dedicated space designed to offer both practical and moral support to all Fringe participants', including desk space, wifi, printing and events [34]. Participants use the open-plan spaces for informal get-togethers with colleagues and

friends, to collaborate with others through use of the resources provided or to have refreshments at the café based there. More formal events covering a range of topics from networking events to production tips are then held either within these open spaces or within lecture halls. Moreover, the Society provide support online via an 'arts industry area' which 'connects' participants through sharing company touring information, professional contact details and web links to meeting spaces [27]. In this sense, although there are social inequalities at the Fringe and newcomers may find it hard to gain access to 'core' groups to become networked into the Fringe, the Society provide support to participants to facilitate integration into the collective. However, the Society don't just provide advice for performers, they also support venues through *managing time and spaces* (subtheme 3.2). For example, they have a 'clash diary' of venue launch events and previews to ensure that venues are not competing for industry professionals and audiences to attend, and they have a street team to manage street performances, making sure that performers have a fair share of playing time, performance space and exposure.

Connected to the previous subthemes, the Society are also a major *source of communication* (subtheme 3.3); a central point of contact for venues, theatre companies, participants, the local council, charities and critics. For example, they provide events where they connect producers to performers (networking brunches) and performers with critics ('meet the media'), as well as directly supporting performing companies via email, telephone and in person. A member of the Fringe staff explained how he was able to 'troubleshoot' for production companies, helping them to identify what they wanted to achieve from the Fringe and supporting them in their goals; in some cases, certain individuals become 'very attached' to him (personal communication, 1 August 2018). Accordingly, the Society are able to facilitate networking and provide the support needed to cultivate successful 'patterns of collectivity' [11], seeking to reduce inequalities and increase access.

Finally, the Society play an important *advocacy role* in light of social inequalities, seeking social justice (subtheme 3.4), particularly evident in their access and community engagement work. In relation to access, they provided talks on 'how to create better access for audiences' and reducing inequality of pay, as well as inviting inspirational speakers such as feminist Deborah Frances-White to speak about the importance of equality in the arts [34]. They also give out 'venue access awards' to accessible venues, providing guidance to venue managers and event organisers to ensure that their venue is as accessible as it possibly can be [35]. In relation to community engagement, they run a 'Fringe Days Out' scheme for those who would otherwise not be exposed to the arts, working with partner organisations in Edinburgh to give free tickets to shows at the festival [36].

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the results of a sociologically-informed ethnographic pilot study exploring the processes of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Results revealed that the Fringe is a place for collective action whereby performers maximise resources, collaborate and network with others and share knowledge. However, integrating into the Fringe community can be problematic as it requires the 'right' kind of 'cultural competence' and access to exclusive areas, whereby inequalities are enforced by branding and a hierarchy of venues. In light of these inequalities, the Fringe Society support social integration by providing support and advice, communicating with organisations and individuals, and advocating for diversity and inclusivity.

In many ways, these findings are contradictory as they present a picture of the Fringe as a site for 'collective action' as per Becker on the one hand and a site for reinforcing social inequalities as per Bourdieu on the other. However, Giorgi et al. [37] believe that these views are not contradictory, but differences in perspective; as such, they simply ask different questions about the same phenomena. The former invites discussion of agency and action, whereas the latter wants to explore structures and power relations. Nevertheless, although philosophically this can work to articulate research processes, qualitatively, a duality or paradox exists because individuals speak of having meaningful, subjective, experiences *and* feeling marginalised by structures. It is therefore necessary to understand better how one becomes integrated into the 'core' of Fringe communities, why some feel marginalised and how to optimise the Fringe as an environment for creative freedom and accessibility. It is clear that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society work towards achieving this aim; thus, the next stage of this project is to further examine the role that the Society plays in facilitating integration and tackling inequalities.

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A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHINESE YOUERYUAN TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWING

Although policies have outlined the importance of facilitating early learning, limited research has been done to understand youeryuan practitioners' views from their own perspectives. This research examines Chinese youeryuan teachers' pedagogical content knowing (PCK) with regard to *The Guidance of Learning and Development* (2012). I selected a purposes sample of 1 director and 5 teachers with various years of teaching experience in a first class public youeryuan in Beijing. Based on interviews and observations, the research shows that participants hold a holistic view on the mutuality and integrity of content and practical knowledge. The participants' PCK regarding the policy also vary in different degrees on a spectrum. Results suggest the importance of adopting a qualitative and relational perspective in understanding teacher appropriations.

Keywords: Pedagogical content knowing, Youeryuan teachers, Hermeneutics.

57 PURPOSES

The purpose of the research is to understand Chinese youeryuan teachers' pedagogical content knowing with regard to *The Guidance of Learning and Development for Children from Age Three to Six* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012, referred to as *The Guidance of Learning and Development*). In this research, I refer to day cares for children aged 3 to 6 as youeryuan base on the Chinese school systems. Comparable to Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2009), *The Guidance of Learning and Development* serves as a policy guideline for early childhood practitioners. The policy (2012) provides detailed descriptions of children's developmental characteristics in five different areas of learning (health, language, society, science and art) and in three age groups (ages 3 to 4 years, 4 to 5 years, and 5 to 6 years). In each section, the policy also offers detailed suggestions for teacher appropriations. In general, the policy outlines four essential contents: being committed to the learning and development of children for personal integrity, respecting for diversity, understanding children's ways of learning and their characteristics, and paying attention to approaches towards learning. Although *The Guidance of Learning and Development* has been implemented for five years, little has been known about how the essential contents are understood in relation to teaching from practitioners' perspectives.

58 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Before conducting research, I developed relationships with the director and teachers while supervising student teaching. Perceiving the teachers as active and reflective practitioners, I adopted the model of Pedagogical Content Knowing (PCK) (Cochran, DeRuiter & King, 1993) as my framework for analysis. The concept of PCK is developed based on Shulman's concept of pedagogical content knowledge and a challenge to his distinction on content and pedagogical knowledge (McEwan & Bull, 1991). PCK concerns the integrity in pre-service teachers' understandings of "pedagogy, subject matter, students and the environmental context" (Cochran, DeRuiter & King, 1993, p.266-267). This model is important for understanding youeryuan practitioners, because early learning areas are usually integrated as a whole in daily life rather than separated as different subjects. With in-service teachers who already had plenty of experience with students and environment, I simplified the model to focus on teacher descriptions of the relationship between knowledge of subject matter (content)

and pedagogy (practice). I visualized a simplified model as shown in Figure 1, which includes two components of content and practice. Since PCK is not a simple addition of content and pedagogical knowledge as two separate segments, I used the overlapping place to represent the dynamics of PCK.

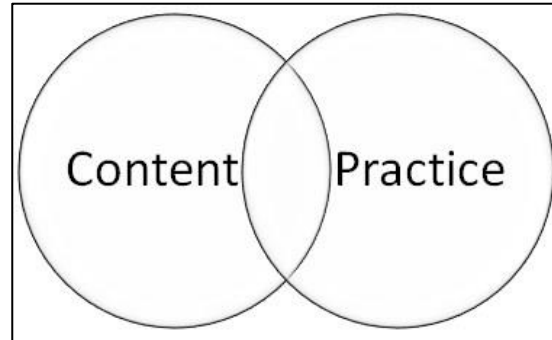


Figure 1. A simplified model of pedagogical content knowing (PCK) for understanding inservice teachers

Although it is possible to conceptualize content and practice separately, they integrate as a whole in practice. The frame in Figure 1 represents a background wherein the negation of content and practice are emplaced. As is suggested by the background, this research is also based on a holistic perspective of thinking. According to Freeman and Vagle (2013), philosophical hermeneutics involves an intentional reconceptualization of relations and perspectives. Within a Confucian cultural context, philosophical hermeneutic also resembles a Chinese way of deductive thinking. From a holistic perspective, I placed meaningfulness at the center of discussions and focused on the ways in which teachers present their ideas in relation to their horizons of the world.

