



ESREA –
European Society for Research
on the Education of Adults
Life History and Biography Network

'Togetherness' and its discontents

Lorenza Garrino
Barbara Bruschi
[editors]



Connectivity
(as well as belonging, cooperation,
conflict and separation)
in biographical narratives
of adult education and learning



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Barbara Bruschi e Lorenza Garrino

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Contents

Introduction	XI
<i>Lorenza Garrino e Barbara Bruschi</i>	
Togetherness, discontents, and the Network: framing this collection	XIV
<i>Alan Bainbridge, Laura Formenti and Linden West</i>	
Individualization, togetherness, and its discontents	XXIII
<i>Marianne Horsdal</i>	

PART A

Systems and contexts 1 - Learning from nature	
1. The Loss of Material Self in Three Recent Disasters	01
<i>Ann Brooks, Michelle R. Holcomb and Moira C. Martin</i>	
2. We Are Not Separate From The Natural World: How Connected Learning Reminds Us of Our Interdependency	15
<i>Janet Groen</i>	
Systems and contexts 2 – Learning and the meso-level	
3. What's in the making of a 'collective mind'	27
<i>Gaia Del Negro, Laura Formenti</i>	
4. Collective Mind and Togetherness in Educational Team. The Eco-Training in Adult Education	43
<i>Milani Lorena</i>	
Systems and contexts 3 - Cultural Heritage, sharing and identity	
5. COMMONS. Heritage in common, shared stories	53
<i>Barbara Bruschi, Fabiola Camandona</i>	

Systems and contexts 4 - Differences, identity and dialogue

6. You who travel, you who watch me: the telling of my story.
Narration as an instrument of self-study 65
Dalila Raccagni
7. From Individual Perturbation of Intercultural Valence, to Collective Sense:
the Development of Intercultural Competences 79
Manila Franzini

Systems and contexts 5 - The action of structures and larger systems

8. Beyond Borders: Educating and Empowering
between Mexico and the US. A biographical case study 89
José González-Monteagudo
9. Narration and welfare building with homeless people housed 101
Melania Talarico

PART B

Formal education and training 1 - From HE to work

1. Conditions for learning in professional conversation 113
Christer Langström
2. Connecting skills and biographical resources to enter the labour market.
The experience of laboratory “skills for employability”
of the Sinapsi University Center 127
Marianna Capo

Formal education and training 2 - On becoming teachers

3. “Autobiographic Essays of Teaching Experience to obtain the Master's
degree at Pedagogical University of Veracruz, Mexico 141
María Marcela González Arenas
4. Devenir enseignants ensemble 157
Francesca Davida Pizzigoni

Formal education and training 3 - Training and researching professionals

5. “To be born” as a professional. A practice proposal for the care work formation 167
Sara Nosari, Emanuela Guarcello

Formal education and training 4 – A critical gaze on teachers’ training

6. Beyond boundaries: a narrative inquiry on learning “togetherness”
in scientific education 179
Ashley H. Gess, Marika d’Oria

7. The Ethics of Teacher Resistance: Acting on A Vision for Public Education 193
Richard Sawyer
8. Getting stories in movement 209
Silvia Luraschi

PART C

Health and care process 1 - Taking the patient's and the doctor's view and coping with pain

1. Let's lull with the words 223
Serafina Lo Piccolo, Claudia Bertoldo, Daniela Negro
2. Can metaphors enhance "togetherness" in family medicine?
A phenomenological-interpretative study 231
Mariika D'Oria

Health and care process 2 - Respect and dignity in care processes

3. The personal in the professional in mental health care:
Methodological reflections 245
Kjetil Moen
4. Stories that care. Narrative Medicine in Action in Home Care 257
Carla Bena, Elisabetta Iacono Pezzillo, Maria Grazia Martin
5. Meaning of living alone in old age: continuity
of existence despite existential threats 267
Maria Grazia Bedin; Nicolas Kuhne, Marion Droz-Mendelzweig

Health and care process 3 - Training in medicine and health professions

6. Facilitating belongingness through Supported Education for
adults living with mental illness 275
Alyson E. King, Shanti .I. Fernando
7. Collecting stories of illness experience: an undergraduate medical
curriculum to develop connectedness and togetherness with patients. 291
Lucia Zannini, Benedetta Gambacorti Passerini
8. Interprofessional Education during academic training courses:
promoting collaboration between health care professional 303
*Alberto Bellomo, Lorenza Garrino, Simone Zamarian, Alaberto Borraccino,
Andrea De Franceschi, Valerio Dimonte*

Health and care 4 - Transitional spaces and healing relationships

9. Educational pathway of people with Spinal Cord Injuries:
a participatory research project starting from the illness narratives 311
Alessio Conti, Lorenza Garrino, Antonella Rizzi, Alberto Borraccino, Silvia Mozzone, Valerio Dimonte

10. Bringing the illness experience to language: between descriptive phenomenology and biographical narrative 323
Hervé Breton
11. Les lieux transitionnels de la Santé et ce qu'ils nous apprennent sur l'être-ensemble 339
Marty Laurent

PART D

Professional support and education as a relationship

1. Traineeship and pedagogical supervision in group: learning contexts and dialogic-reflective tools for building educators' professionalism 353
Francesca Oggionni

PART E

Relationships and conversations: focus on language

1. We make the road by walking: identity formation and collaborative narratives within the doctoral supervisory relationship 363
Paula Stone, Alison Ekins

PART F

Dimensions and complexities of togetherness and 'voice'

1. 'Dimensions and complexities of togetherness and voice: A symposia' and foote 373
Iain Jones, Parminder Assi, Roger Willoughby, Richard Sanders
2. International education at home 385
Roger Willoughby & Parminder Assi

PART G

Thinking about the conference theme 1- Overcoming linear epistemologies

1. International Dialogue for Transforming Global Food Sustainability: A Batesonian Perspective 401
Rachel Brooks e Ann K. Brooks

2.	Togetherness and systemic thinking. Dealing with “deuterolearning” in educational/training contexts based on narratives <i>Andrea Galimberti</i>	415

PART H

Thinking about the conference theme 2 - The construction of otherness		
1.	Togetherness – in times of conflict should we re-connect with our creative selves <i>Peter Leyland</i>	425

PART I

The medium is the message		
1.	The Left Hand of Game Dev - Finding togetherness through polarity <i>Mike Spence</i>	437
2.	Tales of transformational encounter in Digital Arts practice: Co-forming connective togetherness through techno-sensual acts of love <i>Alice Tuppen-Corps, Gaia Del Negro</i>	445

PART L

Family systems, togetherness and transformation		
1.	Through the addiction experience “together”: when the word rebuilds relations <i>Alessandra Augelli</i>	475
2.	Roots and connections. The genogram as narrative instrument <i>Francesca Marone e Maria Navarra</i>	485
3.	Linkedness: Relational transformation and narrative conflict resolution <i>Susie Mossman Riva</i>	497

PART M

<i>The local community: recognition, dialogue and belonging</i>		
1.	The “Table for Education”: learning from community life experiences <i>Monica Amadini</i>	515
2.	Lost in paradise. separation and togetherness in the lives of migrant workers in Fuerteventura <i>Paolo Camboni</i>	527

PART N

Poster

1. Togetherness supporting those who care:An Interprofessional
Education Experience 541
Milano Maria Daniela Steila, Marina Sozzi, Eugenia Malinverni, Lorenza Garrino
2. Togetherness in learning lives as experienced in an Italian Centre
for cognitive stimulation 547
Roberto Stefano Moro

Introduction

Lorenza Garrino e Barbara Bruschi

In an era of new racisms, of walls that rise in the name of indifference and hatred, of seas where the desperate lives of men and women are lost, hosting a conference whose title starts with the word Togetherness is a privilege and at the same time a sign of hope.

It is a privilege because it means being able to bring together to our country an international community that, for more than 25 years, has put people and their stories at the center of its research and training activities.

It means helping to restore the value of a word, togetherness, which meaning has unfortunately taken on, since the 1980s, a switch to indicate the mere exercise of benevolence towards the less fortunate. It has, in fact, moved away from that previous identity principle about solidarity as the convergence towards common interests.

Humanity has an urgent need to find interests that unite rather than divide, indeed interests that orient the different forms of individual and social actions in the view of a common well-being. In this way, solidarity will no longer be the sentiment reserved for those who suffer, but a possible antagonist to suffering itself.

However, the title of this conference also includes a second key term, “discontents”. Discontents is seen in its necessary and fundamental dimension of human existence and complex organizational systems. As we know, relationships are made up of particles that attract each other as well as elements that repel each other and this does not take the form of the problem as long as it represents the origin of dialogue and negotiation. This was the meaning of the Turin conference in which, for three whole days: scholars, operators, students and researchers tried to give answers to questions such as: What kind of learning emerges from the experiences of connectedness? Do groups, families, teams, and organizations ‘learn’? How did connectedness have an influence in our lives, and the lives we research?

What of separation processes and their place in learning? Can life-based or narrative research itself enhance togetherness, and if so how, in

which conditions and with what effects? What are the conditions that enable people to learn within relational systems, and to transform them? Is togetherness a motivator towards adult learning, and does education enhance togetherness? What are, on the contrary, the potential manifestations of dis-connection, and with what implications? Can togetherness become a delusion, a mystification, a prison for the mind, or an obstacle in a world that celebrates individualism?

This volume collects the numerous answers that arose during the working days and offers a plurality of looks as well as a variety of proposals that do not claim to be exhaustive, but offer themselves as starting points for other “conversations”.

The papers are organized into twelve parts, corresponding to as many investigation themes. Part A, called “Systems and contexts” is divided into five subjects: “Learning from nature” which deals with relationships established by individuals with physical contexts whether these are natural or man-made, particularly the implications on men lives are analysed; “Learning and the meso level” develops the theme of the collective mind and the learning models that favor its development; “Cultural Heritage and identity” proposes, through a case study, a public engagement model based on digital storytelling; “Differences, identity, and dialogue”. Immigration, interculture and narrative systems are the themes of this subsection: experiences of action research with migrants are proposed, aimed at the re-construction of the “self” and of the “we” and the definition of educational practices for inclusion; “The action of structures and larger systems” focuses the attention on the empowerment processes through narrative methodologies, reporting two different cases: the first, referring to migrant people and the second to homeless people.

Teachers and professionals training methods are the main topic of the Part B, called: “Formal education and training”, which deals with some central themes in adult education such as the transition from university education to the world of work, training in health contexts, narrative methods in professional reflection.

“Health and care process” is the part C, focused on health contexts and narrative strategies for the education of professionals and patients, intended as an active part of the care process. The section hosts case studies in contexts ranging from home care to the care of the elderly, as well as reflections on the dignity of patients. In “Professional support and education as a relationship” the theme of initial training of professionals in the educational field is developed by proposing an intervention model based

on the relationship between the students in training and the courses' supervisors. Supervision is intended as a form of support for students who approach the professional world by acquiring skills in reflection and interaction with others. On the same topic, the second contribution presents an original reflection on the relationship between a counseling psychologist and social justice: contemporary important subject in an era of migration and integration. "Relationships and conversations: focus on language" offers an interesting analysis on dialogue for doctoral supervisor relationship. The subject is taken up again in the next contribution, focused on the relationship between teachers and students in the academic setting, within a collaborative framework based on narrative dialogue. "Thinking about the conference theme - Overcoming linear epistemologies and The construction of otherness" collect a series of papers in which the main themes of the conference, togetherness, discontents and training, are addressed from different points of view ranging from systematic thinking to ecological thinking.

Togetherness and transformation in digital era are the themes of Part I where two interesting and original studies report how to reach togetherness through performance experience with the aim of overcoming gender distance and patriarchal models.

The variety of themes and approaches presented in this volume allows us to represent the togetherness as a kind of kaleidoscope: the elements are always the same, but depending on the rotation and position the shapes vary by proposing different figures.

Togetherness, discontents, and the Network: framing this collection

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ESREA's Life History and Biography Network has a long, engaging story to tell. Telling that story and trying to interpret it in the light of this book's topic, is important when seeking to frame the papers that you will read. Our Network's conferences began in 1993, bringing together a diverse group of scholars from all over Europe who were using biographical methods, albeit in varied ways and often with different assumptions about the nature and purpose of research. The idea was to share their research experiences on diverse topics relating to adult education and learning in the broadest sense, informal, non-formal and formal. There was a need, at that time, to establish or reinvigorate research on adult education because it remained a marginalized field in the academy. If biographical methods were beginning to gain more attention across the social sciences, and within adult education and in studies of teachers' lives, then its standing was never very strong (Merrill and West, 2009). There was also the desire, among this 'family' of researchers, post the fall of the Berlin Wall, to contribute to building a better, more inclusive Europe, by bringing scholars and research students together, from East and West, North and South, as one contribution to such an important project.

Beside a shared zeal, there were always and inevitably tensions. The question of what was an acceptable definition or even a scientific standard, for "biographical" or "life history" methodologies was frequently raised. Some researchers were focused on illuminating and developing educational practice and valued the relationship between research and intervention, interviewer and interviewee, while others positioned themselves as "pure

researchers” to gain greater recognition and credibility within academic institutions. A number of researchers came from the colder lands of Northern Europe, bringing, maybe, more of an imperative towards objectivity, standardized empirical practice, and strong interpretative procedures, while others came from the sunnier shores of the Mediterranean, with different backgrounds and a penchant for an applied philosophy, for less standardization and for a relational creativity (and sometimes messiness) in the doing research. In the Western archipelago of Europe, particular researchers were attracted by the apparent rigour of German biographical approaches in sociology, but others by the more relational emphasis of feminist methodologies. There was a kind of tension between methodological and epistemological coherence and the notion of diversity. Any attempt to determine a common methodology or disciplinary framing, in one perspective, risked being anti-experimental and even anti-ecological, rather than celebrating various research forms and practices that brought new life, insight, epistemological sophistication as well as aesthetic satisfaction.

The title of this present collection ‘togetherness and its discontents’ brings of course echoes of Freud’s (1930) *Civilisation and its Discontents*. Freud emphasized a living contradiction between what we might call personal desires, and a sort of social necessity, in which individuals needed to adjust to social realities, and the repression of various desires in the interests of social harmony and their own well-being. We wonder if there is a parallel in the urge for greater consistency in research design, compared to the more eclectic, experimental, and idiosyncratic in doing research. Whatever the reason, the Network has struggled with but also benefited from various discontents and vigorous debate: over purpose (a more practice or academic orientation), objectivity and subjectivity, (minimizing or enhancing the researcher’s presence, for instance), and or attaining respectability in the academy as against enabling a thousand flowers to bloom, without, of course, forgetting the necessity of a reflexive, self-aware and critical imagination.

There were Network conferences where dissent was particularly marked. At a Triennial Conference of all ESREA Networks, there was fracture in the leadership of the Network. There were issues, as suggested, to do with the intellectual and methodological inclusivity of our work, with especial reference to Southern European traditions. At one Conference there was a major debate about the scientific quality of our conferences. Each conference in fact raised crucial issues about the Network’s identity,

its inclusivity, and the intellectual influences at work in engaging with the stories people tell. These issues remain alive today, in the Network and beyond.

The original leaders of the Network – Pierre Dominicé and Peter Alheit – were progressive and collaborative in their work. They used a metaphor of ‘patchworking’ (West et al, 2007), and applied this to the work of ‘educational biography’ and the struggle for agency across lives. In Pierre’s perspective, it represented a deep search for self and a quest for a cultural identity. The point was to conceive of our biographies as the locus for meaning and authenticity, and a means to the broader education of self as well as the capacity to work humanely with others.

Pierre Dominicé developed educational biography workshops at Geneva, in which a range of people, actual and would-be professionals, came together (Dominicé, 2000). They told stories in small groups, and worked over time, iteratively, to create written biographies, drawing on their own lives but also the educational resources of the group. They were offered theoretical resources like Paul Ricoeur and hermeneutics. Ricoeur wrote of writing as an act of testimony about one’s own life and identity.

Educational biography was not primarily a tool for better knowledge of adult development or adult psychology, and did not belong to the domain of psychology or sociology. Instead it offered insight into what it means for an adult to become more of a subject in his or her life. Doing biographies can be a process of subjectification, as against socialisation, where the latter has to do with fitting in to the established order, maybe learning to be a good employee, or citizen. Subjectification is about learning from here and now experience, surrounding our capacity for agency, if never in conditions of our own choosing. Peter Alheit is a sociologist, who looked back to the Chicago School and American pragmatism. He engaged with the ideas of Ulrich Beck, Pierre Bourdieu and Fritz Schütze (Alheit and Dausien, 2007). Peter wrote of the feeling we have of being the organisers of our life course. We are planners, whether for the dream job, a political career, homebuilding or finding a good match. We even plan to lose 10 pounds in weight or give up smoking... giving the impression that we hold our own lives in our own hands, that we are the subjects of our own biography. But this is partly illusion. Fate can deal us a blow at any time, like illness, the loss of a loved one or a valued job. And our supposed autonomy of action and planning is subordinated to ‘processual structures’ in our biographies. We only influence these to marginal extents, as with schooling, vocational training, work, or in trajectories of unemployment,

a drug career, let alone when facing unconscious desire like coming out gay, late in life.

Structure and subjectivity in interaction, and we are not as free, it was suggested, as we sometimes imagine. But for Peter Alheit, even within such constraints, we have more opportunities than we will ever put into practice (Alheit and Dausien, 2007). There are unlived lives within our biographies and we can become aware of the structures, or unquestioned certainties, or discourses, functioning in our existing lives. The habitus can be reflexively understood and our unlived lives have the potential even to be socially explosive forces for change as well as of personal significance. This is a political as well as personal ambition of biographicity.

There were discontents in the Network at this time. The educational emphasis clashed with the more scientific search for patterns or regularities across large samples. Or with what biographies teach us of the workings of the social order (Alheit, 1995). Especially in a world of enticement and promise, as well as illusions around the self-authorship of a life. Peter Alheit was pre-occupied with the status of biographical research in the discipline of sociology. If there was a turn, a looking back to the Chicago School and forward to the potential for biographicity, there remained many in the academy who questioned the value of personal testimony or biographical work. We need to remember German history: it is always possible to demonstrate the illusions that surround and infuse the stories people, we, tell. Hannah Arendt (1958) wrote of what happens in totalitarian societies, like the DDR, when a neighbour goes missing: no one wants to know, and even memory is obliterated.

There was rarely a tension between senior and junior researchers, or older researchers and newcomers. The narrative of the Network has always stressed inclusivity, not always the case with other research groups. Laura found her first meeting in 1993 to be a shock, as she has observed on many occasions: coming, as she did, from an Italian and very patriarchal academy, where a beginner PhD student was asked simply to listen and learn; here she was welcomed even though her ideas were still very sketchy while her research was still-to-be-completed, using biographical methods to sustain adult learning.

