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"Vor, Neben und Nach (Jenseits) der Biographischen Erzählung"

"Avant, Auprès et Après (Au delà de) le Récit Biographique"

PAPERS

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Jean-Michel Baudouin & Christopher Parson, Université de Genève

Cette contribution comporte trois dimensions. (i) La première présente succinctement les travaux d'Amartya Sen portant sur la problématique des facteurs de conversion ; (ii) la seconde vise à clarifier la base empirique de ce qui définit et concrétise les facteurs de conversion, lorsque l'on prend comme objet d'analyse les rapports entre développement professionnel et impact de la formation ; (iii) la troisième est davantage méthodologique et interroge ce qui dans l'entretien biographique et plus largement le récit de vie doit être pris en compte pour comprendre mieux le fonctionnement des facteurs de conversion.

Soulignons que notre perspective dans cette communication est essentiellement exploratoire : est-il possible de déterminer des facteurs de conversion dans un entretien biographique ? Comment s'y prendre ? Quels segments de l'entretien biographique privilégier ? C'est seulement lorsque nous aurons stabilisé les réponses à ces questions qu'une autre phase de recherche pourra être envisagée, de manière systématique, sur des catégories plus larges ou d'autres générations.

Facteurs de conversion et accomplissement chez Amartya Sen

La distinction proposée par les travaux d'Amartya Sen entre capabilités, fonctionnements et ressources interrogent la possibilité pour un individu de disposer véritablement d'un pouvoir d'action réelle :

> A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedom, in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead (Sen, 1988).

L'approche par les capacités s'inscrit dans la perspective de la justice sociale et du développement humain en tant que liberté réelle. Sen fait une distinction fondamentale entre les fonctionnements ou accomplissements – les actes que je pose effectivement, les choix que je fais - et les *capabilités* ou libertés réelles d'agir ou de me comporter selon ce que je considère présenter une valeur pour moi, ou encore de mener la vie que j'ai choisie librement – les actes que je suis capable de poser, les choix que j'arrive à faire selon mes propres critères. Cette distinction met en lumière la position centrale de la liberté d'agir, c'est-à-dire l'autonomie réelle, et nous renvoie à des considérations en termes d'*empowerment* ou d'émancipation.

L'approche par les capabilités est donc définie en partie par sa centration sur la signification morale de la capacité d'un individu de mener la vie qu'il a choisie librement et de poursuivre des objectifs qui correspondent à son propre système de valeurs. Ce focus sur le libre choix et sur les valeurs individuelles distingue l'entrée par les capabilités des approches basées sur l'utilitarisme (Mill, Bentham), ou la distribution équitable des ressources (*resourcism*) et la disponibilité des moyens d'accomplir une 'vie bonne', une vie de valeur. Une vie de valeur est comprise comme un ensemble d'états et d'actes tels que jouir d'une bonne santé, avoir accès à des relations aimables avec autrui

ou poursuivre une carrière qui nous valorise et nous permet d'accéder à des formes de reconnaissance.

Notre contribution abordera en particulier la problématique générale des *facteurs de conversion* à l'œuvre dans ce qui relie investissement dans une formation continue et transformation des parcours professionnels. Il s'agit de déterminer mieux et d'élucider ce qui surdétermine l'opérationnalisation effective d'une formation dans le parcours de vie des personnes.

La notion de facteurs de conversion est centrale dans les travaux de Sen. Des ressources ou des biens possèdent des caractéristiques ou des qualités qui les rendent intéressantes aux gens. Prenons un exemple proposé par Sen de la bicyclette standard. Cette ressource possède le potentiel de 'déplacement', mais sa capacité d'effectivement transporter une personne dépendra de certaines caractéristiques liées à la personne qui essaie de l'utiliser. Il serait étrange de nous intéresser à la bicyclette comme un pur objet décoratif, en privilégiant uniquement sa forme ou sa couleur, ou encore les matériaux utilisés dans sa construction. Ce qui nous intéresse est sa capacité de nous amener là où nous voulons aller, et plus rapidement que si on marchait ! Ces caractéristiques fonctionnelles d'un bien ou d'une commodité permettent ou contribuent à un accomplissement. Une bicyclette permet l'accomplissement de la mobilité, la possibilité de se mouvoir librement et plus rapidement qu'à pied. La relation entre un bien et l'accomplissement de certains états ou actes (*beings and doings*) est l'essence même des facteurs de conversion, qui désignent le degré de transformation d'une ressource en accomplissement opéré par une personne.

Une personne en pleine frome physique, qui a appris à faire du vélo pendant son enfance possède un facteur de conversion élevé lui permettant de transformer la bicyclette en possibilité de se mouvoir dans l'espace de manière efficace, tandis qu'une personne souffrant d'un handicap physique ou n'ayant jamais appris à faire du vélo posséderait un facteur de conversion très faible. Ainsi, le facteur de conversion représente le degré d'accomplissement que l'on peut tirer d'un bien ou d'un service, en l'occurrence ici la mobilité qu'une personne arrive à obtenir d'une bicyclette.

Les facteurs de conversion sont les facteurs – liés à l'individu et/ou au contexte dans lequel celui-ci évolue – qui facilitent sa capacité à faire usage des ressources pour les convertir en réalisations concrètes. Selon Sen, ils peuvent être globalement de trois types : personnels, sociaux et environnementaux:

1. Les facteurs de conversion *personnels* sont internes à la personne : le métabolisme, la condition physique, la santé psychique, le sexe, les compétences en littératie, la culture générale, etc. Pour reprendre notre exemple, une bicyclette fournira de très faibles possibilités de mobilité à une personne handicapée physique.

2. Les facteurs de conversion *sociaux* se réfèrent à la société dans laquelle l'on vit. Les politiques publiques, les normes sociales, les pratiques de discrimination négative, les hiérarchies sociales, les rapports de pouvoir en termes de classe, de genre, de race, de religion sont ici à prendre en compte. Il se pourra ainsi que les valeurs sociales associées à la bicyclette interdisent à certaines personnes de l'utiliser.

3. Les facteurs de conversion *environnementaux* renvoient au contexte géographique naturel ou urbain, et concernent aussi bien les dimensions climatiques que les équipements collectifs à disposition. Par exemple utiliser une bicyclette sera dangereux dans certains contextes urbains inappropriés.

Pour notre part, notre contribution ne portera pas sur l'usage de la bicyclette, mais sur la problématique du développement professionnel et de ses rapports avec la formation. Nous nous appuyons ici sur les travaux récents menés en France et en Suisse (Fernagu Oudet (2012), Zimmermann (2011), Bonvin et Favarque (2007)) qui explorent le fonctionnement des facteurs de conversion dans le milieu du travail et de l'insertion professionnelle. En particulier, nous nous intéressons à la possibilité de proposer une approche alternative à l'approche par les compétences, qui est dominante dans le champ de la formation. Si les compétences renvoient à des *savoir-faire quelque-chose* dans un contexte spécifique, transférables ou non à d'autres contextes de vie, les capabilités relèvent « …du fait d'*être en mesure de faire quelque-chose*, elles sont donc un pouvoir d'être et de faire. » (Fernagu Oudet, 2012), et prennent en compte les préférences et les possibilités propres à la personne et à sa situation, c'est-à-dire «les opportunités et les moyens d'agir» (Zimmerman, 2008).

Matériel biographique et facteurs de conversion

La base empirique de notre contribution est ici constituée d'entretiens biographiques d'adultes d'origine modeste, qui sont parvenus, au cours de leurs vies, à obtenir des qualifications professionnelles et à améliorer de manière significative leur statut socioéconomique et leur qualité de vie. Malgré des débuts qui ne laissaient guère présager de telles progressions, et en dépit de nombreux obstacles et embuches, ces personnes ont su tirer profit de situations diverses pour assurer leur avancement professionnel. Notre hypothèse est que ces acteurs, ont pu mobiliser des ressources – personnes, formations, embauches – rencontrées sur le chemin de la vie, dans le sens d'accroitre leur liberté réelle et leur pouvoir d'agir.

Notre objectif est de mieux comprendre les rapports entre ressources, fonctionnements et capacités et d'identifier les mécanismes à l'œuvre dans ces situations en privilégiant la problématique des facteurs de conversion. Pour ce faire, nous devons prendre en compte en premier lieu la spécificité du matériel biographique sur lequel nous travaillons. Pour tester la possibilité d'une réflexion portant sur les facteurs de conversion à partir d'entretiens biographiques, nous avons retenu une demi-douzaine d'entretiens réalisés par des étudiants dans le cadre d'un enseignement de Master en formation des adultes (en 2012) et retranscrits par leurs soins. Outre le fait de se former à la conduite d'entretiens biographiques, l'exercice vise à réunir des données qu'ils peuvent ensuite analyser. L'objectif du travail qui est leur est proposé est de mieux comprendre les évolutions des parcours de vie contemporains, en privilégiant ici une génération de personnes, nées dans les années 50 et ayant débuté leur vie professionnelle avec un niveau de qualification modeste type CFC (Certificat Fédéral de Capacité) ou CAP (Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle) (le plus souvent les personnes enquêtées sont suisses ou françaises). Les entretiens durent de une à trois heures et comportent de 30'000 à 100'000 caractères. Nous avons choisi six entretiens en veillant à disposer autant de parcours féminins et masculins.

Le lecteur pourrait se demander si l'inexpérience potentielle des étudiants dans la conduite d'entretiens de recherche ne conduit pas à une altération des données ? Le lecteur jugera par lui-même. Il arrive certes de temps en temps que nous regrettions que telle ou telle dimension biographique n'ait pas été davantage explorée, ou encore, dans certains cas, que des données temporelles ne soient pas systématiquement renseignées (dates et âges précis). Mais le sentiment général qui s'installe est plutôt que les personnes sollicitées ont beaucoup à dire et à raconter sur leur parcours. Ces personnes étant nées dans les années 50, les entretiens retenus ayant été réalisés fin 2012, ils adoptent sans difficulté semble-t-il une perspective rétrospective et brossent les événements qu'ils estiment significatifs de leur parcours. Il arrive dans certains cas que l'entretien

prenne momentanément la forme d'une conversation, parce que les étudiants réagissent à telle ou telle situation évoquée, mais l'entretien reprend le fil du récit biographique sans problème aucun. Notre appréciation spontanée, sous réserve de discussions ultérieures, est plutôt que le matériel biographique concernant le parcours professionnel est « robuste », et que les éléments les plus déterminants et massifs ne sont pas oubliés par les adultes ayant accepté de livrer leur parcours professionnel. Notre hypothèse est que cette robustesse doit permettre de discerner les facteurs de conversion ayant contribué au développement de ces parcours.

Facteurs de conversion et réseaux de proximité

Commençons notre exploration avec Verena : elle a un peu plus de 50 ans, deux enfants de 21 et 18 ans. Une enfance dans le canton de Neuchâtel, une mère romande employée de bureau, un père d'origine suisse allemande et comptable, une scolarité qui ne permet pas de faire le "gymnas" (secondaire deux) mais de réaliser une formation d'aide soignante alors que Verena rêvait d'être infirmière, formation inatteignable car supposant de disposer de la formation gymnasiale et du diplôme de maturité. Verena est bilingue « depuis l'âge de six ans », et parle le suisse allemand et le français. Cette compétence langagière lui permet d'être engagée à la fin de sa formation d'aide soignante dans un hôpital de la capitale fédérale (allémanique), où elle ne restera finalement que 6 mois, car sa maîtrise du « hochdeutsch » ne lui permet pas de rédiger les rapports médicaux sous la dictée des médecins, qui apprécient cependant son bilinguisme dans la vie professionnelle courante. Elle pose donc sa candidature comme employée de bureau dans une grande entreprise horlogère où elle travaillera durant 4 ans, pour ensuite donner son congé et faire un séjour de 18 mois comme jeune fille au pair en Angleterre, à 24 ans. Suivront ensuite cinq emplois successifs, comme secrétaire dans une organisation fédérale à Berne, période durant laquelle elle se marie et emploi qu'elle interrompt définitivement pour la naissance de sa fille (à 29 ans) et de son fils (à 32 ans). A 35 ans, elle décide de reprendre un emploi comme vendeuse dans un supermarché où elle est rapidement chargée des achats, emploi qu'elle abandonne après trois ans à un moment où son mari connaît des évolutions professionnelles qui amènent à un changement de région. Elle postule dans la succursale locale d'une chaîne de grands magasins où elle ne travaillera que quelques mois, car elle est recrutée par une célèbre marque de cosmétique qui recherche une « animatrice », emploi qu'elle occupera pendant 7 ans avant d'être recrutée par une marque de parfumerie comme représentante, fonction qui est la sienne depuis 5 ans et toujours encore au moment de l'entretien.

Au plan de la problématique des facteurs de conversion, que peut-on prendre en compte dans un tel parcours ? Dans une perspective cavalière, deux points sont frappants. En premier lieu, la plupart des activités professionnelles développées sont sans lien aucun avec la formation professionnelle

initiale d'aide soignante. En second lieu, les emplois successifs occupés à partir de 35 ans permettent d'observer par la répétition même du processus ce qui semble favoriser à chaque fois le parcours professionnel.

Reprenons. (i) On l'a vu, c'est la difficulté de rédiger sous la dictée en « *hochdeutsch* » qui fait prendre à Verena la décision de quitter son premier emploi, correspondant cependant au milieu hospitalier qu'elle visait initialement par la formation d'aide soignante réalisée et le projet d'enfance antérieur d'être infirmière.

Verbatim de l'entretien biographique. Verena.

> Parler l'allemand, il n'y avait pas de problème. Mais écrire une lettre, c'était vraiment un peu compliqué, parce que le médecin, quand tu as un rapport hospitalier à faire, une personne qui rentre à l'hôpital ou une patiente qui doit aller chez un autre médecin, il te dicte une lettre. En allemand, c'était juste pas possible. Donc je me suis engagée chez X [entreprise horlogère].

Elle a confié quelques instants auparavant qu'elle n'avait pas trouvé de place d'aide médicale en postulant dans trois grandes villes de Suisse. Certes, ces événements sont décrits à quelques 30 ans de distance, mais on ne peut être que frappé par l'irénisme apparent de la remémoration, l'absence de pathos ou de regret observable. Malgré le choix d'une formation dans les métiers de la santé durant près de trois ans, le projet professionnel semble encore labile. D'une certaine manière, on pourrait se demander ici si l'impossibilité de trouver un emploi dans le domaine retenu ne constitue pas un exemple de facteur de « déconversion », car il y a échec par rapport au projet initial. Mais Verena souhaite trouver un emploi avant tout, et la qualification d'« employée de bureau » est en tout point celle de sa propre mère : il y a ici comme la reproduction d'un héritage intériorisé et familier. Dans le même temps, dans l'entreprise horlogère, « il y a tous ces ingénieurs qui parlent anglais » : le projet de partir comme jeune fille au pair en Angleterre, donc en terrain inconnu, s'enracine dans cette première expérience de travail.

Il faut donc en synthèse souligner la réactivité de Verena dans ces premières expériences qui conduise à changer d'orientation sans trop d'état d'âme dans un autre secteur d'activité que celui initialement visé, et en reconduisant un habitus maternel hérité. Soulignons que le processus de réorientation est rapide et repose sur deux dimensions totalement disjointes : d'un côté, la réactivité de Verena, qui est un facteur individuel lié à sa personnalité ; d'un autre côté le fait qu'il n'y ait peu d'emploi disponible dans le secteur d'activité visé initialement (secrétariat médical) et beaucoup dans celui de l'horlogerie, dans la conjoncture considérée propre au parcours de vie et aux ressources locales, facteurs qui relèvent d'une perspective macro-économique, ou environnementale pour rester dans la terminologie de Sen.

(ii) Les emplois successifs occupés à partir de 35 ans permettent d'observer la reproduction à l'identique d'un nouveau processus. Ces changements sont toujours le fruit d'une place laissée

vacante par des collègues de Verena et qui l'ont côtoyée quotidiennement dans son travail, qui semblent être convaincues de ses compétences, et qui l'encouragent à postuler à la place qu'elles laissent vacantes tout en soutenant sa candidature. Nous allons examiner un extrait d'entretien pour appréhender le processus, mais il convient de dire que l'importance de ces moments de transition ou de bifurcation professionnelle semble être intuitivement repérée par Verena, qui les soigne sensiblement dans l'entretien en les développant longuement. Les changements de travail sont d'ailleurs toujours plus détaillés spontanément que les activités des emplois occupés.

Verbatim. Verena.

> V. Oui, ça n'allait pas, et puis il y a toujours des dames qui viennent pour X, pour Y, pour Z [célèbres marques de cosmétique], pour faire des animations, elles sont là 2 jours, 3 jours, une semaine, et j'ai fait la connaissance d'une fille qui venait pour X, et un jour elle m'a dit « écoute moi, je change de travail, je ne travaille plus pour X, je pars comme représentante ». Et je lui dis « ah tu pars », et je lui dis « ils cherchent quelqu'un chez X, puisque tu pars ? ». Elle m'a dit : « écoute, écris » ! Alors j'ai écrit, j'ai fait un magnifique CV, motivation, et voilà.

> [Rires]

> Et puis le monsieur, à l'époque chef de vente, c'était un autrichien. Il m'a téléphoné, il m'a convoqué au buffet de la gare à Yverdon. On a discuté en allemand, parce qu'il ne savait pas très bien le français. Donc on a discuté en suisse allemand … Tu sais que j'ai entendu à la radio l'autre jour que parler suisse allemand équivalait à avoir un doctorat ?

> I : nooon, ce n'est pas vrai !

> (…)

> [Rires]

> V : c'est compliqué, je confirme !

> I : toi tu parles suisse allemand ?

> V : oui, c'est un plus, c'est vrai, c'est un plus. Je ne parle pas très bien le hochdeutsch. Forcément, quand tu parles suisse allemand, tu parles le hochdeutsch. Les suisses allemands, ils ont le hochdeutsch à l'école. Mais moi qui ait appris le suisse allemand phonétiquement, je parle hochdeutsch, mais pas très bien. Je le comprends, mais je ne le parle pas très bien. Je le parle, mais je préfère parler suisse allemand

> I: tu te sens plus à l'aise,

> V : oui, je me sens plus à l'aise, plus fluide en tant que le hochdeutsch, c'est un peu moins fluide, saccadé.

> I : donc,

> V : voilà, on a fait l'entretien en suisse allemand … parce que, voilà, il ne savait pas très bien le français et … je me rappelle, parce que c'était quelques jours avant Noël, la nuit de Noël, et il m'a dit : « Ecoutez, je vais en parler avec mon directeur, je vais lui montrer votre CV, je vais lui dire que je vous ai vue, qu'on a parlé, que, voilà ». Il m'a téléphoné le 23 décembre : « Ecoutez, vous pouvez envoyer votre congé ». « Mais, je … ». Il m'a dit : « Vous pouvez compter sur moi, je vous le dis, vous pouvez envoyer votre congé. Vous êtes engagée, on va faire ça au début de l'année. Il n'y pas de problème, l'engagement est fixé. ». Et j'ai travaillé sept ans chez X comme animatrice, chez X [très grande marque de cosmétique] !

Plusieurs facteurs de conversion sont repérables ici. En premier lieu, il y a la mobilisation évidente de Verena, qui est observable aussi bien quand elle apprend qu'un emploi va être laissé vacant par

sa collègue (elle s'informe immédiatement et fait le nécessaire) que lorsqu'elle se déplace à Yverdon pour rencontrer le chef de vente. Verena semble clairement déterminée et résolue. Le second facteur de conversion semble tenir aux compétences langagières de Verena en suisse allemand, qui incontestablement facilitent la discussion avec le chef de vente autrichien. Les dimensions formelles semblent ici en permanence soutenues par des aspects informels : on n'est pas dans le bureau du chef du personnel au siège de l'entreprise dans le cadre d'un entretien de sélection, mais dans le café d'une gare ferroviaire, en transit entre deux trains. L'un est autrichien, l'autre est romande, mais on se débrouille pour se comprendre, moitié hochdeutsch, moitié suisse allemand ! Et « le courant passe », comme on dit. Verena décroche ainsi l'emploi avec l'appui de cette personne et bien entendu son CV. Aux côtés des facteurs de conversion identifiés plus haut (aspects macro-économiques : la marque de cosmétique crée des emplois) apparaissent en plus des facteurs personnels de nouvelles dimensions, que l'on qualifiera de « relationnelles », sous réserve de formulations à venir plus appropriées. Au plan personnel, la compétence langagière construite informellement (ce n'est pas appris à l'école, mais dans le cadre familial, grâce à l'origine suisse allemande du père de Verena) joue un rôle non négligeable. Verena en semble consciente quand elle rappelle avec humour que « parler suisse allemand équivaut à un doctorat » ! Mais ce qui émerge ici est la sorte de « chaînage » relationnel, qui va de Verena à sa collègue qui lui dit : « écoute, écris », c'est-à-dire l'encourage ; « chaînage » qui se construit ensuite entre Verena et le chef de vente, avec en toile de fond celui existant entre le chef de vente et le directeur. On est dans une configuration relationnelle marquée par la confiance (Verena/sa collègue ; le chef de vente/le directeur) et la rencontre mixant le formel et l'informel entre le chef de vente et Verena, qui reconduit alors le sceau de la confiance. Nous sommes donc en présence ici d'un facteur de conversion qui ne tient pas seulement à des dimensions macro-économiques (il faut qu'il y ait de l'emploi) ou des dimensions personnelles (un CV et des qualités diverses associées de détermination et de suisse allemand), mais à des aspects qui sont intermédiaires et introduisent la problématique du rapport entre les personnes. Nous proposons d'observer la répétition du même processus pour en tirer quelques observations plus générales. Verena travaillera en effet sept ans dans le cadre de cette nouvelle fonction, jusqu'au jour où une ancienne collègue la contacte, faisant le même travail qu'elle mais ayant quitté cet emploi depuis un an pour devenir représentante pour une autre marque.

Verbatim. Verena.

> V (…) Ça faisait pas tout-à-fait une année qu'elle avait son nouveau job, quand elle m'a téléphoné et elle m'a dit : « Ecoute, il faut que je te voie, parce qu'on va reprendre une nouvelle marque qui s'appelle Z » [célèbre marque de cosmétique]. Elle m'a dit : « Tu connais Z ? » (…) C'est énorme, c'est 150 meubles dans toute la Suisse. Donc elle m'a dit : « Ecoute, c'est juste énorme, moi je suis toute seule, et mon Boss m'a dit : « il faut trouver quelqu'un ». Alors, elle m'a dit …

I : …c'est chouette qu'elle ait pensé à toi…

V : Elle m'a dit : « Ecris, tu es faite pour ce job, écris ». Et je me suis dit : « Voilà, représentante »… J'ai dit : « Je ne sais pas. ». « Mais oui, écoute, tu sais l'allemand, tu connais la région et tout, écris ». Et alors, j'ai écrit.

Lorsque l'entretien biographique est réalisé, Verena occupe ce dernier emploi depuis 6 ans et semble satisfaite de son travail. Il est intéressant d'observer combien le processus de conversion semble ici se reproduire à l'identique : une collègue, convaincue des compétences de Verena, la contacte pour l'informer d'une opportunité. Verena développe longuement cette séquence de nouveau changement d'emploi, et le matériel biographique restitué indique bien que cette collègue ne fait pas qu'informer Verena d'une opportunité. Elle souhaite que Verena soit représentante comme elle, dans la même entreprise. Elle est également convaincue que Verena, aussi bien en terme de compétences que de personnalité, est faite pour cet emploi : « Ecris, tu es faite pour ce job, écris ».

Trois éléments semblent constitutifs de ce facteur de conversion. En premier lieu, la relation est marquée par la confiance : dans tous les cas, les collègues de Verena sont confiantes dans ses propres capacités de réaliser le travail de manière pleinement satisfaisante. Cette confiance est déduite du fait que le risque pris serait trop grand si elles doutaient des capacités de Verena, dans la mesure où elles-mêmes s'impliquent en la recommandant. Cette confiance n'est évidemment pas dissociable d'une sorte de « conviction » fondée par la connaissance mutuelle que produit le fait de partager la même réalité de travail sur des durées longues. Cette confiance mise en Verena est la sanction de ce que l'on pourrait appeler la « notoriété » de Verena auprès de ces collègues, qui sont proches et qui sont convaincues de ses qualités. La notoriété est une dimension personnelle *et* sociale : elle définit une réputation dont la caractéristique particulière dans le cas analysé ici n'est pas liée à l'étendue « dans la cité », mais à une pertinence resserrée. En effet, la notoriété de Verena n'est pas dépendante d'une sorte de « réseautage » élargi et tout azimut, mais repose sur un réseau restreint et solide de proximité étroite. Ce réseau ne semble pas le produit d'une intentionnalité délibérée à caractère stratégique, mais plutôt le résultat d'une activité professionnelle sur le long terme et observée de près par des collègues elles-mêmes compétentes dans l'activité considérée. A ces traits de confiance, de notoriété et de réseau de proximité étroite correspond une sorte de solidarité spontanée, en terme d'appui et de soutien. *Si l'on conceptualise les caractéristiques intervenant dans ces changements d'emploi en terme de facteurs de conversion, il faut observer que le niveau sollicité est un niveau intermédiaire. Certes, il présuppose des qualités personnelles (niveau micro) et des réalités socioéconomiques favorables (macro). Mais le fait décisif que notre analyse détecte semble tenir à la conjonction relationnelle : une notoriété locale repérée par des personnes proches en position momentanée d'apporter leur soutien. On pourrait proposer la*

formulation suivante pour la facteur de conversion repéré : notoriété dans un réseau de proximité opératoire. Le pouvoir d'agir ou, dans le langage de Sen, la «liberté» de Verena, repose sur une opportunité qui dépend fondamentalement de ce facteur de conversion.

Verbatim. Aurélien.

> Je rencontre Patrick qui travaillait chez ce petit ferronnier dont je me rappelle plus le nom... et ce Patrick c'est un vieux Compagnon, lui, pour le coup, personnage complètement atypique, voire fou, mais par contre lui m'a appris beaucoup de choses, vraiment, vraiment. Il était serrurier de métier, pas ferronnier ; une maîtrise, une pratique professionnelle absolument exceptionnelle. Il avait cette dimension qu'ont beaucoup de Compagnons, c'est-à-dire pas que la dimension métier, tout ce qui va autour, les outils, l'histoire, des tours de mains, des secrets… (…) Donc au bout d'un moment, Patrick me rappelle, il avait été contacté par un grand ferronnier de X [grande ville française], pour un projet d'ouvrage en [pays d'Asie], pour Y [nom du chef d'état du pays concerné], à l'époque. Il s'agissait de construire six portes monumentales en laiton pour un palais présidentiel. Lui est embauché par W [nom de l'entreprise], à X [nom de la ville française], m'appelle et me propose de venir travailler là-bas. Je suis à Z [autre grande ville française] à l'époque. J'accepte, d'autant plus qu'après les portes construites, il fallait aller les poser là-bas, en [nom du pays d'Asie].

Le processus repéré pour Verena fonctionne à l'identique pour Aurélien. Nous pourrions multiplier les exemples qui montrent le fonctionnement décisif de cette notoriété dans un réseau de proximité. Evidemment, rien n'interdit aux personnes d'être pro-actives et de tirer partie des ressources que certains secteurs d'activité rendent possible. Ainsi Maud, qui a été successivement serveuse, responsable de salle dans un restaurant faisant rapidement office de sommelière, puis infirmière-assistante, infirmière, responsable d'équipe observe :

Verbatim. Maud.

> Maud : Tu vois ces changements, en m'écoutant parler, j'ai toujours tiré profit des changements comme ça, et là encore, j'en tire profit.
>
> I : C'est assez flagrant !
>
> Maud: C'est vrai, je suis une vraie opportuniste. [rires]
>
> I : Je ne crois pas que tu puisses utiliser ce mot là.
>
> Maud: Non. Je dis ça en plaisantant. Mais je saisis des opportunités.

Maud en effet, dans les deux grands secteurs d'activité qui ont marqué son parcours et qui sont définis par les métiers de la restauration et des soins infirmiers, a su tirer parti des occasions de changement professionnel, à proportion semble-t-il de sa propre mobilité, en l'occurrence voulue et agie. La prise en compte de ce point conduit à thématiser des facteurs de conversion qui semblent puissants dans les parcours de vie propres à notre corpus biographique.

L'investissement dans le travail et dans la formation

Si pour Verena les facteurs de conversion ne reposent pas de manière massive sur la formation formelle, ils sont cependant reliés à une forte mobilité professionnelle, qui est enclenchée par une disponibilité aux imprévus et aux changements. Sa reprise de travail après les six ans d'interruption liés à la naissance de ses deux enfants est à cet égard illustrative : elle prend un emploi de caissière

dans une entreprise de distribution alimentaire et accepte rapidement de se risquer sur un problème nouveau qui se présente dans la succursale.

Verbatim. Verena.

> Voilà, j'étais comme vendeuse chez X (marque de distribution alimentaire), tu connais X ? Alors j'ai été vendeuse là. Je travaillais à 60%. Et puis, ça faisait six mois que j'étais là quand ils ont décidé d'installer le système scanning. Ils ont demandé à deux ou trois vendeuses si ça les intéressait d'essayer de s'y mettre. A l'époque, c'était le système AS 400. (…) Alors, quand mes deux collègues qui travaillaient avec moi ont dit : « Non, non, je ne touche pas ça », « je ne touche pas ça ah non, non », (…) ils ont alors demandé à moi. Et moi, je me suis dit : « Mais non, je vais essayer, ou bien c'est mettre des boîtes de conserve en rayon. Je vais quand même essayer ». J'ai dit « oui, oui, moi oui, moi oui ». (…) D'être assise dans un bureau, et passer les commandes, commander les prix, commander les actions [opérations promotionnelles], regarder que tout joue au niveau des prix, c'était vraiment plus intéressant et plus gratifiant, tu vois ? (…) Ça a été vraiment bien. Ça a été vraiment une bonne période.

On ne peut être que frappé par le fait que Verena reprenne le travail sur un poste modeste par rapport à ses qualifications et expériences antérieures, mais est rapidement en situation d'accepter de faire face à des évolutions inattendues. Travailler ici ne signifie pas seulement réaliser une classe d'activité stabilisée et répétitive, mais s'adapter à des changements techniques et se mettre ainsi en situation d'évolution. Verena suivra d'ailleurs une formation sur le poste de travail pour intégrer le nouvel outil informatique. Il ne s'agit pas pour nous de tenir un discours normatif, du type Verena fait ce qu'il convient de faire, etc. Mais il s'agit d'observer que le fait d'accepter un emploi en-dessous de ses qualifications dans le cas présent (en fait, elle ne thématise pas ce point qui ne lui pose aucun problème semble-t-il) n'entrave aucunement des évolutions ultérieures de travail, dans le cas où celles-ci se présentent. Le facteur de conversion qui semble ici central, c'est le goût même pour la… *conversion* ! Cette dimension ne nous semble pas triviale. Elle est absolument décisive dans les parcours d'Aurélien et de Maud, qui recourent massivement à l'investissement dans la formation, le premier en faisant la célèbre formation des Compagnons dans le domaine de la ferronnerie à 38 ans, et Maud une formation d'assistante infirmière puis d'infirmière à 31 ans. Le premier, en France, passe un Baccalauréat, puis deux CAP de chaudronnier puis de tôlier, et enfin un Brevet Technique de tôlier-constructeur, tout en travaillant comme magasinier chez un grand détaillant de l'électro-ménager ou comme employé de bureau dans une entreprise. La seconde a été serveuse dans un bistrot dès l'âge de 17 ans pour quitter sa famille. Il est intéressant de noter comment la bifurcation opère :

Verbatim. Maud.

> Tout ça, c'est dix ans, jusqu'à 28 ans. Dix ans dans l'hôtellerie : ça m'a fatigué les jambes. J'avais des varices et je me suis fait opérer à l'hôpital cantonal. (…) J'ai fait une semaine d'hospitalisation et, de nouveau, j'ai vraiment retrouvé ce truc.. : moi, il faut que je travaille dans un hôpital, que je sois infirmière, c'était vraiment fort ! Donc, je les voyais faire. Je m'identifiais complètement aux infirmières, et alors je trouvais que j'étais très mal soignée. J'avais l'impression que j'aurais des idées pour faire mieux. Je me rappelle, elles m'appelaient : « Mme Maud, Mme Maud ». En même temps,

j'avais l'impression que personne ne me connaissait, que ça manquait de chaleur. J'ai décidé de faire l'école d'infirmière. Dès que je suis sortie de l'hôpital, j'ai tout de suite pris les renseignements (…). J'ai commencé d'abord comme infirmière assistante, parce que à l'époque, il y avait ces deux formations, et puis je n'avais pas la scolarité pour faire l'école d'infirmière. J'étais très bonne, parce que j'avais cette référence de ma propre hospitalisation. Je ne sais pas. Je répondais aux questions « que faut-il faire pour un malade, etc », c'était quand même assez axé sur les soins individualisés, et donc c'était tout-à-fait dans l'esprit dans lequel j'avais aussi senti les choses que j'avais choisies de faire. (…) J'ai commencé cette école d'infirmière assistante. C'était un changement de vie énorme. Quand j'étais dans l'hôtellerie, je travaillais le soir, les dimanches. Je n'avais jamais eu une vie normale entre guillemets, avec des horaires la journée. J'ai eu tout de suite beaucoup, beaucoup de plaisir. J'ai beaucoup aimé cette formation, parce que ça me correspondait, ça marchait bien. J'étais reconnue, tout ça. J'ai fait un an et demi de formation.

Dès lors que l'on examine ces parcours professionnels, la formation formelle définit elle-même un facteur central de conversion. Dans les deux secteurs professionnels représentés par Aurélien et Maud, (les métiers de la ferronnerie et des soins infirmiers), les conjonctures sont favorables à l'emploi (niveau macro), et des dispositions individuelles sont préparées biographiquement à l'exercice des métiers correspondants. La « préparation biographique » est liée soit à des héritages familiaux (le père d'Aurélien est titulaire d'un CAP et a fait une carrière d'enseignant technique) soit à des inclinations personnelles, comme on le verra plus bas pour Maud. Au désir de se former d'Aurélien et de Maud correspondent des possibilités offertes par des appareils de formation à des adultes qui sont dès lors en reprise d'étude dans des contextes de formation plutôt conçus pour des jeunes gens. Dans le cas de Maud, il est nécessaire qu'une passerelle institutionnalisée existe entre formation d'aide-soignante et formation d'infirmière, et que son dossier soit accepté à titre dérogatoire (elle ne dispose pas du diplôme de maturité requis). Les facteurs de conversion ici reposent fondamentalement sur des dispositions réglementaires, juridiques et sociales qui rendent possibles ces développements professionnels.

Facteurs de conversion et préférences des personnes

L'analyse de ces entretiens biographique confirme que les trois types de facteurs de conversion identifiés par Sen nous permettent de comprendre qu'il ne suffit pas d'identifier les ressources à disposition d'un personne, qu'elle possède ou qu'elle pourrait utiliser,pour identifier son pouvoir d'agir véritable. Nous devons connaître davantage l'histoire de la personne, son contexte de vie et les situations dans lesquelles elle évolue. Le terme "capability", tel qu'employé par Sen, ne se réfère pas exclusivement aux compétences ou capacités internes d'une personne, mais aux opportunités qui sont soit rendues faisables, soit contraintes par les facteurs de conversion internes (personnels) ou externes (sociaux ou environnementaux) :

Hence, knowing the goods a person owns or can use is not sufficient to know which functionings he/she can achieve; therefore we need to know much more about the person and the circumstances in which he/she is living. The capability approach thus takes account of human diversity in two ways: by its focus on the plurality of

functionings and capabilities as the evaluative space, and by the explicit focus on personal and socio-environmental conversion factors of commodities into functionings, and on the whole social and institutional context that affects the conversion factors and also the capability set directly. (Robeyns 2005: 99).

L'analyse des récits biographiques offre, donc, une ligne d'investigation susceptible à nous apprendre plus sur la personne et sur ses circonstances de vie, une hypothèse confirmée par Zimmermann (2008):

> …une troisième ligne d'investigation , au plus près des personnes, s'appuie sur l'analyse de récits biographiques. Une telle perspective biographique (….) donne accès aux préférences des personnes à un moment particulier de leur vie et à la façon dont elles identifient l'impact des données institutionnelles, organisationnelles et biographiques sur leurs propres parcours.

Prenons le contexte familial de Rose, 60 ans, et de Maud. Rose a travaillé en tant que nurse dans le milieu hospitalier, grimpant lentement les échelons de la hiérarchie pour terminer responsable d'une crèche, malgré un parcours parsemé d'embuches et d'obstacles. Maud, au moment de l'entretien, est infirmière en psychiatrie, un métier qu'elle a toujours voulu exercer, mais auquel elle a pu accéder après une série de bifurcations dans son parcours professionnel. La situation familiale pendant l'enfance des deux femmes a été conflictuelle, mais, de manière paradoxale, a favorisé l'émergence de choix réels :

Verbatim. Maud.

> Je pourrais même remonter plus en arrière parce que, après, avec le recul, par exemple je sais que quand j'étais enfant, j'ai quand même eu vraiment l'idée d'être infirmière. Je me rappelle très bien d'une fois où je suis allée dans un hôpital chanter pour les malades et j'ai vraiment senti ce truc : moi, j'ai envie de travailler dans un hôpital, de travailler avec des malades. Je me rappelle, et puis bon, je m'occupais aussi de ma mère qui était souvent malade. Donc il y avait, j'étais aussi dans la famille, on était 6 enfants et puis j'avais un peu ce rôle. En tout cas, auprès de ma mère, c'est clair que je faisais la petite infirmière, vraiment.

Très tôt, la maladie de la mère donne à Maud un rôle de 'petite infirmière' au sein de la famille. Ses rencontres avec le milieu hospitalier, avec des malades, semblent donner naissance à la vocation. C'est bien la proximité avec la maladie, en particulier celle de sa mère, qui permet l'émergence de cette envie de se consacrer aux soins, envie qui ne la quitte jamais, mais qui ne se concrétisera pas du tout dans un premier temps. Les relations avec ses parents se dégradent au fil des ans, et elle quitte la maison familiale à l'âge de 18 ans :

Verbatim. Maud.

> Pendant l'adolescence, ça a été assez euh...houleux disons, la relation avec mes parents. Donc, je suis partie de la maison. Je n'avais même pas 18 ans, et puis là alors, je voulais être serveuse. Ce n'est pas… c'était aussi un choix. A cette époque-là, j'avais vraiment l'impression que… la vie était intéressante dans les bistrots. C'était là que se passaient les choses.

Maud parle d'un choix réel et non pas d'un choix par défaut faute de mieux, malgré son rêve de travailler dans le milieu des soins. Ce choix-là, facilité, paradoxalement, par les désaccords avec sa

famille, s'inspire de son sentiment que la vie dans les bistrots correspondait bien à ses envies à ce moment-là : c'était là que se passaient les choses.

Pour Rose, la maladie de sa mère et l'incapacité de son père de la protéger l'ont éloignée du milieu familial très tôt, mais l'ont également rapprochée du monde du care :

Verbatim. Rose.

> Ensuite maman est tombée malade, un peu, puis de plus en plus, jusqu'à ce qu'on découvre qu'elle avait une tumeur cérébrale (ton plus grave). Elle a dû se faire opérer à l'Inselspital. Et euh...si bien que euh... elle a été opérée trois fois, trois trépanations. Et chaque fois, elle revenait, mais c'était moi qui devait m'occuper de la maison.

La mère de Rose la maltraite, la bat si elle arrive en retard à la maison. Rose comprend plus tard que c'est la maladie qui transforme sa mère et se montre dès lors compréhensive à son égard, malgré la violence subie :

Verbatim. Rose.

> Oui, j'dois dire que cette maladie, ça change complètement le caractère des gens. Et elle avait très peur pour moi aussi tout le temps. Alors si j'arrivais 5 minutes, en retard et ben je recevais des coups de tape-tapis ! J'ai jamais acheté un tape-tapis (rires) ! (…) Une fois, elle était vraiment très mal, pis elle a pas compris, j'crois que je suis venue 5 minutes en retard... Là j'en ai reçu partout ! J'avais des marques partout. Pis mon papa m'avait dit : « tu veux que je demande le divorce ? » Pis je... c'est terrible qu'on dise ça à un enfant... C'est quand même ma mère ! Et puis euh, ça m'avait fait drôle, et puis j'ai dit : « non, papa, c'est, j'sais pas pourquoi, mais c'est pas de sa faute » je lui avais dit. Mais après, on s'est rendu compte que c'était sa maladie !

Cette capacité de prendre du recul, de se montrer compréhensive et compatissante avec sa mère, est reliée par Rose à son projet de poursuivre sa « vocation ».

Si les facteurs de conversion représentent la capacité de transformer des ressources en accomplissements et de renforcer ainsi le pouvoir individuel d'agir librement et selon ses propres valeurs, que dire des facteurs qui semblent entraver cette liberté ? Des facteurs de conversion *négatives* ? Des facteurs de *déconversion* ? Rose et Maud, toutes les deux, ont découvert des problèmes de vue relativement tardivement et se sont rendues compte de l'effet significatif de leur myopie sur leur parcours de formation et de scolarité :

Verbatim. Rose.

> Alors... oui j'ai eu un traumatisme. Mais au départ, j'étais une très très bonne élève. Dans mes deux premières années, j'étais une des premières de classe. Et puis la 3ème année, euh... j'étais un peu moins bonne parce que c'était une maîtresse méchante, horrible. Bon, elle m'a un petit peu déstabilisée. Pis faut dire que je voyais bientôt plus rien au tableau, et je regardais chez ma copine, parce que je me suis pas rendue compte que je voyais rien, mais voyais pas bien ! Pis j'ai pas osé dire tout de suite, et puis au fond elle croyait que je copiais ! Au fond c'est parce que j'arrivais plus à voir au tableau !

Verbatim. Maud.

> Et je me rappelle qu'il y avait des trucs que je n'arrivais pas, parce que je ne voyais pas bien clair. Je n'avais pas de lunettes et puis je m'étais habituée à, avec mon défaut de vision, à ...vivre sans lunettes, et là je ne pouvais pas. Il y avait par exemple des séries de chiffres qu'il fallait comparer, il

fallait repérer des différences et je ne pouvais pas faire ça, je ne voyais rien. Donc je me suis dit, ça-y-est, je ne vais pas être prise, puis bon la psychologue, après j'avais eu un entretien avec elle, elle avait bien compris que c'était la vision, elle avait trouvé, je ne sais pas, elle avait trouvé que j'étais motivée.

La prise de conscience tardive de leurs problèmes de vue, qui pendant de nombreuses années ont limité leurs chances de transformer leurs désirs en accomplissements, leur ont permis de relativiser leurs mauvais résultats scolaires et de confirmer leurs choix d'insertion professionnelle. L'exemple de Maud démontre que la capacité interne (myopie) n'a pas été déterminante *in fine;* ce sont effectivement les opportunités qui ont été transformées en accomplissements grâce aux facteurs de conversion internes (forte motivation) et externes (reconnaissance et soutien du psychologue).

Eléments de conclusion: identifier les facteurs de conversion suppose une approche chronique des situations

Les facteurs de conversion sont l'expression d'une puissance d'agir. Ils posent l'auteur de l'action non pas seulement comme *individu* héritier d'une série de détermination, mais comme *personne* certes marquée par une histoire surdéterminant des orientations et des préférences, mais pouvant les prendre à son propre compte en les transportant dans d'autres directions ou en y renonçant de manière radicale. L'entrée par les facteurs de conversion est une manière féconde d'opérationnaliser (ou de concrétiser) la problématique du pouvoir d'agir : elle permet d'identifier ce qui relève d'une *situation*, propre à un environnement général (conjoncture économique d'un secteur d'activité) et à un contexte professionnel localisé, traversé par des interactions, *situation* qui pourra délivrer des opportunités ou au contraire des impossibilités. La situation provoque la personne et révèle des potentialités qui rendent possible un développement professionnel. Analyser véritablement la capacité d'action de la personne revient à identifier les situations qui sont les siennes.

Dans les quelques parcours ici analysés, la formation fonctionne toujours comme une ressource, quelle soit de nature informelle (comme l'apprentissage du suisse allemand de Verena en relation avec les origines alémaniques de son père, ou bien encore la gestion apprise « sur le tas » d'une salle de restaurant pour Maud) ou formelle et acquise tardivement (comme l'expertise en ferronnerie pour Aurélien ou en soins infirmiers pour Maud par exemple).

Le travail ici présenté invite à accorder un primat méthodologique à ce qui se passe au plan de parcours professionnel : c'est à partir de son identification et du repérage des principales transformations qui le marqueront que l'on peut appréhender les (im)puissances du pouvoir d'agir de la personne. C'est à partir de la *chronique* de ce parcours que l'on pourra alors déterminer l'impact de la formation dans le développement professionnel. L'analyse du matériel biographique se doit donc de privilégier l'analyse des moments de bifurcation ou de transitions professionnels,

cat ils sont des moments privilégiés pour discerner les facteurs de conversion à l'œuvre. Si nous retenons le terme de *chronique*, c'est pour mettre en avant la temporalité des parcours étudiés qui permet de ressaisir les dynamiques de développement personnel et professionnel. Les facteurs de conversion ne peuvent être appréhendés dans une seule approche synchronique. *L'approche par l'identification des situations doit être complétée par une analyse des dynamiques qui contribuent à leur configuration.*

Sous réserve de discussions à venir, les facteurs de conversion rencontrés dans ce travail relèvent en premier lieu de l'environnement socioéconomique : pour que du développement professionnel puisse se réaliser, il faut des secteurs d'activité eux-mêmes en développement et qui cherchent des compétences disponibles. Les parcours ici analysés indiquent clairement le primat d'un environnement socioéconomique favorable. Le niveau intermédiaire des contextes sociaux est aussi présent, par exemple dans le fait que les personnes aient accès à des dispositifs de reprise d'étude à l'âge adulte (Aurélien et Maud). Le troisième facteur de conversion très opérant semble tenir à des qualités individuelles. On ne peut être que frappé par l'étonnante réactivité de Verena, qui renonce à une première orientation pourtant désirée pour « choisir » ce qui se présente, et qui ne sera finalement pas une négation personnelle, mais l'occasion de développements nouveaux et non prémédités. On ne peut être que frappé par l'attitude d'Aurélien, qui titulaire d'un diplôme du secondaire deux (le « Bac » français) enchaîne finalement deux CAP (niveau inférieur de diplôme) après avoir connu une période de chômage. Il en va de même pour « l'opportunisme » de Maud, qui lui permet de gérer énergiquement son parcours professionnel. Dans tous les cas, des individualités se sont constituées et ne sont plus substituables, en terme de détermination et de « préférences » personnelles. La notoriété dans des réseaux étroits de proximité peut alors fonctionner et permettre des accomplissements non prédictibles, eux-mêmes résultant de dynamiques temporelles sur des durées significatives.

Le matériel biographique réuni dans le cadre d'entretiens appropriés permet de saisir des facteurs de conversion, en resserrant l'analyse sur l'identification des situations marquant le parcours professionnel de la personne a partir d'une approche chronique.

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{ TC "*Dorothee Bechinger-English* - Travelling with the participant, travelling with myself: intersubjectivity in biographical narrative interpretative research" \f \l }Travelling with the participant, travelling with myself: intersubjectivity in biographical narrative interpretative research

Dorothee Bechinger-English, University of Winchester, United Kingdom[1]

Part of being a qualitative researcher is being reflexive about our theoretical perspective, our values and emotions and their influence on the research process. Reflecting on the research process is a dynamic and ever changing process; it has a transient quality to it which can be hard to capture. Reflections can feel chaotic and uncontrollable, as the insights are driven by the values and emotions which can be unconscious, semi-conscious or conscious. When I started to interview healthcare professionals, I faced challenges, some of which I had not anticipated at the beginning of the project. The assumptions, judgements, and emotions the researcher brings into the research matters, because in qualitative research, meaning is co-constructed between individuals, the researcher and the participant, during the course of the interview, as well as during the analysis and interpretation of the data (Silverman, 2004; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

The focus of this talk is my PhD study. The overarching aim of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of how healthcare professionals learn about ageing, old age and working with older patients throughout their lives and careers. The participants are doctors, nurses, physiotherapists or occupational therapists who either work in clinical practice, are retired, or are students working towards their professional qualification. These professional groups have been identified as being the core team in England looking after older patients (Department of Health, 2001). The participants of the study care, or have cared, for older patients at some point of their career.

Investigating how healthcare professionals learn about old age and working with older people is multi-layered. Theoretically the study draws on life span theories, formal and informal learning and understanding of clinical practice. Ageing and old age in itself is an elusive concept. Old age encompasses physical and psychological changes and adjustments, but is also a social and cultural construct. There is no definite age when "old age" starts as ageing is individual, and a chronological definition is arbitrary. For the purpose of the project, however, older people are defined as 65 years or older, a definition commonly accepted in the Western world (WHO, undated).Healthcare professionals learn in formal settings such as universities and training courses. They also learn informally, through their day to day work and socialisation processes in their professional and personal lives.

The study sits within the framework of interpretative phenomenology. Meaning is created not only by the participant, but also through the attitudes, judgements and perceptions of the researcher. Self –awareness and critical engagement with their own biography, their past and present experiences enables the understanding of the inter-connection between the researcher and the researched.

The method of data collection is biographical-narrative interpretative interviewing, a method developed by Rosenthal, the method is strongly influenced by Schütze's work. The individual and their narrative are understood to be situated in a social and historical context and are interpreted

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[1] PhD student. Supervisors Colin Goble, Colin Coles, Samantha Scallan

within the context of their life course (Rosenthal, 2005; Schütze, 1983). Biographical-narrative research is a method of psychosocial research. Psycho-social research is underpinned by psycho-analytical and psychodynamic approaches, it avoids the separation between the individual and society, and pays attention to emotions and affect (Clarke and Hoggett, 2009). It also emphasises the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Alexandrov states that psycho-social research helps to gain a deeper understanding 'by revealing the projective dynamics of the researcher' – researched relationship..." (Alexandrov, 2009, p38).

At the beginning of the biographical-narrative interview, the researcher asks at the beginning of the interview an open-ended question relating to the research topic, to elicit a narrative from the participant. The topics raised in the initial narrative are explored further in the next stage of the interview. Because the participant sets the agenda for the interview in their initial narrative, the researcher cannot necessarily anticipate the topics that will be raised.

I will use examples from the three first interviews: two interviews with retired nurses; and one interview with an Occupational therapy student. In the interviews the participants talked about their careers, their work with older and younger patients, and their education and training, as well as about their personal lives. The participants told stories about treating patients who had had strokes, cancer or dementia; and their experience of witnessing people dying.

Older patients who seek healthcare often have complex, multiple and long-term health conditions which can lead eventually to a deterioration health and quality of life. Gerontology differentiates between different life phases of old age. Baltes and Smith (2003) make a distinction between the time when old age is an age of agency and self fulfilment (the "third age"), and the time when the older person is becoming more vulnerable and dependent, and the physical health as well as the quality of life is deteriorating (the "fourth age"). It is often during this fourth age that the older person will need health and social care (Baltes and Baltes, 1990; Baltes and Smith, 2003)

When listening to the participants, I got a sense of the work of the participants had done, and some of the demands they had dealt with. Working in healthcare is demanding because the professionals have to deal with complexity and uncertainty and the work is can be cognitively, physically and emotionally challenging. Apart from technical and cognitive skills, healthcare professionals need to manage their emotions as they deal with the anxiety and fear the patients might experience; they need to deal with their own feelings associated with old age, illness, decline, loss and death. Hospitals are places where feelings of alienation, fear, and abandonment among patients are common are, and yet the emotional labour of the healthcare professionals in relation to manage these feelings often goes unnoticed (Twigg, 2006; Hochschild, 2012).

I hope that understanding some of the emotional responses of the participants to their work will increase understanding how healthcare professionals learn and develop. Emotions and attitudes shape clinical practice to some degree. The emotions medical students feel are linked to development of professional identity (Helmich et al., 2012, p1074). Emotions matter in clinical practice as for example quick and intuitive professional judgements are often shaped by emotions and attitudes (Fish and Coles, 1998).

The topics raised in the interviews have emotional content and overtones. As I listened and immersed myself into the narratives, I found that some of the stories told evoked forgotten memories of my own professional practice. When I was starting to transcribe the first interview, I found it difficult to make progress. I often tried to delay having to listen to the interview even I found them interesting, but found that I avoided spending time with the interviews. It was at this time I wrote in my field diary:

> Ageing, old age, death, illness, disability are all difficult topics. They are universal yet so individual. We fear it, my own experience.... makes it so real, so alive, it is hard to brush over it, not to feel something.

I was conscious that during the interviewing, some of the stories of the participants evoked emotions inside me. In places I felt a strong sense of familiarity listening to some of the narratives. Researchers who are or were practitioners might find that they need to negotiate the boundaries between being a researcher and a practitioner. As an Occupational Therapist, I have worked with many older patients. The research questions were shaped by my clinical and educational practice. Feeling familiar with some of the descriptions of what it is like to be a student or work in a hospital meant that, as a researcher, I felt that I understood some of the narrative from the inside; and yet at the same time I was an outsider to the scenarios. Reflecting on my responses, I was at the time surprised about the strength of my emotional responses.

The emotions of the researcher are not always acknowledged, explored or made explicit. Nicholson who studied the experiences of frail older people, highlights that the emotions of the researcher are often overlooked but essential to explore in order to understand how the researcher's subjectivities shape the research (Nicholson, 2009).

Examples from data:

First example

My first example describes some of my emotional responses to a story the participant told during the interview.

The participant Bianca[2] is a retired nurse who has worked all of her adult life, and had a lot of responsibilities in her last post before retirement.

In the following edited extract she recounts how, having just recently qualified as a nurse, she witnessed the death of a patient:

Bianca: I failed sometimes, and I think you have to realise you know sometimes I failed, but I learned a lot on the way , and I felt and I always had believed , when I became a health visitor when I trained we did everything what we were told to , right?

I: Yes.

Bianca: So the very first patient I saw die, died – if I'm really honest, because of my ignorance.

I: OK.

Bianca: …And that taught me a lot because I went to this ward and I was full of myself, I had that uniform on and a hat. They did report, and I only understand a quarter what was in that report.

I: Yes.

Bianca: And then they said "go and give out bedpans" because that is what you did when you were a junior nurse in my day, so I went and gave out the bedpans, and this man said "I'm cold nurse." and I said "are you dear?, I get you a bedjacket.","" I'm still cold." "I get you a blanket." Next thing I put him on the bedpan; and next thing he had a cardiac arrest.

In addition to hermeneutic analysis, I found that using the Listening Guide helped me to become more sensitive to the psychological tone of the data. The Listening guide "…is a method of psychological analysis that draws on voice, resonance and relationships as ports of entry into the human psyche" (Gilligan et al., 2006, p157). This method guides the researcher to notice the changes of the "voices" in an interview by following a series steps to listening and reading the interview. This brings the researcher closer to the psychological experiences of the participant. The researcher also records their own responses to what is being said.

After the initial readings of the text, an "I" poem" is made which crystallises some of the experience of the speaker. The" I" poem from the extract above is:

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[2] All names have been changed.

I failed sometimes

I failed

I learned

I saw die

I went

I was full of myself

I had

I put

I did not understand

I said

Reflections

I had arranged to interview the participant at home. The story is told many years after the event as the participant was at the time just qualified. The interview had started out with the participant talking about herself and being in positions of developing other staff and organisations.

The voice of the participant certainly changed at that part of the interview. It is in contrast to the voice at the beginning of the interview which is very authoritative and sure. The participant told me the story of "failure" towards the end of the interview. I felt it was a brave thing to do, to talk about her perceived failure. As she recounts the scenario I feel sorry for her. These emotions are in contrast to the beginning of the interview, where I felt intimidated by her confidence and authority.

She seemed so young at the time when the event happened. I feel a mix of emotions. I could not identify with her confidence and the pride she felt wearing a uniform, I never quite understood those feelings, as I never liked wearing a uniform myself. But I am aware that the feeling of pride she described was not uncommon. As she continues her story I feel a sense of sadness and anxiety for her. Having just qualified, she was young, and felt confident, perhaps overconfident. I feel a sense of nostalgia, as I remember being bold and young. I somehow feel it is a much needed quality as it helps to deal with a demanding job. However her account also brought back memories where I found myself alone with an unwell patient; the feeling of a crushing responsibility to make the right decision, and the accompanying anxiety. I considered myself lucky and grateful that I never felt that a patient had died because of my ignorance, as it easy it is for anybody in healthcare to find themselves in this situation.

I also felt annoyed on her behalf. Did nobody support her? She must have felt fearful after the event. I did not ask her any questions about this event. I felt it was very open of the participant to tell me the story in the first place. I somehow felt it was disrespectful to ask for more information.

Second example

In this example I want to highlight how my own emotions hindered me to be an empathetic listener. I found it difficult to disentangle the emotions between the participant and me. This example demonstrates how emotions can potentially prevent the researcher to be an empathetic listener and to be able to engage with the data sufficiently.

The participant Ruth who used to be a district nurse, talks about her work visiting patients at their homes when she was in charge of a district.

> Edited extract from Ruth's interview
>
> *Ruth: I remember working as a district nurse one weekend and I was in charge that weekend, and we had several terminally ill patients, and so you go from one to the other and some of them were quite young and because I was in charge I go from one to the other. One of them was a young lad with a brain tumour, and I remember somebody else was just diagnosed that weekend it was all ghastly. And then I went to Elsa, she was such an old dear, by this time she thought she kept pulling the plug out of her fridge, she thought the neighbours were listening through it. She was such as ... just having that one bit of Elsa, to give her an eye drop or whatever. It was so... it just was the time... it was just so... it brought you back to, well not exactly normality... (laughs)*

Reflections

Listening to the interview initially, I was particularly struck by the word "ghastly", "ghastly" being synonymous with ghastly, grim, gruesome, grisly, and macabre. After some passing of time, I'm now finding it harder to feel with clarity the impact that word had on me at the time of the interview and when I was transcribing it; but the use of word "ghastly" indeed frightened me.

I wrote this in the field diary when I started to transcribe the interview.

> A huge wave of doubt comes over me, wondering if I'm able to do this PhD- I'm not distanced enough- can I cope with all this talk about illness and death? Certainly during the interview I did not feel so sure for a minute. "(notes field diary)

A few weeks later I wrote:

> Talking about uncertainty is a different experience from living it. I used to talk with my students that uncertainty is part of being an older patient, but thinking about uncertainty is a very different experience from living it. Luckily enough I met very many kind people on the way. Carrying and listening to the interviews made me realise how sensitive and unsure I am how to deal with the emotional aspect of the research.

The participant talking about patients with brain tumours felt very close to home. In my personal life I have had to deal with cancer. I had met a few people with brain tumours in hospital waiting rooms. I was very aware that some of these patients were seriously ill, but I felt in awe of how "together" they seemed.

Listening to the interview, I assume that the word "ghastly" described the experience of the participant caring for cancer patients and that witnessing the effects of the illness had been painful

and difficult and ghastly for her, especially given her description of being with the other patient Elsa. Being with Elsa feels comforting and positive to her. I wondered at the time of the interview and afterwards what exactly the participant's experiences of caring for   patients with tumours were. I felt she had the knowledge. I never asked because I was unsure if I could hide or control the fearfulness I felt at the time or contain any other feelings I had. I was aware that my own fears and concerns were drowning out the concerns of the participant. Looking at the transcript, I certainly felt that I had missed the opportunity to explore her experience in more depth.

Strong emotional responses may prevent the researcher to be able to listen empathetically. To be empathetic means to connect to, and understand the emotions of the participant. Empathy or Einfühlung, the german word, helps us to understand the subjectivities of the other. Phenomenologists such as Zahavi discuss empathy and intersubjectivity from the theoretical standpoints of Husserl, Merleau- Ponty, Heidegger (Zahavi, 2001). Finlay explores empathy within phenomenological research and describes it as reflexive embodied empathy (Finlay, 2009).

Considering empathy in the practice of research, I found the notions about empathy used in therapeutic settings useful, even a research interview differs significantly from therapy, the inner position of the researcher can be compared to that of a counsellor. Writing about client centred therapy, Carl Rogers defines being empathetic as " where the counsellor is perceiving the hates and hopes and fears of the client........, but without himself, as a counsellor, experiencing those hates and hopes and fears." (Rogers, 1951, p29). Kitwood uses the concept of free attention in the meeting of another person. To be able to meet another a person needs not to be "beset by unacknowledged conflicts and fears, against which defences have been constructed" (Kitwood, 1990, p96). It is impossible to change that both, the researcher and the researched, are anxious and defended, and the interaction between two people is influenced by both individual history (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). But if the defences are acknowledged, and that is not always straightforward, it becomes possible to listen to the concerns of the other.

Being a reflexive researcher and empathetic listener has been more difficult than I imagined at the beginning of the project. Talking about old age, illness and death are difficult topics to research. Both the participant and the researcher are sentient beings, and their respective biographies meet during the research. The boundaries between the researcher and the participant can be porous (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). It can be a challenge to disentangle the emotions of the participant and the researcher, because of the semi-conscious and unconscious nature of the emotional responses. To make the individual subjectivities and the relational quality of narrative research more visible is helpful, even if the process feels messy and chaotic at times. The researcher can use

their emotional knowledge to gain a deeper understanding of the data and to make more explicit how meaning and knowledge are co constructed between the participant and the researcher.

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{ TC "*Frank Beier* - Socialization and trajectory pathways of female political prisoners in the GDR" \f \l }Socialization and trajectory pathways of female political prisoners in the GDR.

Frank Beier, Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany

Abstract: This paper informs about biographically shaped experiences of women who were incarcerated because of 'political crimes'. Which reason did women have to take political disapproved actions? The study contains 15 narrative interviews with former female political prisoners. It could be found, that often there were private crisis which caused dissident actions, although these woman did not have any political intentions. The paper describes the socialization and life-learning processes of these women and argues that one could speak in those cases of 'anomic dissidence'.

Introduction

Following the collapse of the socialist regime in East Germany and the reunification process with the Federal Republic of Germany in 1990, a wide social discourse about the constitutional legality of the former GDR began. This discourse manifested itself in the installation of many memorial places in venues of former repression and political persecution as well as in many academic research projects, which tried to explain the diverse mechanisms of repression and the quite heterogeneous forms of opposition and resistance. Still the discourse is dominated by a male perspective. Neither the sole central women prison *Hoheneck* where many female political prisoners have been incarcerated is established as a memorial place yet, nor do we find a study which tries to investigate the structure of the socio-biographical backgrounds of the imprisoned women. Similarly their motivations for political resistance and their subsequent persecution in the totalitarian state of the former GDR has been neglected. This paper tries to give some few insights about the socialization and trajectory patterns which could be found in narrative interviews with former female political prisoners. It should be noted that the logic of political persecution varied within the 40 years of the existence of the GDR and so does the biographical backgrounds of the victims. Political incarceration had quite different functions for the totalitarian system. The soviet regime and subsequently after 1949 the socialist party of Germany (*SED*) instrumentalized the process of denazification to eliminate many real and suspected political enemies (see Neubert 1999). After the revolt in June 1953, many former politicians of the SED were incarcerated in order to purge the party of supposed dissidents. These are only some few examples for specific socio-historical occasions which led into political persecution of non-conformists. However, the many thousand emigrants to western Federal Republic of Germany remained an ongoing problem for the *SED*-Regime, which tried to solve this issue by closing the border and raising the Berlin Wall in 1963. Emigrants and *Ausreiseantragssteller* (exit permit applier) were criminalized and seen as political enemies, who tried to damage the socialist social order. The political and educational system made

many efforts to indoctrinate this friend-enemy scheme into the minds of the people, in order to prevent the ongoing emigration to the western states (see Waterkamp 1989). Therefore it is interesting to ask why this indoctrination failed in so far, that women in the GDR did not only withdrew from political topics into private niches, as many other did, but took action, which was criminalized by the state authorities.

1. Theory of conformal and dissident socialization

While historical studies give some insights about the forms and the processes of dissidence, opposition or resistance (e.g. Neubert 1999), medical investigations could prove that many former political prisoners are suffering from a post traumatic symptom (see Punamäki 2010). Nevertheless there are only few concepts and empirical approaches which try to investigate the conditions and reasons for the development of political dissident behavior in totalitarian states. I general there are two common explanation patterns in educational and socialization theory which are discussed in literature. Firstly there are internal explanation patterns which focus on the conditions for the development of an emancipated subject (2.1). Secondly there are concepts which focus on social relationships and milieu influences (2.2).

1.1. Internal Explanation Patterns

Internal concepts on resistance to indoctrination focus on capabilities and knowledge which individuals acquire through education. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s numerous critical educational scientists claimed that there is a logical opposition between education and reign (see e.g. Heydorn 1979). They argued that it would not be possible to build up a working educational system which would serve to maintain a current politically illegitimate regime: School – as far as it remains a location of learning – brings up individuals who are able to reflect on and deliberate over current situations (see Fischer 1996). However, these approaches have been criticized in several aspects: Firstly indoctrination does not seem to correlate with the degree of education. We find ideological world views in all educational levels. Secondly school lessons can teach scientifically correct content amalgamated with ideological world views. Indoctrination may work out especially then, when it's not noticed as a form of manipulation (see Schluß 2007). Acknowledged scientific knowledge may mask the actual implicit ideological aims of school lessons. In any case: this discussion mirrors the typical form of internal explanation patterns which tries to explain the reasons for indoctrination and its failing. In the center of these approaches there is a concept of an emancipated and critical subject which is to be formed through education. If this – for any reason – fails, indoctrination is quite probable.

1.2. External Explanation Patterns

External explanation patterns on the other hand focus on external factors which cause different world views in general. The most prominent proponents of this approach are the sociologists Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger. Following Alfred Schütz's concept of the lifeworld, they try to explain how reality is socially constructed through interactional achievements, which they sum up into three basic mechanisms: internalization, objectivation and externalization (see Berger & Luckmann 1966). Such a theory does not need any conception of an emancipated or educated subject since all world views are generally social constructions, which are highly dominated through the interaction with significant others. In other words, it is the social environment which determines whether a certain world view is accepted or rejected by an actor. Subsequently the educational scientist Dietmar Waterkamp attempted to separate different kinds of social environments and factors which led to a more conformist or a more dissident attitude in the former GDR (see Waterkamp 1996).

However, external explanation patterns systematically underestimate the subjective view of the actors, which is established in biographically shaped socialization processes. In opposition to these approaches I want to assume that dissident behavior is caused by a separate process of learning or by identification to a certain social environment. Dissident behavior is investigated with its whole biographical background – as a process of life-long-learning – framed by socially transmitted and individually acquired values and relevancies. The basic assumption is that specific conditions are relevant for a specific actor only if these are connected and integrated into biographical experiences.

1.3. Biographical Research Approaches

This fact is very well illustrated by Ingrid Miethes (2002; 2006) investigation of the biographical backgrounds of former dissident women in the GDR. She could reconstruct the enormous impact which convergences between experienced family history and social history had for the decision process of engaging in political movements. She illustrates the many obvious similarities between dissident men and women in the GDR and those in West Germany who were active in the oppositional movements of 1968 (see Miethe 2006; Habermas 1990). Both groups questioned the involvement of the older generation in the criminal system of the Third Reich and reacted to those uncertain backgrounds with protest and resistance. However, in contrast to the situation in the Federal Republic there had been no possibility to act out such protest in East Germany. The GDR saw itself in general as an anti-fascist state (see Völter 2010), which left no room for critical questioning for the younger generation. Nevertheless, this resulted often in a resistant attitude: the children accused their parents of being submissive to a totalitarian system like the GDR and they did not want to act similar to their parents. This attitude remained dormant for many years and caused oppositional actions as the socio-historical changes in the eastern states began. Furthermore

younger oppositional women, whose parents were themselves too young to be involved in the nazi-regime, often reacted to the open repression of the *SED*-Regime against their family, comparing the totalitarian system of the GDR to the one in the Third Reich. They often experienced persecution or incarceration of close family members, which evoked fear and anger. At this stage oppositional action became a possible action scheme to overcome the fear which opaquely affected the life of the concerned women. It is quite interesting that such a reaction was not only caused by repression of the state. In some cases domestic violence in the family caused the same consequences.

> For different types of women, different parts of the family history were found to have different crucial functions. Elke Buchenwald represents one type for which political activity was a form of dealing with the family's history during the National Socialist period, although in the study a second type was reconstructed for which political activity was directly related to domestic violence. For yet another type, political activity was a way of dealing with the women's own or their parents' experiences of Stalinist repression in the GDR. For this group, processes of socialization were more important and the connection between political activity and family history more indirect than for the other types described. (Miethe 2002: 221)

These findings show which major impact personal relationships to family and other significant others have for explaining political engagement.

2. Biographical framing of the dissident action and the imprisonment

These inquiries very much complement the biographical reconstructions I could make with the narratives of former female political prisoners. These women see themselves clearly as *political* prisoners on the one hand, but often simultaneously negate a political background or oppositional attitude in the former GDR. This quite surprising fact can be illustrated by the following quote from one of the first interviews I made. Prior to the actual interview I told my interview partner Mrs. Böll how interested I was in the life courses of women who were politically engaged against the political regime. Mrs. Böll reacted immediately in the following way:

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01 Böll:  you'll may be disappointed when I tell you that ((cough)) (1.0)
02 Int:   mhm?
03 Böll:  <<len> I actually never (1.0) concerned myself with (1.0)
04        actually leaving the GDR;
05 Int:   yes
06 Böll:  this came because of my ex-husband-
```
Transcript 1, GAT2, (own translation)

Mrs. Böll not only negates that she had been in any way a political or dissident person she also instantly connotes dissidence with the desire for 'leaving the GDR'. This was in fact quite often the reason for political persecution. She leaves no doubt that the reason for her dissident action was her former husband who wanted to illegally cross the border to the Federal Republic. This surprising self-description is quite similar to many other narratives from other former politically persecuted women who took part in this study. In these cases the circumstances which subsequently lead to political incarceration are framed with actions for which their former husbands or other male

relatives are held responsible. Consequently these women see themselves as *Mitläufer* (follower) which has an interesting semantic ambiguousness. One the one hand it represents a type of person who is explicitly not emancipated rather than naïve. On the other hand it connotes to the fact that they physically followed their husbands in their attempt to escape into the Federal Republic of Germany. That such action would be seen as dissident and political was common sense and those women were conscious about this fact. Yet they often proclaim that they'd never expected to be imprisoned which is again quite often retrospectively evaluated as naïve and inexperienced. In most of the cases the consequences of imprisonment not only affected the women themselves but also in a very direct way affected the lives of their children who suffered quite different fates (e.g. getting admitted in a children's home). The incarceration narrative is in consequence often closely connected to expression of guiltiness. The biographical work that those women are processing is therefore ambivalent: one the one hand they see themselves as victims of the despotism of the GDR authorities and on the other hand they feel guilty for being naïve and inexperienced. In the reconstruction analysis (see Schütze 1983) of the narratives, one can observe that those 'naïve' actions are reactions to initial or already unfolded trajectories of suffering, which neutralizes the actually well socialized conformist word view.

3. Apolitical socialization patterns and trajectory pathways to political imprisonment

The following remarks describe only a certain process of 'political' socialization and life-long learning process which could be found in a bunch of different narrative interviews in this study. However, it should be noted that there are other types of socialization which cannot be illustrated in scope of this paper.

The educational system and the youth policy in the former GDR were strictly organized by authorities. Since the formation of certain youth organizations like the *FDJ*, children got in contact very early with political world-views. Those organizations impacted not only the lifeworlds of children in school, but affected also their free time and private spheres (see Waterkamp 1989). While in some of the interviews the women criticize this kind of educational system, others don't even mention it. They rather focus on other biographically more important facts like growing up in a village context with mostly traditional forms of life. Mrs. Bürger for example introduces her life-history in the following way:

01 I was born in fourth of january fiftyfive-
02 two of three children
03 girls- I'm the middle one-
04 I grew up in a VILLAGE- (1.0)
05 my childhood was quite nice actually-
Transcript 2, GAT2, (own translation)

Mrs. Bürger emphasizes the normality of the conditions in her childhood which she connects with the village context in which she grew up: 'we acted all as it was just typical in <<dim>the village>.' She makes clear that political topics were not criticized in these contexts. She has no bad memories of her school time, which she characterizes with the corporate feeling she had with her schoolmates who she mostly knew since kindergarten. But she also describes herself as being rebellious and having a strong autonomous will. For instance she mentions that she ran away from kindergarten because she was forced there to do something she did not want. During her adolescence she spends a lot of time in discos where she enjoys the exciting presence of soldiers of the nearby army station. Here she meets her later husband who is in military service at this time. Mrs. Bürger marries her husband as an eighteen-year old – being pushed into this marriage by her parents. Due to lack of feelings towards her husband she lives with him 'like brother and sister". After the marriage she gets pregnant and her first and only son is born. Mrs. Bürger is now in a situation, where she is both a mother and an employee working in three shifts. Although this phase in her life is very exhausting and overbidding, she does question neither her biographical action scheme of career advancement nor her traditional role-model duties, which also include a non-emotional relationship to her husband.

We find such apolitical and traditional socialization patterns in other interviews as well. The life-history of Mrs. Böll is quite similar: growing up in the postwar period, she enjoys the freedom of village life having a 'nice childhood" but – in contrast to the experiences of Mrs. Bürger - also witnesses very early the threat of sexualized violence. She experiences several times how her grandmother – fearing sexual abuse – has to hide in the garret when soviet soldiers are passing by the village. The way she speaks about different male persons shows that she perceives them on the one hand as protectors and caretakers but on the other hand also as a permanent sexual threat. Similar to Mrs. Bürger's experiences it is not the political system which had great biographical impact in her life-history but the village context with its traditional and close relationships. Mrs. Böll meets her later husband as a teenager and she marries him just a few years later which causes a conflict with her parents, who do not agree with the marriage. After she gave birth to her two children she describes herself as a '*Hausmütterchen*" (wifey girl), despite the fact that she works fulltime in a planning office. She concentrates on raising her children, in the meanwhile she is also aware that her husband is cheating on her with a younger woman.

It is evident in the cases of Mrs. Bürger and. Mrs. Böll (and many others) that their biographical action scheme was quite heteronomous over a long time period and all in all totally in line with the socialist conception (e.g. being responsible for raising the children and being an employee at the same time). This connection of traditional and socialist role models did not affect only women who

have grown up in village contexts. Mrs. Schmied for example grew up at her grandparents' house in an eastern GDR town. Her mother who was separated from the father of Mrs. Schmied was not able to raise her by herself. The grandfather was an old communist back to World War II and raised Mrs. Schmied in a socialist way. As an eighteen year old she meets her later husband who is a STASI officer at this time. Just short time after they get married, two children were born. Mrs. Schmied struggles with finding a job in the new town and finds herself caught in an untrustworthy and maybe even violent relationship to her husband.

The reconstruction of the interviews brought up certain similarities in the way these women experienced their time growing up: all of them describe their childhood as nice and they don't have any problems with growing up in the GDR. They are even engaged in socialist youth organizations. They orientated their life plans to the institutionalized normal biography, including getting married with an early age, giving birth to children and being responsible of the household on the one hand and having a full time job on the other. Why would such women become a political enemy for the authorities?

4. Trajectory pathways

When applying biographical research methods to these narratives it as soon gets very obvious that the reason for political disapproved actions in these cases rose out of private crisis, which began or unfolded a trajectory (see Schütze & Riemann 1991). These trajectories broke up with the hitherto existing biographical way of coping and acting out different life situations. Spoken with Erving Goffman (1974), we find an erosion of the former action frame leading to even damaged social frames when violence and social coercion is experienced. Trajectories are combined with experiencing social situations as heteronomous, causing a fate of suffering and leading to different coping strategies. In life-history narratives the beginning and ending of trajectory experiences is often marked by specific language markers. This is for example illustrated in Mrs. Bölls description of her situation just before she tried to flee with her children over the border to the Federal Republic. Her husband who treated her violently and had several affairs with other women had already fled into the Federal Republic with an eighteen year old woman, with whom he had a love affair. He did not even inform Mrs. Böll about his intentions. She – left alone with her 4 and 8 year old daughters – receives a letter from her husband just a few days after his disappearance. Few months later he organizes a flight attempt for Mrs. Böll and her children. He gets in contact with an organization which tries to help GDR refugees to escape to the Federal Republic. However, Mrs. Böll and her children are caught at the border during their attempt to flee while lying in the luggage space of a car. Mrs. Böll gets arrested, her children are sent to children's home.