59 MODES OF INQUIRY

This research uses qualitative inquiry to explore Chinese youeryuan teachers' pedagogical content knowing with a focus on their understandings of the relationship between content and pedagogy. The research adopts a qualitative research design with a focus on transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There are two research questions: How do the participants describe the relationship between content and practical knowledge? In what ways are their descriptions related or different? Whereas different learning domains are usually integrated during the early years, the "what" and "how" are often assessed quantitatively and separately. Although findings may provide an accurate description of the status quo, based on a dualistic standpoint, it is difficult to inform professional development and promote meaningful and authentic classroom experience. From a qualitative perspective, this research examines teachers' understandings of pedagogical content knowing using semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The researcher used picture elicitations and concept maps (Hancock & Gallard, 2004) to encourage elaborated descriptions. Transcripts were coded and notes were analyzed for emerging themes.

60 DATA SOURCES

This research draws on a qualitative study of Chinese youeryuan practitioners' understandings and implementations of *The Guidance of Learning and Development* conducted in 2017. Given the purpose of examining practitioners' policy appropriations regarding *The Guidance of Learning and Development*, I intentionally chose participants in a first class public youeryuan in Beijing where the policy has been implemented. To know the possible differences in understandings among teachers

given variations in their years of teaching, I chose 5 teachers with 1 to 16 years of teaching experience. Table 1 summarizes the participants' information. To protect their confidentiality, I requested my participants to use pseudonyms.

Table 1

Information about the Participants


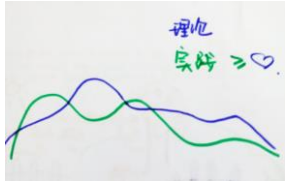
Pseudonym	Gender	Years of Teaching	Position	Classroom (Age group)	Educational Level	Province/City
Xiaolu	F	7	Director	N/A	Master's	Beijing
Zhanglaoshi	F	16	Teacher	5-6	Bachelor's	Beijing
Wanglaoshi	F	13	Teacher	4-5	Bachelor's	Beijing
Kongxincai	F	6	Teacher	5-6	Bachelor's	Beijing
Youyoutang	F	6	Teacher	3-4	Bachelor's	Beijing
Shuaishuai	F	1	Teacher	3-4	Bachelor's	Beijing

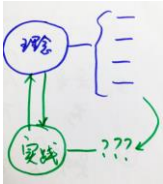
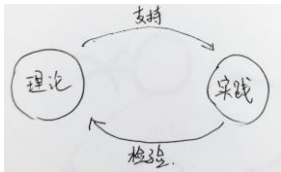
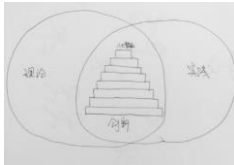
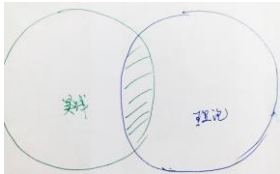
61 FINDINGS

Findings show that participants' understandings were both similar and different. Regardless of their different years of teaching (from one to 16 years) and backgrounds, they all took content and pedagogy as related. I identified *mutuality and integrity* as a common theme for analysis. However, their understandings on the degrees of relatedness also differ and vary from content oriented or pedagogy oriented to interactive and overlapping. Based on the participants' different emphasis and degrees in practicing PCK, I also identified four sub-themes under the common theme: *content-oriented, practice-oriented, interactive* and *overlapping*. Table 2 shows the sub-themes, the participants' concept maps and descriptions. Below the table I include quotes and examples based on the teachers' descriptions.

Table 2

Summary of Participants' Understandings of Pedagogical Content Knowing.

Sub-themes	Concept maps	Descriptions
Content-oriented		Content knowledge (the blue circle) gives structure in organizing teaching activities. Practice (in green) is what fills. It is sometimes possible for practice to go beyond the boundary of scheduled content given contexts.
Practice-oriented		Content (in blue) and practice (in green) are like two curves. While practice is sometimes complemented by content knowledge, practice is broader than (greater than or equal to) content.

Interactive		Content (in blue) and practice (in green) are interactive (as marked by the arrows).
		Content (the circle on the left) supports practice (the circle on the right) and is verified in practice.
Overlapping		Children develop multiple intelligences (represented by the stairs) within the overlapping part of content (the circle on the left) and practice (the circle on the left).
		Although content (the circle in green) and practice (the circle in blue) can be conceptualized separately, they are inseparable.

To be specific, teachers with limited years of teaching experience perceived the relationship between content and pedagogy to be the weakest. They either described practice as primarily content informed or attached greater importance to practice. Based on their descriptions, it is not difficult to understand why some teachers lacked flexibility in implementation while others lacked intentionality in helping students to make reflections and connecting theory with practice.

62 CONTENT-ORIENTED

Shuaishuai, the youngest teacher with 1 year of teaching experience, showed a content orientation in describing the relationship between content and practice. According to her, “Content is like a watermelon rind that informs. Practice is the pulp within the rind and sometimes falls outside like the pedicle.” Shuaishuai described practice as content informed with some variations by giving an example of counting with regard to integrity and diversity proposed in the policy. Her example suggests the lowest degree in practicing PCK.

It is important not to ask three-year-olds to count beyond 10 given their age characteristics. Based on the policy requirements, I placed 5 toys in a circle for most children to count. However, I had to give Duoduo who had difficulty counting fewer toys and place them in a line. For Xiaoyu who are good at counting, I asked him to pick 5 toys among many.

63 PRACTICE-ORIENTED

Different from Shuaishuai who conceptualized content as a structure that informs practice, Youyoutang, a teacher who had taught for 6 years, was practice oriented, “I think practice is broader than content.” She used the peaks and troughs in the curving lines to represent good and bad practices. Only when she is in troughs would she refer to the policy for some content knowledge. For example, she would make reflections on the approaches towards learning in the policy when children showed no interest in learning activities. Although Youyoutang to some extent showed her understanding of the connection between content and pedagogy, she still had to work on incorporating content in practice in some difficult situations.

Interactive

In contrast, teachers with more years of experience perceived the relationship between content and pedagogy as interactive. They described the relationship to be bi-directional and discussed the importance of the relational view in terms of authentic learning. Although they were able to describe the dynamic relationship, the awareness was based on experience of problem-solving.

For example, Xiaolu (the director) and Kongxincai (a teacher) who had similar years of teaching experience conceptualized the relationship between content and practice as interactive. According to Xiaolu, “theory is useless if it is disconnected with practice, and practice without theory is blind.” From a director’s perspective, Xiaolu gave an example of the interactive relationship between content and practice in understanding children’s ways of learning. We always talk about facilitating active learning...but how can we make it in practice? Teachers are still not clear...How can children be active? In practice we know why. For example, a teacher did not guide well. But policy provides a direction for us to think...You may also consider materials provided and the environment created.

Similarly to Xiaolu, Kongxincai mentioned that “without practice it (content) is all empty talk.” According to her, a teacher enters into children’s heart by appropriating content given contexts. Regardless of their positions, their descriptions suggest an increased degree in practicing PCK compared with the first two teachers.

64 OVERLAPPING

Teachers who taught for more than ten years perceived the relationship between content and practice as overlapping and co-existing. They were not only good at solving emerging problems but were also mindful about students and committed to prepare learning environments. They live to teach and teach to live a better life.

As is seen from their pseudonyms, Wanglaoshi and Zhanglaoshi (laoshi: teacher, like Ms. in English, but often used in respect to experienced teachers in Chinese culture as a part of the propriety) who had more than 10 years of teaching experience viewed the relationship between content and practice as mutual and overlapping. According to Zhanglaoshi, “sticking to content knowledge without practice is like walking on one leg. While theories are validated in practice, practices are supported by theories.” Similarly to the connotation in Zhanglaoshi’s metaphor, Wanglaoshi also mentioned that content and practice are inseparable. Their descriptions indicate the highest degree of practicing PCK.

65 MUTUALITY AND INTEGRITY

Whereas the above analysis shows variations in practitioners' understandings of the relationship between content and practice within each sub-theme, these sub-themes are emplaced in a shared theme of *mutuality and integrity*. Regardless of the different ways of representations, the practitioners all conceptualized the relationship as "one" instead of different parts to be integrated. Even Shuaishuai used the metaphor of a watermelon to show the integrity. In addition, from *content-oriented, practice-oriented, interactive to overlapping*, the practitioners' increased degrees of holistic thinking parallel their years of teaching experience. The variations and similarities in the practitioners' understanding suggest the importance of a relational way of analysis.