There were other tensions, reflecting no doubt different language communities, academic cultures, different paradigms, and occasionally open conflict burst out: and struggles for power, as in every human group. We struggled to attract many colleagues from the Francophone world, although many efforts were made (Monteagadu, 2008). A small number of

colleagues left the Network over the question of scientific standards, and even over the kind of conferences we held. Too much art, collage music and movement were not to everyone's taste. Even so the Network survived and thrived, for almost three decades now. Many of us use the word "home", or "family" to express what this community means to us (Formenti and West, 2018). How did this happen? We can say, if with varying degrees of emphasis, that our objects of study and our research methods – narrative, biographical, auto/biographical – are often strongly relational, touching depth in human experience; while doing research can be transformative for both researchers and the subjects of enquiry alike. So, we learned – as coordinators – to manage the struggles, conflict and self/other relationship demands. But this is an insufficient explanation. Educators are not "good people". Researchers are not "good people". Togetherness is always a challenge. Creating and maintaining a community, as a learning space for adults, requires perpetual effort in taking care of complexity in a collaborative, responsible and developmental way. The complexity of the process must and has been acknowledged: of different needs, of the play of emotions and different expectations, and recognition of external pressures on the group. Discontents and centrifugal forces are always and inevitably there, alongside the urge for community, dialogue, respect of difference and desire to learn from each other.

The pioneers of adult education knew some of the above rather well: the workers tutorial class movement in the UK, the adult education circles in Italy, the feminist groups working towards self-consciousness, community adult educators all over the world, know this well but also how difficult, tricky, messy, and fragile human togetherness is. When Linden became the Convenor of the Network, followed by Laura and more recently Alan, he brought a growing awareness that the space – physical, symbolic, and relational – of conferences mattered greatly. We know the many conferences where people participate for the sake of their presentations alone. They do not particularly listen to each other, let alone learn from the experience of the conference itself. This is deeply unsatisfactory, especially for people who work in education. It represents a kind of dismissal of the very nature of learning and research. Research is in fact a form of learning, in its own right, and creating a community has to do with maximizing the potentiality of learning from experience, from otherness, as well as self. What do we learn from our participation in the academic system? Questions such as what kind of people are we and do we become? Which values should we celebrate and why are constant questions in the life of the Network.

So, we have tried to enable the LHBN Network to become a real community, critically engaged in a reflexively collective as well as individual process. A community as an ecology of learning and life, to help researchers develop their ideas and identities. There can be, from time to time, a strong feeling of connectivity, of good practices and conceptual sophistication that inspire and make a difference to real research in the troubled world “out there”. Empowering researchers is a prime task for this community: the goal is to encourage the development of meaning-full research in the struggle for a better society, as in ESREA’s motto, not simply to achieve excellent results in research (as our institutions constantly insist, sometimes in ways destructive to lives, well-being and the quality of research itself). Remembering, too, the Network was forged out of a desire to contribute to building a better Europe, and to heal the centuries old wounds between the Francophone and German speaking world as well as to transcend the demons of destruction that have so often haunted the European imagination. Pierre Dominicé, from Romandy, represented the French speaking world, and Peter Alheit the German. We are living in times where Europe seems once again fragile and the old demons of nationalism, racism and xenophobia are rearing their heads.

Struggling for social justice has been another goal for the Network. We are a microcosm of the whole and try to create good enough learning, dialogical and just spaces across our differences. Alan and Linden are psychoanalytic psychotherapists, while Laura was trained in the Milano School of systemic therapy, and different ideas have been in play to these ends drawing from these different communities (Formenti and West, 2018). Some have emphasised sociological perspectives, others the need to focus more on race, sexuality and gender. Learning from each other can be difficult, as noted, maybe more so for adults than children. We often seek to reinforce our existing perspectives and the other too easily becomes a problem or a threat. In this moment, in all our countries - as different as they are - there can be profound collective resistance to thinking like adults, as with the ecological crisis; instead we look away. Moreover, in the competitive world of adult life - including academia - there are more than ever claims to total “truths” and “right ways to do things”, as in evidence-based mantras. The discourses we live by (Hoyen and Wright, 2020) shape and often constrain our lives. It is important, almost always, to keep dialogue going, even across profound differences of perspective or epistemology. That is how we come to learn in profounder, even transformational ways (Formenti and West, 2018).

So, togetherness, and its discontents, is an appropriate topic, coming as it does after a series of conferences exploring the diverse fabric of narrative and auto/biographical methodologies. We have engaged with complex political questions about research and adult education in struggles for a better world. We have explored how narratives are deeply embodied (not simply formed in the head); and how people and their stories are also embedded in cultures and ecologies of often precarious life (the topic of a conference in Odense, 2013 (Formenti, West & Horsdal, 2014)). We moved explicitly to questions of the politics of biographical narrative research, in Magdeburg, 2014, in a divided and increasingly unequal continent, (Evans, 2016). And to consider the transforming potential of stories in Milano, 2015 (Formenti & West, 2016), alongside, in Canterbury, 2016, asking where resources of hope lie in our research and contemporary adult education. In 2017, in Copenhagen, we critically engaged with the theme of the discourses we live by, including ecological, and whether our lives enhance or help destroy habitats, and are open to diversity (Hoyen and Wright, 2020). Across all this work, arts-based methods have been more confidently woven into our repertoire. We continue to search for the 'good' and beautiful in adult education, in the language of American pragmatism, in our research and wider lives and actions, recognizing, always, that what we do is a perpetual experiment for forms that work best.

We are aware of the relative absence of colleagues from particular countries in this collection, and that our evolution does not appeal to everyone. The German speaking world and Eastern Europe are under-represented. It is worth recalling that the Networks's first book, was published in 1995, in Vienna, by Verband Wiener Volksbildung, but a number of those researchers were never involved again. What to do about under-representation from certain countries is a constant question, as are concerns about the Network's life future. Adult or popular education, of a questioning and critical kind, a tradition from which many of us come, and to which our biographical work often relates, has been marginalised, over many decades, in the rise of neo-liberalism. There are forces in Europe that have little of nothing to do with civility, democracy or conviviality that seem so essential to really significant learning. 'There are populist currents with dangerously fascistic tendencies'. Peter Alheit, Pierre Dominicé, Agnieszka Bron and Elisabeth Brugger wrote this in the introduction to the 1995 book. The political turn in some of our recent conferences suggests that disturbing trends have worsened, and the need for subtle understanding of why, and how they can be resisted, gets stronger.

We should also mention that any turn to biographical and narrative research counts for little among policy makers in some parts of the world, (think the United States); or it continues to be treated sceptically by many academic colleagues. Strange, really, given its power to illuminate how people's hearts and minds are often colonised by discourses of racism or fundamentalism, of various kinds, and of how the means might be found – in surprising places - in a sewing class, or a women's health group made up of working class women from Muslim and predominantly white backgrounds, to challenge these dynamics (West, 2016). Our work chronicles and illuminates the dystopic, destructive as well as generous, inclusive, learning possibilities in our lives, across Europe and beyond.

So, here is a backcloth to the conference in Turin, in 2018, which provided the basis for this book. We met during a snowstorm in the city, but attracted old and new people, to create space to share research, feelings, thoughts and experiences on togetherness, connectivity, belonging, cooperation, conflict, and separation. We were together for just a few days, but in moments the Network felt "like home" again. We used our intelligence as researchers, educators and humans, to consider the joys of togetherness, but in no simplistic Polyanarish sort of way. We are lucky to have this book, which brings to life what we did, and embodies the writing of diverse colleagues, in their own struggles for togetherness as researchers, in classes, and diverse groups. There was in fact a powerful and poignant reminder of the darkness of human experience in the very material tissues of the Medical Foundation in Turin where the conference took place. It was the location for a violent attack by the Red Brigades, which emerged in Italy in the 1970s in the name of liberation and hatred of bourgeois democracy. People were murdered in this place. We were reminded of what can happen when dialogue breaks down and hate captures hearts and minds. Some take it upon themselves to lead the people, cavorting with a Kalashnikov or grenade. Our work and Network are grounded in a very different ideal: of practicing and illuminating adult education for social justice and peace, and as the means to learn our way to a more sustainable, inclusive future.

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Individualization, togetherness, and its discontents

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This paper intends to focus on one significant aspect of the conference theme. The interconnectedness of the individual and the groups, communities and affiliations of which the individual is and become part throughout life, the complexity of this interconnectivity in the present society, and some implications for learning and for biographical research.

The invitation to the conference the theme: “‘Togetherness’ and its discontents’ (implying the associations to ‘Civilization and its discontents’ by Freud) states that “We are social and communicating beings”, but also that we “live in a world that celebrates individualism”. What is the impact of this celebration? Our heredity of old fairy tales show a rich display of the discontents of narrow community bonds, and the individual separation acts as the hero starts his explorative journey into the wide world. We also know today how individualism and isolation and loneliness can be a devastating combination. An ongoing discussion in the Lhbn network and beyond is the interpretations of the relationship between the individual and the community, considering e.g. the difference between a Freud, Kant, and Bateson. Therefore, this relationship deserves special attention considering the 2018 conference theme.

The first part of the paper presents a theoretical discussion of the interconnectedness and complexity of individualization and togetherness in social communities and affiliations; and the issue of possibilities and disadvantages and discontents inherent in the general features of the contemporary society. The second part is an analysis of a biographical interview with a young girl which underlines the remarkable importance of the quality of relationships also in early learning contexts. Finally the relationship between the grand narrative of individualization, lifelong learning, and the development of biographical research will be discussed.

Events or communities?

Quoting Mink, Ricoeur (1984) applies his term “grasping together” - of events- in order to describe the emplotment in a narrative. I made an illustration with circles on a curved line besides a linear timeline in order to present the emplotment of the story line from the beginning to the end and to demonstrate the difference of the story line to the linear chronological time line which of course may be reconstructed from a biographical narrative. Even a strict chronological narrative has a story line and a plot which selects and promotes certain parts of what happened to the expense of others. During a project researching: *Active Citizenship and Non-Formal Education* (2002) in the beginning of the century my research assistant asked me referring to the illustration with the circles and to the biographical interviews she had carried out: “But what is it, actually, that the narrators are grasping together in the biographical narratives”? Suddenly, I realized it was not events but social contexts, short – or longer – episodes of different communities of practice or affiliations. People asked to tell their story told of their lives in the family, with playmates, with grand-parents, in the street, in schools, in worksites, in educational settings, in leisure context, in intimate relationships etc.

Shortly after, I wrote an article about: “Affiliation and participation” (2001), as I realized how crucial this feature of the biographical interview is.

The social contexts, ‘communities of practice’ ‘affiliations’ , ‘sites for togetherness, or belonging’ – or whatever we decide to name them - are decisive for the identity constructed (and felt) in the biographical narrative.

The empirical research showed different degrees of participation and belonging in various social contexts with significant effects concerning active citizenship and identity.

Who we are, depends to a large extend on the social contexts in which we have participated, on the affiliations we experienced – or not - to our relationships in those contexts, and on the sense of togetherness or distance, contents and discontents we felt.

Personhood and language

Taylor (1989) underscores the connection between personhood and language:

“There is no way we could be inducted into personhood except by being initiated into a language...So I can only learn what anger, love, anxiety, the aspiration to wholeness, etc., are through my and other’s experience of these being objects for *us*, in some common space.” (p.35)

“The close connection between identity and interlocation also emerges in the place of *names* in human life. My name is what I am “called”. A human being *has* to have a name, because he or she has to be *called*, i.e. addressed. Being called into conversation is a precondition of developing a human identity, and so my name is (usually) given me by my earliest interlocutors. “ (p. 525)

He mentions scenarios where e.g. prisoners or other inmates in camps no longer have names but just numbers in order to deteriorate their sense of identity.

This example clearly demonstrate that communities exist that do not recognize individual selves, but also that recognition of the individual self depends on the other, depends on how another person is addressed or talked about, depends on what happens between people in a community, relationship, or context.

What is the need of a name if no one calls you? We may think about our commons ways of addressing someone: “How are you?” “How do you do?” Although normally answered as superficially as the questions are put, the standard phrases’ literal meanings point to the significant relationship between the personal and the partner in interlocation. The standard phrases for addressing the other literally points towards an interest in the individual person in spite of the fact that the exchange of questions and answers in this situation were emptied of their literal meaning ages ago.

Ricoeur (1994) underscores the way we respond others. This is our responsibility as human beings. Nevertheless, people are often addressed, regarded and treated not as an individual person but as a generalized other, a member of a group, some collective unit. Not every community assigns a status as an individual to each member, let alone to people outside their community.

Generalizations take place when a situation is restricted to the here-and-now-perspective, in these particular contexts you only see: Pupils, patients, students, unemployed, convicts, foreigners, Muslims etc.

Modernity and biographical narratives

The title of Taylor's book quoted above is *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*. The modern identity requires a narrative understanding of life which can only be given in a story, he says. Those individual life story narratives contrast the generalized other mentioned above. Often in this ESREA LHBN network the connection between biographical narratives and modernity has been discussed, e.g. by Alheit in his article "Subject figurations' within modernity: the change of autobiographical forms." (in Formenti, West, Horsdal 2014). He mentions the story of Martin Guerre, a fictive premodern story about someone who has a name, but as the plot develops, his role in this society shows to be more important than the individual self. From later periods in literary history Alheit demonstrates the development of more individual subject figurations and, accordingly, a stronger emphasis on the individual, biographical story. This individualization may also be reflected in the rise of "Bildung novels", first the bourgeois type that Alheit mentions, later from the working class, and even later (the 1970es) female lives.

More stable groups and communities and less movement characterized the traditional society. Increased movement and the plurality of different contexts and relationships in modernity bring forward a greater need for the biographical and narrative construction of individual coherence in comparison to the collective community stories and traditions. There is a lot of difference between fulfilling a role and the need of personal, individual contributions in quite different contexts.

The span of almost two centuries between the first bourgeois Bildung novel and the female variety indicate the difference in class and gender regarding citizen rights, individualization, and personhood. The first democratic Danish constitution – like in other placed – included only white, wealthy males over 30. They alone were regarded autonomous human beings worthy of citizen rights in opposition to children, women, the poor etc. Kant proposed that autonomy involved some education and rationality.

In many countries – e.g. Denmark, parts of a traditional society continued far into the 20th century, not least in the country-side. During the sixties and seventies many people moved from the country to the cities, and the relatively stable traditional society broke up. The new generation became to a large extent emancipated from the tight frames of the traditional society, from "the togetherness and its discontents".

Just as Freud, from whom the title of this conference derives (*Civiliza-*

tion and its discontents, 1930), describes the necessary limits for individual behavior in any given society and culture, individuals may regard certain features of the societal or family norms as limiting their personal choice and desires. Biographical narratives from mid twentieth century clearly demonstrate this understanding. Gradually throughout the last century the general interpretation of existence changes from “fate and chance” to “individual choice” as the individual from the society is given more opportunities (Horsdal, 2012).

Individualization became and is continuously a celebrated grand narrative with an enormous impact. The significance of given social contexts declines in the interpretation of self and existence we find in the biographical interviews in spite of the social influence on opportunities which sociologist inform us about.

Notwithstanding social limitations the fate of belonging to a given social contexts is easier to transcend than before, not least because children today are brought up to celebrate individual movements instead of the collective security as M.C. Bateson demonstrates in her book: *Peripheral Visions*. (1994)

Contents and discontents

It is not, however, quite as simple as that. The crucial issue of the transition from fate to personal choice is the importance of belonging. In a traditional society belonging to a social context was rarely questioned. It was natural, and expulsion, therefore, was considered a severe punishment, whether one was exiled from a home country or banished from a smaller community of practice. Belonging was natural, however not always pleasant. Belonging to a certain community was often followed by feelings of discontent in certain aspects. The various communities (or families, or work context) were different, some were good, and some were quite horrible. “It depended on where you landed”, and old man who had to leave home to work on other farms as a young child stated. “In those days, you were not asked what you wanted”. (The contrast to this expression I found in the narrative of a man born just 15 years later – after the 2nd war. He said: “It was fantastic that you could do what you wanted”).

The other side of the coin proceeds in the description of ordinary childhood experiences from the middle of the last century. Many narratives inform us about the pleasure in being part of the family’s working

life, doing things together and the feeling that your contribution to the community was necessary and thus appreciated. Children had to work, but they were needed, and their belonging in the family was not questioned.

I guess one of the reasons why Honnet's discussion of recognition turned out to be so popular is the decline of necessity of participation in the given social contexts. The sense of belonging no longer is obvious. The self-concern implied by the question whether or not you are good enough to be recognized and accepted in a certain community or relationship can be problematic. 'Do I belong here?' 'Is this the right place for me to be,' or should I move on'? These existential questions for an individual in modernity (or post-modernity) call for an enormous need for recognition to chase away the fear of exclusion. The emancipation from the strict limits of the social contexts in a traditional society meant that a person had more opportunities to choose his or her profession. One now could quit and leave, a region, an education, a marriage a lot easier than before. Social mobility was possible through education, and women became financially more independent. But all these changes implied that the sense of belonging to a social context no longer was quite as obvious, and the fear of exclusion increased along with a need for recognition and appreciation. People felt they had to be accepted and appreciated for individual and personal reasons in intimate relationships, in working sites, among friends, and in a lot of other places.

I was very inspired by Lave and Wenger's work (1991) as I tried to develop a methodology for analysis of the communities of practice and relationships I found in the biographical narratives (Horsdal 2017a). I can use several of their concepts when I analyze each of the social contexts and affiliations mentioned in the stories. *Legitimate, peripheral participation* – the subtitle of their first book – contains several useful concepts. You may or may not be a legitimate participant in a certain social context. Ask refugees! And your movement within the community may be centripetal in time, or you may remain in a peripheral position or even be excluded. Lave and Wenger also discuss the relationships and interactions within the community. Are the rules transparent or not. And how do the relationships and interactions affect the identity of the participants. You may assume or reject the cultural identity constructed by the community. Those questions are fertile to ask in the analysis of a biographical narrative. All the time their focus is the interpersonal interactions and relationships rather than the individual development.

Lave and Wenger only describe a single community of practice in this book. Later Wenger discovers the point of the transitions between different communities throughout life and discusses the term 'trajectory'. The transition from one social context to another is a very interesting topic to analyze and, of course, indispensable in a biographical narrative. A community may bridge or inhibit transitions to other contexts. Some social contexts are forced unto the individual and not a matter of preference (e.g. imprisonment).

An old Danish proverb was: "if you dislike the smell of the bakery, then quit!" But if we consider the present conditions it is quite a lot of different bakeries with different smells in which we have to fit in!