```
01        °hh <<creaky>yes> and (2.0) i have to be honest (2.0)
02        I would have probably-
03        I would have NEVER done it-
04        I have been so stupid to just follow this guy-
05        mhm   (-) one can really say that
06 FB:    mhm
07 Böll:  if one thinks about it (--) I mean (1.0) okay
08        I was actually not THAT YOUNG anymore
09 FB:    mhm
10 Böll:  I was thirty when I was in prison
11        so I wasn't EIGHTEEN anymore
12        but still I was so stupid °hh
13        I was so focused on him-
14        I don't know-
15        he always achieved it- °hh
16        if I think about it-
17        all his escapades with other women-
18        his beating oh-
19        I must have been a blockhead;
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Transcript 3, GAT2, (own translation)

Mrs. Böll is strictly denying any agency in this description. She characterizes her situation as being stupid and young even though she was already thirty years old. This shows that she actually was not able to take responsibility for herself and did not make her own decisions similar to a very young and childish person. She describes a clear situation of dependence which results out of a highly precarious relationship to her husband. He is not only cheating on her with other women but he is also violent, which even leads to death threating situations as she describes it later in the interview. In this situation Mrs. Böll totally focuses on her private sphere, on raising her children and being a housewife. The sudden disappearance of her husband breaks down this coping strategy. Mrs. Böll is actually losing all of her agency possibilities. Although she is scared of the West and has neither expectations nor a desire for the Federal Republic she complies herself to the plan her husband made. In the background of her biographical experiences one can see a breakdown of all her possible action perspectives. This happens while she is already suffering in several aspects: her husband is cheating on her and is violent to her. Mrs. Böll reacts with focusing in her traditional role as a mother which also involves the attempt to protect her children against the aggressiveness of her husband. Ironically, as her husband escapes to West Germany even her role as a mother is breaking down. To restore this self-identity – the only intact and appropriate self-identity she has – she follows her husband, not even considering the enormous risks this brings with it. It is clearly visible in these episodes how passive and reactive Mrs. Böll is handling this situation. The trajectory pathway ends here in what I'd like to call anomic dissidence. This dissidence, as it is described by the authorities, is characterized by the loosing of social orientation and hence also by the loosing of quite well indoctrinated socialist world-views, which do not even matter anymore in the life-planning of Mrs. Böll.

Nevertheless the extreme pathway of a violent trajectory process remains an exception in the study. More typically we find trajectories which are rather combined with loosing the agency perspective in different ways: In Mrs. Bürger's case one can see quite paradigmatically how close she is actually orientated to institutional (traditional and socialist) expectation patterns. She internalizes her role as a mother and a wife despite being in a hard situation where she has to cope with the double burden of waged work and the bulk of household responsibilities. Her agency potential thus grows out of having a good and acknowledged job and being a good mother. These agency possibilities break down as she and her husband divorce. She begins a romantic relationship which failes after several months. Meanwhile her ex-husband gets arrested because he tries to flee in the Federal Republic. As her romantic relationship fails Mrs. Bürger now tries to advocate for her ex-husband, telling the prosecutor that it was all her fault and the she would marry her ex-husband again, as soon as he would come out of prison. By doing this she restores her traditional relationship which allows her to get back in her traditional role as a mother and a wife. However, she is also aware that due to this second marriage to her husband, who is now stigmatized as a criminal and a political dissident, she won't have any good job perspectives in the GDR. They decide to leave the country by filing several applications for exit permissions. Subsequently, Mrs. Bürger and her husband are arrested.

Mrs. Bürger's situation is not anomic – she knows about the available role models but is struggling because she begins to have an emotional relationship with another man, an experience which is deeply influencing her. This is evident in the following quote: 'then I felt that I actually COULD have emotions' something she simply did not believe before. However, her relationship fails and this becomes a burden for Mrs. Bürger for a very long time. Therefore, she does not hesitate to help her ex-husband who is arrested and marries him again. With this action she tries to end a phase of suffering which is caused by the loosing of her hitherto biographical orientation frame. The return to her old relationship however erodes her second major biographical action scheme which is orientated in her career advancement. [3] She reacts with immediately applying for an exit permission.

5. Conclusions

In contrast to the common concepts of political socialization one can see that neither internal nor external explanation patterns will give a satisfying answer to the question, why these women became state dissidents. Of course one can question if these women were 'dissidents'' in a very strict sense at all. It is obvious that the ascription as a political enemy is socially constructed. In a

sociological perspective this construction process itself would be very interesting for a thorough investigation. However, it was common sense that leaving the GDR was politically disapproved and the presented woman very much knew about the fact, that West Germany was seen as an enemy force. In fact, it is very obvious that these women were socialized in a quite conformist way and lived very well with the doctrines of the state. We hardly see any alienation processes to the state while growing up. Socialization concepts which suppose a linear process of emancipation or a major influence of the (dissident) social environment won't be appropriate for the explanation of the development of political dissidence in these cases. By using a biographical approach on the other hand, one can see that the political ideology served for a long time as a biographical resource which broke down with private crises, and this enfolded a trajectory of suffering. In this sense one can say that the socialization process which these women went along had a quite paradox effect: the women used the common expected socialist normal biographies as major biographical orientation frame, which led them into an enormous private crisis. Due to this crisis they end up with the attempt to restore former agency possibilities. This attempt also consisted of political disapproved or 'dissent'' actions, which was punished by the authorities. Interestingly enough – these political enemies actually never had any political purpose.

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{ TC "*Elisabetta Biffi & Maria Benedetta Gambacorti-Passerini* - Exploring Collage in Narrative Inquiry: Beside and Beyond Words" \f \l }Exploring Collage in Narrative Inquiry: Beside and Beyond Words

Elisabetta Biffi, Maria Benedetta Gambacorti Passerini, University of Milano-Bicocca, Human Sciences "Riccardo Massa"

Telling a collage, making a collage of narratives

Collage, in an attempt to give a first definition of it, is an artistic technique based on an ancient Oriental methods of art and decoration, involving the gluing of a mix of different materials onto a frame, usually rigid. The revolution introduced by the practice of collage into art history hinges on collage's infringement of the two-dimensional surface, achieved by cutting out different forms of paper and other materials and sticking them over another frame. Initially proposed by Pablo Picasso[4], the story of collage in contemporary art has been developed by different artists using different techniques, from the *papiers collés* of Braque to the *papiers gouachés découpés* of Henri Matisse, to the Dadaist photomontages, up to and including various other forms of experimentation in recent decades.

In all these types of collage, the key aspect is that part of the material used has been produced elsewhere, and is now added onto a new frame where it acquires new meanings and takes on a new form. Cuttings from a range of materials (papers, photographs, other types of image, etc.) are re-used in the collage to produce something different.

The revolution consisted of overcoming the limits of the canvas and breaking out from the two-dimensional limitations of paper. When collage is based on cuttings from other works, it involves a process of de-construction – that is to say, the basis on which the cuttings are removed from their frame of meaning – followed by a process of re-construction – by placing the cuttings within the frame of meaning of the new work. This process of *bricolage*, in Lévi-Strauss's sense of the term, is a creative process through which something new and unexpected may be created.

Thus, collage is also a process of reappropriation, in relation to what has been cut away from its original frame. Collage makers know that their work is to give something a new meaning, to disrupt the pre-existing contextual sense of the work by putting it into a different frame. This operation of 'movement' is what introduces difference, allowing the unexpected to become possible. Even the uncertainty of the Dadaists, in their casual juxtaposition of words forming new words was, in a certain way, self-aware.

4Picasso P., *Still Life with Chair Caning,* 1912, collage, oil, oil cloth, paper and rope on canvas, 27cm x 35cm, Paris, Musée Picasso.

This aspect is in some sense connected with the role of collage in research. As emphasized by Lynn Butler-Kisber, collage may be used in qualitative inquiry "as a reflective process, as an elicitation for thinking, writing and/or discussion, and as a conceptualizing approach" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 102). This is because qualitative research sets out to understand the world 'from the inside', from different perspectives. Thus collage can help the researcher to gain unusual insights into phenomena. Using collage in this way falls half-way between an arts-based research approach and the use of images in qualitative research (Knowls & Cole, 2008; Stanczak, 2007).

Based on the above considerations, collage may be used in research to support narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), as long as it is viewed as a collaborative research strategy and not just as a way of eliciting insights: introducing collage into the research process means accepting an epistemological framework that views language constructions (using different language systems, such as words, numbers or images) as ways in which life is experienced. In other words, both oral narratives and artistic artifacts can be more than representations of their authors' lives, becoming opportunities for those producing them to actually create their own lives in the process. From a phenomenological (and hermeneutic) point of view, research has the aim of accessing the subject's meanings, although the researcher knows that complete access to these meanings is impossible and that at best a partial understanding may be pursued. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the research will be superficial in nature: scientific rigor is guaranteed by awareness of the structural limits of the research process. In reviewing the debate about the "reliability" of data and how it should be treated in the field of empirical social inquiry, Wagner comments: "the irony is that keeping data as 'raw' as possible can also reduce their usefulness in answering empirical question we care about" (Wagner, 2007, p, 28).

From a methodological point of view, a range of different practices may be used: working with a variety of materials and non-images, working with static images. In each of these situations, a different process will come into play, because of the different activities involved and the different meanings accessed. Even when using static images, there are different methodologies to choose among, from the use of advertising images, to the use of reproductions of works of art. The research procedure and its goals will be different in each case, because they involve different ways of thinking about the artistic creation. For example, when using advertising images, it is possible to work on stereotypes related to the topic under study. In this sense, the advertising images lead us to work on their 'common sense' meaning, as an means of introducing other reflections about them. In any case, it is important to bear in mind that images are not neutral in any of the approaches just outlined: images are a human construction and as such are culturally defined. In this sense, although on the one hand images show us what the world looks like, on the other, they are always a

production and they will provide us with different information depending on the different questions that we ask of them. As Banks has underlined, "One of the strengths of visual methodologies in particular lies in the inevitably open-ended nature of the inquiry. Resisting single interpretations, images can give rise to a range of alternative paths of inquiry" (Banks, 2007, p. 60).

At the same time, the collage is a sort of narration. If we think of the work not just as a product but as a real text, in the hermeneutic sense of the term, it is possible to view the collage as a creative process through which first a story with an established meaning is cut into pieces and then the resulting pieces are rearranged into a new composition.

Collage making in educational research: a research experience

In line with the theoretical framework underpinning the use of collage-making practices in educational research, the paper now aims to present a concrete case study in which this methodology was implemented.

Our purpose here is to explore and reflect on a specific study in which the collage instrument was included in the research design as a data collection tool accompanying participants' verbal narratives.

The study, a PhD research project, still ongoing, has the aim of identifying a context in which medicine and pedagogy can work together. In Italy these two fields currently have difficulty collaborating. Medical science and pedagogy were chosen as a research focus because they have a common object of interest: man and his "being in the world": medicine cares for physical wellbeing, while pedagogy focuses on the formative aspect.

In particular, the study set out to compare pedagogy and psychiatry, given that psychiatry is concerned with psychic pathologies, but must find a way to intervene in the person's formative process in order to orient or correct it.

This was a multiple case study involving in-depth observation of two contexts in the area of psychiatric medicine, while seeking to identity opportunities for collaboration between different types of professional practitioner: a Therapeutic Community for Adolescents, which is part of a hospital of Infantile and Teenage Neuropsychiatry Unit, and a Community for Psychiatric Rehabilitation which provides care for adults and is managed by a cooperative. Both these contexts are run by multidisciplinary staff composed of psychiatrists, educators, nurses and social workers.

The study has a qualitative research design that draws on the "ecological" research paradigm defined by L. Mortari (2007) following G. Bateson (1979), K. Gergen, M. Gergen (1995), R. Rorty

(1979), and J. Creswell (1998). Within this framework, we have developed a mixed method combining narrative inquiry and phenomenological research.

Narrative Inquiry is based on the fundamental assumption: «that a research, as an experiential act, can be narrated» (Y. Lincoln, E. Guba 1985). To expand on this, «narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience» (F.M. Connelly, D.J. Clandinin 2006). Thus in the current research context it was appropriate to use narrative inquiry to explore the professionals' thoughts about the experience of being involved in collaboration between medical science and pedagogy.

This method also allows us to explore the meanings of educational and health care present in the research contexts and lived by the professionals. Participants' descriptions of this aspect may be investigated, allowing a new description of the phenomenon «as it appears in its perceived immediacy» to be developed (A. Van Kaam, 1966).

In order to refine the research questions the issue of the research, a collective case study strategy was used, with the aim of exploring both the daily practice of professionals involved and their ideas and representations related to this practice. To this end, the instruments used were: ethnographic and close observation (M. Van Manen, 1990) in order to investigate the practices; the narrative interview, in order to explore the professionals' ideas about the topic under study; the "collage technique" (L. Butler-Kisber, 2010, E. Biffi, 2013), used in the context of a focus group discussion with the professionals, in order to explore their representations of and inner meanings relating to the practice of their work.

In order to analyze in depth the role played by collage with the narrative description in the research, it is necessary to outline the research experience in detail.

After a period in which the researcher had been constantly present in the context as an observer, she proposed an encounter with the multi-professional team. During this meeting, each professional was asked to create a collage basing on researcher's suggestion: *Create a collage representing the collaboration between different professionals on this team.*

The setting of the room and the material provided to produce the collage are very relevant elements to be considered. First of all there must be a table, with enough space for each person to work comfortably with the material. Atmosphere can help participants to carry out the task: background music could make it easier for them to become absorbed in their work, relaxed and not anxious. In this regard, it should be pointed out that collage-making, using colors, cutting out images, etc., is a very unusual activity for adults and could cause anxiety to some.

The material required to produce the collage is, of course, supplied by the researcher, and special attention must be devoted to preparing it. When we use this practice in our educational research, we normally offer each participant a white A3-size sheet paper: this is the space that they can use to create the collage on. A rich and abundant set of materials is usually offered for the production of the collage: colored pencils and marker pens, colored paper sheets that may be cut, and a wide range of magazines from which participants can select images to be cut and pasted onto their white sheet; in this regard, it is crucial to provide magazines with pictures related to different aspects of life. Therefore the supply usually includes travel magazines, which contain a wide range of natural landscapes, children's magazines with cartoon bubbles, providing highly expressive images with little or no use of words, food and home decoration magazines featuring the iconic universe related to the dimensions of living and inhabiting.

The researcher presents this material to the participants and lays it out on the table, in such a way that it can be reached easily by everyone, together with scissors, glues and sticky tape (the quantities of these materials must be well thought, in line with the number of participants, in order to facilitate their work and avoiding situations in which individual participants must wait their turn to use scissors or glue).

When the material has been presented and suitably laid out, the phase of collage-making proper may begin: it usually lasts at least thirty minutes, but the researcher must monitor the time by looking at the participants' work. Sometimes it is possible to ask them "How are you getting on with the task?". When the researcher notes that some people have finished their collages and stopped working, they may point this out to the group, inviting the other participants to put the finishing touches to their own work.

The idea is to create a "flexible" time period, that is neither too long nor too short, in which each participant can find the space they need to create their collage, without feeling either rushed or bored. In the current study, when all participants had completed their collages, the research team decided to ask each participant to show his/her collage to the group, presenting it in a few words. This activity was planned in order to wind up the session with a brief moment of "collage-sharing": thus, a very short verbal narrative started to accompany the collage and its meanings, in the context of talking about it to the entire team (all the professionals involved in the service and participating in the research). This phase, with the participants' consent, was audio-recorded[5] and then transcribed by the researcher.

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5 Video-recording would also be a useful instrument for analyzing the collage-making session: the research presented here involved psychiatric services, in which the video-recording of spaces and people is not allowed. For this reason, the collage-making session was only audio-recorded.

In the present research we worked with two different multi-professional teams and therefore collected two groups of collages. A first group of twelve products, and a second of ten creations.

The instruction provided to the participants, as stated above, was *Create a collage representing the collaboration between the different professionals on your team.*

The first team engaged in the proposed activity with enthusiasm: one of the educators, while finishing her collage, said to the coordinator: "Wonderful! In this activity, it is possible to concentrate on ourselves, our feelings and emotions in our professional life: can we do it again at other sessions?" (C.)[6]. This sentence is relevant because it highlights the fact that this team was not used to visual and imaginative work methods, not even as part of supervision or other educational events.

After the collage making and its initial presentation as just described, done by the authors to the group, individual interviews were conducted with all participants, in the course of which the subject was asked to narrate some aspects of his/her daily working life on the basis of the images chosen for the collage, and particularly in relation to his/her specific professional role within the multidisciplinary context.

We now go on to argue, on the basis of our preliminary analysis of the collected material, that the practice of collage-making is a useful instrument that can supplement oral narratives in educational research. As stated, the research described here is still ongoing. Hence, it is not yet possible to produce a complete analysis of the items gathered. At the same time, in line with the aims of this paper, it may be of value to explore some methodological aspects that illustrate the potential of associating collage practices with narrative interviews.

A first aspect worthy of examination concerns the purpose of the collage itself: certain participants, as reported above, seemed very enthusiastic about the use of images as a narrative instrument. Some of them commented during the interviews that: "With images it was easier to narrate and make you understand what I mean" (A.). In this sense, they tried to use images as a basis for the creation of oral narratives, attempting to give verbal form to what was represented by the image. In contrast, other participants said during the individual interview sessions that they were relying on their familiarity with verbal speech in order to make the content of the images understandable. In fact, they referred to the images they had chosen using statements such as "This image is not precisely what I have in my mind, because what I was trying to say with it was …" (B.), in an attempt to broaden the narrative around the visual picture.

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6 During this paper, the authors will quote some of the research participants' utterances, drawn from the activity record of one of the services involved into the research. These sentences will be identified with the speaker's initial. The use of non-real names is necessary to guarantee the privacy and anonymity of the participants.

Both these reflections on the use of images as a narrative instrument help us to build up a description of it as a means of enriching verbal narrative, from opposite perspectives: when images are experienced as an "easier" way of telling a story, words accompany them in order to explain in verbal form what the image naturally tells us in iconic fashion. This narrative is directly based on the visual code, made possible by the presence of images.

In the other example given, it is difficult to find images to narrate something that would be clear and straightforward in a verbal account. The presence of iconic material, in this case, acts as a supplement to the spoken word: the image introduces something new, adding to what the participant was able to express orally.

Another reflection stemming from our analysis of the collages created by the first group of participants is the opportunity offered by images to represent those elements with which participants particularly struggle or, on the contrary, that yield satisfaction and fulfillment related to one's daily work. An example here would be the series of "monstrous" images used by some of the professionals to represent the "dark side" of their work in the psychiatric context, given that they are in daily contact with life stories characterized by serious difficulty, violence, suffering. In contrast, we also find images of satisfied people, and of attaining goals, as representative of those moments in which participants feel that their work is useful and that the teamwork has been successful, and shares common aims.

The chosen images effectively enable participants to represent and then speak about the emotional parts of their work that elicit highly negative or highly positive emotions. During the interviews it was more difficult for participants to give verbal expression to the emotional aspects of their experience: they most typically narrated their professional role, or their most recent work-day with the predominant focus on the practical aspects, and few elements linked to emotions or sensations.

Therefore, we may hypothesize that verbal narration, the most commonly used communicative language, proposed here as an instrument of communication in the context of the interviews, leads to the creation of "usual" stories that conform to the semantic register used in daily life and are accepted by the social community of the lived context. Participants are not really used to focusing on their personal feelings about their work, rather their daily focus is on what they have to do; similarly during the weekly team meetings, their verbal conversation is focused on practical aspects.

It follows that the use of images as a research tool meant inviting the participants to use what was for them an "unusual" communicative code, enabling them to focus on "unusual" aspects of their work, often unutterable, but present and relevant in the course of their daily work. Thus, the use of collage in narrative inquiry can be a particularly valid research instrument for use with adults,

fulfilling the function of shattering the "fixed versions" of their stories built over their lifetimes. The collage serves as an instrument for introducing something unexpected and unusual that allows participants to think of their stories in a different way, producing different narratives.

Our final consideration about the first group of collages goes in a direction comparable to what we have already written: two participants chose very clear images to represent the distribution of power between different professional roles in the team. It is classically very challenging to speak about this theme inside professional contexts: we hypothesize that the presence of images created the opportunity to allude to this theme by using very powerful pictures. It is also important to note that, during the interviews, the theme of power was taken up again in reference to the images used to represent it as well as having been shared with the group immediately after the collages had been created.

The second team that we invited to create a collage on the same theme as the first, was more used to using metaphorical and iconic instruments in the context of supervision and were therefore not surprised by the use of images as an instrument for producing narratives, although one participant commented that it had been an effort for them to think with pictures as a starting point.

The work organization in this team is based on a style that valorizes sharing the emotions and feelings experienced while practicing one's work: vis-à-vis what we have said about the collages collected from the other group, in the second we also find a reference to the emotional part of the team's work though less dominant, as though to make visible the fact that this group does not need to rely on the power of images in order to manifest this intimate aspect of their practice.

Nevertheless, there is another point to be noted here in relation to this group's experience, which again leads us to reflect on the use of collage as an instrument for supplementing verbal narratives: all the participants chose images to represent the professional diversity of their team, thus reflecting on a specific characteristic of their work group, that is present everyday but is challenging to discuss or even speak about in daily practice. This shows us that a visual instrument can give material form to well-known elements of one's usual work-life which are taken for granted and therefore hard to describe. In relation to this aspect, the collage-making activity conducted with the second team gave rise to a very intimate group session, in which all participants were involved in the narratives of others, looking at their collages and seeking clarification about the references to everyday practice. The images created a sort of expression of what the participants usually live and experience, but do not share, because, in some ways, taken as given, or only verbally communicated for organizational and practical purposes, such as the authorization to give medicines or the distribution of tasks. In this case, in particular, we present the use of images not only as an

instrument for supplementing oral narratives, but also as an opportunity to generate specific narratives about something that is known but tends to elude us in everyday life.

In conclusion, we can summarize our experience of implementing collage-making in a research context as a means of supplementing the oral narratives of two different groups of professionals: first of all it may be perceived as an unusual instrument, providing the opportunity to interrupt fixed narratives about daily practices, or to speak about something that is not included in the everyday semantic register of communication, such as the emotional universe in the first case study. Similarly, we note that the use of pictures can allow participants to give material form to well-known elements of their daily work, that are not often the object of discussion or reflection.

Finally, the use of images can accompany or guide discussions on the team's work organization, helping to give form to ideas, as in the second case reported above.

Putting all these aspects together, the practice of collage making does appear to be a valid tool for supplementing oral narratives, and not only: in fact, it can also help to create narratives on themes that are never the object of discussion, endowing them with material form and meaning and allowing them to be communicated.

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{ TC "*Laurence Bonnafous* - Du récit autobiographique à l'auto-analyse d'un parcours de professionnalisation" \f \l }Du récit autobiographique à l'auto-analyse d'un parcours de professionnalisation

Laurence Bonnafous, Université de Rouen, France

Mots clés

Evénement, autobiographie, apprentissage transformateur, compétence biographique

Résumé

Cette communication porte sur l'expérimentation d'un travail d'objectivation d'une posture subjective de chercheure, dans le cadre d'une recherche doctorale qualitative, réalisée par l'auteur sur l'innovation en formation des adultes, à partir de l'étude de projets européens LEONARDO DA VINCI et EQUAL. Le travail présenté illustre une tentative de réflexivité inspirée de l'ethnométhodologie. La démarche d'auto-analyse s'applique plus particulièrement ici à l'examen d'un choix de reconversion professionnelle, pris sous l'angle d'un événement biographique. L'intention est d'élucider l'ancrage biographique du projet de recherche, en explorant les liens sujet-objet-projet. La démarche d'auto-analyse a été produite à partir de l'adaptation d'une grille de lecture, en reprenant les étapes d'élucidation de sens de la théorie de la transformation perspective et de la théorie de la conscience anticipante. Les transformations repérables ont permis de révéler un apprentissage transformateur dans et par l'expérience, catalyseur d'une nouvelle orientation professionnelle dans le champ de la formation des adultes. Des liens entre mobilité-altérité-identité ont également été mis en évidence et ont servi à interpréter comment les espaces transnationaux étaient investis par les acteurs de projets européens Au regard des résultats produits, cette pratique de réflexivité mise en œuvre, au sens de l'approche bourdieusienne ouvre le questionnement sur son usage par et pour des doctorants en sciences de l'éducation, en vue de contribuer à leur passage à une posture de chercheur(e).

Introduction

La théorie des cohérences humaines trouve ses sources dans la philosophie kantienne, la phénoménologie, l'herméneutique. Elle propose la trialectique sujet-objet-projet en dépassement de la dialectique traditionnelle sujet-objet. Le primat du sujet est posé, dans le sens où toute réalité est d'abord humaine et où la connaissance que le sujet peut construire d'un réel est selon l'hypothèse phénoménologique (Le Moigne 1995) celle de sa propre expérience du réel. En nous fondant sur cette théorie, la première partie de notre thèse nous a servie à explorer la trialectique sujet-objet-projet pour assumer notre subjectivité de chercheure, la rendre visible et lisible au lecteur. Cette démarche nous est apparue cohérente au regard du choix d'une recherche qualitative inspirée de l'ethnométhodologie. Les recherches qualitatives font en effet appel à des approches inductives qui renvoient à l'intuition du chercheur, à son engagement, son expérience, plus globalement à sa subjectivité. Selon Muchielli (2005), le chercheur est « partie prenante » de sa recherche. Cette subjectivité est moteur pour le projet de recherche, en tant que motivation à rendre le monde intelligible, à lui donner un sens. Le projet de recherche est ainsi la résultante des rapports entre sujet et objet, comme l'exprime Gaston Bachelard (1934, p. 15) « *La médiation de l'objet par le sujet prend toujours la forme du projet* ». Par ailleurs, l'ethnométhodologie demande également au chercheur de se positionner à partir de son expérience individuelle, de son système culturel. Nous

avons fait nôtre ce principe en appliquant une des règles de l'objectivité de l'ethnométhodologie, à savoir celle de l'auto-réflexion, en prenant pour objet d'étude notre terrain expérientiel. Dans cette communication, nous choisissons de présenter l'auto-analyse réalisée d'une reconversion professionnelle, entendue au sens d'un événement autobiographique. La première partie permettra au lecteur de comprendre la décision d'objectiver une posture subjective de chercheure, en la resituant par rapport à la question de recherche et à la stratégie globale mise en œuvre pour produire de nouvelles connaissances. La deuxième partie précisera les concepts d'événement et d'autobiographie mobilisés avant de présenter le récit de l'événement étudié. Enfin, la troisième partie en proposera l'analyse en précisant la grille de lecture utilisée et les indices d'apprentissage transformateur identifiés.

I. Comment objectiver une posture subjective de chercheure ?

L'objet de notre recherche concernait l'innovation en formation professionnelle, en tant qu'innovation sociale. L'innovation recouvre ici de nouveaux dispositifs de formation conçus et expérimentés par des partenaires européens pour développer des compétences en réponse à des situations-problèmes relatives au travail et à l'emploi dans trois secteurs d'activité distincts : le secteur en émergence du recyclage et deux secteurs en mutation, celui des services automobiles et celui de la production agricole. Cette recherche visait à contribuer à une meilleure compréhension du phénomène de l'innovation en formation professionnelle dans le cadre de projets transnationaux, commandités par la Commission européenne et au développement de modèles de lecture utiles aux professionnels, praticiens et chercheurs qui les conçoivent, les conduisent, les évaluent, les étudient. Notre questionnement sur l'innovation en formation des adultes est né sur le terrain de nos pratiques, par le tissage de plusieurs expériences, nous amenant à nous interroger sur la démarche mise en œuvre par les acteurs de projets pilotes pour concevoir et expérimenter de nouvelles démarches pédagogiques et/ou de nouveaux dispositifs de formation à l'échelle européenne et à visée de transformation des systèmes de formation. Que traduit cette démarche ? Une stratégie de conformité au prescrit de la commande, tel qu'il se manifeste dans l'appel à projets de la Commission européenne, une stratégie d'intérêt particulier en se servant de la commande pour exporter leur dispositif de formation, voire auto-légitimer leur fonction, leur statut, leur institution, ou bien encore une stratégie de conception, au sens de l'acte cognitif de concevoir selon Le Moigne (1995), du modèle théorique de l'invention pour l'ingénierie en formation de Clénet (2003). Nous avons cherché à comprendre quels apprentissages collectifs et transformation en usages, les projets d'innovation en formation professionnelle conçus et réalisés dans le cadre d'une procédure européenne d'appel à proposition, produisaient compte tenu de l'intention de transformation des systèmes européens de formation professionnelle et d'un contexte de forte hétérogénéité de ces

systèmes et de profondes mutations. Notre visée de compréhension de l'innovation en formation professionnelle s'est s'inscrite dans une tradition de recherche développée en Allemagne, au XIXème siècle, la « Verstehen » du mot allemand qui signifie « comprendre ». L'historien et philosophe Dilthey (1883) en est le fondateur en posant pour postulat qu'une connaissance de la réalité humaine et sociale n'est possible que par le recours à une approche différente de celle utilisée pour l'étude des phénomènes physiques. Sa formule « *Nous expliquons la nature, nous comprenons la vie psychique* » (1947, p. 50) marque une claire distinction de l'approche positiviste dominante à l'époque. Selon Dilthey, comprendre c'est produire du sens. Pour embrasser au mieux la complexité de notre objet, en tenant compte de notre subjectivité, nous avons inscrit notre recherche dans le paradigme de la complexité et dans une épistémologie constructiviste. Alors que le principe de simplicité impose de séparer et de réduire, celui de complexité nous enjoint de relier, de conjoindre, tout en distinguant, en faisant notre le principe de l'Ingénium de Vico (1710), « *Cette faculté mentale qui permet de relier de manière rapide, appropriée et heureuse des choses séparées.* ». Selon Morin, la pensée de la complexité représente un nouveau paradigme, soit un modèle de référence au sens de Kuhn (1983) qui forme le cadre de réflexion d'une communauté scientifique. Ce paradigme est né de l'intégration des principes de la science classique, dans un schéma plus large. « *Ainsi au paradigme de disjonction-réduction-unidimensionnalisation, il faudrait substituer un paradigme de distinction/conjonction qui permettre de distinguer sans disjoindre, d'associer sans identifier ou réduire.* » (Morin, 1990, p. 23). Selon la théorie de la complexité, la nature et la société sont vues comme un système vivant et non un univers mécanique. Le système vivant est instable, imprévisible, ouvert et créateur. Ces quatre caractéristiques nous ont guidé dans notre compréhension des projets européens d'innovation en formation. Le paradigme de la complexité intègre également le sujet dans l'observation en lien avec l'épistémologie constructiviste. Cette épistémologie laisse la place à la subjectivité du chercheur en posant que le réel connaissable peut être construit par ses observateurs qui sont dès lors ses constructeurs (Le Moigne 1995).

Le schéma qui figure ci-après donnera au lecteur dans un premier temps une vision d'ensemble de l'architecture de notre thèse et des trois parties qui l'ont constituée. Il fait apparaître en orange les sous-ensembles du terrain de recherche, en gris l'intention de recherche, en violet les principales méthodes mobilisées et en vert les modèles de lecture élaborés, qui sont des résultats au regard des nouvelles connaissances produites. La première partie de notre thèse sur l'innovation en formation des adultes a porté sur une exploration des liens sujet-objet-projet à visée de leur compréhension, en cohérence avec le choix d'une démarche qualitative inspirée de l'ethnométhodologie et des épistémologies constructivistes, comme nous l'avons précédemment exprimé. La deuxième partie a

rendu compte d'un deuxième axe d'exploration, celui des liens entre systèmes de formation-politique européenne de formation professionnelle - programme Léonardo – projets pilotes. Ce travail a servi à rendre visible et intelligible une série d'enchevêtrements, d'antagonismes et d'interfaces critiques dans le chaînage des acteurs impliqués dans la mise en œuvre des programmes et des projets européens. La troisième partie a été consacrée à la modélisation de l'innovation en formation professionnelle à partir de l'étude de trois projets européens singuliers.
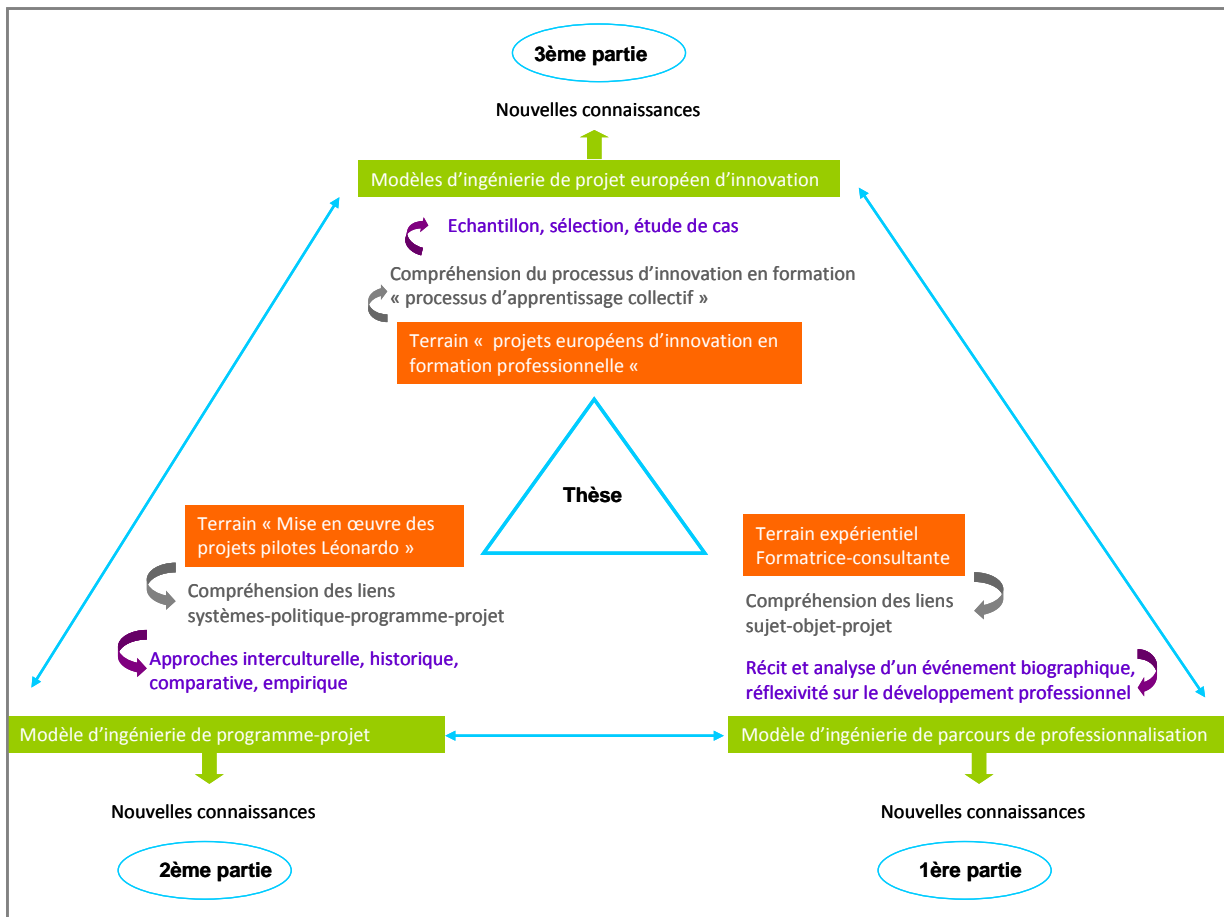
3ème partie

Nouvelles connaissances

Modèles d'ingénierie de projet européen d'innovation

Echantillon, sélection, étude de cas

Compréhension du processus d'innovation en formation « processus d'apprentissage collectif »

Terrain « projets européens d'innovation en formation professionnelle «

Thèse

Terrain « Mise en œuvre des projets pilotes Léonardo »

Compréhension des liens systèmes-politique-programme-projet

Approches interculturelle, historique, comparative, empirique

Terrain expérientiel Formatrice-consultante

Compréhension des liens sujet-objet-projet

Récit et analyse d'un événement biographique, réflexivité sur le développement professionnel

Modèle d'ingénierie de programme-projet

Modèle d'ingénierie de parcours de professionnalisation

Nouvelles connaissances

Nouvelles connaissances

2ème partie

1ère partie

Figure 1- Modélisation de l'architecture d'une thèse sur l'innovation en formation – Bonnafous (2010)

II. Récit d'un événement autobiographique : une reconversion professionnelle

Le passage à une posture de chercheure nous a demandé un travail pour élucider notre implication par rapport à l'objet de recherche, objet qui trouve d'une certaine manière son inscription dans une histoire personnelle. Pour tenter de le faire, nous avons pris appui sur un récit à caractère autobiographique, celui d'un choix de reconversion professionnelle dans le champ de la formation des adultes. Le récit de pratique se distingue du récit de vie, dans la mesure où il est une forme d'expression de l'expérience vécue, expérience qui comporte une fonction de connaissance et une fonction d'action. La pratique vécue constitue une matière au départ hétéroclite, que nous avons transformé dans un premier travail de mise en mots par l'écrit, dans lequel j'opère des choix, pour mettre en lumière certains aspects et de ce réaliser un premier niveau d'interprétation.

Comment analyser un parcours de dix-huit ans, en quelques pages pour qu'il permette de produire des connaissances sur le cadre de référence à partir duquel nous pensons et engageons notre action dans le champ de la formation des adultes ? Le ou la chercheur(e) est aussi un(e) praticien(ne), qui doit résoudre ce type de question. Théorie et pratique apparaissent comme deux pôles liés dans une réciprocité dialectique, deux sources rendant à chacun possible l'analyse du réel. Nous entendons ici par réel, ce qui est tenu pour susceptible d'être perçu. Nous ne percevons pas la réalité elle-même, mais sa transposition mentale en nous, ce que la psychologie cognitive explore, en s'intéressant à la manière dont les sujets perçoivent leur environnement, y dirigent leur attention et gèrent les interactions qu'ils entretiennent avec lui. Elle désigne par informations ou cognitions, les éléments du réel perceptif que nous prenons, comparons aux informations stockées en mémoire, interprétons, récupérons et/ou modifions dans des situations diverses pour agir en conséquence, générer des actions, telles que la pensée, la prise de décision, le jugement.

Pour interroger le réel perçu à partir du filtre de notre subjectivité, nous avons puisé à ces deux sources pour ensuite le confronter à celui perçu par une diversité d'interlocuteurs acteurs de l'innovation en formation dans le cadre de projets européens. Pour faire cet effort de pensée, les trois questions suivantes ont guidé notre travail de chercheure pour prendre conscience de notre perception :

- Comment suis-je venue à la formation des adultes ?

- Comment j'y construis ma professionnalisation ?

- Quelle place y prennent l'innovation en formation et la dimension européenne ?

Le lecteur trouvera dans cette communication les éléments de réponse élaborés à la première question, compte-tenu des contraintes de temps à prendre en compte. Nous l'informons de

l'utilisation du « je » dans le récit qui va suivre, après avoir clarifié les notions d'autobiographie et d'événement.

2.1. Clarification épistémologique

La notion d'autobiographie

La définition proposée par Peneff (1990) nous permet de préciser l'autobiographie comme « un récit travaillé et construit selon un schéma préétabli […] avec une chronologie suivie » (p. 68), où il faut que « l'auteur se prenne comme sujet d'histoire avec une intention de recul, qu'il se dédouble pour objectiver son passé » (p. 69).

La notion d'événement

Le mot événement vient du latin « evenere » qui signifie sortir, avoir un résultat, se produire. Son sens étymologique rejoint bien un sens développé dans les sciences humaines de l'événement comme expérience cruciale, comme faits perçus comme importants par l'émotion qu'ils ont suscitée, la dynamique de réflexion, de pensée, de recherche de sens qu'ils ont enclenchée, les effets, les transformations qu'ils ont produits. La démarche scientifique s'intéresse à comprendre ce qui est en profondeur, c'est-à-dire la structure, qui est peut être repérée dans la durée, et répond à certains déterminismes. Or l'événement ne se répète pas, il est singulier, non déterminé, il émerge dans un contexte, reliant sujet-action-temps. À ce titre, il se doit d'être situé dans le temps, dans son contexte d'émergence pour être compris. Il est également un construit social, une donnée subjective, réactivée à partir d'une mémoire biographique. La notion d'événement peut également être considérée comme pertinente au regard des exigences scientifiques, notamment en référence à plusieurs travaux en sciences humaines. Selon Boutinet (2006), structure et événement constituent deux paradigmes significatifs de nos espaces contemporains, qui peuvent être utilisés comme analyseurs culturels, et comme des grilles de lecture des temporalités. Le concept d'événement lui apparaît plus adapté aux espaces postmodernes. Prestini-Christophe (2006) dans son article intitulé la décision d'entrée en formation chez les adultes, elle montre comment, l'événement se présente à la fois comme un révélateur et un catalyseur et comment il peut amener la personne à définir un nouveau cadre de référence.

Ces clarifications épistémologiques étant faites, nous allons maintenant poursuivre avec le récit de cet événement.

2.2. Récit d'une reconversion professionnelle dans le champ de la formation

Je suis venue à la formation des adultes par choix, après un passage dans un autre monde professionnel, découvert et vécu dans la fonction marketing, pendant cinq ans, principalement en Allemagne. Ainsi ma décision de m'investir dans un nouveau champ professionnel a traduit une

volonté de reconversion professionnelle. Mon premier domaine d'activité professionnelle exercé dans le secteur du transport international faisait logiquement suite à une formation initiale, autofinancée, à l'École supérieure de commerce de Montpellier (ESCM), avec une spécialisation Affaires internationales, qui m'avait amenée à faire une partie de mes études en Allemagne dans le cadre d'un partenariat avec la Fachhochschule de Worms et a réalisé une mission export sur le marché allemand pour deux PME de la région des Pyrénées Orientales.

L'interculturel comme processus d'ouverture

A la fin de mes études, j'avais décidé de prendre dans un premier temps de la distance par rapport au moule de l'ESCM et d'investir dans les deux langues étrangères que je parlais, l'allemand et l'anglais. La recherche d'une expression de ma pensée et de mon action en plusieurs langues est un fil rouge dans mon parcours. Cet investissement prit la forme d'un séjour de 6 mois en Allemagne et 6 mois aux Etats-Unis, que j'organisais par mes propres moyens, en recherchant des stages. Compte tenu des restrictions de visa aux Etats-Unis, la formule du stage était difficile à organiser depuis la France, aussi je choisis un séjour d'études de trois mois à The School for international Training, située dans le Vermont à Bratlleboro. Je verrais bien sur place quelles seraient les possibilités pour dépasser ce cadre.

Nous étions trois cents à vivre, étudier et travailler sur le campus de l'école. Trente nationalités y été représentées, de même que tous les âges de 18 à 81 ans. Je m'y suis tout de suite sentie très à l'aise et j'y ai vécu avec intensité et beaucoup de joie la rencontre avec l'altérité. Outre les cours de langues, le centre proposait également des programmes de formation pour les volontaires du Peace Corps[7], des masters in « Arts of teaching » et en développement international et une diversité d'activités de découverte en interaction avec la population locale. Mes professeurs d'anglais étaient d'anciens membres du Peace Corps, certains d'entre eux avaient fait l'expérience de la guerre du Vietnam. Leurs méthodes pédagogiques traduisaient une approche humaniste centrée sur les personnes, et s'inspiraient notamment des travaux de Carl Rogers, de Kolb, du « Silent Way » de Caleb Gattegno[8]. J'étais loin des méthodes pédagogiques éprouvées en classe préparatoire aux grandes écoles [9] et en École de commerce, qui s'inscrivaient dans des courants traditionnels,

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[7] "Peace Corps" en anglais, les Corps de la Paix en français est une agence indépendante du gouvernement américain créée en 1961, dont la mission est de favoriser la paix et l'amitié dans le monde, en particulier auprès des pays du tiers monde. Les volontaires du Peace Corps travaillent avec des gouvernements, des écoles, des entrepreneurs sur des sujets comme l'éducation, la santé, l'agriculture, l'écologie, le HIV/SIDA.

[8] Patricia Benstein, Explaing Concept behind the Silent way, the Science of Education n° 14, 1996

[9] Les classes préparatoires occupent une place originale dans le système éducatif français. Ces classes d'enseignement supérieures sont situées dans des établissements secondaires, des lycées, elles sont pour la plupart publiques. Par leur mission et leur enseignement intensif et théorique, elles sont liées à des établissements particuliers appelés « grandes écoles » qui recrutent sur concours. Leur personnel enseignant se distingue des professeurs de l'enseignement secondaire et des enseignements-chercheurs en université. À leur début au XVIIIème siècle, elles sont exclusivement scientifiques, les classes préparatoires littéraires et scientifiques apparaissent ensuite au XXème siècle. Selon Bruno Belhoste (2003), l'histoire de ces classes n'a

comportementalistes et fonctionnalistes de la pédagogie, au service d'un modèle de formation élitiste. C'est dans cet environnement ouvert sur l'altérité que j'ai non seulement entendu mais aussi fait l'expérience pour la première fois d'une approche interculturelle de la formation, appelée en anglais « Cross-cultural learning ». Je me souviens à mon retour en France, en avoir cherché une traduction et n'en avoir trouvé aucune trace. Peut-être n'avais-je pas les bons outils de recherche à cette époque. Le concept de « cross-cultural learning » se fondait sur une immersion culturelle recherchée à partir d'une diversité d'activités et de rencontres impliquant une participation active des adultes, dans l'espace pédagogique, dans l'espace du campus de l'école, et avec l'environnement de l'école, notamment par des reportages sur des lieux de la vie économique, sociale, politique, ainsi que par la contribution à des manifestations collectives. Les apprentissages visaient aussi bien des apprentissages d'ordre cognitif, affectif que conatif. Trois autres mois s'ajoutèrent à ce premier temps de vécu très riche dans ce microcosme, où chaque moment occasionnait des rencontres, des découvertes, avec des humains venus des quatre coins du monde. J'en garde jusqu'à ce jour de très belles et très profondes amitiés. Grâce à des opportunités saisies sur place, je pus prolonger mon séjour par un stage au département marketing. La directrice du département Langues vint un jour me demander, contre toute attente, si j'étais intéressée pour former pendant trois semaines un groupe d'étudiants américains et les préparer à un séjour de six mois en France. J'étais enthousiasmée par cette proposition tout en déclarant n'avoir aucune expérience dans ce domaine. Pour elle, ce n'était pas un problème. Elle me proposa une mise en situation, à partir de laquelle elle déciderait si elle pouvait me confier « le job ». Elle ne parlait pas l'allemand, son assistant non plus, aussi me proposa-t-elle de leur donner un cours de trente minutes. J'y mis toute mon énergie, ma spontanéité. J'ai eu « le job » et avec lui la joie et le plaisir de concevoir et mettre en œuvre ma première formation, d'apprendre et d'échanger avec des étudiants américains. Il me fut ensuite proposé de prendre en charge le programme de l'université du 3ème âge, sur une durée de six mois. J'acceptai la tête pleine d'idées pour concevoir le programme. C'était sans compter sur l'administration américaine, qui rejeta par deux fois la demande de visa, ne voyant pas en quoi ma nationalité apportait une plus-value à ce poste. Je dus me résoudre à rentrer en France et à entamer ma recherche d'emploi. Mes recherches pour des missions à l'étranger en m'adressant au Ministère de la coopération restaient infructueuses. J'entendais dire avec étonnement que le diplôme de l'ESCM, n'était pas considéré comme un diplôme d'Etat, que les missions de coopération étaient réservées aux diplômés masculins, qui devaient faire leur service militaire. Après l'ouverture vécue aux Etats-Unis, comme vecteur

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jamais été étudiée. Elles illustrent pourtant la constitution d'une filière élitiste fortement hiérarchisée et isolée du système global de formation supérieure en France.

d'émergence de potentialités, je faisais la découverte en France d'un système qui m'apparaissait fermé.

Vers la fonction marketing à l'international

C'est ainsi, que je repris la voie de la fonction marketing à l'international. Peu de temps après, je commençais au poste de chargée de développement dans la filiale allemande d'une société de transport française, à Francfort. Je n'avais pas d'affinité avec le monde des véhicules utilitaires. La perspective de travailler en Allemagne m'avait par contre séduite, j'y voyais la possibilité d'une diversité d'apprentissages. J'ai dû me créer un savoir technique sur le transport terrestre pour penser le développement de prestations. J'ai appris à faire ma place dans un environnement étranger, quelquefois plus facilitateur que celui que j'avais connu jusque-là en France, quelquefois plus hostile. Lorsque j'ai décroché les premiers contrats, puis un important client pour développer une ligne journalière entre Francfort et Lyon, le regard et l'attitude de mes supérieurs et collègues ont changé. Je n'étais plus « «l'espionne » envoyée par la maison mère, j'étais reconnue pour ma contribution. Un an après, j'acceptais la proposition d'un groupe allemand de dimension internationale, de développer les prestations de transport multimodal, en direction et à destination de la France. L'année suivante, j'étais appelée au siège, à la direction Europe, de ce même groupe, au poste de responsable du marché français. La voie semblait tracée, encore fallait-il que je reste sur les rails.

De la perte de sens à la décision de rupture

La décision de rupture avec l'exercice de la fonction marketing renvoie à plusieurs questions, apparues un peu avant d'avoir trente ans, au cours de ma cinquième année d'expérience professionnelle dans le secteur du transport international. Elles portaient sur le registre des valeurs.

- Quelle est l'utilité de mon engagement ?

- A qui et à quoi je sers en agissant professionnellement ?

- Quel est l'effet de l'énergie et des ressources que je mobilise et que j'investis ?

L'exploration de ces questions a débouché sur le constat de 70% de mon énergie détournée dans des jeux de pouvoir, de lutte de territoire, et 30% investie dans la conception et la mise en œuvre d'une stratégie de développement du marché français dans le cadre du rachat à 50% d'une société française. Les jeux de pouvoir étaient exacerbés par les tensions, les rivalités, les peurs suscitées par le rachat. Ces peurs étaient d'autant plus fortes que les cultures d'entreprises des deux acteurs en présence présentaient de forts antagonismes et que la volonté politique de les concilier faisait défaut. La fonction officieuse d'interprète que m'avait confiée le directeur du département Europe

me plaçait au premier rang pour observer lors des réunions des comités de direction français et allemand, les incohérences, les contradictions et le développement de positions d'hostilité et de stéréotypes négatifs des deux côtés. Aucun des autres scénarii de partenariat, proposés avec le soutien des équipes opérationnelles, dans un esprit de complémentarité de réseau, de compétences, d'atouts stratégiques, n'avait été sérieusement étudié. Il avait été décidé que ce rachat se ferait, quitte à adopter une logique procédurière. Je prenais conscience de « dimensions cachées ». J'utilise ici cette expression en référence à l'ouvrage de T. Hall (1966), anthropologue américain qui s'est intéressé à l'espace social et personnel et à sa perception par l'homme. Il y met en évidence comment la culture façonne la perception du monde. Par l'observation des différences culturelles en présence, je comprenais la rupture au niveau de l'interface des fonctions stratégiques et politiques. La stratégie marketing élaborée dans une démarche participative avec le niveau opérationnel des dix-huit agences allemandes n'avait aucune chance d'être opérationnalisée dans un contexte de non prise en compte de la diversité culturelle. Mes échanges avec le directeur du département Europe, et d'autres collègues n'ont pas permis de réguler mon sentiment de perte de sens en présente d' une culture dominante perçue comme fondée sur des rapports de force et de reproduction.

A cela s'ajoutait, un vécu quelquefois difficile dans un milieu misogyne, où les femmes disparaissaient au fur et à mesure que je gravissais les échelons hiérarchiques. Par contre les photos de femmes « objet sexuel » que j'avais vues orner les cabines des chauffeurs de poids lourds, me semblaient persister de manière implicite dans les bureaux du siège. Je devais trouver le moyen de penser conjointement professionnalité et féminité. J'entends ici professionnalité au sens de Perrenoud (1994) comme « *La capacité à identifier et résoudre des problèmes en situation d'incertitude, de stress et de forte implication personnelle.* ». C'est ainsi que j'ai appris à intégrer ma féminité à ma professionnalité, un apprentissage clé qui ne figurait pas au programme des études à l'Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Montpellier. Pour toutes ces raisons, j'étais en situation de dissonance cognitive par les tensions entre mon environnement de travail et moi-même. Je ne voyais pas à cette époque de rapport constructif entre le projet de l'organisation et le mien, bien au contraire, il me semblait que le projet d'entreprise me demandait de faire abstraction du mien et de ma personne. Cette situation m'a amenée à questionner profondément ma vie professionnelle, mon identité, ma vocation au sens où Boutinet (1999, p. 94) l'entend, c'est-à-dire, comme « *La façon par laquelle l'adulte entend se réaliser notamment dans son travail professionnel, compte tenu des possibilités subjectives et objectives qui sont à sa disposition.* ». J'ai essayé de négocier une évolution dans ma situation de travail, de poser ma candidature dans d'autres entreprises, de prendre quelques mois de réflexion, de recul. Chemin faisant, se réactivaient à ma mémoire diverses expériences en lien avec la formation. Ainsi, ma première expérience de formation aux Etats-Unis,

d'autres expériences dans mes activités extra-professionnelles, telles que des séminaires sur des problèmes du monde, l'environnement, l'éducation, les rapports Nord-Sud, ainsi que mon plaisir d'enfant à l'école et mes premiers jeux de simulation recréant l'espace de la classe et ses interactions. Ne voyant pas de perspective d'évolution à court terme, j'ai décidé de rompre avec un modèle professionnel auquel je ne trouvais pas de sens. J'ai démissionné pour me mettre en situation de recherche, d'exploration, d'expérimentation, me confronter à diverses situations de vie, de travail, pour élargir mon horizon. Cette recherche a pris la forme d'un projet de tour du monde.

Formation expérientielle et émergence d'un projet de reconversion professionnelle

Initialement conçu comme un projet autofinancé d'un an, avec des étapes dans six pays différents, ce projet aura duré deux ans, en trouvant sur place des opportunités de travail, de ressources pour continuer ma mise en chemin et la découverte de dix pays. Pendant cette période, j'ai fait l'expérience de la diversité humaine et culturelle, d'une variété de situations de vie, de travail et de formation. Dans des Organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) américaine et française en Thaïlande, ma contribution comme bénévole à des actions de formation préparant des réfugiés du Sud-est asiatique à leur départ pour les Etats-Unis et des personnes déplacées à leur perspective de retour au Cambodge m'a donné à réfléchir sur l'apprentissage des adultes et des enfants dans de tels contextes de transition. Au Guatemala, ma situation d'immersion culturelle et linguistique a intensifié mon apprentissage de l'espagnol, en combinant des cours individuels intensifs, la vie avec des familles locales, et des expériences de travail et de bénévolat. Au Japon, l'enseignement du français dans une école de langues à Tokyo m'a permis des contacts directs avec de nombreux japonais. L'école était organisée sur un mode de consommation étonnant. Les clients achetaient un crédit d'heures enregistré sur une carte. Un cours de langue durait quarante-cinq minutes avec au maximum trois participants. Je ne savais jamais qui j'allais avoir en face de moi. A chaque séance, je découvrais de nouveaux visages, qui souvent ne se connaissaient pas entre eux et n'avaient pas le même niveau de langue. Nous avons petit à petit fait connaissance dans ces temps de rencontre et appris à apprendre ensemble dans ce contexte. Tout en relativisant la valeur d'utilité et le sens que j'avais spontanément attribués à la formation, ces expériences m'ont appris à regarder et à éprouver la formation comme un métier de l'humain, qui demande toujours à apprendre, à prendre conscience de ses limites, de certains obstacles à l'apprentissage chez les adultes, chez moi-même, de l'instrumentalisation possible de la formation dans des contextes économiques et politiques sensibles. Les mêmes questionnements que ceux qui avaient émergé dans le monde professionnel avec lequel je m'étais mise en rupture, pouvaient tout aussi bien exister dans celui de la formation. Ce qui pouvait donner du sens pour moi, c'est la place que je reconnais à l'humain, la cohérence entre mes discours et mes actes, les possibilités de création, de développement dans un rapport

d'ouverture à autrui et au monde. Le bilan positif de mes premières interactions pédagogiques avec des publics très différents, le sentiment de plaisir dans l'activité de conception et d'animation de formation, les rencontres faites au cours de ce tour du monde, qui ont fait résonance en moi, ont servi de points d'ancrage à ma décision de reconversion professionnelle. En ce sens, ce voyage peut être appréhendé comme une formation expérientielle, en vivant des expériences qui amènent un sujet à évoluer et à opérer des changements.

Après une phase de rupture et de dé-construction, j'étais entrée dans une phase de reconstruction de mes représentations. A mon retour en France, j'avais construit une nouvelle compréhension du monde, une cohérence entre moi, mes domaines de vie et d'action, un regard humain, lucide, confiant et optimiste. J'étais animée d'un sentiment d'identité commune avec les personnes que j'avais rencontrées dans des pays si différents, par une volonté de coexistence pacifique, le refus de la discrimination basée sur la nationalité, la race, la religion, le sexe ou encore le statut. De là, la construction européenne m'apparaissait comme un espace possible et porteur pour œuvrer en ce sens. Je percevais également le champ de la formation des adultes comme un champ vivant, ouvert, varié, au carrefour de plusieurs domaines, à la croisée des dynamiques individuelles et organisationnelles. J'associais ces caractéristiques à des conditions favorables pour m'engager au service du développement humain individuel et collectif, en exprimant ma créativité, ma recherche d'autonomie, mon désir d'apprendre. J'avais identifié un champ professionnel et un espace européen qui me paraissaient compatibles avec ma nature, une vocation au sens de Schlanger (1997, p. 26):

> «L'affinité entre ce qu'on est et ce qu'on fait est au cœur de notre idée de la vocation. Par vocation, nous entendons, choix et désir, adhésion volontaire, voire même identification enthousiaste, adéquation interne entre un désir et une nature, épanouissement et réalisation active d'un moi. Nous nous soucions avant tout de savoir si notre occupation présente ou future est bien la nôtre, celle qui nous permettra d'être pleinement nous-mêmes, et si elle répond bien à ce qui nous importe. La vocation moderne se présente comme la tâche éthique d'une vie et cette vie est son champ, son enjeu et le critère de sa réussite. C'est parce que la grande priorité est de réussir sa vie à ses propres yeux, qu'il est si important que chacun puisse se reconnaître dans ce qu'il fait.»

III.   L'analyse d'un apprentissage transformateur

Les notions de « transformation de perspective » (*perspective transformation*) et « d'apprentissage transformateur »(transformative learning) ont été introduites par Mezirow (1975) dans la littérature nord-américaine. La notion d'apprentissage transformateur renvoie à des processus qui produisent pour la personne ou un collectif une remise en question et une ré-interprétation des cadres de référence tenus jusque-là pour acquis ou élaborés sans réflexion critique. Ces processus débouchent sur la construction d'un/des nouveau(x) cadre(s) de référence qui vont alors guider les expériences

individuelles et/ou collectives de façon plus ouverte, plus autonome, plus libérée de contraintes culturelles.

3.1   Choix d'une grille de lecture

Pour procéder à une analyse de cet événement autobiographique, nous avons adapté une grille de lecture proposée par Prestini-Christophe[10], en reprenant les étapes d'élucidation de sens de la théorie de « la transformation de perspectives » de Mezirow et la théorie de la conscience anticipante décrite par Bloch (1976).

Temps	Rapport à soi	Etapes de transition	Décision
Temps de la rupture	Incompréhension, perte de sens. Insatisfaction, dissonance cognitive, sentiment de décalage, de déséquilibre, conflit de valeur, remise en question du cadre de référence initial	Recherche de résolution d'un dilemme perturbateur Examen de conscience Evaluation critique des perspectives Reconnaissance du bouleversement en cours	Négociation d'une évolution Envoi de candidatures Démission Prise de position de non-conformité au cadre professionnel de référence
Temps du déplacement « **Streben** »	Recherche de nouvelles reliances, déplacement des limites	Prise en compte du bouleversement et des nouveaux possibles qu'il permet.	Conception et organisation d'un projet de tour du monde sur un an
Temps de la découverte « **Sehen** »	Ouverture à de nouvelles expériences de vie, de travail. Rencontres fécondes, Essai de nouveaux rôles Confiance en soi	Exploration de possibilités de rôles, de nouvelles relations Acquisition de compétences	Réalisation du projet de tour du monde Prolongation du tour du monde sur une deuxième année
Temps de la mise en disponibilité « **Suchen** »	Sentiment de cohérence, d'équilibre, engagement, optimisme et désir, de réaliser la vision d'une nouvelle perspective	Mise en place de la confiance en soi et de la compétence pour assumer un nouveau rôle Nouveau cadre de référence, engagement dans une dynamique de projet professionnel	Choix de reconversion professionnelle dans le champ de la formation des adultes, décision de formation au CNAM

Figure 2: Adaptation d'une grille de lecture d'un apprentissage transformateur –Bonnafous 2010

Cette analyse permet de valider le caractère d'événement autobiographique que recouvre la reconversion professionnelle examinée. Les transformations repérables permettent d'y voir un événement fondateur, révélateur d'un apprentissage transformateur, catalyseur d'une nouvelle orientation de la construction de mon identité professionnelle. La distinction des étapes et des temps met en évidence leur relation de cohérence dans un temps linéaire et fait ainsi apparaître une structure sous-jacente à l'événement. On retrouve bien là, la distinction entre le temps bref de l'événement enclenché en surface par la décision de démission et le temps plus long de l'expérience de transformation qui s'opère dans un espace temps/projet et des apprentissages qu'il en résulte

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[10] Elle reprend notamment les quatre caractéristiques définies par Winock (2002) au regard de l'événement historique : intensité, imprévisibilité, retentissement, conséquence.

sous forme d'un changement de culture permettant le passage à une reconversion professionnelle. Dans le récit de cette première phase de mon parcours professionnel, les émotions jouent un rôle clé dans la mise en mouvement, pour traverser des phases, faire advenir de nouveaux possibles, revisiter des expériences stockées en mémoire. L'émotion au sens de sa racine indo européenne « mov » renvoie à l'idée de mouvement, de moteur, de motif. L'agir est vecteur d'émotion. Réciproquement les émotions donnent du sens à l'agir et son environnement. Les émotions positives vécues dans les expériences de formation, et au-delà de mobilité, de rencontre avec l'altérité ont permis d'identifier une voie de reconversion professionnelle et de consolider un rapport d'ouverture au monde, aux autres.

Au-delà de ces éléments de compréhension, cette analyse apparaît révélatrice de liens entre «Mobilité-Identité-Altérité» et d'un apprentissage transformateur dans et par l'expérience, que nous tenterons de préciser ci-après.

3.2   Un apprentissage transformateur, dans et par l'expérience

L'engagement identifié dans le champ de la formation des adultes sur la base d'une nouvelle perspective de vie et d'identité professionnelle peut être appréhendé comme un indice d'un apprentissage transformateur réalisé dans et par l'expérience de l'altérité. Cet apprentissage mobilise des processus de construction, déconstruction, de réflexion, d'analyse, de remaniement, de créativité. Il combine plusieurs composantes, dont la fonction centrale de la pensée critique, qui place la personne en position de sujet, le désir et le plaisir d'apprendre, la conjugaison de l'acquisition de savoir et de la transformation de soi, l'articulation entre soi et autrui pour apprendre. Il produit plus particulièrement des connaissances critiques ou émancipatoires, un des trois types de connaissances proposées par Habermas (1978) dans son ouvrage sur la connaissance et la société. Ces connaissances émancipatoires sont décrites par Morrow et Torres (1995) comme le désir de potentiellement transformer la réalité grâce à la démystification ou à l'altération de certaines formes de conscience. Les deux autres types dont l'homme a besoin dans cette perspective habermassienne sont d'une part des connaissances empirico-déductives, entendues comme le désir de potentiellement contrôler grâce à l'analyse de déterminants objectifs. La connaissance instrumentale s'inscrit dans cette catégorie. D'autre part, des connaissances historico-herméneutiques qui sont définies comme fondées sur le désir de potentiellement comprendre grâce à l'interprétation des significations. L'analyse discursive, l'intuition féminine en sont des formes.

Pour illustrer le temps différé de l'apprentissage transformateur, nous reprendrons ici, l'idée musicale sous la forme d'un rythme à trois temps, développée par Ricoeur (1991, p. 56) en parlant de l'événement:

«D'abord quelque chose arrive, éclate, déchire un ordre établi. Puis, une impérieuse demande de sens se fait entendre, comme une expérience de mise en ordre. Finalement l'événement n'est pas simplement rappelé à l'ordre mais en quelque façon qu'il reste à penser, il est reconnu, honoré et exalté comme crête du sens».

3.3. Des liens entre mobilité-identité-altérité

Le récit de l'événement autobiographique examiné manifeste une mobilité voulue et vécue globalement positivement. Être mobile amenant en quelque sorte, dans ce cas, un changement de perspective associé à un ajout d'expériences et de contacts, transformables en gain de ressources, avec un sentiment de plaisir et d'y être « gagnante ». La mobilité apparaît ici comme révélatrice d'identités, participant d'autant plus à la dynamique de construction identitaire qu'il s'agit d'une mobilité non contrainte, sur une échelle spatiale en progression continue. La mobilité est à prendre ici en tant que notion polymorphe, qui s'appuie sur un processus déjà présent depuis l'enfance, inscrit dans différents temps, le temps des études, le temps des voyages, les temps du travail et faite d'intégrations successives de nombreux déplacements pour se loger, pour étudier, pour travailler. Dans le processus de mobilité se combinent ainsi une identité issue d'une histoire individuelle, familiale, sociale et des identités nouvelles générées. Elle peut être mise en lien avec une mémoire de mobilités héritée de mes ancêtres, mobilités très variées en fonction des trajectoires personnelles : de la mobilité contrainte en période de guerre, d'occupation, de difficultés économiques, à la mobilité désirée en recherche d'ouverture, de stratégie d'alternative pour construire un avenir distinct. Cette combinatoire a favorisé une identité socio-spatiale plus étendue.

Ainsi la mobilité peut être comme un acte de construction de soi, d'appropriation de compétences sociales et interculturelles, d'apprentissage linguistique, culturel, relationnel, professionnel. Elle touche également à des modes d'appropriation de l'espace autant en termes d'usage, qu'en termes de représentation, à des potentialités pour des espaces de liberté, permettant une prise de distance individuelle vis-à-vis de rôles et d'effets du contrôle social. Cette relation à l'espace me semble déterminante pour la construction d'un lien entre sécurité et mobilité. Cette mobilité a été génératrice de l'expérience d'une multitude d'altérités, mettant la diversité culturelle en situation quasiment au quotidien. La question de l'altérité a été particulièrement interrogée en sciences sociales, notamment par l'anthropologie et la sociologie. La notion « d'autres » du latin « alter » porte en elle une double relation, celle du même et celle du différent. Ainsi sur le plan conceptuel, elle renvoie à une « méta-catégorie de la pensée de l'être », selon l'expression de Ricoeur (2004, p. 47). Dans son analyse, il distingue deux sortes d'identité personnelle, celle du « même » et celle « mobile du soi ». À partir de là, trois types de relation sont à distinguer : celle de la relation entre soi et le monde, celle de la relation intersubjective, entre soi et les autres, et celle de la relation de soi à soi. La diversité des mobilités vécues implique la diversité des expériences et des

apprentissages interculturels à des degrés différents au niveau des trois relations mentionnées, en fonction de la durée, de la nature de l'expérience et du caractère des interactions.

Conclusion

L'expérimentation de cette auto-analyse à partir d'un récit de vie appliqué à une reconversion professionnelle volontaire nous est apparue productrice d'une compétence biographique en tant que prise de conscience de soi, des transitions liées aux âges de la vie, des apprentissages transformateurs liés à l'expérience de vie. Nous considérons cette compétence biographique comme une compétence stratégique pour développer un chemin professionnel tout au long de la vie, en faisant face à un avenir incertain. Tout en reconnaissant les limites liées à une auto-analyse, nous mettons en lien cet apprentissage, avec les travaux de Delory-Momberger (2003, 2004). Elle a en effet orienté sa réflexion vers la formation des adultes, en prenant en considération ce qu'elle nomme la biographisation. Le travail biographique permet de faire des liens entre des mondes différents, de « métaboliser » l'expérience de la mouvance et de déboucher sur de nouvelles figurations du soi. Ce travail de biographisation a débouché pour nous sur un sentiment d'unité à partir d'une identité professionnelle faite de diversité, a renforcé des liens de cohérence avec l'objet et le projet de recherche, en contribuant au passage à la posture de chercheure.

Les liens mis à jour entre mobilité-identité-altérité et d'autre part ceux entre expérience de l'altérité et apprentissage transformateur ont servi à interroger les effets de l'innovation en formation, notamment dans le cadre d'une « Classe Europe » exposant une trentaine de jeunes étudiants espagnols, français et suédois et leurs formateurs à une mobilité européenne, donnant lieu à une confrontation significative à l'altérité. Si cette confrontation met bien en jeu des processus cognitifs et psychologiques et peut renforcer ses liens avec l'identité. Pour autant, les transformations vécues ne sont pas systématiques pour tout adulte, ou jeune adulte et ne débouchent pas forcément sur la construction de nouveaux repères.

Références

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The autobiographical atelier as a tool for identification / recognition of educational needs:

Marianna Capo, Université de Naples Federico II & Equipe de recherche Mimesis et Formation – Université de Genève

English Summary

This paper intends to bring to the attention of the scientific community a reflection focused both on the use of autobiographical semi-structured interviews as a tool for the detection of training needs of participants in a research experience, and on adoption of the so-called multimodal narrative modes, such as the online diary like an option of subjective writing starting from stimuli selected by the researcher. Is deemed that writing can be understood as a "functional technology to reflection and reflexivity, which allows to feed and sustain reflective devices in a variety of contexts of social life (Striano, 2010: 152). Indeed may be different means and media of the 'plotting connections' each in his own way affects the content of the story, its structure, its transformative and formative possibilities" (Formenti, 1998: 29). The idea is not only to ascertain the experiential-formative valence in relation to the dual oral / written communicative dimension, but also to collect a collage of individual research products, [...] in ways and languages that make this narrative shared" (Formenti, 1988: 27). Collage work is always an engaging process. Inevitably new insights emerge about the research in question, or about the researcher herself. Collage as a form of inquiry (Butler-Kisber, 2010), has been attracting interest in qualitative circles because it allows the researcher to work in a non-linear and intuitive way by arranging image fragments that reveal unconscious connections and new understandings (Davis, 2008a).It has been described elsewhere how, to date, collage has been used in inquiry in three basic ways--as a reflective process, as a form of elicitation, and as a way of conceptualizing ideas (Butler-Kisber, 2008; 2010).

Keywords: experience, autobiographical recognition, training support, expression/subjective representation.

L'interview autobiographique comme un espace pour la revitalisation des connaissances professionnelles

Cet article scientifique est le résultat des réflexions qui se sont développées au cours et à la fin de la première phase de ma recherche. Cette dernière prévoit l'adoption de modalités narratives dites " multimodales"; en effet, les moyens et les média destinés à (tramer)/établir des connexions sont nombreuses: chacun influe à sa manière sur les contenus du récit, sa structure, ses possibilités transformatives ou formatives"(Formenti, 1998:29) – comme par exemple le journal de bord on line, en tant qu'option d'écriture subjective à partir de stimuli sélectionnés exprès par le chercheur.

Ce travail, pour des raisons liées aux temps et aux phases du parcours de recherche, se propose de porter à l'attention de la Communauté scientifique une réflexion centrée particulièrement sur l'utilisation des interview autobiographiques semi-structurées, en tant qu'instrument pour déceler les besoins formatifs des sujets participant à une expérience de recherche-intervention.

On veut nous référer aux éducateurs qui éducateurs travaillent dans les creches - il faut préciser qu'au début un tel service sur le territoire n'existait pas (c'est pour cela que la coopérative a promu une initiative qui a été, par ailleurs, très appréciée par la population), par conséquent on a projeté l'ouverture d'ultérieures creches dans les différentes communes du milieu environnant.

Le personnel de la creche est formé d'un coordinateur et de plusieurs opérateurs. Les coordinateurs ont obtenu une maitrise en Sciences de l'Education et possèdent une expérience consolidée en tant qu'éducateurs dans les creches ou dans les services d'assistance domiciliaire aux mineurs (il s'agit d'un service destiné aux mineurs avec des difficultés psyco-phisique), alors que les éducateurs ont obtenu ou une licence en Sciences de l'Education ou le titre professionnel d'OPI (opérateur pour l'enfance), titre qui leur a été decerné directement par la coopérative sociale.

Cette recherche est articulée en différentes phases: une phase interprétative – herméneutique, et une phase de recherche-intervention. Dans un premier moment on a supposé de soumettre à une interview focalisée les éducateurspretant leur service dans les creches d'une structure coopérative; en effet, on s'est demandé quelle serait la meilleure manière d'obtenir des récits et des "descriptions riches". Pour descriptions riches on entend non seulement un matériel narratif autobiographique riche en détails, mais incluant aussi les aspects réflexifs qui concernent les expériences évoqués par les sujets en formation (Linden &Merril, 2012). Par conséquent, l'interview semi-structurée focalisée a le but d'identifier non seulement les besoins et les désirs de formation des sujets étudiés, avec l'intention de fournir au chercheur chargé de la formation les éléments pour structurer un parcours de formation parfaitement adapté à leurs besoins formatifs; - soit à faciliter dans les sujets étudiés une reconnaissance autobiographique.

On a décidé de s'activer en donnant à l'avance à l'interviewé une liste des sujets que l'on va traiter, de façon à l' aider à se faire une idée plus précise du territoire autobiographique à explorer. On a prévu une série de focus thématiques et de questions préparées à l'avance, dans un ordre décidé précédemment, en accordant aussi d'amples marges de flexibilité et de réélaboration, et en préservant en meme temps une modalité interactive pour la conversation.

En réalité, on a eu une attention particulière dans la tentative d'offrir au sujet interviewé la possibilité d'introduire de nouvelles thématiques qui n'étaient pas prévues à l'avance (Sita, 2012). L'interview représente un espace potentiellement créatif entre les individus, qui demande une

attention non seulement pour les aspects émotifs, mais aussi pour la capacité critique. En un certain sens, cela a à faire avec la relation entre interviewer et interviewé: en particulier, cela dépendra de la sensibilité du chercheur en relation à ce qui se passe dans le moment où on rencontre l'autre

La qualité des interviews biographiques, dépendra donc de ce que nous (les chercheurs) apporterons dans cette rencontre. En réalité, on estime que la présence du "soi" de ceux qui effectuent la recherche est centrale dans chaque recherche (Mortari, 2007).

En ce qui concerne la dernière question, c'est-à-dire: "Quels mots associes-tu à la formation?" On a pensé se servir de la technique des associations libres, parce qu'on est convaincu qu'une telle technique puisse encourager et mettre en valeur une plus grande ouverture expressive. On peut demander aux gens de dire ce qui leur vient à l'esprit, en relation au sujet en question, et ainsi ouvrir un terrain de recherche précieux ainsi que de nouvelles possibilité de compréhension (Merril&West), 2012). A un niveau plus conceptuel on peut imaginer les interview comme des espaces d'apprentissage, dans lesquels des changements peuvent se produire dans les idées des interviewés et, par conséquent, raconter des histoires représente une zone d'expérience transitionnelle, dans laquelle le "soi" négocie constamment sa position en relation aux autres.

En cohérence avec les objectifs de connaissance définis dans la recherche, on a prévu les thèmes suivants:

- La motivation en ce qui concerne le choix de la profession;

- Les retombées opératives de la formation sur les pratiques professionnelles;

- Les expériences qui ont mis à l'épreuve sur un plan cognitif, relationnel, émotif;

- Les besoins formatifs présents et futurs;

- L'idée personnelle de formation;

La modalité utilisée pour conclure l'interview est aussi importante que la manière de l'ouvrir. On a donc pensé demander à chacun s'il voulait ajouter quelque chose ou parler d'un aspect qui n'avait pas été mentionné, de façon à permettre une ultérieure marge d'expressivité subjective.

Presque une semaine après avoir ramassé les interview, on a eu l'idée de créer une "mailing list" de tous les "éducateurs" et de leur écrire un mail en leur demandant de répondre à une question-stimulus finalisée à mettre en évidence les résonances intérieures, ainsi que l'expérience de leur vie émotive et cognitive par rapport à l'expérience précédente à laquelle ils avaient été soumis.

Le but était d'abord de les rendre davantage conscients de l'expérience subjective, mettant en route une sorte de reconnaissance réflexive sur l'expérience de l'interview, et en meme temps de les

rapprocher progressivement à la dimension de l'écriture personnelle. La question-stimulus était : qu'as-tu éprouvé du point de vue émotif au moment où l'interwiew s'est déroulée? Et au moment où tu étais en train de formuler ta réponse?