66 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

This research is important for two reasons. First, the findings provide understandings of PCK regarding *The Guidance of Learning and Development* from in-service youeryuan practitioners' perspectives. Because the policy is suggestive rather than prescriptive with accreditations, qualitative understandings of the results are important for Chinese policy makers to support pre-service teachers from a bi-directional perspective. In addition, the methods and findings from this research contribute to philosophical hermeneutic inquiry. Through analysis I found it appropriate to take the group of practitioners as my unit of analysis containing negations shaped by visible and latent relationships. The "grafting" (Freeman & Vagle, 2013) suggest the necessity to enrich methodology with philosophical hermeneutics and engage in interdisciplinary research. Through dialogues in relations, it is expected to create communities of learning and transform teaching with flexible and creative appropriations of policy.

Content and pedagogy are not isolated events, and practitioners are all related. The qualitative analysis of the teachers' understandings suggests that teaching is an artful activity and a life-long commitment. In addition to dealing with standardized evaluations, teacher educators and preschool and kindergarten principals must prepare teachers to be competent and reflective learners. It is expected that future researchers engage in hermeneutic dialogues with practitioners to promote collaboration and improve teaching.

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STUDYING THE ARCHIVAL CONFESSIONS OF THE WHITE LOTUS REBELLION IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINA FOLLOWING THE ARCHIVAL TURN

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Abstract

The archival turn is based on the idea that that archival data should be treated not only as a source as it usually did, but also as a subject that can be investigated. This turn has created a shift in research paradigm in archival research. Following this archival turn, in this paper I will describe my proposed method for analysing a specific type of document – the confessions of the White Lotus Rebellion (1796—1804) during the Qing dynasty. I argue these methods could be helpful in reading similar confessions in other rebellions, and perhaps also other documents produced by the Chinese state.

To explain my method, I will first introduce the confessions I am going to use: there are around 300 confessions relating to the rebellion, which record governments' interrogations of rebels. They are preserved in the Secret Palace Memorials, which are the handwritten imperial documents for the reference of high-ranking officials in imperial China. They are valuable as they provide a comprehensive information for studying this rebellion.

I consider these confessions as constructed by the interrogators, the rebels, and the state power. I will analyse them in three stages. The first stage is to analyse the context of these confessions. Based on an understanding of the basic social context of the rebellion, I will discuss the silence in the document, the distortions in these documents, and the modifications made by later collectors. Secondly, I will do inner-text analysis, focusing on the overall character of the writing, the marks of the document as well as the attitude and tones of interrogators and rebels. Thirdly, I will make intertext analysis to compare between the overlapping descriptions and different tones of different confessions, as well as the reports, predesigned interrogation structures and other documents that are present in the archive. At this stage, I will also reflect back on the previous stages of analysis. I intend to use my analysis of confessions to serve my further research aim, which is to analyse the language and rhetoric that are used for mobilisation in the rebellion.

Key words: Archival research, Archival Turn, Confessions, Rebellion, Qing Dynasty.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper describes my method, which is informed by the “archival turn”, of analysing the rebel’s confessions that the Qing dynasty (1644 to 1911) regime produced during the White Lotus Rebellion (1796—1804). I also seek to present this method in terms of common steps, which may apply to the analysis of other bodies of archival documents.

In recent decades, historians and social scientists committed to archival research have witnessed and created a turn in researching the archive [1][2]. This “archival turn”, which seeks to examine archives

from a constructive lens, argues that archival data should be treated not only as a source as historians and social scientists traditionally have done, but also as a subject that can be investigated [3][4].

The theory and practice of this archival turn also shapes and influences research on the documents produced by the Chinese state [5][6]. This constructivist methods of archival research have enabled new approaches to understanding these documents, particularly in considering the long tradition of government censorship in China [7][6].

Previous studies which analysing the documents that produced by the Chinese state that have been influenced by the archival turn, have covered the policies, internal communication and pronouncements of officials and intellectuals. However, in this paper, I will focus on a special type of document produced by officials, imperial interrogators and gross-rooted people: the recorded confessions of rebels in the White Lotus Rebellion in China's Qing dynasty.

Although these confessions have been discussed in many historical studies [8][9][10], they have seldom been studied in a systematic way, following the methods of the archival turn. After presenting a basic account of the rebellion and the confessions, I will present a method of analysing these documents in terms of three stages, considering three dimensions of the text: context, inner-text and inter-text. This is inspired by the method proposed by Moore et al [11], but I have made some changes, and present it in relation to the specific details of the confessions. Nevertheless, the methodology proposed here could also be applied in the analysis of similar documents, and might provide insight for understanding other types of Chinese police and state documents – or perhaps even those with no association to the Chinese state.

2. THE REBELLION, THE CONFESSIONS AND THE EXPLANATIONS

In 1794, large groups of rebels claiming affiliations to a specific religion with strong affinities to Buddhism – the White Lotus - rose up in the mountainous region of China. The rebellion quickly developed into large scale warfare between the rebel forces and the state military. This rebellion lasted eight years and is the most important rebellion in the middle Qing dynasty.

Even before the rebellion started, the government began extensively interrogating suspected rebel captives. These interrogations continued throughout the rebellion, and after its end [12].

In most cases, when a rebel was captured, they were sent for interrogation and what they said was recorded in the confession documents. For most rebels, their testimonials would be cross-examined, and when interrogators doubted what they confessed, they could be tortured. Important rebels were often sent to higher level government agencies for questioning, and their confessions would be submitted to the imperial court. Less important rebels would all go through the process of interrogation and a simple trial, and only some of their confessions were randomly selected for submission to the imperial court, sometimes with a notice that the rest of the confessions were similar.

After being sent to the imperial court, these confessions were collected by the highest decision-making body of the Qing dynasty, the Grand Council, before being stored in the secret palace memorials, which are collections of handwritten imperial documents for the reference of high-ranking officials and emperors in Qing dynasty. While there are some original documents, for many of these documents only their copies are preserved. These memorials can be accessed in the archives in China⁶. However, since the secret palace memorials system began to be systematically applied from around 18 century and methods of archiving developed only gradually, the documents of confession produced during the White Lotus Rebellion are one of the earliest and most systematical recordings of rebel confessions that have been preserved. (For information regarding the memorials see [13] [14].) In addition, many official reports are kept in the secret palace memorials, which provide various information relating to

⁶ Due to the restriction of these archives, I can't provide a photographic example of confession documents here.

the rebellions. These include officials' discussion, opinions and analyses of the rebels' confessions. These sources therefore provide detailed descriptions of the causes and modes of organisation and process of development of the rebellion. Together, these documents thus provide indispensable sources for understanding the rebellion itself as well as the activities of the state during the Qing dynasty.

There are two further explanations that I need to make before I start to present the different steps of my analytical approach. First, while in the following sections, my analysis will move from context to inner-text and inter-text, this is not a strict sequence of analysis. For example, the analysis of the inter-text may lead us to reflect on the context analysis and inner-text analysis, in order to refine them. Secondly, although I will only discuss my method in reading these confessions in this paper, my overarching research aim in using these confessions is to understand how the rebels are persuaded to join the rebellions, and the frames as well as the discursive repertoire used by organizers when they mobilising others. I won't explain this in detail here, but it is necessary to mention it, to indicate that my reading of the confessions is preparatory to a broader project.

3. THE CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Before reading the documents, it is necessary to understand the basic social context of the time, and the total number, classification and location of the confessions. Only on the basis of this knowledge is it possible to properly use and understand the documents' contents. It is also important to consider the silence of the documents, the distortions present within them, and the modifications made by later collectors. These points may be crucial for understanding the confessions. I also want to remark again that it is necessary to reflect back on this context analysis on the basis of the inner-text and inter-text analysis.

Firstly, while the confessions "tell" us stories about the rebels themselves, there are many things which are untold and remain silent in the confessions. Even though the confessions were normally read only by the emperor and his ministers, in writing as well as in their line of questioning, the interrogators had to defer to certain taboos. An understanding of the context will help to grasp this silent stratum of the confessions. This will also be tested in the course of actually reading the confessions.

For example, discussion of restoring the Ming dynasty, the dynasty overthrown by the Qing dynasty, was a forbidden subject under the Qing dynasty. If anyone needed to talk about the subject in the course of extracting or reporting the confessions, they had to be very careful to do so in a way that would not displease the emperor and the high ranks officials who would read them.