Some communities are more open and tolerant; some are quite narrow in their concept of 'normality'. Biographical narratives with young people from migrant minorities sometimes show how difficult it can be to move between the traditional family context with its social control and the modern Danish youth culture.

Back in 2004 one of my Ph.D.students interviewed 30 persons with some learning disabilities. And the result was depressing. The stories were full of feelings of inferiority and exclusion, feelings that teachers preferred the clever students, embarrassment by not to being able to read the signs in public transportation and thus not knowing the codes of behavior in everyday settings.

In a European research project on citizenship and lifelong learning I asked a few questions after the biographical narrative interviews. One was: "Where do you feel at home?" My idea was to investigate the significance of the affiliations in the different social contexts. This research made me realize how much we long to belong.

The active citizen turned out to be a person who is able to enter new contexts and establish new affiliations and relationships – not by jumping from one place to another disregarding the past – but one who is able to construct some kind of biographical coherence between the different communities of practice in which she participated and eventually felt 'at home'. She has a rather stable sense of identity, a freedom of expression and she is able to negotiate meaning in an open and democratic way; whereas people who lack a sense of belonging have a very unstable sense of identity that effects their interactions. Some people are willing to go to an extreme to belong somewhere, not to be left alone, e.g. join a gang or stay in a violent relationship (Horsdal 2012).

An empirical case

I asked my students in a course on biographical narratives to make their first interview with someone they knew in order to practice the methodology. One of my students interviewed her 11 year old daughter and gave me permission to use the narrative.

The girl's story is almost exclusively about relationships, to her family, to playmates, friends, animals, even when she is on holidays abroad. Also, she is telling about the things she loves to do together with her companions.

Now, I move on to the kindergarten. It was a nature kindergarten. I had a lot of friends. The best of them were Emmi, Frida, Inger, Carl, little Frida, Valdemar, Emil, Nico, Gustav and Josefine and a lot of others. And then there were a lot of animals.

Her story proceeds in the same patters, rather chronologically, from her family, a playroom, kindergarten, preschool, different grades of school etc. She is quite detailed, not only concerning names, but also describing all the different activities she loves.

The big change of this happy child life description occurs in the third grade.

There is nothing to tell about third grade. It was just boring. Is it stupid to write that I do not have many friends. Because Jessica and Victoria started to play together. Between classes I walk around the house and I don't do much. I don't know... I found it was extra difficult because a girl in my class kicked me and turned me down on the ground every day. I felt it was difficult in the 3rd grade, but luckily I had my super sweet parents who helped me a lot. I appreciate this. I wouldn't have made it without them. They really helped me...

4th grade became much better. I played a lot with Tilde, Signe, Jessica, Maja, Clara and Laura.

In her conclusion she returns to her family:

It is nice to live in this family because we are nice to each other. We treat each other in a nice way, talk and behave properly. We have time for each other. Mmmm...we often do things together, though we are not often on holidays our holidays are long, and that costs a lot of money. What did you write? It is important that you write it correctly. We love each other, we do nice things together.

This is by no means an unusual story from a pre teenage girl from a loving and caring family. However, it is remarkable to realize HOW much the relationships in the different social contexts mean. Belonging is cru-

cial; even though this girl continually has her loving and caring family and several animals around her.

Belonging and learning

A colleague of mine from Aarhus University interviewed some school-children in a research project on social inclusion. One boy said: “It is easier to concentrate on what goes on in the classroom if you are not afraid of the breaks”

This answer is so much to the point. In order to learn you must be able to concentrate, and therefore you must thrive in the community. Biographical narratives with adult learners confirm this, and, unfortunately, confirm the longevity of negative school experiences. The desire for joining adult education mainly builds on previous confidence in the ability to learn, and comfortable feeling about learning contexts. New learning contexts that make this possible may produce an immensely fruitful renegotiation of a person’s learning identity. Luckily, our life story narratives are continuous, dynamic, renegotiated, replotted, and subject to multiple interpretations. The possibility for the construction of a configuration of meaning through the plot cannot escape the question of belonging; so much more crucial in the individualized society.

In 2001 I wrote:

“We may – and often do – reinterpret past experiences and actions in the light of our contemporary situation, but we cannot do away with the, deny their past existence if we want our lives to have meaning. And as Charles Taylor puts it: “this means our *whole* lives.” (1989:50) “In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going.” (ibid:47). The increased mobility puts the question of identity on the agenda.” (p. 129)

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A.1

The Loss of Material Self in Three Recent Disasters

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The centrality of the material world to the self is not a new idea. William James discussed the material, the social, and the spiritual parts of the empirical self (James, 1890), noting in reference to the social self that it is possible for to have multiple selves. He writes,

In its widest possible sense, however, a man's self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account (p. 291).

Mead thought of what makes up one's whole being as including the things that the person owns or possesses (1934). Acknowledging the shoulders on which he stood, Belk writes that "A key to understanding what possessions mean is recognizing that, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard possessions [including places and experiences] as parts of ourselves" (1988, p. 139).

In the three studies we share in this paper, we use the concept of extended self (Belk, 1988) to examine what our home and possessions contribute to the biographical meaning we make of our lives. We examine the loss of place, things and relationships as both destructive and liberating. Belk defines extended self as "The concept of extended self (Belk, 1988) comes from consumer science and has mostly developed in relationship to marketing and technology (see Brooks & Anumudu, 2016 on extended self applied to social media, self-branding, and adult identity development). In some ways this is particularly appropriate to life in the U.S., where consumerism is so deeply built into the social and economic fabric and the idea of the individualistic self is fundamental.

We also look at spontaneous acts of compassion and their meaning to disaster survivors as well as responders. Drawing on Buddhist philosophy (Goldstein, 2013), Martin defined compassion as “the ability to feel the suffering of another and the wish to mediate that suffering in some way” (Martin, 2016). She notes that compassion is not the same as empathy or altruism. Empathy refers to taking the perspective and feeling the emotions of another person, but compassion that those thoughts include the desire to help. Altruism is defined as the “Disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others” (OED) and implies action. However, Ekman (2010) points out that altruism does not always include compassion and compassion does not always lead to action.

Finally, we look at extended self and extended community together with the role of image of the material world in anchoring individual narratives of self.

1. Three Studies of Human Responses to Disaster

What follows is the description of three case studies on the meaning people made of their lives in response to surviving natural or manmade disasters. Study I documents how a web of relationships, developed over generations and characterized by intergenerational abuse, were held in place by a house (Holcomb, 2017). For this paper, Holcomb focuses on the transformation of identity that occurred when this house was destroyed in Hurricane Ike. Study II focuses on stories of survivors and responders in a small town at the time of the biggest flash flood in recorded Texas history in 2015 (Martin, 2016). She highlights the nature of compassion as experienced by both survivors and responders. Study three examines the stories of survivors of a fire that destroyed the lofts and community they had built in an historic warehouse district when a contractor installing fiber optics for a telecommunications company hit a gas line and ignited a fire in one of the buildings’ basement. Here, Brooks looks at the narrative patterns present at the levels of the individual, neighborhood, and city, forming an ecology of interdependence among system levels (Bateson, 1972).

2. Hurricane Ike

Study I documents the transformative journey of myself (Michelle) and my mother after our family house and web of relationships, developed over

generations and characterized by intergenerational abuse, were destroyed by Hurricane Ike in 2008 (Holcomb, 2017).

Galveston, TX is an island that has seen its share of natural disaster. My family is Galvestonian, and my mother continued to live there after I moved on. Our family home held over two decades of memories for me. It formed the place that established my childhood. On September 13, 2008, Hurricane Ike sent its 18 foot surge levels and 110 mph winds into its walls – leaving behind a molded shell of history and memories.

2.1 *Methodology*

The purpose of my study was to understand how the consequences of natural disaster loss led to identity development for the individuals affected. I situated this study in a constructivist philosophy. Using life history research methods with my mother, I added my own understandings of happenings within our family system to arrive at a thick description of personal and interpersonal experiences before and after Hurricane Ike. These stories provided places for me to look for patterns of identity change.

Drawing the concept of extended self, I thought of our house as part of who we were through the interactions and memories we made within. The result was an autoethnography where I took my mother's stories and inserted my learning to paint a broader picture. I arrived at the following: my mother saw the Sycamore house as a possession of control, as a receptacle for memories, and as a reflection of my grandparents.

2.2 *Housing family relationships*

My Popo bought the Sycamore house in 1957. Grandma did not come from a wealthy family, and a significant part of her life was spent within the Galveston projects. On several occasions through her early childhood, Grandma had placed my mom in an orphanage. This time, Grandma had fallen into the graces of a wealthier man, and they were trying to fit the mold of the stereotypical 1950s "American" couple. To make the picture complete she needed a child, so mom, Grandma's child, was now a resident of 7018 Sycamore Drive, and my Grandma could take all of the staged family photographs she wanted.

I have the feeling that Popo truly wanted to be a supportive and loving stepfather to mom, but his feeling for my grandma – and her feeling toward

my mom – always took precedence. In mom's own words: Grandma was never a very loving parent.

When Mom was 24, I came along. Grandma and Popo were anything but supportive when she showed back up at their front door with a child. It was not my mom's first choice of residence, but considering the circumstances, returning to live with her parents was her only option. When she had me, she was living in her car on the streets of San Antonio. Her biggest hurdle: coming home.

Full controlling force ensued. They allowed mom and me to move in, but she was continually bombarded with negative displays of support. Comments such as, "You needed a kid like you needed a hole in your head!" were Grandma's weapon of choice. She and Popo even went so far as to take mom to court seeking legal custody of me. The judge sided with my mother. However, the social infrastructure, with them ruling the household, continued.

I took orders according to the chain of command. Popo may have been the man, but Grandma was the real boss. My grandparents definitely placed me on a pedestal, and this served as a constant reminder to my mom that I was her biggest mistake. When I got older, I found out mom worked so much because she had to pay my grandparents rent and for babysitting. When I reached kindergarten age, my Grandma found the perfect private school for me to attend. I would be sent there, mom would pay for it, and our Sycamore household would once again look like the perfect, although extended, family. Our household would be forced to grow again when Nanny moved into the Sycamore house with non-severe medical issues. Popo was still working for National Cash Register Corporation, so it became Grandma's job to take care of Nanny. And then came the bruises.

When I asked Grandma about the marks on Nanny's face, hands, and legs, I was first told that "little girls should speak only when they are spoken to, so it was my place not to ask such questions." But, this would always be followed with "she fell." As a child, I accepted the answer. She was old, and nobody else seemed to be concerned. Not the neighbors, not my mom, not my Popo. Then one day I heard the bruises happening. "Bessie... Bessie... Bessie. No! Stop Bessie," Nanny begged in her 82-year-old voice. I saw the bruises happening as Grandma pulled Nanny, naked, down the hallway. "Stop, Bessie... please stop." I felt the bruises happening, and it was something I could not unfeel. The bruises stopped on January 14, 1978. In my little mind, one of two things had happened: either the bruises had killed Nanny, or Nanny had finally found a way to get Bessie to stop.

The relationship between the house and mom was negative and vile.

And, when connecting the study to a bigger picture, cultural patterns such as the desired conformity of the 1950s era, the shame of unwed mothering, and the indignity of poverty, are evident. All of this, including the abuse, was held in place by the house. Mom's transformation in identity was linked to the house being destroyed and then leaving it: a transformation from incarceration to liberation.

I came from a place of struggle and destruction, a situation concerned with power, lacking the concept of nurturing. But to change such deep roots, the entire system needed to be destroyed. I learned that slicing away at the bark or cutting off a branch would not stimulate the change needed. I learned that Hurricane Ike was not only needed, it was essential.

3. The Wimberly Flood

On Memorial Day of 2015, rains pelted the central Texas hill country. In Wimberly, the river rose more than 33 feet in just three hours early Sunday morning, cresting 27 feet above flood stage. The Blanco River left its bank, engulfing livestock and trees. Houses were lifted from their foundations and plunged into a typically calm and peaceful river. Some 321 homes were destroyed and more than 1200 homes were left with extensive damage (Wimberly City Records, 2015).

3.1 *Purpose and methodology.*

This study sought to identify the relationship between the crisis moments and the process of compassion in first responders as well as the victims, who both received and in some cases enacted compassion. Moira used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as both the guiding philosophy and the methodology (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009).

She lived in the community at the time of the flood, and although her own place was not flooded, some of her friends were not so lucky. The entire community was affected by their friends' homes and lives and the destruction of parts of town, surrounding countryside and roads.

3.2 *The importance for survivors of extended self and the compassion of others*

The centrality of home permeated survivors' concerns, whether they were gripped with fear, surviving, or creating a new life. Survivors talked about

the things in their homes and the environment around their homes and connected them by speaking of memories and identity. Mary, for example, talked about home as part of her family and her memory, almost as an image of herself. She said, "I thought, I didn't lose my house, I lost my home [the interior of her house had been flooded]. The house is still standing...but the home. We've been there 23 years, and the family has been there. We created an ambiance and a sense of our family (in that house), it was our family history." She continued, "my home was part of my identity. Part of me was/is tied up in that house. How we had created an ambiance... that was part of who I am...it is who I am." Another woman, Kara described her home as "a beautiful home" – as a place of retreat. She said she enjoyed working on and around the home. Kara enjoyed the sense of having a home for others and told me, "I need to have a beautiful home. It is important to me." Theresa said her home had been her, "respite, recluse, sanctuary, hide-away and nest." For Dorothy, her home was a place of gathering and entertaining friends with her special mark and hospitality. Dorothy explained, "I want to have my own space. I want to be able to have my friends come over, to be there. I have to get a little house. I do want to have a little house, a house of my own."

Friends and first responders seemed to be able to recognize home and possessions as important aspects of survivors' sense of personal meaning. For example, on the evening of the flood, Dorothy placed her wedding rings in a small container on the bathroom countertop. During the night, when the power was out and the house was dark, she could not make her way to retrieve them. Dorothy is a widow who finds great comfort in her wedding rings. After the flood, her house was considered dangerous to enter as it was filled with mud and debris. Neighbors knew how much she would appreciate her rings. One man dug through mud to get to the bathroom area and then through several feet of mud to find them on the countertop. Dorothy described the feeling of relief and ability to move forward when she got back her wedding rings: "Now that I have my rings, I know it's all going to be okay. I can go on."

Mary described volunteers recognizing her (and her husband's) need for nourishing food during the recovery process. One of the volunteers organized the local restaurants to donate food, giving people in need a daily selection of meal choices. Mary said they found themselves relishing the fact that good, nutritious and delicious food would be delivered to their home during the working process. She said, "You know food is really a doorway to the soul and to healing. It's amazing how much we would look forward to that as being a highlight of the day. The food was delicious, and it really

allowed us to go on. These were ‘Mercy chefs’ you know...” Mary also described being in her home the day after the flood. “My friend knew how important our home has always been. She brought fresh linens and a huge box of cleaning supplies, a thousand black trash bags and I don’t know what else. She brought things to make the house feel less like a disaster. She knew, she just knew.” Dorothy spoke of her desire to get to her home as she told me, “They wouldn’t let me see my house because it wasn’t safe. Everybody knew how much that house meant to me. All those memories – all those years there. My friends were helping me find a new place.”

3.3 Responder’s recognition of extended self and compassionate action

One of the first responders, Kal, director of the local EMS, described survivors as though he knew each one of them. In describing his work he spoke of making “scared, distressed, and hurt individuals as comfortable and comforted as possible. I think it’s just what we do here. It’s the job here. That’s what we must do.” He went on to tell Moira about getting to one couple trapped in their home:

We waited there, and I talked to the guy and the brother both. I just kept talking to them, telling them I was there. It was all going to be okay. I got this. In about half an hour, I with one other guy waded through waist high water and got into the house. We got to the house and in through all that debris and stuff into the water in the house. The downstairs was a wreck. We saw a dog had died downstairs. We got up there – upstairs, and got the man and his wife and their little dog upstairs. They had kept that thing alive by holding it above their head and out of the water all that time. I didn’t know how to tell them the dog had died downstairs...He was so frightened and had been so close to death, there with his wife and dogs and all. He just didn’t care that he was going to have to walk over rock or whatever...he just wanted to get out and on safe, dry ground.

Kal told the story of a woman saving a horse. She was not a first responder, but had rented a cottage near the river for the holiday weekend. As Kal told it, the woman told him the electricity had “blown out and [“I heard these] bleating, blaring sounds – not like anything I’ve heard before...”. She slowly made her way down the stairwell into the four or five feet of water in the room below and saw the horse trapped in the room. She realized she needed to “calm the horse down and get it upstairs since that was

the only place of safety at that moment.” Knowing the horse was afraid, the woman used “every bit of my strength to calm the horse – letting it know that it needed to follow me. And it did. It went up those stairs. You know horses when they are afraid need you to talk a certain way, they are looking for you to be the one leading them. They are afraid.” Another man, John, a retired academic, told of the harrowing drive in his pickup with tools through his own destroyed property to go help his friends.

I went to my friend’s place...and just stopped cold. The house was gone. There was nothing there. The foundation was there...there was debris everywhere. There was nothing else. I was sick inside. I just felt like I was in slow motion. I walked around and there was my friend. He was sitting in a lawn chair holding his head in his hands. I came up behind him. I didn’t know what to do. I just stood there, then touched him on the shoulder. I said, ‘Oh Charlie’. He turned around. He looked at me and said that he and Margie had decided just two weeks ago to let the flood insurance go...they didn’t renew it. I didn’t know what to do. I just held him. I just held him.

Explaining his actions, John said, “I mean I don’t usually do that. I have known this guy for 50 years and I’ve never held him. I held him. What else could I do? I found another bent lawn chair and pulled it up...and just sat next him...for several hours I think.”

Moira wrote in her journal, reflecting on the people and community around her:

Moments of crisis, we ask deeply important questions, perhaps only unconsciously. We wonder about who we are and if we can handle what is in front us. In this crisis, people survived because acquaintances and strangers went door to door informing others that the waters were rising/had risen; called their friends if they couldn’t get through, and connected through volunteers from nearby communities.

4. The Old Market fire

Study three examines survivor stories of a 2016 fire that destroyed their lofts in an historic market/warehouse neighborhood in a U.S. city. A contractor installing fiber optics for a telecommunications company hit a gas line, igniting a fire. The study’s purpose was to understand the meanings

survivors gave to home and things when their lives were suddenly and violently disrupted. Becoming clear from this study was that the residents' extended selves of art and relationships were entangled in an "extended community".

4.1 *Methodology*

Using narrative methodology, I focused on visual images (Reismann, 2008), including media stories about the fire and neighborhood. Interviewees were family members and friends. Other stories came from online news sources. My strong ties to the narrators and the community brought intimacy the interviews and an historical experience of the community, making me privy to a particular way of framing and telling the stories (Hallqvist, 2014). I use pseudonyms for all interviewees and referents.