Nous avons élaboré les écrits en adoptant une analyse phénoménologique et descriptive (Mortari, 2007). Nous avons aussi remarqué des catégories, dont nous reportons quelques extraits ci-joint avec les catégories associées. Il en résulte une reconnaissance autobiographique des expériences professionnelles et formatives :

Elle permet de devenir davantage conscients de son propre parcours évolutif, en se situant/ ou en se situant à nouveau dans sa propre histoire:

> "Il ne m'était jamais arrivé de reparcourir les étapes de mon parcours formatif, c'est-à-dire de mon parcours académique et dans le monde du travail. Cela a été une expérience fondamentale, parce qu'elle m'a permis de me situer à nouveau dans une histoire, dans mon histoire, et de devenir encore plus consciente de mon parcours évolutif" (Lella);

Elle se présente non seulement comme un (moment) révélateur des changements subjectifs, mais elle offre d'autres occasions de (changement d'avis) en ce qui concerne les pratiques professionnelles:

> "Parler à haute voix de mon parcours professionnel m'a permis de comprendre comment des expériences bien déterminées m'ont changée et m'ont aidée à grandir. Mettre par écrit ces choses-là, cela veut dire se trouver face- à- face avec la réalité. En effet notre travail change jour après jour, par conséquent il n'est pas possible de suivre un protocole bien déterminé. Les situations que nous nous trouvons à envisager sont nombreuses et on arrive à trouver les réponses seulement grâce à la formation et aux expériences passées" (Lisa);

Elle invite à la réflexion et à la capitalisation de ses propres expériences et représente de nouvelles possibilités:

> "Bon, que dire? Il s'agit d'une invitation à la réflexion, et je me demande quel est le moment meilleur pour réfléchir et exprimer l'essentiel qui accompagne notre travail quotidien caractérisé par l'attention, le mouvement, la force physique et psychique. [...] je me réfère à l'écriture, à ma narration écrite actuelle; je peux dire que je me sens bien, du moment que je suis en train de donner une possibilité à moi-meme. J'ai la conviction qu'il peut exister un horizon de sens qui donne une signification au désir impérieux d'autres expériences, ouvertes, différentes et divergentes, mais qui, de toute façon, peuvent accorder un espace symbolique aux savoirs" (Giovanna).

Elle favorise une forme d'attention envers son propre parcours formatif, en permettant le repérage des limites et des stratégies relatives à leur dépassement:

> "J'estime que dans notre travail il est fondamental de savoir se mettre en question, étant donné la (grande) responsabilité liée travail que nous faisons. L'interview m'a permis de réfléchir sur des aspects de ma formation qui ne trouvent pas toujours en moi-meme l'attention qui leur serait due. Cela a été très intéressant de m'arreter pour repenser à mes limites, et de découvrir combien je dois encore travailler pour les surmonter". (Valeria).

Après avoir ramassé les interview, on les a analisées dans une perspective phénoménologique finalisée à repérer les structures signifiantes, telles qu'elles émergeaient des participants memes.

Telle modalités' éloigne soit d'une attitude illustrative qui utilise les mots des personnes interviewés afin de confirmer une théorie déjà pensée/élaborée, soit d'une attitude purement "restitutive" selon laquelle les textes "parlent tout seuls" et l' intervention d'un chercheur extérieur n'est pas nécessaire (Demazière & Dubar, 2000). Une analyse phénoménologique descriptive est finalisée à utiliser les compte-rendus des sujets pour éclaircir un /des phénomènes significatifs.

Dans notre cas elle est aussi finalisée à déterminer non seulement les besoins et les désirs de formation des sujets participant à la recherche, mais aussi les significations sous-tendues aux expériences de formation et aux pratiques professionnelles. Après avoir fait une première analyse encore provisoire des interview, j'ai deduit les categories suivantes:

La formation doit répondre à un critère d'utilité, autrement dit, elle doit fournir des indications opératives, des input, qui puissent aider dans l'accomplissement des pratiques professionnelles, en effet:

> "La formation doit avoir un but d'utilité, elle doit donc me servir pour faire quelque chose qui pourra être utile dans la pratique. Si je pense à la formation, je pense à cela, l'utilité". (Valeria).

Une expérience formative et professionnelle est perçue comme significative par un sujet, surtout quand il se sent partie intégrante d'un milieu de travail, en effet:

> "Cela a été pour moi une expérience hautement significative, soit parce que j'ai été supporté par le groupe de travail ; il y avait en effet une belle équipe - et c'est justement dans ce contexte que j'ai grandi professionnellement comme éducatrice et que je me suis formée, soit parce que cela a été l' expérience de travail que j'avais choisie et réalisée en conscience et en autonomie". (Angela).

La formation en tant que lieu-temps optimal pour "reformuler une pensée" et donc pour apprendre de nouvelles modalités opératives, différentes par rapport à celles expérimentées ailleurs:

> "Puis, avec la coopérative Prisma, j'ai suivi un cours de formation et de mise à jour/niveau, une expérience qui a été très utile pour moi, parce cela m'a obligée à re-organiser mes pensées. Dans les creches de la coopérative Prisma on utilise la méthode "Montessori", ces rencontres ont été donc très utiles pour bien comprendre comment l'utiliser dans la meilleure des manières et aussi pour comprendre et apprendre les métodologies que l'on utilise ici, à la creche "Montemare de Meta de Sorrento". (Rosaria).

Dans le parcours de professionalisation, ce qui a été considéré comme essentiel est une formation non purement et simplement "transmissive", mais une formation capable d'engendrer une pensée réfléchie, fondamentale pour devenir complètement conscient d'éventuelles erreurs commises dans les pratiques du travail quotidien:

> "Ces expériences de formation m'ont aidé à être un éducateur meilleur, du moment qu'elles m'ont fait réfléchir sur la pratique. En effet, elles n'étaient pas tellement centrée sur la théorie, mais plutot sur la pratique - et donc sur la quotidienneté vécue avec les enfants qui m'aident à comprendre même les erreurs que l'on peut commettre et en quoi on peut s'améliorer". (Stefania).

Il en ressort un besoin d'expérimenter des parcours de formation qui donnent l'opportunité de renouveler les pratiques de travail et de répondre dans la meilleure manière aux besoins des enfants.

"Toutes les expériences de formation aux quelles j'ai participé dans les dernières années, comme par exemple un cours organisé par "Giunti Scuola" que j'ai suivi à Rome, sont des experiences qui laissent toujours quelque chose qui peut être utile dans le travail avec les enfants. Par exemple, si on participe à un cours sur la musique, ou biensûr le mouvement, cela va faciliter l'apprentissage de nouvelles modalités opératives. Successivement on peut les mettre en pratique avec les enfants pour les aider à bien grandir". (Giovanna).

Il en ressort la conscience du role fondamental que les émotions ont dans les processus d'apprentissage; autrement dit, elles sont considérées fondamentales pour activer un apprentissage significatif des sujet en formation.

"Je suis sure que souvent, dans les cours de formation, les adultes vivent les memes experiences qu'ils feront ensuite revivre aux enfants; donc l'impact émotif que cette expérience a sur eux s'ils le vivent vraiment et en ressentent les émotions, -toutes les émotions qui sont reliées à cette expérience ont une relation entre elles -et c'est pour cela qu'il devient plus facile de les faire revivre aux enfants. Je suis convaincue que ces expériences qui transmettent aussi des émotions, sont celles qui rendent possible un apprentissage plus significatif pour les enfants. J'ai pu noter cela dans la pratique quotidienne des creches". (Daniela).

D'un point de vue relationnel et émotif la présence des collegues adultes peut conditioner et devenir cause d'inhibition:

"Devoir se mettre en relation avec les autres éducateurs peut souvent être problématique, (dans le sens que) les enfants font spontanément ces expériences, alors que nous, les adultes, sommes conditionnés par la présence des autres; du point de vue émotif il faut aussi considérer la difficulté à vaincre l'anxiété de parler dans un groupe pour se confronter avec les adultes". (Angela).

Cependant, ce qui en ressort est aussi la conviction que les émotions facilitent l'apprentissage et donnent une signification à une expérience de formation. Cela facilite le fait de la reproposer aux sujets en formation (dans le cas spécifique les enfants), en effet:

"La chose intéressante, dans les cours de formation, est la suivante: si un adulte se soumet vraiment à l'épreuve et se laisse aller complètement meme d'un point de vue émotif, il peut vraiment comprendre la signification profonde de ce que il est en train de faire, et donc il peut le refaire dans la pratique avec les enfants; si on ne le vit pas en première personne, cela reste seulement une théorie. C'est un peu le discours que l'on faisait auparavant, c'est-à-dire que pour éduquer, il faut "être", pour apprendre quelque chose à quelqu'un il faut connaitre cette différence". (Stefania).

Les désirs et les besoins de formation sont vus dans l'optique d' une croissance professionnelle perçue comme une dimension authentiquement personnelle:

"Je ne sais pas, peut-etre dans quelques années je voudrais être coordinateur et donc avoir la possibilité de suivre aussi d'autres cours qui ne soient pas liés au rôle spécifique de l'éducateur, mais aussi au profil du coordinateur, mais... cela est quelque chose de personnel, c'est un désir à moi". (Maria).

En outre, il se manifeste le désir de faire des expériences formatives qui puissent ouvrir l'esprit, offrir de nouvelles idées, de nouvelles solutions opératives en relation avec la pratique professionnelle quotidienne, pour répondre d'une manière plus efficace aux besoins de ses propres usagers, en effet:

“Je voudrais continuer à suivre des cours qui m'ouvrent l'esprit sur la pratique éducative que nous utilisons ici, pour la perfectionner toujours davantage". (Rosaria).

Il en ressort la conviction de l'importance de la réflexion en tant qu'instrument optimal pour la révision des pratiques, en effet:

“Nous avons certainement atteint des resultants importants, mais je crois qu'il y a encore beaucoup à faire; en premier lieu je crois que cela pourrait être important de faire démarrer une réflexion partage sur ce qui a été déjà fait, de créer un contexte de partage des expériences, même si peut-etre il faudrait réfléchir d'abord individuellement et essayer ensuite de trouver un moyen qui puisse activer une attitude réflechie”. (Giovanna).

Implications théoriques

Il se sont manifesté plusieurs éléments qui nous amènent à situer les expériences formatives, surtout celles qui se sont développéés dans les contextes de travail, comme des expériences qui comportent une mise à l'épreuve, un déplacément profitable à une croissance humaine et professionnelle; et en plus une révision des pratiques professionnelles destinée à produire un plus grand bien-être individuel et organisatif. En effet, la notion d'expérience est devenue une reference majeure aussi bien en éducation que dans tous les métiers où des personnes agissent sur l'activité d'autres personnes (orientation, conseil, soin). La raison avancée du point de vue des promoteurs de la formation des adultes tenait au fait que les adultes se reconnaissent des expériences sur lesquelles il est opportune de prendra appui pour stimuler et activer de nouveaux apprentissages (Knowls, 1973, Alberici, 2009). On procedera, donc, à une théorisation dans cette direction.

Implications méthodologiques

Un aspect déterminant que l'interview a l'intention de sonder est la dimension des besoins et des désirs de formation des sujet simpliqués dans le parcours de recherche. Une fois terminée l'analyse des interview, on a l'intention de réaliser un atelier autobiographique. Après avoir illustré et mis en place l'atelier en question, le chercheur prendra soin de négocier avec les sujets participants l'organisation de l'atelier même, de façon à apporter d'éventuels changements sollicités par les sujets en formation. La réalisation de l'atelier est prévue pour mars 2014 et comprendra six rencontres de trois heures chacune.

L'atelier autobiographique se propose de réactiver une double attention envers le sujet, en tenant compte de son identité professionnelle, du contexte de travail habité par des relations significatives et connoté par des logiques d'organisation, sans négliger les saviors bases sur l'expérience. L'atelier est donc considéré non seulement comme une méthodologie utile visant à créer une attitude de reflection individuelle, soit à implémenter le partage en groupe des expériences et des savoirs. En plus, elle s'avère utile à une révision des pratiques professionnelles. Etant donné que la formation autobiographique ne propose et ne produit pas un seul type de materiel, on a hypothisé

d'articuler/organiser l'atelier sur la base d'un registre oral et écrit, en se servant aussi de différents supports-stimuli qui seront proposés aux sujets. Pourquoi sur un registre oral et écrit? Parce que, d'un point de vue théorique on reconnait avec certitude les potentialités expressives de l'une et de l'autre modalité. L'écriture est considérée comme une modalité indispensable à l'éducation de la pensée, même si elle manque d'un code relationnel explicite. En effet, dans un texte écrit, l'intonation de la voix, le geste sont absents (Formenti, 1998). On peut remédier à un tel vide/manque en redonnant voix et gestualité à ce qui a été écrit.

L'union de ces deux codes amplifie et intensifie les potentialité de transformation: si l'écriture confère à un texte de la stabilité, l'aspect oral peut y introduire de la flexibilité et du dynamisme, comme le soutient le prof Formenti (Formenti, 1998). Une fois l'atelier terminé, on demandera un feedback sur l'expérience vécue aux sujets impliqués, sous forme de journal de bord.

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{ TC "*Micaela Castiglioni* - Training teachers to use professional writing" \f \l }Training teachers to use professional writing

Micaela Castiglioni, Milan-Bicocca University, Italy

Summary

This paper takes a critical look at the training paradigm intended for teachers of the various types of school. In the Italian context, this is prevalently of the traditional-transmission type, based on provision of content and techniques. The paper looks at the legitimacy, at the epistemological, methodological and procedural level, of an alternative training model centred on use of the practice of narrating and writing down the educational, training and didactic procedures adopted, within a reference framework that embraces the auto-reflexive, narrative-autobiographical approach to research-training. We sustain that this approach is able to grasp the complexity of the contemporary school and of present-day learning contexts.

'There are two types of school in the world. In one, they teach only true things: who really founded Rome, which is really the highest mountain in the world, what really lives under the sea. In the other, they teach only untrue things: that Rome was founded by Remus or by Numa Pompilius, and that dragons and mermaids live under the sea.

'There is a big difference between the two types of school. There is only one truth: if it is true that Romulus founded Rome, then it cannot be true that somebody else founded it. When children go to this type of school, they all learn the same things, and when they have learnt them they spend their time repeating them: "Rome was founded by Romulus", "Fish live in the water", and so on. At any time during the year, if you go into a school of this type, you will find all the children repeating the same thing, for example that Rome was founded by Romulus. If one of them goes out of step and says someone else founded Rome, he gets treated as a dunce. Because in these schools they teach the truth, and there is only one truth.

'In the long run, the children who go to these schools become identical. The all have a white apron, their hair is red or black, their eyes are hazel or blue and they all eat blackcurrant-flavoured ice-cream. When they grow up, they all want a great big car with a phone, a refrigerator and a washing-machine in it.

'The other type of school is very different. For every true thing, there are an infinite number of untrue things. So this type of school teaches the children lots of different things. In a school like this, each child learns something different from the others. One learns that Rome was founded by Remus, another learns that it was founded by Numa Pompilius, while yet another learns that it was founded by his Uncle Gustav, who never has anything better to do, after all. If you go into a school like this, you find sheer pandemonium. All the children are telling different stories and none of them can say that the others are wrong because they are all wrong and they know it from the start. Even the children are different, here. One has green eyes, another has white eyes, one has his nose

in front, the other has it behind, one is wearing an apron, another is wearing a diving-suit. When they grow up, one wants a car with a refrigerator in it, another wants a refrigerator with a car in it, one goes around in suit and tie, another goes around without a suit and a tie.

'The problem now is: which of these is a real school?' (Bencivenga, 2011, p.25).

This fable tells of two types of school. Types of school that involve, at least in Italy, not only younger children aged six to ten, but pre-adolescents and those adolescents who are still going to school. The story illustrates two types of educational context, two teaching models, two ways of developing a relationship with education and with teaching-learning. These two alternatives are not necessarily and perpetually in opposition to each other. On a case by case basis, they can be related to the situations and made to complement each other, as Bencivenga reminds us: '(…) for every true thing, there are an infinite number of untrue things (…)' (*ibid.*). At a deeper level, the fable-like manner of the story brings us up against the serious nature of a far wider question: to what type of socio-cultural project should a school adhere, within the macro-system of political, institutional options? This is a question that needs posing with increasing urgency. It could be said that the issue has been raised by the complex and pragmatic meaning it has been given by the various players involved in scholastic educational and training programmes, and hence by their attitudes towards teaching-learning and study. Even more, what is being brought into play are our attitudes to culture and to the human being. Inexorably, we are heading towards an indispensible and fertile integration of culture and life, education and life, learning and life.

If we take a step backwards, we realize that our image of school and "practising school", and thus the teachers' educational, training and didactic methods, which are none other than their relational, communicative and narrative practices, are implicit and preformed by the narrative stratifications in which the teachers, like all human beings, operate, however unaware of them they may be, at least on a critical level. That is to say, the teachers' educational, training and didactic narratives – whether they are man or woman, married or single, with or without children – are *today* conditioned – partly if not wholly – by the narratives they experimented *yesterday* as children, adolescents, teenagers, students and so on. What is taking shape is a sort of wheels within wheels situation, after the manner of Chinese boxes, where the narratives of the scholastic organization inform and pre-form the teacher-student relational narratives. This is where each one of us, as a teacher, runs the risk of relating all too hastily and simplistically, under the cover of standardized narratives, the context, precision and originality of the learning stories and the learning events that develop day by day in our classes. Narratives of representation and action that are all too often used as virtually unique and exclusive reference parameters. Parameters that paradoxically exclude the vitality and

the capacity to generate learning possessed by what Riccardo Massa defined as the educational materiality in action. Rather as if each one of us, every morning, in the course of our teaching, went into the classroom and staged a scenario that had already been seen many times, without taking into consideration either ourselves – as stage directors with the power to dismantle and reassemble the scenario – or the students, who are the leading players no less than we ourselves. The teachers, as often as not, see the students but do not look at them, do not observe them, do not recognize them and hence do not even recognize themselves. So why should we expect the students, much more attracted by other training agencies and other means and languages of learning, to recognize us? Or listen to us?

This reminds me of what was said to me, not so long ago, by a teacher of the first level of the upper school. During a narrative-autobiographical-type training course centred on writing down educational and didactic experiences, I was told: 'What you're proposing is all very well and very interesting, or it would be if we didn't have any students in our classes. You see, in my view there's the risk of disregarding the text book and the programme. It's as if you were telling us to do without the text books'.

Obviously, it is very far from my intention to 'do away with the text books', to ignore the programme, the teaching goals, not to assess learning, etc. On the other hand, it is very close to my intention and above all to the research-training perspective I was proposing to the group, to wonder how the students approach the text book, how they view the knowledge we are offering them, the discipline we are facing with them. Undoubtedly, sticking to a linear, vertical transmission of knowledge, maybe as part of a didactic position that keeps personal implications at a safe distance, can in some ways be simpler and more reassuring for the teachers. They can therefore take refuge in their role, skills and techniques. But let us join Blandino and Granieri (2002) in remembering that students – like all adults during life and while pursuing education – do not just expect a cumulative increase in knowledge and skills. Indeed, especially during their adolescence, they are "thirsty for relations" (p.179), albeit in their own way, with manners that may seem, on the contrary, aimed at sabotaging relations, or at least putting them severely on trial. But it is precisely those who seem to reject the relationship with the adult teacher – as we well know – who are most urgently seeking relationships in order to be accepted as an autonomous person, to be recognized as a dependant/independent student "while they are learning", who are seeking that trust which the adult-teachers can enable them to feel and recognize in them, whatever the fragilities or difficulties (*ibid.* p.270) : '(…) Students' needs for relationships are not something "separate", they are an essential part of themselves and are fundamental to the quality of their learning and to the quality of their mental and personal development. And it is precisely at the moment of transmitting the

learning content that their needs for relationships should be satisfied. It is intrinsic to the way I teach that I make it plain how close to me are the students' needs. I truly take care of my students to the extent that I recognize their needs and make them mine (…). In this way I enable them to grow mentally. Whereas, if I neglect their needs, I deprive my students (…)' (*ibid.* p.280).

'Students' "needs for relationships" proceed hand in hand with their "needs for identity" and for their "identity as students". This, we might say, is the premise for a reasonably successful learning experience. But it also has its own value as a provisional end result, one which makes demands on both teachers and students. This path-process calls for a fundamental openness on the part of the teachers. They must be able to listen as part of the educational relationship, to themselves as well as to their students. My readers may think this is the sort of trite and doubly trite thing that educational pedagogues and professionals are liable to say. Personally, I do not believe the question of listening can be dismissed hastily or superficially. First of all because the ability to listen is not something so easily taken for granted, even for an educational professional. And secondly because "listening", or "ascoltare" in Italian, from the Latin verb *auscultare*, does not mean just "listening" but listening "carefully", or even "paying attention". Listening, then, does not mean simply hearing what the other person is saying, but giving it proper consideration' (*ibid.* p.278).

What we have said so far, however briefly, implies that teachers need to dismantle and reassemble their educational methods, their tried and tested educational and didactic practices. Their question must be, going even further back: *how* am I to narrate my school, my class, my students, my individual students, myself in relation to them, the approach we make towards knowledge and learning and so on. *How I narrate*, and *how I narrate myself*, as Bruner reminds us, brings into play personal viewpoints, personal visions, personal experiences, hypotheses drawn from our own experiences. *How I narrate*, then, encapsulates *how I think*. In our own case, how I think about my being a teacher, the relationship I develop with my students, what sense the learning, growth and training processes have for us.

Breaking down and re-composing the narrative script with which and within which we take heed of our students' single and specific stories is no minor matter. It means allowing ourselves to leave aside this principal, dominant narration – to borrow a term used by narrative psychoanalysis (Arrigoni, Barbieri, 1998). It also means creatively distancing ourselves from the pre-comprehensions, prejudices, stereotypes and the like which threaten the educational relationship or even prevent it from *authentically* taking form, dynamically and contextually developing, modulating and evolving.

What is called into question at this point is adult training aimed, as illustrated here, at an autobiographically and auto-reflexively guided narrative option. This is the training which the present writer has been proposing, for many years, to the various professionals involved, including the teachers of the different types of school. This attitude towards teacher training has been the subject of reflection and research in Italy by such experts as – to mention only a few – Alberici (1997); Cambi (2002); De Carlo (2013); Demetrio (2002, 2007); Fabbri (2007); Formenti (1998); Formenti, Gamelli (1998); Perla (2007); Striano (2007), as well as the present writer. It is a training procedure which these writers apply in various contexts designed for educators, teachers and health professionals, where the link between research, training, self-training, learning from "past experience" (Mariani, Santerini, 2002) and transformational learning (Mezirow, 2003) is essential.

Teachers, then, and in particular those who can claim many years' professional and teaching experience, as opposed to technical training of a transmitting type, centred on a continuous and objective imparting of knowledge and techniques, the professional lapses of which can be immediately detected, need training space or methods. A much more complex and, in some ways, elusive and even sophisticatedly subtle training space – because the object of the training that concerns them is itself increasingly elusive and subtle in the present-day scenario – in which they can observe, at an objective distance, meditate, interrogate themselves and understand better their professional epistemology. In the same way, narrative-autobiographical self-examination seems to find its precise and important legitimization in their personal educational and didactic practice, in its explicit and implicit components, as well is its personal and professional stratifications, recent and from many years ago, of a cognitive, emotive or similar nature.

It is within a narrative context where teachers can put in writing, or in other narrative languages, the educational and teaching-learning practices they perform, that the reflexive, meta-reflexive and critical operation of their professional and relational repertoires or scripts becomes possible. Let us not forget, as Bruner reminds us, that the principal feature of narrative-autobiographical thought, subtended to narrative action, is the way it introduces deviations in the pattern that would tend to establish itself as a permanent and stable narration. Narrative thought, that of stories… is flexible and dynamic. It is acquainted with in-location criticism and therefore with generative uncertainty (Bruner, 1992; Smorti, 1994).

More specifically, two fundamental, strictly interlinked questions have been placed at the centre of training and research-training projects personally activated through the narrative autobiographical approach based on the writing (and not only writing) of teachers' professional experience:

- *how* students *learn* and *how they experience* it, and not just *what they learn* (Blandino, Granieri, 2002, p.278);

- the sense that school and study can have, or not have, for today's students (and for teachers as well) who find themselves part of a more global condition of life where the precariousness of their projects contributes to loss of the sense referring to the various spheres of self-belonging.

Along these lines, and especially in the two most recent experiences, one concerning the TFA (Tirocinio Formativo Attivo [Active Training Apprenticeship]) set up in Milan-Bicocca University in 2013 for the qualification of teachers of the first and second grade, and the other regarding the teaching of Italian to foreigners – making use, in fact, of narration, and cinematographic narration in particular – set up in 2011 by the Fondazione ISMU of Milan (Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità, Viaggi nelle storie [Initiatives and Studies on Multi-ethnicity, Travels in History], www.ismu.org) and aimed at educators and teachers in the various types of school, we attempted to guide the teachers involved towards:

- learning to narrate and put into writing their personal educational practice, a far from habitual operation and not a skill to be taken for granted;

- increasing their awareness of how to narrate their educational and didactic experience and thus how to narrate their pupils, each single pupil, themselves as teachers and in relation to the class group and each student, with a view to raising possible and realistic alternative narratives. As Mortari reminds us (2002), the educational practices adopted and maintained do not always have a permanent intrinsic self-legitimization and indeed, this fact leads to their becoming decontextualized and increasingly irrelevant to educational needs;

- becoming increasingly able to reconstruct and render explicit the representation of their relationship with their knowledge (Munari, 1993), awareness and their own discipline, in order to relate with the representations of which their students are the bearers;

- re-entering their personal story of training, growth, learning and teaching in order to ask themselves which were the teachers-educators who left a mark on their own growth. Why do they point to those ones and not others? It has emerged from copious research on scholastic success and failure that each of us tends to forget over the years the content we learnt but to remember very well the teachers we had on account of their relational style. We remember relations far more than knowledge (hence the well-known phenomenon of adult relapse into illiteracy). This does not mean that teachers should reproduce before their students, lock,

stock and barrel, the methods they experienced as pupils, it means they should ask themselves what will work and what will not, taking their own personal experience, duly called into question, as Tramma would sat (2005, P.121), as a starting-point;

- using with greater awareness and continuity certain narrative tools for the examination of their personal educational practice, beginning with the professional diary, in order to develop or strengthen a *narrative sensibility* which goes hand in hand with *relational sensibility*;

- practising writing in order to bring to the light the "submerged aspects" of the educational experience and relationship, which inevitably affect its progress;

- obtaining an attentively critical and competent familiarity with the planning and activation of narrative devices in the classroom, through an understanding of their subtlest and deepest educational sense;

- asking themselves what they believe it is important to teach, or better still, what they believe should remain of their discipline, in short, asking themselves, by way of premise, beginning, central body and result of the narrative training set up: "Why are we here? (Varchetta, 2011, p.150). This introduces the fundamental dimension, today, in adult training, of the research for a sense, the sense to give to oneself, to oneself as an educational professional and to the educational experience considered as a whole. During this process, can the practice of narration and writing one's own educational experience, which is a major practice in the search for a sense, provide a support? Can there be a possible link, even for the teacher, between autobiography at school, self-training and care of the self?;

- asking themselves what they mean by *narrative teachers* and whether they themselves are, *de facto*, narrative teachers, which term may be summarized here as a teacher who considers the pupil not only and not exclusively "from the neck upwards"(Blandino, Granieri, 2002, p.278, op. cit., from Rogers). What decisions, relational, methodological and procedural first and foremost, become "obligatory" as a consequence of this personal – as well as professional and educational-didactic – option? One, certainly, will be to conceive 'the learning process as (…) a fact that (…) does not only bring into play cognitive skills and abilities (…). Real learning, rather, involves the person globally and, in the first place, emotionally and affectively (…)' *(ibid.)*. And this goes for both students – whether pre-adolescent, adolescent or adult – and teachers. Let us not forget the role of the emotions in learning. As Sclavi observes (2003, P.10) 'they tell us not only and not so much what we

see, as how we see it'. This is no minor matter in the school and within the relations we develop – or do not develop – with our students.

Obviously, choosing this educational option has meant conceiving the place where it is put into practice as a place of research and transformational learning (Mezirow, 2003), in accordance with the epistemological premises of narrativist constructivism, cultural psychology, phenomenology and so on. The narrative and writing exercises proposed to the teachers have been numerous ('An experience that was educational for me', 'That time that I was a student', 'A metaphor for me as a teacher', 'A letter to a difficult pupil… The pupil replies….', just to quote a few). Equally necessary are the stimuli that the writings provide for a return to metacognitive and self-training processes, as part of the inevitable attention given to the construction along the way of an educational context that will facilitate, stimulate, develop, deepen, criticize, guide and re-elaborate the narrations produced (cf., Castiglioni, 2011).

By way of example, we reproduce here the points that emerged from the two training projects mentioned above (Cantù and Castiglioni, 2013; Cfr., Giusti; Pinto Minerva). They are questions demanding attention or of dimensions too large to ignore. They should form the basis, in our opinion, for a narratively and autobiographically oriented educational and training proposal. This "map" may guide the teacher, the educator, the trainer, etc., both during the phase of constructing the proposal and while reassessing it during its execution and after it is concluded. Furthermore, in line with the perspective adopted in this contribution, we believe that the dimensions indicated may indicate the proper attitude for the professional operator of "inner narrative" education. Here are the points:

- contextualization of the educational proposal;

- assumption of a systemic approach;

- strengthening of self-estimation;

- facilitation of autonomy;

- development of attitudes of participation, sharing, collaboration;

- assumption of other people's points of view;

- recognition and exploitation of reciprocal learning;

- disposition to problematization;

- assumption of a decentred outlook, which debanalizes the obvious;

- facilitation towards modifying one's perception of oneself, of the other person and of oneself with the other person;

- realistic awareness of oneself and of the other person;

- proceeding by assumption of reality, by the inductive method and by cognitive displacement;

- educational and didactic orientation aimed at construction, elaboration and reattribution of meanings;

- the importance of flexibility (that is to say, of the educational and existential attitudes and actions of mediation, negotiation, modification, acceptance, non-prevarication);

- recognition of diversity as a resource, and of dialogue as a resource;

- assumption of narration;

- the importance of listening, the ability to listen and to listen to oneself;

By moving in this direction, it seems to me that we can reduce the risk of losing the soul of the educational experience, as Madera argued in a recent conference in Italy (Milan-Bicocca University 'Educare e istruire, due mestieri impossibili?'). Where, for us, losing the soul and falling out of love seem to be the same thing. Regarding this, I conclude with a comment by a young pupil:

 'Miss, let's not have any more trips, they're interesting but then we have to write a composition about them every time' (third year female pupil of elementary school, see Blandino & Granieri 2002).

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{ TC "*Ann Chant* - Not going there: a recognition of the subjectivity of interpretative research" \f \l }Not going there: a recognition of the subjectivity of interpretative research

Ann Chant, Canterbury

Introduction

During recent research I interviewed an adult Jewish woman. Her story of a post-holocaust family and their identity was rich with conflict, concerns over identity and pregnant with possible analysis. My analysis explored her apparent struggles with nationality, otherness, belonging and loyalty. These struggles are echoed in my own story. What I did not include to any great extent was the feminist perspective. This may have been significant in its absence. As a woman who has never felt restricted by my gender or animated by the feminist discourse, it did not seem to me to be a 'must have' in my analysis of this woman's story, anymore than other, yet to be explored aspects of her story such as her love of the ballet. Another researcher may have begun with this perspective; others may have focussed perhaps on literature about the Jewish community in the UK. All of these foci could be justified. But it may be that the omissions of certain powerful discourses such as feminism are less justifiable in the academy.

Far from being a rejection of the advances in social justice that feminism has achieved and continues to fight for; I am no less grateful as a woman for the life I live as compared to that of my grandmother, than I am for the advances in medicine and technology that also enable me to live a fuller, safer and healthier life. Post-feminist or treachery; this is part of my story. My question in this paper is, what factors were involved in making decisions about which discourses to include and which to leave out in auto/biographical research and in particular one interview with Hannah? Why did the feminist discourse not occur to me to be an essential component and what might there be in my own biography that informed that omission?

The analysis of the transcribed account of a conversation between two people is subjective; especially if one of those people is the researcher. Even positivist, quantitative research has an element of subjectivity in that there will be a reason behind the topic overall in the first instance and the research interest in the second. My research focuses on the experience of mixed influence early in life on career choices later on. The reason for this is, as auto/biographical research attests (Hollway and Jefferson,2000), the similarities or relationship between my story and those of my participants. In this paper I explore the subjective analysis of the transcript of a conversation with Hannah. In particular I consider the ways in which my own perspective may have had an impact on the lack of feminist references in my initial analysis of this transcript.

I come from a mixed race, mixed religion, mixed social background family and found myself balancing between these influences all my life. On both sides of my family there were strong, successful women and growing up I expected no more or less from life than did my brother. That as a young woman I did not feel I had any gender-based demons to fight or arguments to win in this regard did not mean that I was not aware that others did. Similarly I would not expect someone for whom feminist issues were at the forefront of their experiences to ignore these when they consider what to research or where their interests lie. But neither would I expect them to consider mixed race families, even if they were from one, if this did not feel to them to have been a key theme in their lives.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) explore the importance of reflexivity in the analysis of such conversations and acknowledge that the choice of participants as well as the analysis of subsequent transcripts is significantly influenced by how we relate to the participant and how closely our stories relate to theirs:

> "In short, I enjoyed interviewing Tommy because I liked him; and I liked him because we had things in common" (2000, p.65)

During some recent research into mixed influence on career direction I interviewed a Jewish woman, Hannah, who as the oldest child of one of the first Diplomats of the newly formed state of Israel, travelled extensively and lived in many diverse countries. Her story was full of references to 'not belonging' of always being the outsider, being different and also of her acceptance as this being the status quo and almost embracing that difference.

> It is. ..it is…yes …and. ..and I think that usually happens to children in that kind of situation . I think it also made you feel very different from other people …because…because you're strange in that way. … Because you are different in that sense. You're always…someone who never joins in at the right moment [laughing..] because you're always sort of arriving and leaving your classmates and umm and you're always er the last to sort of join the school or first to leave the school or er ….and er…and you're not like the other er children right? [Silence] and that….that's true wherever you are………. well in Israel also…even when I came back to Israel from er…wait let me get the chronology right…yes er e r …I started my schooling in Madagascar in Africa and we came back to Israel when I was about 8 years old. By that time I'd forgotten any Hebrew I'd known as a small infant and …if you think about it there's this young girl who speaks French and English but can't speak Hebrew and has to integrate into the local school-so-then you come back into your country ….. and what is considered home and yet you are again a stranger….So that is something that I very much relived again and again and again in lots of different contexts …

I also experience considerable travel in my early years and in my own autobiographic reflective account I also recognise this 'otherness': the constant role of the new girl in a school and difficulty in being able to clarify my identity and ethnic origin to others.

> I don't remember where we were or what we were doing but I remember looking at our hands one day. I remember thinking that this hand was me, and that hand was him. We were different. Although I'm sure I was too young to put the thoughts and feelings into words, the feeling was that this hand, mine, would always be with me. It was small but wouldn't always be. The other hand would not always be with me. Perhaps this was the beginnings of my awareness of me as an

individual, of identity or aloneness. It was certainly my first awareness of the difference between me and others.

 My father had told me with pride that when people call you names such as 'pakki' or 'nigger' it showed only ignorance. Our family, he told me, were in fact one of the ruling elite in Sri Lanka and my grandfather had been a great man, a poet, barrister and one of the key figures in the process of winning independence for the country from the British. When taunted I was not to react angrily but to calmly explain the facts about Sri Lanka and about our name and family. I had done this in the class room and the teacher had been impressed. The girls however were not.

Perhaps the on-going battle with my ethnic identity and acceptance overshadowed less pressing concerns about gender. The feminism of my childhood in the 60s and 70s was characterised by the media and some individuals as caricatures; bra-burning, vegetarian, sandal wearing women of dubious intellect, low morals and bad haircuts. Although my recollection is not that I embraced such crude stereotypes, they did not appear to me to be role models for anyone who wanted a serious, successful career. Most importantly they did not seem powerful to me or offer young women the opportunity to be powerful themselves or to be taken seriously. It was hard enough being accepted by the society I lived in without alienating myself further. I may well have been influenced by opinions around me but I don't recall any negative comments from my family or education. I was brought up in quite a liberal family. We lived near a large commune in the 1970s where my mother, a midwife, delivered many babies to women who were vocal feminists and peace activists at such sites as Greenham Common. Their views and political arguments were respected and discussed widely, but their lifestyles were not attractive to me or seemed to offer any real future. I wasn't angry with the world; I felt I had no reason to be so. However their cause, although not appertaining to me, seemed exotic and strangely compelling. Greenburg (1994), writing about the place of feminism in Judaism, echoed my thoughts when she expressed her feelings on first reading feminist literature,

' [I] had trouble with what seemed to me a portent of friction between the sexes, but the essential idea, the equality of women, was exciting, mind-boggling, and very just. Still, correct or not, it didn't mean me, nor did it apply to women in Judaism. On that score I was defensive, resistant, and probably just plain frightened. It must have threatened my status quo……And yet…once I had tasted of the fruit of knowledge, there was no going back.' (1994:27)

However there is a dichotomy here; feminism purports to empower women and to free them from gender based and male dominated agendas. As a woman, there could be an irony in feeling under pressure to include the feminist discourse by a male dominated academy. Simone De Beauvior, who has been credited as having begun the second wave of feminism with the publication of her book 'The Second Sex' (1949), explored the pervasive default of society to place women as 'other' where men were spoken of and referred to as 'human'. Which is the 'other' voice here? If an individual does not perceive themselves to be subjugated, is it within the remit of the Feminist, in particular

male feminists, to insist that they are? Is this also a form of domination, by a gender, an academic elite and by a discourse and idea?

This said, history tells us without question that women have been discriminated against and marginalised and continue to be so. By contrast my early experience of 'otherness' was also not one of empowerment, rather it was of marginalisation, ridicule and a separateness from the world I wanted to be part of and be successful in. There were many strong female role models to tell me that this was possible: a female monarch, a female prime minister, brilliant and inspiring women teaching science and maths in my school and a family full of professional, successful women. So irrespective of what feminist writers and activists said and continue to say, it was and possibly still is the perception of the movement and discourse, rather than the message that informs the individual's understanding and opinion of the movement. My experience may not have been typical but it was my experience, and hence informed my understanding at the time and to some extent today. I am however aware that my lack of awareness does not mean that my gender was not a factor in the shape of my early life.

Hannah similarly was not subject to any noticeable prejudice; not of her gender anyway. Her family had high expectations of her, as she had for herself. In fact she was shocked when friends at school seemed to have lower aspirations.

> It was never a question in my mind as I was growing up – the end goal was to go to university…there was no question mark around that. And I remember when I was in secondary school here in England my best friend – it was very interesting because my best friend who remains my friend to this very day - um – her parents expected her to end up being a secretary or something…and I still remember to this day being absolutely shocked that that was all that was expected of her. It was clear to me that she was very bright and could do a lot more …and she in fact did …she went to University and worked afterwards in advertising. But I remember the shock of discovering that that was all that was expected…but I think my generation was ...where those sorts of things happened.

So Hannah was aware that for some people gender was a restrictive factor, but not for her. Her restrictions and battles lay elsewhere, as they did for me. My omission of feminist perspectives in the analysis of Hannah's story may be linked to my omission of it in my own, and my recognition or seeking of myself in her story. This was illustrated by some of my part of our conversation

> ...so you've got this combination of where you were born – out of choice – your parents' choice – your parents' birth nationality and their chosen nationality by political affiliations and the religious national identity overlaid all of that … and so within your family was there ever any discussion about identity? Was it something that was encouraged or told, as I was, 'be proud of your ancestry' …

It is clear both in my choice of Hannah as a participant, and in our friendship, that shared experiences of 'otherness' play a key part. However, the temptation to simply state that feminist issues were not a factor for either myself or Hannah, and therefore deserve no place in the analysis of these narratives, is to ignore some important points made strongly by Audre Lorde (2007).

'For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are as a result of those structures. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (2007:123)

Some of those blueprints, expectations and structures could be reflected in the stories of us both. The Holocaust itself, the post war settlement of Israel, the long reach of empire and colonialism on the assumptions that 'west is best' and that 'fitting in' is what an outsider must do, could all be traced to the domination of the strong over the weak. Edward Said, recording his own early years in Egypt, points out the propensity for giving children 'enviably authentic names' (1999:39) that were western, and if possible linked with royalty. In his earlier work he explores some of the reasons behind this. Quoting Jules Harmand, a French supporter of colonialism in the early years of the 20th century, it is clear that superiority of nations and cultures was at the heart of this 'master's house'.

'It is necessary then to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilisations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilisation…….The basic legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority……Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity.' (1994:17)

My discomfort with my early experiences of feminism and the views formed, may, it could be argued, have been a response to the internalisation and acceptance of structures and blueprints of the time, and of the security of the status quo. The ridicule of feminism was a powerful way for society to dismiss it or marginalise it as something that intelligent, ambitious women would not aspire to. Greenburg (1994) again expressed it well when she recalled feminism being considered as 'an extremist movement, a temporary, cultural fad….a petulant, middle-class woman's hobby'(p.3).

There may be another important thread in both my and Hannah's lack of feminist concerns. The limited acknowledgement of feminist discourse in our early stories may also be a response to the dominance of 'white feminism' in our younger years. Audre Lorde (2007) writes with some anger about what she sees as a naivety on the part of white heterosexual feminists. She argues that their experience of oppression is only in terms of gender. Black women, and even more so black lesbian women, face oppression from all directions and also share that experience with black men and gay men too. Their experiences are multifaceted and their allegiances vary with context. This, she suggests, is something perhaps only also experienced by the Jewish community,

'Black women and men have shared racist opposition and still share it, although in different ways. Out of that shared oppression we have developed joint defences and joint vulnerabilities to each other that are not duplicated in the white community, with the exception of the relationship between Jewish men and Jewish women.'(2007:118)

It should also be acknowledged that social background may have served to ameliorate the impact of sexism in both our lives. Had either of us been born and raised in poverty our life paths would

certainly have been different. As Roberts has argued (2005) that opportunities are structured around class as well as around ability and ambition. But for both Hannah and myself, it was predominantly those feelings of being the outsider and having to try to fit in to be accepted, that we recall. These memories may be an example of multifaceted experience of dominance. When race, religion, culture, appearance or geography, are all areas of non-compliance, perhaps gender issues are not so pressing. That is not to say of course that two or more areas of dominance or subjugation always eliminate any awareness or interest in gender inequalities. But perhaps it is later in life, when other battles have been fought, and perhaps won, that this is recognised. Certainly the feminist voice has been strong in the Jewish community. Rachel Adler writing in a reader edited by Heschel (1983) describes herself and other Jewish women as 'the Jew who wasn't there' (p.12). She points out that along with children and Canaanite slaves, women are peripheral. However, male children grow up and slaves can be freed. Women will always be women; left behind in joining and taking their place within the rest of the community. Hannah would perhaps have been more aware of this had she grown up within a traditional Jewish community. But she did not. She lived with her mother and father and sister in countries and communities as diverse as Finland and Madagascar.

In this paper I am considering the narrative of Hannah and my minimal inclusion of feminist literature in the analysis of her story. However it is of interest that the story told by my second participant in this research is a very different one. Like me, S was raised in an ethnically mixed home. But unlike me she was not encouraged to seek and explore her Asian heritage, rather to ignore it and to concentrate on fitting in. Her identity, superficially at least, was clear: Roman Catholic from Leeds. Any acknowledgement of her mixed cultural heritage was muted with the expressed need to integrate and to fit in. However, she embraced Feminism as one of the most influential and important aspects of her life and a discourse that has driven and informed most, if not all of her life choices, including her career. Out of a sense of fairness and personal experience of being marginalised, she has sought to provide help for those who, for any reason, also find themselves in the hinterland of society. Her experiences of otherness include gender, sexuality and race, like Audre Lorde referred to above, have led to a multidimensional perspective on discrimination. However, her experience of otherness was different to that of both Hannah and me. First perhaps because it was initially ignored and not spoken of by her family, it was something she dealt with in silence. Told to 'turn the other cheek' she experienced hurtful reminders that that other people did not see her as belonging even though she did.

> as a young person I was waiting for a bus in my road. The woman standing next to me, when the bus arrived, said "people in this country don't push in".

Her experience was different also because she also felt marginalised within the family itself. She was the 'naughty rebel' and was reminded throughout her life that even her birth was problematic. Trying to understand why for some the experience of otherness increased their interest in the feminist discourse, but for others it did not, is not ultimately an achievable goal. However trying to understand the meaning behind these stories is a broader and perhaps more interesting aim. It is ultimately my interpretation of the narratives that I present and my interpretation is coloured by my own narrative, experience and perspective. In particular my experience, or lack of experience of gender discrimination, and place within the feminist discourse will influence the subjective interpretation and visibility of such issues within these stories. In attempting to answer the question about which discourses to include and which to leave out in auto/biographical research, I am minded to turn to the transcript itself. If, in Hannah's transcript, issues of gender, discrimination or male dominance had emerged as themes then clearly, irrespective of my own story or experience of such issues, those themes would be explored and would have contributed to the meaning making process. If however, as was the case, no such theme emerged then imposing such on her story would, I believe be disrespectful of the material. Of course as Hollway and Jefferson pose relating to the analysis of narratives 'what do we notice?' and… 'why do we notice what we notice?' (2013:51). The same could be said about my exploration of this material. What stood out to me was as much as a result of my own perspective, interest and story as what was said and done. Perhaps a committed feminist would have heard threads and themes that I did not. Perhaps that is why we refer to this methodology as auto/biographical. It represents a space in research where the autobiographical is acknowledged as relevant in the interpretation of the biographical narrative. Perhaps that is the meaning; my meaning.

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{ TC "*Gaia Del Negro* - Searching together for our embedded theories. Questions on co-operative reflective practices in higher education" \f \l }Searching together for our embedded theories. Questions on co-operative reflective practices in higher education.

Gaia Del Negro, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

Summary: The paper addresses questions of 'embedded understanding' in relation to research and to educational practice that will be object of my PhD research on professionalism and adult learning. A constructivist, systemic method is presented that might be of help to compose dualities of body/mind, thinking/action, self/collectivity. This in order to try to solicit narratives, informed in their context, where what is sometimes unspeakable might find ways to be told, in some form.

Abstract

How can we interrogate our embodied understanding of the world? What (untold) theories/stories inform our practices of learning, being and becoming? My Ph.D research will look *beyond* the established discourses of higher education and question the kind of learning produced on the fringes between HE and professional worlds.

At this point of my journey, to set the scene from an auto/biographical viewpoint I will present how my research questions emerged beforehand; through my experience of being: as a student, as a young professional in adult education, as a traveller in the East and now as a researcher in the West. A constructivist, systemic understanding of human learning (Bateson 1979; Fabbri and Munari 2005; Heron 1996; Maturana and Varela 1987) is the theoretical framework that I am finding promising with which to address issues such as the relationships between: theory and action, epistemology (as *logos* on the world) and embedded ontology (as being in the world), the cognitive and emotional, and collectivity and the self.

Posing such questions, I relate my research to the current debate about the idea of 'the university': what kinds of learning are being developed in HE, and what can we imagine might be generated (or 'propitiated') for an unknown and uncertain future (Barnett 2000, 2011). It is a debate which comprises a dominant discourse on *employability* and counter arguments of social power and epistemic understanding (Doyle 2003). I am taking a position in line with Barnett's call for a participative, self-ironical, holistic 'knowledge of being' as part of a re-foundation of the 'university's' aim. This theoretical, ethical, and political background certainly lies *besides* (even within) the narratives of learning that will be generated. What could graduates and professionals actually have to say? How do academic and professional knowledges relate in their life experience and sense-making processes, and what kinds of identity struggles might be told? A 'good enough' research space will need to be constructed, within the university, where dominating discourses in the professions (and in HE) can be questioned and insiders' voices can be heard and mutually interrogated.

I wish to develop a richer understanding of the theories of learning of graduates and professionals through a systemic, constructivist and auto/biographic approach (Formenti 2013). By generating a 'spiral of praxis' comprising authentic experience, aesthetical representation, propositional understanding and engaged action, I hope to celebrate the complexity of human being/knowing and explore what might fall beyond established discourses on learning in HE.

Introduction

This paper comprises an autobiographical introduction of myself in relation to the research, and two main sections: one about 'embedded theory', and the other about accredited methodologies of research in social sciences. What I wanted to do was to sketch the object of research, and illustrate why I think that a certain biographical approach to research might be suitable as it aims at constructing complex insights that compose dualities of body/mind, thinking/action,

self/collectivity. This in order to try to solicit narratives, informed in their context, where what is sometimes unspeakable might find ways to be told, in some form.

Placing myself in relation to my research questions

At this point of my journey, to set the scene from an auto/biographical viewpoint I will present how my research questions emerged beforehand; through my experience of being: as a student, as a young professional in adult education, as a traveller in the East and now as a researcher in the West.

Bringing the researcher's life and orientation into the research frame has come to be a methodological concern in the biographical approaches to social research stemming from the critique drawn by 1980s feminism (Merrill and West 2009). The presumption about emotional detachment and political neutrality achieved through theories and methods was rejected as a trick to disguise the researcher's interests and power. It is now part of an 'auto/biographical imagination' the concern for how the choice of a topic for a biographical study and our ways to pose questions tend to be deeply rooted into the fabric of ourselves and our personal and/or professional biographies (Miller 2007). The very term 'auto/biography' (with a slash) was coined by feminist sociologist Liz Stanley in 1992 to draw attention to the dynamic of the inter-relationship between the construction of one's own autobiography and the other's biography, in a recursive process of meaning making that reflects social and cultural locations. As the direction and development of the research process depends on what the researcher brings to the scene, as well as on factors of context and relationship with other subjects, the case is argued for first making it explicit (and questionable) how the interest in a topic was formed and where the engagement to the research originated (Merrill and West 2009).

The autobiographical story I am going to tell reflects the experience of forming, in higher education and in my early working life, a professional identity in the sector of adult learning. Thinking now at a more abstract level, I can see from a distance that I encountered a number of themes that have been discussed in the educational debate over the last 30 years: a discussion about knowledge and pedagogy in the university (Barnett 2000 2011; Readings 1996), and about holistic and reductive views of adult learning relating to issues of *employability* (Doyle 2003; Furedi 2009); the stories of professionals in adult learning struggling to be in working organizations plunged into a culture of technical training (Ball 2003), and existential views of learning and becoming (Jarvis 2009). Some of these themes will be slightly more developed in the second part of this paper. I will now tell you briefly about my story of coming to this research.

In my case, I grew curious about professionalism in education and specifically about the theory/practice divide since my experience as a student in the university in Italy. After a bachelor

degree in intercultural studies, I started a Laurea Magistrale in 'Formazione e Sviluppo delle Risorse Umane' at the Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca, which is a master degree programme in the training and development of human resources[i]. It had an organizational and managerial character, as the name suggests. There were tensions among the offered courses, between a more humanistic and a more enterprising line. Ideologies of measurement, testing, performance, leadership and talent management were counter balanced by pedagogic and philosophical concerns with human wellbeing, sense-making, recognition and struggle. Some discourses sounded slightly manipulative or at least blurry. The dominant discourse left me with the impression that people needed to be supported in their professional and personal development in order to: increase their opportunities for employment, and better encounter their personal abilities and passions with the employer interests towards a successful organizational performance. I graduated with some knowledge acquired, little clarity about what to do and wanting to grow and establish myself in professional training. Alongside my Master's programme and afterwards I worked in the training and development department of two multinational companies, and collaborated with a small consultancy for organizational development and adult learning. The impact with the working organizations was exciting and frustrating, for I was confronted with weak possibilities and strong constraints, in the structures, policies and culture especially of the companies. Some colleagues seemed colonized by dominant discourses of a marketized, manipulative training of adults. Among the professionals in adult learning, most expressed passionate commitment and creativity in mediating theory and practice. I was impressed at their efforts to construct theory locally, to be in the situation with unique subjects of education and clients of their work, and build good enough spaces for learning within complex and demanding contexts. Being and becoming a professional in the education of adults looked all the more as a learning path extended through a lifetime, open to multiple dimensions of adult life, and inhabited by ethical, political, theoretical, cultural and affective elements. At this point I was full of unclear questions and feelings. As living and working with others in the education of adults, I began to feel a sort of displacement or disconnectedness, a sensation of conflicting spheres of experience where I could not see myself. The working life for which I had prepared studying in HE was now somehow more ambiguous than uncertain. It was questioning how I made sense of things, how I felt, and how I was taking ethical positions in specific situations. These same concerns I could observe in the professionals I worked side by side with, and their joyous and frustrating efforts to mediate between self and context, theory and practice. I left for a sabbatical year in South East Asia, where I travelled and volunteered working in educational institutions with disadvantaged groups of women and children. As a traveller, I took the opportunity to put aside what I had studied in my formal

education and to open up to other ways of making sense and finding reasons for what is worth in life, and what makes a human life happy. The stories of the ones I met and I worked with made me reflect on the relation between agency and structure, and the emancipatory value of education. I came back to Europe with a sense of connectedness to all living beings, and of the power of stories to illuminate meaning: it didn't take me long before I decided to go back to university to explore ways to research into our embedded understandings as persons and professionals, aiming at celebrating complexity through a constructivist, systemic understanding of learning and being.

In these first months as a researcher in the West, I have gone through another transition into a new professional and personal identity which I am building with fatigue day by day. As a student, I wonder about my attitudes towards learning[ii] while: acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes; socializing into the professional group of academic researchers; and, if not prematurely, looking for my ways of 'wearing the dress' of the researcher in terms of theoretical and ethical positioning[iii].

Contrasting reductive views of learning through a 'knowledge of being'

I have found Barnett (2000, 2011) helps me to develop an interesting analysis of how the university has experienced a loss of mystery in the way it refers to learning and knowing. If it is true that the distancing of our western mode of thinking from ineffability and the unknown is inscribable within the post-seventeenth-century rise of modern science, secularism and specialization of scientific knowledge, today's linguistic power structure in (higher) education has come to rule out what is not overtly explicit. Government policy and university mission statements often miss the chance to be daring and imaginative, as universities are increasingly attracted by an impoverished discourse of competition, excellence, efficiency and income generation. Tensions emerge with the very practices of teaching and learning that are in themselves mysterious because, as Barnett says, in Heideggerian terms there is the possibility (being possible) there for something to happen through which students (and teachers) learn and become themselves in new, unpredictable ways.

In fact, a trend of vocationalization, technicalization and performativity has been identified as part of a reductive turn in the understanding of learning in (higher) education (Biesta 2010; West *et al.* 2007). In the UK, the growing influence of market logics on the educational system (referred to as *marketization*) has arisen arguments against the commodification of the pedagogical relation student/teacher, where students might embrace an ideology largely diffused around them of consumerism, shaping them into instrumentally driven consumers. The tortuous journey of learning together in a relationship, and along a vast array of experiences and feelings (sometimes even of dismay or displacement) could be dismissed (Molesworth *et al.* 2011). Biesta (2010) has been particularly critical about a phenomenon that he has termed of *learnification*[iv], i.e. the process of

political re-signification of the language of education, as he shed light on the ambiguities between the claimed empowerment of the learner that it is supposed to favour, and a draining of the actual possibilities within such a discourse to think of why, when and for whom we engage in learning.

Nowadays higher education is expected to produce an employable workforce, and increase the intellectual capacity of 'human capital' to construct and exchange knowledge lifelong, so as to secure the economic well-being of the nation-states and EU (Knight and Yorke 2003). *Employability*, measured in the number of people in work after six months from graduation, has been criticised (Doyle 2003) as it seems to refer to complex learning achievements while at the same time it is unclear of its premises about what is to be held as learning, about how (adult) learning happens, and what learning is to be valued within a social framework of uncertainty (as firstly constructed by Bauman's and Beck's theorizations of contemporary 'liquid' and 'risk' society, respectively). It might be claimed that the imposition of (and fascination for) a discourse of measurement is impoverishing our capacity to reason upon and experience learning in higher education: questions arise as to whether we are overlooking the capacity and task of education to cultivate the intellectual and moral resources of society to reproduce and renovate itself (Furedi 2009). Critiques have also been moved against a limited understanding of professionalism in education, that has been increasingly shaped by international and national policies emphasizing its technical, performative and managerial aspects (Gewirtz 2009), not last influencing the way educators and particularly teachers can sometimes perceive themselves as strugglers divided between expressing entrepreneurship on one side, and sticking to their authentic professional judgement (Ball 2003).

Pierre Dominicé (2007) has been using biographical approaches of research-formation with adult educators, that he describes as a work population that has seen both a diversification of profiles (instructors, besides educators in formal education), contexts (public and private enterprises and services) and activities (besides teaching, also guidance and counselling); and an increasing trend towards professionalization, with degrees and programmes considered to be 'training for trainers'. Even if they have to incorporate new organizational demands, educators remain primarily specialists in organizing and facilitating processes of adult learning in ever-changing contexts. They must, therefore, have clear ideas about: how adults learn (in terms of cognitive-emotional processes, social factors, individual-group relations etc.); which interplay occurs between organizational structures and learning subjects; finally, how they themselves make use of theoretical knowledge and construct local understanding. The practice of writing and collectively reflecting on *learning biographies* (narratives of one's stories of learning), as proposed by Dominicé, can offer adult educators an opportunity to explore how they transmit instrumental knowledge, how they master

their own emotions and how they hold a comprehensive level of knowledge (what they learned about learning and through which relationships). Such a complex professional (and personal) understanding is never achieved, and becomes all the more important as adult educators' lives are now as fragmented as those of the adults they address: a happy enough life needs the construction of a meaningful life history, a good enough sense of oneself along extended careers and sudden transitions.

Taking a closer look to the edges between higher education and professional worlds, I am interested in further investigating what kinds of learning happen in the process of learning a professional identity, thus drawing on the idea of professionalism understood as a non-linear process of becoming a person-in-society (Jarvis 2009). At the same time, thinking of higher education as engaged in the development, together with its students, of a 'knowledge of being', i.e. with fundamental matters of human being, of life and of value that are inherent to an ecological and reflexive pedagogy (Barnett 2011). Learning in uncertainty has to do with learning to doubt one's assumptions, and to have faith in the world and hope in the future, similarly to how professional being needs to be constantly creatively invented to engage with others and propose them ways to signify experience (Barnett 2008). The systemic view is also critical towards a concept of learning understood as a property (ability, competence, skill) of the individual that can be managed (transferred or enhanced), and prefers instead to look at learning as the emergent quality of a systemic process (Formenti 2009). The relationship with the other(ness) always comes first in the process of human becoming through and together with a context, so the point of research into learning becomes to look at the kind of relationships where it might happen. Formenti reminds us of Gaston Pineau's formulation of how we bring forth our human form (*formation* in French) within an ontological triangle combining relations to the world (eco), to the others (etero) and to ourselves (auto): *auto-etero-ecoformation* expresses a large and strongly relational view of learning. A view in which knowing, feeling and being with the other(s) naturally come together.

Researching generative con-positions through a co-operative, auto/biographical inquiry

In this conclusive part we finally come to a possible methodological approach to interrogate personal experiences of learning, being and becoming a professional in education that is based on a comprehensive and systemic understanding of human learning. In this section I am strongly drawing on the work of Laura Formenti (2008, 2009, 2013), who has been working extensively in the research-formation on/with adults, developing a constructivist, systemic method that I will outline below. As anticipated in the beginning and discussed throughout this paper, the experience of this can be investigated by taking a closer look to how we develop, as adult educators, our

embodied understandings of the world. When I speak of an embodied understanding I am referring to the systemic view according to which each human learning in the moment when it happens also gets to a second level of learning, or *deuteronlearning*, or learning the context where it happens (*how* we learn *what* we learn). In other words, professional knowledge is something we relate to in a personal way, and in the ecological understanding of learning and life developed by Gregory Bateson this relationship comes to contribute to how we act in the world and with the world, in some aspects unconsciously (1979). As Maturana and Varela claimed (1987), the ontological and the epistemological are aspects of the same process: living beings are learning (knowing) beings, and constitute themselves in a relationship with the environments they contribute to construct. Investigating our theories[v] of learning (as raising our epistemic and biographical awareness) could thus be illuminative of the complex experience of becoming a professional in education, as it can be regarded as one of its constitutive dimensions. As Bateson would put it, to teach means to have a theory of teaching and learning, hence an epistemology, and those who say they don't have one, have a bad one. As educators, we use our theoretical understanding to prepare contexts apt to propitiate learning and transformation in individuals, human relationships and workplaces: this is when the theory/practice divide comes to work dynamically, and where tacitly internalized modus operandi shape the ways we act as professionals (and persons). This attempt to reflect through a constructivist, systemic approach to research on how one relates (feels, believes, values) to knowledge, on the other hand, might have a formative effect since educators could become: more attentive (take more care) of how they enter in a relationship with the otherness (both in terms of subjects and contexts); and more curious about the possibility of moving their 'maps', their understandings to give themselves other possible stories and actions with-the-world (Formenti 2013).

For the purposes of my research, I hope to achieve a better insight into their practices, career choices and identity struggles as lifelong learners and as professionals. The compositional method of research-formation into adult learning developed by Formenti (2009) combines co-operative inquiry (Heron 1996) and operative epistemology (Fabbri and Munari 2005) with biographical approaches in order to construct collective, intelligent understandings with (and not only on) subjects of research. The three actions of writing, reading and talking are interwoven to develop a participative process of research in which one story is: first produced (and personally encountered); then voiced (and recognized in the group); then played with and reflected upon in a group. Besides a composition of individual mind and collective mind through voicing and inter-subjective dialogue, on a conceptual level this method looks for the composition of dualistic oppositions that often constrain our understanding of the world and of ourselves. The stories that could be generated

have come through moments of authentic experience and aesthetical representation, in order to propitiate a richer understanding that leans on to the non-cognitive (to what we cannot say). The 'spiral of praxis' goes through 4 cyclic passages: authentic experience, through which subjects either participate into or authentically remember past experience; aesthetical representation, through which experience is translated into a generative, aesthetical form of thinking; propositional understanding, where the stories are written, voiced, shared and played with connecting the body and the mind, and the individual and the collective; and engaged action. Acting in relation to the real, introducing variations and proofs in everyday life and work is the moment when subjects of research bring their intuitions alive, and will produce other questions for further research. By generating a 'spiral of praxis' bringing different forms of knowledge and viewpoints into the stories of adult educators that will be produced, I hope to celebrate the complexity of human being/knowing and explore what might fall beyond established discourses on learning in higher education and becoming a professional.

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[i] I am finding myself on the edge between two linguistic frameworks, an English and an Italian one; one of the terms I hope to be able to better understand and translate, as far as possible, is 'formazione'. In this case, I decided to render it into 'training' to emphasize the managerial, organizational understanding of this course of studies.

[ii] Josso found after analysis of some hundreds of learning biographies that adult learners positions themselves towards knowledge and the learning situation in 4 modes (waiting, taking refuge, intentioning and giving up o play), and these were coupled with 4 teacher's postures (starring, instructing, listening and playing/guiding) in a systemic approach to inter-dependence by Formenti (Josso 1995, in Formenti 2013).

[iii] Qualification (acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding and dispositions), socialization (becoming part of a particular social, cultural and political 'order') and subjectification (becoming oneself, more autonomous and independent in one's own thinking/acting) together constitute a framework to analyze processes of education according to Biesta (2010).

[iv] Biesta traces back this shift in the vocabulary used to speak about education to a four-folded combination of contradictory trends: the rise of new constructivist theories of *learning*, and of teaching as 'facilitation of learning'; a postmodern philosophical critique to the idea that processes of education can be controlled; the rise (and recognition) of informal learning throughout people's lives; and the erosion of the welfare state and subsequent rise of neo-liberal policies across western countries (Biesta 2010).

[v] In this paper I am using a complex conceptualization of theory by Alberto Munari: 'a theory is a coherent system of conceptualizations, strategies and actions, apt to provide a satisfying explanation, from a cognitive and moral point of view as well as aesthetic and practical, of the world we live and act in' (Munari 1993, p.61 in Formenti 2013)

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{ TC "*Leo Delfgaauw* - Wiser Than God? Older artists and lifelong learning" \f \l }Wiser Than God? Older artists and lifelong learning[1]

Leo Delfgaauw

In 2009, the New Museum in New York organised a high-profile exhibition, *Younger Than Jesus,* with work by almost 50 artists, who were born *after* 1976 and were then no older than 33. The curators wanted to show a new generation of promising young artists at an early stage in their careers: "celebrating the present and anticipating the future". It was not so much the concept or the basis of the exhibition or the quality of the exhibited works that caused all the fuss (and ensuing publicity success) it was mainly the show's title that offended numerous Americans. For many people felt that it was inappropriate to use the name of Jesus for a presentation of various experimental and innovative artworks. But there were also reactions to the principle of age as the criterion for selection and participation. Possibly the most forthright commentary came from a nearby gallery that presented a "counter-exhibition". Here, a month after the opening of *Younger Than Jesus*, the BLT Gallery launched its *Wiser Than God* show with the participation of "worldwide working artists born in or before 1926", all of whom were therefore at least 83 at that point in time. These included such names as Lucian Freud, Louise Bourgeois, Nancy Spero and Elsworth Kelly. Through their antithesis, these two exhibitions perfectly illustrated the issue of whether and in what way age is important for artistry. Because whether it's about selecting "young" or "old", this issue always concerns the precise relationship between age and artistry. So whereas the New Museum used youth to anticipate the future, the BLT Gallery specifically opted to show the topicality of the older generation.

The association of youth with the present and future, and age with the past, is both understandable and traditional. Understandable in terms of the chronology of life and traditional regarding the evaluation and portrayal of the course of time and age. In this context, it is interesting to look at the iconography of different ages. In other words: at the traditions of the depiction of diverse life stages and their associated meanings. It's striking that the earliest representations of these stages were not shown in the form of a linear development but as a cyclic process. Since ancient times, the course of human life has been regarded as a cycle that corresponded with the changing seasons or the movements of the celestial bodies as directed by the gods. The microcosm of human life was directly influenced by the higher forces of the macrocosm. The iconography of the cycle of life contained diverse

variations on the number of life stages. Each age was characterised by specific activities and developments, which were in turn influenced by cosmic change. Hence, the course of life was a closed system comprising youth, maturity and age (or growth, blossoming and decay) where man knew that his fate would be determined by a cosmic and/or divine power.

In the Middle Ages, the assumption of a connection between macrocosm and microcosm also remained the basis for the division of life stages, albeit that they were now located in a Christian perspective on life and death as related to the Bible. The ancient symbolism of numbers for the different stages of life was largely accepted in accordance with the belief that God "hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight" (Wisdom of Solomon 11:20). Scholars developed and handed down this construct in both text and image. The circle was the most common schematic form. Man passes through the various stages of life by means of the circular course of the wheel of life (*rota*).[2] In the biblical context, the cycle of life was imbued with a moralising tenor. Through exegesis and preaching, the life stages served primarily as a directive for virtue and devotion. The image of the wheel of life expressed not only man's inescapable destiny and the temporality of his earthly existence, but also rebirth and continuity.

However, we observe an important change in this iconography during the 16th century. Alongside the old circular form, the staircase of life had now become increasingly popular for portraying the different stages from the cradle to the grave.[3] This pyramid-shaped staircase (which is sometimes also depicted as an arch, gate or bridge) shows the stages of birth and youth in an ascending line, maturity at the top, and then the descent into old age and death. Most of the staircases of life consist of ten stages of ten years. The Last Judgement frequently features in the background. The depiction of the staircase of life was particularly widely circulated in printmaking, and the theme's popularity is demonstrated by, for instance, the fact that, for many centuries, the cycle of life was chosen as a subject for art. There are also plenty of examples and variations to be found in both modern and contemporary art. Consider, for instance, the "three generations" of Edvard Munch, Gustav Klimt and Charley Toorop or, more recently, the photos of Nicholas Nixon (*The Brown Sisters*), Hans-Peter Feldmann's *100*

Jahre portrait series and *Rise and Fall*, a video installation by Fiona Tan.

Anonymous, Staircase of Age
Second half of the 19th century
Woodcut, 31 x 40 cm
National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague

That the staircase of life remains a popular image for illustrating a human lifetime is evidenced by a series of recent and highly varied examples. For instance, the biologist Midas Dekkers devoted the first chapter of his publication *De vergankelijkheid* to this subject. He wrote: "During the previous centuries, a staircase of life could be found in many a bourgeois living room. Whether, drawn, printed, in the form of a Dutch cake board or embroidered, the people on this staircase did not reach their peak at the end of their lives but halfway through. Thereafter, it went down rather than up, just like the steps of a town hall. As fresh and powerful as he was when climbing his staircase of life, man descends tottering and staggering until finally he collapses."[4] Douwe Draaisma, the psychologist and distinguished memory expert, also illustrates his treatise on "memory, time and ageing" with the example of the staircase of life[5]: "No matter how many sprightly, healthy and active old people are around us, in terms of our perspective on ageing, we still usually follow the image of age as portrayed in the staircases of life of the 16th and 17th centuries." However, as he adds matter-of-factly: "If it were to be painted now, a staircase of life would not include sticks or crutches, but rather the latest rollator or a mobility scooter." In Draaisma's view, it is not surprising that the staircase shows the second half of life as being downhill all the way: "The depiction of age as a valuable stage of life, marked by wisdom and matured by insight, has always been dominated by its complete opposite: age as a time of decline, disease and foolishness."

Wisdom and foolishness are opposites in the evaluation of old age. While old age is sometimes hailed as being a time of experience, insight and wisdom, it is also frequently regarded as a period of deterioration and decline. These different views play a role in the morality of old age and can also serve as *topoi* "in a rhetorical pattern of the praise and blame of old age".[6] The dichotomy of wisdom and foolishness, and praise and blame, also exists in regard to older artists and their work. For them too, there are "two incompatible views: one of physical, mental, and psychological decline; the other of a spiritual liberation from our corporeal limitations."[7] Ever since Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite*[8], biographies have comprised varying evaluations of artists' "late work". One the one hand, ailments and infirmities play a role here (Pierro della Francesca's blindness, Poussin's tremor, Goya's deafness, Matisse's gastric disorder and Willem de Kooning's dementia), on the other hand, older artists are praised for their artistic maturity, skill, insight and depth. The splendid term *Altersstil* was devised for this in art history[9]. This *Altersstil* assumes that an artist's late work has a quality that has been acquired through age: "It is characterised by a transcendent quality and a reduction of forms to their very essence.'[10] Titian and Rembrandt's late works are often presented as illustrations of this idea, which are praised as being highlights of their oeuvre. But the theory of the *Altersstil* or *Spätstil* itself has a considerably less transcendent quality because it ignores all the examples of its opposite. After all, not every artist is at the height of his powers at an advanced age while many career curves peak at an earlier stage. Various studies have been devoted to the course of creative careers.[11] Remarkably, many of these actually indicate a climax in both creativity and the artist's career at a much younger age: "creativity's youthful and abbreviated span"[12]. Therefore, it's generally difficult to make statements not only about the course of an artistic career but also about the achievements and qualities of older artists. Frances Feldman has this to say on the subject: "A great variety of individual responses (are) given by eminent painters in their old age (and) old age can be a meaningful culmination (…) in the lives of artists in all fields who continue to practice their art with no loss of talent or inspiration, often breaking new ground late in life."[13] Hence, Feldman emphasises the artist's individuality and cites talent and inspiration as being conditions for development. Strikingly, the title of the exhibition that Feldman's publication accompanied was *I Am Still Learning*, which included the work of "masters who retain astonishing vitality in their brushwork and undiminished inspiration in old age". This title is derived from a drawing made by Goya at the age of 80. The drawing, which is included in the collection of the Prado, shows a frail old man on crutches along with the caption "Aun aprendo".[14] Goya biographer Jonathan Brown regards the work as being a "metaphorical self-

portrait" and Hugo Munsterberg also says that the drawing "may well represent Goya himself in his extreme old age, living in exile and close to death, but still growing and learning and producing some of the most original works of his entire career".[15]

Francisco de Goya, *Aun aprendo*
1825 - 1828
Black chalk on paper, 19 x 14.5 cm
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Goya's old man with the crooked back, long beard and crutches bears a striking resemblance to the ancient figures that we know from the iconography of the staircase of life.[16] Here, the decline is almost complete. Still more remarkable is the caption, which says that he "keeps learning". It remains unclear whether this concerns dealing with his physical limitations or is referring to his artistic development and achievements. However, as a "metaphorical self-portrait", it makes an important statement about being an artist at an advanced age. Yet, just as the caption comments on the drawing, so the drawing itself illustrates Goya's wish to keep learning. Drawing and text display the connectedness of making and learning. Here, artists arrive at the point of the "individual responses" that Frances Feldman mentioned, and they are also able to embark on new paths at an advanced age. "Learning" and "producing" are closely entwined and form a combined process of development. But what does this learning entail in practice? And what forms of knowledge are involved? What are the roles of experience and craftsmanship here? Expertise and skills are forms of what is known as "personal knowledge".[17] For art scholarship, this cognitive aspect of the making of art is a relatively new area of focus, which has partly developed under the influence of other disciplines. The

lifelong learning process can be considered as a 'hidden career' of the visual artist. It would be interesting to examine in greater depth the ways in which making and learning are connected in the practice of art, and what artists have to say about this themselves. In an issue of *Art Journal* that was completely devoted to older artists, Robert Berlind wrote: "To consider artmaking in terms of life process is from the outset to allow for questions not common in our critical discourse. They are the sort of questions that might be most profitably addressed to those who have been at it, artmaking that is, the longest."[18]

Research into these forms of cognition cannot ignore individual experiences and developments. Narrative biographical research focuses specifically on life stories and career stories, and attempts to analyse what Elliot Mishler calls "identity performances".[19] According to Mishler, an "identity" is constantly "reshaped and reconfigured". Diverse researchers emphasise the important role played by social context and concepts of learning: "Biographical research is about how people's life courses develop through interaction between the individual subjectivity and the social conditions. Learning is an important part of this interaction, and therefore biographical research of necessity includes a conception of learning."[20] Narrative research is extremely appropriate for understanding not only the learning process in the life courses of artists but also their multi-facetted "identity performances": "(…) This is why it is so interesting to interview artists of various ages. We can then map out how the development of identity is constantly taking shape throughout the various stages of life along with the ways in which respondents look back on this with hindsight."[21]

For many artists old age is the "meaningful culmination" of their lives and work. "Reshaped and reconfigured" by everything that has happened, and been experienced, finished and done. Yet these artists are absolutely determined to continue and to develop their life's work still further. Goya's words reverberate in an earlier statement by sculptor Loes van der Horst (born 1919). This dates from 1995 when she was already 75: "A great deal is still possible right up until you're very old. Just as long as you read, remain involved and open-minded, and swap experiences (...)."[22] Similarly, as photographer Ata Kandó (born 1913) once said during a 2007 interview, "I'm now suddenly getting emails from people in New York who want to show my work".[23] According to a recent interview, painter Co Westerik (born 1924) is still spending entire days in his studio: "Pursuing the image: that's what keeps me going".[24] And when Armando (born 1929) first embarked on painting ceramics at the age of 81, his comment was, "Why not? (…) What else am I supposed to do? Spend my days gazing out of

the window?"[25] None of the artists seems to want to stop working and they experience their artistic calling as an identity that keeps evolving and developing. The lives of these artists seem to develop not as a linear course of time with the inevitability of an imminent ending, but as a cyclic process of continuing reflection, insight and regeneration. An endless series of new beginnings.

It is difficult to establish whether older artists are indeed wiser than God. But the very suggestion will make us curious about the nature of the wisdom that these artists have or are supposed to have. Are these the qualities of knowledge and skills that the *Altersstil* referred to? Or are artists developing other qualities and experiences? And how much space are they allowed for this development? The life stages of "younger than 33" and "older than 83" are reflected in climbing up and down the stairs of life, and with a long way between these two points. Paul Hefting has written about this: "Wherever the new, young and dynamic is highly praised, the artistry that has matured over an entire lifetime will then seem old fashioned and out-dated. What was once viewed as being important and avant-garde, has now become history, which sometimes benefits those who played an important role in it. Their work has become valuable. But they are also few in number. For most older artists, it's simply a matter of *schon da gewesen* ("been there, done that") and there are no buyers, critics or museum people who will vouch for you and still value your recent work."[26] This is a serious lament concerning the problems affecting the older artist, and which articulates the importance of time for a matured artistic practice. Picasso once said that[27] "it takes a long time to become young", by which he acknowledged that you never stop learning about art, and that the fervour of youth can specifically be found in the maturity of the older artist

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[1] This is a slightly adapted version of a text that has been published in the catalogue 'Margriet Luyten, *Life's work,* Museum De Pont, Tilburg, November 2013, pp. 135-149'.

[2] See, for instance: Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man; Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle*, Princeton University Press, 1986.

[3] See, for instance: Korine Hazelzet, *De Levenstrap*, Zwolle, no date

[4] Midas Dekkers, *De Vergankelijkheid*, 1997, p. 10.

[5] Douwe Draaisma, *The Nostalgia Factory; Memory, Time and Ageing*, Yale University Press, 2013.

[6] Anouk Janssen, *Grijsaards in Zwart-Wit; De verbeelding van de ouderdom in de Nederlandse prentkunst (1550-1650),* Zutphen, 2007, p. 58.

[7] Philip Sohm, *The Artist Grows Old; The Aging of Art and Artists in Italy 1500-1800*, New Haven and London, 2007, p. 7.

[8] These famous biographies were compiled in 1550 by the painter-writer Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574). English translation: *The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, New York, 2007.

[9] A.E. Brinckmann, *Spätwerke grosser Meister*, Frankfurt, 1925.

[10] Hugo Munsterberg, *The Crown of Life; Artistic Creativity in Old Age*, New York, 1983, p. 7.