In addition, although interrogators knew that once submitted to the imperial court, most confessions would be closed to the public, they also knew that the most significant confessions, e.g. of rebel leaders, could be recorded in collections for public use. This meant interrogators and officials had to be careful to avoid sensitive and controversial topics in framing their questions and managing the interrogations.

Secondly, either officials or rebels might distort what they said or recorded for their own benefit. Much evidence of such distortion may be found in reading the documents. By understanding something of the context before reading the documents, it is easier to understand which procedures or elements are most likely to be distorted. In the confessions, due to the fact that the highest ranking rebels were very likely to be cross-examined by government officials at various different strata, the wise conduct for officials was not to distort the confessions or exaggerate their own merits. However, confessions of captured lower-strata rebels are more likely to be distorted, as the fact these people were unlikely to be cross-examined would give the interrogator greater freedom to lead these people to confess what they want to hear. At the same time, when the interrogation took place will have an impact on the narratives in the confessions. In the early stages of the White Lotus Rebellion, the powerful and

corrupt minister Heshen⁷ and his official faction permitted greater corruption at the local level than in the later stages of the rebellion. Some questions used in interrogation were designed to lead the rebels to exaggerate the severity of the rebellion, in order to increase the funds from the central government, so the corrupted officials could get more from it⁸. However, after Heshen was executed, the general tendency was for corruption decrease, and it is likely that such exaggerations will also have been reduced. This should be borne in mind when examining the documents.

The last point concerns the possibility of revision by collectors. The archives of the Qing Dynasty have been preserved by authorities of the Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China, and the People's Republic of China⁹. Although collectors are unlikely to have modified the contents directly, they may have reconstructed history by classification. They may, for instance, choose documents which are beneficial to their view of history and curate them in such a way as to shape the "facts" that readers are aware of. The view of history has changed across these different regimes: the Qing Dynasty court had a negative attitude towards the rebellions against it, but the authorities of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China were more positive about them. The degree of positivity may itself be found to have changed at different times, according to the authority's attitudes and the political situation. To understand the context of the Qing documents it is therefore necessary not only to understand the context in which the documents are produced, but also to understand the social context in which they were collated and collected, and the history of the attitudes of the institutions in which they are stored at present.

4. THE INNER-TEXT ANALYSIS

Once we understand the context, the inner-texts analysis of the confessions becomes possible. During my first reading of a confession, I try not to focus on too many details of the content, but on the writing, and on certain marks in particular. In those confessions that have survived in the original, the interrogator's writing may indicate their attitude towards the rebels. Even with confessions which have survived only as copies, the font size and the symbols of modification can also reflect the recorder's attitudes to the confessions. Certain marks however, can also provide much information. For example, if a person's name is marked with a cross symbol, this may mean he has been executed.

Once this is done, I would start to read the detailed content of the confessions. In doing this, it is important to pay attention to the conventions of recording and the attitudes of the interrogator and confessor. These can help reveal what information the rebels would like to hide and the interrogators would like to obtain, and the normative understandings of both rebels and interrogators.

The most important conventions of recording in the archival documents include their structure and the terms they use. The structure of the confession and the sequence of the interrogation may reflect the information desired by the state, and what the state need to know by regulating the interrogator. However, when some questions are being investigated in a very detail or been neglected by interrogators, they may reflect the interrogator's own thoughts. At the same time, the structure of the rebels' confessions is also very important, as it shows the normative understanding

⁷ In Chinese Characters and Manchu (Transliteration): 和珅/Hexen

⁸ Due to limits of space, I am unable to provide a more detailed account of this history here. Regarding Heshen, see [15].

⁹ All of them are the regimes of China.

of the rebel. It reveals what the rebels want to emphasize. However, where the rebels' words have clearly been organized by the recorder, as in certain cases they have, this might indicate the priorities of the state in its attitude to these rebels.

The usage of certain terms is one of the most important ways of uncovering the information that is untold by the rebels. For example, when an official uses the term "juzhongzishi¹⁰" (meaning, to gather a crowd and cause disturbances), this often means that the organisation of the movement was relatively loose. When officials used the term "jiujifeitu¹¹" (A brief translation: gather bandits), it often meant that there was a well-organised large-scale armed rebellion.

Another significant focus is on tones and attitudes. The rebel's tone may indicate their approach to constructing their story. Some rebels who feared punishment for their crimes and wished to beg the mercy of the state might try to avoid confessing their guilt in their confessions. And some rebels who do not fear of death might neglect to cover up many of their activities. However, it is also possible that they might try to conceal something to protect their accomplices. At the same time, the tone of the interrogator is also very important. This shows their normative understanding of the rebels. For instance, if interrogators despise the rebels and think they are fools, their questions or conclusions may show an underestimation of the rebels they are interrogating. However, when investigating the tones of the interrogator, it is important to bear in mind that the attitude of interrogators is strongly influenced by the pre-decided outlines for interrogation and the attitude of the higher-level officials.

5. THE INTER-TEXT ANALYSIS

Analysis of the contents of individual texts may provide insights into the attitudes of those particular actors, but only by reading different texts together can more information be revealed. For instance, where the tone of rebel statements leads one to speculate that they might be hiding some information in order to avoid punishment, it may be more possible to discover what they are hiding through a reading of other texts.

When reading the confessions, I noted and compared overlapping descriptions of the same persons or events from different confessions, in order to locate the conflicts and tensions between these different descriptions. This method is similar to that used in Naquin's [9] study of the confessions. However, in addition to comparing descriptions of events and persons, I also compare the structure, tone and attitude of different confessions, which may reveal further clues. I also read the descriptions of the person who confessed in the other confessions, as an understanding of their character can be of aid in judging whether this person is likely to hide something when he confesses.

Apart from comparing the confessions, I also compare the records in the government reports regarding these confessions. Several studies have mentioned the importance of commission of producing the documents and the way in which these commissions influence the statecraft of the documents [4][16]. They also proposed to read the communication of the commission as the state telling its intentions [4]. For the confessions, there is no permanent or formal body in charge of commissioning or censoring the documents. However, in some cases the officials may gather prior to the interrogations, to discuss the outline of interrogation, and write the report for the outline. When the interrogators or higher-level officials submitted these confessions, they always reported to the emperor the situations surrounding these confessions. For some important confessions they often went further, writing a report on the confession or the results of discussions among officials, in order

¹⁰ In Chinese Characters 聚眾

¹¹ In Chinese Characters 緝匪

to confirm the credibility or value of the information given by the rebels. The emperor would also reply to these reports when he considered it necessary.

These interactions between the different levels of the state hierarchy can thus be viewed as some kind of “commission” which shapes the production of the confessions. These reports provide a further understanding of the state attitudes towards these confessions and of what rebels confessed. These reports also provide another way of checking information regarding the rebels. For instance, in several cases, the confessor has tried to deny their role in the rebellion. However, a detailed investigation of the officials’ reports, which include details from the cross examining of different rebels as well as the examination of material evidence found in rebels’ homes, show the officials had evidence for considering him a leading member of the rebels. In other cases, although rebels were presented as leaders by lower-level officials, it turned out that they had merely been forced to confess this under torture.

Finally, other documents can also be used, including analyses by scholars of that time, some local gazettes and even analyses of later scholars, etc. While they are not the primary documents for analysis, they are able to provide clues for understanding the documents in the archive.

6. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STEPS

By using the example of the confessions from the White Lotus Rebellions, I have presented my approach to understanding the archival documents, passing from the context to inner-text and then to inter-text, with a more detailed and comprehensive method been given. This is especially appropriate for the police documents and other documents produced by the state of imperial China. However, reading the confessions is not the final step of my research. As my research aim is to analyse how the rebels are persuaded to join the rebellions, and how the rebels constructed language and rhetoric that are used to mobilise the others to participate, I will then sort out the texts and oral statements that rebels used to mobilise. Finally, I will study how and for what purpose these texts and oral statements were constructed, and what language and rhetoric was utilised in the construction processes by using the framing analysis and the discourse analysis, based on the understanding gained in the previous steps. I also would like to remind the reader of the other documents by using similar method that this method should sever their purpose of researching and always try to find the information that is most relevant to the research aim. I hope the reader of other documents may also find this a useful methodological example, relative to the different purposes of their own research.