4.2 *Individual and community biographies*

The Old Market evolved during the 19th century as an epicenter of produce dealers, buyers, and transporters responding to Omaha's role as a railroad center connecting the settled U.S. East with the unsettled West. Its importance ended when the grocery industry changed in the 1950s. One warehouse owner, faced with a condemnation notice, decided to renovate. He turned the ground floor of one building into The French Café. More businesses began to develop. His son, Mark, grew up in Paris, married a painter and photographer from Berlin, and moved back. They owned and lived in the building that had burned. His family is often credited with the vision for developing the neighborhood. In his words, [we] "evolved this never-planned but organically developed area...We knew these warehouses had possibilities...and to tear them down to construct contemporary buildings would have been like painting over the Mona Lisa" (History of the Old Market, n.d.).

The analogy with art is telling. Art and creativity drew people to the lofts, which they filled with art from the community and places they had lived in other parts of the world. Paintings, photography and sculptures flowed into the hallways, many their own creations. Mia talked of Mark and Vera giving the building across the street and ongoing fees from the nearby parking lot to the Artists Cooperative Gallery. Madeleine, an interior designer, had "done" other lofts in the building. She had wanted to live

there, but her “husband didn’t care for it.” When he died, 20 years ago, she moved into and ran her design business in one of the lofts. Madeleine lost her design tools, art and workspace in the fire. She was 86 when I interviewed her, practicing her profession and rebuilding her loft.

The neighborhood’s character was pivotal. Mia, a former CEO for a large technology company before contracting multiple sclerosis, explained, “Where else in Omaha would we have lived? ...I had lived all over. Omaha was where I grew up. I thought the Old Market was one of the neatest places around.” Asked to describe an image that was quintessential “Old Market” for her, Mia became pensive:

...so many things...walking back from Plank...everything shrouded in fog – and street lamps – a group of young people in front of Cup-Cake around the corner from our loft. One of them was hulahooping and others were singing – not well – but singing and laughing – a guy across the street playing the saxophone with his case open – that’s what I would think of.

History pervaded the neighborhood. When looking to buy a loft there, Mia had imagined, “...we could sit and look at the fruit and vegetable market across the way that Pop used to visit to get our Christmas tree, and they would give him a lug of oranges. Remember? We would wrap them in tissue paper and roll them around the kitchen floor.” Going back earlier in the century, Mia’s mother had told her that *her* parents had driven to the Market for Christmas oranges from their farm 30 miles away. Hallie, who had come to the US from England years before, described bringing her teenage children to The Market.

Relationships were important. Brian, Mia’s partner and a former airline pilot, wanted their loft to be rebuilt exactly as it was because “this was the first place Mia and I started making a life together.” Mia continued, “Also, there is a whole neighborhood of people that know one another, live in the building, own and work in businesses.” She illustrated her point: “Garrett called me from Chicago just to talk. He’s there with his daughter who has pancreatic cancer...Sean – we had a glass of wine last night, and he really wants to come back to The Market. He and Javier were going to get married...they broke up.” Thinking about that she added, “Tragedies are hard to come through intact... Javier is redoing the loft they no longer share... Madeleine is helping him – they fight all the time – she tells him if he doesn’t shape up, she’s going to call his mother in Venezuela...(laughter)”. M’s Pub was an iconic restaurant on the ground floor of the loft building.

Many in the city wrote on an online news site of times there with people they loved: “So sad!! This was my Mother’s favorite place...when she had to stay in Omaha for an organ transplant 17 years ago. She loved the rubens... Many good memories eating there with my Mother.” “My wife... and I were engaged at M’s and were planning on celebrating our ten year anniversary there tonight.. .So sad....” “M’s has been such a huge part of my life...” (‘A Special Place in Our Heart’, 2016). Brian described M’s Christmas Eves when the owner stopped seating customers and opened it to the neighborhood, serving up oyster shooters, eggnog, vodka...the place filled up with Old Market folks.”

Finally, the financial impact of the fire had become a constant topic of conversation as the shock of the disaster lessened. But rebuilding in the shell of the building that was left was not a question for residents, even though they described it as costly and entangled in city inspections and permits, insurance, and work with contractors.

5. Discussion

Belk writes that “We impose our identities on possessions and possessions may impose their identities on us” (p. 141). He goes on to say,

If involuntary loss of possessions causes a loss of self, one of the primary reactions following such loss should be an attempt at self-restoration. This phenomenon has been observed in psychoanalysis and has led to the hypothesis that, along with body loss, object loss is the fountainhead of creativity... (Belk, p. 143).

In Michelle’s “Ike” study, rewriting identity as a result of the loss of a house on Sycamore Drive that held a history of abusive and constraining relationships, which themselves were a form of extended self, served to liberate two of those who lived or had lived there. The author and her mother then went on to develop new identities and understandings of themselves that included more clearly understanding how the Sycamore Drive house held the memories of relationships and events that had come to comprise their identities. Thus, as Belk points out, we might hypothesize that object loss was a source of creativity as at least two of the occupants, moved to a new home and developed their identities in a way that consciously did not replicate the extended selves held at the Sycamore Drive house.

Moir’s interviews for the “Wimberly Flood” study captured the inten-

sity of immediate survival. In her study, bodily survival, life over death, came first. Then survivors spoke of the importance of their homes and possessions, all symbolic of close relationships.

Compassion was expressed in material ways, tending to the extended selves of the survivors, and both survivors and responders told stories of meaning of what someone else had done or the meaning of what they had tried to do. Their feeling of connection to their home gave survivors a feeling of security, which Hiss (1990) describes as belonging to an environment. It comes from feeling grounded and rooted in the memories of who one is, who one was, as lived through this setting (Altman & Werner, 1985), and offers an empirical basis for home and our home interiors being an aspect of our psychological self (Marcus, 1995, p. 25). Sensing this, responders tended to the things they sensed were important to the survivors, such as wedding rings or a pet. Moira quoted one respondent as saying, “scared, distressed, and hurt individuals as comfortable and comforted as possible. I think it’s just what we do here. It’s the job here. That’s what we must do.” Whether this indicates a spontaneity to compassion or the statement of a vocational role is hard to say. But research is beginning to document a pattern of compassion and altruism in people (see for example, Meyer et al., 2013; Keltner, Marsh & Smith, 2010; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012).

Finally, Ann’s “Old Market Fire” study also documents the disruption of extended selves and the compassion people feel for the material selves of others in disasters. However, this study also picks up the narratives of history and art as extended individual selves and extended community identity, thus linking through shared images the entanglement of personal histories with community. The narratives of both are present in both individual interviews and in the media and other online sources. The Old Market and the lofts and businesses provided a unique space for creativity. They served as places where relationships were developed, becoming entangled with peoples’ biographies. Importantly, image, both as art, the creative, evolving ambiance of the Market, and relationships came out in the memories people shared. Images of relational encounters and of the special ambiance in the Market became a container for personal stories both told and yet to be told. Ethnographers have long asked participants to show them important artifacts in their lives and tell their meanings. But the importance of images here is that they link our memories to our identities through invoking our extended selves. They accompany the biographies we tell, and whether or not we actually describe the images themselves, we hold them in our minds as we tell them.

6. Final Reflections

The violent loss of our extended selves is increasingly important as we witness the struggles of refugees, survivors of natural disasters, and those displaced by conflict and war. Our identities are in great part secured by our material worlds and the life stories we tell others to help secure. Bakhtin (1990) writes, the author must take a “position outside himself...He must become another in relationship to himself, must look at himself through the eyes of another” (p. 15). As we tell of our lives in the wake of disaster, do we have the chance to see ourselves “through the eyes of another” and the open the possibility to rewrite ourselves. Can understanding the importance of our material selves, their embeddedness and resonance with our surrounding communities and environments, the images we hold of them, and the compassion their loss engenders in others be a key to the human evolution of which Gregory Bateson writes (Bateson, 1972)?

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A.2

We Are Not Separate From The Natural World: How Connected Learning Reminds Us of Our Interdependency

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1. Overview

We are indeed social and communicating beings: born and situated not only into a human group but also into a particular landscape and natural environment. As well, our connections go beyond many 'people' related groups to being deeply interconnected and part of the natural world. But I believe that many of us in the Western world have forgotten this connection. As a society we have separated ourselves from nature, mirrored in the emergence of the primacy of instrumental reason and a rational understanding of the world where we simply consider its contribution to our material sense of well-being (Taylor, 1991). Despite harbingers of an ever-growing environmental crisis for the past several decades, we continue to hold an anthropocentric view of our place in the world (Berman, 1981, Berry, 1988, Fox, 1991, O-Murchu, 1997). Expanding on some of the questions in the call for papers for the ESREA 2018 conference, I consider the following in my paper: When we encounter nature, by spending time at a spiritual retreat centre, what kind of learning emerges? What activities do retreatants engage in during a self-directed retreat and is a deeper connection sparked with the natural setting? If so, what does this engagement look like and is there a shift in one's relationship with nature? How is that experience translated into daily engagement with the environment after leaving the spiritual retreat centre? Ultimately, how does such connected learning with the natural setting influence our lives and ultimately how do we live in deeper relationship with the natural world?

In my quest to engage these questions, I draw on a research study where I, using a life history methodology, engaged with people's learning journeys as they intentionally connected or reconnected with nature whilst on silent retreat at a spiritual retreat centre. At the outset of this journey, I drew on discourses in spirituality and adult learning to ground this particular approach

to environmental adult education. And just recently, noting significant resonances, I have also begun to draw on writings focused on Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world, where “interconnectedness as well as concepts of transformation, holism, caring, and responsibility, rooted in experiences of nature, community, and land and communicated through storytelling, has been the domain and foundation of Indigenous education models for millennia” (McKeon, 2012, p. 131).

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

Turning first to voices familiar to me, the theme of valuing interconnectedness as central to spirituality and adult learning has been a constant thread in the literature (Tisdell, 2003; English 2005 & 2012; Groen & Kawalilak, 2016). In reviewing the work of these authors and their understanding of interconnectedness, I see that they widen this spiritual dimension beyond a human connectedness to also include our relationship with the universe and a transcendent being, however that is described by each of us. For example, in earlier research in adult learning (Fleming, & Courtenay, 2006; Groen, 2004; Lange, 2009) that explored what spirituality meant to the various participants in their respective studies, a common theme was their desire to intentionally seek this quality of interconnectedness with the universe and creation through time spent in nature while engaging in practices such as contemplation and meditation.

However, underlying this quest, is deeper thread in the research challenging us to reconsider and ultimately change how we see ourselves in this relationship. Scholars across varied disciplines (Coates, 2003; Hill & Johnston, 2003; Korten, 2006; Macy & Johnstone, 2012) suggest that we must engage more deeply in processes of learning to shift our current relationship with nature where we see ourselves as separate and apart from her, pointing us toward transformative learning. Such learning is often described as a means whereby we undergo a deep shift in how we see ourselves in the world around us. The robust description of transformative learning offered by Edmund O’Sullivan (2012) is particularly helpful, as it moves beyond a focus on individual change to invoke a deeper contextual shift that “alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and *with the natural world* (italics mine); our understanding of relations of power” (O’Sullivan, 2002, p. 11). Other environmental education scholars

(Clover and Folleen, 1998; Crowe, 2013; Lange, 2012; O’Sullivan, Morrell, & Connor, 2002; Sterling, 2010) also recognizing the need to this cultivate deep change in our connection with nature, have turned to a socio-emanipatory approach to transformative learning to create spaces of learning that not only encourage individual change (Mezirow, 1991, 2000), and also, also address societal structures of injustice in order to create “a more livable, just world” (Lange, 2009, p. 196).

While I have appreciated the multiple voices across various disciplines that have called for more profound and connected learning that brings us back into right relationship with nature, there are those among us who have never strayed from this worldview and way of being. Mckeen (2012 suggested that we look to the diversity of Indigenous cultures where we can benefit from their accumulated wisdom and research in order to move toward the deep and transformative learning required in order to re-activate our deep connection with the natural world. Indeed, Mckeen (2012) drawing on the wisdom of a Mi’kmaq Elder Albert Marshall suggested that an Indigenous worldview is ultimately what we are seeking, as the gift of ‘two eyed seeing’ allows us to move beyond our western centric epistemology of placing the individual at the center, separate from the natural world toward the relational orientation of Indigenous knowledge and learning. Two-Eyed Seeing is about moving beyond borders to connectiveness, to accept the “interdependency of one with the other and with all of creation” (Marshall, Marshall, & Iwama, 2010, p. 174). Even though there is a caution in stereotyping and essentializing the broad range of indigenous cultures, there is consensus that there exists common worldviews and practices across different peoples (Mckeen, 2012). To elaborate Cajete (1994) who developed one of the first models of Indigenous education describes its critical components as follows: “recognition of interdependence the use of linguistic metaphors, art, and myth a focus on local knowledge and direct experience with nature orientation to place and the discovery of ‘face, heart, and foundation’ in the context of key social and environmental relationships (p. 189)”. In turn, then with Indigenous understandings of our interconnectedness, we learn to care for self and others – including the land and all its inhabits – as an extension of ourselves.

When we consider the intersections between a spirituality based environmental education orientation and Indigenous environmental education, both are grounded in the intent to elicit, within all of us, a deep and transformative change toward cultivating connectedness with nature. As well, we can see profound overlaps with their respective emphasis on storytelling,

wholeness and holistic learning, and nature/land experience as essential learning processes in order to cultivate transformative learning. Drawing on intertwining discourses of spirituality and adult learning and Indigenous approaches of being and learning, I use this opportunity to explore what kind of connected and relational learning with nature emerges as people participate in a silent spiritual retreat.

3. Methodology

A life history approach (Cole & Knowles, 2001, West, Alheit, Anderson & Merrill, 2007) was used to explore the experiences of retreatants; helpful in situating retreatant experiences at a retreat centre within an understanding of their broader life history, in relation to environmental awareness and action. I recruited retreatants who had the following criteria: they participated in at least three retreats at the Ignatian Centre for a minimum of three to four days and they felt that engaging spiritual retreats had deepened their connection with the nature. In total, I interviewed 4 voluntary retreatants from this particular centre, engaging each participant in the links between their spiritual story and environmental awareness and citizenship, prior to their retreat experiences; their reflections on their experiences at the retreat centre and finally, the impact of these retreat experiences on their spiritual journey, their understanding of their place in the natural world and examples (if any) of environmental citizenship in their daily life. Interviews (60 to 90 minutes duration) with each volunteer participant typically took place via tele-conference or Skype. After interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, participants had the opportunity to review their transcripts.

Data analysis of the life history interview transcripts extended throughout and beyond the collection of data. Initially, categories were developed based upon the identified topics (noted above) for the life history interviews, my research objectives and data that emerged from my field notes, while on-site at each centre. Moving beyond these initial categories, I then went deeper into the data to develop themes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 15). For this particular paper, I offer portraits and an analysis of the experiences of two retreatants who participated in retreats at the Ignatian Jesuit Centre: Nona and Maria.

4. Findings. Participant Profiles

Nona

Nona has spent decades going to retreats in different parts of Canada and the United States, starting when she was an undergraduate at York University. Teaming up with Catholic students from the University of Toronto, she participated in “one of these organized structured retreats they do for young people.” Eventually Nona even planned retreats with her newfound friends.

After graduating, she was unsure of what to do with her life; therefore, she decided to go on a retreat for women, “So I went on those weekends and at the same time I found myself; I’ve been trying to figure out where I wanted to go.” In the meantime, she was also “developing a relationship with God.” Becoming a novice, Nona participated in retreats that varied in duration from one weekend to 30 days. Her preference now is silent retreats: “mostly I may take on silent eight-day retreats.” However, other retreats had themes, such as the eco-spirituality retreats. In most recent years, Nona has gone to the Ignatian Center in Guelph, where she chooses retreats and spiritual directresses that are “largely Ignatian in style.” However, she has moved away from being mainly centered in the Catholic Church. Eco-spirituality interests her and she has gone to some weekends organized by a group in Ontario that supports that approach.

Maria

Maria’s experiences with retreats began in the 1970’s. She had the wonderful opportunity to know John English and Jim Profit, two key Jesuit Priest in the history of the Ignatian Center and its recent focus on ecological retreats. Maria’s and her husband’s first retreat with Ignatian spirituality brought scripture to life for her: “What was really different about the retreat too was the scripture wasn’t just scripture from the past, it became the living word.” She then decided to do her first eight-day silent retreat. During this first retreat, she slept a lot and “I didn’t even want to go home. I had enjoyed the eight days so much.” Surprisingly, she did not expect to experience that “it wasn’t easy stopping the chatter” in her mind. Even today, after so many retreats, she must still work at silencing the chatter.

Since that time, Maria has gone on numerous different retreats at the Ignatian Center. She explained that from the beginning until now, every four or five months, she would feel like it was time to escape from the busyness of life and “just be silent”, knowing that “somehow God can reach us or something because I don’t think I was listening.”

5. The Retreat Experience: Experiences of Connecting and Re-Connecting with Nature

As just suggested, for Maria, a key motivation for going on retreat, especially as her children were younger, was the need to step back from her day-to-day life, be silent, reconnect, and listen. Even though she was busy and involved with others, she indicated that this didn't mean that she felt connected with them. "I felt I had even disconnected myself from people. I was me – you know how you're kind of out there always judging and all they're this – they're that, and I'm this." Both Nona and Maria, as they continued to engage in silent retreats, where there really very little structured programming, began to realize that through their need to walk the land – the fields, the old forest, the paths along the creek – that not they were only renewing their connection with people who were important to them, they were also re-establishing their connection with nature. Maria reminisced about the moment, while on retreat, that she began to pay attention to what her surroundings had to say to her.

Nature does talk to us. I can remember one time being there and the leader asked us to go out and just look at nature and let it speak to you. In my own heart, I was just grumbling like crazy - well nature doesn't speak to me and I don't want to do this and what are they talking about. Anyway, I stepped outside and in that field, because it was in the fall, was this sunflower. It was dry and drooping and I looked at it and I thought oh my God! That's how I'm feeling. So that was my first experience of really seeing how nature does speak.

Nona has also realized that she really appreciates the unstructured time of self-directed retreats and that ultimately, when everything is taken away, what is left is nature and what it wishes to communicate to her:

Every single retreat that I've been to whether it be an urban one or out in the country or out on the seaside or in the mountains or, anywhere once you are in silence - once you turn off your phone, turn off your computer, you close the door of your car - it's settled. Your days have to fall someplace and it almost naturally falls outdoors ... What are you going to do with 24 hours of your day? There's only so much time you could spend doing concentrated meditation. There's only so much time you're going to spend eating. The rest of the time you're going to be walking, sitting, maybe swimming if you're lucky, or cycling if you're lucky, but really there is nothing else like the broad, most basic things in life.