[11] These include: H.C. Lehman, *Age and Achievement*, Princeton, 1953, M.S. Lindauer, *Aging, Creativity, and Art*, New York, 2003, and D.W. Galenson, *Old Masters and Young Geniuses*, Princeton, 2006.

[12] M.S. Lindauer, *Aging, Creativity, and Art*, New York, 2003, p. 46.

[13] F. Feldman, *I Am Still Learning: Late Works by Masters*, Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, 1992, pp.3-4. Quoted in Lindauer op. cit. p. 82.

[14] Jonathan Brown and Susan Grace Galassi, *Goya's Last Works*, The Frick Collection, New York and Yale University Press, 2006, p. 16.

[15] Munsterberg op. cit. p. 37.

[16] There is also a remarkable similarity with Jan Miense Molenaer's "old man on crutches" from 1652, which is included as an illustration in K. Hazelzet *De Levenstrap*, p. 53. Its companion piece, the "old woman on crutches", is included as an illustration in the exhibition catalogue *Tot Lering en Vermaak,* Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1976, p. 208.

[17] Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge, Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, London, 1958.

[18] Robert Berlind, "Art and Old Age" in: *Art Journal*, 1994, No.1, p. 20.

[19] Elliot G. Mishler, *Storylines; Craftartists' Narratives of Identity*, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 19.

[20] Peter Alheit, "Biographical learning – within the new lifelong learning discourse", in: Knud Illeris ed., *Contemporary Theories of Learning*, London and New York, 2009, p. 116.

[21] Rhea Hummel, *Kunstlevens; Hedendaagse Nederlandse beeldend kunstenaars en schrijvers over hun levensbeschouwing*, Almere, 2011, p. 38.

[22] Cornald Maas, "Zo zwak ben ik niet", *De Volkskrant*, 21 April 1995, (*Kunst & Cultuur*), p. 2.

[23] Rosan Hollak, "Ik wacht gewoon af wat er gebeurt", *NRC Handelsblad*, 12 January 2007, (*Cultureel Supplement*), p. 17.

[24] Merlijn Kerkhof, "De dagelijkse tred beïnvloeden", *Trouw*, 23 March 2012, (*de Verdieping*), pp. 4-5.

[25] Evelien van Veen, "Oude meester", *Volkskrant magazine*, 27 November 2010, p. 32.

[26] Paul Hefting, "Ik ga maar en ben…" in: *Jaarverslag 97, Stichting Fonds voor Beeldende Kunsten, Vormgeving en Bouwkunst*, Amsterdam, 1998, p. 50.

[27] "*On met longtemps à devenir jeune";* this quotation is included on countless "quote websites" but I have not yet succeeded in finding the source of the original statement.

{ TC "*Carmel Digman, Kelly Davey & Alex Hassett* - Stories of mystery and loss told by parents from care backgrounds" \f \l }Stories of mystery and loss told by parents from care backgrounds

Carmel Digman, Kelly Davey & Alex Hassett, Canterbury Christ Church University

Summary. This study presents a narrative analysis of six autobiographical interviews with parents who were maltreated in childhood and removed into care. Participants explored experiences of childhood, transitions and parenting and the impact of these experiences on relationships with their children. They demonstrated continued personal development into adulthood and used the process of storytelling to evaluate meaning in their lives. Their stories uniquely illustrate the losses, confusions, adversity and social stigma they experience.

This study presents a narrative analysis (NA) of the autobiographical interviews recorded with six parents from care backgrounds (foster care or residential children's homes) who were raising their own children. They ranged in age from 25-65 years and were three fathers and three mothers. From their stories, NA explored their experiences of childhood, transition to adulthood and parenting and the impact of these experiences on their relationships with their children. Parents demonstrated difficulties and strengths indicative of attachment and resilience. Practice implications considered the importance of stories in making sense of lives across generations.

Introduction

Literature reviews considered intergenerational transmission of parenting difficulties and child maltreatment and the experience of young parents leaving care. No academic narrative studies into parents from care backgrounds were found, although a small body of published work exists comprising biographical accounts of traumatic childhoods and children removed into care (Nesbit, 2007; O'Neill, 2010). This research addresses a significant gap in the study of narratives of life course experiences in this group.

The majority of children placed in care in the UK were there because of maltreatment (Department for Education, DfE, 2011). The care system aims to provide alternative parental care and to meet the child's social and emotional needs (National Care Advisory Service, 2011; Petrie, Boddy, Cameron, Wigfall & Simon, 2006). Where this provision fails, young people leave care unprepared for adult life and parenthood (Sinclair, Baker, Wilson & Gibbs, 2005). Research into intergenerational transmission considered whether childhood experiences of maltreatment conveyed a risk of repeating abuse into the next generation (Buchanan, 1996; Cicchetti & Carlson, 1989). While evidence from retrospective studies supported the hypothesis that parents who maltreat their children were more likely to have

been abused in childhood, the converse was not demonstrated (Buchanan, 1996; Rutter, 1989, 1999). Children maltreated by their parents were not more likely to maltreat their children than parents from similar demographic backgrounds and may successfully parent their own children (Rutter, Quinton & Liddle, 1983).

Care leavers in the UK experience social exclusion and poorer outcomes in education and employment than their peers (DfE, 2011). Becoming a parent complicated further the social and emotional difficulties they faced (Chase, Maxwell, Knight & Aggleton, 2006). Figures for the number of teenage mothers leaving care were consistently high with 20-45% of young women becoming pregnant within 18 months of leaving care at 18 (Centre for Social Justice, 2008; DfE, 2011; Dixon, 2008). Support for young parents was often limited to unofficial sources: friends, birth or foster parents, partners and siblings (Chase, et al., 2006; Corylon & McGuire, 1999). Young fathers and older parents were more likely to have lost contact with post-care services and were harder to recruit as research participants (Tyrer, Chase, Warwick & Aggleton, 2005). Consequently there is a gap in knowledge about the long term implications of care backgrounds on raising a family.

Theoretical models were considered to understand the impact of participants' experiences through the life course. Attachment theory offers a way of understanding the difficulties a parent from a care background might experience when interacting with their child. In a secure attachment a parent responds to her child consistently, providing a loving, secure base for the child to explore the world (Bowlby, 1988). When the parent responds ambivalently, neglectfully or abusively, the child becomes anxious and insecure. Alternative strategies may be developed in an attempt to reduce anxiety and the child may interpret his interactions with his parent as shaming or threatening (Crittenden, 2011; Howe, 2005). When the child becomes a parent, his child may unwittingly provoke extreme and inappropriate responses from him as he re-experiences childhood feelings of rejection, threat and fear. He may then act to protect himself by withdrawing from, or responding aggressively towards his child (Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989). This model may explain the prevalence of early maltreatment experiences in parents who are known to abuse their children (Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989).

Resilience theory suggests possible ways in which the maltreated child may still learn to adequately parent their own child (Rutter, 1989). Specific protective factors, such as one consistent adult carer or educational achievement, may combine to promote self-esteem and self-efficacy. The child may then develop a more positive appraisal of life situations, seek

appropriate support and develop successful parenting behaviours (Schofield, 2001, 2002). Transitions from care and school to adulthood and independence coincide with crucial stages of adolescent development (Coleman, 1980; Stein, 2006) where sexual identity, peer relationships and career choices are formed. For young care leavers, transitions happen earlier and quicker than their age-matched peers. Parenthood and leaving care may coincide with complex relationship difficulties, without the family support or personal resources to resolve them (Stein, 2006).

Attachment and resilience models allow us to consider how young people negotiate the transitions to independence, adulthood and parenthood in the context of their attachment history, and personal and social development (Stein, 2006). Maltreatment and rejection may lead to insecure attachments, difficulties forming relationships and problems negotiating complex transitions. These psychosocial factors then present barriers to the development of resilience. Stable, long-term foster care may provide alternative secure attachments and extend and support transitions to independence (Schofield, 2002).

Rationale

A NA approach was chosen to privilege the lived experiences expressed by participants (Riessman, 1993). Creating a narrative also enables the storyteller to make meaning from the events in their life (Bruner, 1991; Murray, 2000); exploring identity and human agency, interpreting and reinterpreting events. In this way the narrative gives the researcher a vehicle to explore the participant's understanding of their childhood (Riessman, 1993). In autobiographical stories, childhood attachment experiences of relationships with parents and foster carers, patterns of separation and internalised beliefs may be revealed (Dallos & Draper, 2010). The story teller unfolds their narrative freely, bringing their own emphasis and determining what is important to them.

The aims of the research were to explore the child/parent relationship, concepts of parenting of participants and to identify protective factors that might promote positive parenting outcomes.

Method

In-depth life history interviews (Murray, 2003) were carried out with six participants, who were parents from care backgrounds. Interviews were designed to generate personal accounts of childhood, adolescent transitions and parenthood using open questions which encouraged the telling of a series of autobiographical stories (Murray, 2003). Once participants began

telling personal stories the researcher responded flexibly to the direction of the narrative. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were recorded. A reflective journal was kept, noting non-verbal dynamics and interviewer responses. Participants were recruited through a child and adolescent mental health service. They had between 2 and 4 children each and were involved in their upbringing. The oldest participant had several grandchildren.

Participants were:

1. Neil, white British, self-employed van driver with no formal qualifications, aged 33 with 4 children.
2. Pamela, white British housewife aged 45 with 2 children.
3. Sean, white British self-employed car repairer and foster-carer, with no formal qualifications, aged 65 with 3 children (one deceased).
4. Charlie, white British lorry driver, aged 40, with 2 children.
5. Marina, white British/Italian, aged 35, retail worker with several unspecified college courses, 2 children.
6. Zita, white Eastern European, aged 25, unemployed with some GCSE levels, 2 children.

(All names have been anonymised)

Recordings were transcribed verbatim with both participant and interviewer voices. Pauses, laughs, crying and other non-verbal elements were included. Transcription formed part of the analysis, allowing for listening and re-listening of sections of the recording (Riessman, 1993). Complete narratives contained individual episodes which were identified and coded as relating to childhood, adolescence, adulthood and parenthood. Linguistic analysis (Labov & Waletzky, 1967 cited in Riessman, 1993) was used to codify these episodes.

Transcripts were analysed according to the following framework (Murray, 2003):

1. *Narrative coherence* identified how the storyteller presented, constructed and organised the story for the listener. Discrete story episodes were seen as consisting of an abstract (introducing the story), orientation (setting the scene), complicating action (describing what happened), evaluation (making sense), resolution (what finally happened) and coda (concluding statement) (Labov & Waletzky, 1967 cited in Riessman, 1993).This identifies how the storyteller emphasises and ignores aspects of the story, i.e. the interpretive orientation she adopts.

2. *Genre* identified the semantic meanings and constructs about social beliefs within the story.

3. *Narrative interaction* represented the relationships between storyteller and characters and asked: 'what role or identity do the storyteller and the characters adopt within the story?'

Validity was addressed by the use of bracketing interviews. Bracketing involves the researcher reflecting on possible influences in interpretation from their personal background and professional experience, with a neutral colleague. Influences are acknowledged and 'bracketed', permitting the researcher to consider possible bias and avoid prejudice (Rolls & Relf, 2006). A reflective journal was used to monitor the thoughts and responses the research provoked. In this way the research could consider her position as co-constructor of the narratives, facilitating their creation and bringing meaning to the interpretation (Murray, 2003). Completed transcripts were read and analysed by two researchers separately. They then met to compare and discuss conclusions about the genres of the stories and the identities participants adopted.

The research was approved by the NHS Research Ethics Committee and Trust Research and Development Board. Provision was made to address any distress caused to participants in recalling traumatic events.

Analysis

Narrative Coherence

Participants often entered into storytelling in fragmented ways, with participants describing memory lapses and vague impressions. Stories often switched between the present and the past with only brief reorientation for the listener. There was a sense of co-creating with the listener, where permission was sought and given to recount. Zita interacted continuously with the listener, pausing after speaking and waiting for comment or questions. Charlie brought shocking detail of violence at his father's hands, repeating for emphasis, but also hesitant and confused in parts and using the interview questions to refocus his account.

All participants mentioned not remembering all or part of their stories and some struggled to make sense or manage not knowing. Neil did not remember if he had been sexually abused:

> 'y'know as a kid, if I was abused; I don't even know if I was.' (Neil). Pamela interpreted her memory lapses as blocking unpleasant things out and Marina described her memories of her father as follows: 'I don't remember actually what it was like when they lived together. I remember missing him.' (Marina).

Both Marina and Neil reported actual or probable sexual abuse and recounted this hesitantly with a distinct physical discomfort. Neil shifted continuously in his chair and Marina cried.

Cultural judgements concerning child sexual abuse were raised and evaluated within the stories. Marina reflected angrily on what society expected of children who had been abused:

> 'Yeah, society, society go around saying, "Kids who've been abused turn out to be abusers." I've heard that saying so many times and especially as a teenager, it makes me cross. So it made me make a conscious choice to be different.' (Marina).

Participants also emphasised not knowing or understanding. The effect of chaotic childhoods and adults failing to communicate or threatening children into silence, may contribute to this, but each participant brought their own interpretation. Sean's mystery was why his parents neglected and punished him. Meeting with his parents as an adult failed to resolve this and he broke off contact. The unresolved mystery resurfaced in his role as a foster-carer when his foster-daughters expressed a wish to return to a neglectful mother and he struggled to understand why. Pamela's story contained several mysteries which were revealed gradually as she grew up. Moments of epiphany were described dramatically with Pamela acting out the complicating action with voice characterisation:

> 'And she (sister) sat me down on the bed one day and she said, "Oh, y'know mum comes to see us, our mum?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "She kisses and cuddles ladies," and I just didn't take it in, y'know. In them days it wasn't mentioned, was it?' (Pamela).

Marina, Charlie and Zita consciously chose to be candid with their children in contrast to their experience of not knowing. They described developing a culture of openness within their families in response to their children's questions on difficult topics. They associated keeping secrets with a disrupted and confused childhood.

Turning points or epiphanies were present in several stories (Murray, 2003). Parenting was often described as transforming, with the love of their children and the joy of parenting providing an incentive to do things differently. Specific decisions were sometimes recalled where pivotal moments brought change. For example, at age 7, Sean was asked if he would like to remain in care or return home and chose to remain in care.

Genre

Within autobiographical narrative research several classifications of genre are recognised (Booker, 2004; Murray, 2003). Charlie and Marina had narratives that concerned surviving sexual and physical abuse and violence perpetrated by specific characters. These were classified as 'overcoming the monster'. Sean's survival of neglect was more an escape or rescue with less vivid protagonists. Pamela and Zita presented quests. Pamela sought a loving mother and Zita sought reassurance that she was loved. Zita described pursuing her quest by creating her own biological family and by contacting her birth family. Her story could also be

an adventure of the child, lost and found. Neil presented a fable with a moral; 'you get what you give.' He expressed this repeatedly: 'you've got to work in life to get things that you want.' (Neil).

Narrative Interaction

Within the narrative storytellers adopted different roles during their life story. Parent and child identities were analysed as follows.

Child Identities

Marina and Pamela told the most child stories, describing themselves as introverted, shy and frightened. Pamela presented herself as lonely and abandoned, searching for a loving mother. At times she appeared as an observer to the other characters, who acted out their dramas without reference to her. Marina presented herself as silenced, afraid to reveal the abuse she suffered:

> 'I would have been introvert.. I would have been shutting my mouth so hard.. you know when you want to say something but you mustn't.' (Marina).

This sense of not being heard or informed is present for all participants. Sean, Charlie and Neil describe abandonment, loneliness and worthlessness. Punishments are undeserved or confusing: 'we could never work out what we were supposed to be doing wrong at home.' (Sean). Zita and Charlie described themselves as 'a menace' and 'a little tyrant' respectively, explaining their difficult behaviour as a reaction to their distress. They both reasoned that the violence they suffered was unjustified despite their behaviour. Care often bought relief from these feelings, but carried its own risks. Charlie reflected on maturing during his adolescent placement but was largely unsupervised and began using drugs. Pamela's foster mother helped her through a confused adolescence and made her feel loved unconditionally.

Parent Identities

Parent identities were dichotomies with both confident and problematic parenting styles. Marina described being over-indulgent with her children and tough when facing social services or other professionals on their behalf. Zita felt guilty about the impact of her failed relationships on her children, but also protective and capable. Parenthood was a defining moment for all participants, with an expressed desire to create a different experience for their children. Overcoming their histories, giving something back (e.g. Sean, through his fostering) and protecting their children, were frequent themes. All parents used their stories to reflect on how a legacy of emotional difficulties had affected their relationship with their children.

Findings and Discussion

Participants were recruited through their contact with mental health and parenting support services and all had experienced some difficulties parenting their children. The NA provided rich and extensive subjective accounts, suggesting new areas of research. It supported theoretical approaches that combine attachment and resilience models (Schofield, 2002; Stein, 2005). Five key findings are given below and while they cannot be generalised to the wider population, indicate areas for future research.

1. The narratives illustrated aspects of attachment and resilience theories over two generations.
The complexity of individual attachment experiences reflected the different care histories of the participants. Insecure and ambiguous relationships were described by Zita and Pamela where feelings of loving and distrusting, wanting and rejecting, their parent figures alternated. Strong alternative parent figures were described by Sean, Neil, and Pamela, who experienced secure foster placements. Sean and Neil reported forming strong attachments to their foster fathers and modelling their parenting on these experiences. Only Charlie lacked any secure attachment figure in his narrative. His insights into his emotional difficulties were concerned with angry and self-destructive behaviour. His relationship with his daughter was 'not like father and daughter.. we're mates'; but also any threat or pain she felt 'does my head in' (Charlie). Both he and Marina experienced complex relationships with their mothers who failed to protect them from abusive fathers. Charlie and Marina produced the strongest statements about not repeating cycles of abuse into the next generation.

During childhood, participants experienced poor self-esteem, abandonment and confusion in their relationships with parents/carers. Their stories suggested confused internalised models of self and others, where they were not considered or were silenced, where parents might be loved and feared simultaneously and where strong emotions were often suppressed as unsafe (Howe, 2005). Because the approach was narrative, subjective biographic details were available so childhood difficulties could be considered in the context of current parenting. In the next generation parents described role confusions with their children, where the child comforted the parent, or retraumatising experiences where minor threats to the child triggered disproportionate parental distress (Crittenden, 2011).

Participants described a range of protective factors that may have promoted resilience. These may be categorised as internal (e.g. reflective capacity and determination) and external (e.g. supporters, education and professionals). Supportive or inspirational characters in the stories included foster carers, health visitors, mental health workers and extended family members.

Education through mainstream schooling was difficult for all participants. Those who were physically neglected described feeling ostracised and different (Sean, Charlie and Marina) even when in care. Sean and Neil described themselves as 'self-taught', though Neil credited his personal development and confidence to a residential transition programme for care leavers which taught life skills. Marina engaged with educational opportunities as an adult, gaining confidence through parenting courses and counselling, before enrolling at her local college. She described counselling as allowing her to, 'deal with and speak and express my feelings in a more mature way.' Charlie engaged with learning through professional driving qualifications and had a deep interest in television documentaries. He credited his wife with helping him find stability and maturity. Parental values were derived from positive experiences of carers and demonstrated how consistent foster placements could be protective (Rutter, 1989, Schofield, 2001). Participants valued professionals who were sensitive and understanding, without prejudice; i.e. they did not assume them to be poor parents because of their care backgrounds.

2. There was a sense of mystery and confusion in the narratives, with participants unsure of what happened to them and why.

For all participants, confusion and difficulty remembering and understanding their past caused distress. Theories involving trauma and affect memory indicate that children in stressful situations may fail to effectively lay down verbal memories (Hobday, 2001; Valentino, Toth & Cicchetti, 2009). However, cultural aspects of unacceptability and family secrecy expressed by participants suggested further reasons why stories were incomplete and lacked fluency. Secret family histories and the unexplained actions of others meant that the complicating action of stories (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, cited in Riessman, 1993) did not always make sense to the narrator so evaluation within the story was confusing.

3. Participants demonstrated insight into the effects of their childhood on their lives.

Participants described the importance of accessing support into adulthood and of working through problems over their life course. Child identities were frequently negative and the transition to adulthood required the formation of more mature and positive self-images (Stein, 2005). While Stein considered this in relationship to adolescent transitions, participants demonstrated this throughout the course of their parenting. The determination to break the cycle of maltreatment was explicit in several accounts. Charlie was adamant he would 'break the chain' of abuse; Zita and Marina described their mother's style of parenting and were determined to be different:

'I thought I was being criticised heavy, by my mum and I thought everything I did was wrong.' (Marina).

For Zita and Pamela, breaking the cycle was both protective and worrying, with concerns that repetition might be inevitable.

4. Participants showed a lack of self-pity and described generally positive experiences of care.

Despite their early life experiences and current circumstances none of the participants expressed self-pity within their stories. There was a sense of acceptance of their histories and gratitude for people who had supported them. Charlie insisted there was always someone 'got it worse than me'. Experiences of care were positive and participants expressed gratitude for the safety and relief provided by both foster and residential care. Zita's transition to adult independence for example, was facilitated by social services and Charlie's time in care provided him with a safe place to negotiate change.

5. Participants continued to process their experiences into adulthood and most engaged in some form of further personal development either formal or informal.

Negative models of formal education acquired during childhood were countered by learning in alternative ways and participants had developed adult interests they valued as life affirming. Difficulties with formal education appeared to stem from both practical difficulties (e.g. frequent moves) and perceived or real social stigma (i.e. being in care). Participants explored alternative pathways, for example being 'self-taught' (Sean and Neil), or practical courses. Becoming a driver was important to Charlie and Neil. All three fathers rated earning their living as important to self-esteem and sought to instil this value in their children. Sometimes individual supporters appeared in the stories to enable further personal growth. Sean described attending fostering courses with his wife and credited her with helping him to access this training. Neil worked as a DJ, a skill he had learned from his brother and Zita was encouraged by a sympathetic health visitor. Apart from Marina, participants did not see formal education as something for them, although they valued it in others and for their children.

Practice implications

Current research and professional support concentrates attention on young parents. This research considers the longer lifetime impact of early childhood maltreatment and time spent in care. Participants described this as affecting their personal thoughts and feelings and their relationship with their children. Extending professional interest to older parents and considering their life history would usefully support possible later parenting difficulties. Schofield (2002) provides a model that emphasises the importance of love and belonging

within a substitute family beyond the official care provision and this could be used to provide support into the next generation. Narrative therapeutic approaches that consider sense-making, living with uncertainty and managing unresolved emotional trauma may be useful in individual counselling. Narrative therapy recognises the importance of story in the development of personal identity and could be used both individually and in family work (Dallos & Draper, 2010).

Fathers' experiences of parenting demonstrated their need for equal consideration in accessing support (Tyrer et al., 2005). This may prevent father's losing contact with their children before relationships can develop.

Further research into the long-term and intergenerational effects for parents from care backgrounds is indicated. The influence of the care component, what is working and what is failing, is of primary importance. Future studies should take into account more extended lifetime effects and the changing parent/child relationships.

Conclusions

Participants showed capacity to reflect on their experiences and used the narrative format to question, interpret and evaluate episodes from their past lives. Attachment theory predicted that childhood maltreatment would affect the parenting of their offspring and this was described by participants in terms of role confusions, retraumatising experiences, over-protectiveness and compensatory behaviour. Participants' concepts and values of parenting were formed from experiences of good replacement carers, but personal determination was equally important. A desire to do things differently, to break the cycle of abuse and to prevent their child from suffering was expressed. Resilience factors included supportive individuals, counselling, personal attributes, training and self-improvement. Extended and supportive transitions to independence were valued and long-term stable foster care placements provided a sense of belonging and being loved.

Participants had a strong sense of mystery and confusion about the emotional and factual content of their narratives. Despite their experiences they expressed no self-pity and were generally positive about their time in care. Extended life stories presented a picture of participants reappraising their experiences continuously in the light of their changing circumstances.

The research highlights the potential to educate professionals in the importance of narrative throughout the life-span, supporting parents troubled by past lives, to make sense of their

personal history, with benefits for future generations. Models already exist that encourage resilience and take account of attachment difficulties (Petrie et al., 2006; Schofield, 2002; Stein, 2005). Integrating an understanding of the value and importance of personal narratives into training for professionals would enhance these models.

The value of NA was demonstrated in the participants' personal construction of their stories. They emphasised what was important to them, in particular, concern for and joy in their children.

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{ TC "*Aurélie Dirickx* - Roles of life history and biographical research in voluntary professional retraining" \f \l }Roles of life history and biographical research in voluntary professional retraining

Aurélie Dirickx, Université de Genève, Switzerland

Rôles des récits de vie et de la recherche autobiographique dans les processus de reconversion professionnelle volontaire

La recherche autobiographique offre au chercheur une riche voie d'accès pour aborder la thématique des réorientations professionnelles volontaires. L'étude du matériel biographique permet d'extraire de précieux indices pour analyser les mécanismes qui sous-tendent à une reconversion, tels que les processus d'orientation initiale, les signes précurseurs d'un désengagement vocationnel et les étapes de construction d'un nouveau projet professionnel. Les histoires de vie fournissent également des pistes de réflexion et d'action aux sujets 'reconvertis' qui produisent leur récit, en leur permettant de travailler sur les trois temporalités composant leur histoire (passé-présent-futur).

Life stories provide the researcher with a rich pathway to explore the topic of voluntary career reorientation. The study of biographical material can extract valuable clues to analyze the mechanisms underlying an occupational retraining, such as initial orientation process, warning signs of a vocational disengagement and stages of the construction of a new professional project. Biographical research also gives 'retrained' subjects who tell about themselves the opportunity to think about and to act, by working on the three temporalities which make up their life history (past-present-future).

A doctoral thesis as a starting point

This presentation explores the contributions of life stories in the process of occupational retraining voluntarily initiated by the subject. Starting this year a doctoral thesis on career bifurcations and reorientations, we chose to collect autobiographical narratives to cover the following thematic areas :

- Biographical transitions, crisis of the temporalities, bifurcations and retraining (these issues are especially studied in the works of Bidart, Grossetti, Bessin and Négroni)

- Occupational psychology, professional trajectories and subjective relationship to work (vocational disengagement factors, career crisis, deconstruction of the system of expectations, triggering elements for retraining)

- Facilitators of the retraining process and mapping of the sociological profiles which would be the most inclined to carry out a professional reconversion

- Concept of lifelong vocational guidance and panorama of the existing offers intended for retraining (devices, accessibility, etc.)

Life stories are here considered as a rich medium to study a variety of subjective processes that underlie the voluntary professional retraining, insofar as they highlight different phases

crossed during a reconversion and as they reflect how subjects project themselves into a new job by detaching themselves from the previous one.

Contextual aspects: occupational projections and temporalities crisis

The construction of the vocational projects is an appealing issue, considering our work environment marked by frequent and deep changes which have an impact on the individual career trajectories. Due to constant work evolutions and to acceleration of the social rhythms, many people change jobs all along their life, sometimes by making a radical change of direction. This destandardization of the trajectories, coupled with longer and more complex moments of transition, makes us realize that the linear temporal section 'orientation-training-employment' is no longer the sovereign model. Vocational guidance is not anymore made only during the adolescence, but throughout lifetime in response to requests made by retraining people for whom it is impossible to plan on practicing one single job until the age of retirement.

From this observation the following questions arise:

- On which basis are the professional projects made by individuals constructed and how do these projections evolve through time?

- To what extent is autobiographical research able to account for these projections, and concretely how can life stories be used as a means of understanding by the researcher and as a way of support by people involved in a retraining process?

Life stories, a rich substratum to explore the retraining career path

In this research work, the autobiographical approach provides valuable clues to question the individual and social dynamics that characterize individuals making a career change. It allows the researcher to dissect the construction of individual paths and to study the inner workings preceding the acting out. The collection of life stories therefore aims at analyzing the influence of biographical material on professional reconversions, in order to better catch the major events that have an impact on career paths, to understand to a certain extent the origins of the construction of professional choices and to identify a series of steps through which the retraining individuals go.

The origins of professional retraining can be partly explained by a 'bad' initial choice (conscious or not), which eventually becomes unbearable for the person and invites them to convert. To illustrate this fact, Négroni (2007) speaks of 'frustrated vocation' and expresses

the idea that an individual builds, sometimes very early, initial professional desires but for some contextual reasons (labor market, family event, moving, financial reasons, etc.), he or she is led to hold another job than the one they dreamt about. Sooner or later, several factors of disengagement (fatigue, conflict, inadequate working conditions, lack of recognition and of opportunities) determine them to reconvert and to turn to their original vocation. If for Négroni (2007) these contextual reasons have an important explanatory role in the decision to change one's career path, another crucial element appears to her necessary to understand the origins of career choices: the life path.

Our research is in its very beginning (construction of the theoretical framework and inventory of the current research), but already from the testimony of three people who agreed to briefly speak about their retraining, some links or controversies have emerged. Two of these people intentionally left their previous job (respectively in the fields of accounting and radio in Paris) for reasons related to an unsatisfactory work environment. However, they did not quit their job in order to redirect themselves into a profession they always dreamed about or into which they developed an action plan over the time. The peculiarity in their history is that they resigned to go and find another living environment (different from their Parisian context) without having any professional project at this time. This raises two fundamental issues:

- financial matters ('packing in everything' can only be assumed by people who have the material means to live without income for a given period) which call into question the actual individual margins of action that therefore depend on sociological variables ;

- vocational issues, which set in motion the idea that a bifurcation can restore individuals to their original career choice.

Our third subject has meanwhile made a reconversion that adopts the form of a 'return ticket'. Banker by initial training, but having always dreamt of working in education, he left one day his job in finance which he did not like anymore and he followed academic courses in order to become a mathematics teacher in the secondary school. He however discovered a job in which he did not recognize himself, resigned after a year and returned to the banking sector. Here we can identify an original purpose built around the desire to become a teacher, but whose representations are idealized to the point that the reconversion goes wrong and eventually fail.

Our objective is therefore to define in which way the life stories of these people involved in an 'atypical' retraining path can deal with these controversies and can try to bring new

elements regarding to the traditional retraining process described in the current literature. This issue is absolutely central to refine the understanding of the mechanisms underlying the bifurcations, and it justifies the idea that autobiographical research can reconstruct the pieces of a puzzle putting into perspective the ordeals, the progressive or sudden vocational evolutions, the construction of the representations of a profession and the identity projections. The 'before' feature of life stories here is clearly highlighted to go back through time.

Formative impact of the autobiographical narratives on individuals retraining

By leaving the researcher position and adopting the posture of the subject involved in a process of reorientation, it is also possible to consider life stories as a very relevant tool for reflection on oneself insofar as they come seeking the individual in his ability to take stock of his present, to establish links with his previous experiences and to better plan for his future. This job of explanation and self-analysis opens an access to a better understanding of oneself, highlighting elements related to the one's identity, values, achievements and aspirations. By helping to define the personal scope of action and to clarify what the subject wants, can and does do, the autobiographical approach is seen here as an opportunity to make an assessment that provides the individual with a powerful lever for change.

This feature of formative assessment linked to the narrative approach clearly appears in the work of Bernard and Simonet (1997), in a method they called 'Autography - Projects of life'. These two authors underline the fact that the process of generating life stories is frequently adopted during phases of retraining, but also of vocational guidance, of job search and of preparation for retirement. Autobiographical narratives therefore help the person to make more informed choices when going through a transition period of their existence, either by promoting work on the significance of the directions taken or by the attempt to 'project oneself into a future in continuity with change' (p.79). Like skills assessments which identify in black and white the experiences and learnings acquired through professional and personal pathways, life histories can have a significant impact on the life course and on the future vocational choices insofar as they take part in the professional and identity reconfiguration of the individuals who are involved in a career reorientation. Reflexivity induced by producing narratives gives consistency to the self-projections into a new professional identity. A reconversion does not only imply a change of the course of life, but it also leads to a self-updating. In research conducted with students achieving an academic curriculum to redirect into adult education after holding another job, Negroni (2011, p.145) explains the results of her work, which is based on life stories, in these words:

> We want to show in this work that the professional reconversion is not just a change of career path: more than ever, it is also a life reorientation that the student operates in this 'work on oneself' that he actualizes in and by the story he tells to someone and to himself.

This function of identity reconfiguration appears so prominently through autobiographical narratives. Négroni (2011) is able to state three successive periods involved in the reconversion process:

- A disengagement phase where the subject disinvests and distances themselves from their previous job in which they no longer recognize themself;

- A latency period characterized by important introspections (inventory of individual resources at disposal and exploration of the potentials) and after which the person can actively get involved in a project and anticipate the future;

- After being detached from their previous professional identity, the individual can then reengage in their new orientation and deploy their action plan to achieve it.

On the basis of clues provided by autobiographical narratives that she collected, Négroni (2011) manages to place her subjects in these three different phases. According to her, a narrative turned to past events shows a reengagement process not yet initiated by the individual who does not know which direction to take, while frequent narrative references to future indicate that the person is engaged in a project approach. Autobiographical research, here considered under its functions of 'beyond' and 'after', highlights its ability to clarify the stages of professional and identity reconfigurations in which individuals find themselves when delivering their story to the researcher.

The phenomena of identity projections revealed by life stories stand out in our exploratory empirical data. Our two subjects originating from Paris frequently insist on the adequacy of their new professional and personal contexts to their personality, values and aspirations. Expressions such as 'this is important to me' or 'I need', coupled with the mention of some character traits oriented towards optimism (sense of personal achievement and conviction that certain events, yet stressful, occur to them as appropriate at that moment of their life), give consistency to the vector of change that the self-projections are.

Reengagement in a new profession, like the construction of a new building, requires a prior ground preparation by the individual. This preliminary is necessary according to Négroni (2011): 'to be released from his professional past is an essential condition for the time of the project, the second being to perceive the usefulness of the project' (p.153). She adds that the

'mourning' (p.151) of his previous job and 'breaking with his past life' (p.153) are necessary to implement the process of voluntary retraining. While it seems clear that periods of identity latency, due to their uncertain outcome, inhibit the ability to plan for future employment, the supposedly essential character of a rupture appears less evident. In the work of Bernard and Simonet (1997), life stories show that there are elements of continuity with the past experiences and they contribute to establish links between past experiences to make sense of the new professional project. The principle of skills assessments offered by vocational guidance institutions works on the same basis, by exploring the biographical material of the individual to bring out the key points of her career and her acquisitions (in terms of skills, construction of the personality, interests developed over time).

The concept of mourning, assimilated to a process of resilience which refers to an irreversible state, can also be controversial while used for career reconversion. If for one of the subjects we interviewed it seemed necessary to turn on his heels to his previous job before being able to start a new life elsewhere and in another job, the stories of our two other subjects reveal that they did not have to 'bury' their previous job in order to move on a new one. The former accountant who became a bus driver keeps his accounting experiences as a 'spare wheel' (without play on words) in case unforeseen circumstances should lead him to quit his current job in the future. His break with the accounting universe is therefore not definitive, despite the negative experiences he encountered there.

The 're-reconverted' banker meanwhile shows a more complex process. In the light of his career characterized by a return in the finance after making a reconversion in education, we can draw up two assumptions of scenarios. The first one is that he returned to the bank area for safety (by fear of the unknown and of getting wrong again) but he does not enjoy his current job and he is just waiting for the moment to come to develop a new project. The alternative scenario would be that he had to try an experiment in education, obviously idealized in his initial representations, to realize that he missed his job as a banker, to reinforce his career choices and to be able to understand what the problems were at the time he wished to retrain. Whatever the hypothesis attempted to explain his return in the bank, this shows us that a break with his professional past has nothing completely irrevocable in it.

As a summary, we can express the idea that an autobiographical approach highlights elements of rupture and continuity jointly acting in the process of voluntary professional retraining. It allows individuals to access what they learned as positive or negative from their experiences, what they can valorize or wish to forget in their previous career and what comes asking their

subjective relationship to work (as well as what is linked to work: relationship to the hierarchy, to knowledge, to time, to some places, to themselves, to the others).

Conclusion

Autobiographical research provides the researcher with a rich pathway to explore the topic of voluntary professional retraining. The study of biographical material actually allows her to extract valuable clues to analyze the mechanisms underlying a change in a career, such as initial orientation process, warning signs of a vocational disengagement and stages of the construction of a new professional project.

We also saw that life stories provide the subject with a rich support for self-reflection and action. Autobiographies have the merit to lead the individual to work on the three temporalities which make up his life history (past-present-future), highlighting past experiences, current situation and future projections. Under their assessment function, they are a powerful lever for change and they can help the individual to make informed choices by reclaiming her own history. The reflexivity they induce pushes the subject to become a research partner simultaneously working with the researcher. Life stories give both of them valuable keys to understand how the person manages to mature his project as well as the way s/he lives the process of voluntary retraining.

Their other strength is that they can highlight the stages in which individuals are invested in the process of retraining. However, some controversial issues remain to be clarified, such as those related to an original 'frustrated vocation', to social factors which are likely to re-examine the real sense of 'voluntary' retraining and to the supposedly 'irreversible' character of a break with one's previous job. These considerations show us that voluntary vocational retraining respond to complex mechanisms which make simultaneously interacting contextual, psychological, sociological and institutional elements whose understanding will be refined through deep analysis of autobiographical narratives in our doctoral thesis.

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{ TC "*Aurélie Dirickx* - Rôles des récits de vie et de la recherche autobiographique dans les processus de reconversion professionnelle volontaire" \f \l }Rôles des récits de vie et de la recherche autobiographique dans les processus de reconversion professionnelle volontaire

Aurélie Dirickx, Université de Genève, Suisse

Life stories provide the researcher with a rich pathway to explore the topic of voluntary career reorientation. The study of biographical material can extract valuable clues to analyze the mechanisms underlying an occupational retraining, such as initial orientation process, warning signs of a vocational disengagement and stages of the construction of a new professional project. Biographical research also gives 'retrained' subjects who tell about themselves the opportunity to think about and to act, by working on the three temporalities which make up their life history (past-present-future).

La recherche autobiographique offre au chercheur une riche voie d'accès pour aborder la thématique des réorientations professionnelles volontaires. L'étude du matériel biographique permet d'extraire de précieux indices pour analyser les mécanismes qui sous-tendent à une reconversion, tels que les processus d'orientation initiale, les signes précurseurs d'un désengagement vocationnel et les étapes de construction d'un nouveau projet professionnel. Les histoires de vie fournissent également des pistes de réflexion et d'action aux sujets 'reconvertis' qui produisent leur récit, en leur permettant de travailler sur les trois temporalités composant leur histoire (passé-présent-futur).

Une thèse comme point de départ

La présente contribution vient interroger les apports des histoires de vie dans les processus de reconversion professionnelle volontaire. Démarrant cette année une thèse de doctorat sur les réorientations et bifurcations dans les parcours professionnels, nous avons choisi de recueillir des récits autobiographiques afin de mener une réflexion couvrant les quatre champs thématiques suivants:

- Transitions biographiques, crises des temporalités, bifurcations et reconversions (s'y réfèrent notamment les travaux de Bidart, Grossetti, Bessin et Négroni)

- Psychologie du travail, trajectoires professionnelles et rapport subjectif au travail (facteurs de désengagement, crise vocationnelle, déconstruction d'un système d'attentes, éléments déclencheurs d'une reconversion)

- Facilitateurs de la reconversion et cartographie des profils sociologiques les plus enclins à se reconvertir

- Concept d'orientation tout au long de la vie et panorama des offres de formations existantes permettant aux adultes de se réorienter (types de dispositifs, conditions d'accès, etc.)

Les histoires de vie constituent ici un riche support pour étudier une variété de processus subjectifs qui sous-tendent aux reconversions professionnelles volontaires, dans la mesure où elles rendent compte des phases traversées lors d'une réorientation et reflètent la façon dont

les sujets se projettent au plan identitaire vers un nouveau métier en se détachant du précédent.

Aspects contextuels: projections professionnelles et crise des temporalités

La construction des projets professionnels interpelle, dans notre contexte de travail marqué par des mutations fréquentes et profondes qui impactent sur les trajectoires professionnelles des individus. A l'heure où les métiers évoluent et où les rythmes sociaux s'accélèrent, nombreux sont ceux qui changent d'emploi au cours d'une vie, parfois en effectuant un changement d'orientation radical. Cette déstandardisation des parcours, couplée à un allongement et à une complexification des moments de transition, nous fait réaliser que la section temporelle linéaire 'orientation-formation-emploi' n'est plus le modèle souverain. L'orientation professionnelle ne se fait plus seulement à l'adolescence, mais tout au long de la vie pour répondre aux souhaits de reconversion professionnelle formulés par des individus pour lesquels il devient impossible de se projeter dans un seul et même emploi jusqu'à l'âge de la retraite. De ce constat découlent les questions suivantes:

- Sur quelle base se construisent les projets professionnels formulés par les individus et comment ces projections évoluent-elles à travers le temps?

- Dans quelle mesure la recherche autobiographique est-elle capable de rendre compte de ces projections et concrètement, et en quoi les récits de vie peuvent-ils servir de support de compréhension au chercheur et de soutien aux personnes impliquées dans une démarche de reconversion professionnelle?

Les histoires de vie, un riche substrat pour explorer les parcours de reconversion

Dans ce travail, la recherche autobiographique fournit de précieux indices pour questionner les dynamiques individuelles et sociales qui caractérisent les individus réalisant une réorientation de carrière. Elle permet de décortiquer la construction des parcours individuels et d'étudier les rouages qui précèdent les passages à l'acte. Le recueil d'histoires de vie se destine donc ici à analyser l'influence qu'ont certains éléments biographiques sur les reconversions, de mieux saisir les événements majeurs qui ont impacté sur les trajectoires professionnelles, de comprendre dans une certaine mesure les origines de la construction des choix professionnels et d'identifier une succession d'étapes traversées par les personnes en situation de réorientation.

Les origines des reconversions professionnelles peuvent en partie s'expliquer par un 'mauvais' choix de départ (conscient ou non) qui, à l'image d'une bombe à retardement, finit

par devenir insupportable pour la personne et l'invite à se reconvertir. Pour illustrer ce fait, Négroni (2007) parle de 'vocation contrariée' et émet l'idée qu'un individu construit, parfois très tôt, des désirs professionnels initiaux mais que pour une raison contextuelle (marché de l'emploi, événement familial, déménagement, motifs financiers, etc.), il est amené à occuper un autre emploi. Tôt ou tard, plusieurs facteurs de désengagement (lassitude, conflits, conditions de travail insatisfaisantes, manque de reconnaissance et de perspectives) le déterminent à se reconvertir et à se tourner vers sa vocation originelle. Si pour Négroni (idem) ces motifs contextuels constituent une importante part explicative dans la décision de modifier sa trajectoire professionnelle, un autre élément lui apparaît crucial pour comprendre l'origine des choix professionnels : les parcours de vie.

Notre recherche est à son tout début (construction du cadre théorique et état des lieux) mais déjà, à partir des témoignages de trois personnes ayant accepté de nous parler brièvement de leur reconversion, certains liens ou controverses ont émergé. Deux d'entre elles ont intentionnellement quitté leur précédent emploi (respectivement dans la comptabilité et dans la radio) pour des raisons liées à une ambiance de travail délétère. Néanmoins, ces personnes n'ont pas donné leur démission dans le but de se lancer dans une profession dont elles ont toujours rêvé ou autour de laquelle elles ont élaboré un plan d'action au fil du temps. La particularité dans leur histoire réside dans le fait qu'elles ont quitté un employeur pour aller rechercher un cadre de vie tout autre (région géographique éloignée de leur contexte parisien), sans avoir de projet professionnel à ce moment-là. Se posent alors des questions fondamentalement financières (ne peuvent 'tout plaquer' que les gens qui en ont les moyens matériels pour vivre sans revenus pendant une période donnée) qui remettent en cause les réelles marges d'action individuelles, ainsi tributaires de variables sociologiques, et des questions d'ordre vocationnel qui viennent mettre en branle l'idée qu'une bifurcation permet de rétablir les individus vers leur choix professionnel originel.

Notre troisième interlocuteur a quant à lui réalisé un parcours qui prend la forme d'un 'ticket aller-retour'. Banquier de formation, mais ayant depuis toujours rêvé travailler dans l'enseignement, il quitte un jour son emploi dans la finance et s'investit dans un cursus académique lui permettent d'accéder à un porte de professeur de mathématiques dans le degré secondaire. Il découvre alors un métier dans lequel il ne se reconnaît pas, démissionne au bout d'un an et retourne dans le secteur bancaire. Nous pouvons ici identifier une vocation originelle construite autour du désir de devenir enseignant, mais dont les représentations sont idéalisées au point que la reconversion se déroule mal et finit par échouer.

Nous nous donnons donc pour objectif de définir en quoi les récits de vie de ces personnes au parcours de reconversion 'atypique' pourront permettre d'aborder ces controverses et tenter d'apporter des éléments nouveaux par rapport aux processus de reconversion professionnelle plus classiques décrits dans la littérature actuelle. Cette question est absolument centrale pour affiner la compréhension des mécanismes qui sous-tendent aux bifurcations, ainsi elle justifie l'idée que la recherche autobiographique permet de reconstituer les pièces d'un puzzle en remettant en perspective les épreuves traversées, les évolutions vocationnelles progressives ou par déclics, la construction des représentations d'un métier et les projections identitaires. La fonction 'avant' des récits de vie est ici clairement mise en lumière pour remonter à travers le temps.

Impact formateur de l'acte autobiographique sur les individus en reconversion

Si l'on quitte les lunettes de chercheur et que l'on adopte la posture du sujet impliqué dans un processus de réorientation professionnelle, il est en outre possible d'affirmer que les récits de vie constituent un outil de réflexion sur soi-même très pertinent, dans la mesure où ils viennent solliciter l'individu dans sa capacité à faire le point sur son présent, à créer des liens avec ses expériences vécues et à mieux se projeter dans le futur. Ce travail d'explicitation ouvre un accès à une meilleure connaissance de soi, en faisant ressortir des éléments en lien avec son identité, ses valeurs, ses réalisations et ses aspirations. En l'aidant à définir sa marge d'action et à préciser ce qu'il veut, peut et sait faire, la démarche autobiographique, vue ici comme une occasion de faire le bilan, fournit à l'individu un puissant levier de changement.

Cette fonction de bilan formatif qu'endosse le récit ressort dans les travaux de Bernard et Simonet (1997) qui, dans une méthode qu'elles ont baptisée 'Autographie – Projets de vie', relèvent elles-mêmes que la démarche de production de récits est fréquemment adoptée lors de phases de reconversion, mais aussi d'orientation, de recherche d'emploi et de préparation à la retraite. Les histoires de vie aident donc la personne à opérer des choix plus éclairés lorsqu'elle traverse une période charnière de son existence, que ce soit en favorisant un travail sur la signification des directions prises ou en permettant 'de se projeter dans un avenir en continuité avec le changement' (p.79). A l'instar des bilans de compétences qui permettent de répertorier noir sur blanc les expériences et apprentissages acquis à titre professionnel et personnel, les histoires de vie peuvent avoir un impact considérable sur les parcours et revêtir un véritable intérêt pour les choix futurs en participant à la reconfiguration professionnelle, et plus largement, identitaire chez les individus qui amorcent une réorientation. La réflexivité induite par la production d'un récit vient donner de la consistance

aux projections de soi vers une nouvelle identité professionnelle. Lors d'une reconversion, il n'est donc pas uniquement question d'infléchir son parcours de vie, mais également de procéder à une réactualisation de soi. Dans une recherche menée auprès d'apprenants réalisant un cursus académique pour se rediriger vers la formation d'adultes après avoir occupé un autre emploi, Negroni (2011, p.145) explique les apports de son travail, qui s'appuie sur des récits de vie, en ces termes:

> Nous souhaitons montrer dans ce travail que la réorientation professionnelle n'est pas un simple changement de trajectoire professionnelle: plus que jamais, elle est aussi une réorientation de vie qu'opère l'étudiant dans ce «travail sur soi» qu'il actualise dans et par l'histoire qu'il raconte et se raconte.

Cette fonction de reconfiguration identitaire apparaît de manière saillante au travers des récits autobiographiques. Négroni (idem) a ainsi pu faire ressortir trois périodes successives qui interviennent dans les processus de reconversion :

- une phase de désengagement où le sujet se distancie et de désidentifie de son premier emploi dans lequel il ne se reconnaît plus ;

- un moment de latence caractérisé par d'importantes introspections (inventaire des ressources individuelles à disposition et exploration des possibles), à l'issue duquel la personne peut activement s'investir dans un projet et anticiper son futur ;

- s'étant détaché de sa précédente identité professionnelle, l'individu peut alors se réengager dans sa nouvelle orientation et déploie son plan d'action pour y parvenir.

Sur la base d'indices narratologiques fournis par les autobiographies qu'elle a recueillies, Négroni (idem) parvient à situer ses sujets dans ces trois différentes phases. Un récit tourné vers les événements passés révèle ainsi, selon elle, un processus de réengagement non encore amorcé par l'individu ignorant quelle direction prendre, tandis qu'un récit riche de références au futur indique que la personne est engagée dans une démarche de projet. La recherche autobiographique rend compte ici de sa capacité à clarifier les stades de reconfiguration professionnelle et identitaire dans lesquelles se situent les individus lorsqu'ils livrent au chercheur leur récit, mettant ainsi en lumière les fonctions 'au-delà' et 'après' du récit.

Les phénomènes de projection identitaire mis en exergue par les histoires de vie ressortent dans nos données empiriques exploratoires. Nos deux interlocuteurs originaires de Paris insistent fréquemment sur l'adéquation de leur nouveau contexte professionnel et personnel à leur personnalité, leurs valeurs et leurs aspirations. Des expressions telles que 'c'est important pour moi' ou 'j'ai besoin de', couplées à la mention de certains traits de caractère

tournés vers l'optimisme (sentiment de réussite personnelle et conviction que certains événements pourtant éprouvants surviennent à un moment opportun de leur vie), donnent une consistance à ce vecteur de changement que sont les projections de soi.

Le réengagement dans une nouvelle profession, à l'image de l'édification d'une nouvelle construction, demande une préparation du terrain au préalable. Ce préliminaire est nécessaire selon Négroni (2011) : 'être dégagé de son passé professionnel est une condition primordiale pour être dans le temps du projet, la seconde étant de percevoir l'utilité du projet' (p.153). Elle ajoute que le 'deuil' (p.151) du précédent emploi et la 'rupture avec sa vie passée' (p.153) sont nécessaires à la concrétisation du processus de reconversion professionnelle. S'il est vrai que les périodes de latence identitaire, de par leur issue encore incertaine, inhibent la possibilité de se projeter dans un futur emploi, le caractère incontournable d'une rupture apparaît moins évident. Dans l'ouvrage de Bernard et Simonet (1997), les récits de vie montrent qu'il existe des éléments de continuité par rapport au vécu antérieur et ils participent à une mise en lien entre les expériences individuelles passées pour donner sens au nouveau projet professionnel. Le principe des bilans de compétences proposés par les organismes d'orientation professionnelle fonctionne sur cette même base, en allant explorer le matériel biographique de l'individu pour en faire ressortir les points-clés de son parcours et de ses acquisitions (en termes de compétences, de construction de la personnalité, d'intérêts développés au fil du temps).

La notion de deuil quant à elle, qui vient faire écho à un processus de résilience face à un état irréversible, peut elle aussi être sujette à controverse. Si pour l'une des personnes que nous avons interrogées, tourner définitivement les talons à son passé lui a paru nécessaire pour être en mesure de recommencer sa vie ailleurs et dans un autre emploi, le récit des deux autres sujets nous révèle qu'ils n'ont pas eu à 'enterrer' leur précédent emploi afin de pouvoir passer au suivant. L'ex-comptable reconverti en chauffeur de bus conserve ainsi ses expériences de comptabilité comme roue de secours (sans jeu de mots) si des circonstances imprévues doivent l'amener à se réorienter ultérieurement. Sa rupture avec l'univers comptable ne revêt donc pas un caractère définitif, malgré les expériences négatives qu'il y a rencontrées.

Le banquier 're-reconverti' quant à lui illustre un processus plus complexe encore. A la lumière de son parcours caractérisé par un retour dans les finances après avoir esquissé une reconversion dans l'enseignement, nous pouvons émettre deux hypothèses de scénarii. La première serait qu'il a repris son travail de banquier par sécurité (de peur de repartir dans l'inconnu et de se 'planter' une nouvelle fois) mais qu'il s'y déplaît et qu'il attend le moment

venu pour pouvoir développer un nouveau projet. Le scénario alternatif consisterait à dire qu'il lui aura fallu tenter une expérience dans l'enseignement, visiblement idéalisée dans ses représentations initiales, pour réaliser que son emploi de banquier lui manque, pour conforter son choix et pour être en mesure de comprendre ce qui lui posait problème à l'époque où il avait souhaité se reconvertir. Quelle que soit l'hypothèse retenue pour tenter d'expliquer son réengagement dans la banque, il nous prouve qu'un mouvement de rupture avec son passé professionnel n'a rien de complètement irrévocable.

A titre de synthèse, nous pouvons émettre l'idée que l'approche autobiographique fait ressortir des éléments de rupture et de continuité qui agissent de façon conjointe dans les processus de reconversion professionnelle volontaire. Elle permet aux sujets d'accéder à ce qu'ils ont tiré de positif ou de négatif à partir de leurs expériences, à ce qu'ils peuvent valoriser ou souhaitent oublier dans leur parcours et à ce qui vient questionner leur rapport subjectif au travail (ainsi qu'à ce qui gravite autour : à la hiérarchie, au savoir, au temps, à certains lieux, à soi, aux autres).

Conclusion

La recherche autobiographique offre au chercheur une riche voie d'accès pour aborder la thématique des reconversions professionnelles volontaires. L'étude du matériel biographique nous permet effectivement d'en extraire de précieux indices pour analyser les mécanismes qui sous-tendent à une bifurcation dans une carrière, tels que les processus d'orientation initiale, les signes précurseurs d'un désengagement vocationnel et les étapes de construction d'un nouveau projet professionnel. Nous avons également pu voir que les histoires de vie fournissent de véritables pistes de réflexion et d'action aux sujets qui se racontent. Les récits autobiographiques ont le mérite de conduire l'individu à travailler sur les trois temporalités qui composent son histoire (passé-présent-futur) en mettant en relief ses expériences antérieures, sa situation actuelle et ses projections dans l'avenir. Sous leur fonction de bilan, ils sont un puissant levier de changement et peuvent aider l'individu à effectuer des choix plus éclairés en se réappropriant son histoire. La réflexivité qu'ils induisent pousse le sujet à devenir partenaire de la recherche en collaborant avec le chercheur. Les histoires de vie donnent ainsi à tous deux de précieuses clefs de compréhension sur la manière dont la personne parvient à faire maturer son projet ainsi que sur sa manière de vivre son processus de reconversion. Leur autre point fort est de pouvoir mettre en relief les stades dans lesquels se trouvent les individus investis dans un processus de reconversion professionnelle. Certains points de controverse demeurent toutefois à être éclairés, tels que ceux liés à une vocation

originelle contrariée, aux facteurs sociaux susceptibles de réinterroger le côté « volontaire » des reconversions et au caractère prétendument irréversible d'une rupture avec son précédent emploi. Ces considérations nous prouvent que les reconversions professionnelles volontaires répondent à des mécanismes complexes faisant simultanément interagir des éléments contextuels, psychologiques, sociologiques et institutionnels, dont la compréhension devra être affinée au travers d'analyses approfondies de récits autobiographiques.

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{ TC "*Agnès Dussard* - Récit d'expérience et récit de vie: épreuves et transformation de soi" \f \l }Récit d'expérience et récit de vie: épreuves et transformation de soi

Agnès Dussard, Université de Genève

Sommaire

Le récit nous confronte au réel de la vie et de la mort et cette confrontation nous met à l'épreuve, nous éprouve. Après le récit, nous ne sommes plus les mêmes, nous avons changé, nous nous sommes transformés, comme le regard que nous portons sur le monde. En faisant un récit de leur vie, Sati, Hélène, Michèle et Nathalie ont fait de nous des témoins des épreuves traversées, nous confiant ainsi une mission nouvelle, celle de transmettre la parole de ces femmes, venues d'Afrique subsaharienne devenues aides-soignantes et aides familiales en Belgique.

Peut-on parler de l'avant, de l'à côté et de l'au-delà du récit biographique sans parler du récit ? Y a-t-il un avant et un après la recherche biographique ainsi que le titre de ce colloque nous le laisse entendre ? Si oui, cela pourrait signifier que le récit fait saillance ou rupture dans le parcours d'une vie et le placerait dès lors comme "évènement" ou même épreuve dans le parcours de cette vie. Ainsi, en pensant à Jean-Michel Baudouin (2010) nous aurions envie de parler d' "épreuve biographique" épreuve pour celui qui fait un récit de sa vie comme pour le chercheur, celui qui recueille, qui reçoit le récit.

Cette contribution articule un récit d'expérience et des récits de vie dans une temporalité multiple. Elle commence il y a quelques temps déjà lorsque nous avons effectué une recherche exploratoire dans le cadre d'un mémoire de maitrise en sciences de l'éducation dont le titre était : femmes d'Afrique et tablier blanc : impact d'une formation d'aide familiale et d'aide-soignante dans les parcours de vie de femmes africaines subsahariennes, recherche poursuivie actuellement dans un projet de thèse. Une dizaine de femmes venues à l'âge adulte d'Afrique subsaharienne ayant effectué une formation d'aide familiale et/ou d'aide soignante ont accepté de faire un récit de leur vie ; les récits de Sati, d'Hélène, de Nathalie et de Michèle ont été intégralement retranscrits. Ces femmes étaient pour la plupart des anciennes étudiantes ayant terminé leur formation depuis plus de cinq ans. Nous les avons rencontrées à plusieurs reprises chez elles ou dans des lieux choisis par elles. Bien que venant de pays différents et ayant chacune une histoire singulière, les récits de Sati, d'Hélène, de Nathalie, de Michèle et de Jacqueline sont tous marqués par une coupure entre un avant et un après, entre leur vie en Afrique et l'arrivée en Belgique. Tout au long de leurs parcours, elles ont traversé des épreuves redoutables dont elles sont sorties vivantes et différentes. Elles se sont transformées. Elles ne sont plus les mêmes. En faisant un récit de leur vie, elles ont accepté de retraverser ces épreuves.

Les différentes rencontres, les longues heures passées à écouter, réécouter et à retranscrire, mot à mot, chaque récit, le temps de l'analyse... nous ont également transformée - de manière souterraine, silencieuse (Jullien, 2009) - sans que nous en ayons pris conscience. Quelque chose s'est passé, quelque chose a eu lieu. Nous nous sommes surprise à avoir changé, à regarder le monde autrement. Nous nous sommes sentie plus consciente de notre responsabilité et porteuse d'une mission nouvelle, celle de transmettre la parole de celles qui ordinairement ne font pas entendre leur voix, de faire reconnaitre qui elles sont, ces femmes venues d'Afrique subsaharienne devenues aides-soignantes et aides familiales en Belgique.

Si le récit transforme les narratrices, il transforme également ceux qui le recueillent et ceux qui l'entendent et/ou le lisent. "Plus jamais je ne regarderai les aides-soignantes africaines de la même manière… ". Cette phrase qui plusieurs fois nous a été dite – par les premiers lecteurs, les correcteurs et les destinataires de notre travail nous a fait prendre conscience que le récit produit des effets sur les différentes personnes qui en prennent connaissance de manière directe ou indirecte. Le récit nous surprend et nous transforme. Il nous confronte au réel de la vie, de la mort et de la souffrance et cette confrontation nous met à l'épreuve, nous éprouve. Nous sommes éprouvés ; nous ressentons des sentiments et des émotions et ces émotions nous transforment et nous construisent, nous fabriquent ainsi que l'a écrit Vinciane Despret (2001).

Il y a quelques jours, alors que - pour préparer cette communication – nous relisions le récit de Sati, nous recevons un appel téléphonique de Michèle, inattendu, qui nous annonce la mort de son père, assassiné au Congo, où il s'était rendu pour quelques jours (pour l'enterrement de sa mère, la grand-mère de Michèle). Depuis, cette communication téléphonique, les paroles et la voix de Michèle nous restent en mémoire... En quelques instants, nous nous sommes retrouvée ce jour de décembre lorsque nous avons rencontré Michèle chez elle pour recueillir son récit de vie. Ce récit que nous avions appelé le chemin vers la paix était véritablement un récit de survie, il était celui d'une survivante de massacres et de viols, traversé de nombreuses épreuves dans lesquelles de nombreux proches ont trouvé la mort.

Cette contribution s'intéresse à ce qui se passe avant le récit, au moment, du récit et à l'"après" du récit, à ce qu'il produit chez les narratrices et chez ceux qui le reçoivent

Avant le récit

Les entretiens se sont déroulés en journée, en soirée, en week-end, pendant des congés scolaires, en fonction des différents agendas, des situations et des organisations familiales.

Certains rendez-vous se sont trouvés écourtés en raison de différentes contraintes et/ou opportunités du moment. Nous nous sommes adaptée aux situations telles qu'elles se sont présentées, la plupart du temps différemment de ce qui était prévu : la présence du compagnon, des enfants ou des petits enfants, les changements de lieux, les oublis de rendez-vous, les retards... Les récits se sont déroulés dans des cadres différents laissés au choix des narratrices. Ainsi, nous avons rencontré Sati chez elle à son domicile à Bruxelles. Nous l'avons rencontrée à trois reprises. Les deux premières séances se sont déroulées, à sa demande, en présence de son compagnon. Le deuxième entretien ayant été écourté pour des raisons qui lui sont personnelles, elle a souhaité un troisième rendez-vous pour pouvoir parler seule, sans la présence de son compagnon de son vécu de l'excision, épreuve centrale de son parcours de vie. Nous avons rencontré Hélène à deux reprises, la première fois à Bruxelles, dans un appartement mis à notre disposition et la deuxième fois chez elle, dans sa maison d'une petite ville wallonne. Nathalie nous a donné rendez-vous dans un restaurant de cuisine rapide à une heure de faible affluence. Le premier rendez-vous fixé avec Michèle n'a pas eu lieu car elle avait oublié la date fixée. La rencontre s'est déroulée chez elle, dans une petite ville de Flandres pendant des congés scolaires. Tout le temps passé à parler du passé, à regarder les albums de photos sont importants, ils nous ont permis de refaire connaissance, de recréer des liens, de créer ou d'aménager un environnement de confiance, suffisamment sécurisant pour que les narratrices puissent et osent parler sans crainte.

Tous les moments passés avec Michèle dans sa maison nous reviennent en mémoire. Sa fille et son neveu qui avaient à l'époque cinq et trois ans jouaient et regardaient la télévision dans une pièce contigüe à celle dans laquelle nous nous trouvions. Elle avait – pour nous recevoir –préparé un petit déjeuner et prévu différentes choses à boire et à manger. Nous avons pris le café ensemble en parlant du temps passé et du temps présent, en regardant, en feuilletant les albums de photos. Elle tenait à nous présenter tous les membres de sa famille et voulait nous montrer toutes les photos de son mariage, selon les rites coutumiers, le mariage civil et le mariage religieux.

C'est seulement lorsqu'elle s'est dit prête à raconter que nous avons amorcé l'enregistrement. Il faisait assez sombre dans la pièce où nous nous trouvions ; dans cette pénombre elle a commencé son récit qui a duré cinquante quatre minutes, sans une interruption, sans une question de notre part.

Le temps du récit

Michèle parlait très bas, à un rythme très soutenu, très dense, plus de cent septante mots par minute… Plus d'une fois, il a fallu tendre l'oreille pour entendre ce qu'elle disait et plus d'une fois nous aurions préféré ne pas avoir entendu.

En quelques phrases, Michèle esquisse le décor de son enfance dont selon elle "*il n'y a pas grand-chose à en dire*". Troisième enfant d'une fratrie de sept, elle a grandi avec ses parents et ses six frères et sœurs dans une famille fortunée. Le récit ne commence véritablement que lorsqu'elle a 22 ans. À 22 ans, Michèle est une jeune fille riche qui étudie l'économie à l'université lorsque soudain, surgit l'inhabituel : l'entrée de Kabila (le père) et la guerre qui fait éclater tous les repères. Tout change : c'est la guerre. Ils doivent fuir et dans cette fuite, sa petite sœur meurt et sa grande sœur enceinte de son premier enfant est assassinée de *manière atroce* ainsi que son mari et tous les habitants du village.

Michèle prend conscience de la mort. Le regard qu'elle portait sur le monde change. Elle raconte les massacres et les viols, toutes les choses qui se sont passées et tout ce qu'on ne peut pas dire parce que c'est trop honteux… "*Il y a eu tellement de choses, il y a eu des viols, il y a eu tellement d'atrocités que des fois on n'a pas envie d'en parler [...] des atrocités que les gens n'osent même pas en parler parce que ça c'est une honte...*" (Michèle)

Et pourtant, ce qu'on ne peut pas dire est présent - comme crié silencieusement - dans tout le récit, marqué par la mort et la violence des hommes. Michèle semble porter au profond d'elle-même le souvenir des jours de guerre et des atrocités commises par la folie meurtrière des hommes. Puis, c'est la fuite, l'exil, et l'errance. Arrivée en Belgique, elle découvre un monde différent de celui qu'elle connaissait, l'isolement, une solitude jamais connue auparavant, le froid, les odeurs et les goûts différents, le racisme… C'est un assistant social qui l'oriente vers la formation d'aide familiale. Cette formation lui a permis de rencontrer des personnes qui l'ont soutenue, encouragée et lui ont donné un "*petit élan*" qui lui a permis de continuer ; la formation l'a aidée à comprendre les Belges et la société dans laquelle elle est arrivée…

A la fin de son récit Michèle nous dit qu'elle est "*reconnaissante vis-à-vis de la de la Belgique... je n'ai rien fait pour être là, j'ai la chance d'avoir des bons médicaments, j'ai la chance [...] d'avoir un boulot, j'ai la chance d'avoir un mari, j'ai la chance d'être en paix…* " (Michèle)

Recueillir un récit de vie, implique et nous demande de nous mettre en position d'écoute, sans a priori, sans préjugés, sans interprétations rapides... nous sommes dans l'instant, ici et

maintenant, présents à l'autre. "Etre présent c'est [...] être complètement disponible à l'autre, [...], c'est être ouvert à l'ici et maintenant" (Séjournant, 2001). Nous accueillons l'autre qui se raconte à nous, qui nous donne à voir une infime partie, des fragments de cette vie vécue, imaginée, remémorée, en partie oubliée, reconstituée, recréée, constituée d'un ensemble d'évènements qui scandent le déroulement du récit.

Au-delà de cette succession d'évènements, le récit permet une mise en conscience ou en mots des épreuves affrontées dont Michèle est sortie vivante et transformée. En nous racontant une petite partie de son histoire, avec le regard qu'elle porte - au moment du récit - sur cette histoire passée, elle nous a laissé entrevoir un peu du chemin parcouru. Le récit nous a confronté à l'indicible et à l'inaudible, à l'insoutenable en nous faisant entrevoir la réalité d'un monde inconnu que nous n'étions pas préparée à entendre. Nous ne savions pas ce qui allait se dire. Nous nous sommes laissée surprendre et toucher, la surprise nous a saisi…La surprise arrive lorsque nous ne sommes pas préparé à ce qui se dit et que l'inattendu s'impose, "quelque chose se passe et ce quelque chose provoque des effets…" (Nève, Pluymaekers, sd.).

Le récit de Michèle, sans doute, eut (vraisemblablement) été différent s'il avait été réalisé par quelqu'un d'autre, des fragments de vie auraient été mis en lumière autrement et d'autres moments de vie, d'autres épreuves, peut-être, auraient émergé ou au contraire auraient été tues. Le témoignage recueilli par le narrataire est, en quelque sorte, une co-construction. Ses qualités dépendent en grande partie du narrataire, "de la façon dont il se situe face à son témoin, dont il le considère, de l'attention qu'il porte à son récit..." (Pelen, 2009). En tant que chercheur nous ne sommes pas étrangers au récit. Nous participons à sa construction, co-auteurs ou co-acteurs, nous le co-construisons, par notre présence, par la qualité de notre écoute, par l'écoute des moments de silence, par la qualité de notre silence, par nos interventions respectueuses, par la relation qui se crée et la confiance qui s'établit.

Autour du récit

Michèle nous a invitée à partager leur repas et elle a, en quelques mots, hors enregistrement laissé entendre certaines choses qui n'avaient jamais été dites. Le soir tombé, nous sommes partie avec le souvenir de ce qui avait été dit, des images de massacre, un autre regard sur l'humanité et un sentiment accru de notre responsabilité… Michèle - en faisant un récit de sa vie - a fait de nous un témoin des épreuves traversées. Après le récit, quelque chose avait changé. Nous avions pris conscience - autrement que par les informations transmises dans les

medias - par le témoignage d'une survivante - des atrocités commises par la folie des hommes.

Le récit de Michèle nous a ouvert les yeux et notre regard sur le monde a changé. Nous avons changé, nous ne sommes plus les mêmes. Le récit, le long travail de retranscription et l'analyse qui a suivi nous ont transformée, sans que nous nous y attendions, sans y être préparée... En nous faisant un récit de sa vie, Michèle a fait de nous un témoin des épreuves traversées… Aujourd'hui, cette communication téléphonique - après plusieurs années - prolonge le récit. Michèle nous téléphone et en nous racontant cette nouvelle épreuve, renoue le fil, continue avec nous l'écriture de son récit.

Les épreuves

Tout au long de sa vie, l'individu traverse et affronte des épreuves qui le forment et le transforment… Alors que certains changements sont prévisibles, d'autres, au contraire, amènent ou signent une rupture, une discontinuité dans la continuité de la vie. Lorsque Michèle fait un récit de sa vie, ce ne sont pas les multiples faits du quotidien mais les évènements, les épreuves, les moments marquants qui constituent la trame du récit. Epreuves, changements, ruptures, évènements, transitions, bifurcations… Cette succession d'évènements et d'épreuves constitue le canevas, l'intrigue de cette vie qui nous est racontée.

La polysémie du mot nous permet d'appréhender différentes définitions et dimensions de l'épreuve, de la mise à l'épreuve et de l'éprouvé/er. L'acteur est aussi celui qui éprouve, qui ressent des sensations et/ou des sentiments, (Martucelli, 2010) et qui est éprouvé.

Ainsi, l'acteur est à la fois celui qui agit et celui qui subit, qui souffre. Agissant et souffrant, il ne sort pas indemne de cette "expérience" qui agit sur lui, qui le transforme. L'être éprouvé met l'accent sur ce que l'acteur subit, sur le souffrir de celui-ci sur son "pâtir" (Martucelli, 2010).

Les épreuves ainsi qu'elles sont définies par Martucelli *sont "des défis historiques socialement produits, inégalement distribués que les individus sont contraints d'affronter. Et comme c'est le cas lors de toute épreuve, les acteurs peuvent, en s'y mesurant, réussir ou échouer "* (Martucelli, 2006).

L'épreuve du récit - au sens narratologique du terme - quant à elle constitue le pivot central de la narration (Baudouin 2010). Le récit met en scène un héros, celui-ci doit affronter une épreuve dans un lieu inconnu de lui, dans un espace distal, éloigné de ses repères habituels,

avant de revenir dans son lieu habituel, transformé par la traversée de l'épreuve. L'épreuve est transformation du sujet, passage entre deux états identitaires.

Le récit de Michèle est scandé, marqué par les différentes épreuves, celles-ci ont constitué la trame de son récit. Elle raconte et en racontant, revit les épreuves vécues : "*des fois, on n'a pas trop envie de raconter car c'est comme si on revivait une deuxième fois...*". Nous pourrions ainsi parler avec Baudouin d'une épreuve à "deux niveaux", l'épreuve existentielle "configurée par l'élaboration narrative" et l'épreuve revécue par/lors de la narration qui va "prendre à témoin " le narrataire. (Baudouin, Leclercq, 2013)

"Il est périlleux de se confronter professionnellement avec la vie au sens le plus trivial parfois ou redoutable, voire violent ou pervers" (Lani-Bayle, 2012). Par la narration, Michèle, Sati, Nathalie et Hélène nous font entrevoir une certaine réalité du monde et nous obligent à entendre ce que nous n'étions pas préparés à entendre, que nous n'aurions pas voulu entendre, nous dévoilant et nous confrontant à un monde inconnu de nous. Comme si un voile se déchirait, le récit de Michèle nous met face à l'horreur du monde, à l'indicible, l'inaudible : la souffrance, la mort et la folie des hommes. Le récit transforme le monde, notre représentation du monde, il nous oblige à prendre conscience de ce qui se vit pour d'autres, ailleurs : "sur quelle planète suis-je tombée, où des hommes ont pu se montrer capables de telles atrocités" (Lani-Bayle, 2012) ce qui se passe prend un visage et une voix. Certains récits sont tellement insoutenables, qu'ils constituent une épreuve également pour nous, narrataires, ils nous mettent à l'épreuve et nous éprouvent. Nous éprouvons des sentiments et des émotions.

Les émotions

Est-il scientifique de ressentir de l'émotion pour un chercheur ? Sommes-nous dans une distance juste avec l'autre, le narrateur, avec Michèle lorsque nous ressentons de l'émotion ? Est ce raisonnable - en tant que chercheur de parler de nos émotions dans un travail qui se veut scientifique ?

Les narratrices en partageant avec nous une expérience émotionnelle revoient et revivent cette expérience. Tout au long du récit, les manifestations émotionnelles sont très nombreuses : silences, pleurs, rires, sourires, hésitations, changements de tonalité, onomatopées, répétitions, bégaiements, mains qui tremblent… En tant qu'auditeur/chercheur, nous sommes exposés aux différents signaux qu'elles émettent. Nous ressentons également une palette infinie d'émotions tout au long du processus, peur, énervement, joie, tristesse, colère, culpabilité, révolte... Nous avons les larmes aux yeux, nous pleurons, nous rions

quelquefois aussi, certains récits parfois nous empêchent de dormir... Ces émotions constituent une expérience qui nous "déborde", elles nous arrivent (Despret, 2001) sans qu'on s'y attende, elles "s'imposent" à nous (Rimé, 2005). Manifestations immédiates de notre relation à l'environnement et à l'autre, elles ont valeur d'expérience et "elles permettent, comme expérience, de penser et de négocier les rapports à soi, aux autres et au monde" (Despret, 2001).

Différentes attitudes s'offrent à nous : "*soit on se blinde, soit on se noie. [...] Ou bien [...] on se bloque, on ne sent plus rien, ou bien on se laisse complètement emporter par l'émotion [...] Il s'agit de ne pas avoir peur d'être touché, de laisser couler des larmes parce qu'on est entouré d'injustice, de désordre. En même temps, ne pas se complaire dans cet état... [...]Il importe d'être à l'écoute de ce qui se passe en nous, sans être trop tendu par l'émotion, ni trop indifférent, ni trop relâché*". (Leloup, 2004). Selon Arendt citée par Gérome Truc (2008), il n'y a pas à opposer émotion et raison parce que ce n'est pas l'absence d'émotion qui signe une attitude raisonnable mais le fait de pouvoir être touché par celle-ci. C'est la capacité de ressentir des émotions ressenties par l'empathie qui nous permettent "un accès authentique à l'autre et par là-même un accès authentique à ce moi qui se découvre autre". (Rimé, 2005)

Le narrataire devrait être "un homme ou une femme nu(e) et compatissant(e) (Pelen, 2009). Cette "émotion compassionnelle" nous permet, selon Arendt cité par Gérome Truc (2008), de nous élever au-dessus des frontières ordinaires, de découvrir la singularité d'une personne en souffrance et de découvrir la réalité d'un monde que nous ne connaissions pas. "Je suis obligée de découvrir qu'au-delà du monde que je connais, vivent des hommes malheureux. La compassion abolit ponctuellement la distance séparant deux personnes singulières, elle me rapproche, de l'autre" (Truc, 2008).

Cette émotion compatissante - à condition cependant de ne pas "rester dedans", de pouvoir s'en détacher, de garder notre lucidité - nous permet de prendre conscience de notre responsabilité en tant qu'adulte, en tant que formateur et en tant que chercheur. C'est elle aussi qui nous "met en mouvement et [nous] pousse à l'action" (Lipiansky, 1998)

Après le récit

Sati, Hélène, Nathalie et Michèle sont quatre femmes venues d'Afrique subsaharienne devenues aides-soignantes en Belgique. Elles ne sont pas venues pour faire des études, elles ont parcouru des milliers de kilomètres dans l'espoir d'une vie meilleure ou pour fuir un pays en guerre. Bien qu'étant toutes différentes et ayant toutes une histoire singulière, leurs récits

nous ont permis de dégager et de mettre en évidence des éléments communs nous permettant de retracer une histoire qui pourrait être celle de nombreuses femmes venues d'Afrique subsaharienne devenues aides familiales et/ou aides-soignantes en Belgique.

Tous leurs récits sont marqués par une coupure entre un avant et un après, entre la vie en Afrique et leur arrivée en Europe. Elles ont quitté l'Afrique pour l'Europe, l'autre monde où rien n'est plus pareil, ni les odeurs, ni les saveurs, ni les manières de s'habiller ni même la langue. L'arrivée en Belgique leur a amené bon nombre de désillusions, elles se sont retrouvées seules, dans un isolement qu'elles n'avaient jamais connu auparavant, ayant tout perdu, leurs identités, leur reconnaissance sociale, leurs diplômes, sans papier, sans possibilité de travailler ou de retourner en arrière. Toutes les quatre ont vécu un moment de destruction de leur identité antérieure. Ce moment a constitué un moment de perte de tous leurs repères, de solitude, de souffrance et de vulnérabilité dans lequel il n'est plus possible de retourner en arrière. C'est dans ce moment particulier de vulnérabilité qu'elles ont été orientées vers la formation par des assistants sociaux.