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A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHINESE YOUERYUAN TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWING

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Abstract

Although policies have outlined the importance of facilitating early learning, limited research has been done to examine youeryuan practitioners' understandings of early learning and development from their own perspectives. This research examines Chinese youeryuan teachers' pedagogical content knowing (PCK) with regard to *The Guidance of Learning and Development*. This research selects a purposeful sample of 1 director and 5 teachers with various years of teaching experience in a first class public youeryuan in Beijing. Based on interviews and observations, the research shows that participants hold a holistic view of content and practical knowledge. The participants' PCK regarding the policy also vary. Results suggest the importance of adopting a qualitative and relational perspective in understanding teacher appropriations.

Keywords: PCK, Chinese teachers, qualitative research.

67 PURPOSES

The purpose of the research is to understand Chinese youeryuan teachers' pedagogical content knowing with regard to *The Guidance of Learning and Development for Children from Age Three to Six* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2012, referred to as *The Guidance of Learning and Development*)[1]. In the Chinese context, day cares for children aged 3 to 6 are named as youeryuan. Different from existing studies about theories into practices based on the belief that mind and body can be separately examined, this research enables participants to discuss their own understandings of the relationship between content and pedagogy.

Just like the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (2017) [2] in England and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2009) [3] in the United States, *The Guidance of Learning and Development* serves as a key policy for early childhood practitioners in China. The policy (2012) [1] provides detailed descriptions of children's developmental characteristics in five different learning areas (health, language, society, science and art) and three age groups (ages 3 to 4 years, 4 to 5 years, and 5 to 6 years). In each section, the policy also offers detailed suggestions for teacher appropriations. In general, the policy outlines four essential contents: being committed to the learning and development of children for personal integrity, respecting for diversity, understanding children's ways of learning and their characteristics, and paying attention to approaches towards learning. Although *The Guidance of Learning and Development* has been implemented for five years, little has been known about how practitioners understand essential contents in relation to their classroom teaching.

68 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Before conducting this research, the author supervised student teaching in the youeryuan and developed relationships with the director and teachers. Aimed at understanding practitioners' views about the relationship between content and pedagogy, the research adopts Pedagogical Content Knowing (PCK) (Cochran, DeRuiter & King, 1993) [4] as the analytical framework. Whereas Shulman

proposed that practitioners put pedagogical content knowledge into practice, McEwan and Bull (1991) challenged him that there is hardly any content knowledge separated from practice. Based on this holistic understanding, Cochran, DeRuiter & King (1993) [4] put forward the concept of PCK to describe the integrity of “pedagogy, subject matter, students and the environmental context (p.266-267).”

This framework is important for understanding youeryuan practitioners, because early learning areas are usually integrated as a whole in daily life rather than separated as different subjects. If practitioners take content and pedagogy as separated, it is difficult for them to engage in reflective practices and foster children’s learning. With in-service teachers who already had plenty of experience with students and environment, the framework is simplified to focus on teacher understandings of the relationship between knowledge of subject matter (content) and pedagogy (practice). The simplified framework is visualized in Fig. 1. Although PCK is represented in the overlapping area, it is not a simple addition of content and pedagogical knowledge as two separate segments. The framework is not intended to present content and pedagogical knowledge separately, and each part is outlined to show different degrees in which content and practice are related. Perceiving teachers as active and reflective practitioners, the author attempts to use the overlapping place to represent the dynamics of PCK.

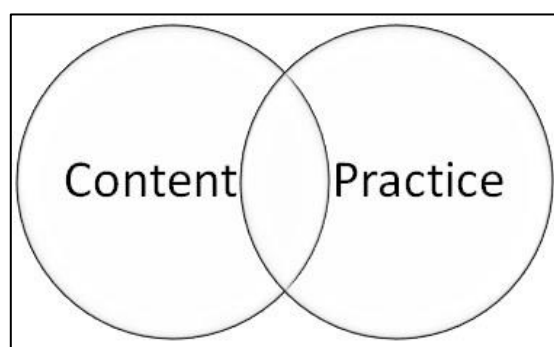


Fig. 1. A simplified model of pedagogical content knowing (PCK) for understanding inservice teachers

According to Freeman and Vagle (2013) [5], hermeneutics involves an intentional reconceptualization of relations and perspectives. Within a Confucian cultural context, hermeneutics are helpful for understanding the complexity of teachers’ thinking. From a holistic perspective, this research focuses on the ways in which teachers present their ideas in relation to their classroom teaching.

69 MODES OF INQUIRY

This research uses qualitative method to explore Chinese youeryuan teachers’ pedagogical content knowing with a focus on their understandings of the relationship between content and practice. By adopting a qualitative research design, the research seeks transferability. There are two research questions: How do the participants describe the relationship between content and practical knowledge? In what ways are their descriptions related or different? Whereas different learning domains are usually integrated during the early years, the “what” and “how” are often assessed quantitatively and separately. Since the purpose is to inform professional development and foster meaningful and authentic classroom experience, this research examines teachers’ understandings of PCK using semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The author also used picture elicitations and concept maps (Hancock & Gallard, 2004) [6] to encourage elaborated descriptions. Transcripts were coded and notes were analyzed for emerging themes.

70 DATA SOURCES

This research draws on a qualitative study of Chinese youeryuan practitioners’ understandings and implementations of *The Guidance of Learning and Development* conducted in 2017. Given the purpose of examining practitioners’ policy appropriations regarding *The Guidance of Learning and*

Development, the author intentionally chose participants in a first class public youeryuan in Beijing where the policy has been implemented. To know the possible differences in understandings among teachers given variations in their years of teaching, the author chose 5 teachers with 1 to 16 years of teaching experience. Table 1 summarizes the participants' information. To protect their confidentiality, participants were requested to use pseudonyms.

Table 1

Information about the Participants


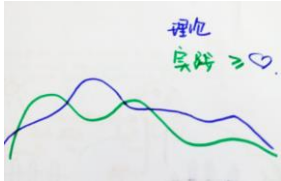
Pseudonym	Gender	Years of Teaching	Position	Classroom (Age group)	Educational Level	Province/City
Xiaolu	F	7	Director	N/A	Master's	Beijing
Zhanglaoshi	F	16	Teacher	5-6	Bachelor's	Beijing
Wanglaoshi	F	13	Teacher	4-5	Bachelor's	Beijing
Kongxincai	F	6	Teacher	5-6	Bachelor's	Beijing
Youyoutang	F	6	Teacher	3-4	Bachelor's	Beijing
Shuaishuai	F	1	Teacher	3-4	Bachelor's	Beijing

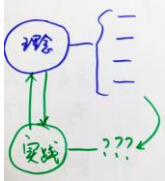
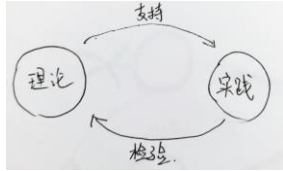
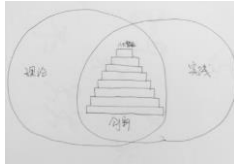
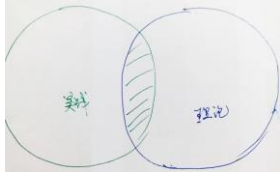
71 FINDINGS

Findings show that participants' understandings were both similar and different. Regardless of their different years of teaching (from one to 16 years) and backgrounds, they all took content and practice as related. The author identified *mutuality and integrity* as a common theme for analysis. However, their understandings on the degrees of relatedness also differ and vary from content /pedagogy oriented, interactive to overlapping. Based on the participants' different emphases and degrees in practicing PCK, four sub-themes were identified under the common theme: *content-oriented, practice-oriented, interactive and overlapping*. Table 2 shows the sub-themes, the participants' concept maps and descriptions. Below the table are quotes and analyses based on the teachers' descriptions.

Table 2

Summary of Participants' Understandings of Pedagogical Content Knowing.

Teachers	Sub-themes	Concept maps	Descriptions
Shuaishuai	Content-oriented		Content knowledge (the blue circle) gives structure in organizing teaching activities. Practice (in green) is what fills. It is sometimes possible for practice to go beyond the boundary of scheduled content given contexts.
Youyoutang	Practice-oriented		Content (in blue) and practice (in green) are like two curves. While practice is sometimes complemented by content knowledge, practice is broader than (greater than or equal to) content.