Nona also indicated that we are intuitively drawn to nature; that it is within us to connect, or renew our connection, with her wherever we are. “We live in an urban setting. People go and sit out in the gardens. ... It’s like where are you going to go? You’re naturally drawn to the earth. You’re naturally drawn to where beauty resides.” What the time in retreat centre does is call us back to pay attention, with intention, to the beauty of nature.

It’s beautiful. If it’s natural, it’s created naturally, it’s beautiful. It took years for the earth to be created like a flower bed; it’s beautiful. Whether the plants really come up or not, they’re just something. Like spider, we just need to sit and watch it. So, I think the act of going on retreats calls you forth back to the basics of creation

In addition, both Nona and Maria indicated that reconnecting with nature can almost be an embodied experience that moves beyond our rational cognitive way of knowing and being, where we open up to the possibility of learning in a different way. Maria elaborates: “I was expecting words I guess and trying to look at trees and say okay what are they going to say to me kind of thing? That’s probably the biggest gift is being able to walk and walk and walk and I think in that stillness and nature around us I don’t know, something just gets quieted down and something else then happens.” And

6. After Retreat: Out in the World

As Nona and Maria reflected on if and how they connected with natural world a little differently because of their experiences in nature while on retreat, there have been some shifts. For example, as Maria reflected on her times working in her garden before and then after renewing her connection with nature while on retreat she said:

I can’t work out in the garden without thinking of Father Jim Profit because I really felt disconnected from the land myself [before I spent time at the Ignatian Centre on retreat]. Sure, I would go out in the garden and work but I was managing everything. Not really realizing that the land and me and the trees and everything else we’re really all one and interconnected ... Otherwise we, I mean we won’t exist because we’re destroying it. While I see the balance, and God created everything perfectly, we’ve gotten off track so badly, abusing whether its land, trees, or people. ...

Maria and her husband have been doing fund-raising for the Ignatian Center, because they deeply believe in ecology and the church's role in helping people become more active in environmental issues. Pleased about Pope Francis' encyclical, she nevertheless commented that, "When I go to mass and the homilies to me aren't about how we live today and honestly just personally for myself, I really believe that it is the most important thing in our life is taking care of our creation."

For Nona, as much of her adult life has taken place within intentional community, she has been living out the spiritual value of interconnectedness for decades. Some of her focus has turned to supporting the work of the Ignatian Centre and other centres like it so they can continue to do their important work, most recently in the area of eco-spirituality. For example, she states that she appreciates the emerging focus of "a lot of retreat centres, as just part of spirituality that has taken a look at how do we use the world's resources. We know that the ecosystem has really overused the resources." In particular, she holds up the Ignatian Centre and the work of Jim Profit, noting their quest to live in congruence with the land. "Then at Guelph it's really special because they really try to live up to the fact they're an organic farm." If the life of the retreat is congruent with the good environmental practice, that has an impact."

7. Discussion

For both Nona and Maria, time spent on retreat at the Ignatian, gradually became to be associated with a significant amount of devoted to walking and being on the land. While on a silent self-directed retreat, everything else is stripped away and what is left but to be outside – walking, sitting, and re-engaging our senses of listening, feeling, touching, smelling and tasting. In this space where there no distractions, including structured environmental education program, the land has a chance to speak to us. Indeed, this approach taps into an experiential domain of knowing where the retreatants "encounter a subject, person, place, or thing personally and directly. There are kinesthetic, cognitive and emotional connections we make when learning becomes personally experienced with multiple senses" (Goralnik, Millenbah, Nelson, & Thorp, 2012, p. 417). In addition, this direct connection with the land, where nature teaches us directly, draws on integrative approach to environmental education, where the emphasis on land based education is significant both in environmental education re-

search, as well as Indigenous ways of understanding of relationship with nature. According to McKeon (2012), “these similarities of ideas, having different histories and coming from distinct worldviews, are in some places imperfect and contradictory, though strong enough to show starting places for Two-Eyed Seeing” (p. 136). To elaborate, in both Indigenous ways of knowing the land and spirituality discourses of transforming our relationship with the land, both believe that it is only through having quality time directly in nature can we ever hope to instill feelings of being interconnected with nature. “Through this connection to and love of the natural world, learners become open to learning and interested in seeking out knowledge about nature and sustainability” (McKeon, 2012, p. 136).

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A.3

What's in the making of a 'collective mind'?

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1. Two researchers of difference

This paper draws on the experience of two researchers: Gaia Del Negro is an early researcher who finished a doctoral thesis focused on the *relationship to knowing* (Charlot, 1997; Fabbri & Munari, 2005), working with two groups of professionals in education, in Italy and the UK; Laura Formenti is an experienced researcher who developed her own approach to cooperative and biographical inquiry, to be used in settings of transformative research to enhance the flourishing of professional educators, pedagogists, counsellors, teachers, parents and other helping professions. We share, then, a practice and a common prejudice: learning together is better. Rather: since learning always is relational, if we want to sustain transformative learning and a deeper understanding of the educational role/profession, we need to bring about relations of a special kind.

Togetherness, then, is not only a social, communicative or emotional experience. It is the foundation of learning itself, and maybe – ironically – also the main reason for its failures, discontents, and shadows. This is our thesis and what we try to develop in this contribution.

The 'auto/biographically oriented cooperative method' (Formenti, 2008; 2017; Heron, 1996) that Gaia experimented in her PhD research builds on a special kind of group relationships, whose primary aim is the development of knowledge, but also self-awareness and reciprocal understanding through authentic dialogue. The process fuels the emergence of relevant paths of action, not in the functionalist sense of 'useful' or 'performative' intervention, but as the result of conscious and unconscious, embodied reflexivity (Luraschi, 2017). Another way of describing this process is the constitution of a 'collective mind' through the reflexive engagement of the participants with their own learning biographies and life experiences, through different forms of aesthetic representation of experience, and crit-

ical dialogue, in order to achieve deeper and articulated meaning, and the imagination of deliberate action.

The concept itself of a ‘collective mind’, however, is problematic. Can we ‘detect’ a collective, super-individual entity – a system – formed by the participants but also transcending them? If so, will it sustain or hinder what happens at the individual level? At what conditions is a collective mind conducive to learning for all its members? And which are the risks associated to it?

Whilst other scholars have written about the stages that can be featured in the process of cooperative inquiry (Wicks & Reason, 2009), we feel a need to problematize ‘authentic collaboration’ (Heron & Reason, 2006: 150) in the collective mind – what we could tentatively call a ‘learning togetherness’.

In this study we draw on ideas from Gaia’s doctoral research and Laura’s previous experience with professionals in education. We use a reflexive critical approach by engaging in a conversation that entails the narration of our own experience, a main tenet of duo-ethnography (Norris, Sawyer & Lund, 2012; Formenti & Luraschi, 2017). Therefore, we choose to use writing as a form of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

2. Gaia’s research questions and methodological choices revisited

Gaia – Between 2013 and 2017, I conducted my doctoral research that you, Laura, co-supervised by providing methodological guidance. The study involved two groups of professionals, in Italy (at Milano-Bicocca University) and the UK (at Canterbury Christ Church University), in a series of auto/biographically oriented co-operative inquiry workshops in which they reflexively engaged with their learning biographies (Dominicé, 2000; 2007). They were all professionals in education, of many kinds; hence, more expert than me in many regards.

My research questions aimed to illuminate the professionals’ narratives of knowing (Charlot, 1997) and becoming (Winnicott, 1965, 1971), and the quality of a ‘research space’ created to work together around that. My question about the latter was: how can a study be designed in such a way to encourage participants to be active and to connect in meaningful ways with their own deeper thinking and acting self?

Co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996) with a biographical orientation to it (Formenti, 2017; 2018) seemed to fit well with the complexities involved

and – what I liked most – invited me to dismiss the expert-researcher position. I wanted to involve my participants in ways that might challenge traditional roles and identities, knowledge and power, so as to allow more authenticity. Maybe this has to do with love, if I dare use this word. Authentic collaboration, however, is not a given in co-operative inquiry (Heron & Reason, 2006). I need to go back to my experience, and understand better how it unfolded.

Laura – This is worth an effort, indeed. I have been working with the idea of proximal systems – systems of interrelations and interdependencies (like the family for example, or a team of professionals). They can be seen as self-organized, autonomous (maybe even autopoietic, or auto-mytho-poietic) units that shape actions and meanings creating group scripts and myths, mainly in tacit ways. Bateson uses the metaphor of a 'mind' (1979) to talk about them. The members tell stories and are storied as well by the group's narratives (and larger discourses). This can be positive or negative. Or both, from different perspectives. Groups may become, at certain conditions, spaces for feeling, voicing and sharing. They can also produce conflict, competition and power. Fuelling a sense of freedom or building prisons. Togetherness and its discomforts. Or both, as the systemic theory has shown, by way of defining mystification and confusion (Laing, 1967) as clear signs of 'double binds' (Bateson, 1972; Sluzki & Ransom, 1976). I experienced these different possibilities at different times.

But, as we do in cooperative inquiry, we should begin by interrogating experience with our imagination. Would you start?

A wild forest

Gaia – Metaphorically, I see my study as a 'wild forest', partly planted by me as the researcher. The forest is alive, multi-layered, and growing out of the inter-actions of all those involved; it is inhabited by the spirits of significant others, memories, fears and desires, bodies, and objects. Such circularity between the dispositive and learning is intrinsic to the constructivist perspective (Fabbri & Munari, 2005; Maturana, 1990; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Bateson, 1979) and informed the iterative design of my workshops: six whole-day open-ended meetings over an eight-month period.

Laura – I like this metaphor. It is organic. A wild patch of forest is an ecosystem. Self-organizing. And yet, have you seen Wim Wenders' film on Salgado, The Salt of the Earth (2014)? The famous photographer was so horrified by what he had witnessed – war, famine, genocide, pollution – that he had to stop for a while, go back to his roots – in Brasil – and plant a forest... Then the

forest began to grow at its own rhythm, in its own terms. It became enormous! As it may happen with a group. I cannot count how many groups I have met, convened, facilitated, studied. Some for one day or a few hours. Others for years. In most cases, the participants came to learn, but they/we had no idea of where this would have brought us. Planning ahead and foreseeing is not the best way to proceed. But many learners ask for some certainty. So, here we have a first answer to our questions: there is no need or possibility to control. Togetherness is an emerging feature of a complex system. The group will grow, like a forest, but someone needs to bring the seeds. Then: sun, water, and some decay are also needed. And not all will flourish in the same way. Or even survive.

Biography and reflexivity

Gaia – This is a great story! Which reminds me that the biographical focus of this method helps to feel the complexity. In my study I draw on Pierre Dominicé's work on learning biographies (2000; 2007) with reflexive groups of adult educators. He signalled the dramatic and disorientating changes that were happening in the profession, due to a massive diversification of roles (instructors, trainers, tutors, coaches, counsellors), settings (formal, non-formal, informal), agencies and activities (teaching, coaching, mentoring, tutoring, supervising, guidance and counselling). This, he claimed, required a surplus of self-reflexivity on how someone becomes the person s/he is. As you know, my sample was opportunistic, to be sure that a diverse group of committed participants were recruited as learners, educators and co-researchers. I was prepared to explore blurred areas and cause displacement vis-à-vis previously held views – including my own.

Laura – *I also prefer to work with heterogeneous groups. It is still the forest metaphor: it does not need maintenance because each animal and vegetal species brings a specific contribution to it. If there is difference, it will nurture the process, in positive and negative ways. As it should. But we are raised to look for the similar (Us) and not the different (Them). The heterogeneous groups of professionals are more likely to bring a difference that makes a difference (Bateson, 1979) – maybe even conflict. But they are difficult. People do not easily accept that conflict is a blessing moment, when you work on learning and opening possibilities. They need to learn about perspectives, become friends with this idea (transforming perspectives is the book I wrote with Linden, Formenti & West, 2018).*

I published a case study (Formenti, 2017) on my experience with a group of professionals who were working in home care for distressed, negligent families. They loved the method, we met 6 times in 4 months and they seemed happy to share their stories, representations and theories. But: when we began to reflect

at a deeper level and they realized how different their perspectives of meaning were, they got scared. Social workers became inflexible on assessment. Educators started to blame other professionals, for not understanding the families' points of view. And psychologists used categorization to impose their truth on stories that had shown an irreducible complexity.

Besides, since they were not able to summarize all the positions in one, the "best", or the "most functional", part of the group decided that all the process we had gone through together had no value. They abandoned, just before the final dissemination seminar. It was a wound for everybody. I convened everybody for an extra-meeting. Only a part of the group attended: they engaged in a meta-reflection about the process, shared emotions and challenged the dominant idea of "knowledge" as "output". We decided to open the final seminar to a larger audience, because we valued the understanding that was achieved, even if it was stuttering, uncertain, and incomplete. Since the theme of family care is itself stuttering and incomplete!

But the accident, this rupture of togetherness, was a difficult moment, also for me. Cooperative inquiry develops a "nexus" (Laing, 1967), that is a bond going beyond "common interests" or "institutional rules and roles", the "persona" as you say in your work. When bonds are broken, we suffer.

The embarrassment, angriness and anxiety that are produced by difference (Sclavi, 2003) need to be channelled, recognized, and brought to a higher level of understanding, where differences are maintained and composed. And also bonds can take a more mature, authentic meaning. We need good theory and practice, for that. A 'pedagogy of discomfort' (Boler, 1999; Brooks, 2011) seems somehow necessary for adult learning; this is a very delicate topic, we should reflect on it.

Gaia – My work is aimed to enhance this theory and practice. My two groups were composed of younger and older professionals in formal education, social work, research, career guidance and art therapy. I adapted my methodology, inventing ways of co-ordinating or 'linguaging' (Maturana, 1990) inside the group. Recruitment was partly done by personal invitation, so there were biases from the very beginning. But this was fruitful, as it allowed the emergence of issues about authority and power (Belenky & Stanton, 2000). We had critical moments, but they were not disruptive. We used cooperative inquiry to question whose voice is heard in research or in education (Belenky *et al.*, 1986).

Laura – So, here we are. With a metaphor of self-organising organic growth, and a bunch of diverse people, ready to go through their own story and experi-

ence, and prepared to welcome discomfort in the process. These could be – maybe slightly idealized – the basic ingredients for the emergence of a collective mind.

3. The co-operative meso or ‘mind’ process

Problematizing “Mind”

Gaia – I took Bateson’s idea of a ‘collective mind’ (1972, 1979) to frame the inter-acting of co-inquirers who met regularly, in my project, over a period of time. A ‘mind’ for Bateson is an aggregate of interactive parts with a feedback loop structure. From his perspective, ‘the individual mind is immanent but not only in the body. It is immanent also in pathways and messages outside the body’ (Bateson, in Keeney, 1983: 91). It is a property of relationships, just as a violin becomes part of the whole when the musician starts to play it (*ibid.*). ‘Individuals, societies, and ecosystems’ (Formenti *et al.*, 2014: 31) can be seen as systems of interdependent levels of organization. The ‘collective mind’, as a metaphor, reminds me to attend to the level of interaction: here, subjects appear as parts of a whole, influencing one another in their feeling and thinking, consciously and unconsciously. This is problematic. What is the role of empathy, sympathy and antipathy? What is the role of likeliness and diversity? Can a co-operative inquiry model always facilitate the emergence of meaning, learning, and togetherness? Bion (1961) describes group dynamics where possibilities are not generated, but closed. They also are collective minds.

Laura – This is a good point. Yes, the collective mind does not follow our agenda. In the example I brought, the participants worked as a collective mind, also in the split. That is why I felt the responsibility of convening the whole group for an extra reflexive meeting. A learning togetherness is a messy thing. Not heaven on earth. Discontent is a part of it, not its negation. We are too committed, sometimes, to what we see as ‘positive learning’ or desirable outcomes. We act on the basis of an ethical imperative – Act in such a way that multiplies possibilities (von Foerster, 1973). But learning is also unlearning, and closure, and what is positive at some point becomes negative at another. Individual and group have different, often conflicting interests. So, we could follow the naturalist’s path for a moment and ask – with Bateson – which is the pattern that connects? What keeps together, if ever, the rebel adolescent and her parents? The self-conscious wife who disrupts the family script (like Nora in Ibsen’s Doll’s House, see Formenti & West, 2018) and her husband or father? Educators and other professionals?

Gaia – Besides complexity with its different levels (*micro*, *meso*, and *macro*)¹ I found an answer in narrative and auto/biographical research. It offers 'rich insights into the dynamic interplay of individuals and history, inner and outer worlds, self and other' (Merrill & West, 2009: 1). But, as you Laura once wrote:

The meso-level is often underrepresented in auto/biographical research, where psychology and subjectivity (the micro) or sociology, culture, and history (the macro) tend to dominate the scene. However, in education and learning, our proximal relationships, communities, and enduring contexts, at the meso-level, are remarkably involved in *both stabilizing and changing* our personal myths. (Formenti *et al.*, 2014, p. 39, italics in original)

Laura – I come from family therapy. I did research on relationships within groups. I observed interactions in real time and asked people what they were doing, and why. Hence, I am tuned with the 'we' of the situation, maybe more than the 'I'. When I listen to a story, I tend to read the message(s) in how it is storied, more than considering it as a representation of the narrator's experience. I am all too much aware of the action of family scripts, legends and myths (Byng-Hall, 1995) in human action. We are what the context (present, past and future or imagined) allows us to be, to become. I am the mother that my partner and child (as well as parents, paediatrician, teachers, friends, etc.) allow me to be or invite me to become. Context matters. Interdependence is a rule, in adult learning. So, I often wonder, methodologically speaking: why so much effort on psychology and sociology (the micro and the macro), and so little about interaction (the meso)? Or: what happens in the educational setting? It is difficult to study the process, maybe because it entails too much of the researcher's reflexivity.

Methods of meso-analysis

Gaia – Well, I honestly tried, at least, to attune myself to what was happening at this level, in each group. While I am mindful of the *micro* (subjective, individual) and *macro* (wider context, society), I tried to focus especially on the *meso*, in complex ways, and ask: *how can we illuminate the construction of a collective mind?* To answer this question I analysed for each case study the final group conversations from each session, the reports prepared by the participants, and the participants' probing of the reports. I

1 These three levels of experience and their interrelations are analysed in the introductory chapter of *Embodied Narratives*, edited by L. Formenti, L. West, & M. Horsdal (2014).

wanted to make sense of how the group worked as a collective mind – to celebrate that, and also to meaningfully situate the individual narrative. Since I used aesthetic languages, evocative objects (Bollas, 2009), and theatrical practice, this allowed to bring the body on the research scene, and with it the actions, perceptions and emotions. Ultimately, this method enhances the possibility to bring the unknown and unconscious in our lived relationships with knowing. Is there a collective unconscious at work, here?