Les récits nous ont permis de prendre conscience de l'importance de la formation qui occupe une place centrale en ayant été tout à la fois : une formation qualifiante préparant à un vrai métier dans un secteur porteur d'emploi ; un lieu de rencontres avec d'autres êtres humains, des pairs, des formateurs, des personnes âgées ; un dispositif de socialisation secondaire particulière, proche d'une socialisation primaire, qui a amené une transformation des savoirs sur le monde et leur a appris la culture du pays dans lequel elles sont arrivées. La formation en étant formation d'aide et de soins semble avoir constitué un lien permettant de relier leur vie présente avec leur vie passée. Éduquées pour prendre soin des ainés et des malades, la formation ne les a pas mises en rupture avec les valeurs inculquées lors de leur socialisation primaire.

La formation a permis à Sati, Hélène, Nathalie et Michèle de sortir de cet isolement qu'elles ne connaissaient pas en Afrique, en les mettant en relation avec des autrui qui les ont écoutées, donné des explications sur le monde dans lequel elles sont arrivées, qui leur ont montré et permis de découvrir des manières d'être et de faire différentes. Elle leur a permis de se transformer en tant que femme, en tant que maman, dans leurs rapports avec les hommes. Elle a pour chacune d'elles apporté quelque chose en lien ou en réparation d'une épreuve cruciale de leur histoire de vie. La formation, bien que reproductrice de liens traditionnels, s'est trouvée être facteur d'émancipation sociale et d'émancipation d'une "domination masculine".

Par le récit, Michèle, Sati, Nathalie et Hélène font plus que représenter leur passé. La mise en mots d'une partie de leur histoire et des épreuves traversées a pu permettre aux narratrices de trouver/donner/mettre du sens, quand c'est possible, peut-être même les aider à dépasser la douleur. La mise en récit leur a permis de relire leur vie avec le regard qu'elles portent aujourd'hui sur leur vie passée, de se raconter et ce faisant, de prendre conscience et de mettre en mots ce qui s'est transformé en elles. Le récit leur a permis de se définir autrement, de prendre conscience et de dire qui elles sont devenues.

> "Je suis différente de la femme qui est venue d'Afrique parce que, quand je suis venue d'Afrique, j'étais naïve, il y a beaucoup de choses je savais pas [...] ça m'a transformée je suis devenue, je peux dire, je suis africaine mais européenne dans la tête [...] je suis fière de l'être parce que je peux dire… Je suis très contente parce que je… je suis maintenant je suis une européenne dans la tête même si je suis noire de peau mais je suis une européenne dans la tête et ça je suis contente. " (Sati I. 321-330)

> "Je suis contente de… l'Europe m'a beaucoup changée, surtout l'école, ça m'a changée, je suis plus Sati de... je veux dire quand j'ai quitté la Côte d'Ivoire j'avais 27 ans, je suis plus Sati de quand j'avais 27 ans... j'ai beaucoup changé je vis comme une européenne je réfléchis comme une européenne" (Sati II. 139-141)

Selon Martine Lani-Bayle, la vocation première du récit serait la recherche d'amour ou du moins "celle d'une reconnaissance de l'autre, d'exister dans le sens d'être au monde, d'être avec les autres" (Lani-Bayle, 2012). En faisant un récit de leur vie, Michèle, Sati, Hélène et Nathalie ont souhaité pouvoir être entendues et reconnues dans ce qu'elles sont et dans ce qu'elles ont vécu, pour qu'un jour on sache qui sont les femmes d'Afrique devenues aides familiales et aides-soignantes en Belgique. Elles ont fait de nous des témoins et nous ont confié une nouvelle mission, celle de porter leur parole, de transmettre.

" Voilà je suis bien contente de participer à cet entretien parce que ça montre un peu le parcours de certaines personnes de l'Afrique jusqu'ici en Europe et ça explique un peu la souffrance. C'est vrai qu'il y en a qui cachent cette souffrance, qui ne veulent pas en parler parce qu'ils ont honte, honte de dire qu'ils ont souffert ainsi certains ne veulent pas en parler [...] parce que ils ont des souvenirs assez poignants par rapport à ça et ils n'ont jamais eu la possibilité de sortir ça de leur bouche et ça leur ronge ça leur ronge... Beaucoup n'en parlent pas […] Maintenant je suis fière de moi, fière de ce que je suis devenue et je ne souffre, je ne parle sans avoir une souffrance [...] au jour d'aujourd'hui ça va et tout ce que je veux maintenant c'est de donner, d'expliquer " (Hélène)

"Ca me fait plaisir de parler de ce récit, pour moi au moins ça donnerait une idée de ce métier de ce qu'on est, de qui on est" (Hélène)

"Je peux encourager toutes les femmes africaines qui arrivent ici parce que, la plupart, on arrive souvent ici avec plein de problèmes mais faut se battre il faut se battre pour y arriver parce que on a la chance d'arriver dans un bon pays qui nous donne accès à tout " (Nathalie)

"Il y a des cas où on se dit qu'il y a des gens qui nous considèrent au même point d'égalité qu'eux, il y a des gens qui comprennent qu'on est un être humain et c'est ça qui nous donne le courage aussi de se dire quelque part oui c'est vrai on est à l'aise " (Michèle)

"Je pense que ce côté-là j'ai presque tout dit [...] ça m'a fait beaucoup plaisir de... j'ai presque tout dit, tout, en grande partie sur l'excision... ça m'a beaucoup rongé" (Sati)

"Le fait de parler de ça c'est un fardeau qui s'enlève sur ma tête, c'est un ouf " (Sati III, 61)

"Ce qui me tenait plus à cœur, c'était l'excision parce que là, c'est un truc, ça, voilà, c'est toute ma vie qui a été gâchée donc on a parlé de l'excision" (Sati, III. 290)

Les récits de Michèle, de Sati, de Nathalie et d'Hélène ont été réalisés à notre demande dans un objectif de recherche. Elles ont accepté de nous raconter une petite partie de leur histoire dont elle nous ont fait don en nous remerciant de l'intérêt que nous leur avons porté alors que nous nous sommes sentie et nous sentons toujours tellement redevable de ce qu'elles nous ont apporté.

Après le récit - en guise de conclusion:

Cette contribution nous a permis d'articuler récit d'expérience et récits de vie ; de mettre en mots une partie de ce que nous avons vécu et partagé avec Michèle, Sati, Nathalie et Hélène ; de relire aujourd'hui les récits passés et enfin de relier l'avant, l'à côté et l'après du récit.

Parler de l' "avant" et de l' "après", c'est considérer le récit comme faisant rupture ou saillance dans le parcours d'une vie, c'est le placer comme évènement et épreuve pour les narratrices et pour nous-mêmes. Il nous confronte au réel de la vie et de la mort et cette confrontation nous met à l'épreuve, nous éprouve. Après le récit, nous ne sommes plus la même, nous avons changé comme le regard que nous portons sur le monde.

Les récits nous ont permis de prendre conscience de la place centrale de la formation dans les parcours de vie de Michèle, de Sati, d'Hélène et de Nathalie en ayant constitué un dispositif de socialisation secondaire particulière, proche d'une socialisation primaire, amenant une

transformation des savoirs sur le monde ; en les mettant en relation avec des autrui significatifs, des pairs, des formateurs, des personnes âgées, leur permettant ainsi de sortir de cette solitude qu'elles ne connaissaient pas auparavant ; en leur apprenant un métier dans un secteur porteur d'emploi ; en leur permettant de réparer une épreuve cruciale de leur parcours de vie. La formation leur a permis de se transformer, en tant que femmes dans leurs relations avec les hommes, en tant que maman. Elles se sont transformées tout en restant toujours elle-même "*européenne dans la tête même si je suis noire de peau*" (Sati).

Tout le temps passé à parler du passé, le temps de l'entretien, le long temps de la retranscription et le temps de l'analyse, nous ont ouvert les yeux et fait prendre conscience avec plus d'acuité de notre responsabilité, responsabilité d'adulte, de formateur et de chercheur. En faisant un récit de leur vie, Sati, Hélène, Michèle et Nathalie ont fait de nous des témoins des épreuves traversées, nous confiant ainsi une mission nouvelle, celle de transmettre la parole de ces femmes, venues d'Afrique subsaharienne devenues aides-soignantes et aides familiales en Belgique.

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{ TC "*Agnès Dussard* - Life and Experience Narratives: Ordeals and Self-Transformation" \f \l }Life and Experience Narratives: Ordeals and Self-Transformation

Agnès Dussard, Université de Genève

English Summary

If, as the title of this conference suggests, there is a "before" and an "after" biographical narrative, it could mean that it is a protruding or breaking element in a life course, and therefore constitutes an "event", or even an ordeal in this life course. This is why, referring to Jean-Michel Baudouin (2010), we would like to talk about "biographical ordeal": ordeal for the one telling about their life, as well as ordeal for the researcher who receives and records the story.

This contribution links together an experience narrative and biographical narratives in a multiple temporality. It began some time ago, when I made an exploratory research for a master thesis in education science the title of which was "African Women in White Aprons: the Impact of Caregiver and Nursing Auxiliary Professional Training in the Life Course of sub-Saharan African Women". This research is currently being continued as a Ph.D project. Nine women, who arrived as adults from sub-Saharan Africa and who took a training course in caregiving and auxiliary nursing, accepted to tell the story of their life. Although coming from different countries and having each of them a different story, the narratives of Sati, Hélène, Nathalie and Michèle are all marked by a discontinuity between "before" and "after", between their life in Africa and their arrival in Europe. Along their way, they've been through terrible ordeals out of which they emerged alive and different. They've changed. They're not the same. By telling the story of their life, they've accepted to go through these ordeals again.

Our different meetings, the long hours spent listening, again and again, and transcribing, word by word, each narrative, the analysis time…have also transformed me – in a silent way – without realizing it. I understood with surprise that I have changed too and now look at the world differently. I've become aware of my own responsibility and of a personal new mission: to relay the voice of those who usually are not heard, to ensure the recognition of those women who came from sub-Saharan Africa to become caregivers and auxiliary nurses in Belgium.

If the narrative transforms the narrators, it also transforms those who receive it and those who read it or listen to it. "I will never again look at African caregivers the same way…". I've heard this sentence several times – from proof readers or recipients of my work – and it made

me realize that the narrative produces effects on the various persons who directly or indirectly get to know about it. The narrative surprises and transforms us. It leaves us facing the reality of life, death and suffering, and this confrontation challenges us, puts us to the test. We experience feelings and emotions, and these transform and shape us, as Vinciane Despret (2001) has written.

This contribution enabled me to put into words a part of what I've experienced and shared with Michèle, Sati, Nathalie and Hélène, and to re-read today those narratives. Finally, it made possible to connect the "before", "after" and "side" aspects of the narrative.

The narratives have made me realize how central the professional training has been in the lives of Michèle, Sati, Hélène and Nathalie, because it constituted a specific secondary socialization device, close to primary socialisation and bringing a transformation of knowledge about the world; by connecting them with different significant people, peers, trainers, elderly people, allowing them to get out of a loneliness that they hadn't experienced before; by training them for a job in an employment sector; by enabling them to sort out a "critical ordeal of their life course". Professional training made it possible for them to transform, as women in their relationships, as mothers. They've been transformed while staying themselves too, "European in the mind even if dark-skinned" (Sati).

All the time spent talking about the past, the time of the interviews, the long time of transcribing them and the time of analysis have opened my eyes and I realize with more acuteness my responsibility, as an adult, a trainer, a researcher. By telling about their life, Sati, Hélène Michèle and Nathalie made me a witness of the ordeals they went through, entrusting me with a new task: relaying the word of these women, arrived from sub-Saharan Africa and now living in Belgium as auxiliary nurses and caregivers.

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{ TC "*Christine Eastman & Kate Maguire* - The critical autobiography and the professional doctorate" \f \l }The critical autobiography and the professional doctorate

Christine Eastman and Kate Maguire, Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom

These research findings emerged from a year-long series of workshops for professional doctorate candidates at Middlesex University. The workshops used autobiographies, biographies, novels, journalism, poetry and essays from the 18th to the 21st century to stimulate discussion and learning in relation to each candidate's style, tastes and context support the development of writing skills appropriate to doctoral practice knowledge. Outcomes included bridging academic, reflective and professional writing; deepening critical thinking and expression and understanding and practising critical autobiography – all of which are core components of professional/practitioner based doctorates.

Introduction

The professional doctorate is a doctoral pathway[1] that focuses on theorising and conceptualising practice and change agency in the practitioner's context. It has key characteristics: it puts the researcher at the centre of the work; takes a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge; aims to impact both practice and knowledge and to provide tangible outcomes for the benefit of stakeholders.

Due to the complex nature of work environments and the variety of possible beneficiaries of the research findings, the research approaches are usually in the mixed methods arena or are evolving methodologies. In qualitative approaches, an indicator of reliability is the transparency of the researcher and their ability to research themselves as well as the field or sector on which they aim to have an impact. Other indicators of professional doctoral level research are the depth of criticality in research areas which are inter, multi and transdisciplinary; articulation and conceptualisation of complex practices and expertise and the positioning of the practice in wider knowledge arenas including the academic arena.

It was the challenges of facilitating mastery of placing self at the centre of the writing; articulation of practice and expertise and developing critical depth that motivated us to combine our academic knowledge areas[2] with our expertise in professional studies and design and deliver a series of workshops.

In 2012 we designed four themed workshops.[3] Reading materials and activities were prepared in advance and a web presence set up for interaction with and between participants. We ensured a mixture of literature including that chosen by participants as favourites and pet hates, and literature that they were most unlikely to access. We defined 'literature' as various

publications (journals, books, magazines) from fiction to non-fiction covering a range of genres.

It soon became apparent that delving into literature produced rich depths of self knowledge as likes and dislikes were explored. A different kind of questioning emerged as participants dialogued with the literature. This began to lead to confidence in challenging not only their own ontological and epistemological stance but those of others perceived by the non academics as keyholders to some epistemic treasury more sacred than accessible. In a sense the workshops succeeded in making barriers visible and supplying the means to challenge and gain a mastery over them. Although the workshops were intended to develop a better writing style and capacity to critically engage with the literature genres to develop skills in translating ideas and concepts, it became increasingly evident to us that participants were reading their own experiences into the texts at some depth.

In this paper we explore how this emerged and why and suggest how it can be positioned in a critical autobiographical frame and become an important tool in developing level 8[4] criticality not only in the professional doctoral context but in non academic sectors. We hope that our perceptions and observations will also contribute to (i) thinking of critical autobiography as a form of research that encompasses autoethnography[5] which is becoming increasingly used in organisations but with varying degrees of success and needs further development (ii) the discussion of the relevance of identity to professional learning as participants drew on their cultural store of conceptual frames that serve to contribute to their individual formation of self.

What lies beneath

As Michael Ryan (1976:34) points out in his review of Jeffrey Mehlman's study of autobiography, if self-knowledge were ever possible, there would be `an incredible self-destruction, a recognition that the self's sovereign interiority is split and invaded by exteriority; that its illusory homogeneity is, in fact heterogeneous. But this very heterogeneity prevents complete self-knowledge'.

In other words, like Narcissus not being able to see himself uncritically, that is to see self in relation to others resulting in unknowingness in life, wasted his life and that of others represented by Echo. Autobiography can fall under the spell of Narcissus and therefore the `critic of autobiography' is necessary (34). Perhaps autobiography is motivated by a `narcissistic dream of self-presence' (35). Perhaps it is also `necessarily fictive' (36), `a

discourse containing the discursive subject which constitutes the topic of discussion' (Blanchard, 1982:100), or simply a form that can hardly be expected to contain the complexity of a life. The best definition might be Pascal's (1960:54) conviction that it is a form which offers its readers `a complex set of interpretative problems'.

Autobiographers do not share the same principles or value set but there appears to be a common motive `to carve public monuments out of their private lives' (Howarth, 1974: 369). In the context of critiquing one's own practice with a view to making significant change to one's profession, organisation or community of practice, the soul of the professional doctorate begins in the practitioner's critiqued story of their working life. In fact, one type of autobiography – the oratorical autobiography – takes as its theme vocation, how work guides one's life and becomes the story of one's life.

However autobiography is defined, it is an ineluctable fact that constructing one's story concerns language, not least the use of the first person and an I - we construct that is often uncritical, lacking in 'other' awareness and set in contexts that are often more background than critically engaged with as a major influence.such as the lives of others. But the lives of others are usually not the point of the autobiography unless they are angels or demons to be praised or damned by the self focused view of the author. The psychoanalyst is always interested in how notions of self are constructed and in the `latent dynamics of the text' (Ryan, 1976: 40), what the author did not intend, the unconscious dimension of the work, or a certain ignorance concerning one's own text. In short, the traditional autobiography is often a case of writing the obituary you would like to be written about you rather than grappling with the obituary that will be written about you and using that to transform your thinking, your practices and your life.

This paper focuses on the 'unpremeditated' use of autobiography to improve criticality and academic writing because although we encourage doctoral candidates to recount their `stories' as they relate to their workplaces, past and present, and what has informed their values and decision making processes, we are not looking for their stories to be histories. A *history* is a story that is experienced, recounted and condensed usually chronologically. Instead the autobiography functions as *language*. It allows the writer:

`to project human life, complete with its epistemological processes, into a mental space whose primary feature is that it includes representation of the subject slowly going through

all the steps, meticulously surveying the various planes which made this mental space possible' (Blanchard, 1982:114).

Participants examined the writing of others and in doing that 'critical' autobiography began to emerge.

The project

We shared the delivery and the facilitation of the groups. Maguire focused on examining criticality, introducing the fundamentals of critical thinking, dialoguing with knowledge and challenging the selection of likes and dislikes based on uncritiqued assumptions or prejudices thereby taking responsibility for limiting one's own access to knowledge. Eastman focused on literature, introducing the participants to convincing and persuasive prose to see how points of view were handled, pieces framed and organised, what metaphors and images were employed and the use or not of `evidence' to support their conclusions. There was, however, a degree of overlap. Participants reported that, as facilitators, with different professional backgrounds we modelled the possibilities of *transdisciplinarity in action, the complementarity of otherness, the celebration of difference*. The participants themselves were from a range of ethnic and professional backgrounds which enriched the discussions.

1. **The critic in us all: the dark arts of persuasion and boringness - criticality and the fundamentals of critical thinking**

Probing the notion of critical thinking was done through examining the dynamics of constructing convincing and persuasive prose with learning which came out of the experiential parts being linked back to their doctoral work. Participants had been asked to bring in examples of writing they liked and disliked and to share their views in pairs.

Participants agreed that critical thinking was the fundamental building block in higher education, particularly at doctoral level, but that it was not solely a rational, mechanical activity. Reflection, including emotional responses, was central to critical thinking in adult life. In particular, the ability to imagine alternatives to one's current ways of thinking and living, is one that often entails a deliberate break with rational modes of thought in order to prompt leaps in creativity. This reflection, as Boud and Walker (cited in Boud, Cohen & Walker, 2009:82) explain is `a useful instrument for recognising (the barriers) which come from our personal story and those which come from the social, cultural context in which we have developed.' Critical thinking or critical reflection should therefore be the basis of autobiography. The more critical the doctoral candidate is, the better he or she is able to tell his or her story. However, what had challenged us was how often they wrote descriptively,

concentrating on problem solving and ways of doing or not doing rather than on ways of being in the world which informs ways of doing.

The idea of critical autobiography as a model in which the value of the individual can be appreciated, in which the mystery of what it means to be human is revered, in which the possibilities of identity exploration are rich and transformative, is one which surfaced as early as the first half of this first seminar.

When discussing the writers whom the participants admired or did not admire, they began to reveal themselves and a notion of the self as defined by its relationship to others. One participant read out an excerpt from the `Four-Gated City' by Doris Lessing. He praised its vocabulary from a *vanished time* describing the writing as *evocative*, *poetic* and having a depth of narrative that evoked 1950s London perfectly, *a London he could relate to* and the narrator, *a woman he could relate to*. Another discussed the *beauty of the Qu'ran*, its *lyricism* drawing him into the possibilities of beauty in everyday life forming the *cornerstone of his approach to leaning*. Another offered his admiration of Orwell's *Animal Farm* and later posted this on our blog: *The book reminds me of the deceits we frequently find in modern political systems, particularly man's inhumanity to man.*

Each participant seemed more eager to link his or her preferred literary choice to a life experience rather than become involved in the intricacies of the work itself. They were trying to connect to the character and in doing that they were connecting to themselves, understanding themselves. As Bruns (1992:252) points out, `…basic to hermeneutics both ancient and modern is the idea that there is no understanding at a distance; one must always work out some internal connection with what one seeks to understand.'

Such dialoguing produced admissions of struggling with their own writing, harbouring anxious attitudes towards writing at this academic level. As Russo (2005:195) explains, `Since we put together our lives as narratives, with intentions, a causal and temporal order, a setting, we tend to make narratives of others too, and study history and even fiction for similar selves.'

By the end of this first session, criticality had deepened significantly. The questions participants were asking of each other and of the works had become qualitatively different over the four hours influencing how they might use the discussions to enhance their own academic writing. Below are examples of the discussions.

Boredom

By challenging one's assumptions and 'narcissistic' position that excludes dialogue with the views of others, others were drawn in, finding resonances, being persuaded, not being bored. Discussions deconstructed the notion of boredom. 'Boredom' was first used in English literature by Charles Dickens in *Bleak House* (1852). The most potent definition in the context of the articulation and communication of knowledge was writing that keeps the reader out, which kills the energy of the reader making an internal connection impossible. In this sense the writer is committing murder. Returning to the story of Narcissus it was Echo who was slowly and painfully killed off by Narcissus' failure to acknowledge her existence though she tried repeatedly to connect to him.

Assumptions

The difference between 'not wanting to know' or read something because of personal and cultural prejudice and remaining in a state of 'not knowing' because of it. There was fear around exposure to what they did not want to know– a theme which came up later in Workshop 3 and which will be discussed more fully then.

Participants were beginning to accept responsibility for not accessing knowledge; their writing styles being on the whole instrumental, following formats which keep themselves and others out of the frame and having *hierarchical reverence* for the *big guns* of literature and knowledge. Fear of exploring them critically was now diminishing.

2. Whose voice is it anyway and why is nobody listening? - finding yourvoice as a writer

We looked at the authentic voice as being sometimes elusive as we try to fit into criteria of what we think is expected of us; as existing when the internal and external self are congruent. This raised issues about the subjective voice in research. The grammatical style of traditional research is the passive voice to underpin objectivity and reliability but it often fails to reveal the 'metissage', the complexity that exists between islands of knowledge, in social constructs, in the I - we tensions, in the influences on motivations and actions, power dynamics, the experience of the lived rather than the observed world. In practitioner research, involving the subjective - objective dialogue, the first person captures the metissage. As the subjective voice in professional contexts is not usually an acceptable indicator of reliability, it is challenging to encourage our doctoral candidates to develop the subjective - objective dialogue. It emerged from our participants that it was not only that the passive was indicative of reliability but that they used it to *hide behind*, *to keep subjective opinions silent* even if these had been critically informed by years of professional experience. What then might be

the 'subjective' voice of each individual with its own hallmark be? In every writing situation the writer uses a particular voice which indicates the relationship she intends to establish between herself and her readers.

> A writer's voice depends on three things: his knowledge of himself, his awareness of the character of his audience, his understanding of the matter he wishes to discuss. Unless he knows his subject, he will not be able to strike a clear attitude toward it; unless he knows his audience, he will not be able to choose means of persuasion likely to be effective with it; unless he knows himself, he will not understand his purposes clearly enough to appreciate which voice or voices he can honestly assume in making his appeal (Martin and Ohmann, 1963: 138).

Our contention is that the passive voice can render indistinct, less powerful and even evasive such knowledge and awareness, such a clear attitude, such an appreciation of subject and audience. We went through a number of exercises demonstrating the impact of using the more direct and rigorous active voice eg: `The mouse was eaten by the cat.'- `The cat ate the mouse.'

However, this demonstration felt like a "lesson" – pedagogically prescriptive and flat. It was not until we turned to `voice' in poetry that the participants engaged. They read Robert Frost's `Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening' and identified with the bold narrative style of an author who refuses to efface his presence in the literary work. Some of the comments included an admiration for Frost's sense of concision, his directness, his exact word choice. One participant remarked on the poem's *autobiographical lucidity*. Participants repeatedly expressed the desire to find the voice to relate their narrative construction without it being boring, narcissistic and unreliable:

> I saw [the workshops] as a chance to... grapple with what we were supposed to be doing and most importantly, find out what `voice' I needed to have for my doctorate
>
> [there is] a trusting atmosphere where we can express ideas and learn how to express ourselves and find our voices without feeling stupid
>
> my main problem is that I don't like to commit to paper until I feel confident about what I am saying
>
> My aim has always been to find my original voice because I know it's like no one else's.

It became increasingly apparent that this elusive `voice' was the tool by which the participants could impart their knowledge and values. Although it was helpful for the participants to explore how points of view are handled, how pieces of writing are framed and organised and how writers use metaphors and images to strengthen their prose, participants appeared to be searching for the confidence to write in their own voices where 'own' appeared to have a different identity than 'own' in the context of their professional lives.

3. What do you mean it's not original? cultural paradigms and power dynamics in concepts and language

We came to realise from the discussions that the participants were uncertain about this concept of originality in terms of a piece of research and originality in terms of the communication of the research journey and the interpretation of the observations and data collected. We had linked the originality to the cultural and power dynamics to explore what is considered original and hence unique and what is considered distinctive and a new synthesis which can be used by others if they allow themselves to be open to it.

We had asked participants to carry out two activities prior to the workshop. The first was to read `The Years of Magical Thinking' chapter from Barbara Ehrenreich's *Smile or Die*: *How Positive Thinking Fooled America*. The chapter serves as a critique of the multi-billion dollar positive-thinking industry but is also an autobiographical account of the author's diagnosis of breast cancer, her feelings of impotence and rage, and her subsequent investigation into motivational conferences resulting in an acerbic, balanced and sage diagnosis of an America beset by the seductive assumption that one only has to desire something to make it happen. We were less interested in whether the participants agreed with Ehrenreich's polemic views on complacency and brainwashing and more in whether the participants could comment on her `voice'. The participants concluded that a major strength of her writing is her ability to merge her facts with her autobiography. In personalising her argument, she makes it more *immediate*, *potent* and *urgent*. Her response to her concerns – whether economic, political or social – are filtered through a heightened emotional awareness which is coloured by her history, memory and autobiography.

The participants commented on Ehrenreich's *ability to interpret a subject*, analyse and discuss it with *precision, care and lucidity* while *amplifying her questioning prose with the personal, with the self, with an expression of her own identity*. They did not doubt the reliability of her evidence or her authenticity. They did not feel manipulated. From the discussions, the participants came to understand that originality can reside in a thing, an artefact, but also in a person and their way of seeing, searching, interpreting and communicating.

What then emerges as a piece of research into a particular area of the professional setting becomes distinctive, a new synthesis, an existing model applied to a new situation, in a new way fundamentally informed by the critical engagement the researcher has with their own lived experience and its relationship to the environment and the people with whom he/she

interacts. Ehrenreich's approach had helped the reader to find the internal connection to what she was saying and her critical view of herself provided the conditions of reliability about her observations about the environment. She also modelled that a good observer will find things they never expected to if they have the courage to challenge their own cultural assumptions and their own authority figures.

The second part of this workshop was in relation to these power dynamics and cultural influences, a way to look at what blocks our route to originality and distinctiveness that can have a wider audience. These are usually around prejudice carried through cultures and Cultures. We had put four poems on the website for participants to read in advance without knowing the authors. They were all about identity and belonging but none of the poets had identified the details of who they were and what cultures they were talking about. The discussions were open and frank about what participants had been able to relate to and what they had not. There was talk about being able to relate to one poem because it was *obviously by a man who had known battles*, for another it was being able *to relate to the exile of the Jewish people* so perhaps it had been written by a Jewish exile, and for everyone there was the ability to relate to the anguish of physical separation from one's culture and of separation from what has made you feel safe for most of your life. The revelation of who the poets were caused genuine surprise, for example the man was in fact a woman, the Jewish exile a Palestinian. It then emerged that the exercise had helped them to tolerate separation from prejudices so that the universals could come into the foreground and that criticality was also about tolerating where you have been mistaken and having the courage to explore ideas and visions from which you have been separated by culture and by perceived knowledge authorities.

In addition to engendering a critical appraisal of self and others and of the power of language and cultural paradigms, it was our belief that confidence was central to all writing and self-expression. A command of structure, language and material allows the writer to be bold. Above all, the goal of writing is to `succeed with human readers' (Elbow, 2011:174). Readers are too diverse to agree to the same standards of quality, therefore the ability to write well is predicated on that fragile and elusive ingredient called confidence. Our premise was that confidence makes a piece of writing assertive, searching and powerful and could be developed by practising autobiography and constructing personal narratives.

In her exploration of working class autobiography and gender, Regenia Gagnier argues that narratives of the self are extremely significant in the discourse of human identity. The

following criteria from her autobiographical canon, are those we emphasised in the workshops.; `a faith in writing as a tool of self-expression; an attempt to make sense of life as a narrative progressing in time (...) and a belief in personal creativity, autonomy, and freedom for the future' (cited in Bell & Yalom 1990:100).

To a certain extent, we were unconsciously promoting an autobiographical discourse when we set out to help doctoral candidates become more effective writers.

4. I speak English therefore I can write it – the many Englishes – freeing myself in the act of writing[6]

There was discussion about: what is allowed and not allowed in academic writing protocols such as contracted verbs and using dialect and computer speak; being authentic if you do not write how you speak; the different conventions for (i) those for whom English is not a first language and the possibility of translation or over-formalisation (ii) for native English speakers who might slip into less formal English and about cultural differences on reliability if the writing does not follow formal academic protocols.

The discussion progressed to writing for different audiences. The professional doctorate requires the use of the first person but encourages reports for different audiences on the research and its findings being written in the style appropriate to the cultures of those audiences. We then turned to what others had written about 'style' to extract some basic principles to support the unique individual voice and still meet the academic requirements.

George Orwell's `Politics and the English Language' (1946) examines `ugly and inaccurate' written English. Echoing Orwell, we stressed the importance of concreteness and clarity, simplicity and transparency. Transparency takes us back to authenticity: `The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish spurting out ink' (1946: 15).

The participants were eager to draw on their cultural store of conceptual selves in their appraisal of Orwell's dictum, `If you simplify your English, you are freed of the worst follies of orthodoxy' (1946:20). A participant from the Middle East related a personal anecdote about her struggles with her identity as an Arab Muslim in Jerusalem. What had she learnt from the workshops?

> Not to be afraid of writing simply – to express myself in brief sentences and not to sound like someone I've read and might admire.

Another participant,of African heritage and a scientist, was pleased that what he had learned with us was *a consolidation of the advice he had been given in his formative school boy years in a British pedagogical system.* Yet he had learned more with us – *he had learned to trust himself*: his writing was as good as other writing in that it was *his* writing and that it was his *authentic* voice that counted.

Our intentions at the conception of the idea of the workshops were bound up in our ideas about writing better and analysing in a deeper critical vein. The autobiographical dimension originated in paired and group discussions. We realised that in providing the conditions for participants to tell their stories in the clearest and most reflective way possible, the legitimacy of life writing became the cornerstone of professional learning. Eakin (1999:ix) illustrates the paradox of the `simple' autobiography:

> Autobiographical discourse tends to promote an illusion of disarming simplicity when it comes to self and self-experience (...) Use of the first person – the "I", autobiography's dominant key – compounds our sense of being in full command of our knowledge of ourselves and stories; it not only conveniently bridges the gaps between who we were once and who we are today, but it tends as well to make our sense of self in any present moment seem more unified and organised than it possibly could be.

Each person can spend a life time exploring him or herself. `Self' here is less of an entity and more of `a kind of awareness in progress' (Eakin:ix). Using autobiographical writing as a means of developing professional practice became an unforeseen yet fortuitous and extraordinarily rich by-product of our original intentions.

Summary

The views, voices and experiences of the participants contributed significantly to our understanding of the critical autobiographical experience of learning in the professional/academic context. We would suggest that professional learning is not solely about acquiring professional knowledge, skills and competencies but concerns the negotiation of ourselves: our voices, our expressions, our relationships, our quests and our interaction with the people with whom we engage in our professional lives and the organisations in which we work. We observed an emergent sense of self as the workshop participants approached their own autobiographies in the spirit of cultural anthropologists. They came to recognise that the capacity to construct narrative deeply reflected a more cohesive sense of identity. The participants' confidence to critique writers' works developed in parallel with

the confidence to write. Furthermore, the confidence to write emerged from the tentative construction of critical autobiography. Ultimately, this approach – using critical autobiography to improve writing skills and deepen criticality – should make a contribution to the research on the education of adults and adult learning and close the gap between practitioner and academic knowledge.

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[1] The professional doctorate has been associated with the fields of education and engineering. However the last twenty years has seen this expand into all areas of professional practice across several sectors or domains. Middlesex University and other UK universities, in response to UK government initiatives in seeking knowledge exchange and research partnerships with professional, public, private and voluntary organisations, have developed a professional doctorate in professional studies and practice recognising the significant contribution which can be made to knowledge through researching and theorising practice to bring about changes in practice and thinking and resolve what have come to be termed sticky problems.

[2] Eastman is a literature specialist and Maguire is both an anthropologist and trauma therapist with an interest in knowledge approaches for the future and translating across different realms of experience.

[3] Four hours each over three semesters designed loosely enough so that they could be refocused to attend to issues as they arose from each successive workshop. Some of the participants had not been in higher education for several years, others had not been in higher education at all but were senior level professionals in their various fields of practice, managing high impact projects.

[4] Level 8 descriptors are the criteria against which doctoral level study in the UK is assessed.

[5] Autoethnography is one of the evolving methodologies that is part of the suite of methodologies which combine critical reflection and transdisciplinarity.

[6] Candidates' self-avowed goal in these workshops.

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{ TC "*Daniel Feldhendler* - Enacting life as social mediation" \f \l }Enacting life as social mediation

Feldhendler, Daniel, Goethe-Universität, Germany, ASIHVIF-RBE (*Board*)

How can one develop the kinds of social bonds which take into account the singularities and self-expression of the individual, while at the same time acting as catalyst for a dynamic of mediation focusing on reliance, relation building and synergy between the individual and the society ? The approach Enacting Life that I will present with some practical application can bring fruitful answers to these questions. Enacting Life means an integration of Psychodrama, Action Methods, Theatre and Life Stories applied to Education.

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The approach *Enacting Life* that I will present with some practical application can bring fruitful answers to these questions. *Enacting Life* means an integration of Psychodrama, Action Methods, Theatre and Life Stories Approaches applied to Education. I will focus on my actual action-research, the creation of a privileged space for Life Stories in Action. Using a theatrical form catalyses the process of putting personal experience into context. The approach is here that of a theatre where participants tell their personal life stories, a theatre where participants become both agent and subject of their story/history. The playing out of Life Stories is both dynamic anthropology as well as cross cultural hermeneutic and opens up a social imagination rich in transformative dynamic. The method shows itself to be an important tool for identity work: it enables and promotes the formation of a "*narrative identity*" between the individual and the community.

It is becoming evident that the use of transversal practices is as much a necessity as a challenge for educational systems. Certain practices used in Education, in cross cultural setting propose establishing a balance between cognitive and emotional learning and giving greater weight to experiential and action oriented processes. They borrow from Psychodrama and Sociodrama (method of J.L. Moreno) and Theatre (the methods of Augusto Boal and Jonathan Fox). We will first highlight the importance of these processes in Education, before focusing more particularly on the dramatic approach to personal stories.

1. Psychodrama and Theatre in Education

The theoretical and practical framework for applications suitable for integration into the practice of action research, teaching, intercultural training in Education was originally developed in the social psychology work of J.L. Moreno (1889 - 1974).

Moreno, physician, psychiatrist, sociologist and philosopher, better known as theoretician and practitioner of Sociometry and Psychodrama, developed a method whose aims were to:

- Improve understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal relations

- Help resolve inter- and intra-personal conflicts (individuals in their relationship to themselves and to the group)

- Increase awareness of the socio-emotional structure of individuals and groups

- Improve relations with others, where necessary.

Moreno's approach (see references) found its origins in Vienna (Austria) at the beginning of the 20th century and developed in the United States from 1925. His method came into use in Europe after the Second World War, when it was used primarily in therapeutic applications. From the 1970s, it began to spread to many other fields: social work, socio-cultural work, teaching, professional training (Schützenberger 1981, Bosselmann et al., 1993) and even the teaching of foreign languages (See References: Dufeu and Feldhendler).

Today, in the English and German-speaking world, the term *psychodrama* covers a very wide field of activities and its applications are both therapeutic and pedagogical. Its origins can be traced back to work on spontaneous play-acting and experimental theatre around 1920. Influenced by these practices, Moreno went on to develop, in turn, the theatre of spontaneity, the living newspaper, sociodrama, axiodrama, ethnodrama, sociometry, action research, role playing, group psychotherapy and psychodrama ((See References: Moreno).

For Schützenberger: "Psychodrama is a tool for exploring and modifying one's own attitude faced with that of the Other, training in spontaneity and creativity, a means of liberating conflicts" (1970, 88). These practices are based on the philosophy of encounter and dialogue as an antidote to alienation and its attendant evils. A theory and practice of action were developed to this end, a praxeology of qualitative development of human relations. The qualities that facilitate this encounter with the *Other* in congruent and authentic relations are:

- Empathy ("*Einfühlung"*) to develop an aptitude to communicate

- Greater awareness of the Self and the Other

- Role flexibility (through the experience of changing or reversing roles)

- Handling and resolving conflicts

- Developing attitudes that allow openness.

These concepts and practices developed by Moreno built the foundations of a relational pedagogy for application in Education. This pedagogy emphasizes more particularly:

- The development of the person in the group

- Empathy, listening to and awareness of oneself and others

- Harnessing creative potential by recourse to the imaginary

- Play-acting, spontaneous expression and involvement of the self

- The concept of role as a basis for interaction

- Congruent encounter in the action

- Meta-communication processes.

Psychodrama approaches also encourage active observation of group phenomena. Meta-communication processes (feed-back/retroaction, verbalization of lived experience, the work of integration and perlaboration) develop the attitude and faculties of the observer in a situation of active participation. These processes are effective tools in Education.

After undergoing psychodrama training in the Moreno Institutes in Germany (Leutz 1974), I then integrated these approaches in my practice, supplemented by the theatre-based processes which, in one way or another are directly or indirectly related to the Moreno tradition (See References: Boal, Fox, Salas). I refer more particularly to the following methods and processes:

1. Theatre of the Oppressed

This dialogue-based and transitive method developed by Augusto Boal (1977, 1980, 1983, 1990), aims to encourage awareness, deal with societal themes through group experience and develop ways of resolving present or future conflicts.

2. Playback Theatre

Developed by Jonathan Fox (1994) and Jo Salas (1993, 2007), this practice involves a tangible approach to everyday life, real experience and ambiguities/conflicts through the

enactment of fragments, personal stories and life histories. Fox, himself trained in psychodrama, is positioned directly in the Moreno tradition and his community theatre process constitutes a kind of renaissance, an adaptation and extension, of the traditions of oral transmission and collective creation.

3. The use of personal stories and life histories as a pedagogical approach

Literary genre, scientific research, social and cultural practices: personal stories and life histories constitute a living and flourishing culture. Many books and reviews explore this approach (West 2007 et al.) and the great diversity of practices employed (See French publications on Biography Research such as Pineau, Le Grand 1993; Lejeune 1998; Gaulejac 1999; Delory-Momberger 2000, 2005). The biographical approach directs attention to the everyday, the individual and the group. It tackles issues in our societies by providing a means of representing, shaping and structuring life trajectories. It also aims to give meaning to lived experience as a significant dimension of the search for identity.

Theoretical reflection around these life history practices brings into play an interdisciplinary approach, and alongside history, sociology and linguistics, other disciplines, such as social psychology, anthropology and philosophy, are increasingly being integrated. On this point, Paul Ricoeur (1985) looks at the importance of the narrative function in constructing the identity of the human subject. He notes that both individuals and communities construct their identity through narratives which become their effective history. For Ricoeur, being the historian and narrator of one's own life introduces a particular dialectic: subjects are both reader and scriptwriter and recognize themselves in the story they tell themselves about themselves. In this way, the history of a life is continually refigured by the narration and this activity may induce qualitative changes. The constant refiguration of the subject's own story, along with its gradual transformation, results in a "narrative identity". The narration activates the awareness of Self and Others, and according to Ricoeur (1990), knowledge of *Oneself as Other*, i.e. of one's otherness. This should be considered as a dynamic and structuring factor in the search for identity.

A pedagogy of the life history as an education in complexity is emerging, gradually, in training for intercultural applications. Carlo (1998) proposes integrating the work of narrative identity as didactic activities with an intercultural purpose by referring back to Ricoeur:

"We can speak of education in narrative coherence, education in narrative identity; learning to tell the same story in another way, learning to let it be told by people other than ourselves,

submitting the life story to the critique of documentary history: all these practices can be used to deal with the paradox of autonomy and fragility".

2. Interactive approaches to the personal story

In 1975, in the USA (New York State), an exceptional form of interactive theatre was given life by Jonathan Fox, together with his partner, Jo Salas and their original Playback Theatre Company. Called *Playback Theatre* by its founders, it is an improvisational form, where individuals recount personal experiences which actors immediately enact, or mirror, on stage. PT aims at encouraging dialogue and creating bonds between people and can be carried out in any location and in any space.

Today, *Playback Theatre* is used in many diverse cultural and social contexts, such as, for example, educational and social services institutions, adult and continuing education, theatre training and cultural contexts, organisations as corporate theatre. It is used as coaching and supervision and in therapeutic settings. In the same way, this approach is gaining increasingly in significance in socio-pedagogical and pedagogical institutions, schools and universities. In connection with the training concepts of the Centre of Playback Theatre and by means of educational opportunities offered through the international network (IPTN), Playback Theatre methods are being increasingly introduced into educational institutions and becoming an accepted part of study programmes. Playback is seen in these contexts as a method for the development of key social skills in pedagogical practice - through the promotion of interactive, communicative and creative competencies.

A fixed structure is seen as a frame, a kind of ritual, which serves respectfully to encourage and enable people to recount their personal stories.

In the original Playback Theatre dramaturgy, the intention was to recreate events, experiences, and lived situations told as stories by spectators - immediately translated into scenes on the stage set up for that purpose, acted out in an abbreviated form and, so-to-speak, "played back" (hence "*Playback*"). A part of the room is set aside for the stage, where the actors sit facing the audience. As a rule, a musician sits to the right, with an array of musical instruments. On the left of the stage stand two chairs, one for the director (*Conductor*), and the other for the person from the audience telling a story (*Teller*).

A first exchange with the audience about their present mood and perceptions, leads to the spontaneous mirroring of these, using short dramatic forms, (e.g. a moving statue form (*fluid sculpture*). After this, a Teller is invited to tell his/her experience (*Story*). The Teller relates

his/her story, which is structured through questions and prompting from the Conductor. After this interview, the Conductor passes the story to the actors and musician. Expressively, using movement, words, pieces of cloth as props and with accompanying music, the story is portrayed in such a way that its essence is vividly experienced. After the scene the Teller's ownership of the story is acknowledged and the Teller comments on the spontaneous re-enactment of his/her story. Normally, the first story told stimulates further Tellers, each story linking to the other, forming a thread or "*red thread*". Personal and individual experiences become a collective event happening *in situ*, whereby the common dialogue is supported by speech, music, dramatic metaphor and a range of dramaturgical forms (*Pairs, Chorus, Tableau, and Story*).

Through the sharing of biographical moments in narrative form and through their immediate transformation into a dynamic mirroring, what is shared becomes incorporated into one's resource for self-knowledge or perception of oneself and others. The method becomes a medium of communication – both magnifying glass and megaphone at the same time - between the individual and the group. Thus PT shows itself to be an important tool for identity work: it enables and promotes the formation of a "*narrative identity*" between the individual and the community. While voicing one's own story in this way means, on the one hand, discovering one's story anew; it also means being seen and heard. The result is that a form of mindfulness for others arises. The dialogical value exists in the sharing of one's own lived stories and experiences and in cooperation with others, in the here and now, bringing them to life, allowing the stories on the stage to have an effect on one, and to examine one's present, personal reality. In this way, new, creative paths and processes can be called into existence.

Playback Theatre demonstrates its value increasingly as a tool for dynamic learning and for cultural and anthropological exploration. It offers heuristic qualities in the encounter with the *Other*. PT serves to promote attitudes conducive to peaceful coexistence by enhancing fundamental interpersonal skills and basic communicativeness: empathic listening, mindfulness of oneself and others; poise and physical awareness; intuition; intellectual, affective, and emotional openness; appropriate responses; perception of oneself and of others; flexibility in adopting roles; acceptance of responsibility; and creative spontaneity.

The underlying dynamic of mirroring through staged scenes works as a catalyst for hermeneutical learning stemming from an aesthetic interpretation. The processes of deepened understanding open up dimensions of the "collective consciousness and collective

unconscious" between the individual and the society. Playback Theatre is a forum for interpersonal dialogue, a vehicle for *memory/remembrance rooms* and awareness of history; it provides the opportunity to be the author of one's own story and of one's self, and in addition, to develop a collective identity (Feldhendler 2005, Rowe 2007).

The method of *Playback Theatre* operates on a model of constructive social dialogue. In a workshop situation, participants are by turns actors and spectators "on the alert", engaged in a process of dialogue and communication through telling and enacting their stories. In this way, the members of a group enact their lived experience; they express their feelings and emotions. Individuals are revealed in word and image, in the constant reflections sent back by the intersubjective mirror. There is a connection here to the philosophical hermeneutics of Ricoeur, whose work is guided by a central conviction: the shortest path from self to self is the word of the other. The philosophy of this form of improvisation resides in the challenge it sets itself: to translate in images, in a condensed and metaphoric form, the essence and quintessence of what the teller/narrator has expressed. In other words, the "receiver" must comprehend the literal and figurative meaning of a message and its connotations and re-enact it meaningfully, as authentically, congruently and empathetically as possible, to allow the "sender" of the story to receive it in turn. The process is very demanding, but the rewards are development of reciprocal listening and reflexive communication.

The concept of narrative identity is operative here and I believe it is applicable to the method of *Playback Theatre* in that it designates configuration of the action provided by the story as a "refoundation of the productive value of the story, re-presenting (*mimesis*) the action and transforming it by conferring order, meaning and complexity (*muthos*)" (Pineau, Le Grand, 1993). Moreover, as Ricoeur notes, "the notion of narrative identity proves its fecundity in that it applies as well to the community as to the individual" (1985); it is the identity which the human subject attains by mediation of the narrative function. Specular performative mediation (performance-as-mirror), as found in Fox's method, adds an appreciable dialectic to these considerations.

3. Applications in intercultural Education

Playback Theatre as part of *Enacting Life* gives active encouragement to reflexive communication. It integrates different phases: listening, understanding, expression, action, interaction, retroaction and sharing. It encourages the emergence of relational attitudes between "sender" and "receiver". My practical experience of the method and its use in the

university environment and in continuing education for teachers confirms this hypothesis (Feldhendler 2005, 2013). Its specific forms foster:

- A capacity for listening and understanding

- Receptivity and expressiveness

- Spontaneity in speech and action

- Making an adequate response

- Using other registers to convey a message

- Integration of verbal and non-verbal expression

- Expression of affectivity and emotions

- Perception of the self and others

- Openness to new situations.

Since 1991, Romance language students at Goethe-University have been offered regular workshops using the dynamic approach *Enacting Life* to intercultural situations. Their presentation in the study program stresses development of global expression in an open and personalized working environment. In these classes, students are involved in different ways in encounter situations with others: they are, by turn, narrator, actor, spectator and conductor/presenter. Entering into the role of teller brings the foreign language to life through narration of one's own intercultural experience while at the same time allowing the student to appropriate the linguistic tools necessary for relational expression. It also involves entering into contact with oneself and seeing oneself in another way. The teller becomes an observer during the enactment of his/her story, which is mediated by the "observation" of others. In parallel, taking the role of actor means entering into sympathy with the teller, i.e. becoming closer to that *Other*. It also means respecting the other and learning to use the imaginary sphere to represent an aspect of the teller's reality in a symbolic form.

The enactment of lived experiences or future experiences in intercultural situations encourages expression and perception of underlying feelings, what is unsaid, what is culturally implicit. It also raises awareness of different ways of managing time and space. The expression of ambiguity and affective polarities, likewise moments of conflict, opens up new perspectives for intercultural work. Through workshops and seminars which I have led in the university context and in continuing teacher training (Instituts Français, Goethe

Institutes, Popular Universities (Volkshochschulen) and Adult Education in Germany, summer school at the International Centre for Pedagogical Studies, CIEP at Caen University in France) and other projects in Europe and Canada, I have discovered that the dramatic enactment of personal stories and life histories brings a new dimension to intercultural communication: authenticity and relational involvement.

Since 1997, I have been carrying out work of experimentation and action research in the university framework, with the aim of contributing to emergence of the subject and narrative identity by bringing together written personal stories and dramatic enactment. The brochure of our Institute of Romance Languages and Literature at Goethe-University presents this workshop in the following terms: Autobiography, writing about the self, life dramaturgies.

This workshop aims to train students in writing and enactment of personal stories and life histories. The biographical approach is understood as a dynamic training process based on:

- Writing a personal diary of stories and histories to encourage emergence of a "narrative identity"

- Enactment of fragments of life using theatrical processes.

In 1999, the workshop encouraged students, more particularly, to:

- Write about the "I" by keeping a diary or log book

- Seek the "WE" by identifying thematic and collective connections

- Undertake joint work on the texts written by participants using dynamic processes (creating images, modes of stage representation, theatrical and relational work).

Working with this group of students, we established a thematic web as a guiding thread bringing together individual and group trajectories. This web included the following concepts:

- My life today and my key themes.

- My life as student. How did I become a student?

- My first experience at the Romance languages study institute.

- My relations with the foreign language (French).

- My underlying motivation in studying the French language (transgenerational influences).

- My discovery of the *Other* and the other culture.

- My experiences of the *Other* abroad.

- My first intercultural experience.

- My experiences of socialization at school.

- My first moments in learning a foreign language.

At the summer school organized at Caen University in 1999 by the French language department of the CIEP (International Centre for Pedagogical Studies, Sèvres), we also presented a module entitled: *Dramaturgy, personal stories and intercultural relations*. In this workshop, we focused more particularly on the following themes:

- Forms and principles of the Enacting Life Approach

- Experiential approach to personal stories

- Exploration of lived experiences in intercultural situations

- Integration of written situations by keeping a diary of intercultural stories

- Practical arrangements for using this approach in language classes.

The presence of French teachers from all over the world revealed to me the complexity of the multicultural encounter and the fundamental need to go further in developing active listening structures, based on reciprocity and creating connections between individual experiences. When these conditions are in place, expression becomes personal and significant for the participants and the themes tackled tend to organize themselves in a structured way. Here for example, is the thematic thread of this module as revealed at the end of the workshop:

Leaving the native country. Being homesick. Travelling for the first time without the family. Arriving alone, Being a foreigner. Being well or badly received. Being frustrated by certain aspects of the welcome given. Being confronted with racism or latent rejection. Feeling protected. Being able to express one's real feelings (such as sadness, stress and tiredness, fear, attraction). Discovering the deep-seated oral tradition and collective transmission culture of one's native country. Examining the role and position of man and woman in one's native culture. Experiencing, in situation, acknowledgement and respect of the *Other*. Recounting one's intercultural story using one's own first name.

The greater the affective involvement of participants, the greater the need for structure in framing the work. The trainer must develop new attitudes: flexibility, professional know-how and relational know-how to accompany this liberation of the word.

Very often, the only tool available at the place of training to allow the trainer to monitor and structure his/her attitude in an adequate manner is the log book. The practice of writing this training log book becomes a process of self-training, a work of deliberate self-reflection. In these situations, the log book becomes an effective tool, encouraging greater awareness of the trainer's own level of involvement and generating the necessary distancing and differentiation. After work in the field, the practice of individual or group supervision as professional follow-up gives the trainer the tools required to analyze his/her own practice and continue to progress in the future (Buer 1999).

4. European projects

Current European developments and the transformation of the organization of university curricula (modularising courses and setting up of new courses of study - the bachelor's and master's degrees) are creating new opportunities for incorporation of innovative ways of working - the approach *Enacting Life*, for example - into study programs. The aim is to encourage the growth of, not only democratic participation, but also linguistic, cultural and aesthetic education. In connection with this, it is worthy of note that the Common European Reference Framework for Languages, developed by the Council of Europe to enhance cultural co-operation, lays particular value on the notion of the biographical: *"With the language biography, one can record the progress of one's own linguistic and intercultural learning"* as an opportunity to *" design and take responsibility for one's own learning"*.

Now, the challenge is for institutions, for people in positions of responsibility, and for initiators of change, to exploit this phase of transition and upheaval, to develop meaningful, progressive concepts, and to put them into practice.

One illustration of this is the European *Comenius Project* in the *Socrates* program, in which I was involved from 1998 – 2001 along with other educationists. The title of the project: *European Correspondences: Education, Creativity, Commitment and Civil Society*. The aim of this action-research was to identify relevant and effective forms of proceeding with regard to the present 'virtual mobility'; to support them with theory, to put them into operation and to integrate them into teacher training programs. With its transnational and interdisciplinary approach, the project was seen as a contribution to a paradigm change in the development of

innovative ways of working in education. Five European countries were involved in this three-year action-research project: Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Poland, with the focus of the teams' work being:

- Development of innovative practice for encouraging communication

- Opening up and transformation of the pedagogical relationship

- Transcultural dimension of learning.

In the different phases of our action research, we pressed ahead with the integration into this transnational educational project of the approach *Enacting Life* which was used with teaching staff and education officials in the countries involved. For a future European teacher training method, new perspectives arise, using Life Stories in Action as an invitation to an exchange of experience and perspectives in the area of school socialization: *The school in Europe - stories lived and told*.

5. A field of Research and Application

Playback Theatre as part of *Enacting Life* demonstrates its value increasingly as a tool for dynamic learning and for cultural anthropological exploration. It offers heuristic qualities in the encounter with the *Other*. These Approaches serves to promote attitudes conducive to peaceful co-existence by enhancing fundamental interpersonal skills and communicative attitudes - empathic listening, mindfulness of oneself and of others; poise; physical awareness; intuition; intellectual, affective, and emotional openness; taking appropriate action; perception of oneself and of others; flexibility in adopting roles; acceptance of responsibility; creative spontaneity. The fundamental dynamic - mirroring through the scenes which are enacted on stage - acts as a catalyst for hermeneutical learning, borne on aesthetic interpretation.

The processes of deepened understanding open up dimensions of the collective consciousness and collective unconscious between the individual and the society. Playback Theatre becomes a venue for intersubjective dialogue, 'remembrance rooms', historical awareness; the opportunity to be the author both of one's own story and of oneself, and to develop a collective identity.

Restitution of fragments and personal stories through dramatic enactment opens up potentialities as a dialogical process and transversal approach. It contributes to understanding of "existentiality" and in this way can be seen as a self-creative practice, i.e. creating the self

to serve the narrator. Likewise, all participants involved are called on to practice formative methods, apply a "comprehensive" approach as *maieutics* and *hermeneutics* of the present moment. There is also an additional challenge: individual personal stories must be linked together in a collective story, or in the words of Bellah (1986) in a "community of memory". The theatrical approach to personal stories opens up a wide field of investigation, as I can observe in my current fields of application, as practitioner of the method, co-founder of the German company *Spiegelbühne* (Mirror theatre), and teacher for the *School of Playback Theatre (N.Y.)* affiliated to continuing training networks in Adult Education.

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'Let's get critical': biographical research, critical realism and the challenge of producing emancipatory knowledge

Fergal Finnegan, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to stimulate discussion on the nature of critical and emancipatory knowledge and how it can be produced. In order to do this it outlines how emancipatory research might be defined and how this has been understood and pursued in biographical research. Building on this it makes a case for a Critical Realist form of emancipatory research using life stories drawing on the work Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Sayer, Hilary Wainwright and Margaret Archer. It concludes by marking out some of the theoretical, methodological and practical implications of taking this approach.

Introduction

How can we use biographical research to produce critical and emancipatory knowledge? In this paper I want to approach this topic in three ways: first, I will sketch out what I think constitutes the basis of emancipatory knowledge, second the paper will explore this topic in relation to the development of certain themes and methods within the family of oral history, life history and auto/biographical research; thirdly, and finally, I want to make a case for a critical realist form of biographical research and explore a number of theoretical and methodological issues from this perspective.

The ticklish subject of motivation

Doing biographical research has made me acutely interested in how we make and remake ourselves through the people we encounter; through the stories we tell and how and why we chose to position ourselves within particular intellectual and cultural traditions. So I think it is important to briefly say something about why I am interested in the question in the first place. On the most immediate level I have been using in-depth interviews and biographical research methods for several years and in these various research projects I have been trying to puzzle out how, if at all, this work can be done in an emancipatory fashion. This is more than just an interest in teasing out methodological questions though. My approach to research draws on a deeper layer of biographical experiences and commitments including to radical adult education. This is strongly rooted in what I learnt about the consequences of inequality in my first years as a community educator in Dublin's inner city during which I slowly groped my way to thinking of adult education, at its best, as the 'practice of freedom' (Freire, 1998).

This perspective has informed how I approach biographical research. Now I am aware that this interpretation may be a partial and somewhat idiosyncratic but I believe emancipatory

intent and desire is discernible in deal of biographical research. I want to bring this into focus by tracing certain lines and themes within this body of work and suggesting how this might be developed in the future. I am at relatively early stage in trying to articulate these arguments and aware of the limits of what I have to say and even more conscious of the flaws of what I have actually managed to achieve through my own research. That said I believe it is important, for a variety of reasons, that we should be explicit about how we imagine and conceptualise emancipatory research. However, I am certainly not interested in saying there is one way of collecting, analysing or presenting biographical research (Bertaux and Kohli, 1984). Rather my aim here is to initiate a discussion and see if others are interested in this question and -if this is the case -to find ways to think more clearly about the subject to collaborate and perhaps embolden each other.

Towards a definition of emancipatory research

I suspect any further qualification will forestall discussion so I want to risk offering a necessarily incomplete and provisional definition of what I mean by critical and emancipatory knowledge. In broad terms I think this can be defined as knowledge which is produced to reflect upon, and consciously work towards, a greater degree of economic and social equality in order to provide people with the conditions and resources necessary to live dignified and flourishing lives. Exploring this calls for dual focus: 'identifying the ways in which existing social institutions and social structures impose harms on people' (Wright, 2010, p. 11) and simultaneously asking how social relations could be altered to allow for 'the expansion of the 'capabilities' of persons to lead the lives they value- and have reason to value' (Sen, 1999, p. 18). From my perspective this means, as feminists have long argued, fully acknowledging the centrality of love, solidarity and care for social well-being and seeking to identify and foster the social and institutional arrangements that support and enhance these things (Kittay, 1999; Lynch *et al.*, 2009).

I want to go one step further. Like Etienne Balibar (2002) I think it is important that in any effort to puzzle out what we exactly mean by emancipation, and in exploring how ideas of emancipation can be realised, to think of equality and freedom as *mutually constitutive* principles. Therefore the multidimensional conception of equality of sketched out above – which includes equality in terms of cultural and economic resources and access to valued social practices – also entails a commitment to political equality based on a 'thick' notion of participatory democracy. Substantive equality and freedom, I would argue, involves working towards 'citizens having equal, effective possibility of participating in legislating, governing,

and judging, and in the last analysis, in instituting society' (Castoriadis, 2010, p 3). Of course, amongst other things, this notion of equality and democracy calls for enormous changes in how we produce knowledge and organise education (Wainwright, 2009)

Methodologically, as C. Wright Mills (1959) pointed out, such research also requires the cultivation of a 'sociological imagination' and ways of working – a craft- which is entirely at odds with positivist methods based on an aspiration to 'neutrality'. By definition it begins with an explicitly normative form of inquiry linked to an awareness of the situated and contingent nature of social relations and knowledge production. This, I would make the case, necessarily involves an anticipatory dimension and certain type of hopefulness, as well (Bloch, 1985). It is a mistake to think of hope and history- what Bloch calls the 'not yet'- only in terms of large-scale change though. It is also about more modest attempts to understand and intervene in local contexts and to 'envisage real utopias' based on small-scale and practical ways of developing more just, egalitarian and generative social relations (Wright, 2010).

Research based on these principles has tended to crystallise into four interlinked but discrete types of knowledge of the social world: 1) descriptions of social life and suffering (which often seek to illuminate ways of being and thinking from 'below'); 2) analyses of structures of exploitation and oppression which are the causes of this suffering; 3) accounts of existing or potential resources for popular agency (frequently linked to arguments about patterns of contention and social action which sometimes include descriptions of 'prefigurative practices' which enact egalitarian ideas ; and 4) exploring the conceptual and empirical limits of the contemporary emancipatory imagination. There are of course multiple ways of pursuing this type of research – and combining these various types of knowledge- but increasingly, largely as a consequence of feminism, there is an awareness of the importance of *how* knowledge is produced and that emancipatory aims need to be matched with democratic, collaborative and participatory processes (Freire, 2008; Wainwright, 2009).

Emancipatory research is therefore defined as dialogical, historically aware, hopeful, and engaged inquiry linked to a conception of equality and freedom which has sedimented into several distinct forms of knowledge exploring structure and agency from 'below'. This is a basic and rather general definition but it seems to me a necessary departure point for further debate.

I also think it is important to say something more about the role of any individual academic researcher in producing such knowledge. While a sense of possibility- that the 'future is unwritten'- is crucial -a realistic sense of the specific constraints and enablements of one's own context is just as important. I would highlight two things in particular. First it depends on a quite precise awareness of how emancipatory change *has* occurred in the past in one or more contexts. Examining this alerts one to the obvious but significant fact that emancipatory ideas and practices are only elaborated through *collective* effort and that although academics have, and can continue, to help in producing critical emancipatory knowledge this has rarely been the primary source of egalitarian ideas and practices (Eley, 2002; Tilly, 2004). To think otherwise means falling into that peculiarly scholastic vision of the world which tend to confuse, pace Marx, 'the logic of things with things of logic' (Bourdieu, 2000). Second, as Bourdieu (2000) contends, we should also clearly acknowledge that academic work takes place in structured and situated field of activity with its own demands and power relations, criteria of distinction, preferred modes of understanding and mental schema which exercise an effect, often limiting, on how knowledge is produced.

An awareness of our reliance on the creativity of social movements and an acknowledgement of the specific pressures of the academic field means that what a given researcher can contribute is usually very modest indeed. Just as importantly it is self-evident that a statement of aims is no guarantee of emancipatory outcomes or even for that matter good research. With these caveats in mind I think the most accurate way of describing this work - to borrow a metaphor from Locke (via Bhaskar)- is that we are simply underlabourers recording, prompting, clarifying, reframing and reflecting upon egalitarian themes and practices within broader society.

So how does the field of biographical research appear from a perspective which aims to hold onto clear and ambitious emancipatory aims but also strives to be reflexive, realistic and critical?

The emancipatory line in biographical research

At the heart of what it means to be modern, Charles Taylor (1989) claims, are the affirmation of ordinary life and the development of more elaborate and defined sense of an 'inner self'. Philosophers, literary critics, cultural historians and sociologists have persuasively argued that these changes relied on new ways of constructing and relating to narratives in modern life not least in the way we think of biography In one sense to be modern is to be deeply

'tangled up in stories' (Wilhelm Schapp quoted in Alheit, 2002, p 3) which have created new modes of identification, patterns of self-making and biographical construction.

This is an immensely stimulating proposal which in various forms has underpinned much of the best work in this particular ESREA research network. Given what was said above it is worth pausing briefly to speculate on how the affirmation of everyday life and the increasing importance of biography as a form have been shaped by the activity of social movements over the past two hundred years (Eley, 2002; Tilly, 2004). For instance we know that new forms of literacy and networks of communication and interaction within the workers movement were the source of *both* collective agency and biographical formation (Rose, 2001; Vincent, 1981). Auto/biographical narratives were also central to the collective work of anti-slavery and abolitionist movements (Rediker, 2007). It is worth remembering how mobilising stories and moral tales of freedom and equality – for example those of Frederick Douglass, Samuel Bamford, Francis Place or Oluadah Equiano – were an integral element of broader – albeit very gendered- emancipatory history.

Life stories can offer traces, signs and examples; provoke and sustain dialogue across time and contexts and even incite agency; this idea has been a recurrent thread of emancipatory thinking inside and outside the social sciences. Certainly this sort of desire and intent can be readily discerned in a range of work in modern oral history, life history studies, life story and auto/biographical research (e.g. Alheit, 1994; Connell, 2005; Fraser, 1994; Portelli, 1991; Thompson, 1982; Thomson, 1994; West, 1996; see also Chamberlayne *et al*., 2000; Plummer, 2000; Thomson, 2006). I think there is a clear orientation to uncovering hidden social experiences, documenting subaltern agency, giving voice to marginalised groups and examining how social inequalities impinge upon and enable action in everyday life. This, I believe, has profoundly shaped the ethical and thematic horizon of the field has also informed *how* the research is conducted (with narratives structured largely by the interviewees themselves and is in several feminist iterations of the method conducted in a notably collaborative manner see Merrill & West (2009) and West (1996). It also can produce knowledge which can be easily disseminated to non-specialist audiences.

These democratic and egalitarian methods and ethos precludes, or at least make it difficult, to indulge in grand theorising or take a crudely propagandistic approach to research. Fine-grained and complex stories refuse the daubing of thick bristled brushes. For instance what we learn from the work cited above is that when we listen to Australian veterans, Italian workers, Appalachian miners, unemployed youth, adults in higher education etc. is that life

worlds, and our ways of relating lived experience, are immensely complex and layered. This is why I think biographical has also proved so useful in mapping some of the limits of the emancipatory imagination and how certain narratives of freedom can also pinch and bind. A fine example of this is Carolyn Steedman' s *Landscape for a Good Woman* who in telling her own story explored histories *within* working class history -histories of exclusion, of refusal, private longing, flight and subversion that remained hidden within larger narratives of struggle (Steedman, 1986). Freedom, in personal and political terms, then is not a simple thing and often involves renegotiating both myth and memory (see also Thompson, 1982; Thomson, 1994).

This stress on voices from 'below' and efforts to change the boundaries of what constitutes a proper 'object' of scientific interest are crucial. Again I think this is intimately connected to wider emancipatory struggles- led by workers, feminists and colonised peoples – which has forced us to ask whose knowledge' counts' and which has 'wreaked havoc on the neat structures of knowledge that had evolved and been consolidated in the previous 100 to 150 years' (Wallerstein, 2004, p 9). Once we allow for the questions 'Whose history are we taught?' 'What does the world look like from the global south?' and 'What gendered values and cultural norms are smuggled into research under the cloak notions of scientific objectivity?' a large portion of long hallowed knowledge, including in the social sciences, is revealed as partial, often narrow and ultimately impoverished.

The point of this brief sketch is that some of the key themes and practices of biographical research can be easily located in a distant and more recent history of 'speaking truth to power'. But this is a potential that needs to be constantly scrutinised, rethought and renewed. Not least because one can discern a tentative mood within the field (Plummer, 2000; Thomson, 2006) and uncertainty, and even anxiety, on how as interpreters we can respond to shifts in the politics of knowledge and the advance of new technologies. Of course behind this is another vexed issue: what does it mean to do research in an era of risk and individualisation in which emancipatory claims appear to have become far more muted or have been entirely abandoned? (can you readily imagine *Our Common History* appearing today?)

I think critical realism (CR) can be drawn upon to address these concerns and to sustain and develop emancipatory biographical research in three ways: it buttresses the rationale for biographical research; it directly addresses issues of interpretation (especially in terms of relativism) and it offers a way of thinking about the value of the various forms of

emancipatory knowledge (social description, structural analysis, popular agency and problematising and extending the emancipatory imagination).

Critical realism

CR emerged in the 1970s primarily through a number of interventions in academic debates about the nature of scientific inquiry which resulted in carefully constructed arguments against empiricism and idealism in philosophy and psychology (Bhaskar, 2008; Harre and Madden, 1975; Harre and Secord, 1972). This intellectual project has developed in multiple directions since then and now includes a very rich body of work in the social sciences (e.g. Archer, 1995, 2007; Bhaskar, 2005; Sayer, 1992, 2000 etc.).

Roy Bhaskar's *Realist Theory of Science* is a foundational work within this corpus and is a useful place to begin. Bhaskar (2008) is a realist in the widely employed philosophical sense of the term-in that he argues the world exists independently of our knowledge of it and distinguishes between the world and our descriptions of the world (what he terms the transitive and intransitive dimensions). Bhaskar is a *critical* realist in two major respects. First, he is concerned with eliminating unnecessary suffering and thus thinks it is vital for scholars to identify the causes of suffering and unwanted determinations on social being. Second, according to Bhaskar, both the natural world (2008) and the social world (1979) have ontological *depth* and the world is *complex and stratified*. Bhaskar posits that reality has three levels -the empirical, the actual and the real. The empirical is the domain of everyday experience but there are events which are not readily discernible at an empirical level (the actual). The actual depends on the liabilities and powers mechanisms within the real. We also have to account for activated and *potential* powers: therefore reality is both structured and inexhaustibly complex. Social and natural phenomena cannot be understood solely examining visible regularities or correlations between cause and effect. Positivistic approaches to science are therefore inherently flawed because they are based on a 'flat' ontology which seeks to offer predictive accounts of the world based on the discovery of law like regularities which inevitably skate over the complexity and non-synchronous temporalities of causality (Bhaskar, 2008).

If objects and mechanisms in the world have their specific structure and their own causal powers activated in complex relational patterns then due weight has to be given to *the principle of emergence* (Bhaskar, 2005, 2008; see also Archer, 1995). Emergence depends on the way entities, events and mechanisms interact in open systems to create unpredictable

phenomena and new powers (Sayer, 2000). Moreover, reflexive action using artefacts, codes and new ideas can radically reorganise social practices (Archer, 2007). This stress on emergence also underpins the importance given by many critical realists to a person's own self-understanding, desires and intentions as this is crucial to agency and grasping patterns of emergence (Harre & Secord, 1972). It should be noted that this is embedded within a specific conceptualisation of structure and agency; Bhaskar states (pp 37-38)

> Society is both the ever present *condition* (material cause) and the continually reproduced *outcome* of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is, conscious *production,* and (normally unconscious) *reproduction* of the conditions of production, that is society. One could refer to the former as the *duality of structure,* and the latter as the *duality of praxis.*

This 'analytical dualism' allows us to properly conceptualise the structured, yet dynamic and unpredictable, nature of social activity.

Using CR in biographical research

There are significant implications for the practice of critical social science if one accepts the ontological arguments about the stratified, structured and emergent nature of the social world, and claims about analytical dualism and the importance of emancipatory critique. It follows that neither atomistic and individualist nor schematic and structuralist analyses are capable of giving an adequate account of the social world. I think this emphasis on the heterogeneity and multiplicity of human practices-which nonetheless are structured and structuring- means that in many research contexts (but certainly not all) biographical research is particularly well adapted to discovering patterns of constraint and enablement.

CR also makes the case that knowledge is fallible and historically and socially contextual; 'one cannot expect 'descriptions to remain stable or unproblematic over time' (Sayer, 2000 p 13). These ontological and epistemological arguments mean that the role of social science has to be clarification rather than prediction. But accepting epistemic relativism does not mean one has to endorse judgemental relativism and this distinction goes to the heart of both the question of what we sort of knowledge can be regarded as critical and emancipatory and how we might interpret life stories. The worth of research *can* be judged according to its 'practical adequacy' (Sayer, 1992) and explanatory power. This depends on reconstructively linking life stories and other empirical phenomena to the generative mechanisms behind events in a contextually relevant and plausible way. Importantly, this theoretical work – grasping depth, structure and emergence - is also where the emancipatory potential of a piece of research lies. Bhaskar (2005, p. 28) is worth quoting at length on this point

> The essential movement of scientific theory will be seen to consist in the movement from the manifest phenomenon social life, as conceptualised in the experience of social agents concerned to the essential relations that necessitate them. Of such relations the agents may or may not be aware. Now it is through the capacity of social science to illuminate such relations that is can come to be 'emancipatory'. But the emancipatory potential of social science is contingent upon, and entirely the consequence of, its contextual explanatory power

Thus the major task of critical social science is theorising the connection between empirical experience and social structures in a way that explores the constraints and possibilities for emancipation.

What does this mean in practical terms? CR is predicated on the theory laden nature of social reality. Both everyday practices and academic reflection are inherently theoretical and this means that 'clear accounts of concepts themselves are needed' (Harre & Secord, 1972, p. 37). Therefore a good deal of the effort of critical social science needs to put into the proper conceptualisation of a field of inquiry. As Sayer has noted (2000, p. 23) 'it is not the mechanical application of standard tools in which concrete knowledge of the phenomena being studied and previous research is irrelevant; rather scholarly knowledge of the subject is crucial, coupled with particular applications and contexts'. Particular care is required then on how we mark out, carve up and conceptualise a research project in the first place, how we choose certain phenomena as worthy of attention and how we decide that other potential concepts, themes and events are irrelevant as the research progresses.

Thus CR biographical research involves a double hermeneutic moving 'between particular empirical cases and general theory' (Sayer, 2000, p. 23) as well as seeking an interpenetration of the frames of reference between researcher and interviewee 'for mediation of their respective understandings' (Sayer, 1992, p 35). Precision comes from a melding of perspectives and recursive spiral which allows one to become aware of 'uncritical given' in one's own position, the limits and strengths of relevant lay and academic concepts, and in thinking through patterns of constraint and enablement within biographical accounts taking care not to conflate agency and structure.

I think this offers three things to emancipatory biographical research. Analytically, in underscoring the distinction between transitive and intransitive dimensions CR offers a way of moving beyond the extreme relativism of much modern social theory especially what Sayer (2000) has called 'defeatist postmodernism' which overinflates the claims of discourse and creates a strange hall of mirrors where everything and nothing is possible. Human activity is *not* equivalent to our descriptions of it and *it is* possible to contextually assess how

emancipatory tendencies and practices can be enhanced. Analytical dualism encourages sensitivity to *both* the durability and weight of structures and agentic potential. It also invites researchers to critical test concepts. Methodologically this means using a type of abductive inquiry which is suspicious of any claims about the self-evident nature of phenomenological experience (i.e. more akin to Tom Wengraf or Daniel Bertaux than say Studs Terkel). It is also pluralist about methods; so while 'common sense' ideas in social science which rely on atheoretical conceptions of truth and data which lack depth –such as generalisability, based on statistical regularities or numerical coverage etc., have to be treated sceptically they can be used as long as *how* this is integrated within a piece of research is made clear (Sayer, 1992).

The internal conversation, collective agency and the politics of hope

Interestingly, even though it might be argued that many versions of biographical and life history research already work with something quite close to a CR approach there is relatively little work on this topic. However, recent work by the British sociologist Margaret Archer (2003, 2007, 2010) on agency and reflexivity based on life stories has been immensely suggestive and also led to the establishment of a European research network on CR and biography. Archer argues that this form of research illuminates the 'internal conversation' and that this is a neglected, but very rich source of knowledge, and that how projects, are pursued and modified through this internal conversation helps us to understand the interplay of structure and agency. Archer also makes the case, which I find convincing, that this type of life history research reveals a current blind spot in social science – the extent to which agency is linked to attachments, concerns and values.

I have been pursuing very similar questions in research on higher education across Europe with colleagues from ESREA (Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg, in press) However, it is germane to the present discussion that I have come to more pessimistic conclusions about the scope and power of individual reflexive agency than Archer has and I am convinced that we need to develop a differentiated notion of reflexive agency. Above all this means retaining a clear focus on unmet needs and unwanted determinations.

This experience, alongside some misgivings about the potential of CR to degenerate into another form of theoreticism linked to traditional forms of intellectual engagement and interpretation, has recently led me to speculate how emancipatory research using CR and biographical methods might be extended or adapted. I currently think there is a strong argument for using biographical research on everyday reflexivity *alongside* work which

explores patterns of agency and emergence within social movements and how lived experience can be altered by prefigurative practices.

A useful example of how this might be approached has come from another CR thinker - the feminist Hilary Wainwright (1994, 2009). Wainwright, in a loosely biographical mode, has done intriguing work, as a participant-observer, on collective learning practices, knowledge and praxis within egalitarian social movements and in various experiments in participatory democracy. This work has explanatory value, is infused with a sense of possibility and clearly breaks with familiar, hierarchical academic approaches to theory building. I suggest this might be worth critically interrogating and extending. If one believes, as I do, there has been a narrowing of our capacity to think beyond the present moment, based on an almost paralysing absence of hope and an amnesia about what has been achieved in the past, this sort of biographical work may well prove to be a very rich source of critical and emancipatory knowledge.