Xiaolu	Interactive		Content (in blue) and practice (in green) are interactive (as marked by the arrows).
Kongxincai			Content (the circle on the left) supports practice (the circle on the right) and is verified in practice.
Wanglaoshi	Overlapping		Children develop multiple intelligences (represented by the stairs) within the overlapping part of content (the circle on the left) and practice (the circle on the left).
Zhanglaoshi			Although content (the circle in green) and practice (the circle in blue) can be conceptualized separately, they are inseparable.

The concept maps show that teachers with limited years of teaching experience perceived the relationship between content and pedagogy to be the weakest. They either described practice as primarily content informed or attached greater importance to practice. Based on their descriptions, it is not difficult to understand why some teachers lacked flexibility in implementation while others were not motivated to promote student reflections of daily experience. Discussions below give some details of the participants' understandings.

71.1 Content-oriented

Shuaishuai was the youngest teacher with 1 year of teaching experience. She was content oriented when describing the relationship between content and practice. According to her, "Content is like a watermelon rind that informs. Practice is the pulp within the rind and sometimes falls outside like the pedicle." The circle of theory provides a curriculum model which is to be enriched by practice. Shuaishuai explained content informed practice by giving an example of counting with regard to integrity and diversity proposed in the policy.

It is important not to ask three-year-olds to count beyond 10 given their age characteristics. Based on the policy requirements, I placed 5 toys in a circle for most children to count. However, I had to give Duoduo who had difficulty counting fewer toys and place them in a line. For Xiaoyu who are good at counting, I asked him to pick 5 toys among many.

According to her, *The Guidance of Learning and Development* includes methods for teachers to work with children of different age groups. In practice, there are some variations. For example, some children may not achieve the desired outcome and others may not need teacher's help. Although Shuaishuai was able to describe the difference between planned and real activities, she only made

limited adjustments within the scope of appropriate content. Just as she mentioned that “it is important not to ask three-year-olds to count beyond 10,” she was cautious not to cross the line in practice. However, the example given by Shuaishuai suggests that the two children may be better/under achievers. Although she unintentionally expressed her desire of considering specific contexts and going a little beyond the standard, without much experience working with children, it seems that Shuaishuai found it safe to follow the guidelines and design activities based on the content. Her example suggests the lowest degree in practicing PCK.

71.2 Practice-oriented

Different from Shuaishuai who conceptualized content as a structure that informs practice, Youyoutang, a teacher who had taught for 6 years, was practice oriented. She thought practice is broader than content. According to her, the point of learning theories is to inform practice. Just as the parallel and the overlapping parts in her concept map suggest, sometimes practices and the underlying theories tell similar stories. However, she found what was reasonable as theories imperfect in practice. Youyoutang recalled that once she had a student teacher who questioned her based solely on theories. Given a more solid theoretical basis, the student teacher in a masters’ program was able to share why teachers facilitate children’s learning when they learning when they encounter difficulties. Knowledgeable as the student teacher was, her teaching was awful based on the right theories she shared.

Youyoutang contended that good practices must be supported by theories, but one can hardly use theories to shape practices directly and achieve the desirable goals. She said that if she only read theories but not practice, she would not be able to know how to teach. In her concept map, Youyoutang used the peaks and troughs in the curving lines to represent good and bad practices. Only when she was in troughs would she refer to the policy for some guidance. For example, she would make reflections on approaches towards learning stated in the guideline when children showed no interest in learning activities. Youyoutang’s comments on the student teacher to some extent reflect the content practice divide in teacher preparation programs.

Youyoutang’s thinking that learning and development do not automatically follow when theories are simply put into practices represent the claim that there is no content knowledge that are not pedagogical by McEwan and Bull (1991) [7]. Although Youyoutang to some extent showed her understanding of the inherent connections between content and pedagogy, she took practice as an ending point. Just as she said, she still had to work on incorporating content in practice in some difficult situations.

71.3 Interactive

In contrast to Shuaishuai and Youyoutang who described the relationship between content and practice as primarily unidirectional, Xiaolu (the director) and Kongxincai (a teacher) perceived the relationship between content and pedagogy as interactive. These two teachers had worked with children for six years or longer. They described the relationship between content and practice to be bi-directional and discussed the importance of adopting a relational view.

According to Xiaolu, “theory is useless if it is disconnected with practice, and practice without theory is blind.” It is during the process of practice that theories are enriched. Theory that comes from practice also guides practice. Theoretical guidelines are made to correct practices that deviated from the purpose of fostering children’s learning and development. Theory and practice are not separated. From a director’s perspective, Xiaolu gave an example of the interactive relationship between content and practice.

We always talk about facilitating active learning...but how can we make it in practice? Teachers are still not clear...How can children be active? In practice we know why. For example, a teacher did not guide well. But policy only provides a direction for us to think...You may also consider materials provided and the environment created.

Similarly to Xiaolu, Kongxingcai mentioned that “without practice it (content) is all empty talk.” According to her, a teacher enters into children’s heart by appropriating content given contexts. To explain, Kongxingcai said that content developed in other cultural contexts may not work in practice in China. Etiquette is important in Chinese culture. However, some parents who had experience abroad did not pay enough attention to good manners. There are also different manners in other countries, and children cannot be allowed to do whatever they wanted. Although Kongxingcai also mentioned the importance of respecting children’s thinking and developing relationships with them, she thought it important to teach children acceptable manners related to the Chinese cultural context.

Regardless of their different positions, Xiaolu’s and youyoutang’s descriptions suggest an increased degree in practicing PCK compared with the first two teachers. Discussions of good theories or practices may not be possible without considering the context, and content and practice has to be examined as a whole. Although the two practitioners perceived the relationship between content and practice as bi-directional, their reflections are based on practice, not in practice. In *The Reflective Practitioners*, Schon (1983) [8] distinguished reflection-in-action from reflection of practice. Whereas PCK is generated during the process of reflections, the two practitioners did not expand on the dynamics of content and practice.

71.4 Overlapping

As is seen from their pseudonyms, Wanglaoshi and Zhanglaoshi (laoshi: teacher, like Ms. in English, but often used in respect to experienced teachers in Chinese culture as a part of the propriety) who had more than 10 years of teaching experience perceived the relationship between content and practice as overlapping and co-existing. Their descriptions resemble Schon’s (1983) argument that content knowledge cannot be separated from the process and context it was produced. Zhanglaoshi drew two intersecting circles to represent theory and practice and focused on the overlapping area. According to her, “sticking to content knowledge without practice is like walking on one leg. While theory is validated in practice, practice is supported by theory.” Using the metaphor of walking, Zhanglaoshi emphasized on the process theories and practices are generated and fused. She mentioned that among many different theories, Piaget’s, for example, predicts development and guides teaching. However, Zhanglaoshi thought it more important for teachers to develop their own unique perspectives about early education based on the theory. In the overlapping area she drew a pyramid of multiple intelligences, suggesting that when teachers make their own appropriations during practices, they foster learning in different areas. Content and practice are complementary. During the dynamic process, both teachers and children develop and learn.

Similarly, Wanglaoshi also mentioned that content and practice are inseparable. Wanglaoshi also drew two intersecting circles. According to her, theory guides practice and continuously develops in practice. Content and practice are not the same, but they are inseparable. Whereas it is possible to examine content and practice separately based on their differences, they intersect and overlap. Sometimes it is difficult to understand a theory given specific contexts. However, in addition to reading theories and teaching, teachers consistently incorporate new knowledge in practice to make appropriations. For example, Wanglaoshi mentioned that she developed new understandings about Montessori’s theory with regard to how to observe in practice. When she observed children in learning activities at first, she found that some also reacted to please her. In order to understand what children really think and how they solve problems, she intentionally sat in corners to hide herself and collected children’s artifacts. In doing so she gained understandings about children and made communications effective.

Although both Zhanglaoshi and Wanglaoshi acknowledge the possibility to examine content and practice separately, they intentionally engage themselves in the dynamic process of reflection. For both of them, teachers’ PCK is not a direct result of technical training but is generated during a reflective process of teaching. To put it differently, teachers develop their PCK while fostering children’s learning and development. Their descriptions of the co-created process indicate the highest degree of practicing PCK.