Laura – Your methodological choices make a huge difference in respect to other similar studies in education, where the researcher is very keen to celebrate contents and events that are related to consciousness, while the pattern which connects (Bateson, 1979) is only partially conscious. We need to develop methods that bring more care-full attention, as said, to context, shared meaning and process.

Gaia – In this respect taking a constructivist epistemological stance cautioned me not to take the co-operative group as a given, but to attend to how it might have developed throughout the research process. Following Reason (1988), I doubt whether the facilitator of a co-operative group is a participant-researcher like any other. My colleague facilitator and I, in fact, were the ones who put the dispositive in place: we proposed the activities, timing, and choice of objects, thus the rules of the game. I examined the interplay between us *and* the participants in the process of learning, also keeping in mind their professional lives, ages and gendered positions. My analysis paid attention to metaphors (Fabbri & Munari, 2005; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and crises (Sclavi, 2003) in the negotiation of meaning and roles. There were dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991) and clashes of expectations, therefore moments of self re-organization and learning, both individual and inter-subjective...

Reflexive analysis and Mind

Gaia – Between January and November 2015, the two groups of participants (academics, practitioners, and researchers) met (during 6 cycles of cooperative inquiry workshops) to investigate aspects of their knowing and self with a focus on: (1) roots of knowing, (2) learning biography, (3) strategies of knowing, (4) mentors, and (5) professional practice, followed by a theorizing and conclusion phase. The resulting corpus of qualitative data, narratives, drawings, registered conversations, field notes, reports was difficult to handle. No one of my experienced colleagues (and supervisors!) seemed to have the ‘right’ method to handle this complexity; this somehow made it easier for me to find my own. So, I engaged in a reflexive dialogue with data, inspired by auto/biographic (West, 2004) and co-operative researchers (Reason, 1994), who conceive the analysis as an intersubjective

endeavour (i.e., as taking place within the cooperative process) and a researcher's responsibility towards her own lens and focus – and the other, and wider (research) community.

Laura – Interpretative research interrogates us. As a qualitative researcher I feel an urgent need to interrogate 'data', which should be re-named as 'capta', from the Latin word for 'grasping', since they are co-constructed. So, we need to open a meta-reflexive dialogue with participant-researchers, not least about the process. We also need to maintain a critical and ironical attitude, to be open to discover our own projections and manipulations on the group. Or possible mystifications, due to power games and reciprocal projections. Cecchin (Cecchin, Lane & Ray, 1993) wrote about irreverence, firstly about oneself, as an antidote to fixed ideas.

Gaia – As I went along I was increasingly guided by an 'epistemology of crisis', based on auto/biography (Merrill & West, 2009; Stanley, 1992) and writing as inquiry (Richardson, 1997); these practices sustained my creative-critical exploration of meaning, as a 'clumsy researcher' (Sclavi, 2003). My theoretical framework, I would say, was my primary source of triangulation, helping me to make sense of what I was doing and finding. I used sociological and psychoanalytic perspectives, and sensitizing concepts, like the notion of social roles or personae (Goffman, 1959), the relationship to knowing (Charlot, 1997), or Belenky and Stanton's (2000) critique of the ideal communicative space proposed by Mezirow (1991), whose rationalistic logic excludes diverse and marginalized people, stories, and approaches. Besides, Winnicott (1971), Mosconi (1996) and Bollas (2009) offered ideas about 'cultural objects' as mediators of dialogue in the making and remaking of knowing and self within the research process.

Laura – Thank you Gaia, for reminding me about the relevance of theory. Cooperative inquiry, as I often say, is a shared way towards the collective definition of a 'satisfying theory' (not necessarily homogeneous, or a 'master story', as said), among people who share common questions, interests, or preoccupations. The essence of a collective mind is the 'res', another Latin word meaning 'it', 'the Thing'. What is the thing we really care about? This is the first question to be asked in order to raise relevant issues. But not enough to crystallize thoughts, attune actions, or bring minds together, if we want to have a grasp of complexity. In your case, the 'complex' thing to be 'theorized' is professional development, identity, education, or knowing, or a mix of them. But we can generalize this argument, and say that every human system has its own 'res', if temporary and changing. And the method is about facilitating the process.

Gaia – Then *how* does a co-operative setting lead to the emergence of a co-operating group of co-researchers, connecting their intellect along with their unconscious – including the body, heart, imagination and playfulness? I saw the emergence of this ‘collective mind’ in the metaphors used in the Milan group, for example, to address specific aspects of co-operative knowing: washing machine/chaos, lightness/conviviality, space/holding setting, ‘spiralitose’ cycle/subjective-intersubjective, basin/embodied playing, bread/nurture, etc.

In this group, especially at the beginning, the negotiation of our role as facilitators, in constructing and holding an ordered space for chaos seemed crucial to me. I believe that it was necessary, along with dialogue and increasing cooperation, in holding this space together with the participants, if with different responsibility. Power issues were key to the ‘authenticity’ of the quest (authentic collaboration), together with ‘playing’ supported by different languages – although the balance between subjective and objective knowledge was often challenged.

Laura – This is maybe not always necessary. My fantasy is that a totally self-organized cooperative inquiry may work. I tried, in some occasions, to avoid giving any instruction from the very beginning. There are many ways to set the stage or to hold and contain anxieties. But it is true that new groups do not understand the implications of a cooperative inquiry, and get anxious very rapidly. As West puts it, in Winnicott’s terms, the facilitator works like a ‘good enough’ parent.

Gaia – Yes, because cooperative inquiry is messy and challenging: there are bifurcations and many ways/moments when the process might go wrong. We do not need to objectify them, but it seems interesting to me to bring these moments into focus, in order to see how cooperation gradually unfolds. They also helped me to recognize my own learning, intertwined with the emergence of the cooperative group, if sometimes with great discontent.

4. A five-step model of spiralling

Gaia – I tried to chronicle how the two groups were spiralling, in different ways, towards the construction of a ‘collective mind’. I identified five interconnected steps (one conducive to the other), which I have named as:

- chaos – displacement from previously held premises,

- positioning – 'who am I' in the research space,
- individuation – in relation to knowing and to what I already know,
- complex desires – emergence of the unconscious dimension in knowing (ambivalence, free association, emotional answers of attraction/repulsion, backward and forward movements, in memory and imagination...)
- 'playing' – living the quest in the here and now of action (improvisation).

I do not see a linear progression or any order in these steps: learning is social and individual, recursive and multi-layered. Participants and groups need time to learn new ways of doing; they learn by engaging in interaction: observing, listening, and positioning themselves in relation to others' stories and actions. Each step entails active negotiation, inter-action, and back and forth processes. These steps expand the sequential phases that have been proposed as characterizing the co-operative process (Wicks & Reason, 2009).

The five-step model of spiralling is a map providing a sense of progression from an uncomfortable unexpected situation towards devising strategies to cope with it, where each step feeds back into the original situation, modifying it. There may be deeper reflexivity and discovering of new possible stories in resonance with the stories of others.

Laura – It can be a model of how a "learning togetherness" might evolve along with its members. In fact, all these steps entail a "task" for the individual as well as the group. One level does not prevail on the other. I see in these steps a major challenge, if I think of the individualism and competitiveness that are present in our formal systems of education. There is a sort of solidarity in the steps: the recognition of your need of others, and the beauty of learning from each other.

I see a big value in this model, when it is shared, and used for meta-communication; for example at the beginning of a cooperative cycle, or in critical passages. People may feel contained and reassured by the model (we need not to reify it, of course).

Making space for mystery and doubt

Gaia – This also helps in discussing ethical dilemmas that are raised by co-operative inquiry: I exposed myself and others to the risks of increasingly reciprocal and close relationships of care and shared learning. This caused at times feelings of 'embarrassment' (Sclavi, 2003) and conflict, associated with my dual status of facilitator and learner, and a negotiation of power among our personae (quite explicit in the step that I called 'positioning')

step). Any step is ongoing rather than achieved once and for all, thus favouring ‘authentic collaboration’ (Heron & Reason, 2006: 150).

I learnt that co-operative inquiry is a highly uncertain practice. It emerges from the unconscious interplay of relations and occasional purposeful action. It brings participants and researchers into a transitional space (Winnicott, 1971), in which they can negotiate who they are and play more mindfully and maybe more freely with their knowing.

My analysis identified an individual as well as collective path of becoming expressed by the metaphor of ‘spiralling’ – a process in which ‘the person is progressively actualized, through different states, some of which can run concurrently’ (Heron, 1992: 36). This is an iterative process of learning through steps of chaos and order. The different ways of knowing that are implemented in it – body, emotion, imagination, dialogue – further challenge the despotism of reason and make space for mystery and doubt... Do we have to ‘remaining content with half-knowledge’ as the poet John Keats suggested (1958: 79)?

Laura – I do not know. I see here in action the human desire to know and not to know, to become and not to become. Cooperative inquiry illuminates the theme of the conference in unexpected ways. A step forward from an overly idealized perspective of togetherness. Authentic research only is possible when unknowing is contemplated.

5. Temporary conclusions for an ongoing dialogue

The reflexive approach to material experience, embodied memories, and personal/collective theories, as proposed by this method, can help researchers who sought to learn from their own lives (Dominicé, 2000), to re-connect the personal with the professional, subjective and objective.

This could cast a new light on professional development, since learning is not framed here in terms of individual skills, objectives, evaluation, credits, as in the mainstream of professional education, but as processes of change and transition in shared professional becoming. This entails, as we argued, disorientation as well as reorientation, and ultimately the play of multiple perspectives, in order to act and see.

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A.4

Collective Mind and Togetherness in the Educational Team. Eco-Training in Adult Education

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Educational professionals are often engaged in team work and work together for the implementation of educational projects. Their practice is constantly questioned by the praxis - where the unpublished and unexpected (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2010, pp. 33-37; Wittorski, 1993; Teiger & Montreuil, 1995) are the figure of the professional competence and the ability to learn in a situation (Lave & Wenger, 2006) and in the work context.

In the educational team, professionals must be able to operate effectively and efficiently, both regarding the goal and their ability to be a team, encouraging team building: a group, in fact, is not yet a team, rather it must learn to become a team (Quaglino & Casagrande & Castellano, 1992; Quaglino & Cortese, 2003). The process is not easy and it involves a multiple commitment: the ability to work in a team, to cultivate a sense of belonging and of Collective Identity, to learn from experience and to capitalize the knowledge and the skills learnt.

The learning ability of an educational team is directly proportional to its capacity to be a *Collective Mind* (Weick & Roberts, 1993; Tollefsen, 2006; Milani, 2013; 2014) as the highest expression of an *Educational We* (Milani, 2013) which does not erase differences and originalities, rather it harmonizes them according to the educational / pedagogical task.

The *Collective Mind* is a construct that expresses the ability of a team to act carefully, in a conscious and effective way. Reliability and ability to act carefully must characterize the educational teams as subjects with high responsibility. Reliability requires a group to operate as a *Collective Mind*. K.E. Weick and K.H. Roberts give this definition of *Collective Mind*: "The concept of collective mind is developed to explain organizational performance in situations requiring nearly continuous operational reliability. Collective mind is conceptualized as a pattern of heedful interrelations of actions in a social system. Actors in the system construct their actions (contributions), understanding that the system consists of connected actions by

themselves and others (representation), and interrelate their actions within the system (subordination). On-going variation in the heed with which individual contributions, representations, and subordinations are interrelated influences comprehension of unfolding events and the incidence of errors. As heedful interrelating and mindful comprehension increase, organizational errors decrease” (1993, p. 335).

In the educational field – accepting the contributions of K.E. Weick and K.H. Roberts – we defined the *Collective Mind* (Milani, 2013) as a metaphorical concept that helps indicating an indecipherable – but evident – reality, that manifests itself when an educational team coordinates and synchronizes its way of acting professionally in a concrete situation, managing the unprecedented and the unexpected. It is an emerging ability of the group, that is to be found in situations where it is necessary to act synergistically and quickly, to heed and instantly to enhance the skills and specificities of each professional. The *Collective Mind* is inter-subjective rather than over-individual.

The chance of generating a *Collective Mind* lies in the ability of the team to learn in the context, to be resilient (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2010), to create harmony, solidarity, reciprocity, sense of belonging and Collective Identity: it is important to foster mutual trust and the “We”. In addition to the cognitive and meaningful dimension, in fact, the *Collective Mind*, as an expression of acting with care and reliability, is nourished by affective aspects such as a *prosocial* attention directed towards others and *the ability to behold* – simultaneously – *ambivalent feelings*, like hope and doubt, certainty and uncertainty (Vogus & Rothman & Sutcliffe & Weick, 2014).

Developing a *Collective Mind* is a complex formative process. According to G. Pineau (2000), training is built within a triangulation of Hetero-Training (Hétéroformation), Self-Training (Autoformation) and Eco-Training (Écoformation). At the centre of this triangulation is the subject, who learns and thinks.

Self-Training and autobiographical narrative approach constitute an indissoluble duo in adult learning – both in the transformative form of J. Mezirow (2003) and in the revision of life paths and learning in the workplace, especially in the re-reading of personal and professional trajectories. By analogy, we can correspond the *individual biography* to the *collective biography*. How is it possible to generate and support the *construction of collective biographies* in order to create a *Collective Memory*, shared learning and *heedful and mindful performances* (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2010), able to support the *Collective Mind*?

Learning is situated (Lave & Wenger, 2006), socialized (Vygotsky,

1990), organizational (Nonaka, 1991; Argyris & Schön, 1998) and collective (Milani, 2013). Professionals develop their competences and learn the practice in collective contexts and in *communities of practice* (Wenger, 2006), moreover increasing collective skills (Wittorski, 1997). Learning in teamwork develops among *reflection* (Schön, 1993), *auto-reflection* (Mezirow) and *eco-reflection* for a *co-reflection* (Milani, 2013): this *reflective cycle* generates a *learning cycle* that leads to the development of praxis and practice and the creation of individual and collective skills. This process requires, in addition to communication and dialogue, *personal and group narrative skills*. At an impasse, and/or in a cognitive conflict, free discussion can be useful, but a *collective narrative approach* (with a *collective narrative practice*) can be vital: this approach allows to rebuild the professional memory of the group and supports the sense of belonging, of solidarity, the common visions that give sense and body to the *Educational We*.

The dynamic *Hetero-Training, Self-Training and Eco-Training* invites us to place the narrative hypothesis on several dimensions: 1) the dimension of *hetero-training* can foresee proposals of stories/narrations already given to be analysed and reviewed, in order to activate the reflective cycle and the learning cycle; 2) the dimension of *self-training*, encouraging reflection in the form of autobiography, leads to the narration of personal learning stories related to the educational team and, by sharing them, activates a process that leads to shared reflection from self-reflection; 3) the dimension of the *eco-training*, the most important challenge, leads to the eco-reflexive dynamics towards the full expansion of the reflective cycle and of the learning cycle. In the *eco-training* the team rebuilds its own stories of shared professional experiences (the development of a project, the management of some complex cases, the generation of a partnership network in a territory...) assuming also the contextual elements, the processes, the crossroads, the choices, the *know why* and *know where* (Milani, 2013) that have oriented the choices and have given form to *sensemaking* (Weick, 1997), reconstructing the reflection on several levels.

The *collective narrative practice* is widespread in the therapeutic field (Donboroug, 2008) and is having extensive developments (Doboroug, 2012), but has not found full realization in other fields yet. The narrative approach is, however, widely used also in the analysis and interpretation of *Collective Identities* in organizations (Czarniawska, 2000, Brown, 2006) and more generally in organizations (Weik, 1993; Czarniawska, 1998, 2004; Kaneklin & Scaratti, 1998). In a current sociological vision, educational teams can be considered organizations (Bonazzi, 2002).

In the hypothesis of the team as a *Collective Mind* (Milani, 2013), we

believe that it is possible to imagine building a *collective narrative practice* for the reflection in vocational training, particularly in eco-training working contexts. The aims of this practice are: 1) to allow the reconstruction of experiences in order to support professionals and generate a collective resilience; 2) to capitalize collective and individual knowledge and skills; 3) to generate connections in the group and a clarity of cultural references; 4) to learn how to share experiences; 5) to build visions and collective, shared ways of working, generating a unitary and synchronous style of work; 6) to generate the ability to understand each other immediately.

In the framework of organizations, narrative practice is applied in various ways-especially to interpret *Collective Identity* or to analyse how people learn and build a *Collective Memory*. This practice uses: 1) an analysis of the documents, of the mails, of the reports of the organization (Brown, 2006); 2) an analysis of the informal and formal conversations and the exchanges between people, also in the form of stories and anecdotes of successes or failures (Orr, 1995); 3) an analysis of personal stories related to the organization. Moreover, 4) a fourth way is possible, in the wake of E. Wenger (2006) – that is to say the analysis of artefacts and reifications that a team produces, whose meanings are never determined once and for all, but they are the result of negotiations.

Storytelling promotes team *Collective Memory* (or common memory, according to Orr). In fact, “[...] the stories work as vehicles of the community memory and help share the information obtained during the action” (Fabri, 2007). These are situated stories whose narrative favours understanding, because narrative thinking is, for J. Bruner (1996), the thought of comprehension, of interpretation, of reconstruction of the meaning. These stories well represent how much it is possible to learn from experience in contexts that promote eco-training. *Collective Memory* not only supports and reinforces *Collective Identity*, but also a *Collective Culture* for a *Collective Mind*: contributions, representations and subordinations (Weick & Roberts, 1993) can, in fact, be activated only if there are visions, ways of thinking, of acting and common perspectives, if there is a *sensemaking* that drives and supports collective performances.

According to E. Wenger, “practices evolve as shared learning stories” (2006, p.104): in order for an experience to become practical, it must be narrated, also in the form of documentation, to be feasible also by other people (Milani, 2013). Narrating a practice means, in fact, to reconstruct it, to re-signify it: the meaning of a praxis is rebuilt and it is also linked to theories and models, useful to make a practice communicable and trans-

ferable. This process is not always spontaneous in the educational teams: starting from fostering an eco-reflective process, asking the members of a team to narrate a professional experience in the form of a collective story, it could already be a methodological aspect of the collective narration. Trying to reconstruct the story of the birth of a team, could also let the sense of the educational action of professionals be reconstructed, on the axis past-present-future as well as the professionals' sense of belonging.

In the perspective of adult training, the use of narrative approach has multiple functions (Formenti, 1998; Demetrio, 1995, 2004; Scaratti, 2003; Stoppini, 2003; Gamelli, 2003): the reflection on oneself as a learning subject, the reflections on one's own identity change, the professional progression and the self-care. In this context, we believe that the collective narrative practice can in various ways understand these levels in the collective form. In the field of vocational training and in particular in team work and in the perspective of the *Collective Mind*, the collective narrative could promote the development of collective meta-competences. In fact, in order to become a competent team, an expression of an *Educational We* able to act with care in the educational processes, the educational team must know how to implement some meta-competences: *Projectuality, Intentionality, Reflexivity, Deontologicity, Historicity and Representativity* (Milani, 2013). These meta-competences demand to be constantly acted and simultaneously learnt in situation, in praxis.