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Intercultural competences: perturbation in the life history

Manila Franzini University of Verona

The debate regarding intercultural competences becomes even more prominent in an effort aimed at training people about becoming more aware of being citizens of the world. Racism, xenophobia and all the forms that create defensive barriers and aggressive behaviors against other people need to be limited to make space for more appropriate ways of civic coexistence. The aid workers and international operators' experience helps understanding which kind of intercultural competences are essential to relate with people from different cultures and to deal with new scenarios. It is therefore important to understand how these competences are developed in order to create training programs for young people and for the ones who want to work in international contexts. Martine Abdallah-Pretceille highlights the importance of learning to rethink the plurality with a different paradigm that helps to "consider the heterogeneity and complexity starting from the notions of margin, of crossing borders, exchange of intersection"[1]. The action of the international operators in different contexts and in situations outside Europe, allows us to consider the practices as a form of speech to express themselves and communicate with others different from yourself. The research involves not only persons who have necessarily lived for continuous periods in Developing Countries, but also the ones who have gained the experience of international cooperation also through verification missions in the field, traveling through more than ten countries during the year. So, it was not necessary to establish a minimum number of years spent in developing countries in order to consider significant the experience of people for the purposes of the research, as the overall experience of the subject was heavily considered, gained from working in contact with people from other cultures. The research aims to investigate on one hand the process of profound change in the international operators in the field of international cooperation, and on the other hand the other intercultural competences acquired in the course of both personal and professional life. The study provides the reasons for the bond that has been identified between the process of transformation or change in depth of a person and intercultural competences. To do that there were involved some aid-workers, who worked for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in developing countries, Italian international operators of UN Agencies WHO and UNDP in Geneva and the Heads of NGOs Lombardy. The research aims to deepen intercultural aspects of the aid workers and to provide indications for the formation of young people and workers who want to work in an international dimension.

Methodological aspects of research

A part of the work proposed in this paper consists of the experience described by ten international operators of the United Nations (six people working at the OMS Agency and four at UNDP), through the filling of a questioner, which is the realization of a narrative interview with the use of a timing diagram of the person's life and the story of two episodes of his life in which the person thinks he has used intercultural competence. The people interviewed are Italian, eight males and two females, aged between thirty-two years and sixty-one. People have gained experience in the international cooperation from four to thirty-seven years old, eight out of ten people starting it before thirty. Four out of ten people had an experience with NGOs before working for ONU, living also in a country or carrying out verification missions. International operators have been met three, four times each, and this has allowed the creation of a relationship of trust between interviewer and interviewee, which served to capture the hidden aspects that the subject often doesn't show. The timetable has been used in the first interview as the time base for the history of the moments of life of the interviewee and to highlight the links between the years of his life and the two mentioned subjects (profound change and intercultural competences). In addition to the time line, it has been added on the timetable's paper the conceptual contributions regarding the profound change and intercultural competences, highlighting any possible link with the time line. At the beginning of each narration, the researcher has presented the timetable with the interviewee's detail. The survey instruments have been used to capture both aspects of their life stories, both the characteristics that emerged from the various narratives. Robert Atkinson recalls in his work, which consisted in collecting narratives, that: "Every individual is linked to the other by a strong interdependence. The more we share our personal experiences, the more we create brotherhood between us"[2]. In the researches it has been possible to identify some common aspects that allowed the researcher to "interlink" some parts of the people's experiential narratives. The narratives not only have a meaning itself, but can make bring a wider meaning that is found also in the other people's story[3].

The process of transformation in international cooperation

While intercultural skills seem essential in a rapidly changing world characterized by a mix of cultural origins, on the other hand the dimension of the person's transformation represent the framework of the sense in which competences find more place. The transformation process is gradual and continuous and, considering the previous period, it can be analyzed only in retrospect.

Mezirow proposes the transformative theory, which can be described as a constructivist theory of learning in terms of the "transformation of the minds"[4]. He bases the theory on the reflective approach towards self-knowledge, the world and transformative learning, which generated new patterns of meaning or revisited prospects of significance able to direct the action[5]. The transformative theory of adult learning identifies four distinctive levels in which learning can occur, even if the change in perspectives is produced only in certain situations. The transformation of perspectives happens through reflection and the critical analysis of the specific assumptions in which underpin a perspective of meaning, and also through the change of this perspective through the reorganization of meaning. This learning is particularly significant because it leads to significant changes in the existential level, which occur in situations loaded with emotional significance, and which does not correspond to personal expectations and therefore require a redefinition of the problem. The redefinition becomes possible when the subject critically re-evaluates the assumptions that support the pattern of significance that is being questioned. The transformation of the prospects can occur through the accumulation of meaning schemes that deviate from a series of dilemmas, or in response to a dilemma imposed from outside. "Any significant challenge to a consolidated perspective", says Mezirow, "can induce a transformation", even if it is "painful challenges, which call into question the deep rooted values and threaten the sense of Self"[6].

The reference to the concept of change and profound change was useful in the analysis because it has allowed us to identify the significant experiences that the person identified during his existence, which are not always related to the professional experience, in this case to international cooperation. The change has been described in the questionnaires filled out by international operators as a change or mutation of something (four out of ten people). The changes are related to an external situation for the individual, like a situation, the context, or something personal, such as sensitivity, attitude, vision of the world, that in international cooperation becomes a whole different mode of action not for the resolution of a problem, but mostly for the ability to deal with it. It is given a double matrix of change, such as the individual one, as internal factor, and the contextual one, as external factor. The profound change refers to something that involves the whole person, which implies a breaking point. In some cases, the change is seen as a growth or the simple life that requires the individual to continuous changes in response to experiences. It was useful, therefore, to understand how life experiences are intertwined with the professional experiences; an analysis limited to the professional field would not have involved the whole personal sphere and the important

meanings attributed by the subject to the intercultural aspects. It was asked to the international operators to tell three situations in which they think they have experienced profound changes; seven out of ten people have reported cases, while the other three did not indicate any event because they think they haven't experienced any profound change or any change in particular. Six of the people who reported moments of their life have brought back in the profound changes at least one experience of international cooperation. These moments of life consisted in experiences in Africa (in four cases), but also in Afghanistan. The change, according to the people, is due to the different way of dealing with the circumstances of life, to raise awareness, the impact of a local situation, the mentality, the different ways of interpretation of the reality to the life and death the passing of time, the priorities. In the end, four out of ten reported as an experience of profound change in the job under WHO. It is to consider that the events which do not concern the scope of international cooperation are: the death of a family member, the birth of a child, discovering a new religious faith, the business trip or study abroad, listening to the testimonies of doctors who had worked in Africa, which can be considered as a maturation phase that preceded the experience of cooperation.

An analysis of the international operators' experiences has shown that it is difficult to separate the professional history from the personal history, because the two are intertwined, shortening up the boundaries between them.

The intercultural competences of international operators

During the last thirty years, researchers from different disciplines and specializations from different countries of the world have studied the personal dynamics that could explain the successful intercultural experiences. Sometimes, insights led to the creation of models and the development of metrics that could describe the components of intercultural competence; of course the responses were varied. Intercultural competences are a complex area, which includes cognitive, behavioral and motivational aspects. A small number of researches have considered the concept of intercultural competence in a learning perspective, which is based on the understanding of the way in which people learn to become interculturally competent. So, there are multiple definitions of intercultural competence. According to a study conducted by Darla K. Deardorff, which involved twenty-three intercultural experts: "Intercultural competence is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations; it is supported by specific attitudes and affective features, (inter)cultural knowledge, skills and reflection"[7]. The model of intercultural competence proposed by Darla Deardorff identifies four dimensions of intercultural competence: *attitudes – valuing cultural diversity and*

tolerating ambiguity. One of the favorable aspects of intercultural learning is the more open attitude, appreciation, respect for cultural diversity and the ability to meet and deal with people of other cultures in an open, curious and without prejudice way; *comprehensive cultural knowledge; intercultural communication, conflict and synergy management skills; internal outcome: intercultural reflection – relativizing frame of reference and an ability to feel empathy.* Intercultural competences require that people are able to adapt to new intercultural situations, for example, new communication styles, lifestyles, group norms and values. In addition to the ethnorelative view, the internal results include elements of adaptability, flexibility and empathy; *external outcome: constructive interaction – achievement of valued objectives and avoiding violating cultural rules.* Intercultural competence is directed towards the communication between subjects involved in intercultural situations in an appropriate, effective and constructive way.[8] In part of the study, represented by the central corpus of the research, people have highlighted the intercultural competencies that they believe they have developed in the course of their existence, as well as the resources and difficulties they have encountered in some moments of life. Intercultural competence that occur with greater frequency in the questionnaires filled out by international operators are: curiosity, the ability to listen, the knowledge of languages; openness, knowledge of various cultures and behaviors, and the knowledge of the global reality; the ability to interact with people of different cultures, languages and different story, knowledge of customs and traditions. Some of these competencies relate to the knowledge dimension, the others relate to attitude. However, it is important to deepen the meanings conveyed by the language and to understand what sense that particular aspect has had in the experience of the operator. For example, it could be argued that knowledge not only of English, but also of other languages such as French, Spanish have had a significant importance in the circumstances of fieldwork in developing countries. In fact, this can be confirmed, but there are other languages and dialects just as useful to know in order to communicate with the part of the population who live mainly in rural or outlying areas of the city and who might otherwise be excluded from any intervention. An international operator during the interview says: "At the time I wondered many differences. For example, people who had many wives. Or that they had problems in defining the concept of love, for example. The word does not exist in Swahili. As they say, you are mine. Not you, but the woman is mine. It is not ... I love her". About that, another operator argues that the knowledge of the language comes after the underlying logic and made the example of Latin America, which is actually a much more oriented to a system that isn't unknown, a way of life not far and, for some subjects, much more easily accessible,

compared to, the eastern countries. An operator, after telling some differences found when he was in Tanzania, adds: "So, I noticed the big differences and the time seemed huge differences. And ... But instead ... After being in Vietnam, I realized that true differences, big differences, I found them in these countries, these countries in the Far East, because sometimes you do not understand why they do certain things or behave in a certain way or laugh when a car is coming against you. Knowing them understand that this is a kind of reaction, that is possible. "It's interesting that the perception of diversity changes over time. Some differences seem to be "huge", then you live other experiences and the idea of "huge" re-sizes compared to the new experience. Concepts such as development, culture, diversity are dynamic terms, which shouldn't be intended in a rigid way, but are affected by the way people feel, perceive at any given time. Other competences recognized by the international operators in the questionnaires are: the ability to speak in an " intimate" way, the ability to motivate others and to find a common path: "We try together", the understanding of the positions of different ways of thinking; understand why others behave in a certain way, be available to the partnership: "Reality has become" my house. "Empathy is an important aspect, the "feel each other" or "put yourself in someone else's shoes", so that the other person is no longer unknown, but it is accessible and understandable in the way of thinking, to convey the own culture, behave and react in a certain way. In the cooperation work it becomes significant to live an authentic experience with the other person and feel that the environment of intervention in the country in the developing world is not a strange situation, but it is a reality that belongs to the person, especially if the operator experiences a medium to long term, even a decade, to the place, which is felt to be "home."

The intercultural aspects in the situation

The replied were asked to tell, in two of three meetings with the researcher, the episodes of their life in which the subjects think that they have turned intercultural competence, not necessarily a situation where things have gone well, but a condition in where the person was able to learn something that was useful in an another situation. It was asked to describe in details the situation that has been emblematic for the subject, being able to capture those infinite possible "shades" of the subject in a situation. The subjects told various situations, such as, for example, the experience of the reality of Marabou, the sorcerers in Africa, the situation of the relationship between man and woman in Morocco, an incident with a maid in Vietnam, the plight of young pregnant women in Tanzania.

One of the recurrent aspects in the histories of international operators is the role of women: sometimes this aspect is expressed by considerations on the headscarf issue and this is done, for example, by considering the significance of Palestinian friend who decided to wear the veil , rather than thinking about how behavior modes that facilitate dialogue.

An operator explains: "If a woman goes to Afghanistan it's better that you put a veil on her head, otherwise she will not be accepted." Another subject remarked: "In some countries, the Arab countries, women are the ones that are. But if you have to work in a certain field you cannot expect to go there and say, "No, I do not work with you, because you don't respect certain rights ... Usually the only strategy is not to judge them too". In this sense, it is considered to be the woman in the African society, so that, for example, an operator considers that young women asking for support to older women of the village in circumstances involving issues relevant choices.

Considering the history of the events of life in which the individual thinks he has put in place intercultural competence, two different aspects came out: the first concerns the question of the interpretation of intercultural situations and the second concerns non-intercultural ones.

In other words, one might ask: "What is considered to be intercultural? What is not? Where is the line between an intercultural matrix' situation and a social situation, for example?" The other aspect is related to the boundary between competence and incompetence. A person may feel incompetent in a certain situation, but that situation could make him competent. And then, the next questions would be: "What makes the person feel incompetent? How does the transition from a phase of incompetence to a phase of competence take place?" To answer the question concerning the social dimension rather than the intercultural one, it is difficult to consider a clear separation between the two dimensions, because, like the personal and professional dimensions, they are closely linked. We would rather expect a prevalence of one of the two on the other. It is, for example, the case of the story of the relationship between an operator and his principal, who was Korean, with whom he had some misunderstandings. To the question: "Do you think if the Director was of another culture, there wouldn't be these clutches?" The people answered: "It is a difficult question to answer, because it wasn't because he was Korean, and so on. His political agenda was emerging very clearly". Compared to the other point about the boundary between competence and incompetence, in this case we can observe that the situation is changing. Therefore a person may not feel competent in a situation and feel more competent in another setting.

International operators pay attention to the relational, social dynamics, the categorizations in which operators are challenged, such as what is good and bad, what is essential in life over what is superfluous. An international operator says he told the story, reported to the interviewer, to his daughters, saying: "Yes, I tell the story when I got the impression about some events, things that maybe they categorized as positive/negative, white/black, good/bad. And then I said, but wait, it's not that simple. If only it was that simple. Everything organized. One always chooses the good, the right, the white. Instead, it is much more complex".

This rethinking happened also during the narrative interview in which three out of ten people have expressed: "I never thought about this thing". Something happens when you tell your own experience that shows a completely new way of experiencing the episode or moment of the history. Listening to your own story promotes awareness on certain aspects on which the subject had not focused.

The perturbations: turning points

A person develops moral principles during his training, but these principles take a different form in the concreteness of everyday life: sometimes the moral principles seem obvious, but in some moments, like the comparison with people or situations, what seemed obvious needs to be reconsidered and rethought. The risk is to separate the moral judgment of everyday's experience and so the focus is placed on the bond and on the mutual reinforcement of these two dimensions.

In the episodes of the stories, which can be considered moments in which perturbations are created inside the individual, and in which the subject becomes aware of something that does not belong in his own frame of reference, it has emerged the importance of not considering just the relationship created between the international operators and the local people of the developing countries, but it is also useful to give attention to the relationships that the international operators have developed in the developing countries with the non-local, from another culture. This means that the international operator has built meaningful relationships with people from European or non-European countries, other than the local population and not necessarily international operators. One operator says: "In Vietnam, people who I've worked with, that were neighbors or with who I've attended social relations, apart from the Vietnamese, were mostly French or in some cases expatriated... Maybe working in the Embassy, in a company, in a restaurant, but not interested at all in understanding what was

going on around them and very closed in their parties French, British, Belgian, where there are always the same twenty or thirty people". Sometimes, the motivation that leads a person to work in international cooperation is the creation of relationships in the country of intervention.

Often when dealing with the integration theme, we often think about the immigrant from a developing country who emigrated trying to improve his situation, going to a country with an advanced economy. It was interesting in the stories of international operators the phenomenon of integration "backwards", in which the subject "to integrate" is no longer the person coming from a country, mostly in the developing world, but an Italian working in a international cooperation, who has to relate and live in a country in the developing world. It 'clear that the dynamics of the two types of immigration are very different: in the second case, for example, the person is a doctor who has an official role in a hospital in an island of Africa. The doctor can also refer to nurses to understand a situation and therefore the "immigrant" may use a mediator to help him interpret some messages.

There are significant intercultural moments that the subject lives and represent perturbations, which work as a "sentinel" to locate the transformations, which are not always perceived immediately from the story. To understand the perturbations we must consider not only what happened in a situation of difficulty of the subject, but also what happened before. Of course, not all the changes that the individual has lived have some sort of trace of influence with the interculture, but some involve a confrontation with interculture and with the experience in international cooperation. It is in the cracks, the break or, in a more moderate way, in the instability that can be tracked those really important changes that give a sense of interculturality, which is expressed in the encounter with the Other.

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Behind the scenes? Dealing with auto/biographical dimensions in a Ph.D research.

Andrea Galimberti, Bicocca University, Milan, Italy

How to deal with auto/biographical experiences in research? How to integrate this dimension, make it an explicit assumption and maintain a "scientific" style required by an academic product?

The topic of my Ph.D research is deeply rooted in my biography. I chose to interrogate the experiences of non traditional students, who are defined in literature as under-represented in higher education (HE) and whose participation is constrained by structural factors. This wide category includes, for example, students whose family had not been to university before, students from low-income families, older students and students with disabilities. They are considered at risk in terms of access, retention, active participation, academic success, and social integration.

In line with international literature, there is some evidence that these students have a higher risk of non-completion due to different kinds of difficulties related to their "a-typicality" (Alheit & Merrill, 2004; Longden, 2006). The challenge is to integrate identities that are not only different, but experienced as opposite (student vs. worker, or adult, or parent...); the social feedback (generally negative) to the learning choice; the way they dealt with previous experiences in education.

I could define myself a "non traditional" student from different points of view in different times of my learning career. I come from a working class family, I re-entered in education as adult after a work period, I had been student and worker at the same time (even during the Ph.D).

As a researcher I could claim a neutral and "objective" stance in relation to the participants and research materials and push my personal "unwritten story" behind the scenes of the scientific work. But I was aware that my interests and ways of making sense were not divorced from my experiences. The complexity teories helped me in asserting the principle of relationship between the observer/designer and the object of study (Morin 1990). I was also inspired by Bateson's idea of self as "our own metaphor" (Bateson 1977) representing the hearth of a network of relations/metaphors through which we recognize the world and interract with it. In line with these assumptions I chose auto/biographical methods for my research in order to to give voice to the students' experiences but also to my own. This stance implied to make my epistemological choices explicit. My biography partecipated on a plurality of levels in the co-construction of the narrative materials and in building the analytical frame.

In the final step of the research I decided to engage some participants in order to reflect together upon our experience at university, our representations, our theories and their consequences on education, generating a shared and participatory hermeneutic circle. I based this phase on the co-operative inquiry paradigm.

1. Lifelong/lifewide learning and university: my research questions.

The challenges of *lifelong* and *lifewide* learning are posed to the whole education system and particularly to university. Over time the academic world has changed its relation with society through the transformation of its functions or missions (Scott, 2006). Nowadays the university is facing more and more the difficulty of committing itself only to the "formal" knowledge, given the tendency towards the informal and non-formal dimensions of learning that comes from politics and the market. There are growing demands to develop in the students "transversal skills" and life skills, besides the more common specialized skills and knowledge related to the academic disciplines.

Moreover after the transformation from élite niches to "mass higher education" institutions (Trow, 1999), universities are now facing a new challenge: the extension of the their population in a lifelong direction. This step entails a particular attention for "mature aged" students, a category that still remains outside from the "academic tribes and territories" (Becker, 1989).

The question of my research project concerns those students enrolling at university after a "non-traditional" path, or with personal backgrounds that do not consider the academic path as a "natural outcome".

In the specific literature I found a wide range of research studies concerning the so-called "non-traditional students", defined as "under-represented students in higher education and whose participation is constrained by structural factors" (RAHNLE, 2011). This category is so wide that it includes, for example, students whose families of origin did not have any academic experience, students coming from low-income families, adult students who work and students with disabilities.

These students are considered at risk in terms of access, retention, active participation, academic success, and social integration.

I focused in particular on the students whose family had not been to university before (*first generation entrants*) and on adult students that start their educational path during or after a working period. In addition to the greater difficulties they face in overcoming the barriers to the access to higher education, these students also have to take on one more challenge: that of composing different worlds and finding a synthesis that is satisfactory for their changing identity. They have to connect their social networks with new links originated by their inclusion in the academic world and they have to compose their social roles (e.g. the role of parent or worker) with the role of student. In these cases a situation of "floating" may occour. Floating is "a deep feeling of being paralyzed by events or experiences that a person cannot cope psychologically, emotionally and socially" (Bron, 2010); a difficult situation that, nevertheless, when recognised through self-reflection, could trigger a process of learning. I was interested in students' coping strategies involved in the integration of these aspects and in their learning strategies.

Different research studies in the field of adult education and of the sociology of education show how adult students develop forms of multilevel identity (Kasworm, 2010) inside universities. This identity is on the one hand based on their individual biographies,

motivations, present roles in life and expectations, and on the other hand co-constructed in relation to the ethos and actions of university (also depending on the type of university they enroll or the subject of study) but also in relation to the influence of the institution perceived on their own personal world:

"This interest in integration led us in turn to explore what promotes or limits the construction of a learner identity among non-traditional adult students. Such an identity is itself part of the integration process which enables people to become effective learners and which promotes or inhibits completion of HE." (Field, Merril & West, 2011: 2)

2. Research method.

Many of the research studies on "non traditional students" use the biographical or autobiographical methods thanks to their attitude to grasp the point of view of the participants. Usually the experiences of the students are collected through one or more narrative interviews.

I considered useful and interesting to choose the autobiographical methods, exactly because of their potentiality to give voice to the *insiders* and to highlight a whole world of meanings.

Biographical methods revealed useful to interrogate the research objects, in fact:

- Biographies may cast a light on "resilience factors", by focusing the experience of those students who are non-traditional, and nonetheless do not abandon; they could tell what they experienced and how they managed to take the challenge of being "invisible" for the university;

- Biographic narration is a way to offer space for students to become more active; students at risk can better understand their experience by telling it, becoming reflexive and active in relation to it, finding new strategies for adaptation or for claiming space. And maybe they can avoid drop out, but we must also say that drop out is not necessarily a "problem" in the biographic view (Quinn et al., 2005)

My epistemological background is based on systemic thinking and constructivism. From these perspectives the auto/biographical work follows some general premises:

- "self-construction" as a systemic, conversational, and compositional process;

- multiple levels beyond the individual level of construction (the "agent"): relationships and contexts, where individual actions and meanings can be seen as effects of interactions;

- stories and meanings are not only subjective. They are developed in a context with its own possibilities and constraints. Different contexts create different narrations.

The term auto/biography, with the slash, seems to fit these ideas. It was coined to draw attention to the complex interrelations of the construction of one's own life and that of another person (Merrill & West, 2009).

I wanted to emphasize the pedagogical, relational and participatory dimension of the narrative methods, and therefore I chose the form of the autobiographical workshop. With this kind of methodology the research project had a double value: while the workshop represented a chance for reflection and potential learning for the participants (and for the conductors, who are themselves non-traditional students), its outcome – in terms of stories – represented a corpus of data that is suitable for analysis and interpretations.

3. The research design: auto/biographical workshops and co-operative inquiry.

I articulated the research on two different contexts which produced different kind of processes and results: the auto/biographical workshops and a co-operative inquiry.

A. Auto/biographical workshops: A Grundtvig LLP project.

I structured the autobiographical work (Dominicè, 2000; West et al., 2007) with "non-traditional students" within the Grundtvig LLP project "European Biographies - Biographical approaches in Adult Education" which started in July 2009 and ended in July 2011

The general aim of the project was "to enrich and improve methods of biographical work with adults, and to make biographical approaches better known in European adult education institutions, as a powerful integrative and experience-based pedagogical tools for reaching and integrating socially marginalized persons into society" (quoted from the brochure). Each partner institution[12] (from Austria, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Turkey) realized pilot projects introducing new biographical approaches into their work. The results were gathered in a common handbook and cd in English.

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12 The partner institutions were:Università degli studi di Milano Bicocca, Ile- Berlin Institute for Lifelong Learning in Europe, Ibika Institute for Biographical and Cultural Research (Goettingen, Germany), University of Innsbruck, eFKa Women's Foundation (Poland), Kusadasi Public Education Center (Turkey)

As a partner of the project, under the direction of prof. Laura Formenti, the Bicocca University team chose to address non traditional students, who are defined in literature as under-represented, and whose participation in higher education (HE) is constrained by structural factors.

The basic idea was to gather learning stories from students who appear not to fit the usual institutional expectations, for example adult students who decided to re-enter higher education after (or during) a work period, or students who had changed faculties.

Aware of the danger of reducing people to the status of deficit in relation to the university, the attention was focused on resources, coping strategies, retention. Retention is not well defined and focused in current studies (Longden, 2002); recent work in the UK (Yorke & Longden, 2008) appears to favour a greater emphasis on student "success" which is all together a wider and more positive focus.

The stories were gathered through narrative workshops articulated in three meetings (three hours each), in small groups. As a matter of fact the stories were not simply "gathered" but each participant was in continuous dialogue with other participants and narrative proposals.

Auto/biographical workshops were designed and managed by a team of "researchers/students", who were invited to experiment auto/biographical methods through personal exploration, to reflect on their implications, specifically in terms of ethics.

The workshops, articulated in three meetings, three hours each promoted writing and sharing, in small groups, personal narrations that were meant to:

- give voice to individual learning stories within the university;

- highlight differences and connections between the participants' experiences;

- develop meaning and understanding through dialogue;

- foster reflexive processes, and possibly deliberate actions.

The framework used to structure the different workshops was represented by the spyral of knowledge proposed by Formenti (Formenti 2009) that link together different dimensions of experience like aesthetic representation, reflection and action.

The workshop activities were structured in order to allow an exploration of students' experiences from new perspectives. The dimension of "new" was gained through proposals based on cognitive displacement (Munari & Fabbri 2005), aesthetical experiences and group

debates. Learning was not conceived as the main aim but as a sort of "side-effect", as a possibility emerging from the workshops constraints.

All the autobiographical activities were meant to trigger sensemaking processes:

"Explicit efforts at sensemaking tend to occur when the current state of the world is perceived to be different from the expected state of the world, or when there is no obvious way to engage the world" (Weick et al. 2005: 409)

Overall 50 students participated in the workshops. Their texts were shared and, with the consent of the authors, published online in a website, *Fehler! Hyperlink-Referenz ungültig.*, specifically created to make them visible to other students and members of the institution.

B. Co-operative inquiry. A reflexive stance on the whole research process.

I decided to engage some participants in order to reflect together upon the experience at university, its representations, the theories developed by the participants and the consequences on education, generating a shared and participatory hermeneutic circle. I based this phase on the co-operative inquiry paradigm

> "Co-operative inquiry involves two or more people researching a topic through their own experience of it, using a series of cycles in which they move between this experience and reflecting together on it" (Heron, 1996: 1)

The co-operative inquiry is based on key features (Heron & Reason, 1997, 2008):

- research is conducted with people rather than on people. All the subjects are fully involved as co-researchers in all research decisions both on content (what we research) and method (the ways we use to explore it)

- There is intentional interplay between reflection and making sense on the one hand, and experience and action on the other

- the co-researchers engage themselves in the actions they have agreed and observe and record the process and outcomes of their own and each other's action and experience.

- the full range of human capacities and sensibilities is available as an instrument of inquiry.

The group of co-researchers decided to explore learning identity and university environment (with its possibilities and constraints) drawing on personal life experience as well as on the experience developed through their participation to the project "Storie della Bicocca".

In each meeting a topic was decided and interrogated through questions able to trigger self-reflexive writings.

The following are some of the questions that drove the exploration:

- When had I the feeling that university was eager to meet me?

- When did I feel that university was a place useful for me?

- When did the university allow me to dream?

- When did I transform the university from an "unplace" to my own place (did this happen at all)?

- How and what did I feel/see (or didn't I see/feel) before and after this transformation?

- When did I feel recognized as an adult, with my own and proper learning interests?

The co-operative inquiry produced as a result a new project based on participant's experiences and reflections. The project aims to create workshops where students may explore and reflect upon their learning project, developing connections between their life and university experience. The project could become part a of the university strategies to foster retention: "pedagogic strategies that draw on relevant experiences, and relate them to academic knowledge, are likely to enhance integration and promote completion" (Field, Merrill & West 2011: 9)

4. Behind the scenes.

The constructivist and systemic perspectives require to make explicit researcher's own assumptions. As a biographical researcher this request concerns epistemological but also biographical experiences intertwined with one another.

I was aware that my interests and ways of making sense were not divorced from my experiences.

During the research I discovered that many categories used in identifying a "non traditional" student fitted with me: my family is working class, I'm the first member to reach higher education and I also re-entered in university as an "adult" after (and during) a work period.

My first choice was an "elite" university, faculty of economics, with big differences from my socio-economic background. I was a typical "fish out of water", plunged in discourses and new networks I felt extraneus and even repulsive. After three years of economics, and with eleven exams passed, I decided to step back from university and go to work. I would like to

have time for me, to reflect upon my life and to meet new contexts and experiences. I worked as clerk in theatres, I held summer camps for schools, I did voluntary work with young adults involved in drug addiction. In my mind the university remained still as an horizon I would approach again, sooner or later. At 24 I decided to enroll again and I chose the faculty of educational sciences. It was the beginning of a long road that brought me to work in adult education services and to Ph.D. The "mistake" I made in my faculty choice was a critical moment of my life. I struggled a lot to find a way that could make sense for me, looking for a different learning identity. I decided to interrogate this experience during the Ph.D, addressing my questions to other "non traditional" students. During my research I realized that I didn't elaborate a satisfying theory on my university "second life". I started looking for critical reflections able to go beyond my personal experience and connect it with broader meanings.

Lifelong learning became my research object also for other reasons. I worked in educational field and I met over and over colleagues that were "forced" to re-enter in higher education in order to get a better title, an (eventual) better job and give more value to their profession. I remember the words of a friend of mine, working for social services, that was forced to come back to university for bureaucratic reasons concerning his professional title: "Lifelong learning is not a promise, it's a threat!". My friend pointed out some aspects of lifelong learning that I didn't see from my perspectives (I was so glad for the opportunity of re-starting my academic career!). He showed me how external constraints (linked to the professional market) were able to push people to never-ending processes of title validation and how this could be lived in a passive way. I saw other colleagues eager to change their professional status and identity through new training courses but nothing at the end of the process seemed to change in how they were perceived.

This double side of lifelong learning (promise or threat?) that I was constructing through my experiences influenced my research in terms of polarization, duplicity and dynamic tension of opposite sides.

In writing the research I tried to make explicit the link between my auto/biographical assumptions and the decisions taken. My biography partecipated on a plurality of levels in the co-construction of the narrative materials and in building the analytical frame.

The complexity theories helped me in asserting the principle of relationship between the observer/designer and the object of study (Morin 1990). I was also inspired by Bateson's

idea of self as "our own metaphor" (Bateson 1977) representing the hearth of a network of relations/metaphors through which we recognize the world and interact with it.

At the operational level, my assumptions oriented the biographical exercises structuring the narrative workshops. For example I lived my two universities experiences as rigidly separeted and I a used lot of energy in looking for connections useful to overcome this fragmentation; in my narrative proposals the idea of "connection" was in the foreground: for example I asked the students to tell their learning experience as a river or I asked them to imagine a dialogue between their actual self and a past self.

At the analytical level I created a frame structured on the idea of dynamic tension of opposites sides. The experiences told by students were expressed in terms of polarities coexisting within open and dynamic tension fields. The relation between these polarities, as often happens within the systemic models, is not only a relation of opposition, antagonism and rupture, but also one of mutual generation, complementarity and interdependence.

5. Analysis and main themes.

Among the significant dimensions that recurred in the collected stories I highlighted:

> **A. The self descriptions, the descriptions of experiences at university and of learning processes.**

These dimensions are mapped through the following couples of concepts:

1. Structure/agency;

2. Real/imagined social capital;

3. Self/mutual recognition.

> **B. Descriptions of the university.**

This dimension is mapped through the following couple of concepts: political/symbolical space.

A. The self descriptions, the descriptions of experiences at university and of learning processes.

1. Structure/agency.

Structure and agency are mutual influencing factors. Individual agency is shaped by the constraints of structural factors the individual experienced (family culture, class, gender etc), but, at the same time, the agent experiences these constraints in a subjective way, developing meanings and ways to act them out in different ways.

This couple of concepts stress the importance of students' background (cultural, economic, social capital) as well as how they can dinamically exploit the human and symbolic capital of the university.

Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" is a way of exploring the social and cultural worlds of non-traditional students. Habitus is the "great deal of everyday life is conducted on the basis of shared values, norms and routines that are largely taken for granted"(Bourdieu, 1984: 169-73); it depends on people's social, cultural and economic backgrounds.

A perspective based on this idea is able to show how the assumption of the institution and the students interact and generate a plurality of results. For example, if the student and institution assumptions are "similar" (that means similarity in expectations, language, visions of the world), probably they will not generate misunderstandings or clash of different frames; the student career will probably meet the institutions previsions (*fish in the water*). On the other hand, when the student habitus is "unorthodox" (*fish out of water*), it's possible to find obstacles in the learning career and the risk of dropping out raises.

> "In the case of university students from non-traditional backgrounds, there is likely to be a mis-match between the student's cultural capital and the taken for granted cultural capital of the dominant group within the university. Our expectations was that this mis-match and the way is handled by the actors concerned, would be an important factor in explaining retention" (Field, Merrill & West 2011: 5)

Examples:

Daniela, mature student, is forced to re-enter in higher education by structural factors concerning her workplace:

> And for the second time we get to our expiry date. Like mozzarella itself, we are not desirable anymore. New call for tenders with a little surprise: the coordinator must have a degree in educational sciences. The fever to level the diploma of the school for educators and the degree explodes. Will that be enough? Not any answer from whom in charge. You can't always risk, therefore I'll enroll at the Bicocca university and will graduate by the end of the next mandate and then we'll see if you are still able to make me feel like shit.

Daniela, during the university experience, become aware of the possibility to trasform the constraint in a new desire:

> It's unbelievable, that's what I needed to justify a desire. It was necessary that it was a duty, history repeats itself, if it's only for pleasure it has no validity.

> Because it is not valid to say "I like too much studying, I want to enroll at the university because I would be happy". Not after wasting mommy and dad's money some more than 10 years ago, when I left literature, not after failing.

> When you have these burdens to reckon with, you forget when in your youth you spent hours and hours on books without even realize that it was dinner time. But the pleasure of learning resists any cancellation, it just makes itself comfortable, finds a corner and waits.

Luca, a mature student, tells the way in which the choice to enroll at university allows him to become an agent:

> I risked to spend a life without direction.

> Enrolling at university was a turn in my life, it made me happier and this is the fundamental thing.

> […] The reasons are connected to a change in yself and in the world surrounding me. I don't know what the future will bring but until now this choice means self-esteem.

> I feel more relaxed and I'm happy because I overcame a big obstacle. The wall was starting the learning path, the obstacle was beginning to taste life again. The journey started with a lot of difficulties but the first exam had an unforgettable taste: the taste of victory!

2. Real /Imagined social capital

Social capital is a multidisciplinary concept that represents all the benefits coming from social connections. Social capital and lifelong learning are intertwined with one another: there is, in general, a mutual beneficial relationship between these two concepts, but it is not a simple one, depending, in fact, on a range of other elements (Field, 2008). For example, when the network producing social capital is based on very close and strong links (bonding social capital), the space for reflexive learning seems to decrease. In general, social connections help to generate trust between people, and thereby foster the exchange of information and ideas. However "the interplay between networks and learning is not simply part of the process by which skills and techniques are shared, and information is passed around. It is also an active part of the process of making sense of the world, by talking about feelings in complex and apparently contradictory ways" (Field, 2005: 128)

Quinn (2010) adds further reflections to the debate. She gives to the notion of social capital a new dimension: the networks that give benefits are not only "social", but also symbolic and imagined.

> Symbolic networks may be the networks of those we know who are given a symbolic function, imagined networks may be with those we don't know personally, or who may not even exist, but with whom we can imagine desired connections. These networks provide resources of power and resistance and appear to be more useful for survival than formalized support networks are.. (Quinn 2010: 23)

Structural factors remain important, but there is here another level of interest: how are these factors played in everyday negotiations? Which are the creative solutions found to face them?

> (...) universities facilitate the production of imagined social capital by opening up the strange and the unfamiliar to be reframed and reused by students in new symbolic networks. Is this 'making strange', then, the distinctive role of the university within lifelong learning? (Quinn 2005: 15)

Examples:

Daniela, mature student, stresses the desire to make real connections between university and workplace:

> "Today I'm even more convinced that my experience shapes me as a person in the first place and then as a professional, because it is made of encounters and experiences. I don't know whether I'm learning to do a certain job, I don't even know how I will be living a year from now. What I do know is that I'm dedicating my mind and heart in a very personal way where deadlines are in the background, creating space for new ideas and challenges. I don't know whether I'll manage to graduate or not but I'll take the many things that I have learned in my workplace."

Anna's narration about her motives to be a student starts from a sense of emptiness associated with inadequacy.

> "I felt empty inside... like something left over... in the meantime the years passed, the children grew up, and this empty space got bigger and bigger; and it produced a sense of inadequacy. I wanted to escape from home and doing something different..."

She was inspired by a very special imagined social capital.

> "I also needed money, so I accepted any occasion to work... saleswoman, clerk, attendant in a hospital: psychiatric department. The contact with craziness pushed me to begin a new vocational process, searching for "the human world". I wanted to know why we move in a certain direction. Do we make our own decisions? I was 45!!! I didn't know, and actually I don't know by now, where the road is leading but I enjoy it. I left my job at the hospital, stopped cleaning bedpans and vomit, but I miss those foolish men and women. Because I found the courage to start over thanks to them. I took my life in my hands and I gave it a new direction, with new colours and a lot of poetry."

Anna uses her imagined social capital when she is asked to find meaning for her choice of study at the university. The metaphors she uses express the way she embodies this meaning, in a very deep way.

> "I had a reverent fear of university, like something beautiful but I was unfit for, and then I was infected by craziness!"

> "Foolish idea... my idea"

3. Self/mutual recognition.

Recognition become a fundamental issue when we start to consider skills and learning as relational processes. Learning identities in transformation implies the dimension of self and

mutual recognition. This double aspect of recognition is enlightened in the studies of Paul Ricoeur:

> To put it briefly, the dynamic that guides my investigation consists in a reversal, on the very level of the grammar, of the verb to recognize from its use in the active voice to its use in the passive voice: I actively recognize things, persons, myself; I ask, even demand, to be recognized by others (Ricoeur 1994: x)

The necessity of being recognized by others in our identity can produce a series of different effects. For example Honneth (1995) is interested in the struggle for recognition, Ricoeur in the possibility of gratitude:

> It is not my genuine identity that demands to be recognized? And if, happily, this happens does not my gratitude go to those who in one way or another have, in recognizing me, recognized my identity? (Ricoeur, 1994: xi)

Examples:

Carla is a mature student that left an employment in a bank to study educational sciences. The roots of this turning point are located in the maternity experience:

> Becoming parent was the most fascinating and at the same time hard event in my life. I needed help and it was not easy to find someone really helpful, only experts with "receipts" that didn't fit with my needs.
>
> I would like to transform grief in a creative act

Carla tell us how unexpected was this her new learner identity in a dialogue with herself (the Actual Carla is "talking" with the Past Carla in one activity of the autobiographical workshops)

> ActualCarla: I would like to say that you enrolled at university! You can't believe it right? But you asked and obtained a time off work, you took a first level degree and now you'are studying for the second level degree!
>
> PastCarla: Are you sure???
>
> ActualCarla: Yes, and now you don't work anymore at the bank! You left that job for good two years ago
>
> PastCarla: Beautiful! And all these things happened in eight years? I can't believe that!
>
> ActualCarla: Yes, everything is true!
>
> PastCarla: I'm very happy of this new version of me!

Annamaria, mature student, tells her satisfaction for the feedbacks coming from her family and friends:

"What a satisfaction in taking a glance at the library and see all those books! All the things I learned. They changed me. I'm no more the same person of two years ago. My husband too says that I'm a different person: I'm more reflexive and more critical (sometimes too much!). Even my friends, my relatives, everybody says that now I'm a better Anna and this fact is a joy for me.

Luca, mature age student, tells his discomfort in receiving a social feedback inconsistent with his own learner identity:

I was at work talking with clients on my beautiful holiday in the United States when Gaia, one of my colleagues, asked me: "So, Luca, now you are a music-therapist. What are you going to do in the future?".

No hesitation in my answer: "I'm going to the university".

Imagine my colleague look and her reaction: "What?!? But you are old!!! Are you going to live forever with your parents???"

B. Descriptions of the university: political/symbolical space.

In defining a "political space" I assumed the perspecitve offered by Hannah Arendt.

According to Arendt (1958) the two central features of action are freedom and plurality. By freedom she means the capacity to begin, to start something new, to do the unexpected, with which all human beings are endowed by virtue of being born. Without the presence and acknowledgement of others, action would cease to be a meaningful activity. Action, to the extent that it requires appearing in public, making oneself known through words and deeds can only exist in a context defined by plurality.

Plurality is a condition granted by a "space of appearance":

where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly (Arendt 1958: 198)

Such public space of appearance can be always recreated anew wherever individuals gather together politically. However, since it is a creation of action, this space of appearance is higly fragile and exists only when actualized through the performance of deeds or utterance of words.

Many narratives represented university as a "symbolic space" , a protective place, a shelter form the "real world". In this separated place it becomes possible to dream and imagine a different identity and a different future. This focus reminded me the studies of Gaston Bachelard and, in particular, his idea of house:

I should say: the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace. (Bachelard, 1957: 44)

Examples.

Veronica, mature students, is looking for an acknowledgement of her skills:

> Year after year I remained Veronica, counselor, but without a degree. This is an important point in my personal and professional life. I felt not up to others. Before going to the university I couln't see my skills, even if other people aknowledged them.

Rosanna, mature students, describe university as a "mental space" useful to trigger imagination:

> Coming back to university meant mantaining a "mental space" . A space for rêverie, for imagination. A space that give meaning to everyday life. It's about maintainng a clear view on the world, on thoughts coming from othe human beings. In order not to become old in the soul.

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{ TC "*Patricia A. Gouthro* - Selective and layered storytelling: writers and their writing lives" \f \l }Selective and layered storytelling: writers and their writing lives

Patricia A. Gouthro, Mount St. Vincent University, Canada

Abstract

This paper explores the complex factors that shape storytelling before, during, and after the interview process by looking at a life history research study on fiction authors. By focusing on the research process, it considers the role of the researcher in shaping the stories that get told. Biographical research with authors can be seen as a selective and layered process, where at many levels decisions are made, consciously or unconsciously, that shape the stories which are shared.

When authors write fictional novels, they make decisions not only about the characters and plots that they create, but also about what merits a lengthy discussion and what needs to be discarded. As Martin (2005) notes, one of the main characteristics of quality fiction writing involves authors being selective about what is included in a story and what gets left out. In much the same way, when authors agree to talk about their 'writing lives', they selectively choose what stories they will share and how they will be told. In multiple ways the information that is shared in life history interviews is partial, selective, and purposeful – included for a reason, whilst other aspects of the 'story' is withheld. This raises questions about truth and fiction – the story that is told, and the story that is untold.

This paper draws upon a study that uses life history interviews to explore the learning trajectories of traditionally published fiction authors. It explores the selective and layered level of storytelling, before, during, and after the interview process. It considers the stories that authors choose to share about their lives, and how in some ways this compares to the process of learning to craft novels. By focusing on the research process, it considers the role of the researcher in also shaping the stories that get told. Biographical research with authors can be seen as a layered process, where there are many levels at which decisions are made, consciously or unconsciously, that shape the stories which are shared. The paper concludes by examining some of the factors that affect editing, and how this affects the findings and writing processes, ultimately determining which stories are shared as the outcomes of a research study.

Biographical Research on Writers' Lives

There has been very limited biographical research conducted on writers' lives that examines the learning processes that writers engage in when learning their craft. In popular non-fiction,

several authors have written books that reflect upon their own careers as writers. For example, British author P.D. James (2009) wrote *Talking About Detective Fiction*, a book that reflects on not only her own lived experiences, but also the broader genre of crime fiction. *How I Write*, by Janet Evanovich (2006) combines personal stories related to being a writer that are presented in a Q & A (Question and Answer or interview format) with practical tips and advice for aspiring authors. Canadian literary author, Jack Hodgins (2001; c. 1993) delves into the practical components of writing fiction by combining a more literary analysis with reflection his own learning experiences. Hodgins writes that throughout much of his life he has been "remembering other people's stories, living in other people's skins, spinning out of words the magic of a fictional universe" (p. 12). In each of these books, the personal component of reflection is connected with the objective of teaching others how to write fiction.

Historical/archival research often entails looking at correspondence and at the books that writers have produced to explore biographical experiences of writers. For example, in John Curran's (2009) book, *Agatha Christie's Secret Notebooks: Fifty Years of Mysteries in the Making*, a stash of notebooks are used as archival documentation to explore the life and thought processes that influenced the writing of British mystery author, Agatha Christie. Similarly, Lavin's (2011) study of Willa Cather takes up the correspondence between the author and her literary agent.

A couple of academic studies use interviews with authors to discern the life history or biographical learning processes involved in fostering the craft of creative writing. Brace & Johns-Putra (2010) explore connections between geography and writing through interviews with British writers who have either not been published or only published in local anthologies, while Olthouse (2013) did a study examining the motivations and learning processes of individuals aspiring to become creative writers in a Masters of Fine Arts program.

In the field of adult education/lifelong learning there is increasing interest in considering how the arts may be used to explore significant aspects of adult learning processes (Butterwick & Selman, 2003; Clover, 2010). In the area of fiction writing, there has been research by O'Rourke (2007) and Jarvis (2012), but both of these concentrate upon pedagogical opportunities for adult learners through reading and/or writing fiction, rather than exploring the learning processes of the writers themselves. This paper draws upon the findings of a

research study to discern the learning processes that the writers themselves describe through their own biographical journeys of becoming successfully published fiction authors.

The Research Study

Drawing upon a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) study on lifelong learning, citizenship, and fiction writing, this paper explores learning trajectories of writers' lives through life histories. Thus far in this study, interviews with forty fiction writers have been completed, as well as interviews with twenty 'key informants' – individuals in the education, policy, or not-for-profit sector in programs or organizations that support fiction writing. While other papers written on this study have focused on learning with regards to citizenship, workplace learning, and changes in the Canadian publishing industry, this paper examines the life history/biographical interviews with the participants who are authors, focusing particularly on the research process as well as the findings from these interviews.

Although the initial study was conceived of by me and I am the principal investigator, a colleague, Susan Holloway, joined on as a collaborator at the start of the study. She has been involved in much of the research process and we have jointly written several papers from this study, although each of us has also taken aspects of the research to do independent writing. I have conducted most of the interviews for this study, so this paper focuses primarily on some of my experiences in doing life history interviews with the authors.

Life history interviews are useful approaches for developing a deeper understanding of how individuals are socialized within a society, and 'how the individual creates meaning within the culture' (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.152). In this study, traditionally published fiction authors who had published in three different areas; a) CanLit or literary fiction, b) mystery/crime fiction or c) children/young adult (YA) areas were invited to participate. A purposive sampling approach was used to ensure that writers from diverse backgrounds, from different geographic regions, and at different stages in their writing careers, were included.

Most of the forty authors interviewed thus far are Canadians, although half a dozen interviews were conducted with American and UK authors for cross-cultural comparative purposes. The questions in the interview concentrated on how the authors learned to become published writers, as well as the importance of citizenship in shaping their writing career. The life history interviews with authors were between an hour and two hours in length. While an hour is rather short for an interview that uses a life history approach, particularly for some

well-known authors, that was considered to be a fairly lengthy interview as they often have multiple requests for their time.

Participants were sent an information package that included an interview schedule so that they had a sense of the types of questions that they might be asked in advance, although they were also informed that the interview was semi-structured and open-ended, with the intent that it would seem more conversational. They were also informed that they would be given the opportunity to review and edit their transcripts.

The authors were asked to reveal their identities, but were given the opportunity to select out any quotes that they wanted to include but not have attributed to them (to ensure confidentiality around sensitive issues). Authors were also told that they would be given a summary report of the findings of the study and an opportunity to either respond to this via email or through a follow-up telephone, or if possible (and requested) an in-person interview.

In addition to interviews with the authors, shorter, more targeted interviews were conducted with 'key informants' – individuals in the publishing sector, arts councils and in educational programs that support fiction writing. These individuals were given the option of sharing their identity or choosing complete or partial (for selected sections of their transcripts) anonymity.

The analysis of data used both a critical feminist theoretical lens and a grounded theory approach, whereby the transcripts were reviewed numerous times to explore emergent themes. For the purposes of this paper, however, the theme of the conference was used to focus not only on the issues raised by the authors, but also the process of doing interviews with fiction writers. To do this, the findings and analysis are organized into three sections; a) Before – which looks at some of the factors that shape the stories prior to the interview process; b) Beside – which analyzes the communications during the interview, the stories selected by the participants to share and the questions asked by the researcher; and c) After – the editing process in reviewing the transcripts and how this affects the stories to be shared.

Before…

In the beginning, the researcher conceptualizes a study – and from that initial conceptualization, boundaries are established that determine the parameters of the research project, and with it, the kinds of stories that are likely to be elicited and shared. In addition, the researcher determines which participants will be invited or recruited to participate in the study. In this study, the decision was made to focus on fiction writing as a way to explore

lifelong learning and citizenship issues, which for some participants, was perceived to be problematic. For example, when asked if she had any questions about the study, one of the participants, Daphne Marlatt, who is a nationally renowned Canadian poet as well as literary fiction writer, queried: 'I was wondering why you chose fiction only, in terms of citizenship, because I think poetry also plays into notions of citizenship'.

Her question is a valid one – and one that I soon realized in my foray into the research that touched on a sensitive topic. This can be seen in the opening conversation of my interview with Fred Wah:

> In your description of your study it says that you hope this will promote Canadian fiction. Underlying that is a sense that, or I gather that the assumption is that you can put Canadian fiction in a box. For example, I was once at a conference in Saskatchewan and Aritha van Herk gave a lecture; it was quite a long time ago, in the 80s. And she gave a lecture on my book, *Waiting for Saskatchewan,* as a novel. Now, this is a book of poetry, for me, and so this kind of stunned me and stunned the audience as well. But she talked about it as a novel. And of course, I don't know if you know Aritha van Herk, but her sense of genre is cross-genre or cross-disciplinary.
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> So the whole sense of Canadian fiction as we know it in the mainstream – the normative sense of Canadian fiction – is that it's a certain kind of storytelling, particularly about being Canadian. And there is an endless evocation of a sense of the Canadian story, or a story written by a Canadian person that represents a certain Canadianness. I think that's a real problem. So I have a problem with a funded study that's aimed at promoting this blindly.

My rationale for limiting the scope of the study to fiction writing was that a research study always has to set parameters, and so this was one of the boundaries that I predetermined. I was not intentionally excluding poets – indeed, several of the participants wrote poetry as well as fiction (or at least what other people might define as fiction – here it is clear that is not always an uncontested concept!) – but I had determined initially that the main focus would be on fiction. From comments such as these, as well as information shared by 'key informants', it was clear that poets often feel a sense of marginalization and discrimination within Canada. In fact, they are often more likely to be the recipients of funding from granting councils than other groups, and are generally well-represented on peer review councils – but still, as Wah argued later in the interview, they are given less space to sell their work in bookstores and less space in the school curriculum. In addition, while most fiction writers do not earn much money from their writing, poets are amongst the poorest paid writers.

In life histories it is important for the researcher to establish a sense of rapport with the participants. As Marshall & Rossman (2011, p. 118), within an interview situation it is sometimes possible for the researcher to breach the distance created in the context of an

academic study by striving to help participants 'see new and deeper meanings' as they share their stories. If, however, the participant feels that an essential component of their life's work and personal identity – in this instance, being a poet – is not recognized, validated or supported, then that may have a detrimental impact on the interview process. By setting the parameters of the study in advance, while this is not intended to create barriers by suggesting that the researcher is prejudiced in her approach to the topic being studied, it establishes some boundaries for the stories to be shared. It sets the tone for the upcoming interview, which may ultimately also impact on the willingness of participants to openly confide or disclose information, creating initial hurdles that the researcher may not anticipate when entering into the interview situation.

Beside…

Doing biographical/life history research with writers involves dealing with two levels of story – the books that the authors write, and the stories that they tell about themselves. These different levels of story both disclose and obscure the significance of various learning events in writers' lives. As Rovit (2011, p. 32) cautions, there is a "constant danger of identifying the voice of text with that of the author". Yet at the same time, he points out that one cannot ignore that biographical events often shape the decisions around what fictional tales authors will create.

In this study, several of the authors spoke about their own backgrounds and how different aspects of their personal identity or life experiences shape decisions around their fiction writing. For example, Anthony Bidulka, a gay mystery writer from Saskatoon shared:

> When I would walk into bookstores and libraries and see all the books there, I would think, How can I write something that's different? How can I distinguish myself from all these other writers? The protagonist is gay and he is also from Saskatchewan – two very different things. So to add crime to that was very unique at that time. And still is. There are very few crime writers from Saskatchewan, and adding those other elements was how I distinguished myself. And it's worked.

In selecting a gay protagonist, Bidulka is conscious of the way in which portraying a positive gay role model holds importance for his readership:

Over the course of my career I've received many emails and messages from LGBT people who are reading these books. Sometimes they see themselves in a character, and sometimes it's not even about that, it's about seeing a positive portrayal of someone they could be someday. So sometimes it's looking within and sometimes it's looking into the future. It's important stuff. You can use literature to learn from your past and to inform your future. It's key.

When asked to share some information about her upbringing, children's author Gina McMurchy-Barber said:

We had just moved into the house and I said, Can my kid sister come and play too? They sort of welcomed me into the group, and then a boy said, What's wrong with your sister? And I said, What do you mean? Up to that point, you know, that's who she was. He said, Well, she's a retard, right? And that was my first experience like that. A 'retard'? What's that? What does that mean? Up to that point, I hadn't really been exposed to people who looked at her differently. I'd guess I had been kind of sheltered. I went to a farm school in a small community, and there wasn't a lot of that. The book that I got the Governor General's nomination for, *Free as a Bird,* is about a girl with Down's Syndrome. So, I don't know, is that enough of childhood experience?

Free as a Bird was also about exposing a part of our history that very few people knew about. I worked in the institution, and when I finished I worked for family resources for a while, as a temporary job. I had a friend said she could get me a job at the institution where she worked. I worked there for six months and I actually had a fairly good understanding of that institution. My very first day was a horrible day because they took us on a tour of the institution, and having a sister with a mental disability, I was pretty familiar with the system outside the institution, but I had never been exposed to an institution. I had people mauling me; they were just so desperate for attention. I was about 21, and I just remember being totally freaked out by these people hanging all over me; they were so desperately neglected and bored. It was a pretty awful place. So I was bringing all of my experience to the book; I wanted people to know about that.

How the author may choose to portray the experiences that they draw upon from their own life may vary from writer to writer. In the case of McMurchy-Barber, the protagonist of the story is mentally challenged. She purposefully selected that perspective to give validity and insight into how the world might be experienced from that point of view.

One of the participants interviewed by my collaborator, literary author Dawn Bryan explains that in her book: 'It's not an autobiographical novel and there are a lot of differences; these are definitely not my kids and it's not me. But the experiences are borrowed from my own experience or from friends and other people I was watching around me.' Many authors seem to share this selective, purposeful way of drawing upon experience to inform their writing, so that while it contains autobiographical elements, it is still a fictional tale.

Each life history interview involves a selective process of storytelling, whereby the participant might choose to discuss or disclose a personal aspect of his/her life experiences, but the person might also decide to remain silent on a particular issue. This creates challenges for the researcher in determining which questions are appropriate to ask. We have an ethical

obligation to portray the stories that are shared with us in as truthful a way (whilst recognizing the ambiguity and complexity of that concept) as possible. But how truthful are we being when we tell stories that we know are incomplete? And yet, the stories that we hear, and that we share, are always going to be somewhat incomplete.

To illustrate this point, one of the participants that I interviewed for this study is Louise Penny, a New York Times best-selling crime fiction writer. In preparation for the interview (during the Before…) I read what information I could find about her on the internet, which included a couple of interviews where she spoke about her struggles as an alcoholic. This was not something she spoke about frequently, but it has was obviously been a significant life experience for her in many ways – in terms of deciding to change the course of her life as she left her career with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), married, moved, and concentrated upon following her dream of becoming a fiction writer. In her novels it has also been an important influence, as one of the key characters is struggling with addictions to painkillers and she has included characters who belong to Alcoholics Anonymous.

When I interviewed Louise, the interview was compressed to an hour, between a local media interview, a CBC two hour live broadcast, and a book launch. Although in many ways it was an excellent interview, she never said a word about her struggles as an alcoholic – and I did not ask her directly. Why not?

As a researcher I was conscious of the limited amount of time for the interview. To dig into a hard topic like alcoholism often entails an emotionally draining and difficult conversation. In an earlier SSHRC grant that I did on women's lifelong learning trajectories, I was shocked to discover that out of the forty women I interviewed, over a quarter of them had dealt with extremely difficult issues pertaining to alcohol/substance abuse, either as users themselves, or with spouses, parents, or siblings. When I did these interviews, it was emotionally exhausting for the participant to talk through these issues, which in case, they volunteered to share. The women were often in tears, and clearly, the issue of alcohol/substance abuse connected to some of darkest aspects of their lives. I knew from experience it would take more than the brief hour we had to discuss these issues in any depth. There are also ethical concerns in that when a person who has multiple demands on her time is gracious enough to share an hour of it with you, how appropriate is it as a researcher to delve into memories that may render an upset emotional response, when that person has to go straight from your interview to other very public venues to speak?

There were openings in the interview for Louise Penny to talk about this aspect of her past if she so chose – and she did not. To ask the question directly would mean pushing the interview in a direction she might not have been comfortable with. I was also conscious that if the interview went in this direction, I would probably not get answers to other questions that were of central interest to the study – particularly, her perspective on being a Canadian writer and how this connected my interest in fiction writing and citizenship. So the choice was made, and the story therefore gets shaped and shared in a particular way.

In some ways, during the actual interview process (the Beside…) – the participant and the researcher are engaged in a courtly dance – one step forward, a side-step back, a gentle pressure, lean away, nudge forward, swing in a different direction. How do you make the participant feel at ease, encourage them to disclose – to tell their own story in their own words – and yet somehow provide answers to the questions you are raising? It is a complicated, subtle, and not always easy to discern process.

After…

Writers are used to crafting words carefully to tell their stories. Their interview responses are often elegantly composed, particularly when the writer is well-established. Allowing participants to edit transcripts may mean that they will speak more freely (Merle-Jaffe, 2011). Yet as writers, they often do extensive editing of their transcripts. How much does the story change when words become a carefully crafted representation of dialogue?

One of the most common misconceptions encountered in this study was the assumption by writers that we intended to publish their entire transcript. Even though the letter that was sent out with the transcripts for review clearly explained that we would only be using short excerpts, most writers are not familiar with academic journal articles in an Education context, whereby transcripts are coded and short quotes are taken out to be used as evidence to support a larger discussion. Many authors are used to being interviewed, and these interviews are presented in full – or rather in a summary form, carefully edited, so that the interview sounds as fluid as a well-constructed piece of dialogue from a novel. The fractured, broken nature of real life conversation often seemed to provoke a dismayed reaction from participants, who were concerned not only with how disjointed they sounded, but also, in some instances, how much work it would take to 'clean it up'. Initially, some participants spent, I am sure, literally hours editing the transcripts. In some cases, they also edited my questions so that I sounded more coherent! Some authors also did not get the transcripts back

to us for lengthy periods of time, because they could not devote the hours that they perceived were needed to do the edits. It often took quite a bit of follow-up communication to assure participants that the entire transcript would not be reprinted, that the language would be 'cleaned up', and that they would not be represented in studies as writers who were incapable of being articulate.

In the process of analysis, some life history researchers focus more on the micro-aspects of communication – the short breaks in conversation, the disfluencies of speech, and the non-verbal aspects of communication. In this study, I was interested in obtaining a more comprehensive picture of the learning processes of writers, and how this connected to notions of learning pertaining to citizenship. Therefore, because of this, and because of the initial responses from participants around the editing process, I decided that we would 'tidy up' the language ourselves by doing a more thorough edit of the transcripts before they were sent out for review. Of course then, in this 'After…' stage, this meant that in multiple ways the stories there were shared were also being edited, revised, and retold.

Beyond…

Magnifico (2010) points out the ways in which the audience or readership influences an author's decision in the writing process around how to craft a tale, noting that "Because it is difficult to anticipate the needs of a distant audience, writers must abstract their potential readers, at least to a certain degree" (p. 168). In many ways, the academic author must also do this whilst analysing and writing up their own papers on a research study. When writing to a scholarly audience, they are focusing on a particular readership, and so that shapes the examples that they pull out, the themes they focus on discussing, and the theories and concepts that they use to pursue their analysis.

During a life history interview, the author may provide a rationalization or explanation for certain decisions or experiences that may be disclosed, whilst others may be surmised by the researcher in examining the transcripts and reading the author's novels. However, neither approach guarantees that the insights discerned are completely accurate. The added layer of having a body of fictional work to review as well as transcripts when interviewing authors can both enhance and complicate the research process. In asking questions not only about the writers' lives, but also by making connections to the stories that they choose to tell, there is an another dimension to consider when tracing their learning trajectories.

The Before, Beside and After are all stages in the process of doing biographical research where decisions are made that affect ultimately the stories that are shared, in this case not just by the writers, but also ultimately, by the scholars who study their lives and their work.

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{ TC "*Monika Grochalska* - Discursive shaping of intimate relationships as a research field" \f \l }

Monika Grochalska, University of Warmia and Mazury, Poland

The main goal of this paper is to make a critical overview of intimate relationships research in Polish pedagogy and sociology and to suggest an alternative research direction, which treats intimate relationships as the effect of discursive shaping.

In Polish public discourse there are various patterns which determine ways of understanding family relationships, marital happiness, intimacy and other similar concepts. These are kinds of "reference points", which also set the direction of research. Most Polish studies on intimate relationships are focused on problems within the family, excluding the intimacy issue.

The main goal of this paper is to explore and critically look at the research of intimate relationships in Polish pedagogy and sociology. Moreover it aims to outline an alternative research direction, which treats intimate relationships as the effect of discursive shaping. Most often Polish researchers are focused on particular problems within the family, excluding or at least marginalizing the issue of intimacy. Deconstruction of social assumptions ascribed into their studies can show the main constraints of such approach.

Definition of intimacy

The key issue is the definition of intimacy. Despite its importance, intimacy is a very difficult research subject. Especially interesting area of exploration are ways of creating and shaping intimate relationships by women, because of specific social expectations towards them. However, it is really important to acknowledge that "intimate relationship" is a social construct, which is variable in time and created by social actors in relations with their environment.

The category of intimacy or intimate relationship is very interesting, but difficult to capture over a period of time. 'Intimate relationships' is an ambiguous and imprecise term, can mean different kinds of relationships between friends, sexual partners and family members.

In sociology, the concept of privacy has replaced what was originally recorded in terms of family relationships or relationships in the community. At various times, research on intimate relationships in sociology has taken different directions. To the beginning of the 80s there were studies on the functions and structure of the family (Parsons, Goode), including a feminist approach (Millet, Mitchell, Oakley). The 80's brought a research and analysis focus

on interpersonal relationships in marriage, and critical analysis of economic aspects in the sphere of civil and professional relations (feminism, Marxism). In the late 80s, for the first time, non-heterosexual relations were considered (Gilles, 2003). Other studies on this topic include:

- J. Duncombe and D. Mardsen (early 90's) - discourses of love and intimacy, "played" in the household (gender, asymmetry of emotional behaviour)

- J. Gubrium and J. Holstein (early 90's) – the discursive nature of family relationships were reflected and reconstructed through everyday communication.

- D. Morgan (late 90's) - the family as an interactive process, "family practice".

In the course of the development of these studies the very concept of privacy (as a definition) underwent various transformations. Currently, for intimate relationships, researchers generally understand the relationship, usually sexual, among adults, defining these relations in terms of individualized, negotiable interaction. This is in contrast to earlier approaches to provide more flexible gender categories and the roles, responsibilities and duties assigned to a particular biological sex (Gilles, 2003).

Other popular researchers including L. Jamieson (1998), reveal the intimacy of a specific type of relationship based on openness, cooperation, and unlimited expression of feelings, paying particular attention to the quality of the relationship. In the 90s the concept of 'intimacy to be negotiated' appeared, it was also recognized that intimacy was a political category. Finally, A. Giddens (1992) introduced the term "pure relationship" and the category of "plastic sexuality" to describe what happens to intimacy in the pop culture. Transformations of intimacy by Giddens are a response to social changes, but they are also characterise these changes. A gradual individualisation and democratisation of intimate relationships follows and these are starting to be accepted as a norm for homosexual relationships, which are the best exemplification of Giddens 'pure relationship'. This critical view is to exemplify the current stage of Polish research on a family.

Polish public discourse of intimacy

Polish research within sociology of family and social pedagogy are full of cultural biases and schemes, which are usually harmful for females. Their main source is public discourse. Moreover, comparing to the world's research and understanding of intimacy, most Polish studies are stuck in 80's.

In Polish public discourse there are various patterns which determine ways of understanding family relationships, marital happiness, intimacy and other similar concepts. These various discourses penetrate also scientific environment. These are kinds of "reference points", which set the direction of further research. But researchers hardly recognize their own social and cultural determination.

In any intimate relationship we crave two contradictories: closeness and independence. It means that living in a relationship with another person always results in conflict. We often think in terms of opposites: love-hate, peace-war, cooperation-conflict. Thus, in our society, there exists a conflict taboo which considers conflict, war and hate wrong. The same way occurs a popular view of a family as ideal heaven, a sphere of harmony and security. This is 'the folk concept of the family', which emphasizes support, understanding, happiness and warm holiday rituals (Williams, Sawyer and Wahlstrom, 2013: 179). This concept is specifically strong in Polish culture because of its' Roman Catholic roots. Roman Catholic teaching identifies the family as the social and moral centre of the community; the family, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is 'the original cell of social life'. The guiding principle of church teaching, the stability of the family, does not admit divorce. Although the church long defined the family as a hierarchical structure headed by the father, it now in keeping with the declarations of Vatican and the teachings of John Paul II rejects the traditional subordination of women in the family in favour of equality of dignity and responsibility between men and women. The family, moreover, is child-centred; traditional Catholic teaching makes the primary end of marriage the procreation and rearing of children. Only recently have Catholic theologians begun to speak of mutual love as an end 'equally primary' (according to Encyclopedia Brittanica).

This concept dominates also in a public discourse in Poland. Even left-wing politicians are usually very conservative when it comes about e.g. same-sex couples.

Public discourse influence the real intimate relationships, because usually the boundaries and ways of protecting intimacy are inscribed in a set of standards concerning social life model and culture of the social group. In the intimate relationship exists a special code depending on the type of intimate interaction, their meaning and influence of the relations on the level of individualization of each person. Rules of the code are related to emotions – ways of expressing, shaping and simulating them (Luhmann 2003: 21), but also are framed and shaped by a social context. Codes of relations, differentiates in terms of language, embodiment, gestures and erotic relations, regarding to social capital of the persons involved.

As Lynn Jamieson interprets, contemporary relationships are very open and devoid of shyness, embarrassment, mystery and distance. What matters in private life is the desire of intimate conversation, listening and understanding the partner (Jamieson 1998: 158), but in terms of public discourse more important are legality of a relationship (marriage), having children and parenting. Alternative forms of relationships are often regarded as a threat for 'the real Polish family'.

Polish family studies

The main aim of the paper is a critical analysis of main Polish studies within pedagogy and sociology of family published in the last 12 years. Deconstruction of social assumptions ascribed into these studies can show the main constraints of such approach. Such a critic enables rethinking intimate relationships as an effect of discursive learning, which is understood as a phenomenon of social cognition in the discursive reality.

There were chosen four books very often used as students handbooks in the courses of pedagogy and sociology of the family:

- S. Kawula, J. Brągiel, A. W. Janke, Pedagogy of a family. The areas and panorama of issues, Toruń 2009.

- F. Adamski, The family. Socio-cultural dimension, Kraków 2002.

- L. Kocik, The family faced with the values and patterns of life in the postmodern world, Kraków 2006.

- T. Rostowska, Marriage, family, work and the life quality, Kraków 2009.

All of them contain word 'family" in the title. The main critical questions were:

- What is the content of these books?

- What and how do they teach us about a family?

- What kind of stories do they 'sell' us?

- Do they contain any concepts of intimacy between partners in the relationship? What vision of intimacy is it?

Table 1. The content of books – main themes.

Themes	T. Rostowska	L. Kocik	F. Adamski	S. Kawula, J. Brągiel, A.W. Janke
structure of a family	+	+	+	+
support within family	+	-	-	+
conflicts/crises in relations	-	-	-	+
marriage	+	+	+	-
communication	+	-	-	-
alternative forms of relations	+	+ (in negative context)	-	+ (mainly in negative context)
social roles	+	-	+	+
parenting	+	+	+	+
work-life balance	+	-	+	-
gender differences	+	-	+	-
intimacy	-	+	-	-
having children	+	+	+	+
involvement	+	-	-	-
love	-	-	-	-
sexuality	-	-	-	-
uncoupling	-	+	-	+

All chosen books refer to the structure of a family, having children and parenting. Moreover most of them treat formal relationship - marriage as the core of a family. Alternative forms of relationships e.g. cohabitation, homosexual relationships, DINKs are usually commented in a negative way. Only T. Rostowska (2009) who adopts family systems perspective, treats all alternative relationships as equally valuable and possible to choose. Analysed books do not contain issues of love and sexuality. Authors also rarely mention about involvement in the relationships and about intimacy between partners. Those are silenced discourses of Polish pedagogy and sociology of a family.

Seventh heaven – idealisation of the family relationships

According to J.M. Crawford, 'Society's definition of >family< is rapidly expanding and has come to include single parents, biracial couples, blended families, unrelated individuals living cooperatively, and homosexual couples, among others. Unfortunately, family policy has been slow to catch up to changing trends in modern lifestyles' (Crawford, 1999: 271). It's specifically true in a Polish context, where The Constitution of the Republic of Poland says: 'Marriage is a union of man and woman, the family, motherhood and parenthood are under the protection and care of the Polish Republic'. There is no room for alternatives. The most visible is a central role of heterosexual marriage and having children. There is a strong belief that the external norms should govern the relationships. National protection should be reserved only for the 'right' or 'real' families.

This idea has its own representation also in handbooks, where are a lot of paradoxes. On the one hand L. Kocik (2006) wrote, 'family relationships are primarily based not on what

individual members have, but on what and who they are for each other" (Kocik, 2006: 62). But on the other he says, that 'inclusive definitions, drawing attention to the relationships between family members are inconsistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church' (Kocik, 2006: 69). This is quite odd opinion taking into consideration the fact that Catholic Church should be inclusive institution from its foundations. Moreover, The Constitution of the Republic of Poland guarantees the secularity of the state and at the same time it fully complies with the teachings of Catholic Church, especially when it goes about family life.

Other author – F. Adamski (2002) – quotes such a definition of a family:

> a family is the spiritual union of small group of people gathered in a common household by mutual assistance and care, based on faith in a real or perceived biological connectivity, as well as family and social traditions. A family group distinguished from other groups on the basis of co-occurrence of the following features: a common residence of members, common surname, common ownership, biological continuity and common spiritual culture (Adamski, 2002: 29).

There is a paradox too. Inclusive elements, as the spiritual union, mutual assistance and care occur next to the excluding biological continuity or common surname (!). In mentioned books we find usually very traditional definitions which generally focus on either structure or function of the family. The presented structure of family assumes that the relationships among members that are based on marriage, blood or adoption. The main functions are tasks performed by families, such as child rearing, meeting affectional needs of adults and transmitting the values of the larger society. Traditional family provides physical care, allocates resources, determines who does what, assures members' socialization, establishes interaction patterns, incorporates and releases members and relates to the society through its institutions.

In analysed books dominate three perspectives (Williams, Sawyer and Wahlstrom, 2013):

- the structural-functional perspective – a family is seen as a social institution performing essential functions

- the family systems perspective – a family members seen as interconnected elements influencing system as a whole,

- the ecological perspective – stresses the interaction of families and their political and societal environments.

There is evident lack of:

- the conflict perspective,

- the symbolic interaction perspective,

- the social change perspective,

- the feminist perspective,

- the family development perspective.

Structural-functional perspective gives very narrow view of a family as a harmonious unit with shared values. Divorce is seen as disintegration. Interactions between members of a family are not so important for the researchers of such orientation. Especially love and sexuality are taboo themes. Sex in our society is surrounded by an army of social norms, religious restrictions and moral taboos. It is seen as a private sphere, so the researchers do not feel allowed to write about it in the context of a family.

(Un)Importance of choice and happiness

In the opinion of L. Kocik (2006), the core of the family is always a heterosexual couple: 'marriage can be attributed to a feature of universality, because it occurs in every era, in every culture, in every religion, in every place on Earth. As a specific relationship of a woman with a man it initiates the family, and so provides a continuance of our species' (Kocik, 2006: 63). The family has only biological task – reproduction and it has a meaning as long as it contributes to give birth to new children. Author does not say what about couples which cannot have children or consciously decide not to have an offspring. Author also has clear ideas about the cohabitation. He says: 'research confirms that relationships of people who have opted for cohabitation before marriage are less stable than those which have not decided to live together before marriage, treating marriage as a holy sacrament. Cohabitation relationships break down by a lack of trust among partners - for this reason they are taking less conventional solutions than most people' (Kocik, 2006: 86). It is rather radical judgement, although author does not provide a direct source of such a research results. This is not an isolated view.

F. Adamski (2002) seems to be even more radical and stereotypical in his opinions:

> In broad opinion the action professional activation of women should include mainly unmarried or married but childless women eventually. Widely proclaimed thesis that women should work, because it is the only way to their full social emancipation is not so accepted among women themselves. More often unemployed women advocate for it, while working women more forcefully

advocate against it. Those women learned by the life experience, use a lot of arguments against economically forced professional activation of married women (Adamski, 2002: 205).

However the author quotes neither specific examples of research which would indicate that, nor the arguments of those women. He writes further:

> According to the commonly accepted models, a good husband should get paid to keep the house, and a good wife should take care of the house and deal with the upbringing of children, and she should not work professionally. Not very rare are opinions that women are more specifically mentally attributed to a domestic and family matters than to professional ones - and hence they would always be less useful at work. This fact is also the reason of avoiding by women some activities and positions, which seem to be more responsible and absorbing. Such work could potentially diminish interest, time and energy which women have to devote to their homes (Adamski, 2002: 206).

This work is extremely stereotyped and discriminating women, who are not given even the right to make their own choices. Author's view is relentlessly patriarchal. He arbitrarily decides what women should or should not do.

Intimacy – gender differences and heterocentrism

In Polish literature and public discourse dominates the family as the centre of considerations. There is nearly nothing about close relationships between partners. It is very rare to find the word 'intimacy' and quite impossible to find any kind of its definitions.

When there is mentioned a unique character of homosexual relations, it is usually placed in the negative context. The only one handbook, where homosexual relationships are treated equally is T. Rostowska's (2009) writing:

> Talks about feelings are for women the primary way of creating, developing and exhibiting closeness and intimacy. Men create and express intimacy rather by common action. There is no such confusion in the homosexual couples (Rostowska, 2009: 111).

She is the one and only among four authors who openly and objectively writes about intimacy, gender differences, gendered communication and homosexual couples. She considers a family as a system and she does not judge people because of non-traditional relationships choices.

Most Polish studies on intimate relationships neglect or totally ignore the issue of intimacy. In Polish public discourse there are various patterns which determine ways of understanding family relationships and marital happiness. Intimacy is the absent trait in most of the studies. These various discourses penetrate also scientific environment. They are kinds of "reference

points", which set the direction of further research. But researchers hardly recognize their own social and cultural determination.

Conclusion

Not only giving a critical overview of intimate relationships research in Polish pedagogy and sociology is important, but also an alternative research direction should be outlined. Polish studies on families lack socio-cognitive perspective which treats intimate relationships as the effect of discursive shaping. Most Polish studies on intimate relationships are focused on particular problems within the family, excluding or at least marginalizing the issue of intimacy. The authors are under an influence of unconscious processes, their own narratives and the public discourse constituting their writing and research.

Meanwhile the meanings of intimacy are shaped in the process of social cognition through everyday communication. This is closely related to biographical stories of women as long as the discourse shapes biographies. Women learn how to (re)built their intimate relationships and they construct their narrations in particular discursive context. That is why among other promising methods Critical Discourse Analysis can give us a chance to acknowledge better the building and transformation of relationships in life and research.