71.5 Mutuality and integrity

Whereas the above analysis shows variations in practitioners' understandings of the relationship between content and practice within different sub-themes, these sub-themes are emplaced in a shared theme of *mutuality and integrity*. Regardless of the different ways of representations, the practitioners all somehow conceptualized the relationship as holistic. Even Shuaishuai used the metaphor of a watermelon to show the integrity. In addition, from *content-oriented, practice-oriented, interactive* to *overlapping*, the practitioners' increased degrees of holistic thinking parallel their years of teaching experience. The variations and similarities in the practitioners' understanding suggest the importance of adopting a relational way of analysis.

72 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

This research is important for two reasons. First, the findings provide understandings of PCK regarding *The Guidance of Learning and Development* from in-service youeryuan practitioners' perspectives. Because the policy is suggestive rather than prescriptive with accreditations, qualitative understandings of the results are important for Chinese policy makers to support pre-service teachers from a bi-directional perspective. It is also informative for teacher educators to take a holistic perspective in teacher preparation program development. In addition, the methods and findings from this research contribute to hermeneutic inquiry. Through analysis the author found it more appropriate to take the group of practitioners as a unit of analysis that involves negotiations shaped by visible and latent relationships. The "grafting" (Freeman & Vagle, 2013) [5] suggests the necessity to incorporate hermeneutics into qualitative inquiry and engage in interdisciplinary research. Through dialogues in relations, it is expected to create communities of learning and transform teaching with flexible and creative appropriations of policy.

Content and pedagogy are not isolated events, and practitioners are all related. The qualitative analysis of the teachers' understandings suggests that teaching is an artful activity and a life-long commitment. In addition to dealing with standardized evaluations, teacher educators and preschool and kindergarten principals must prepare teachers to be competent and reflective learners. It is expected that future researchers engage in hermeneutic dialogues with practitioners to promote collaboration and improve teaching.

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CONTENT WORK PRODUCE FORM: FEMINIST COLLECTIVE WRITING IN THE ART GALLERY

content work produce form makes use of the stuff of our everyday, including technology that we use regularly for communication and research.

content work produce form is stimulating, provocative, unifying, and female.

content work produce form constitutes a return and a beginning.

In 2016, Sophia Hao of Dundee's Cooper Gallery asked me to assemble a group of writers to respond to work in the **Of Other Spaces: Where Does Gesture Become Event?** exhibition and event programme which she was in the process of curating (Hao, 2016). My goal was to create a structure modelled on the one that developed over the course of the collaborative Feministo Postal Art Event of 1975-77 (Ross, 2016). For that project, women made art at home and posted it to one another, generating home-based art collections and a tight-knit community of women artists.

content work produce form (Williams, 2016) developed into a collective of women writers using a shared Google document. The collective posted original creative textual responses to source texts and material, including **Monica Ross'** text *history or not*, a selection of articles discussing *Feministo &* associated feminist art projects, and the artists and artwork featured in the exhibition *Of Other Spaces: Where does gesture become event?*, and then to one another's writing.

During the international symposium 12-Hour Action Group, part of *Of Other Spaces*, writers Lynn Davidson, Tessa Berring, Alice Tarbuck, Jane Goldman, Anne Laure Coxam and I read the texts in two actions. The group continues to write and perform collectively under the name of **12**.

I would like to outline this project and the model we have developed for collective writing, to talk about the benefits to contemporary women (and all) writers, which reflect the benefits generated by the original art collective, and to read a short selection of the collective's work. I will invite the members of 12 to join me for the reading.

Jennifer Williams

The Model

I asked 11 women to write with me in a shared Google document over a period of months at the end of 2016. We produced poetic texts that responded first to Monica Ross' *history or not*, a selection of articles discussing *Feministo* and associated feminist art projects, and the artists and artwork featured in the *Cooper Gallery exhibition Of Other Spaces: Where does gesture become event?*. The writers then responded to one another's writing. The poem responses were always posted with the poet's name, the date and the time of writing, and poems over time became a response to a response.

I initially considered asking the women to hand write and post responses to one another in order to model the original Postal Art Project. I wanted to mirror the fact, however, that the women artists in the 1970s who used the postal system were doing so because that was the technology they had available to them to be able to make and share art(work) while being mothers and working in the home. My fellow women writers in 2016 were similarly busy with various activities including mothering and working in the home and outside of it, and the technology that would make the poetry easiest to write and share was an online Google document.

The collective enjoyed this experience so much that we decided to continue this project in the form of an ongoing collective with the name '12'. Our group of 12 women write in a shared Google document, one woman posting a poem each month and each of the other women responding to that poem (and, if desired, to one another's poems). We have shared the work live in art galleries and at poetry festivals. More details are available here: <https://12poetry.wordpress.com/>.

The Benefits

The experiment was extremely successful and resulted in a sequence of poems, a selection of which are below. The women involved felt that this type of writing allowed an enormous amount of flexibility to suit busy lives while providing us with a nurturing network of fellow writers with whom we were in conversation and in connection. We have been able to offer various opportunities to one another and to the group, including workshops, readings and publications. We meet in person occasionally. Rarely is the entire group all in one place at one time, however our collaborative writing is a web of thoughts and feelings, experiments and expressions, which bind us and give us support. Two members of the group have stepped back from the regular writing process, and two new members were invited to take their place. The writers in the original collective were **Tessa Berring, Anne Laure Coxam, Lynn Davidson, Georgi Gill, Marjorie Lotfi Gill, Jane Goldman, Rachel McCrum, Jane McKie, Theresa Muñoz, Alice Tarbuck, Karen Veitch** and **JL Williams**. Since then, Rachel McCrum and Karen Veitch exchanged places with **Em Strang** and **Lila Matsumoto**.

The Poems

By Tessa Berring, Anne Laure Coxam, Lynn Davidson, Georgi Gill, Marjorie Lotfi Gill, Jane Goldman, Rachel McCrum, Jane McKie, Theresa Muñoz, Alice Tarbuck, Karen Veitch and JL Williams.

Alice Tarbuck 14:12 01/10/16

Anonymous is a woman

anonymous is hemming
and darning.
anonymous is fishing out
something from the freezer,
sets it to thawing.
anonymous keeps change
in a decorative sugar bowl from
Stockton.
anonymous counts the postage out
then gets the tea on.
anonymous is familiar with that sigh
when she opens the box
it's only what I had to hand
it isn't much to see
I hope it hasn't broken
on the way I'm sorry it took
so long it's just
anonymous hears the spin cycle stop.
anonymous lets the phone ring out.
anonymous runs her ring finger
down the back of a plastic doll
with plastic irons instead of hands
and very little hair.

anonymous lets her children go
with sticky hands
so she can make the morning train.
miserable bitches
anonymous looks at the salad woman.
bitter and twisted
anonymous weeps when she meets the others.
not suitable for children
anonymous sees her broken china
there, as if it is as beautiful
as an object from a studio
made by the hands of an art degree
and she smiles.
anonymous flips to the arts pages
they have ignored the broken china
even though she saw it there
and heard it, loud and constant
clear as ringing
as if it was always in the process
of being thrown, and smashing.

anonymous starts the kettle,
saves the newspaper up for kindling.
always plenty more crockery
in a room full of silent women.

Lynn Davidson 1:18 23/10/16

Precenting the Line¹²

My daughter says
*You're lucky — growing up
with protest songs.
All we have
are tweets and texts.
The post always
and never
here. We jam together
over little screens
like parents round a crib
for copied messages
and faces.*

She buys a campervan —
builds furniture that ebbs and flows
for nights, for days (a bed, a couch) —
and drives herself into the desert.

Kindles a fire.
Suspends a billy.
Feeds flames with fallen
ghost gum branches
for the sudden scented snap —
for the infusion.

Through the dark
the Milky Way flows low and slowly —
brushing the roof of the van
and the brave jut of its open windows.

What can I do, but write it.
Line out the song. Share it.

*It's there in you
as it is in me.*

*The memory
of the axe inside
the tree.*

¹² Precenting is a traditional form of Scottish Gaelic psalm calling.