In particular, *Historicity* and *Representativity* support the Collective Identity of the team and are directly connected to the ability to manage and support the group's *Collective Memory* (Orr, 1995), a memory of the experiences, the activities, the projects, the decisions taken, the difficulties, the moments of impasse and resilience, but also of the team's successes in dealing with the unexpected.

Historicity, as a meta-competence, is in fact the awareness of the history, of the roots and of the evolution path of the team and is based on its *Collective Memory*. An educational team needs to construct a *collective narrative of its history* that acts as a background to the identity and, indeed, generates the *Collective Memory*. The latter actually constitutes the support to the possibility of practice and team identity and the support for the sense of belonging, feeling and *Togetherness*. Exactly like a family, telling stories, narrating the past, keeping track and memory of identity and common history, so the *collective narration* in work teams becomes a tool for strengthening group identity and mutual bonds and interrelations of professional character and refers to a common heritage of practices. The shared learning histories, in fact, are the result

of the combination of participation and reification of the subjects to a community of practice (Wenger, 2006). In this direction, “formation can be considered as a structure of intentional participation in narrative activities insofar as it is the practice that gives meaning to the stories” (Fabbri, p. 107) in which “shared learning histories” are possible (*ibidem*).

The *collective narrative* becomes, therefore, a tool that works as a ‘glue’, generating interconnections between people, shared visions, a common philosophy of educational action, models of action and, above all, mutual knowledge: this practice, while supporting *Collective Mind* – able to act with care – develops an *Educational We* and nurtures *Togetherness* – a professional solidarity and a sense of belonging and, at the same time, an educational hope as a shared collective attitude.

The *collective narrative practice*, could, therefore take some sense directions:

- *to preserve*: in this case the collective narrative practice helps rediscover the strong reasons for the team’s educational action, recovering the historical reasons that have started and supported the group and its perspectives and basic choices, to protect the possible loss of values, reasons, meanings both in the logic to “rejuvenate” the visions, rereading them according to new perspectives, experiences and reflections elaborated by the team;
- *to restore*: the collective narrative practice can bring to light, and to a renewed splendour, the meanings and motivations of collective action that could acquire a new meaning in a historical-critical reading, but also with reference to current needs; every restoration work intends to restore beauty and splendour: in the educational field one often risks, under the influence of educational fashions, of forgetting experiences, models, theories, practical solutions that, brought to new light, still show their value and their endurance;
- *to change*: the collective narrative practice favours the activation of the reflective cycle and allows, through the critical analysis of collective stories, to modify models, reference values, meaning perspectives, but also links with the territory, objectives and network: only by sharing and having in mind the story of a team it is possible to give it a new course, to change its way of acting;
- *to repair*: the memory of a team can be ‘damaged’. Sometimes it can be incomplete, thus offering a fragile support to the Collective and individual Identity. The collective narrative practice could allow, through the biographical reconstruction of the team, the critical elements both on the professional action level and on the “affective” (Vogus & Roth-

man Sutcliffe KM - Weick KE (2014) and relational level, allowing to explore the obscure sides, the hidden shadows of *Collective Identity*: the risk, in fact, may be that of an identity not taken freely and consciously, but undergone. Showing also means acting on the most fragile parts of a team, on its wounds, on its possible traumas: the educational team can not be *heedful* and *mindful* (Weick & Sutcliffe) if it does not cultivate a sense of belonging and inclusion and an organizational well-being (Avallone & Paplomatas, 2005);

- *to recompose*: the *Collective Mind* requires cooperation (Weick & Roberts, 1993) and this requires a sense of belonging; learning to be a team, working in a synergistic and cooperative way requires a solid and supportive group; the collective narrative allows, rereading the collective biography and the stories in a co-reflective way, to put together fragments of *Collective Identity*, but also the multiplicity of visions and experiences that accompany the flow of shared experiences. Starting from the interpretation of these shared experiences allows us to give voice to subjectivity in relation to the inter-subjectivity that characterizes the experience and the context of work itself. The invitation is aimed at learning to ‘put the pieces together’, ‘make them match’, without forcing interpretations, also accepting that the vision is not completely homogeneous, but that the ‘junctions’ between one fragment and the other ‘are essential and important parts of the composition itself;
- *to harmonize*: the collective narrative can aim to favour a harmonious relationship of the team, a relationship in which the ‘differences’, the ‘dissonances’ are not catalogued as something to be eliminated, but as something that enriches and characterizes harmony of the group and the group’s ‘concerted work’. As in a musical composition, the dissonances or the fortes and the pianos create the harmony itself, they write the musical plot, so the multiple ‘voices’ of the collective, the different visions must be recomposed as much as possible in order to feel in a common professional social history. The *Collective Identity*, in fact, can also be a trap that homologates and flattens differences and resources, testing the group’s Togetherness. The *Collective Identity* can, as a matter of facts, also be the theatre of more or less hidden games of power and iniquity (Brown, 2006). It should be remembered, with L. Fabbri, that “The narration fulfils the function of development and transformation of the communities [and of the teams]. Commitment, enterprise, repertoire are not so much the result of a priori sharing among like-minded people, rather the unpredictable and never completely predictable outcome of collective negotiations” (p.109).

Another use of the importance of a narrative approach is offered by E. Wenger: the reference is to the communities of practice, but some dynamics are also to be found in the educational teams - collective subjects constantly committed to redefining the practice in daily praxis to cope with the unedited and the unexpected. E. Wenger writes: "A community of practice is a history collapsed into a present that invites engagement. Newcomers can engage with their own future, as embodied by old-timers. As a community of practice, these old-timers deliver the past and offer the future, in the form of narratives and participation both".

Past, present and future are the times of *Historicity* and narration. These time frames can be the starting point for a methodology of collective narrative in contexts of professional training: for a team that needs help to consolidate its *Collective Memory* and its identity, the axis of the past is the reference with which to review the present, while for a team that needs to measure itself with new tasks and with a different identity, it is necessary to work on imagination, on the invention of stories that from the *present* go towards the *future*.

In terms of feasible tools, there are different possibilities:

- the use of generative metaphors;
- the use of stories to be completed;
- common maps to be transformed into a story;
- suggestions of schemes for plots;
- narrative games;
- tales of collective stories of projects, failures or successes or experiences that have accompanied the shared experiences.

In conclusion – recalling both the dynamic hetero-training, self-training and eco-training, and the transformative and constructive power of the narration – we can say that the collective narrative approach has in itself an enormous potential in the area of professional training of adults involved in team work. The latter is often tiring, stressful and risks de-motivating professionals. In general, this happens when a team does not manage to be competent: nurturing competence, eco-formative and eco-reflexive capacity means defending the group and the individual from *burnout* and encouraging *educational hope* as a shared attitude both within the group and towards the subjects which the team work addresses.

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A.5

COMMONS.

Heritage in common, shared stories

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Introduction

Commons is a project supported by Compagnia di San Paolo di Torino (<http://www.compagniadisanpaolo.it/>) and directed by the Passages Association (<http://commons.network/testimonials/passages/>), as part of the initiatives activated to promote experimentation with new forms of participation in culture. The project was organized in a series of interventions on the territory that involved contexts and modalities that, although different from each other, had in common the narrative method and the research of the stories on which the heritage of the territories are founded. Here, we will take into consideration only the digital storytelling activity and we refer to the project website for a depth analysis of the other aspects and project objectives.

The project included the Archivio Storico of Turin, Biblioteche Civiche of the city, Polo del '900 and the University of Turin (<http://commons.network/partner/>). It involved about forty participants among professionals, volunteers and trainees of the university who, through the digital storytelling methodology, told about their heritage experience.

1. Commons: the project

In order to present Commons we borrow the words used in the “The project” section of the dedicated site (<http://commons.network>) as we think they are particularly effective in transmitting the spirit and the main objectives of the activities (Also in this case, the explanations are declined by the writer, referring only to the part related to the digital storytelling). They are: Discover, tell, share and return.

As most of the storytelling theories deliver, each story is itself a discovery,

that is a way to bring to light some elements and meanings that before the narrative transformation were somehow “hidden”. The stories, then, necessarily imply some form of tale: there is no story where there is not a person willing to tell it or to reconstruct and transmit it through some kind of code. Then, the narration has in its precondition an expressed or latent desire of sharing, where the narrator is engaged in the construction of a connection, between himself and the potential listener; this, in the development of the story, becomes a real relationship or a situation in which a variable form of mutual recognition is defined. That’s why in the construction of a device that promotes a cultural participation we opted for storytelling and, in particular, for digital storytelling.

Proceeding with a more in-depth exploration of the concepts, we see that under the heading “discover” it is stated: “Discover, through unknown stories, unexpected relationships between public / institutional heritage and private / affectional one”. The first element that we like to emphasize concerns the heritage, not only in its most material nature, but in particular in the more cultural and emotional one. Precisely in culture, public heritage meets private heritage allowing the appearance of those aspects that, generally, in the institutional narration tend to remain hidden. The public presentation of heritage focuses on elements which are often distant from people. In the case of Commons, the idea was to tell the cultural-institutional heritage through the emotional and existential experiences of the people who care of that heritage. It was a real discovery, sometimes for the narrators themselves, that allowed to weave the threads of which the stories are composed in a fabric that linked people who were sometimes very far from each other. Through narrations, we discovered that, people apparently distant were, in reality, very close in their way to feel and relate toward the heritage they were telling.

Telling: “the emotional and relational aspect of the heritage through the subjective experience of the participants” transformed the very essence of the heritage, which were recognized as entities, mostly extraneous and distant, as opportunities for sharing and closeness, beyond ages, jobs, genres and provenance. The whole project focused on the narrations because only through the narration of their stories people can find elements of closeness and solidarity. This statement is even more true for those contexts (archives and libraries) of which people produced representations that tend to distance non-experts from the work. Let’s consider the archives: these are, according to the common feeling, represented as dusty places in which only those who go there for curiosity or their job can find something interesting.

Through the narrations of the archive professionals' emotional experiences, it has been shown how these contexts produce emotions and how memory constitutes an element of deep connection between people. We all have memories and we are all memories in the same way that, as Bruner reminds us, we are all stories and we have stories to tell and share. As already mentioned, sharing was the second element of the project. The narrative path was implemented by attributing a specific role and space to the sharing processes. Not only stories were shared, but also difficulties as well as skills. In different moments the sharing process allowed to generate real forms of solidarity between the narrators who joined with the aim of completing their narrative path.

Last but not least, there is the return process where the results of the narrative paths were "returned" to the territory through different initiatives with a double objective: 1) generating new forms of "approach" among people; 2) promote other forms of narration.

Given the premises on which the project was built, it is now necessary to illustrate its structure. So let's start from the people involved. As previously said, about forty people took part in the activities: about thirty professionals and volunteers from libraries and archives and a dozen university students who were doing their internship. None of them had ever participated in this kind of activity and, in general they were not familiar with narrative strategies. In addition, professionals and volunteers were not particularly familiar with digital technologies and at first, this constituted a strong critical factor that found a solution thanks to the collaboration and the spirit of solidarity established with the trainees. In fact, both for their young age and their training path they were all quite competent on the digital area and they constituted a great resource for the development of the project.

As said, the main objective of the research was to enhance the cultural heritage through an approach of the people - in particular the non-professionals. Another objective was represented by the promotion of a particular area of the city center called Contrada dei Guardinfanti, characterized by a particular and intense history of trade and handicraft production. Through these initiatives it was intended to reconstruct the social and cultural community of the district and to promote its knowledge among Turin citizens.

As mentioned above, a central part of the project was represented by the narratives, more precisely the digital stories produced by the participants (The digital storytelling method will be presented in detail in the next paragraph). These were divided into four groups that, in succession from Feb-

ruary to June, took part in a wander lasting about 25 hours, during which they learned how to tell their stories through digital storytelling. The activities were supported by three facilitators and trainees.

The products created were collected on a site (<http://commons.network/>) which, in addition to presenting the project, intended to constitute a reference point not only during the period of activity, but especially afterwards. It should be emphasized that the whole path was shared through social networks and accurately documented through photographs and videos. This is not only because the documentation is a fundamental part of any research process, but because it was considered that the results of the research were represented not only by the digital products made, but also by the whole process.

We refer to the following sections for an accurate description of both the methodology and the results obtained.

2. Digital storytelling

Currently the term digital storytelling (DST) collects different forms of narration that have, as a common basis, the production of an audiovisual digital artifact. Therefore, we have digital storytelling in didactic, advertising, literary area, etc. The DST applied in this project is, however, of a different type and it is essential to consider this distinction if we want to fully understand the spirit of the activity. Otherwise, there is the risk of dwelling on the products, losing a fundamental component of the entire path. Therefore, here we will assume that the digital storytelling is a narrative practice which, using a plurality of codes, allows to tell a story.

It should be noted that this is a process articulated in different phases, whose objective is not only or exclusively the production of a digital story but rather the definition of a context in which people have the opportunity to share their own experiences. This sharing is aimed at the construction of new meanings and the definition of different forms of solidarity (emotional, cultural, ideological). It is precisely in this characteristic that the element of pedagogical interest can be identified: the production of digital stories acquires a pedagogical meaning when it constitutes the opportunity for people to share meanings, to build new ones together, to establish relationships. It is no coincidence that this practice was born precisely with the aim of allowing people, especially those in difficulty, to tell their own story together with others and for the others. Telling a story is not an end in

itself, but it constitutes a process of re-elaboration which allows to find the answers and confirmations that it could be difficult to identify. Moreover, the same answers and the same constructs can be an important source of information or inspiration for other people who are in the same condition or who, despite being in a different situation, show an interest for specific situations (let's think of the situations of illness that can be an object of interest both for those who are struck by the same pathology and for whom, even if they don't suffer from the same pathology, want to understand the situation experienced by the sick people).

The literature identifies seven fundamental elements of DST (Lambert, 2002):

- The personal point of view. As we said before, the digital stories are not documentaries or audiovisual products, but stories of people told by people for other people.
- A narrative structure that can also surprise by asking questions and providing non-ordinary answers. Obviously, the storytelling component is fundamental and it is explicit in the narrative plot that transforms a sequence of events into a story. For this reason it is essential to distinguish the different types of DST because a digital story created for educational purposes will have a narrative plot different from that which can be built to tell a professional story.
- Emotional and engaging content. As known, the aspect of emotions is an essential element of the narrations. With regards to DST it should be emphasized that the emotional component is often amplified by the evocative and engaging power of the images.
- The use of your own voice for the storytelling. The voice is that element which allows to distinguish each individual in his uniqueness and which, therefore, makes the narrations unique. That's why in a DST the contribution given by the voice is a fundamental and essential component.
- The use of a suitable soundtrack for the moments of narration. Music or other sounds chosen by the narrator allow to create a specific, emotional atmosphere and to represent moods and contents when words are not always adequate.
- An effective storytelling economy because you can say a lot with little. Generally, the digital stories do not exceed 10 minutes. The limited duration allows, during the story, to choose what to tell properly (a very circumscribed theme, in order to avoid the risk of converting the narration into an autobiography); moreover, the availability of multiple com-

munication plans allows the construction of meaningful narrations while respecting the time limit.

- An appropriate pace for the narrative methods chosen for the story.

All these elements are very important and can be placed in the stories according to different shapes and intensities, depending both on the story and on the choices made by the narrator. The interesting aspect is that all these factors allow not only to assume a precise and different narrative style for each narrator, but also to employ a certain creativity and, at the same time, to develop a generative attitude. In fact, the multimedia languages used in the DST do not perform a mere exhortative or narrative simplification function, but they constitute a reflective engine. Searching the images for the DST activates important reflective processes and finding the “forgotten” photographs often urges memories that allow to access to forgotten or never organized sequences of your own life.

3. Digital storytelling in action: The workshops

As previously said, the participants were divided into groups of about ten members. Although in the planning phase it was assumed to prefer a heterogeneous composition, in the implementation phase we opted for homogeneous groups to respond to the organizational needs of the entities involved. This choice was successful because it allowed participants to be involved in professional forms of sharing and support that were very interesting on the organizational side.

Each group was involved in approximately six meetings of four hours each. In addition to the activities carried out during the meetings the people worked independently both in the writing of the story, and in the design of the storyboard and in the implementation. A portion of self-employment is necessary to guarantee reflection during the narrative phase. The groups was organized as follows:

First meeting: Presentation of the working methods and of the narrative methodology used. The participants had never made digital stories and did not know how to work. It was important to describe the planned steps and what would be required to them. In the same meeting we communicated the suggested narrative topic (dramatic question). The dramatic question (DQ) is the central topic on which the story is built. This is an important element in the chosen methodology because it allows both to help the par-

ticipants in identifying a well-defined narrative path and it is an fundamental tool for the facilitators to prevent narrations from proceeding on unexpected routes that do not adhere to the project objectives. Each group had a different set of DQs, among which the participants could choose the one that they considered most stimulating (some Dramatic Questions were: Torino è la mia città; Muri di carta; Oltre il quotidiano; Ripercorrere il labirinto; Ritrovare; Un ponte tra passato, presente e futuro; Lasciando un'impronta; Tenere in memoria; La tua cartolina di Torino). The choices were subsequently shared and each member of the group explained the motivations that led him to opt for that specific topic.

Second meeting: first draft of the story and sharing with the group. Some participants arrived at the second appointment with a first draft of the story, while others preferred proceeding with their writing during the workshop. In both cases, a part of the scheduled time was dedicated to the sharing of the stories. That is the first moment in which we can say that a true sense of togetherness is created in a process of digital storytelling.

Third meeting: storyboard planning and sharing with the group. The transition from the textual narration to the multimedia one requires a certain planning to ensure the coherence of the story and to facilitate the subsequent implementation phase through the sw. Even in this phase the most significant aspect concerns the collaborative spirit that is naturally produced: people begin to ask for the opinion of the group, to share points of view and choices in a real process of social construction of the story. A story that, despite this, remains personal and individual.

Fourth and fifth meeting: implementation of the digital story with Windows MovieMaker.

Sixth meeting: socialization of completed video-stories. This is a very significant phase: although the narrative path is full of moments dedicated to sharing, the collective vision of the finished products always generates a state of great emotion and intense participation.

The activities were directed by the university spokesperson of the project with the collaboration of three facilitators and the group of trainees of the University. The trainees had a dual role:

1. In the first phase they told their story, acquiring new skills with respect to the narrative modalities expected by the DST;
2. Later they supported, especially on the technological aspect, the other members of the groups in the fulfilment of their digital story. The support of the students was fundamental as it allowed the overcoming of

various operational problems; it also made possible an exchange, often intergenerational, by activating an interesting atmosphere of mutual help and exchange of knowledge, skills and emotions.