The narratives shape our culture and our minds. To change either the quality of relationships, or the most common topics, perspectives and patterns in research, we should change the dominant narratives first. As a good start is worth recommending to understand relations in a partnership as a socio-cognitive phenomenon, which consists of perceptions, attributional processes, memories, beliefs, expectations and self-perceptions. People built their relationships implementing different strategies of impression management. The primary concern of Polish sociology and pedagogy of a family should become the way we think about our relationships. It should be considered how people's judgements of their partners and their behaviour set the stage for the events that follow, as well as people's efforts to influence and control what their partners think about them. The discourse and narratives we construct are of enormous importance, because they determine our perceptions and interpretations of the partnerships (Miller, 2012: 105). This is the perspective which Polish research field on family lacks the most.

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{ TC "*Janet Groen* - Uncovering the gifts of inner wisdom through silence: An autobiographical account of seeking wellness and congruence as an adult educator" \f \l }Uncovering the gifts of inner wisdom through silence: An autobiographical account of seeking wellness and congruence as an adult educator

Janet Groen, University of Calgary, Canada

Drawing on wisdom, meditation and adult learning literature, as well selected personal writings, I offer an autobiographical account of cultivating an intentional space of silence in my life and increasing my trust in inner wisdom. In turn I also consider if and how this inward journey has manifested itself, referred to as practical wisdom, in my daily life as a mid-career professor, concluding with potential implications for our work as adult educators

Introduction

> I lay in my bed wondering what I had done. The implications of engaging in a nine-day silent retreat washed over-me. Here it is – only the end of day one – and in one week, I would still be in silence! I felt overwhelmed, worried and intimidated. I berated myself for signing up for such a long retreat – why didn't I start with something a little easier? Perhaps the toe-dipping three-day retreat would have been a better starting place.

In the midst of fear, trepidation and some excitement, this nine day silent retreat where I would learn Vipassana meditation marked the beginning of a new journey. Starting an intentional meditation practice marked my quest to find a deeper congruence between my inner being and my outer persona. I came to this stage of my life as someone who was already deeply immersed in her spiritual journey and as an adult education researcher engaged in linking spirituality and adult learning within various contexts such as higher education, workplaces, and now environmental adult education. This was no longer enough. I was feeling restless and anxious in my work as a faculty member. As Jarvis (1987) indicated, I was experiencing a disjuncture; I was no longer feeling at home and felt the need to revisit the deeper questions of meaning and purpose. Now, four years into this journey, I see that this time marked a turning point for me where I heightened my pursuit to live an undivided life "where meaning and purpose are tightly interwoven with intellect and action, where compassion and care are infused with insight and knowledge" (Zajonc & Palmer, 2010: 56). As Tisdell (2011) indicated, by striving for congruence, I was engaging in the paradox of wisdom, engaging in the inner and transcendent cultivation of wisdom in order to reflect practical wisdom in my daily life. Furthermore, I believe that taking up this quest was a counter-response. In our rapidly changing world and more specifically within our universities, where the pace and expectations have heightened, competition for dollars is increasing and the stability previously offered faculty members is gone, I felt buffeted about. Despite and because of the turbulence, I wanted to be anchored in something steady and

nourishing. I was seeking a solid foundation, a place that I could return to in order to draw on an inner wisdom to live more wisely and holistically.

Drawing on wisdom, meditation, and adult learning literature, as well selected personal writings, I offer an autobiographical reflection of cultivating an intentional space of silence in my life and increasing my trust in inner wisdom. In turn I also consider if and how this inward journey has manifested itself, referred to as practical wisdom, in my daily life as a mid-career professor (Tisdell & Swartz, 2012). Finally I reflect on the potential implications for our work as adult educators.

Contemplative Writing and Autobiography

First of all, I must admit, here in black in write for all to read, that I violated one of the principles of this nine-day silent retreat by writing about my experiences in the privacy of my bedroom. We were advised not to bring books and or journals as they might serve as a distraction for full immersion in the retreat. However, I suspected that this was going to be an important time of learning for me and I did not want to lose those 'in the moment' insights by waiting until the close of the retreat. I had learned the value of writing, immediately after a meditation session, at a contemplative writing and dialogue session I had previously attended at the Shambhala Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia. At it's most basic, the guideline is to first engage in a short meditation, typically guided by the facilitator, and then, without interruption, to have participants immediately write down what is staying with them post-meditation. In turn, people work in pairs to share their writing; taking turns actively listening by asking questions of the person sharing their writing so they may potentially have a clearer and deeper understanding of what was offered during the meditative experience. Roles are then reversed. In conclusion, voluntary observations are brought back to the large group. Since this workshop, I always have a journal at my side just in case I wish to capture a thought, observation, phrase, image, and/or metaphor at the close of a mediation session. However, it is important to offer the caveat that one cannot go into a meditation session with pre-conceived expectations (i.e. I need an answer to this problem). I assure you that many times there is nothing to record, but just in case …

I view the writings within my 'meditation journal' as an collection of my interpretations, or reflections, on some aspect of my autobiography; defined as "how people give an account of themselves" (Bruner, 2001: 25). While sitting in silence and being attentive to what is offered, as opposed to being diverted by distracting thoughts, I am occasionally offered

insight into some aspect of my life – in other words, an interpretation. Within this paper, I offer five samples of my writing drawn from my meditation journal, modified somewhat for relevancy to the topic at hand.

Locating Myself

> We are two days into the silent retreat. I cannot shut my mind off! Our facilitator calls this monkey mind – and I had it. There goes my mind – thinking about course assignments for faculty members for next year. I bring my mind back and settle on my breath. Suddenly a tune from choir pops into my head. I bring my mind back and settle on my breath. Now I hear the rattling of pots and pans in the kitchen. What are we going to have for lunch? It smells great. I bring my mind back and settle on my breath. Now I'm stewing about a conversation I had with a colleague and I wonder if she is annoyed with me. I bring my mind back and settle on my breath. I peek at my watch – only ten minutes have passed in this forty-five minute meditation session. Not good.

I have served as an academic, at the University of Calgary, in the area of adult education and learning for 11 years now. I was particularly excited about taking up this academic position, as there was clear evidence of integrating spirituality within graduate level academic course offerings in this particular Faculty of Education. I was invited to add to the roster of course offerings in this area and so I developed a course, based on my doctoral dissertation, entitled *Spirituality within the Workplace*.

As I designed and taught this particular course, both the challenge and the opportunity presented to me was to live out some of the key tenets that my students and I were exploring. The academic setting was *my* workplace and I believed that I needed to try and animate my own talk, reflecting some of my budding aspirations toward congruency. Taken directly from my doctoral work and applied to my course outline, this is how I believed spirituality could manifest itself within our workplaces, including my own:

> As I link my spiritual perspective to the context of the workplace, I believe that work is a central piece in how we define ourselves, and that it is possible to find personal fulfillment through our work. As Matthew Fox (1994) stated, "We have a right to and a need for joy in our work. If joy is good enough for God and powerful enough to have been the cause of the universe, then clearly joy is integral to our work too" (p. 95). Joyful work is experienced when our basic needs are taken care of and we are holistically engaged: physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Finally, the inclusion of spirituality within the workplace is not limited to the creation of safe spaces within well-crafted learning opportunities. It ripples holistically outward to address the foundations of our workplaces by examining our role in supporting social justice issues, such as ethical operating procedures and the responsible and humanitarian treatment of employees.

In turn then, the aspiration to seek congruency between teaching this particular course and my broader life as an academic become fodder for a series of reflective articles (Kawalilak & Groen, 2010; Groen & Kawalilak, 2006) I wrote with my colleague, Dr. Colleen Kawalilak, as we considered our own pathway toward tenure. At the time, the paradoxical tension we

were trying to hold was to not get swept up in the anxiety producing culture of performance and the mysterious judgment process associated with applying for tenure. In one of our articles, we concluded, "While we need to be mindful of the external pressures and expectations as we work toward obtaining tenure, our central focus needs to remain focused on our inner work in honoring our self and soul " (Groen & Kawalilak, 2006: 66). This also became our outer-work as we engaged with our students, our colleagues, our work and ourselves in a way that was based upon compassion, celebration, and social justice. However, despite the learning I unearthed through co-writing these articles, it still wasn't enough. I needed a more intentional inner practice to help me connect with this outer-work.

I now draw literature that explores spirituality in higher education, wisdom and our work as faculty members, and cultivating a meditative practice in order to illuminate my quest to be an undivided academic and to consider how this might enhance our wellbeing within the academy.

Spirituality and Higher Education

> Five days into the retreat, I am sitting in the morning meditation session with my fellow sojourners. My mind drifts to my involvement in a local community – based adult education program, which has become increasingly stressful, dispute numerous attempts to turn things around. I try to bring my thoughts back to my breath. However I begin to almost hyperventilate, while still sitting in silence. I'm not able to get on top of the rapid-fire breathing and my racing heart. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a voice in my head whispers, "just let it go". My breathing slows, my shoulders relax, and a wave of relief washes over me. I continue meditating, feeling lighter and I am able to stay with my breath for the remainder of the session. One of the first things I did, post-retreat, was to step back from continued involvement in this adult education program.

Over the past ten years, discourse and research linking spirituality with higher education has become almost become mainstream (Duerr, Zajonc & Dana, 2003; Fleming & Courtney; Hunt & West, 2007), albeit with some tension and uneasiness. Indeed, there is still some caution about the overt presence of spirituality in teaching and research, regardless of faculty. According to Dillar, Abdur-Rashid, and Tyson (2000), Tisdell (2000), Shahjahan (2005, 2009), and Palmer and Zajonc (2010), it is still risky as an academic to venture into this terrain given a dominant university culture that still places a premium on rational, cognitive and positivist oriented discourses and research. Regardless, I strongly agree with Palmer and Zajonc's (2010) critique of the notion that academics and spirituality do not mix; religion and spirituality are essential to deepening our understanding of what it means to be human.

While noting the importance of engaging in research and teaching in the area of spirituality in higher education, I also acknowledge Leona English's (2012) caution that spirituality should

not be sidelined to simply be about introspection. "Spiritualty is not all about feathers, candles, and soft music. In other words, educators must take care to not use spiritualty as an escape to a spiritual place in our classrooms; life is spiritual in all its messiness" (English, 2012: 28). Indeed it would far too convenient and hypocritical to declare our classrooms and even our research as spiritual spaces, while ignoring how we engage in our roles as academics. Spirituality should be manifested in the daily fabric of our work; how we make decisions; how we interact with our colleagues and graduate students; and in serving as a social advocate when we see harm being done to those around us. This indeed is where the undivided life as academic comes in. As Zajonc (2010) indicated, we need to find a way to "an undivided life where meaning and purpose are tightly interwoven with intellect and action, where compassion and care are infused with insight and knowledge" (Zajonc, 2010: 56). And so I turn to the emerging literature in wisdom in adult learning and education to uncover this path.

Inner Wisdom to Outer Wisdom to Inner Wisdom

> As we concluded our final meditation on day nine, the oldest member of our group drew a happy face on the chalkboard on his way out of the room. We all smiled at each other, feeling that we had achieved something of great significance. We had, without talking, become a tightly connected community. We had shared in the daily rhythm of sitting meditation, eating meditation, and walking meditation for nine-days. We heard each other's restlessness, heavy sighs and occasional sniffles. Once somebody even tipped over, falling on the floor. But she was okay. As we ended this time of silence and prepared to move into a time of speaking, there was almost a collective holding of breath! By breaking it, we knew we were forever releasing something rarely within our grasp.

Once a week I attend a contemplation and meditation group. For the first hour, we sit in a circle and spend time listening to readings, chanting and sitting in silence as we meditate. For the second hour, we talk about the journey of the contemplative life and how, through this practice, we may grow in wisdom – both inner and outer wisdom. Even though we focus on something a little different every week, we are grappling with the same issues. *What are the challenges of a contemplative practice? How do we deepen our practice? How do we practice and apply what this practice teaches us in our daily lives?* Before we leave, we come together to stand in a circle and chant, several times, the following line to each other, turning our gaze to each other while chanting: "*Wherever I turn, I see the Face of God, Wherever I turn, I see the Face of God*" The elusively simple but profoundly satisfying structure of this weekly meeting mirrors the notion that is at the heart of wisdom: congruence of the inner and the outer (Tisdell, 2011). There is an integrative quality to wisdom that allows us to engage in paradoxes of knowing and being that Palmer (1990) called

contemplation-and-action. We draw on both transcendental knowledge and practical knowledge in order to be part of "the interconnecting web of wisdom of the universe" (Tisdell, 2011: 6).

In describing inner and outer wisdom, Tisdell (2011) referred to the Aristotelian distinctions of wisdom – *Sophia*, as transcendent wisdom, and *phronesis*, as practical or lived wisdom. Turning first to *Sophia*, the name comes from Proverbs 24 of Bible, where "Wisdom is building *her* house" (Tisdell, 2011: 7). Wilma Fraser and Tara Hyland-Russell (2011) elaborated that *Sophia* is referred to as the feminized personification of wisdom (*sapientia*), reminding us that there are different ways knowing and seeing the world, beyond the usual rational and cognitive approaches, potentially realized through metaphor, art, music, drama, and story. Their description of *Sophia* and trusting this inner wisdom, as an important way of understanding, is something that we have almost lost and we have paid a significant price. For while we in the West, have acquired the material benefits of well-being and privilege associated with scientific advancements, we have moved into a space of malaise where a connection with the sacred has almost disappeared only to be replaced by instrumental and rational thinking. Jarvis concurred with this, pointing out that answers to questions of meaning and purpose and how to engage in the world is not the purview of science with its emphasis on factual knowledge, but it is through wisdom that we begin to answer these questions. Wisdom is about coming home and recovering what has been lost.

Turning to *phronesis* or practical, lived wisdom, we turn to adult development literature (Erikson & Erickson, 1997; Sternberg & Jordan, 2005) and the suggestion that it is through experience across the lifespan we gain the possibility of wisdom. However, it is not age that automatically confers wisdom, but the learning that occurs as a result of those experiences (Jarvis, 2011). In turn as we engage in a particular kind of learning, we work toward the possibility of practical wisdom as "cultivating intelligence in order to enhance the common good, and preserving successful cultural practices that maintain the unity and "wholeness" of the social group" (Jarvis, 2011: 91). Reminding us of the integrative aspect of practical or the 'action' portion of wisdom, Palmer (1990) stated that action, or practical wisdom, is an outward manifestation of our inward power. However, as already previously alluded to in the previous section, as our society emphasizes action we may become caught up and trapped 'doing'; resulting in a life that is frantic, fragmented and ultimately soul draining. In turn then, we move into a life of alternation – we take action, we become exhausted, we try to rest, we take action, we become exhausted, we rest and so on. Rather than alternation, wisdom

calls on us to move into integration – the intertwining of contemplation and action; inner and outer wisdom – in order to live undivided lives.

Meditation as the Pathway to Inner Wisdom

> Three weeks into their placement as student teachers, they filed into our weekly Friday morning class looking exhausted. While this class provided a space for these students to regroup, talk, reflect, and deepen their understanding on the dynamics of teaching, this weekly meeting could sometimes feel like just another 'to do' thing in their already incredible busy lives. As they came into class this week, I thought, "They really just need a space to breath." Wait a minute, there's something to that! Perhaps instead of coming into this class and immediately moving into another space of stimulation and activity, we should hit the pause button and provide a space to transition from their placements. Next class I was ready. Once my student teachers settled into the classroom, I offered the possibility of beginning each class with a short-guided meditation, selling this strategy by making links to research showing how teachers have been utilizing this practice in their classrooms. We agreed to try it for the remainder of the term. By the end of term, most of students let me know that they began to crave this short fifteen space of silence in their week. Also, as an unanticipated bonus, some of these new teachers began to bring some meditative approaches into their own classrooms!

In the previous section, I noted an all too common trap many of us fall into; as we spend our lives engaged in 'the doing' we become burnt out. This is where I was in my academic life when I enrolled in the nine-day silent retreat. Enrollment in this retreat signaled a breakthrough into a paradox of integration. "They become so profoundly exhausted that they are forced to give up all efforts to manage, direct, and control their lives, compelled to live beyond ego and willpower, they find themselves falling into the sustaining power of paradox (Palmer, 1990: 16).

While I acknowledge that there multiple ways toward cultivating an inner wisdom – journaling art, times in nature, music, prayer, and reading – building an insight meditation practice became an important path for me.

Briefly, insight meditation practice focuses on paying attention to your breath and a part of your body where you feel the inhalation and exhalation of your breath. This could be the diaphragm, the chest, or the space between your nose and your mouth. In your practice, you make a mental note when you are breathing in and a mental note when you are breathing out. *In Out In Out In Out In Out …* As thoughts come into your mind and/or sensory experiences erupt, tugging your concentration away from 'the breathe', you note your thoughts (planning, analyzing, stewing) and your sensory experience (itching, tingling, cramping, rumbling) and you return to noting your breathe – *In Out In Out In Out In Out….* Through this practice, you are creating a space or a clearing for listening into the silence. At times – speaking from experience – valuable insights can be offered into this space. In image, a thought, an emotion, an idea presents itself – an insight from the heart.

Zajonc (2009) reminded us that the doorway to meditation is always there, but the challenge is to intentionally turn away from the busyness of our lives to go through the doorway. Our days become busy with demands; an unexpected crisis emerges at work; a last minute report needs to be filed. However, even ten minutes a day spent in meditation can offers insights that would otherwise not be unveiled without the space of attentive listening into the silence.

While meditation is a solitary experience, I do find tremendous value in my weekly meditation group. This weekly reminder offers the needed support to keep up my practice and it also offers me the bridge to integrate the inner and outer aspects of wisdom. I note, while Neuman (2008) offered a critique of meditation, particularly the solitary nature of meditation practice, he could see value in a group practice. In his weekly encounter, the group would engage in several short meditative exercises and talk about their reactions to the exercises and how these activities might relate to their lives. "The magic is that adult education is beginning to happen" (Neuman, 2008: 297)

Congruence and the Connection to Faculty Wellness

> I dreaded becoming the Chair of our specialization again. When I went to my weekly meditation group I could not settle down into meditation, just when I needed it most. My mind was distracted and I had a pit in my stomach. In the second hour, as we worked in small groups, I was able to pinpoint the reasons for my anxiety in assuming the Chair position – my ongoing discomfort of interpersonal conflict and knowing that I, in my role as Chair, would need to address an impeding issue that was going to certainly cause conflict. While it sounds Pollyanna like, my small group helped me to see the potential learning for me in this role; that I might learn to be courageous in conflict. The conflict did erupt, but I was able to navigate my way through it in a way that brought myself and the other faculty member satisfactorily through to the other side. Also, while in the midst of the conflict, I was totally aware of what was going – it was as if I had the ability to step back, watch events transpire from a space of calm and coach myself on the side to listen, stay focused, and work toward resolution.

Last week, I received another e-mail from a colleague bemoaning the fact that there just wasn't time to do the things we used to do. Between responding to e-mails, churning out papers, applying for grants and sitting on far too many committees; who has time to do slow down and do those things we thought we might when we signed up to be an academic? To have time to read – to really read deeply –, to engage in longer and meaningful conversations with our colleagues and students, and to spend time in the required reflection that, for me, is such a necessary part of any writing project. In addition, many of us bemoan time snatched away from our lives outside the academy – time with families, with friends, and other meaningful pursuits. Still, many of us feel compelled to work harder, smarter and faster. Faculty positions are being reduced and we are told that we are the fortunate ones because we have secure positions. While I am appreciative of my position, it isn't enough. Running

faster, to stay in place, while expressing appreciation is disingenuous and paradoxically it diminishes the quality of work we are able to do. In addition, we are buying into a divided life or a life of alteration where we cycle through work exhaustion rest, work exhaustion rest. There has to be another way.

As I advocate for integration or an undivided life, I am not ignoring the underlying problematic structures within our universities. I am not suggesting that we all engage in a meditation practice so we can cope within the existing structures. An undivided life, a life that cultivates inner and outer wisdom, a holistic understanding of our spirituality, particularly applied to our workplaces, is also about engaging in advocacy and participating fully in the life of the academy to effect change. However, while we are typically fairly good at the 'action' portion of our lives as academics, often as a high personal price, we are rarely as intentional in cultivating our inner wisdom.

In closing this paper, I am reminded of the importance of striving to be an undivided academic with the arrival of a brand new colleague. As we have connected throughout this fall term, I am reminded of the anxiety of being a new faculty member. She is working hard to prove herself because she feels lucky that she landed a tenure track position. While part of my role is to be a resource person who can answer questions or point her in the right direction, my bigger role is to sometimes shelter her – to help her discern what is important and what is busy-work and to remind her to cultivate and protect time and space away from her work. Not only have we talked about family and interests outside of work, we have talked about important it is for her to find time to cultivate inner wisdom. It is in having the courage to step out of the 'doing' and to step into the 'listening' offered in silence that we are given the gift of reconnecting with the heart and soul of our work as faculty members.

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{ TC "*Marianne Horsdal* - The intergenerational impact of the experience of learning" \f \l }The intergenerational impact of the experience of learning

Marianne Horsdal, University of Southern Denmark

"Unequal chances – no thanks!" is the title of a research project carried out in a medium-sized Danish town in Jutland aiming to improve the possibilities for participation in upper secondary and further education. A university college and four local educational institutional institutions collaborate in order to investigate and –hopefully –solve some of the problems in the existing learning environments, find and minimize the excluding mechanisms, and reduce the impact of the so called 'negative social inheritance' on educational achievements. The project is financed by the municipality. Several development projects are going on in the schools and educational institutions: one secondary school, one upper secondary school (Gymnasium) and two vocational training colleges for young people.

Furthermore, the coordinator asked me to carry out a research project concerning the intergenerational impact on motivation and learning. During the spring 2014 I shall carry out narrative life story interviews with parents to the students in the four participating educational institutions in order to research the significance of the students' backgrounds, investigate the intergenerational impact on motivation and educational choice and achievement, and, perhaps, find ways to improve the collaboration between homes and schools.

The project is in its initial state. So far only two interviews are made – one more before the paper shall be finished. But I shall discuss the ideas behind the design of the project. Why I think narrative life story interviews are important in this context. And my preliminary views on the significant issue stated in the title of the paper: The intergenerational impact of the experience of learning.

The intergenerational impact of learning

The project
A Danish municipality containing a medium-sized town in Jutland (Horsens) initiated a project in order to enhance equal access to education and to achieve a higher educational level in the municipality. The project titled: *Unequal chances – no thanks. More opportunities for education for children and young people in Horsens* is running from 01.12.10 – 01.11.14. The main objective is to create knowledge and experience of how cultural changes may minimize the sorting processes in the educational system; and how to organize and implement such cultural changes and evaluate the results.

Several development projects are part of this, researching didactic considerations, pedagogical methods, development of curriculum and educational plans, and investigating the relations and the culture in the schools and educational institutions. Four educational institutions in the town participate in the development projects: Horsens Gymnasium (upper secondary school), HTX Learnmark (a combination of vocational training and upper secondary education with a focus on business), EUD Learnmark (vocational training (carpenter), and finally, an ordinary secondary school.

Connected to the overall project a research project based on narrative interviews with the parents of the students and pupils just started. *The aim of which is to contribute to our knowledge of the influence of the parents' experience of their school days, and their present interpretations of existence and self on the educational orientation of the children.* 'Educational orientation' is here understood as the students' motivation for attending school and getting an education.

The project *Unequal chances – no thanks* expresses a vision of equal access to education for children and young people in Horsens and a wish to enhance educational achievements and ambitions. Creating a new strategy for communication and collaboration with the parents should hopefully contribute to this objective and also support the educational orientation of the parents themselves.

Part of the objective is to research the connection between the social background of the students and their educational motivations.

The municipality wants to involve the parents to a higher extend than today, and find out how children's motivation, interests and attitudes towards education are created and maintained in the families, and they want to know more about the connections and interrelationships between homes and schools and to find out how the possibilities of a successful collaboration may be increased.

In order to develop the motivation for education and establish a connection between the feed-back given in both the homes and in the schools, and in order to establish a well-functioning collaboration between the two contexts more knowledge of the experience of learning, schooling and educational attempts of the parents is necessary. Therefore, the impacts of the background of the parents and their interpretations of existence will be explored. We want to research how parents' experiences of learning can influence the intergenerational

interactions, and how the parents may support their children in school and their motivation for learning and education or not.

The overall project is supervised by a University college, (Metropol), and I (from University of Southern Denmark) was asked to do the research with the parents because of my long experience in narrative research and lifelong learning.

Methodology

16 parents of students and pupils from the four participating educational institutions will be interviewed during the spring 2014. The teachers from the different schools are responsible for the selection of interviewees. Naturally the participation of parents is voluntary. I wrote a letter of information for the teachers to hand out, mentioning the unique opportunity of having a voice and having one's personal experiences taken seriously in the debate on educational issues.

In this type of narrative interview (see Horsdal 2012 chapter 8) I ask the narrator to tell about her life from the beginning and until we are here today. The interview takes place where the teller prefers, either at the school or in her own home. The interviewer does not use a recorder but writes down verbatim what is being told. I write by hand while others prefer a laptop. Therefore, the narrator must slow down the pace of narration. She must insert little breaks and pauses between the paragraphs according to the rhythm of writing. The interviewer will look up and face the narrator when she has finished writing the recent paragraph, and thus, the narrator will know that she can continue her story. The two, listener and narrator, will join in a rhythm in the transformation from oral telling into text. So the narrator has time enough to reflect and consider what she wants to tell; she decides which incidents are significant and should be included in her story. And she has time to express more well-formed sentences than what is the case in most recorded and transcribed interviews. The interviewer listens most actively, eager to catch each single word, but she cannot interrupt the narration or pose any questions during the telling. Even questions concerning a correct understanding of what is being said must be postponed until the end of the narration in order not to disturb the line of thought and the sequence of the narration. As the interviewee caches up with the present in her narration the story has come to an end and further questions may be asked.

The life story interview is followed by a qualitative interview containing questions about the children, and about the collaboration between the home and the school.

The proof of the interview is sent back to the narrator who may correct, add or delete passages of the interview. The interview cannot be used in any way, or quoted, until it has been accepted by the teller. She also decides the degree of anonymity.

WHAT the interviewee chooses to tell (selection), what has a high priority or the opposite (hierarchy), where she wants to begin and end her story (demarcation), as well as the sequence and order of the narrated events are significant issues in any narrative. The narrator selects, chooses, combines, and configures the parts of the telling, creates the plot, and the meaning and sense that matters to her, according to what *she* wants to express at the time of enunciation. Thus, the free narrative interview allows you as a researcher to get a hold on what the narrator selects, underscores, finds significant and meaningful, and how the meaningful elements are combined and configured into a story. In the traditional interview the interviewer asks questions and the interviewer responds, why a traditional interview is likely to provide more knowledge of premeditated selected issues on behalf of the interviewer. Interrupting questions also entail interruptions of the ongoing emplotment, influence the selections, and may lead the teller astray from her own storyline. So she ends up following the path outlined beforehand by the interviewer instead of constructing her own narrative order and her own configuration of events[13].

In the free narrative interview the story is finished as the narrator says something like: "And here we are today", or "I think this is it". At this point it is possible to put questions for clarifications or to continue with a qualitative interview.

This method was developed in order to research interpretations of self and existence, aiming to get a view into how people attempt to create meaning and coherence in the experiences of their lives according to their values and preferences; but also ethical issues play a considerable role in the methodological design. I would not dig into personal subject matter which the interviewee has chosen to avoid or slide quickly past. I respect if the narrator chooses not to tell of certain themes, events, relations etc, and I do not like elaborating questions which may touch on too vulnerable issues unknown to interviewer. There are ethical reasons for this attempt to be gentle and careful of how we step into other people's live; and in the analysis, however, I can notice ellipses, and other issues of order and

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[13] Obviously any inter-view (Kvale) is to some extent a co-construction. At the end of chapter 8 in Telling Lives (Horsdal 2012) I list 8 factors which influence the telling such as the various aspects of the contexts of the interview.

emplotment which may be significant in the analysis. The narrative shows both thick and thin descriptions, matters of significance and the opposite.

I am, of course well aware of the existence of different methodological approaches in life history research such as the aim of finding hidden patterns of alleged subdued narrative fragments in the cracks and chinks in the overt story, but this is not my line of research. On the contrary, what interest me is the successful or non successful attempts of coherence and configuration of meaning in the life story narrative.

The quiet rhythm of telling due to the writing and the very close collaboration in the transference into text gives the narrator a calm space for the – often unusual - happening of telling a life story. The attentiveness on behalf of the writer, the eagerness to catch every single word, ensures absolute presence at the same time as the teller is not rushed. She feels no impatience, and can take her time and let the memories form. The point is to provide a safe place for the emerging self in the narration[14]

Through the free narrative interview we can analyze how the narrator tries to create meaning and coherence in her story at the time of the telling, obviously influenced by the context of the narration. What is significant and meaningful or the opposite – as many narratives are a quest for meaning or negotiate meaning between various perspectives – can be researched together with the interpretations of self and existence of the narrator.

Ricoeur (1984) spoke of narratives as configuration of events, but many years of research on life story narratives show that in most interviews we tell about ourselves and our life in various contexts and affiliations – 'communities of practice' you may say, employing the expression from Lave and Wenger (1991). Participation and affiliations in communities of practice – and the emotional impact, make up the foundation of our life stories. We tell about ourselves in our family, in kindergarten, in the street, with the grandparents, at school, in other educational contexts, in workplaces, and if we have moved about we tell about the different places and about the relationships we experienced in those places. Places and relationships are contexts for an identity construction carried out through the emplotment. The narratives show the transitions and the connection or disconnection between the different contexts, and they show how we felt/feel about it. Did we choose a specific community of

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[14] The theory of mirror-neurons may provide an interesting explanation of the collaboration between teller and writer in the free narrative interview, and of the significance of attunement and attentiveness in the process of interviewing. The listener/writer is vicariously walking following the same path – also emotionally – as the narrator. The theory of mirror-neurons also provides probable explanations for the creation of a safe place for the emerging selves. (Horsdal 2012, Horsdal 2014)

practice, or were we put there? Did we feel welcomed or excluded? Did we thrive, succeed or the opposite? Which values and experiences will the individual narrator bring along on her journey of life from place to place, from one affiliation to another? The communities of practice may also be researched in the perspective of learning. What did the narrator learn in which contexts? What kind of feed-back was given? How did the experience of the participation in one context influence the participation in other contexts? And how did this increase the motivation for learning or the opposite?

The focus on contexts for participation, learning and affiliation is very important in the analysis of the stories. This approach provides a much deeper insight in the narratives than the usual concentration on themes only.

Obviously, also the order and form of the narrative is significant. The initial question:"tell me about your life from the beginning until we are here today" may indicate a chronological order, but repeated issues, ellipses, flash backs etc. may nevertheless occur. The combination of order and themes indicate the plot.

Also the voices may be of importance, such as the use of 'we' for instance. As Ewans noticed (2014), a narrative contains many voices besides the voice referring to the protagonist herself, (beyond considering the obvious social character of all language). We adopt voices from others, using their words and phrases and making them our own, or we quote others without identifying with their expressions. We position ourselves against the expressions of others etc.

In the line of the writings of Lakoff & Johnson (1999) metaphors applied in the narrations may be worth considering in the analysis.

In this project, the 16 narrative life story interviews are analyzed one by one, school by school and all together. As mentioned, all the interviewees are also asked to give a short qualitative interviews focusing on their children and their experience of the collaboration with the schools. The analysis of the combination of the two types of interviews is often very interesting and informative. In this study it may reveal knowledge about the role and impacts of the learning experience of the parents in relation to the attitudes towards the education of their children. This knowledge, hopefully, may provide indications of how the collaboration between schools and homes may improve and how to reinforce the motivation for education and learning

The context

The context of an interview is of course very important, not least when you are asked to tell the story of your life. Interestingly, we normally tell about our lives in two most different types of situations: In asymmetric relations interrogated by some kind of authorities. Here, rhetorical justifications (Bruner 1990) are at work whether we have to defend ourselves to avoid punishment or other negative sanctions, or we want to achieve certain benefits or rewards from the strong part in the asymmetric relation, like getting a job. The other type is symmetric. For instance we tell about ourselves to a new friend in order to share with one another the journey of life we did not experience together. Obviously, a narrative interview ought to resemble the latter type of autobiographical narration. I have often stated that the privilege of listening to somebody else's story is a gift, and we should as interviewers, first of all, respond to the willingness to narrate and to the story told as a gift we receive. Never complain about the content or the wrapping, so to speak.

It IS a gift, considering the fact that every single person walked a different and individual path in her life in space and time, experienced corresponding horizons, and was involved in particular interactions with her surroundings, no matter how general they may appear to be. Every single individual walked a different path than we did. Therefore, we can always learn so much from listening to others. Every life story narrative expands our own horizons.

To consider the narrative interview as a gift is crucial as much autobiographical narrative research is vulnerable research, and in this project very much so. Most of the parents are chosen because they do not have an education, because they may be considered to have social problems etc. The majority do not belong to the families with an educational level and an income which suggest a 'positive social inheritance'. And they may feel exposed and vulnerable having their own problems exposed. This means that creating a secure and pleasant space for the interview is of outmost importance.

Even a free narrative interview is, obviously, a situated construction, contextually dependent in many ways. Chapter 8 and 9 in *Telling Lives* (Horsdal 2012) list various contextual factors which influence the interview both in the process of construction and in the process of analysis. Of special significance here is the framework of research. The agenda of the researcher and the framework of the study, obviously, influence the narrative. School, education, family, children seem to be the main topics that come into mind in these narratives. These priorities may, however, have additional contextual explanations. From my background having analyzed hundreds of narrative interviews, I recognize somewhat modest

narrative competences of the interviewees, the prevailing cultural narratives in their interpretation of existence, as well as their wish to present themselves as responsible parents. The first few interviews are remarkably shorter than the average life story interviews, containing fewer memories, and they are less detailed than most of the stories I have heard during the last 25 years.

The first three stories

With only three interviews out of 16 this, surely, is a premature state of sober analysis. Nevertheless, a few points can be made against the background of my previous experience in analysis of hundreds of life story narratives.

The three narratives:

- A female born 1962 (child in upper secondary school)

- B female born 1964 (child in upper secondary school)

- C female born 1972 (child in vocational training centre – carpenter)

All 3 life story interviews are unusually short. The contexts and themes of narration are limited to the most obvious: family, school, work, education, children, and illness. As the frame of the research directs the focus of the narrators to the context of school this has an influence on the stories, but certainly not to the same extent in the 3 narratives. While A and C quickly runs through the school years of which they do not have the best of memories, B's negotiations of her own school experiences takes up 90 % of her narrative. She is a teacher and reflects her professional practice and her present behavior and identity as a teacher in the light of her own experiences as a child and a pupil.

C finishes her school report in one single sentence: "I attended school from 1st to 10th grade". This is about the time where she meets her first husband.

A uses a few more sentences which underscores the negative experiences:

> My start at school was delayed, because then you had to make a drawing, and as I happened to turn the flag the wrong way, I had to wait a year to start school. In general I had a very bad experience of school due to bullying. My parents divorced and I was dyslexic.

Later in the qualitative interview she replies to a question about her own experience of school:

> Oh My! It was SO bad, I think I only went to school for 7 ½ years, and nobody helped neither at home or at school. I was left to my own devices, so to speak. And then I just felt that this my children should never ever experience.

A's story line after her negative school experience includes a turbulent youth, a boyfriend, first pregnancy, factory work, 2nd birth, 3rd pregnancy, illness and delivery of a handicapped infant. 4th child, work, 5th pregnancy, and then the husband walked out on her. The 5th baby was born prematurely. Flash back to an accident at the factory where she broke her back. The rest of her story is more work and upbringing of the 5 children, disease, and much appreciated help from her mother who now died.

B, on the contrary, let her experiences from school take up most of her story. Only indirectly we learn a few things about her life outside school: Her brother's serious disease when she was little, a secure environment at home, the emphasis on good behavior, and a married life now. An ellipsis from her own school days to her life as a teacher is handled this way:

> I wasted some years believing that I could not get further education because I did not dare to, Because I thought, I cannot do THAT. After having children I found out that I could. So you want to give this to your own children. I think it is important, that you do this together with the educational institution where your children are, or where they are going to be. I think a lot about this related to my own pupils – I am a teacher at this private school – How I react towards them.

C who gets past her school days in one short sentence, starts with her family which plays a significant role throughout her narrative. She underscores the close attachment and the value of continuity. In her story we learn about vocational training, her jobs, her first husband with whom she has two children, their divorce and later problems and conflicts, illness (herself, her mother, one of the children), the two boys now 15 and 18 years old, and a new man. The family context is far the most important in her interpretation of existence.

Ambitions?

The issue of ambitions regarding educational achievement is most interesting in the interviews. In the qualitative interview the last question is: what are your wishes for your children's future?

A That they are Ok with whatever they are doing. That they do not aspire to more than what they are capable of achieving, that is important. They may aspire to something, but it is not decisive whether it is one thing or another as long as they feel Ok with what they are doing. It is important to me, though, that they get an education; I must say that, but not which kind it is.

B First of all I wish that they shall have a good life, that they are satisfied in their everyday life; that they'll work with something they like to work with. That they are together with people they like and trust; that they shall be good towards others; that they dare go for their dreams even though there may be bumps on the road.

C I wish they'll get an education or a job that they really like. I wish them all the best. That they'll find a sweet girlfriend. (Yes, I did have a daughter in law during the last 8 months!) And that they can look after themselves and do not get into all this dirt which is around; and we talk about it. And I remember my mother once said: "Did you smoke hash?" No, nothing stronger than cigarettes.

It is remarkable that C also here mentions her mother. When asked about her parent's attitude towards school and education, she replies: "I guess, about the same. I think they were there for my brother and me." A, on the contrary, replies that her parents had no attitude towards school whatsoever. And B uses a lot of her story to discuss the lack of interest on behalf of her parents.

The following examples indicate how this is a repeated issue in her narrative:

I did not experience so much interest from my parents [about school] so, something like a feeling that going to school was something you did, that was it.

...It was a place in no-man's-land. This meant that your belief in yourself is connected to this, and how your parents tackle this. So you may say, how to behave, to behave properly, THIS I COULD DO, I learned that at home.

I do not think my parents made many demands.

So, you may say, they did not put a bar.

Also in this interview the school is accused of lack of support. The teachers lacked interest in the child as such, and were not concerned with how the children thrived.

Charles Taylor (1989) argues that we want our lives to have meaning and make sense. Our whole lives. If necessary we want to 'redeem the past' to create this meaning. This ambition is evident in the narratives of many model-breakers.

A and B are obvious examples of this. They want their children to have a different experience of school and education from their own. Of course, one of the bias of this study given the framework, the letter of introduction and the preparation for the interview is that everyone are eager to demonstrate how much they support their children. Another bias is the general expression of interest in collaboration with the schools. However, we may dig deeper into the issues of support, motivations and ambitions.

A mentions that she is proud that her 5 children have come that far (they finished or are about to start education (short higher education) except the son with a handicap who nevertheless has a job. She has not been able to help with subject matters or homework, but she motivated her children to struggle and to make a big effort, like they do in their sports (football). And she collaborated with the school to get extra help when necessary. She is quite explicit about it. Her life story narrative ends like this:

> In broad outline this is simply it. It is difficult to narrate. But I want to say that I did all that I could in order to influence my children in the right direction, so they have had a good schooling.

Both she and B underscores the importance of showing interest in the children and how they are getting on and in what they are doing. The interest they lacked themselves when they were young. B told about her own teachers at school:

> Some of them you feared a little, primarily because you were not seen as the pupil, as the human being, like you do today.

And she tells about her own job as a teacher:

> ...And show the interest, sincere interest. Important – that the children I have at school feel seen by me, every day.

C has two boys, 18 and 15 years old. The oldest was a little behind in his development, she tells me. It took him longer to learn to talk. And when she mentions his problems in different subject matters – he recently failed the theoretical test of the driver's license – she compares with herself (tried to take the test at home and had 13 mistakes). How she did not like exams, how she also had problems in schools etc. Her own problems are used as a kind of excuse of her son's learning difficulties. The youngest is bright – and presumably less quiet. And she makes this remark:

> He is actually quite good at school. I rarely had to help him, but this is also difficult, the way they do math today, to help. Sometimes you would wish that you could mix a little. When he finishes 9th grade he wants to come to this vocational school to learn to be a cook.

Tentative conclusions

The desire to be able to mix the intelligence of the clever and the less clever boy indicates rather modest educational ambitions. She has told her boys never to go for an education in a shop or as a store man, as she knows from her own experience that this is physically too hard – she is at present out of work due to pain in her feet. And she expresses discomfort by the possibility that she will have to take new courses due to her unemployment. Vocational education is ok, but education as such is not a main issue in her interpretations of a good life.

A never had any education. She has worked hard, in a shop her husband bought, at a mushroom farm her husband owned, and cleaning at the schools. She wants to break this pattern and tries to motivate her 5 children as much as she can.

B got her education late. She tells explicitly that getting an education was not decisive in her home. She underscores how she helps her own children if necessary, wants them to use their abilities, but not necessarily in higher education.

Though considering the bias mentioned above due to the frame of research which stimulate the parents to tell about their support and interest in their children and their schooling, the stories- especially A and B - reveal a difference between their experience of their childhood and youth and the situation today with their own children. Their children are not left alone with the problems as they felt they were in their childhood – both by the parents and by the school. All three interviewees also mention the significance of collaboration with the schools and educational institutions. They want actually more contact than what exists at present.

To sum up: A and B tries to 'redeem the past' in relation to their own children. A perhaps is a model-breaker to a higher extend considering her starting point and circumstances, whereas C expresses more continuity in the modest type of educational orientation. All of them, however, downplay educational ambitions to a certain extent in favor of 'a good life, where you are content with what you are doing'.

General cultural/political narratives about what is wrong and what is right at different times also have an impact. The interviewees mention (especially B) that they grew up at a different time with different values (Primarily a shift from emphasis on behavior to education). The wider context of the research is a reality of outsourcing of industrial jobs, unemployment, and the increased focus on education and lifelong learning in a knowledge society, the public demand of raising the participation rate in higher education, the ambition to break negative social inheritance etc.

At the same time another cultural narrative seem to be quite influential in the discourses on education and achievement: The danger of adding failures in the experience of less gifted children. In this context ambitions are bad. The idea is that you should give children the possibilities for experiences of success, and not the opposite.

This fear may, however, have the devastating effect, that no demands are made to less gifted children. The present discussion about inclusion in schools should consider the fact that quite many Danish children previously received special education in segregated contexts in which

very few educational demands were made. Learning was not in focus for many excluded children, only – like in the old days – behavior, legitimized by the cultural narrative that it is a bad thing to ask too much and risk failures.

Perhaps, the bar has been put too low. Perhaps ambitions have been too illegitimate.

Feed-back, at home as well as in school, indicating that children CAN learn, CAN achieve something although perhaps not from one day to another but through hard work and training, and that this is fun and may lead to new exiting possibilities for interaction is perhaps very important. Ambitions at a realistic level expressed both by parents and teachers may increase motivations for learning and support presumptions of capabilities. Evidently, the stories show that the opposite rather results in low self-esteem, a lack of belief in abilities and possibilities to aspire to a higher level of competence or knowledge. Actually, A expressed in the conversation we had as she accepted the interview, that even she may have had a different life if someone had offered her support and interest when she was a child in school.

Preliminary results also underscore the emphasis on collaboration between parents and school. And the one more thing: In all the stories only the mothers show any kind of interest. The fathers are remarkably invisible concerning the educational orientation.

It is too early to draw these conclusions from only 3 interviews. But the thoughts puzzle me quite a lot.

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{ TC "*Federica Jorio* - Composing educators' biographies. An experience of image-graphies with students of science of education" \f \l }Composing educators' biographies. An experience of image-graphies with students of science of education.

Federica Jorio, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy

The paper presents an experience which took place in Spring 2013 as a part of my doctoral project, whose purpose is to investigate the idea of education, which students of Science of Education have theoretically and empirically experienced until now.

The paper presents the birth of the idea for the workshop, its realisation, and the first steps of the analysis of a section of the narratives produced, here called image-graphies.

From Milan to Siauliai and back, 2012

In June 2012, I attended an Erasmus Intensive Programme for doctoral students in Lithuania. As participants we were asked to prepare a presentation of our research project and we were given the chance to conduct a brief workshop to present and test our ideas and methodologies for our research.

Since I was in my first doctoral year I had some concepts and topics I wanted to investigate, and tools to rely on, but not a fully designed project yet.

Before leaving, I edited a 20 minute video, a movie-collage of Steven Spielberg's production to show it during the workshop. The topics which guided my editing were 'language' and 'meta-language' in Spielberg's movies. The aim was to show some subtle narrative recurrences in his cinematographic writing and style: above all, some topics, and some visual media which he uses to enlighten these topics.

In Siauliai I introduced it to the audience as a personal editing of the American director's movies and just let the video start. After it ended, I explained to the people the actual task they should work on was reflecting on what they had seen on the screen, which topics and which elements (visual and aesthetic ones) they recognised as relevant in the entire composition.

When I edited the video I chose (here in alphabetical order) A.I., Close encounters of the third kind, E.T., Jaws, Jurassic Park, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Minority Report, Saving Private Ryan, Schindler's list, and War of the Worlds. The only exception (not a Spielberg's film) was a brief sequence taken from Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange.

The topics I selected and edited were (according to my perspective): the Holocaust, the power of look, universal languages, understanding and misunderstanding in communication, the need for truth, arbitrariness and fear, arrogance as self-given right, and being lost in translations.

These following were the aesthetic media I wanted to enlighten since in my perspective they are recurrent and meaningful as media of Spielberg's poetics. He uses close-ups of human eyes in front of relevant plot-contents; the concept of mirroring and being reflected in a mirror as a visual metaphor to indicate its power to show and to hide, to cheat and save people in and behind the reflection. Continuing this analysis, Spielberg lets artificial lights like torches and car headlights flash in front of the recording camera, maybe as a way to represent the story we are watching as a fiction; for the same or opposite reason (the film as a documentary) he lets water and fictional blood stains on the recording camera, the repetead presence of mountains, real or drawn or as a trade mark in the opening credits; the use of b/w or colours to underline or to better enlighten the focus for the spectator's eyes.

When the video finished, I asked the participants to tell which recurrent contents they recognised and which visual media they found.

With my surprise, the main topics observed by the majority of the participants were violence, war, fear and loneliness.

When I explained the intentions behind my video, a conversation about the diverse perceptions of visual narratives started, and I realised that, as a spectator, I watched a different film from the one I remembered.

Since a couple of weeks passed from the moment I edited it, I had the chance to forget the video-making process and experienced the short film as if I was a spectator. At the same time, I realised that the contents indicated by the other spectators were able to describe my new perception of the film too.

This new vision and the chance to share these ideas with some colleagues was an epiphany: composing a video, trying to represent one or more ideas, opened a possibility to build a non-univoque plot for all the spectators.

When I came back to Italy I decided to insert the use of movie-collage in a more complex workshop experience in which the recourse to images could be the core of a auto/biographical experience of self-reflecting, self-composing, and self-writing about the personal experiences of and in education for each participant.

I started to focus on the idea of images as the key to trigger a self-reflection on personal ways to look at reality. When one says what s/he sees in an image, in a movie scene, s/he talks both about contents and her/his perspective on images.

And this is what happened with the audience during my stay in Lithuania: the workshop participants told me what they saw in my film-collage. While I was editing it, the contents were chosen with specific intents (as said before) but when some days had passed I watched the video and I saw different contents from the ones I saw while editing. This suggested me the idea that this experience could be similar to the experience of writing a diary and then reading it after some time has passed. Time, experiences, lapses of time, oblivion came in between the editing and the watching and I had the chance to perceive the collage (almost) without memory of its making. So the images in motion were a visual narrative which could show me which contents are relevant for me and how I organise them in a narrative from my perspective, since the movie-collage is different from a movie. In fact, every scene in a collage has different meaning from the original (inside the movie), and new meanings emerge from the relations with the scene before and after it. So, scenes taken from movies become new and possibly subject to re-signification when put in a new narration.

From the auto-biography to the image-graphies: the idea for a workshop.

From the idea of using movie-collage as a way to show to the author him/herself something hidden and revealed in the movie-collage which is significant for him/her, I linked the editing of a video-collage to the writing of a personal text and realise that it can be read by the author as a fragment of text which reveal something autobiographical, at least the specific personal ways of representing reality as a means to reveal something autobiographical.

From that association, I worked on the idea of using non verbal-devices to create a workshop addressed to the students of Science of Education from the University of Milano-Bicocca as my doctoral project.

In fact I created an educational life narrative workshop for students in order to provide them the opportunity to suspend their activities connected with their education and to start reflecting on who they were and are as people living an education process.

The purpose is to investigate the idea of education, which future educators have both theoretically and empirically experienced until that moment.

The workshop took place from March to June 2013. It has been assumed as an autobiographical method to potentially allow self-reflections through life narratives concerning the topic 'education'.

As a Ph. D. student in education, I am peculiarly interested in investigating the personal experiences of and with education of current students of Science of Education, who imagine their professional future in this specific field.

So with the idea of image (still or in movement) and the specific interest in education and narratives I decided to focus on concepts, ideas, images, metaphors which constitute future educators' representations of the topic 'education'.

I think that starting from the reflection on the concept, a meta-reflection on personal educational projects can be facilitated: looking at the relationship between the self and education can be a way to obtain or increase self-awareness about personal ways which take us to build our educational theoretical and practical attitudes and behaviours (Bertolini, 1990).

For me the focus should be posed on the construction of this topic starting from educational personal experiences, formal and informal ones, which belong to the lives of students who desire to construct their future professional and relational context in educational fields.

The question and my perspective. A workshop for educational knowledge.
The question was: which idea of education future educators have? I try to answer this question with the workshop experience, considering it a narrative and autobiographical method.

The question in fact started up this project and workshop: a self-knowledge and self-educational path with future educators using the representation of educational experiences mediated by images, audiovisual supports, and self-writing.

The path is created in a narrative frame as a way to investigate this self-knowledge, using narrative methodologies to approach education. These methodologies are conceived as devices to concentrate reflectively on the self, and on personal representations and practices of pedagogical knowledge, action and habits.

I consider pedagogical and educational knowledge as a knowledge which originate from practice as the first source to start building theoretical and epistemological knowledge. For

this reason I decided to start my research path from the materiality of experiences (Massa, 2004) of people who want to work on this topic.

The premise is that if you can see your past and present life and reflect on it, you can make an experience out of it: wishing to transform the un-reflected into a questionable topic (Mortari, 2003), I imagined to facilitate this reflection for the students who joined the workshop.

I have three theoretical references for building my narrative workshop about personal stories of (self)education: Luigina Mortari's workshop for reflexive thinking (Mortari, 2003), in which people reflect critically to potentially gain an epistemology of their practices (present and future, in my case), reading personal knowledge in order to become more aware about personal ways of thinking and acting (as an education pro); Pierre Dominicé's research about educational biographies (Dominicé, 2000), which suggests to focus on self-reflecting and self-writing and re-composing adult educational experiences in order to better understand personal ways of learning in different contexts, and the critical and hermeneutical contribution of Clinics of Education introduced by R. Massa (Massa, 2004), which analyses the hidden dimensions which inform theories, knowledge, and current and future practices.

In those described laboratories the core interests are the current attitudes, behaviours and practices of actual professionals; I chanced the focus of the analysis to create opportunities for reflecting for who will be educator.

The participants, the proposal, techniques and instruments.
I recruited the participants through spreading paper-sheet and on line through the university e-learning platform.

The proposal was addressed to 1st year students, attending or not classes, who voluntarily wrote me an e-mail to participate.

At the beginning the participants were 17: 2 men and 15 women. During the activities two men and a woman abandoned the path and university.

I designed and conducted a multidimensional path to offer the possibility to look at the self as the author and narrator of the personal experience of (self)education: a narrative laboratory which allowed the production of a personal representation and narration of the concept of 'education'.

The empirical part of the workshop let the participants create textual materials of different types, it means multimedial texts (images, analogic and digital maps, video-collages) which

create a portfolio for each one, in order to produce personal cross-medial narratives (Canavese, 2011) of participants' experiences of and with education.

These cross-medial texts constitute narrative productions made of images and videos as a diary and as an evidence of the path through which they can obtain a personal educational narrative, in which they can analyse contents and forms, and their narrative styles (Mancino, 2013), with the final contribution of a written text about the portfolio and the experience.

As the material is available on line and in the personal portfolios of each participant, every cross-medial narrative can be used as a mnemonic pretext to read the writing self and narrate the experience to the self again and again.

The portfolio is an opportunity and a tool for giving meaning to what happened and what was sensed during the workshop path. It is in fact a metaphor to access the experience and to transform it in a potential space for learning starting from the self and for the self (Mortari, 2003).

Some educational tecniques were presented to the participants as tools: the logbook (Mortari, 2003) and the already shown portfolio (Walker, 1985) in order to build an educational biography or an autobiography starting from the pretext of personal educational narratives (Brookfield, 1995).

I created an on line site with Google Sites, called 'narrative laboratory', and I used Dropbox links, to communicate and share all the materials created.

Finally I presented some softwares for creating brainstormings and mental-conceptual maps, specifically I used FreeMind, and softwares for editing, FreeMake Video Converter e FreeVideoJoiner.

Workshop activities
The workshop was distributed in seven meetings from March to June 2013.

The first day I introduced the concept behind the workshop, the site, and the technical support. I also presented the theoretical and methodological basis which inspired me.

The core of this meeting was starting to create a sense of commitment and motivation to particpate: through an engagement activity, mediated by images shown to the participants, we collected the first oral narratives about educational experiences from the participants' lives, and each one made a presentation of an aspect of him/herself through the title given to the picture(s) chosen, and the story which this images reminded.

The self-presentations were necessary to start creating a group; in order to protect personal sensitivities I decided to ask about stories of education inside and behind those pictures, and the self-introductions were hidden behind a screen, represented by the picture(s).

For this exercise and as a general approach I wanted to facilitate the students to the final act of writing their education biographies starting from approaching the topic without using verbal tools, and using visual material as asupport for their narratives.

So the first step was choosing images which could tell something about their past and present story of, and relationship with, education, narrating it, and sharing it with the other participants.

The 'task' for the second meeting was preparing a mental map (Gineprini, Guastavigna, 2004) which could describe the personal idea of education, choosing a theoretical or an autobiographical approach to it, giving the liberty to create the map according to personal choices, tastes, desires, ideas, and intentions, and no istructions, suggestions, or limitations concerning the visual style and the presentation of the map. During the meeting they presented their maps to the workshopmates.

During the third meeting all the participants created a collective map, built on the contributions of each one of their individual maps. They collected words, concepts, images, metaphors which they considered as the group's idea of education, including or not all the representations which were able to describe 'education', facing the difficulties of negotiation and compromises they noticed and reported.

This was a collaborative moment of map-building, starting from the single maps presented by the participants: negotiation and informal conversations were here used to increase the feeling of being a learning group and to discover analogies and differences between the individual products and the collective one. In the collective map they presented seven metaphors which described their idea of education. They renamed education "education, body and mind" and they discovered a meta-level of analysis which guided them to construct this map: the perspective of their single visions, the look.

They subsequently reported their map in a digital format using FreeMind.

The fourth step of the workshop was building personal movie-montages as cinematographic metaphors of their representations of educational autobiographies. So the fourth, the fifth and the sixth meetings were dedicated to the third way in which to represent the idea of 'education': the audiovisual editing of movie scenes taken from movies chosen by the single

participants. Educator and director D. Rizzitelli introduced theoretically (a brief story of editing in cinema) and practically (showing a couple of softwares for downloading and editing) the cinematographic editing, since it had to be used for the personal editings.

In the end 17 movie-collages (called 'blob' in Italian) were created as representations of the on-going reflections on educational experiences produced by the participants.

During the sixth meeting, four women decided to show their movie-collages to the mates to share contents, thoughts, and impressions.

All the blobs were then put on line on the site (using Dropbox or personal channels on YouTube).

For the seven meeting we made a review and a re-vision of the whole experience: the particpants created sub-groups and told some aspects of the workshop to each others.

The sub-groups narrated the representation of 'education' through the images chosen (first meeting), through the indivual and collective maps (second and third meetings), through the 'blobs' (from the fourth to the sixth meeting), and, finally, through the reflection about relational dimensions, through the invisible and cross elements of the workshop, reflecting about the sheet-panel they created and used during all the path (a sort of timeline panel of the workshop): they told, wrote, drew on it their thoughts, emotions, expectations, fears, desires, and hopes connected with the workshop.

After that, during the summer, they created texts which narrated their workshop experiences and their personal reflections on their portfolios made of pictures, maps and movie-montages, considered here as a self-reflective tool to see themselves in their images.

I called here these texts generated by this workshop experience "image-graphies": single texts presented as diaries, reports, resumes, graphs, letters, and cross-medial productions according to how they wished to present their educational biographies.

Two more meetings were scheduled: the first was in October 2013 and the second in March 2014, in order to maintain an access open to re-tell and re-significate the activities.

In October, 14 participants were present although only 13 completed the project writing a self-narrative about the workshop experience and the educational biography, which emerged from and supported by the portoflio.

We talked about the portfolios and the final text of each one in a group conversation: we analysed the narrative styles, and the emotions connected with reading the portfolio, writing

the text and reading it again for the meeting, in order to build a first representation of the idea of 'education' emerged from all the materials produced and collected, which testifies the entire process of composing the representations of education mediated by visual metaphors chosen and built by the participants.

The beginning of the analysis

In this section I would like to present the beginning of the reading of the texts for what I have analysed until now (since the analysis is still ongoing), focussing peculiarly for this contribution on the comparison between the individual maps and the collective one.

This analysis is a starting point but nevertheless it is capable to reveal already the underlying idea retraced within this group: education is not simply a part of life but a way to consider the entire life experience, educational biography as biography itself.

The individual maps: concepts and biographies meet each others

As a support for this part of the presentation I use a Word Cloud, which is a way to immediately see the sum of the responses the participants gave to the question: 'what is education?' taking the liberty to create a conceptual, theoretical, personal, or autobiographical map, as they think of the object.

I collected all their definitions on the 'branches' of their maps in a collective list and then I converted it in the image in this link: https://www.dropbox.com-/s/u12saew46jt5hu4/WordItOut-word-cloud-336817.png (which is written in Italian to preserve the original words used by the participants).

This representation includes the first 150 most used words in their maps: from the font size we can understand the recurrence: the bigger the size is, the most the word is used by the participants.

So we discover that 'formazione' (i.e. 'education/learning process') is the most common word even if I removed it from each map when used as title or as a single word: it means that 'education/learning process' is the most used expression anyway because the participants used it accompanied by adjectives or other specifications, like 'elementary education', 'middle school education' and so on.

At the same level/size we find 'scuola' ('school') as an important sign of connection between education and the institution which provides it formally.

After these two first words, we have 'university': again, the institution which provides education, in this case, probably it is so important because the participants are university students, so this specific institution is the most related to them and maybe the most significant at this moment of their lives.

At the third level, 'famiglia', 'educazione', and 'per' stay at the same size: it means that 'family', 'education' here considered as the more comprehensive and traditional idea of 'instruction, education and good manners', and the preposition 'for' are a first way to define what is 'education/the learning process' for them and the first signs of relationships connected with it. We have the first context of education (family), then the more classic concept of learning (education), and the direction, the trajectory (for). Specifically, 'for' can be used to indicate the goal (as the English 'in order to'), and the addressee of the object, process.

At the fourth level, we have 'lavoro', 'vita', 'con', 'in', 'non'; it means that 'work/job', 'life' are the following concepts connected with the research topic, and the prepositions 'with', 'in', and the adverb 'not' are at the same size. Again, we find a real context where a learning process can happen (on the workplace, working) or a specific activity (job) meaning both that education can be spent in a job, but also, working and the job activity/ies are educational and learning opportunities and experiences.

Then we have the first concept connected with the entire existences of human beings: ' vita', i.e. 'life', larger than the formal fragments of life in which education is provided, capable to include all the other concepts above and beyond it in the maps' sum's hierarchy of recurrences.

The prepositions here indicate again the relationships, the trajectories. The adverb is important because it can indicate that the participants wants to describe 'education/learning process' also as something which is not (for example, 'not formal', 'not intentional').

Then we have 'mondo', i.e. 'world', 'prima', i.e. 'first/before', indicating larger concepts in space and time; we can say 'universal contexts concerning human dimensions'.

The sixth size is represented by the words 'liceo', i.e. 'high school', 'esperienza', which means 'experience', 'fiducia', which means 'trust', 'senso' which means 'sense/meaning', 'intenzionale' i.e. 'intentional', and 'istruzione' which means 'instruction'. So we have two categories: formal objects and concepts connected with the institutional education (the school

grade, the formality, and the strong/military meaning of education), and cognitive and affective concepts, related to emotions and evaluations of life moments.

The seventh size indicates 'Literature', 'possibility', 'respect', 'elementary', 'experiences', 'informal', 'formal', 'group', and 'friends' (in Italian, 'lettere', 'possibilità', 'rispetto', 'elementare', 'esperienze', 'informale', 'formale', 'gruppo', and 'amici'). Again, we have formal education represented by a subject, the grade, the distinction between formal and informal; the idea of relationship comes up again: the 'group' dimension, defined by the word in itself and 'friends' who are a group of mates born in a formal (such as school, summer camping, volunteering, church, private classes/lessons) or informal context.

The last size level presents the words 'being', 'new', 'growth', 'adolescence', 'beauty', 'dialogue', 'choices', 'analysis/therapy', 'sons' (in Italian, 'essere', 'nuovo', 'crescita', 'adolescenza', 'bellezza', 'dialogo', 'scelte', 'analisi', 'figli'). We see more and more abstract objects, concerning the development or the transformation of the person, but also depicting the existence and the effect of time, and the relational and dialogic dimensions represented by the interaction with the therapist and the following generation (sons).

The collective map: a portrait of human life

The participants called the collective map (https://www.dropbox.com/s/-ea86sxmy86gstan/formazione%20collettiva%20in%20aula.jpeg) 'education – body and mind' and divided all the elements they connected with this idea in seven areas: 'relationships', 'stories', 'transformation', 'theory of affections', 'journey', 'research/search', 'institutions' (in Italian, 'relazioni', 'storie', 'trasformazione', 'teoria degli affetti', 'viaggio', 'ricerca', 'istituzioni').

The first main difference is that they gave an important place to the couple 'body and mind' to indicate that education concerns and affects both of them, while in the maps' sum only the word 'body' is present, and in a very small size.

The second characteristic is that 'institution', which includes 'work/job', 'school', 'sport' is a branch which all the participants almost wanted not to insert in the map, while in the single maps the first two words were very important (see the size) and strongly connected with the topic.

The 'relationship' branch includes 'family', 'peers' and 'people', and while the family as a concept is confirmed as important, the single persons are less: in fact in the single maps figures like 'mother', 'father', 'teacher/s', 'educator', 'husband' are less nominated. The

group and the friends are more quoted singularly and are positioned both in 'institution' and 'relationships'.

The branch 'stories' is very interesting because contains most of the words which are important singularly and which have been reported in the collective map: 'life', 'time', 'experience', and the third son-branch 'narrative' which includes 'analysis/therapy'. It is a branch which talks about a more extended way to consider education: the life narrative which can include also educational experiences.

The branch 'transformation' includes 'growth' and 'choice', and is comparable with the eight size level of the maps' sum, indicating a coherence between the two representations.

The branch 'theory of affections' is quite unrepresented in the Word Cloud and it is possibly connected with the idea of describing education/learning process in a rational and shareable way among the participants, and also because it could be embarrassing to indicate emotions connected with the topic, while the collective dimension maybe gives them the emotional encouragement to enlighten this aspect let unsaid before.

The fifth branch is 'journey' which shares with 'transformation' two son-branches: 'choice' and 'autonomy' and which presents the idea of travelling and freedom, here considered essential components of 'journey', but individually less considered, also because in some cases the participants preferred to indicate the specific places of their journeys and travels as significant in themselves (India, Thailand, New Zealand) rather than indicate the category in general.

'Journey' in fact in the collective map appears more as a metaphor for experimenting, trying and challenges in life: more likely a mental or existential journey (a participant indicated 'books' as a way to start a journey) rather than a physical one.

The last branch 'research/search' shares 'freedom' with the previous class, and includes concepts and metaphors which are close to 'journery', as 'map/guide', 'orientation'. Compared to the maps' sum, in this class 'beauty' and intentional' and its contrary appear, which had the same importance/size as the elements connected with transformation processes and emotional and cognitive states: it can be read as a 'branch' connected with the third and the fourth ones, which have individually less representation, but collectively a large focus; maybe 're/search' represents the other two 'branches' in a specific meaning of education: the search in life as a part of education, or the search in education as a part of life.

Not to conclude: an epistemology of education?

At the moment, the analysis has just started and the first reading of the maps given previously is one of the first steps of the qualitative analysis I intend to realise.

Since the goal is to obtain a complex image, a cross-medial photograph of the representations of education in future educators' experiences, the only things I can say is that the comparison between single and collective maps probably reveals a different way to elaborate the topic: when individually asked to represent 'education', each participant refers to his/her personal life and knowledge (meaning experiencial and theoretical ones); when asked to elaborate 'education' as a group, the students, who become a group, describe the topic starting from what is essential and necessary for them, but then they collectively negotiate the specific elements of their personal map, abstracting from the autobiographical text/map, and creating a theoretical map, in which the components are conceptual categories, metaphors, which can contain and represent each single element of their personal maps.

The first impression (to use indeed a photographic metaphor) is that 'education' here is a topic represented starting from the autobiographical experience of it; it turns to be a rife and general experience shared by all the participants when it is considered as represented in the the collective map.

In fact when they translate their specific episodes, relationships, and moments of their education in metaphors, they come to an agreement and create their complex concept of 'education'.

This concept indeed seems to describe what theoretically and practically is 'education'. I would say that this task of translation gave them the opportunity to realise a visual picture of their (as a group) 'epistemology of education'.

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{ TC "*Agnieszka Koterwas* - Biographical narrative as a source of knowledge about didactic process" \f \l }Biographical narrative as a source of knowledge about didactic process

Agnieszka Koterwas, University of Gdansk, Poland

Including biographies into research methods on didactics is a proposal of a new methodological approach which I called didactic biography. It is used to reconstruct the experience of school learning, based on narrative interviews with adult school graduates. In the article, theoretical background of didactic biography will be presented, its main assumptions and its potential to extend knowledge. In these threads a description of the research project, formed on the basis of educational biography will be added.

Genesis of didactic biography

An inspiration for the creation of didactic biography was a research project on didactic experience in biographical reconstructions of adult graduates. These studies are to focus on stories of adult graduates of different models of schools about their didactic experiences. Through didactic experience I understand all processes, phenomena, interactions happening in school and encountered more or less consciously by students directly subject to its educational activities. What are these experiences, their shape, form, content, interpretation or meaning is determined by the teaching model of the school. This model defines not only what and how it is experienced by a student in school, but also what further biographical consequences it has (Klus-Stańska, 2006: 111). This means that the teaching model in school, shapes not only the students' knowledge, but also his personal identity and social relations. Therefore, the reconstruction of both retrospective (stories about 'there and then') and prospective (stories about 'here and now' associated with the impact of past experiences on current life) experiences will be interesting.

An attempt to locate didactic biography

At the beginning, it is worth indicating widespread difficulties in biographical approach associated with categorization and systematization of concepts. These difficulties have twofold reason. Firstly they are a consequence of the interdisciplinary character of a biography, and secondly the universality of its application (Bednarz-Łuczewska and Łuczewski, 2012: 92)

The development of biographical research is visible in various fields of social sciences: pedagogy, sociology, history or psychology, as well as the history of education, pedeutology or andragogy. This means that the biographical approach is interdisciplinary, so the biographical research community remains diverse. Keen interest in this method involves, as

K. Kaźmierska (2012: 10) writes, 'appreciation on one hand of the qualitative method and on the other hand the increasing trend for individualization in postmodern society'. As a result, there are many specific strategies of biography organization, which tend to be incompatible with biographical research methodology. The diversity of biographical studies conducted without sufficient theoretical and methodological foundations results with chaos and confusion in this field. Therefore, the identification and location of didactic biography in the chaos of concepts associated with biography, which I here make, is preliminary, approximate and incomplete.

There are many typologies of biographical studies under different criteria. Taking into account didactic biography, the analysis of biography in the educational field becomes significant. A perfect systematization in this matter has been made by D. Lalak (2010: 81). The author identified three types of biographical research. These are: active biography, biography in therapeutic dimension and educational biography.

Active biography initiated by W. Theiss (2001) relies on a set of autobiographical 'interviews – memories' created by the cooperation of the study subjects. It refers to the participants memories of certain socio- political events. This allows not only to acknowledge certain facts, but also the meanings of these events and their commemoration.

Biography in therapeutic dimension initiated by D. Demetrio (2000) is a form of self-treatment, auto-therapy for people, by talking about themselves, making self-reflection and contemplation of their own lives, answering such questions as 'Who am I?', 'What is important to me in life?'.

The last kind of biography, highlighted by D. Lalak, which I would like to devote the most attention to is the educational biography. The forerunner of educational biography is P. Dominice (2006: 19). In his conception, the purpose of educational biography is to create conditions for adult's self-reflection on their own learning experiences, the exploitation of memory and the interpretation of educational experiences and factors affecting them, in order to reveal the potential of an adult for further learning and to look from distance on self-education in the context of past life. Such an understanding of educational biography is a pedagogical method used by P. Dominice when working with adults. It allows a multi-faceted analysis of the dynamics of the learning process, which according to its creator is to serve adults in their understanding of this process and to find their place in it.

D. Lalak (2010: 79) defines the biographical method as:

> a tendency in social studies, which has made the history of human life an object of investigation, subject to individual change (development, formation, education) as well as a source of information about a person, environment, history.

This definition reveals the enormous potential inherent in the biographical method. It means that the biography can be described in two ways. On one hand it is a research approach in which the history of life is the subject of research, on the other hand educational approach in which the narrator changes, develops, educates himself under the influence of his verbalized stories.

In educational biography the research dimension is to 'search for determinants of educational needs of adults in biographies of the researched units, especially in the course of their student career' (Lalak, 2010: 89). Questions posed by researchers in these terms of biography are: Why do adult people learn or not? Why do some older people experience the need for education and others do not? What remains of a student in an adult, what was he like in his childhood and youth? What of knowledge? What of the school atmosphere, and of the learning process? Does the memory of school promote the decision for further education? (Czerniawska, 2007: 128).

Educational dimension involves reflexive evoking memories, drawing present conclusions in time perspective, self-discovery, learning to speak about yourself. This is, as D. Lalak (2010: 90) writes, a kind of self- education 'in which the researcher himself is a research tool'. An excellent example of the use of biography in an educational dimension is the so-called didactic biography that deals with learning to learn from yourself and others (Czerniawska, 2005: 38).

Andragogists dealing with educational biography often capture it in a double sense. This is done intentionally or not. If the researcher is only interested in one dimension of educational biography, usually the second, skipped dimension 'at the margin' will reveal itself in practice. And so regardless of whether the researcher listens to the stories of the researched person, in order to examine the issue bothering him, or in order to provoke self-reflection and self-education in the researched person by narratives, always both dimensions of educational biography will appear. In the above mentioned didactic biography, in certain circumstances it may be considered through such a research prism, that would work on the construction of the specificity of therapeutic - educational methods of working with adults.

Researchers, among others in Italy P. Dominice (2006), D. Demetrio (2000), in France M. Lani – Bayle (2000) or in Poland O. Czerniawska (2007), conduct research in the area of educational biography in various forms. These are individual interviews, focused, written work carried out in a series of meetings and seminars for a selected group of adults, in which the researcher is interested. Participants undergoing educational biography are treated as subjects or as researchers themselves. On the basis of narrated of written histories, the subjects undergo self-reflection on one's own life, a kind of self-therapy on one hand (educational dimension) on the other hand, their stories are a valuable source of information for the researcher (research dimension). Analysing studies in the presented subject, it can be concluded that both of these dimensions often overlap. If the researcher is only interested in one perspective of educational biography, usually the skipped, second dimension will reveal itself in practice in a minor. And so while conducting interviews about school, when the researcher is interested in only research dimension (and this is also the aim of the interview), the educational dimension may appear at the time of the narrator's self-reflection, who thanks to the interview had conditions created, enabling him to restore the contents of the past.

Thus, from the perspective of biographical research, the learning process, which previously was reserved only for didactics, has been extended for a lifetime and appeared in the centre of interest in andragogy. On the other hand, when the focus is shifted back towards didactics, a new area of biographical research associated with the study of school, which I call the biography of didactics, can be discovered. Expanding the use of educational biography with didactic research area can significantly allow to know the school from a new perspective .

Didactic biography and educational biography – comparison of concepts

Didactic biography can be placed in the stream of biographical studies carried out in the educational space next to or within the educational biography as an extension of the issues of the above mentioned research dimension .

Educational biography is directed towards the disclosure of the concept of human development in terms of lifelong education. It assumes that education is a lifelong process taking place 'in course of life and through life itself' (Czerniawska, 2002: 25), which means that it is oriented on education, both formal and informal. This allows for a fuller understanding of an adult's learning process. So educational biography is set in andragogy. In contrast, didactic biography concentrates on the history of life focused on learning, not in the context of the whole life, but in the context of school. In this perspective, it is significant

from the point of view of teaching and exploration of the learning process, and no longer significant only for andragogy. The subject of its interest are school experiences, and so its oriented to formal education. Didactic biography is deprived of the educational dimension. This means that it isn't a specific educational or therapeutic method, only a method of research, which focuses on the history of life from the perspective of ones experiences at school. Hence the emphasis from biographical didactics moves toward didactic biography.

In the presented above concepts, educational experience is differently defined. In educational biography it is understood as a valuable source of knowledge and skills that primarily allows to reveal an adults potential (Jurgiel, 2013: 15). In didactics educational experience is a didactic experience. It is a source of knowledge about the meaning and interpretation of school experience. About how one interprets the institutional reality of education which he was a member of and what value he attributes to it in the context of further life. It is an attempt to explore the learning process and all occurrences happening at school and experienced by students.

It would seem that the presented contrast excludes the possibility of extending educational biography to didactic biography, but there are two dominant aspects bonding both approaches. The first and crucial one is the fact that in the centre of interest of both, educational and didactic biography is the story of life focused on the learning process. The second aspect is related to the researched subjects. In both approaches those are adults who analyse their lives in terms of 'there and then', which consists of evoking memories, as well as 'here and now', making insight, self-reflection over their own lives from the perspective of the past time.

Such interdisciplinarity integrating research in andragogy and didactics will reconstruct the meanings which adults, graduates of different schools (including alternative schools) attribute to educational institutionalization attended, as well as its implications in their lives. In other words, through graduate's retrospection related to teaching, a didactic aspect of their biographies will emerge.

Respondents - adult school graduates are the authors of meanings attributed to school and the didactic process taking place in it. They are to talk about their lives, important events, crises, changes, but in the context of meanings they attach to their education. On one hand it will be interesting, how their lives developed, where do they locate themselves in the surrounding reality, how do they perceive it, on the other hand, how they interpret, what value do they see

in individual elements of the learning process, both 'then' (at school, experiencing it directly) and 'now' in retrospection (as consequences in adulthood).

Didactic biography as a topic and as a mean - double coverage

In planned studies, biographical material will be extracted using narrative interviews conducted with adult graduates of different schools. Those will be people with a variety of educational careers, who were subjected to different models of education in schools. Initially there will be three groups of people. Didactic experience of the first group is associated only with traditional school, second only with a different school (which does not necessarily mean an alternative one), while the third group are people who cross the borders of different school worlds, so those who have received educational impacts both from traditional school and different school. To some extent, this will be a similar choice, because there is never a guarantee that these schools will be different, that their mission is being alternative (Urbaniak-Zając, 2001: 240).

Didactic biography will be considered in accordance to the typology proposed by I. Helling (1985: 95), so in two ways. This is a biography as a method of research - biography as a mean - and biography as an object of research - biography as a topic.

First of all didactic biography will deal with the analysis of elements of the educational process on basis of adult graduate's statements. This is a perspective of biography as a method of research (biography as a mean), which focuses on searching in the biography answers to specific pedagogical questions, which are to be found in the area of the researchers interest.

Sample questions that in this dimension will appear during an interview with adult graduates are:

- Were you able to freely express your views in the classroom?

- Did you like to discuss with teachers? About what?

- What were the relations between students?

- Was there rivalry? About what?

- How did you feel in school?

Secondly, it will also be an analysis of the course of life, the phenomenon of identity of students crossing borders of different school worlds. It is a didactic biography as a subject of

research (biography as a topic). It studies the sequences of events, changes, the meanings attributed to them or their structure. In this dimension, for research the phenomenon of the identity of people who live in areas with a complex history, changing places, crossing borders (social, civilizational, cultural and ethnic) is interesting (Lalak, 2010: 45). These are, for example, the life stories of migrants, sick people who survived the war, the Holocaust (Kaźmierska, 2012).

In didactic biography interesting for research, can be the phenomenon of the identity of people who cross educational or school worlds borders (with different educational career).