Anne Laure Coxam 22:47 26/10/16

front crawl

love swimming pools
more than bus rides
even
I swam back and forth
and back
and forth
between walls then
I picked the wrong salad
that wasn't a salad
in the snack bar
my body is my working tool
my voice
my hands
my eyes
my silhouette
my movement
my body I feel
needs to be
as narrow as possible
to bear the repeated
dissection
the peeling and
pillage
by a hundred and twenty people
two hundred and forty eyes
on my body back
and forth
over a week

I finish this
just as
they finish
their writing exercise

Georgi Gill 05:29 28/10/16

and so we sew

words spool onto
off-white linen
fixed inky thread
our narratives
discreet whispers
of running stitch
we yarn up each
last scrap of self
dictate each threat
each slap each cut
each rape each slur
silence shouting
through our needles
Philomela
teaches us just
how much red thread
a torn hymen
necessitates
and so we sew
grow ambitious
we want to be
proper artists
spend housekeeping
money on best
embroidery
silks so we can
be our best so
we can try so
we can all sew
sweet perfection
from imperfect
experience
WE ARE ALL ARTISTS
unseen unheard
unrecognized
discounted trolled
dismissed artists
who know to stitch
our selves in tight
to bodice hems
and knicker seams
we are our own
emergency
ten pence pieces
sewn into coats'
secret pockets
we are our own
letters heckled

by ragged seams
and wear our selves
close to our chests,
buttoned up tight
libate each word
with sweat until
salt and the coarse
rub of our skin
erase the 'i's
and uncross 't's
stitches fragment
unravelling
like Sappho we
are at risk of
reabsorbing
words into skin.
leaving only
these
loose
threads
of
mutilation
leaving
only
silence

Marjorie Lotfi Gill 16:16 28/10/16

Between Galaxies

She wonders what to tell
her daughters when they ask
for her best hour. *Now*, she wants
to say, *just now* but instead

tells them about her first
martini, unsure whether to lift
from rim or stem, and afterwards
how she threw open her arms

to the constellations — Orion
and the backwards Taurus
and Gemini — on the ceiling^[SEP]
of Grand Central Station, watched^[SEP]

the black birds trapped beneath
its dome plead for re-entry to a world^[SEP]
they somehow knew existed^[SEP]
beyond the blinking electric stars.

She warns never to trust^[SEP]
a city clock, to always carry^[SEP]
house keys in a front pocket^[SEP]
and then adds how walking^[SEP]

the streets of a town where no one^[SEP]
knows your name can itself^[SEP]
be a form of comfort, says^[SEP]
there is safety in loneliness.

Jane McKie 14:00 03/11/16

Stuttgart Airport, 1989

The floor is slick with reflections. Just that, no texture or pattern; only images lubricate the atrium. I am a paper cutout on the floor of Stuttgart Airport, 3 a.m., another body sunk in the mopped-floor underworld of airports.

A sallow-cheeked woman, pushing or propelled by a giant nautilus, nudges my backpack with the machine, enquiring if I have time to converse with the dead?

Time? I don't know what she means, but I answer as best I can: I am twenty-one, en route to a commune in Swabia, I am comfortable in my sleep, and I still hope to achieve things. She seems satisfied, nodding, pushing her machine on, whirring down the grey-green ichorous halls, the only vital beating thing around.

Tessa Berring 19/11/16

in response to

JL Williams 01/11/16

in response to

Anne Laure Coxam 26/10/16

(How Time Takes Place in the Briefest of Moments)

1.

I liked to swim in the dark

wearing nothing

but rubber goggles

elastics in my hair.

The acid taste of chlorine

the accident, when all I meant

was to surprise you underwater

with no costume.

2.

Don't talk with your mouth

full of clotted cream

unless you want to say '*forgiveness*'

or '*zoomorphic ectoplasm.*'

3.

And imagine if echoes just weren't!

If we shouted under bridges

and there was never an answer.

Would it be good for us?

The way meat and bones are good for us,

or angels with their wings sliced off

or...

What? uh? I have the hiccups!

*(please stop watching, no, please
stop looking away)*

4.

Or sex on old washing machines.

How exciting! How ridiculous!

The foam in the drum
holding tight for the spin cycle
that scent of unnatural hyacinth

excuse me.

Rachel McCrum 15:19 19/11/77

in response to

Marjorie Lotfi Gill

'there is safety in loneliness'

Our finest hour turned
grim at the speed of light,
and it's dig in or flee.

A desperate abdication, this taste for
wilful changing of constellations.

My brother, head turned against the world,
astrophysicist, searches for celestial orphans.
When duelling galaxies clash violently enough,
some bodies are flung solo, willing or not.
Stripped of collective energy,
they glow too faintly to be seen
against the masses still holding strong,
get lost amidst the blare of the crowd.

Look harder. There is more in the sky
than you see at first glance.
Between galaxies, light also seeps.
Rogue and wandering, they hold up
their slight necessary stopgap glimmer
in the blackest of spaces.

Karen Veitch 20/11/16

in response to

Anne Laure Coxam 26/10/16

“Swim clockwise”

said some he, or other,

deigning to divide our waters!

RESIST LANE DISCIPLINE

A man in water displaces what?

Space for some other man — so what.

Whereas a woman,

in a pool

moves gracefully

with her own organs —

her eyes,

her hands —

carves volume out of nothing,

transposes space

for nowhere but herself to be

and draws her deepest

breath.

JL Williams 20:25 28/11/16

in response to

Jane McKie 17:13 07/11/16

in response to

Marjorie Lotfi Gill 28/10/16

before the birds come i wake and clean the floor it is the colour of a swimming pool they say aquamarine in the gallery there are birds soon in my hair they peck like this like this in my ears i think sometimes they are communicating with me don't they say but i say yes yes and the little pecks continue making small pricks in my skin through which light shines it's a little like when the needles go in and out in and out of the canvas and on the other side the eyes are watching they are little eyes and they follow me as i move back and forth on my knees along the stones of the gallery floor scrubbing up the shit and the piss and the crumbs of food the birds don't like the food in here they say it's only good for men from the north and a little bomb goes off somewhere in the toilet and i'm thinking i need more water but i'm afraid to go back in there they didn't teach me in art school how to clean up blood when i was a slave they didn't think i was any good at art they just said sew sew and sweat sweat and i did what they said but all the while i knew that deep in my wrist was this thing called 'to make' and when the birds peck at my scalp it's as if they're picking the gold leaf off a tendril of sapphire glass

Jane Goldman 12:50 29/11/16

in response to

Tessa Berring 06/11/16

in response to

Alice Tarbuck 01/11/16

TORN FROM VAST SILLY HILLS RUN

taken to take minted sage tea
cornered for tea in a corner
a pale corner corners a pale
stone we become scene one

sigh

(a time is being minted

a time is being passed)

on

watch now how it is thrown

unpinned

into the lecture

room

(a feminist

revisionist theory

of a universal

hysteria is being

expounded)

scene two

with our name on it

73 REFERENCES

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Creativity is a transformational force in our lives that can help us learn and teach in new ways, as well as opening up unexplored possibilities for dialogue and communication. This belief is at the heart of the work I do to coordinate the [Festival of Creative Learning](#) at the Institute for Academic Development. I also support a variety of projects that explore innovative, collaborative and creative learning at the University of Edinburgh, for instance the [Near Future Teaching](#) project which is dreaming the future of digital education at the University and is led by Assistant Principal and Professor of Digital Education, Siân Bayne.

Professional background and interests

My background is in writing, art, collaboration, creative learning and project management. I hold a Bachelor of Art degree from Wellesley College in English Literature with a Studio Art minor, and an MLitt in Creative Writing from the University of Glasgow. Key recent posts have included Programme Manager at the Scottish Poetry Library and Literature Officer at the Traverse Theatre.

My personal creative focus is poetry and I am particularly interested in the ways poets make use of language in unusual configurations to help us explore our experience of the world. I also research how poetry can inhabit and cohabit with other forms to reframe the creative process; investigate how poetry and writing workshops can improve experimentation, self-understanding, expression and communication; and explore how collaborative working methods can be implemented to bring expertise together from different disciplines in order to spark original ideas.

The **Festival of Creative Learning** is a vehicle for cultivating creativity in all its forms, and I also aim to consider how mindfulness, sustainability and well-being, as well inquiry into utopian – world-changing – ideas, can sit in the heart of rather than at the side lines of what we do.

For more details about my poetry, please visit: www.jlwilliamspoetry.co.uk.