Questions that in this dimension will appear during an interview with adult graduates as external questions are:

- How do you remember being a student?

- What about being a student was most valuable to you?

- What important things, from perspective of time, did you learn in school, and what things seemed important to you then?

- Do you think that the content of teaching in your school influenced your future/ your views/ your further educational career?

- Do you think that the way you were evaluated had an impact on your future?

These questions are treated as external narrative questions that are to touch upon topics of interest for the researcher, and which are asked in the final phase of the interview if they have not been discussed in the narration (Rosenthal 2012: 286.).

In addition to research dimension of educational biography an educational approach will also reveal itself, insignificant from the researcher's point of view, as a method of self-reflection, which treats the didactic processes as a way of gaining competence in life. As part of the interview, subjects will make self-reflections, an analysis of own education from the perspective of current experience. It should be noted, however, that the researcher of didactic biography is primarily interested in the already mentioned research approach and not educational dimension, and such marginalization of the educational approach is rather rare in educational biography.

Conclusion

The presented proposal of application of educational biography in didactic research is an attempt to explore the learning process from people directly exposed to educational impacts of school. Such interdisciplinarity integrating research on andragogy and didactics will reconstruct meanings which adults, graduates of different schools attribute to educational institutionalization attended, as well as its implications in their lives. In other words, through graduate's retrospection related to teaching, a didactic aspect of their biographies will emerge.

The presented method of research as a modification of educational biography was constructed for needs of own research. However, due to its informative value, it may be the beginning of its operation in a wider field of research on education. Since didactic biography is the source of knowledge about the meaning and interpretation of certain elements of the learning process experienced by students in school, I believe that it is worth using in didactics. Such biographical studies on school models, which meaning is given by adult graduates as subjects of research, because of their marginal use in didactics, may indicate a new direction in the search for ways of knowing in didactic research, allow for reorientation of the research field, because life histories may indicate new variables, questions or processes, and eventually may lead to a qualitative evaluation of school work.

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{ TC "*Pierre-Alain Lüthi* - Comment JE deviens PARENT: Articulation entre le parcours et le récit de parentalité?" \f \l }Comment JE deviens PARENT: Articulation entre le parcours et le récit de parentalité?

Pierre-Alain Lüthi, Université de Genève, Suisse

Notre communication portera sur l'articulation et la comparaison des données produites par le récit biographique d'un parent avec les indicateurs issus de la description de son parcours de vie. Au-delà de l'autobiographie, nous articulons les épreuves spécifiques du parent signalées par l'analyse cinétique et les indicateurs chronologiques de son parcours de vie. Le discours des parents est souvent négligé dans les travaux et écrits autour de la parentalité, ce qui nous a conduit à faire appel au cadre théorique et méthodologique des recherches biographiques en formation des adultes afin de faire émerger le récit des parents sur la parentalité. La première étape de notre parcours d'analyse nous a amené à observer l'omniprésence dans le discours des parents d'une chronologie standard qui semble contraindre le récit de parentalité. L'analyse du récit de nombreux parents nous conduit progressivement et au-delà du schéma habituel de la déstandardisation sociale, à lire la biographie parentale comme inscrite dans une matrice de contraintes et de repères très forts que nous avons nommés les épreuves standard du parcours de parentalité. Nous cherchons dans cette communication à rendre plus intelligible et à vérifier l'articulation entre les expériences individuelles ou épreuves spécifiques du parent et ce que nous avons nommé les épreuves standard. En effet, les discours des parents semblent s'inspirer ou faire écho aux discours des professionnels et c'est finalement à un jeu de traduction et de médiation des discours des parents et des discours des professionnels que nous conduit l'analyse des récits parentaux. Les discours et les professionnels en tant qu'actants prennent beaucoup de place dans les récits de parentalité de notre étude. Notre communication aura pour objet de présenter certains aspects en lien avec ces constatations, qui nous interrogent.

Mots Clés: Parentalité, Biographie, Parcours de vie, Formation des adultes.

How I Become PARENT: Articulation between the course and the story of parenting?

Our communication will focus on the articulation and comparison of data produced by the biographical narrative of a parent with indicators from the description of his life course. Beyond autobiography, we articulate the specific events reported by the parent throught the kinetic analysis and historical indicators of the life course. The voice of parents is often overlooked in research and writings about parenthood, which convinced us to use the theoretical and methodological framework of biographical research in adult learning to explore the story of parents and emerging parenthood. The first step in our path analysis has led us to observe the omnipresence in the discourse of parents of a standard chronology that seems to impose certain constraints on the narrative of parenthood. Our analysis leads us gradually beyond the usual pattern of social destandardization, to understand parenting biography as recorded in a matrix of constraints and powerful markers that we have called here the standard ordeal of parenthood. We seek in this paper to make more intelligible and to verify the relationship between individual experiences or specific events of the parent and what we have called the standard ordeal. Indeed, the discourse of parents often seems to be inspired or to echo the discourse of professionals and it is seem to be ultimately a game of translation and mediation between parents' discourse and professionals' discourse that we have discovered in our analysis of paths of parenting. The Professional Discourse and Actors take up a lot of space in the stories of parenthood in our study. Our communication aims to present some aspects related to these findings and that we find challenging.

Keywords: parenting, biography, life course, adult education

La parentalité: Un objet de recherche

Notre projet de recherche «Comment JE deviens parent?» a émergé en 2009 du croisement de la conception d'un projet de soutien et d'accompagnement de la parentalité[15] au sens de Giuliani (2013), et du séminaire de recherche : Histoires de vie et processus de formation des adultes conduit par Jean-Michel Baudouin à l'université de Genève. Cette recherche mobilise le récit biographique en vue d'éclairer le parcours subjectif du parent. Dans la dernière revue internationale d'éducation familiale consacrée à la parentalité tout au long de la vie, les auteurs mobilisent la notion de processus de parentalisation (Robin, Fontaine, 2013). Ce néologisme semble valider le fait que la parentalité peut être décrite par les professionnels comme processus standardisé. Aujourd'hui, en pédagogie familiale, le soutien à la parentalité est majoritairement compris comme le soutien au développement de compétences parentales qui répondent aux besoins de l'enfant. La parentalité est constituée premièrement de compétences relationnelles. Elle est déterminée, pour la plupart des experts du domaine, par la qualité de la relation parent-enfant. Le développement des compétences relationnelles du parent est la finalité de dispositifs de formation de parents tels que les décrivent plusieurs auteurs (Sellenet, 2007; Martin, 2003; Lamboy, 2009 ; Serbati & Milani, 2013). Les compétences parentales sont comprises de manière synchronique comme la capacité d'un parent à répondre au défi relationnel posé par les besoins d'un enfant durant les phases de son développement physique et psychique (Milani, P. 2013), cette réponse parentale est inscrite dans un éco-système (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

En complément de cette lecture synchronique de la parentalité, on trouve la notion de processus de parentalisation (Robin, Fontaine, 2013). On cherche à lire la parentalité comme une fonction sociale traversant la vie de l'adulte parent (Robin, Fontaine, 2013). Dans le petit monde du soutien à la parentalité, si les psychologues et les intervenants sociaux s'accordent plus ou moins sur la référence au bien de l'enfant comme critère de qualification des dispositifs (Catarsi & Pourtois, 2011 ; Milani, 2013), la définition de ce critère demeure multiple. La conception des dispositifs de soutien ou de formation des parents est influencée directement par la manière dont est décrypté ou décrit le «bien de l'enfant » ou la façon dont est interprété le développement de l'enfant. La parentalité est évaluée à partir des réponses que le parent peut offrir aux besoins de l'enfant. Cette lecture de la parentalité peut être plus particulièrement influencée par une discipline spécifique, qu'elle soit juridique, médicale, sociale ou psychologique. Une illustration de cette évolution et parfois de ses paradoxes est le

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[15] Histoires de PARENTS, Fondation Jeunesse et Familles VD (CH), www.fjfnet.ch/histoires-de-parents

développement ces dernières années de la garde alternée. La garde alternée est un des challenges majeurs de la parentalité contemporaine et devient, si elle est mal vécue, un non-sens pédagogique. Pourtant, elle répond aux critères de qualité psychologique de l'attachement ou aux termes législatifs modernes d'autorité parentale conjointe. De plus, les besoins de l'enfant changent tout au long de sa croissance. Le parent est donc amené à faire évoluer sa réponse afin que celle-ci soit en adéquation avec les besoins actualisés de l'enfant. Cette idée d'évolution des besoins de l'enfant suivant des âges typiques est loin d'être nouvelle puisqu'elle correspond à l'esprit des critiques pédagogiques de Rousseau dans Émile (Rousseau, 1762/2009). Celui-ci condamne déjà des pratiques pédagogiques qui ne prendraient pas en compte le développement chronologique de la nature et des besoins de l'enfant, ceux-ci s'inscrivant selon Rousseau dans un déroulement d'étapes distinctes (Thomas, Michel, 1994).

Les auteurs s'accordent sur l'implantation de la notion de parentalité et de sa diffusion à une large échelle dans les milieux professionnels francophones de l'enfance et de la famille à la fin des années 90 (Fablet, 2010; Houzel, 1999; Sellenet, 2007). Le terme de parentalité dérive de l'adjectif parental et est apparu pour traduire le concept anglais «parenthood» utilisé par Thérèse Benedek (1959), puis pour désigner le processus de développement psychoaffectif de l'adulte parent (Martin, 2003). La souplesse sémantique de ce terme est un de ses atouts, car elle permet bien des usages tels que «monoparentalité», «grand parentalité», «coparentalité», «homoparentalité» et accompagne ainsi la description des mutations de la famille ordinaire. L'émergence du terme parentalité est donc indissociable de l'évolution contemporaine de la structure familiale et du statut de l'enfant dans nos sociétés. La parentalité est aussi utilisée pour subsumer l'ensemble des compétences et des responsabilités parentales. La définition des compétences et responsabilités parentales est l'objet de multiples controverses entre les différents experts de l'intervention auprès des familles. Une tentative de synthèse de ces diverses interprétations a été réalisée au travers des déclinaisons de la parentalité décrites dans le rapport Houzel (1999). Rédigé par un groupe de travail composé de professionnels des différents champs d'expertise de la famille, ce rapport a décliné les multiples interprétations qui s'appuient sur des champs d'expertise professionnelle distincts. Cet imposant entrecroisement d'expertises professionnelles sur la parentalité rend d'autant plus importante notre capacité à entendre le discours subjectif du parent sur la parentalité. Les connaissances s'additionnent sur la parentalité et peuvent conduire à un glissement de l'objet parentalité à l'objet parent. L'enjeu de notre démarche est d'introduire une rupture avec cette tendance en

vue d'éviter autant que faire se peut la réification du parent au statut d'objet de recherche et de favoriser, par le choix des recherches biographiques, l'émergence d'un sujet adulte qui s'exprime sur son parcours de parentalisation: «On ne naît pas parent, on le devient».

L'adulte parent: Un sujet en recherche

Les parents de notre enquête se définissent comme des équilibristes, des enquêteurs ou même des jongleurs qui doivent trouver un juste équilibre entre parentalité, conjugalité, socialité et professionnalité. Les parents nous décrivent la parentalité comme un défi pour l'adulte, ils doivent non seulement répondre aux besoins quotidiens de l'enfant, mais aussi à sa croissance et à son développement tant corporel que psychique. Aujourd'hui, les pères autant que les mères sont soumis à de fortes pressions et attentes sociales dans ce domaine. Ce qui était adéquat avec tel enfant à tel moment ne l'est plus quelques mois plus tard. Les réponses parentales doivent pouvoir évoluer, changer, s'adapter dans des circonstances qui sont régulièrement bouleversées par la croissance de l'enfant, ses conditions de socialisation et les attentes de l'environnement social et familial dans lequel s'inscrit la dyade parent-enfant. En effet, cette dyade parent-enfant s'inscrit dans un système bien plus complexe, triade éducative avec le conjoint, fratrie pour le système familial, réseaux sociaux proximal et distal du parent (Bronfenberger, 1979). Ce système évolue et les besoins de l'enfant (Milani, 2013) changent continuellement. Cela impose aux pratiques éducatives parentales une adaptation constante (Serbati , Milani, 2013; Abignente, 2004; Bradley, M.-F., & Pauzé, R. 2008). Tel parent qui s'est senti à l'aise durant la petite enfance se voit complètement dépassé par l'adolescence ou l'inverse.

En pédagogie et plus spécifiquement lors de recherches en formation des adultes, un défi majeur est d'éviter de réifier l'adulte apprenant et de le réduire au simple statut d'objet d'étude (Carré, P. 2006). Pour éviter ce travers épistémologique, nous faisons appel aux méthodes de recherche biographique en pédagogie adulte pour éclaircir l'expérience vécue d'un sujet. Nous sommes conscients que la parentalité est un processus identitaire essentiel de l'adulte contemporain (Robin, Fontaine, 2013). Nous mobilisons le concept d'épreuve issu de nombreux travaux de notre groupe de recherche Mimésis et Formation (Baudouin, 2010; Pita, 2013 ; Martuccelli, 2006). Nous déclinons ce concept d'épreuve sous deux formes. L'épreuve standard décrit le parcours de parentalité dans une chronologie factuelle générique. Cette généralisation est liée aux conditions objectives et spécifiques des étapes de développement de l'enfant qui imposent des défis standards aux parents et que les parents de notre panel nous ont cités de manière générale. Deuxièmement, nous mobilisons le concept d'épreuve

spécifique qui relève de l'analyse sémiotique du récit de parentalité. Cela nous amène à étudier le récit de parentalité comme organisé ou structuré autour d'épreuves individuelles relevant de contraintes et de tensions génériques et spécifiques s'imposant au vécu subjectif de la parentalité. les récits de parents révélent dans leurs descriptions la mise en résonnance entre des épreuves individuelles spécifiques et des épreuves standard au niveau social. Par les références théoriques et méthodologiques inspirées de la sémiotique du récit biographique (Baudouin 2010, Pita 2013), nous analysons la production de sens par le parent sur la parentalité, de quelle manière le parent sujet décrit, analyse, explicite, rend cohérent son récit de parent en vue de donner sens à son expérience de la parentalité. Nous abordons alors la parentalité comme un processus d'apprentissage expérientiel au cours de la vie. Dans ce sens, la pédagogie adulte est fondée à s'intéresser au processus d'apprentissage de l'adulte à la fonction de parent. Nous ne cherchons pas l'étude de la parentalité en tant que savoir expert et réifié, nous étudions la parentalité comme une suite d'apprentissages expérientiels situés dans un contexte géographique et social (Serbati & Milani, 2013; Formenti, 2000 et 2012). Les récits de parentalité de notre panel sont constitués d'expériences qui mettent en lumière des situations, des scènes et des réseaux d'acteurs. Les parents ordonnent, opposent, et font jouer dans leurs récits les actants dans des déroulements cohérents qui rendent leurs expériences compréhensibles pour l'auditeur. Nous montons en généralité en additionnant dans notre étude les récits de parentalité. Notre conception de la parentalité a évolué dans notre parcours de recherche du statut d'un savoir saisissable, réifiable à un phénomène inscrit dans le temps (déroulement chronologique), dans l'espace (scène d'influence) et dans un réseau de dynamiques relationnelles (réseau soi-autrui du parent) et identitaires (relation soi-soi du parent). Nous ne cherchons donc pas à ajouter une expertise professionnelle de plus sur le savoir parent mais bien à mieux comprendre ce qu'est le vécu du parent dans le flux des contraintes, des épreuves standard et des obligations générées par la parentalité et l'évolution continuelle de l'enfant.

Chronologie individuelle: Articulations du Parcours et du Récit de parentalité.

Les données et indicateurs du parcours factuel de parentalité

Le dernier numéro 2013 de la revue internationale de l'éducation familiale (Robin, M., & Fontaine, A.-M. 2013) a pour titre « La parentalité tout au long de la vie». L'article d'introduction de cette revue souligne l'importance de regarder la construction de l'identité parentale comme un processus psychologique qui s'inscrit dans une succession d'étapes individuelles et subjectives. Les auteurs font référence à une double entrée psychologique

(psychologie de la vie entière/life span theory) et sociologique, celle des parcours de vie (life course theory). Le concept clé retenu est celui de transition (réaménagement de l'individu face aux événements et situations de son parcours de vie). Ces transitions sont observées comme des événements significatifs qui constituent des points tournants de la trajectoire parentale. Ces étapes dans le parcours de vie parentale prennent le sens d'adaptation fonctionnelle à une situation nouvelle dans le milieu ou le réseau de relations à autrui (Boucher, 2011). Les auteurs mentionnent que certaines de ces étapes sont particulièrement liées à l'âge et impactent le processus de construction identitaire individuel des parents (2013, p12).

La notion de transition est très utilisée à l'heure actuelle par différentes disciplines des sciences humaines et sociales pour conceptualiser les réaménagements de l'individu face aux différents événements ou situations de son parcours de vie. Dans cette perspective, le changement et la croissance sont déterminés par l'occurrence d'événements significatifs qui constituent des points tournants de la trajectoire. Ces étapes dans le parcours de vie prennent le sens d'une adaptation fonctionnelle à une nouvelle situation intervenant dans le milieu du sujet et/ou dans ses relations à autrui. Processus d'adaptation au changement, la notion de transition contribue également au processus de construction identitaire en suscitant chez la personne de nouvelles conduites, de nouveaux projets plus ou moins conscients, accompagnés souvent par une réorientation des buts personnels et des valeurs. Appliquée à la parentalité tout au long de la vie, la notion de transition renvoie donc à celle de passage entre deux états censés être relativement plus stables, au cours duquel se redéfinissent le fonctionnement individuel et les rapports au sein de la famille. Certaines de ces transitions sont clairement liées à des changements de statut liés à l'âge (entrée dans la parentalité, départ des enfants du foyer parental, accès à la grand parentalité). Leur prévisibilité permet de les anticiper et de relativement maîtriser ces transformations faisant partie du déroulement attendu de la trajectoire de vie.

Les auteurs, qui retiennent la perspective du cycle vital familial, considèrent que les vies des parents et des enfants sont liées et leurs étapes s'influencent réciproquement (idem, p.63 ; Legoff & Sapin, 2009). En 2012, lors de la réalisation de nos entretiens biographiques, nous avons complétés ceux-ci par un questionnaire sur le parcours de vie du parent sur la période de parentalité. Nous avons ensuite réalisé un tableau synoptique qui nous permet d'articuler et de comparer les données du parcours de vie du parent, que nous avons appelé parcours de parentalité, au récit de parentalité, qui est constitué par le récit autobiographique du parent de

la période durant laquelle il a été parent. La comparaison parcours et récit permet de relever ce qui est de l'ordre des épreuves standard, des faits, des événements, des transitions en regard des épreuves spécifiques du récit de parentalité.

Les données et indicateurs du récit autobiographique de parentalité

L'analyse des processus sémiotiques d'un récit et la mobilisation de l'économie cinétique (Baudouin 2010) pour analyser les récits autobiographiques sont les instruments habituels de notre groupe de recherche Mimésis et Formation. En complément, nous avons voulu prendre en considération le parcours de parentalité, c'est-à-dire, autant que faire se peut, les faits objectivables du parcours de vie du parent à partir du moment où il est devenu parent. Ce parcours de parentalité est déterminé définitivement par l'âge de l'enfant dont le parent a la responsabilité, car c'est l'âge de l'enfant qui marque les étapes du développement de celui-ci et donc les exigences standard liées au développement de l'enfant. Nous avons décidé, dans notre cadre d'analyse, de comparer récit de parentalité et parcours de parentalité.
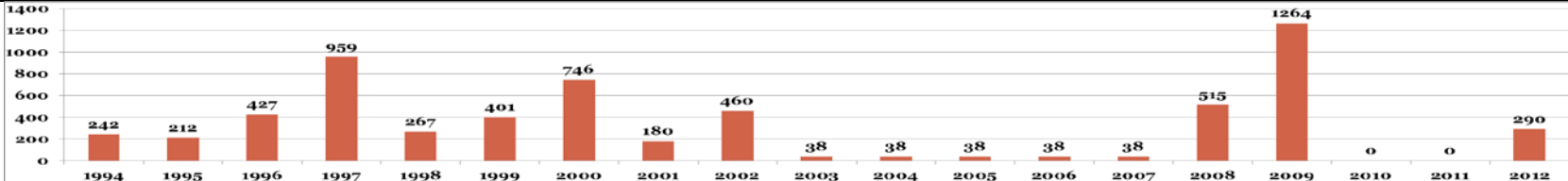
L'Économie cinétique du récit de parentalité

Pour créer l'économie cinétique du récit de parentalité, nous avons décompté le nombre de mots (ou de secondes) mobilisés par la parent pour s'exprimer sur une période d'une année et nous avons inscrit le résultat dans l'année correspondante. Cela nous permet d'obtenir un graphique qui révèle les accélérations ou les arrêts que réalise le parent sur telle ou telle période de son parcours. Nous considérons à la suite de Baudouin et Pita que la décélération signe dans le récit biographique l'émergence d'une épreuve clé, c'est-à-dire d'une expérience importante du récit de parentalité sur laquelle notre intérêt va se porter. Le tableau nous permet alors de tirer une correspondance sur la période factuelle (parcours de parentalité) durant laquelle le parent s'est arrêté plus spécifiquement sur une expérience qui éclaire son récit. L'épreuve clé s'inscrit donc par notre tableau dans une épreuve standard de la parentalité, dans un environnement, à un âge chronologique et devient ainsi par le fait de notre mise en page comme inscrite dans un environnement temporel et social.

Les Épreuves clés du parent itératives ou singulatives

Finalement, nous distinguons des épreuves clés de type singulatif, c'est-à-dire qui marquent une étape très précise dans un parcours, et des épreuves itératives plus discrètes, qui ne marquent pas directement le récit en matière de vitesse mais signalent pourtant des mini-scènes de la vie quotidienne dont la répétition augmente l'importance (les couchers de l'enfant, les repas). Quand le parent parle de son expérience parentale, il souligne souvent la

répétitivité d'un événement comme facteur aggravant parce qu'il conduit à un sentiment d'impuissance: «J'en ai marre de répéter dix fois la même chose…» ; «C'est chaque soir la même histoire…». Nous avons donc souligné qu'il existait des épisodes ou épreuves répétitifs ou itératifs clés qui s'inscrivaient dans la répétition de ces scènes quotidiennes. Quand nous comparons les données issues du parcours de parentalité de Sylvie et l'économie cinétique de son récit de parentalité, nous pouvons rapidement observer un parallélisme entre les faits du parcours de vie et les décélérations du récit. C'est bien l'addition des changements, les tournants ou transitions majeurs que vit Sylvie qui trouvent leur correspondance dans le récit de parentalité. Et on peut d'ailleurs observer un lien très fort entre les événements du parcours de vie de Sylvie (professionnel, conjugal et d'habitation) et la manière donc s'écrit sa biographie de parent.

Sylvie articulation du parcours de parentalité et du récit de parentalité

	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13
Année	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13
Age Aîné	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4sco	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Epreuves standard	Conception			Autorisation				Scolarisation					Individualisation						Autonomisation		
Age de Ego	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53
Trajectoire Fratrie	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Trajectoire Dom.	C	C	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	SE	SE	FR	FR	FR	FR
Trajectoire Pro.	PT	PT	CM	FOR	FOR	FOY	FOY	TP	TP	PT	TP	TP	TP	TP	TP	TP	TP	TP	TI	TI	TI
Ev. Conj. – Fam.		G	N		G	N										R/S/M	D/R			M	
Ev. Professionnel			IA					TP		PT	TP									TI	
Ev. Ego				D	D/S		B	H								D	D				

Économie cinétique du récit de parentalité (Baudouin)

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
242	212	427	959	267	401	746	180	460	38	38	38	38	38	515	1264	0	0	290

Épreuves singulatives Axe synchronique: Naissance 1 (95) ; Migration Chine (96) ; Conception 2 (97) ; Le déclic (99) ; Cirque (00) ; Les marques (02) ; Séparation (08) ; Divorce (09) ; Le Caquelon (13)

Épreuves itératives: Troubles du sommeil chez l'enfant | Garde malade de sa mère | La garde alternée

Trajectoire Fratrie: Nombre d'enfants dans la fratrie

Trajectoire domestique: Configuration domestique (S= Seul, C = couple, F = Famille, SE = Seul avec enfant, FR= Famille recomposée)

Trajectoire Pro: Trajectoire professionnelle de Ego (PT: plein temps, CM= Congé maternité, FOY = Foyer, TP = Temps partiel, TI= Irrégulier, C= Chômage, FOR= Formation)

Ev. Conj. et fam. : Événement familial et conjugal (Mariage = M, Rencontre = R, Séparation = S, Divorce =D, Grossesse = G, Naissance = N, Deuil = D)

Ev. Professionnel: Evénement professionnel (PT = début temps plein, TP = début temps partiel, IA = Interruption d'activité, DR = début de retraite)

Ev. Ego: Événement vie privée de Ego (D: Déménagement, PS: Problème de santé, H = Hobby, Bénévolat = B)

Les Épreuves standard du parcours de parentalité

L'analyse de l'articulation des données du parcours de parentalité et des récits de parentalité nous a conduit progressivement à relever une structure chronologique forte du récit de parentalité. Nous avons choisi pour l'instant de décrire cette contrainte sous le terme d'épreuves standard telles que nous les déclinons. dans le tableau ci-dessous. Si la première spécificité de notre recherche est de donner la priorité au discours parental, la deuxième est de porter un regard diachronique sur la parentalité. En effet, nous pourrions étudier le discours de parent sur la base d'une logique synchronique de type thématique (l'apprentissage, l'hygiène, l'autorité, etc.), topologique (le rapport espace public vs espace domestique ou privé) ou éco-systémique (le rapport Parent - Ecole - Société). Nous avons fait le choix méthodologique d'une recherche biographique et donc d'une lecture chronologique en proposant aux parents de nous présenter le déroulement temporel de leur parcours et de leurs expériences de parent. Très rapidement, en écoutant les récits de parentalité et en articulant ceux-ci aux indicateurs du parcours de parentalité, nous avons pu voir émerger en filigrane des décors, des scénarios, des motifs qui organisent la toile de fond du récit parental. Ce décor dans lequel se déploie le récit de parentalité s'inscrit dans une matrice qui, comme les structures de base que l'on offre aux abeilles pour construire leurs alvéoles, semble initier une structure au récit parental de notre panel. Pour rendre compte de cette structure chronologique, nous avons été amené à distinguer 5 grandes périodes ou épreuves standard dont l'indicateur principal est l'âge de l'enfant. L'âge de l'enfant détermine et définit les étapes sociales (scolarisation, majorité), biologiques (naissance, puberté), psychologiques (adolescence, individualisation) de l'enfant.

Les Épreuves standards de la parentalité	Enjeux pour le parent	Etapes pour l'enfant	Cadre social et juridique
Conception -1 à 0	Reconnaître - Choisir et Donner la vie La santé de l'enfant	Être et Naitre 0 ans Vivre	Diagnostic Echographie Etat civil (prénom)
Autorisation 0 - 3 ans	Etre l'autorité parentale Poser les repères	Petite enfance 0 - 3 ans S'adapter - apprendre	Autorité parentale Entrée en scolarité
Scolarisation 4 - 10/12 ans	Soutenir la socialisation et la scolarisation L'enfance	Scolarité L'enfance 3 - 9 ans Intégrer l'école	Autorité parentale Scolarité obligatoire
Individualisation 10/12 - 16 ans	Favoriser l'individualisation Apprendre à négocier les	Puberté Adonaissance - Adolescence	Autorité parentale Scolarité obligatoire

	choix avec l'adolescent	Choix identitaire et professionnel	
	Communiquer avec l'adolescent	9 - 16 ans	
	Effet Pygmalion	Obtenir sa majorité	
Emancipation 16 - 18 ans	Lâcher prise	Apprentissage - Etudes Adunaissance Devenir indépendant sur le plan du logement, des finances et le plan affectif	Majorité sociale 25 ans, fin des obligations parentales de soutien à la formation

Bien que ce soit souvent le cas, la chronologie des étapes standard de la parentalité ne décrit pas un déroulement standard du vécu de la parentalité mais l'évolution des contraintes imposées à un adulte parent par l'âge de l'enfant dont il a la responsabilité. Nous ne défendons donc pas l'idée d'une succession standard d'épreuves. Par contre, nous relevons la présence d'épreuves standard, de cadres de contraintes types dans lesquels s'inscrit le récit parental. En effet, un adulte beau-parent membre d'une famille recomposée peut être amené par un effet d'alliance à vivre l'épreuve de la scolarisation chez l'enfant de son conjoint et à décrire ainsi une épreuve spécifique inscrite dans cette épreuve standard. Le parent nous relate un entretien difficile avec une enseignante durant lequel il s'est trouvé pris à partie et s'est senti très impliqué sur le plan identitaire, avant de vivre lui-même l'épreuve standard de la conception de son propre enfant. Par épreuves standard, nous entendons donc un cadre de contraintes, de défis posés à l'adulte parent en lien direct avec l'enfant, son développement biologique, psychologique et l'inscription sociale et culturelle de ce processus dans le vécu de parentalité.

Une horloge de la parentalité

L'âge de l'enfant est le cœur dynamique du récit de parentalité dans notre étude. Cette dynamique comme une horloge astronomique[16] organise l'environnement matériel et culturel de la parentalité. L'âge de l'enfant fait progresser le rouage biologique, le rouage scolaire, le rouage juridique, le rouage médical. C'est donc bien à la métaphore d'une horloge de la parentalité que nous pourrions faire appel dans notre étude chronologique. Les horloges astronomiques font apparaître une scène, des personnages, des époques en suivant la position des rouages. Cette horloge de la parentalité organisée par l'age de l'enfant, définit pour les parents de notre recherche des épreuves ou des scènes standard auxquelles le parent est soumis et qui déterminent fortement le récit individuel. Ces épreuves peuvent aussi être lues

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[16] Horloge de Dasypodius à Strasbourg

comme autant d'examens qu'il s'agit de franchir, des épreuves standard qui s'imposent aux parents de par le simple écoulement du temps. Nous avons tenté dans le tableau ci-dessous de mettre en concordance l'âge de l'enfant et différents marqueurs sociaux, juridiques, scolaires, sociologiques et psychologiques qui organisent cette chronologie. Souvent, les auteurs cités dans ce tableau chronologique se prémunissent d'une lecture trop standardisée du déroulement des étapes qu'ils décrivent dans leurs ouvrages et désirent maintenir un certain flou quant à une définition trop fixe des âges de l'enfant. Nous sommes aussi conscients que ces chronologies ne définissent pas un déroulement unique des expériences de la parentalité sachant que, pour certains parents, par les situations d'adoption, de famille recomposée, ou toute autre circonstance particulière, une théorie des stades ne résiste pas à la critique systémique (Formenti, 2000). Le concept d'épreuves standard de la parentalité nous permet de comprendre la parentalité comme déterminée par le développement de l'enfant. Il ne s'agit pas de décrire un déroulement chronologique standard mais plutôt de mettre en lumière des enjeux, des décors, des épreuves génériques des récits de parentalité. Ces épreuves standard correspondent à des étapes qui dépassent le discours du parent ou même celui des experts. Ces étapes décrivent simplement le développement humain bébé - petit enfant - enfant - adolescent - adulte. Toutes les cultures et toutes les sciences de l'enfance construisent spontanément des références culturelles pour lire le développement de l'enfant en les liant à des attitudes, des rites de passage, des défis et des actions éducatives normatives selon les stades de ce développement. Cette chronologie standardisée est bien le fait d'une culture du développement physique et psychique de l'être humain (Abignente, 2004). Il est d'ailleurs intéressant de voir que l'objet d'étude peut alors être l'individu enfant, le groupe famille, le contexte de socialisation ou l'évolution législative encadrant la prise en charge de l'enfant.

L'analyse des récits de parentalité et des indicateurs du parcours de parentalité de notre panel nous amène progressivement à voir émerger une sorte de résonnance entre le discours parental et le discours professionnel. Les parents se nourrissent et en appellent souvent au discours professionnel pour constituer leur expertise de parent. Dans les récits de notre étude, l'interaction entre les demandes de conseil, d'éclairage, de traduction des comportements de l'enfant et le discours des professionnels est marquant. Le parent en recherche d'équilibre trouve son centre de gravité en faisant appel aux repères et indicateurs médicaux, culturels et sociaux de son environnement. Nous pouvons donc voir dans notre tableau un simple descriptif de différents langages auxquels le parent fait appel pour constituer son expertise de parent.

Quelle origine de ce concept d'épreuves standard dans cette recherche?

Bien que très séduisante, cette manière de lire le récit autobiographique nous interroge. Quelle est l'origine réelle de ces concepts d'épreuves standard et spécifiques de la parentalité dans ma recherche? Quel biais pourrait me faire mobiliser un concept étranger au discours parental? Est-ce un effet d'optique lié à mon statut de praticien qui simplement marquerait mon analyse? Est-ce une illusion ou un biais méthodologique produit par le caractère chronologique du croisement d'un récit et d'un parcours de parentalité dans notre canevas d'entretien? C'est possible et il nous est aujourd'hui difficile de départager un phénomène inscrit dans une démarche où nous souffrons comme chercheur de moult travers dus à notre implication quotidienne dans les dispositifs de soutien parentaux. Pourtant, malgré cette réserve, nous conserverons pour l'instant à l'esprit l'hypothèse que ces épreuves standard de la parentalité sont au contraire la manifestation d'une interaction incessante du discours parental et du discours des professionnels structurée par l'âge de l'enfant. Aujourd'hui, nous ne pouvons plus lire le discours parental comme distinct du discours des professionnels. L'analyse de notre panel révèle trop souvent l'influence des savoirs savants qui parasitent ou enrichissent continuellement la manière de penser des parents. Que le parent rejette cet envahissement ou s'en accommode, c'est dans les champs lexicaux mobilisés que nous avons relevé l'impact des professionnels sur le discours parental. Que les termes employés soient juridiques, médicaux, psychologiques, leur mobilisation par les parents pour parler de la parentalité montre à quel point celle-ci est devenue le champ du croisement entre les savoirs savants et l'expérience quotidienne parentale. Aimé ou haï, le professionnel est un des actants majeurs du récit de parentalité et son rôle est souvent crucial dans le déroulement des épreuves clés. Nous continuerons à analyser les récits parentaux de notre recherche en mobilisant cette matrice chronologique dans le but d'organiser la présentation de notre analyse des entretiens.

La chronologie des épreuves standard en regard des chronologies du développement de l'enfant, de la famille, de la personne																					
Age de l'enfant	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	**MAJORITE CIVILE (SIGNATURE)**
Etapes standard pour l'enfant en Suisse		Petite enfance				Scolarité primaire - Enfance							Scolarité secondaire - Adolescence					Etude - Profession			
Epreuves standard du parcours de parentalité Luthi 2013	Conception	Autorisation				Scolarisation							Individualisation					Emancipation			
Cadre juridique suisse pour les mineurs	IVG [17]	Autorité parentale[18] : Droits et devoirs du parent envers l'enfant et minorité de l'enfant jusqu'à 18 ans																			
Cadre politique: loi scolaire vaudoise [19]						Scolarité obligatoire															
Majorité sexuelle: 16 ans loi suisse	Minorité sexuelle																	Majorité sexuelle			
Psychologie de la famille Cycle de vie familiale Bradley (2008), (Formenti, 2000)	Stade 3 La famille avec de jeunes enfants								Stade 4 La famille avec des adolescents												
Thérapie familiale Cycle vital de la famille Merucci 2013 Approche systémique		Naissance de l'enfant 0 - 3 ans			Entrée à l'école 3 - 6 ans			?					L'adolescence de l'enfant: éloignement progressif du monde familial					Départ des enfants (monde du travail)			
Psychologie du développement life span Stassen Berger (2012) Enfant	Prénatalité naissance	Enfant 0 à 2 ans		Âge préscolaire 2 - 6 ans				Âge scolaire 6 - 12 ans					Adolescence 11 - 20 ans								
Ajouter ici le parent																					
Sociologie familiale François Singly 2006													Pré-adolescence et adolescence								
Sociologie culturelle La culture de la chambre Glevarec 2010						Enfance							Préadolescence ou adolescence 12 -15 ans				Age adulte 15 ans et…				
Stades du développement psychosocial E. Erickson (Thomas, 1994)		Confiance	Autonomie		Initiative		Compétence						Identité 12 - 20								
Pédagogie Les âges de l'homme chez Rousseau 1762 (Thomas, Michel, 1994)		Infans 0 - 2 ans		L'enfance 2 - 11									L'adolescence ou la deuxième naissance				Age de raison				
Les âges de la vie (monde médical)	Embryon	BB	Petit-enf.		Enfant								Puberté - Adolescence							MAJ	
Stades psychosexuel Freud (Papalia, 1989)		oral	anal		phallique		Latence						Génital								
Stades cognitifs de Piaget (Papalia, 1989)		1 [20]	1-2		3		4						5								

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[17] **Interruption de grossesse Code civil Suisse article 188-122** Droits sur l'interruption de grossesse en Suisse 12 semaines par motivation personnelle, ensuite uniquement sur avis médical stipulant une mise en danger psychique ou physique de la mère (article 118 – 122 code pénal Suisse).

[18] **Autorité parentale Code civil Suisse article 133** Autorité parentale Choix du prénom, de la religion, du lieu de vie, de l'école et de sa formation. Administrer ses biens, représenter l'enfant dans ses rapports avec des tiers et administrer ses biens, veiller à sa santé. Article 133 code civil Suisse. L'obligation d'entretien peut excéder la majorité de l'enfant.

[19] **Scolarité obligatoire Loi scolaire vaudoise article 55** Tous les parents domiciliés ou résidant dans le canton ont le droit et le devoir d'inscrire et d'envoyer leurs enfants en âge de scolarité obligatoire dans une école publique ou privée, ou de leur dispenser un enseignement à domicile.

[20] 1 sensori-moteur 2 préopératoire 3 préopératoire 4 Opérations concrètes 5 Opérations formelles

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{ TC "*Barbara Merrill & Linden West* - Behind the scenes, and into the messiness of European collaborative research" \f \l }Behind the scenes, and into the messiness of European collaborative research

Barbara Merrill, University of Warwick, UK & Linden West, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

'All the world is like a stage, we

do strut and fret our hour on it, and that is all the time we have' (Goffman)

Introduction

This paper focuses on what 'goes in' to, and goes on, in the processes of doing cross-national biographical narrative research, by drawing on our experiences of involvement in a European research project entitled ' *Access and Retention: Experiences of Non-traditional Learners in HE (RANLHE)* (see Finnegan F., Merrill B and Thunborg C 2014)*. In doing so we want to talk about the 'messiness' of undertaking research and take a closer look at what happens behind the scene; or off as well as back stage in the language of Goffman (1991). This is a story which researchers rarely write about as research accounts are presented in a relatively polished and unproblematic way, if only to keep up appearances.

We were a team of eight partners from seven countries (England, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Scotland, Spain, Sweden) and consisting of eighteen researchers. Many members of the team have worked together on several European projects for a number of years. Comparative research has a longstanding history in the social sciences and in recent years, for us as adult education researchers, the European Union has been a source of funding to enable us to research collaboratively across Europe. Researching and working transnationally is rewarding and enriching but it can also highlight the variety of ways in which researchers in different countries employ the same method in different ways. This largely stems from the development of different intellectual and cultural traditions across European countries. As Jungmann points out:

> …the very theoretical constructs and modes of interpretation used for analysis are themselves culturally specific, in that they are part of the professional socialisation of social scientists from different traditions (1992, 74).

Doing cross-national research can be 'exciting, interesting and challenging for the researcher' (Merrill, 1997: 2). Such research also has the potential to enable researchers to stand back from their own culture rather than being ethnocentric and look at issues in different and new ways (Merrill, 1997). This notion is echoed by Hantrais:

> Inevitably, researchers have their own culturally and linguistically determined assumptions and their own mindsets. The experience of being engaged in comparative work may enable them to see the familiar from a new perspective and to become more receptive to differences. As outsiders, they may even be able to gain an understanding of phenomena that was not obvious to insiders (1999: 103).

This paper explores how, despite our diversity of perspectives and traditions, we developed a capacity to work together and enrich each other's theoretical and methodological repertoires. Achieving this entailed many long, but necessary, discussions and debates. It illustrated to us that undertaking collaborative European research is a learning process for researchers.

A Kaleidoscope of biographical approaches

While we are all biographical researchers we do not share a common approach to biographical narrative interviewing. This situation led to discussions and dialogue during team meetings in order to find a way of working together to allow us to do comparative research. In reality we reached a consensus based, to an extent, on non-consensus because of our different cultural and intellectual traditions. In practice this meant agreeing on a some common assumptions about interviewing – giving space to the interviewee, and avoiding structured or semi-structured methods – but then each partner largely went their own way. Different interviewing techniques were, therefore, used to obtain the same result – rich in-depth stories which were still comparable. Hantrais (1999) argues that it is possible to reach findings which can be comparable even though different partner countries adopt a different approach to a particular method. She goes on to elaborate that: '…cross-national methods can be most accurately depicted as representing a meal from an *á la carte* menu, where individual researchers select according to their tastes and expertise…'(1999: 105). On the whole, we did tend to choose similar dishes.

There were two notable tendencies within the project team, alongside the wish to be eclectic and work with difference. One tendency was more psychological and the other sociological. There were also other disciplines at play as some members also came from a background in history, anthropology, and education. 'We, therefore, represented different theoretical perspectives, shaped by our disciplinary backgrounds and academic cultural traditions' (West et al, 2014: 25). This, thus, impacted on the approaches we variously used in our biographical narrative interviewing. However, we did find one common ground in the Chicago school tradition which united us. Yet even here we noted how the Chicago school had developed differently in different countries in relation to biographical narrative approaches. In Poland, for example, the tradition began with Thomas and Znaniecki's study of *The Polish Peasant in*

Europe and America and was continued through the work of, for example, Chalasiński, Pieter and Romanowska. Here it combined interviewing together with written accounts. In the UK the Chicago school tradition has been important alongside feminist as well as oral history, and to an extent psychoanalytic approaches and insights. Underpinning these is the desire to build and maintain a humanistic set of values heavily influenced by the sociological work of C. Wright Mills (1959) in particular but also John Berger (1972). C. Wright Mills (1959) worked with the fundamental issues in sociology by stressing that biography should be seen to represent the meeting point of history, structuring processes and individual agency. In combining the Chicago school, feminism we strove to break down the power relationships between the researcher and the researched so that the interview was akin to a conversation. Subjectivity and intersubjectivity becomes important in this process.

Relational and 'scientific' orientations

There is what we might call a more relational approach to biographical narrative interviewing; with a more explicitly auto/biographical orientation. Here emphasis is given to the quality of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. The researcher's presence is seen as a potential resource in creating good enough space, in Winnicott's language, for more open, playful and exploratory forms of storytelling, (and, in effect, for self negotiation) (West, 2011b). Emphasis is placed on attentiveness, respectfulness and of the need to take time with the other, to build a relationship of trust; and of the importance of managing anxiety by building a secure, collaborative space. This requires some focus on the emotional qualities of the relationship between researcher and subject, as part of making sense of narrative material and what can and can't be said (Merrill & West, 2009). Participants are also involved in analysing their material, using recordings and transcripts; and given the longitudinal design, this included thinking together about what was difficult to say and/or may be missing from the account. As noted, this is biographical research in more of a relational as well as clinical style (Merrill & West, 2009; West, 1996, 2009; Bainbridge and West, 2012). Such methods can convincingly illuminate struggles to change, and moments of transformation, as well as the complex interplay of desire and resistance, culture and psyche, in really significant learning, including in the research relationship.

Analytically, a proforma can be used to identify themes but also to consider the quality of the process, including the transference (what the researcher may represent, unconsciously, to the interviewee), and the counter-transference, which has to do with the feelings the interviewee may evoke in the researcher (sometimes described as auto/biographical dynamics). These

processes can be a source of rich insight into the meanings and emotions being communicated (Merrill & West, 2009). Frustration and anger in a story teller may be felt by the researcher and her subjectivity becomes a resource in sense making. Each proforma can be developed over time, to consist of a mix of standard biographical data, emerging themes, reference to relevant literatures, but also reflection on what was happening in the research relationship. The members of the team would immerse themselves independently and exhaustively in recordings and transcripts, which allowed for processes of incubation and play with the theoretical repertoire. Sharing interpretations was important while the team searched for any potential gestalt or overall pattern in the narratives of individual students, before moving to other case studies (this is different to conventional grounded theory, which tends to identify common fragments or patterns, across cases, more or less from the outset). Great attention was given to nuance and idiosyncrasy in and across narratives, as well as patterning. Social science can be guilty of ironing out, in reductive ways, what is atypical and or idiosyncratic in narratives. Moreover, individual accounts, in their depth and luminosity, may reveal as much about general aspects of the human condition, including the play of desire and resistance in learning, rather like good literature (West, 1996). Hamlet is both a singular story, while also illuminative of the human condition as a whole.

In contrast, at a different point on a spectrum, the German team employed a more objective 'scientific' approach. The German tradition in biographical research has been heavily influenced by the work of Fritz Schütze. Our German partner – Peter Alheit – built on Schütze's methodology developing a distinct and rigorous biographical approach from a sociological perspective. This approach places emphasis on how lives, and narratives, are structured as well as potential sites for what he terms 'biographical learning' or 'biographicity' (Alheit & Dausien, 2007). Keeping the researcher's identity at bay, minimizing her presence, is a feature of such an approach (often more sociological rather than psychosocial in orientation), which has proved so influential among colleagues in many other countries (Schütze, 1992; Rosenthal, 1995; Chamberlayne et al, 2004; Alheit, 1982 and 1995; Wengraf, 2001). Interviews, in this perspective, are the means to encourage informants to speak extensively and freely with minimum intrusion by the interviewer. The interviewer – having explained the purpose of the study – begins with a single, open-ended question, such as: *Please tell me about your learning life history;* then, as noted, s/he retreats into the background. The interview is conducted in what is called a methodologically controlled way,

in that the storyteller must have trust as well as understand that the material will be treated confidentially and that s/he is also in control of things (Alheit, 1982; Merrill and West, 2009).

A second phase involves developing more structured questions, shaped by the researcher's theoretical interests. Underlying the approach is a perpetual concern to ensure that the narrator's storytelling – and its interpretation – is protected, as much as possible, from the influence and subjectivity of the listener. The story should be more or less the same, in other words, whoever the interviewer might be and thus building reliability into the basic evidence generated: narrative data can then be thought of as more trustworthy, less idiosyncratic, providing, in turn, relatively solid data for analytic and theoretical work as well as generalization. It may be no coincidence that such concerns seem to be especially strong among a number of German biographical researchers, including Peter Alheit. As Ursula Apitzsch and Lena Inowlocki (2000) have noted, biographical research is not of the mainstream in German sociology and is subject to intense criticism, around the reliability of the evidence generated and the capacity for generalizability. There have been constant disputes about the nature of testimony and its relation to historical realities, which may be unsurprising given German history. This may underlie the desire – entirely legitimate - to operate, at every stage, in rigorous, transparent ways, to build a confident methodological rationale in what can be a hostile academic world. Peter Alheit's work embodies this ethic of care-fullness, which includes interviewing and analysis: the entire process, he has argued, must be taken as seriously as any of the results obtained. He uses structural description as an analytical tool – derived from the work of Schütze and colleagues - which permits the subdivision of biographical material into carefully defined narrative units. Care is taken to identify and interrogate the narrator's own weighting of material and to build relatively precise notions of how narrators themselves describe changes in their biographical process and in themselves. The approach encompasses comparative group analysis of texts to help in creating analytic rigor and criticality (Alheit, 1995: 27-8). The approach also engages with objective hermeneutics in which there is a first level of interpretation by the narrator and a second level by the researchers. Researchers follow a clear procedure both in the interview and analysis stages and the narratives are read and interpreted collectively by researchers.

Other partners offered different approaches to interviewing. The Irish partners, for example, drew on a critical and realist perspective. They stress that a person's lived experience is the source of rich knowledge. By listening carefully to what the interviewee says reveals a great deal about the functioning and structure of the social world and the nature of agency

(Honneth, 2007, C. Wright Mills, 1959). Their biographical interviewing approach employed open, participant-led interviews with a particular focus on education and learning. Like the English teams (Merrill & West, 2009) careful consideration was given to the situated, negotiated, emotional and tacit dimension of conducting interviews. The Stockholm researchers also drew on the approach of the Chicago school and, in particular, the work of Blumer (1969). They used abductive analyses, based on grounded theory, and different sensitizing concepts: transitional space, habitus and floating. These were used to explore a student's identity through the interplay between structure and agency and process and structure. The Scottish, like the Swedish team focused on meaning and identity work. In their approach identity is not a given, but something which requires constant attention and work in which education and learning play an important role. The concept of agency was also important in their research approach. They drew on an ecological understanding of agency whereby agency is viewed as being embedded within particular relationships, practices, norms and institutions which are the product of histories and power structures which the learner needs to negotiate and confront.

Using sensitising concepts

As stated above the two main disciplinary influences within the team were sociology and psychology. Dialogue between members of the team led to the emergence of psychosocial perspectives which helped to bridge some of the gap (West, Fleming and Finnegan 2013). If the sociology at work within biographical forms of enquiry tends towards an inter-subjective orientation – placing normalizing cultural processes at the core, and resistance to them – psychology, or at least psychoanalysis can focus more on the subjective, or internal world, alongside the intersubjective. However, there were distinct overlaps between these differing orientations. In order to deal with and bridge the messiness of different biographical and disciplinary approaches we identified three sensitising concepts to enable the voices and stories of non-traditional students to be heard, as well as some dialogue and development to take place in the team. These were Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Winnicott's psychological, ore more accurately, psychoanalytically informed work on transitional space, and self-negotiation, and Honneth's critical theory/intersubjective approach to recognition.

Bourdieu (1990, p. 108) coined the phrase of students being 'fish in or out of water' and referred to misrecognition deriving from being a fish out of water (Fuller, 2009, p. 138) in the varying habitus of different universities. Some fish out of water, however, survive and thrive, while others do not, especially those without particular forms of social and educational

capital, shaped by class backgrounds (Reay, David & Ball, 2005). We wanted to understand this phenomenon in greater depth, and wondered if we could build more holistic, interdisciplinary psychosocial understanding than Bourdieu offers. Learners can, for instance, be considered as potentially more agentic in their social interactions at university, and notions of capital might be broadened to include psychological and familial dimensions. These might encompass, in the case of older learners, resilience forged in diverse forms of lifelong learning, such as surviving various life crises, like divorce or unemployment. In building more dynamic, agentic understanding (while recognising the continuing power of and pervasiveness of social reproduction processes), Bourdieu's (1986, pp. 241-258) ideas on embodied cultures - of how we internalise a range of norms, including how to think but also physically how to relate to others in our dispositions - were connected to Winnicott's concept of changing experiences of selfhood, in transitional space; and of how we may develop more open, less defended orientations to experience. The focus is on the complex process of negotiating who we are - an established focus in biographical narrative enquiry - and the resources we draw on in experimenting with self and of ways of being in the world (West, 1996). Resources such as others, but also from the symbolic world, in a good idea that resonated with experience, like feminism, or a good character in a novel that, through processes of what we can call projective identification (where parts of ourselves get identified with a character, and their resilience can in turn be introjected in ways that evoke a strengthening of selfhood. In developing this focus, we drew too on Honneth's concept of recognition and its fundamental place in human well-being: encompassing micro, mezzo and macro-level interactions. A theory of recognition can also encompass recognition in the symbolic order, in the kind of inner/outer dialectics mentioned above.

These ideas found resonance in the stories of diverse learners, yet the extent of their influence varied across the teams. Some teams found synergies across their work, (West, Fleming and Finnegan, 2013), while others tended to go their own way. There are economies of time, and differences, that will find new and problematic expression in collaborative enquiry. We did not start in a united way, nor end in complete harmony: which in some senses is to be celebrated. However, we did attempt to engage, at length and in depth, with each other's ideas, and in interdisciplinary ways, that remain unusual in research

Language: lost in translation

Engaging in European research also raises issues of language, particularly when native English speakers are involved in the team as English has become the language of research in

European projects. The biographical interviews are undertaken in the language of the country but then have to be translated into English for the purposes of sharing stories and interpretation and writing. Not only does this create more work for non-native English researchers but it also raises questions of how much of a story gets lost in translation in relation to nuances, feelings and emotions for example:

> Postmodernists remind us that language is a crucial part of our identity as it shapes the way we view others and understand the world. Good communication and understanding is essential in the underpinning of any cross-national research. Failure to achieve this may result in soured relationships, irritation and poor research. (Merrill & Bron, 2008: 88).

The dominance of the English language can also bring issues of power and powerlessness to the forefront, in team meetings, for instance. Explaining what you are trying to say about biographical narrative approaches or a particular theory in another language is difficult and can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and frustration for not being fully understood. There is a constant need for native English researchers to be sensitive to this, and yet other dynamics can take over. Of symbolic and methodological struggle, and, maybe, of personal insecurity. We have invested in an idea or corpus of theory, it is how we get known and establish our position in the academic world. Letting go and creating space for others, and otherness, was and is not easy. While we adopted a more psychosocial framing, there was always, and perhaps inevitably, very divergent positions taken. How far you can reflexively interrogate these, and in more open ways, is a major challenge in the academy: admitting we may not know, or managing not knowing is often at conflict with some dominant framings of academic identities.

Back and off stage: a kind of conclusion

So although there were many similarities, there were also multiple differences between us: of method, of theoretical orientation, of identity, language, academic community, and maybe of personality. Some of these found expression on stage, and in very direct ways. Despite a common interest in "stories" of learning – their generation, analysis and representation – the project remained a heterogeneous family: geographically, linguistically, and disciplinarily. There was always too, and inevitably, the danger of forms of linguistic and cultural colonialism in our scientific community, predicated on the dominance of the English language.

There were also issues to do with subjectivity, intersubjectivity and structure, as well as their interplay, in research, which came to encompass questions of the detachment and objectivity

of the researcher herself, as against her potential role as co-enquirer, working empathically and dialogically with learners, to make mutual sense of experience. These differences found expression, in varying ways, as the project sought to build its conversations. On stage, off stage, and to an extent, back stage too - at dinner, between particular partners, or in late night arguments, for example - gender issues reared their head, in debate about who was claiming space, or not, and why. Male voices tended, sometimes to dominate, it was said, which may reflect a continuing, culturally hard wired problem of gendering space. Women's voices get marginalised, it could be argued, too often, even in the ostensible egalitarianism of a project like this. Being a woman claiming public voice to tell new and challenging stories, as Mary Beard (2014), the classicist, suggests, more generally, remains problematic, including in the academy and research. When Telemachus, son of Penelope and Odysseus, in Homer's Odyssey, told his mother that speech is a man's business, there might be traces of this in our academic exchanges. This is a story we did not engage with sufficiently, perhaps, in the formal, on-stage theatre of our project, or even backstage, in any resolved way.

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{ TC "*Kjetil Moen* - The personal in the professional in end of life care: Methodological reflections on a biographical-narrative case study" \f \l }The personal in the professional in end of life care: Methodological reflections on a biographical-narrative case study.

Kjetil Moen, University of Stavanger

Summary: The purpose of this paper is to explore how it is possible, by interpretive means, to extrapolate from a biographical narrative account how encounters with death and dying may have informed the self-understanding of the narrator and how an exploration of the other`s existential feelings may serve to elicit the emotional learning that has taken place.

Background and purpose of paper

The context for the following enquiry is an ongoing biographical narrative study – "the personal in the professional in end of life care" - which is exploring how working with death and dying may change the self-understanding of health professionals. The attempt, by interpretive means, to explicate the self-understanding of the twelve health professionals participating in the study is undertaken by use of Biographical Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2001). The study will contribute to the ongoing discussion of how to provide the best conditions for learning in difficult and sensitive clinical areas.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how it is possible, by interpretive means, to extrapolate from a biographical narrative account how encounters with death and dying may have informed the self-understanding of the narrator? This is the main question pursued and discussed in the following. Through the account of "Dina", a head physician on a palliative care unit at a hospital in Norway, the paper discuss both how the method (BNIM) served to address the research question, but also the challenges ran into trying to relate the outcome of the analysis to the research question.

Initially I place the key concept of "self-understanding" within an existential phenomenological (Heideggarian) frame, before I move on to discuss how BNIM offers a methodological operationalization of the concept. The Dina account, its lack of clinical encounters and the methodological questions this raises, is then put on the stage, followed by a discussion of the relation between "self-understanding" and death, and how a phenomenological-hermeneutical exploration of the other`s existential moods and feelings, may serve to elicit the relation between them and the emotional learning that has taken place.

Conceptualizing a "wicked" problem

Scientific questions and problems may be categorized as "tame" or "wicked"(Rittel & Webber, 1973). Social science is home to many "wicked" questions and changed self-understanding due to encounters with terminally ill and dying is definitely among them. "Tame" problems have in common that they can be solved. "Wicked" scientific problems, to the contrary, are not evil, but unsolvable. They are "slippery" in that they can be explained in indefinite ways and are termed differently by different times, places and people. It is the kind of questions that call for laborious in-depth scientific work without promise of clear unequivocal answers. Engaging "wicked" questions is all about shedding light on complex parts of our existence, parts often placed on the outskirts of language.

Martin Heidegger, as part of his existential ontological analysis in Being and Time, offers a perspective that holds self-understanding and death together, one which will inform the following discussion. Let`s start with his understanding of the former:

> "Da-sein is an entity that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned about its very being. Thus it is con- stitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a rela- tion of being to this being. And this in turn means that Da-sein understands itself in its being in some way and with some expli- citness. It is proper to this being that it be disclosed to itself with and through its being. Understanding of being is itself a determin- ation of being of Da-sein. The ontic distinction of Da-sein lies in the fact that it is ontological" (Being and Time, p.10, in Cerbone, 2008, p.6)

David R. Cerbone (2008), in his introductory work on Heidegger extracts the two most potent claims made by Heidegger about what he understands Da-sein – a human being - to be, namely 1) "a being whose being is an issue for it", and very much related 2) "a being who has an understanding of being" (Cerbone, 2008, p.5). The two ontological claims about what it means to be a human being as opposed to being any other entity will serve in the following as my definition of "self-understanding".

This is a self-understanding that is idiosyncratic and "largely implicit", not put into words and hence calls for interpretive measures to be made explicit. It manifests itself primarily by how we act, not what we think:

> "The `essence of Da-sein lies in its existence`(BT, p.40/42). In its day-to-day activity Da-sein is always `taking a stand` on the kind of being it is, not in the sense of actively declaring itself to be one thing rather than another, but in engaging in some activities rather than others, taking up some tasks rather than others, adopting certain goals rather than others" (Cerbone, 2008, p.34).

Related to the above Heidegger introduces a distinction between two modes of existence, namely a state of forgetfulness and a state of mindfulness of being. The former is marked by immersion in everyday diversions of life. The latter, the ontological mode, implies an awareness of being – both its fragility and its responsibility. Forgetfulness leads to inauthenticity, while in the mindful state one embrace both possibilities and limits. The former, the "veiled" being, he relates to the concept of das Man, while the latter is termed Da-sein. None of which are evaluated or regarded, by Heidegger, as having ethical content or connotations to them (Thygesen, 2010, P.40).

The pressing question, voiced by Cerbone, and shared by me is; "*What sort of method does Heidegger propose for investigating the way of being of Da-sein, along with the meaning of being more generally?*" (Cerbone, 2008, p.13). Heidegger stresses that it methodologically can`t not merely be by `ontical description`, a narration of objects or activities, but rather a `delineating` of the ontological dimension of the latter (activities), that is "*making explicit the understanding of being at work in Da-sein`s activity*". In Heidegger`s own terms:

> "For us phenomenological reduction means leading phenomenological vision back from the apprehension of a being, whatever may be the character of that apprehension, to the understanding of the being of this being" (Being and Time, p.21, in Cerbone, 2008, p.6)

"*The understanding of the being of this being*", an investigation of "*the natives point of view*" (Geertz, 1973), requires a phenomenological-hermeneutical endeavor, according to Heidegger. This is due to Da-sein`s `understanding of her own being` is not anything she `has in mind`. Rather it is about how she is acting in her `world`, her `referential totality`(Cerbone, 2008, p. 41). Hence understanding Da-sein and the world (the referential totality) as two independently intelligible notions is a fallacy. `Being-in-the world` is rather a `unitary phenomenon`. The `world` is often subject to `a familiarity` and a taking-for-grantness, which implies that Da-sein misses or passes over the phenomenon. In `breakdown situations` though, as we will elaborate on below, the world may `announce itself`, according to Heidegger (Cerbone, 2008, p. 44-45).

Hence this existential phenomenological understanding of "self-understanding" calls for a methodological approach that offers a methodological operationalization of "forgetfulness" and "mindfulness" and provide interpretive means to explore how being in idiosyncratic ways is made an issue for Da-sein through her engagement with her "world".

A methodological operationalization

BNIM, Biographical Narrative Interpretative Method (Wengraf, 2001, 2011) has been used in several PhD projects the last years (Esssat, 2010; Graham, 2010; Hughes, 2011; Nicholson, 2009), but to my knowledge there is none that have had end of life care as it`s empirical context and narratives from various end of life care professions as its central research object, leaving open the question how it can facilitate for an empirical exploration of the relation between self-understanding and encounters with the other`s death.

According to Wengraf, the main exponent of the method, the interviewee is a narrative self with a personal "idiom" or "gestalt", which inhabits a "selective principle", a characteristic way in which she is disposed to receive and organize experience (Wengraf, 2001, p.69). These anthropological notions resembles those of Heidegger stated above; "a being whose being is an issue for it" and for whom "things show up" and "matter" to it (Cerbone, 2008, p. 31). To extrapolate such a self-understanding calls for a non-interruptive, minimalist-passive, interview approach, according to Wengraf; "the gestalt principle……requires the spontaneous pattern of the speaker to complete itself fully and so be fully exposed for analysis" (Wengraf, 2001, p.113).

Hence the BNIM interview starts with an open question framed by my research question. In this session there will be no interruptions from the interviewer. In the second session the interviewer takes the Long Narration from the first phase as point of departure and push for Particular Incident Narratives (PIN). When searching for PINs the interviewer is asking deepening questions related to the order and language of the narratives told, but without introducing themes not raised by the interviewee.

Sub session one then rests on the rationale that "free behavior would reveal to the researcher the current `structuring principle` (gestalt) of all the particular behaviors being expressed" (Wengraf, 2001, p.69). Premature questions exploring meaning can potentially crack an emerging image of the "situated subjectivity" of the interviewee, what Wengraf refers to as the "gestalt" (Wengraf, 2001, p.113, 125, 137).

Implicit in BNIM there is a notion of "being-in-the-world" similar to the one we find in Being and Time. There is a recognition of the mutual constituency of the individual being and its world and BNIM aims at getting a grasp on the "**situated** subjectivity" by "thinking in a more than usually focused way about the socio-historic context, situatedness in time and social space… and then thinking in more than usually focused way about subjective experiencing"

(Wengraf, 2011, p.136). This dual aspect resembles and encompasses Heidegger`s "being-in-the-world", and the mutual constituency between the individual and her "world".

BNIM appears promising for our endeavor in that it by its non-interruptive interview method is allowing for an idiosyncratic case account, providing access to both the explicit and implicit self-understanding of the interviewee at the point of the interview. In my interview with Dina though, elaborated on in the following, I encountered possible limits to the method in regard to addressing self-understanding and death.

Encountering Dina – and a methodological problem

The interview started out by me offering a Singel Question Inducing Narrative **(SQUIN):**

> "As you know I am interested in how physicians as persons have changed, or not changed, due to working with terminally ill and dying patients.
>
> So can you please tell me your life story: all those events and experiences which were important for you personally?
>
> Please take the time you need!
>
> I will just listen and won`t interrupt you with questions. I will just take notes so that I can remember what I want to ask you about when you have finished telling me about it all. Take the time you need. Start wherever you like."

Dina responds to the open invitation framed by my research question by talking uninterrupted for about 18 minutes. Moved by a couple of nudges from me, in which I am asking if there is any other event or experience she remembers, she adds another 15 minutes. She undertakes a linear telling of her lived life and follows to a great extent the sequence of events and experiences as they played out.

As I am listening to Dina there is a growing sense of uneasiness related to the fact that I don't get a whole lot of narratives about clinical encounters. An uncomfortable question emerges, namely how I can come to terms with the question of in what ways encounters with terminally ill and dying patients may have informed her self-understanding, when there is no reference to clinical incidents in her account? The void of "relevant" stories raises the methodological question of whether my framed, but open-ended, SQUIN direct Dina towards the phenomenon I want to explore? Can Dina`s account, with its lack of reference to encounters with death and dying, contribute to address my central research question at all? Let us direct our attention to Heidegger`s existential interpretation of self-understanding and death and how he proposes that the two are related.

Death and self-understanding

My own physical death is always only a future possibility and not to be experienced. The other`s death, to the contrary, Heidegger acknowledges, is experienced for most. But, according to Heidegger, the latter doesn't contribute to a sense of deaths inevitability or to a sense of finitude. To the contrary, it keeps death at arm's length as it:

> "…allay any sense of death being my possibility here and now. In other words, experiencing the deaths of others contributes to Da-sein`s tendency to evade or cover over its own finitude. This is so primarily because the deaths of others are experienced as terminating events, something that happens at the end, and to end, a person`s life. Such experiences contribute to a purely futural way of thinking about death, as something that will happen somewhere off in the distance, thereby encouraging the thought that `one also dies at the end, but for now one is not involved`…In other words, `Dying, which is essentially and irreplaceably mine, is distorted into a publicly occurring event which `das Man encounters` … Calculative thinking of this kind is thus not a way of living one`s own death, projecting it ahead of oneself as one`s `own most possibility`'" (Cerbone, 2008, p. 87-88).

Open and direct talk about death, a displayed sense of certainty about the reality of it, fear of it, near death experiences, narratives of encounters with terminally ill and dying in the clinic, or elsewhere, is no indicator of somebody authentically relating to the reality of death, if we follow Heidegger. It could to the contrary actually imply the opposite, namely that the informant is relating to it in terms of Das Man - at arm`s length, not yet something he or she is involved in. It is not necessarily implied by numbers of clinical encounters with terminally ill and dying patients that the one speaking has acknowledged her or his own most possibility, namely death as "the possibility of the impossibility of being".

I can`t experience my own death, and neither that of my neighbor, but still, paradoxically, Heidegger gives death - "that which makes impossible all our possibilities" – and 'unpareil' position amongst the basic conditions[1] (I. D. Yalom, 1998, p.187). Towards the end of the quote above, Heidegger suggests that it is possible to be "living one`s own death". How can we come to terms with the paradox implied in the latter two paragraphs?

Heidegger is (at least partly) parting from a traditional understanding and common sense beliefs about death as an event that ends life, when introducing an existential interpretation of death as a "way of being" and claiming that we are "constantly dying". Being towards the possibility of non-being is not about actualizing or relating to the event of physical death, but it is about relating to death, not as a future event but a present possibility, in a way that death "reveals itself as a possibility in and for this being" as opposed to an event in which "one is

not yet involved" (Heidegger, 2007, p. 274). "Death can thus only show up as a phenomenon in and through life, which makes being-towards-death, essentially, a matter of being-towards-life" (Thygesen, 2010, p.31). What might this amount to?

> "For Dasein to confront life as its own most possibility is for it to acknowledge that there is no moment of its existence in which its being as such is not at issue. This discloses that Dasein`s existence matters to it, and that what matters about it is not just the specific moments that make it up, but the totality of those moments – its life as a whole. Dasein thereby comes to see that its life is something for which it is responsible, that it is its own to live (or to disown)…to be sloughed off onto others"…"being-toward-death" is thus a matter of stripping out false necessities, of becoming properly attuned to the real modalities of human existence" (Stephen Mulhall in Dreyfus & Wrathall, 2005, pp.305-06)

Da-sein can only really be itself, authentic and detached from das Man, when it makes possible for own self the most own possibility, namely death (Heidegger, 2007, p. 275). Hence whether and how one relates to one`s own most part and possibility informs whether one is living in "mindfulness" or "forgetfulness" of being (I. D. Yalom, 1998, p.186). Being-towards-death, the `dying which is essentially and irreplaceably mine, which in the everydayness of life is distorted into a publicly occurring event which `das man` encounters`, held at arm`s length, is hence within reach to be lived, according to Heidegger.

The philosopher raises himself the pressing question, namely

> "how can we `objectively` characterize the ontological possibility of authentic being to death as long as Da-sein in the last resort never really relate to its end, or as long as this authentic being out of its own meaning must remain hidden for others? What does it take for such a draft to become anything more than pure fiction and a random construction? Does Da-sein itself provide instructions for such a draft?" (Heidegger, 2007, p. 272).

In the following paragraphs we will revisit Dina and explore how existential feelings may be providing clues for such a draft.

The affective side of `self-understanding`

In Heideggarian terms all understanding is `befintlich`, embedded in various moods, in `grundstimmung`.

> "All moods are in some way disclosive or revelatory of `being-in-the-world` as a whole. That is, whatever mood I find myself in thereby conditions or determines how everything shows up to me and is thereby constitutive of anything`s showing up at all" (Cerbone, 2008, p. 89).

"Mood" resembles "thematic field" used in BNIM to name the "selective principle", the characteristic way in which the individual is disposed to receive and organize experience, that

which is informing what stories are surfacing in a narrative account, that which is "structuring" and "patterning" not only the telling, but also the living in the world (Wengraf, 2001).

BNIM has protocols to explicate the thematic field(s). The "two tract" model in which both Dina`s "living of the lived life" and "telling of the told story" is analyzed separately – partly by "future blind" hypothesizing based on detailed "chunk by chunk" presentation of her transcribed account in panels - allows for an explication of the multitude of possible paths both the lived life and the told story could have taken. Thus the idiosyncrasy of Dina`s life and narrative is explicated and a "structural hypotheses", a "thematic field" – an answer to the question "why was this life told this way?" - is formed.

The dominant "thematic field", the undercurrent in Dina`s telling, is interpreted, by the above means, to be a contradictory and conflicted need to be apart and a part, belong and separate, may be most poignantly summed up in her own question:

> "what does it take for a human being to grow up in a community without becoming un free….I have always sought that road"

Considering the whole this seems to sum up what has been conditioning what has showed up in the narrative account, the "interpretive principle", what seems to have been informing the selection of stories. Hereunder the break with her faith-community of origin, her "wrestle" with god, two broken marriages, living in an avant-garde political community and then leaving it, several geographical and professional moves in adult years as well as her recent exploration of her creative side.

Ratcliffe in his book "Existential feelings", claims that pre-cognitive affective states, "moods", and we may add "thematic fields", are multiple and changes and that "just as people talk about what is and what is not, they also talk about the changeable ways in which they find themselves in the world and of perturbations in the sense of reality" (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 60). Ratcliffe explores these changes by extrapolating the existential feelings present by focusing on explicit statements made by the narrators. I will argue against limiting the phenomenological exploration of affective states to verbal utterances.

Self-understanding, "the way a being make own being an issue", is implicit which implies both that there might be a discrepancy between the narrative reported self-understanding and the implicit self-understanding and that one has to move beyond descriptive means to get at it. What is called for to make the implicit explicit is a minute and systematic attention not only to

what is said, but how it is said. The interpretation of the following lines in which Dina is speaking about how she relates to death may serve as an illustration:

> "I am looking at everything in my life (.) turn every stone in a way to find out of things (.) then death was the next question (.) look at this thing about death (.) and this I also think is very important as a doctor (.) that you are capable of talking with people (.) that you have a natural relation to death and illness and all this right (.) and not be afraid of it yourself"

BNIM offers protocols that extrapolate the emotionality of the biographical account by considering the sequence, length and manner the different topics are treated by the narrator. Such an endeavor makes explicit that there is a significance change in Dina`s telling when she engages the topic of death. She goes from speaking in first person throughout her account to speaking in general, from "I" to "you", from `dasein` to `das man`. Illustrating what Heidegger suggests is our "everyday" way of addressing death, namely to treat it as a future event in which we are not yet involved.

Does this imply that Dina is failing in "*making her own most possibility a part of her issue*" and that she is not moving "*from forgetfulness to mindfulness of being*" and thus not "*living her own death*"? Not necessarily, if we follow Heidegger. `Being-toward-death` is primarily befintlich in angst or anxiety (Heidegger, 2007, p. 277);

> "Anxiety is never related to particulars, and is not to be mistaken as fear just by this criteria, namely that it is not related to any particular threat or possibility, but more to me becoming aware of myself simply as confronting possibilities, as, that is, having to choose: `Angst (anxiety) reveals in Da-sein it being toward its own most potentiality of being, that is, being free for the freedom of choosing and grasping itself`"(Being and Time, p. 176/188) in Cerbone, 2008, p. 90)

In Dina`s account there are several situations in which she seemingly finds herself in a state of Angst, in which "`the world` announces itself to her, confronting her with possibilities and opening up for a different way of making her own being an issue. Her divorce seems to be one such "breakdown" situation, and the one possibly informing her most at the point of the interview:

> "ehm (.)it has impacted me VERY much…EXTREMELY… that feeling of separation (.) brought up a whole lot of things in me that has made me turn my life upside down …my mind opened totally I saw things in a totally different way (.)"

Dina reports how the divorce made her look at her life and "turn every stone", how "the enormous pain" made her entertain the thought of death and the possibility of "disowning" her life (cf. Mulhall above). The divorce seems eventually though to bring about an altered sense of making own being an issue for Dina, a move from Das Man towards Da-sein, from "forgetfulness" to "mindfulness" of being, a shift from servility towards agency;

"… all of a sudden I realized that I could paint and stuff like that (.) it just opened (.) just could do it all of a sudden (.) really just like that just (.) things that I thought I never could do"

Dina acknowledges that this becoming aware of herself as confronting possibilities leaves her in a state of conflict, Angst;

"There are two parts of me that all the time (.) one that wants (.) is very expansive (.) and one that is holding back" … "two that all the time is saying `now you are to get out and drive the motorbike`(.) `no, you`re not, because then it is going to be an accident`(.) `yes, but I will` ((laughs)) - - do you get it (.) ((both laughs)) (.) `SHUT UP` ((both laughs))"

How does this "breakdown situation" situated in her personal life possibly inform Dina in her professional role? A "wicked" question without promise of an unequivocal answer, of course! Still one clinical encounter referred to (in sub session two) may serve as an illustration of how correlations may be made. It is a brief narrative about how Dina got "heat" from family members after having spoken openly with a patient about his terminal state. The story is told by Dina to illustrate her claim that she is using her ability to be "open and direct" in her work as a physician at the palliative unit and that she understands truth-seeking and truth-speaking to be her most fundamental personal trait.

Weather "the breakdown situation" following the divorce might have informed, and possibly changed, the sense of urgency in regard to truth-speaking and authenticity in encounters with terminally ill and dying, calls for a systematic hermeneutical exploration of the relation between the parts and the whole and a systematic verification process of emerging structural hypotheses. Considering the whole account in a such a manner makes for an extrapolation of the "evolving subjectivity", the possible altered ways of perceiving and acting in the world, and hence the changed ways of "making own being an issue". This is beyond the scope of this enquiry. What should be clear at this point though is that BNIM offers methodological interpretive means to undertake such an endeavor. By holding together the "biographical data analysis" and the "teller flow analysis", the interpretive method facilitates for constructing the "phases of mutating subjectivity" and hence extrapolate from the biographical narrative "*how the informant has changed perspectives and priorities about self, her life, her world and how best to understand and act in it*" (Wengraf, 2011, p. 558).

Concluding remarks

In the above I have made the case, through an existential phenomenological-interpretive reading of self-understanding and death, that it doesn't depend on the number of clinical encounters referred to, nor the explicit statements made about death, to explore how encountering the death of the other may inform the self-understanding of health professionals.

How the individual is making own being, death included, an issue" is implicit, which calls for an extrapolation of the thematic field (s) serving as "interpretive principle" in the biographical narrative. Hence Dina`s narrative, void as it is of clinical encounters, may still carry within it pointers to how she is "living her own death". What is central is having an eye for possible "breakdown" situations – clinical or not - that may have altered how "being is an issue" and death is made part of the issue (the self-understanding). The case has been made that BNIM, even though the method cannot offer any "apprehension of a being" nor any kind of "certainty" about the being in vision, offers methodological protocols to entertain the "deep" hermeneutical circle called for when trying to understand how the other understands being and make own being an issue.

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[1] The concept of mandatory basic conditions implies that human beings are ontologically determined by forces they are not controlling. It is not only for the individual to move through life – he is also moved upon (Vetlesen 1999 p.245). The mandatory basic conditions are named in different ways by different philosophers. Yalom, who has given much attention to mandatory basic conditions, prefers to deal with them in line with the existentialistic notion of every individual as free and therefore in position to choose and monitor the effect of the basic conditions (Vetlesen, 1999, p.341). Vetlesen names them mandatory basic conditions and more specifically as *dependency, vulnerability, the fragility of relations, existential loneliness and mortality*, while Yalom names them ultimate concerns and more specifically *meaninglessness, existential isolation, freedom and death*(I. D. Yalom, 1998, p.172).

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