4. The outcomes

Here we will consider only the outcomes of the project we can connect to the narrative activity.

The first outcome is represented by the digital stories that were created and published on the project website and on the dedicated YouTube channel. They constitute a heritage of great human, social and cultural interest. On the human side, the professional-storytellers were able to represent their professionalism through passion, transmitting a series of emotionally engaging contents. The “affective” dimension of the DST put in contact the stories with the Story, showing how the content of the archives is much closer to the common people than what we might imagine. This proximity is also the prerequisite for the public who can see the stories directly or indirectly developing a sense of belonging to those places and contexts described, a sort of adhesion connected with the purpose of people engagement of the Commons project. Recalling the seven points of the DST previously stated, we can affirm that digital stories told the heritage through a particular point of view that is the personal one of the people involved. The narrators represent a sort of “filter” through which we can also look at the historical resources of the city that allows us to bring to light the humanity in them.

We think a second outcome is represented by the processes of “opening”, “approach” and “discovery” among people who took part in the workshops. Some of them knew each other, however their stories let discover unknown aspects and dimensions, fostering, in most cases, a sort of approach. Certainly, this aspect has interesting social consequences, but even more it constitutes a significant element on the organizational aspect. In fact, there is a natural wondering about the possible organizational repercussions generated by these activities. What changes in people who have been working together for years when they discover unexpected aspects of their colleagues? But above all, what are the effects determined by the sharing and collaboration processes activated by the DST paths? Here we do not have the necessary elements to provide complete answers, however, based on the experience gained in this area, in other contexts we feel to affirm that, gen-

erally, the greater mutual knowledge and the approach stimulated by the shared narration constitute factors that intervene positively both on self-esteem and on mutual recognition.

The third outcome concerns, more specifically, the trainees who had the opportunity to approach a narrative practice particularly in step with the typical digital consumption of young people, and to live an educational experience not only on the professional side (some of them came from studies such as History, Literature, DAMS certainly close to the contents and methods of development of the Commons project), but above all on the human side. As said, the trainees supported the other narrators in the multimedia development of their stories. All this allowed: a generational approach; the creation of the necessary conditions for people of very different ages, jobs and experiences to share an experience of solidarity based on mutual exchange; the sharing, on an equal footing, of the points of view with respect to very different topics; the development of soft skills.

Conclusion

In conclusion we feel to affirm, taking in consideration the moments of sharing and dialogue that marked the months of work of the project, that digital storytelling is an effective device in creating the conditions for the activation of various forms of togetherness and mutual support among people. Despite the initial perplexities expressed by many of the participants, the results were generally positive both in terms of personal satisfaction, expressed by the narrators, and with respect to the group work atmosphere generated.

With respect to the experience reported here, we believe it might be interesting to know the impact that stories can generate on the public. At the moment, no data are available; we have only a few positive feedback, obtained during public meetings organized in those months, which obviously can't have any scientific validity. A development of the project could therefore be represented by a research aimed at investigating how the public reacts to the vision of the stories of Commons, in order to check if one of the initial hypotheses of the project (digital stories are a device to promote the people engagement) could be completely confirmed or not.

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A.6

You who travel, you who watch me: the telling of my story. Narration as an instrument of self-study

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1. Narration and migration

The topic of immigration – as it moves away from the dominant media, political and legislative discourse, which are largely characterized by an alarming logic and an objective representation of migrants – is impregnated by the symbolic role of the self-narrative (Mengozi, 2013). Narration clearly demonstrates to immigrants the need to deal with their own painful experience, so as to meet with society's need to welcome and frame these lives, but also with the desire, the good will, and the demand from third parties – such as journalists, researchers, and scholars – to return dignity to these otherwise anonymous and voiceless lives, so that migrants “become subject to their story [...] and are not only part of the blurred multitude we call “foreigners” (Ognisanti, Traversi, 2008).

These life stories are testimonies of the lives lived and recounted by the same protagonists. They usually have a dual value. On one hand, “therapeutic” and soothing for the authors: the ability to recount their story allows them to identify the situation and at the same time make sense of it. On the other hand, there is the formative function for the self-recounting subject.

A narration of a migrant's life, in particular, is not just a sequence of events and experiences subjectively lived, but – by means of its plot and highlighting the various situations (sometimes in an agitated way) – permits a way of reading reality, producing a concrete way to experience values and meanings, standards of coexistence and social interaction. The narrator does not only recount the story; he who tell, he who narrate is able to interpret it, so that he can be able to identify new perspectives of meaning.

In this respect, autobiographical workshops – promoted by individual or community organisations – are constantly being promoted. They stimulate self-writing as an experience of self-re-identity and self-formation, connected to the personal or family's path, in the belief that the self-narra-

tive prepares us to listen to each other in contexts where people have different historical cultural backgrounds. It therefore acts as a tool to promote not only self-awareness, but also intercultural education.

Memory is not passive, nor a snapshot of the past, but builds, rebuilds, selects, and transforms; in other words, it «opens the continuity of the future (Galinberti, 2009, p. 108)». It is a kind of «diary, a piggy bank of the spirit (Greco, 2009)», where the most precious facts of human existence are preserved. In this sense, memory is not auxiliary to thought, but the «ability to preserve, remember and forget according to our senses (Vegetti Finci, 2006, p. 608)», which makes it a condition of humanity. Removing the memory means «destroying the basis of one's own identity and continuity in time (Galinberti, 2009, p. 107)». Without memory, in fact, the subject is subtracted, living alone in the instant, having lost their conceptual and cognitive abilities. Their identity disappears.

In this sense, memory becomes «a necessary premise of identity, as people develop their identities and build a coherent self-sketch from the interpretation of their own memories and intentions (Ćurković, 2006, p. 491)».

Memories and identities, therefore, «fertilize mutually, merge and recast themselves to produce the trajectory of life (Candau, 2002, p. 16)».

The emblem and the character of the individual, in light of their own identity, is also shown in the physiognomy of their face: something that I can photograph, illustrate, and remember, but that is at the same time something unshakeable, something that has a more elusive effect. The manifestation of the face (Adamczewski, 2007) becomes speech and its same epiphany (Lévinas, 2010) becomes the most expressive form of the subject's autobiography. Thanks to the face the subject has the ability to recognize and be recognized, because it constitutes «the most defenseless part of us, the most exposed, the most revealing and even the most deterrent, so much that it's difficult to kill one by looking in his face (Mancini, 1989, p. 49)».

The face is the identification of an otherness that is close to the gaze, revealing itself in its proximity, without resolving itself in a given identity or a relationship of belonging. It resists being taken by its transcendence at any attempt to know it or to capture it in its own knowledge: that which reveals itself is transcendence itself, as intense as the universal and individual encounter (Sartre, 1972). The face is in fact an expression of a peculiarity which escapes the attempts of categorization and generalisation and of a tension to universality that passes through diversity of possible faces (Fabbri, 2014).

Some common elements emerge within the autobiographical narration of migrants. First and foremost, the family: the main structure for the for-

mation of the individual, which provides the fundamental tools for successful integration into society, and recalls the key sense of belonging to one's country of origin. At the same time, there is the awareness of having embarked on a journey that represents – for the contemporary migrant – the escape from the boundaries of reality and its constructions, but also from the fear of tomorrow, of unjust war, of tribulations and violence under different forms in his present. It is for these conditions that he is prepared to face the perils, dangers and traumatic experiences that lead him away from his loved ones.

The power to narrate is therefore part of every human being that, through their tale, transcends the boundaries of their own reality and elaborates their experience. Narration is against death and oblivion: it is told to give meaning to life; as Sheherazade said: «it is told not only to save life but to live; it is told not only to fight death but to give life. To narrate not only opens the dream dimension to the construction of a fantasy heritage, but it is also an occasion for reflection, denunciation, rethinking, pushing for change (Deseghi, 2003, p. 29)».

2. The project of narration, countless stories

In the eventuality of a double loneliness for those who embark on a migratory journey, being deprived of their own culture, and the difficulty of organizing their memories, can lead to a kind of confusion and sense of extraction where difficulty in thinking and giving order to one's own life clearly emerges.

In March and April, and then September and October 2016, some asylum seekers hosted at the reception facilities of the Diakonia Onlus Association (in which the Ruah Social Cooperative provides reception staff) participated, in collaboration with Tantemani Serigrafia Cooperative Social Patronage San Vincenzo, in the “Innumerevoli” project. This was a narrative and screen-printing workshop that led to the creation of a collective exhibition in the city of Bergamo, during the Cooperative Unions' events (held from 14 to 19 June 2016 in Lazzaretto Park), to then continue as a travelling exhibit at the parishes of the The Diocese of Bergamo.

The workshop was divided into small groups of five asylum seekers, each accompanied by their own drafts of a self-portrait which contained a series of narrative elements – the result of the several experiences they wished to recount and share. The technical printing method of silk-screen printing

was then used to print each self-portrait onto a t-shirt and poster that the subject could bring to their own reception facility. I entered this workshop under a training project, in order to be able to prove that self-narrative can be a self-study tool. The project therefore involved nine asylum seekers from the “Innumerevoli” silk screening project and eight pre-silk-screening asylum seekers; the first group were at the reception facilities of Castagneta in Città Alta di Bergamo and the former seat of BergamoTV, and the second group at Casazza and Botta di Sedrina.

A workbook was prepared for each participant with all the tools necessary for the course, according to the steps foreseen for the project itself. Based on the subjects with whom we met, it was written in Italian, English or French.

For those who participated in the workshop after the screen-printing, the work was divided into five different stages.

In the first stage, they presented their entire workshop, specifically its objectives. A brief summary was provided for the exhibition, so visitors could better interpret the stories on show. In this first step, each guest was also invited to question what the note said, and to freely add details that could best express their own story.

In the second stage a diagram was drawn up, so as to structure the narrative of one's own story by the elements that were significant to the experience: namely, the country of origin, the family, the journey, the desires, the fear that characterised certain significant moments, and the short-term goals.

In the third stage, time was devoted to the actual writing of every asylum seeker's experience. Some of them wrote it themselves, choosing the French or English language, whilst others who could not write preferred to dictate their story.

In the fourth stage the choice of the autobiographical method was shared with them as a privileged instrument of the workshop, emphasizing in particular the identification of the specific elements of identity.

In the last stage, each participant took part in an evaluation interview and a questionnaire.

Awareness, as Tobie Nathan points out, is that «The foreigner, even the most impoverished, is rich in languages that he holds; full of scents and feelings; and especially rich in explanations, in living beings, and in the aims he achieves, by the magic of the journey” and through the narration, “the spokesperson within us; his guests (Nathan, 2003)».

The epiphany of the face (Lévinas, 2010) has been possible thank to the

ability to re-elaborate events, situations, relationships, feelings, desires. The story of himself becomes a verbal response to *who* that corresponds to the narration of his story, in the story where this someone has already consumed during the time the unrepeatable existence of *an* irreplaceable.

My land and my roots

Within each story, there is a clear need to emphasize the need of the subjects to find a feeling of belonging with their country of origin, many referring specifically to cities or villages located within, in turn, regions:

I live in Mali, region of Koulikoro [...] my village is called Kati

The bond created by this sense of belonging creates the fertile ground for active participation in community life, pushing people to build and consolidate responsibility towards the same collective good and, in the deepest form, towards the community (Trapanese, 2005). In a contemporary reality, where the most realistic meaning of nation seems to be a grouping together that is recognized in regulations, this assumes a very different symbolic load for migrants. The contact with the culture of origin is maintained thanks to the presence of migratory networks, but especially through recollection and memory, which have voice in the narration, as well as the family patterns, creating a double sense of belonging (Sassen, 1999).

Someone waits for me at home; my family

The family takes on a symbolic role for those who embark on a migratory journey; it is the context in which the decision to migrate, for most individuals, is formulated (Harbison, 1981). Often the contrasts that they have with it define the motivations:

In 2013 I decided to leave Bangladesh; I had family problems. My dad had thrown out my mother and married another woman: and I accepted it. We made peace but there were so money problems. So my dad talked to the smugglers who told him to send me to Libya.

The need to write their parents names is symbolic; a simple word seems to encompass in itself the whole story of an individual, the story of their family, their individuality. Evoking someone by name is a way to make them feel present, to recall all of their being, not to label them in one way

or another but to live in their entirety. In this sense, the deep respect for parents is clear:

I still have both parents, my father is called Bandiougou Magassa and my mom is called Niame Sissiako

These are the same parents who have permitted the migrant to study, with the awareness that school – at least in the early years – including those in the African and Asian territories, must be a precious ally: it conveys the cultural legacy of the previous generations, opens doors to their community, provides the means necessary for pathways into various professions, and also opens up new horizons (Galli, 2002):

[...] I finish my school in Lahore College and I was graduated from university in «Islamic study, urdu».

Comparatively, disadvantaged families often see education as an extraneous world, which does not include rules or uses (Delors, 1996). In such cases, many are sent to work after their first years of study due to economic necessity:

I studied for three years at school and then went to work as a carpenter. I did not go to the fields, but I was the only one to work

Although emigration can be justified, it is always under suspicion for those who invest hope and expectation in the migrant. The latter contains, in secret, the suspicion of “betrayal” from one who is not responding to expectations, of irresponsibility at the limit of denial. Accusation and self-accusation: this is the inevitable foundation of the emigrant’s condition and the status of the immigrant (Sayad, 2002).

I travelled the earth, the sky and the sea

Some leave abandon areas devastated by interstate conflicts and wars, where children are forcibly recruited by military bodies, where freedom of expression, association and assembly are repressed, and where violence against women and indiscriminate practices of torture are perpetrated without being sanctioned by law. The most sensitive areas are Syria, Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, which are affected by conflicts that cause an ever-increasing number of asylum seekers to flee to those countries, that in turn hold devastating wars.

In this context, we identify in particular the various routes that migrants undertake to reach Europe, with different means of transport:

In 2011 I decide to leave Pakistan [...] I went to Iran with an animal truck, I across the desert with jeep [...] arrived in Turkey in van, met some new smuggler and decided to go by car to Ankara and Istanbul. By boat I arrived in Koss (Greece), by ship I went to Athen [...] cross the border on foot and all the Macedonia by car and the same in Serbia and Hungary. I arrived in Austria by car [...] I went to Germany by train. They control me and I stay there for three years at the end I arrived in Italy in 2015.

Those who flee often choose to do so on case-by-case basis, according to the needs of the moment and the “occasions” presented by the State to cross the borders. In West Africa, the Niger Desert is one of the crosses that claims a high number of victims, who travelled by illegal trafficking routes which are now being used for human trafficking:

I have some problem so I decide to leave Ghana to Burkina Faso ad after I go to Niger by car. I stayed one week in Niger and after I decided go to Libya.

Migrants are willing to spend a lot of money to embark on their voyages, even if it means going into debt. Specifically, travel is purchased through money transfer or through hawala (El Qorchi, 2003) (a transaction system based on the word of Islamic law). There is also an agreement on how to behave once arrived, for escaping the controls and fingerprinting and, on having arrived, to pay further in the countries of North-Europe:

In Libya, I worked as a waiter, there they beat me and I saw a Libyan man shot by a thief who took the money, I was scared and there were so many problems. I paid 1900 Libyan money (about 1200) to come to Italy by boat [...]. [...].

The previous migration experiences of the individuals or their relatives, the ties established between places of origin and destination, the existence of support devices, the functioning of family chains, and information flows, appear at least as important as economic calculations in the explanation of arrivals and departures.

If dreams are wishes

When the traveller leaves, he retreats from the consolidated structure of his daily life made of dreams and needs. He must find ways and means to

achieve some and satisfy others. Getting started requires trusting strangers and losing sight of home comforts, family and friends. You are constantly feeling out of balance. The family element exists even in the discussion about symbolic dreams; some migrants, especially older adults, think of migration only as a pause from their own lives, dreaming of returning to reunite with their families in their country of origin:

My dream is to continue my work here and reunite with my family in Nigeria.

In other stories, the stress is also on the desire to improve one's life and on the self-realization related to the experience of migration:

My dream is to live in Italy, in Milan, where I agreed with a friend that when I get the papers he will give me a job as a waiter

In this perspective, many asylum seekers, in addition to their work expectations, are projecting the dream of building their own future in our country through the support of local, associative or municipal structured networks supporting them in resuming or seeking work and dreaming of marriage and children:

In the future I will married and also built home. I want to meet girl, not problem if she is black or white. I want to stay in Italy.

Finally, among the various stories, there are also some dreams related to personal wellbeing and the awareness of the gift of peace and serenity, even before material well-being:

From my future I want to meet peace for myself to have good relationship with other people. Now in Italy I want to find calm and easy job, like farmer that is in contact with nature and world.

The dream is that mental activity, which becomes context, where we can let loose, without limits or fears, our desires and expectations, allowing us to play and reconcile with time, and to nourish every single moment of our life with the strength and intensity that stimulates us to push forward, always and in every case.

Beyond the limits of fear

There are many ways to tell a war. Some are so deeply rooted in the global collective imagery that they form metaphorical interpretative tools capable

of describing any type of war, such as the one slowly hitting African territories and animating the days with the feeling of fear. It is these local wars and clashes that convince and induce people to embark on a migratory journey:

When I was attack by a group of people with knife and sticks in my country [...].

No journey is free from an encounter, and those who travel have to be decentralized, open and meet to this (Baraldi, 2003). However, not all the encounters that migrants experience during their journey are positive: on one hand, some meet other people who become companions in their shared desire and purpose; yet on the other hand, many are robbed and humiliated:

I saw a Libyan man shot by a thief who took the money [...].

Many are unaware of the dangers and risks of migration through traffickers, not only at sea or in the desert, but also in transit countries such as Libya (Panella, 2015):

In Libya I was at Bahai-Sabaha in Tripoli [...] spending a month in jail. I was beaten.

In a Libya without stability, the lives of migrants are a real hell: many end up in centers that are basically prisons, with stories of torture, food and water deprivation, and continual violence:

In Libya I have a lot of problem, when I was in prison people hurt me; my hand, heart and arm have element of fire.

Many migrants have traumas, usually associated with violent events, that sometimes indicate a point of no return, causing problems that will affect the subject's experience for the rest of their lives (Giudici, Withtol De Weden, 2016).

Every day I pursue a goal that is important to me

If migrants' humans rights are always defended and sustained in institutional documents, the tension between idealism and reality, the opening and closing of frontiers and opportunities, is manifested in both political action and in these dreamed documents that formalize such political policies (Donadio, Gabrielli & Massari, 2014). In addition to the desire to be in possession of

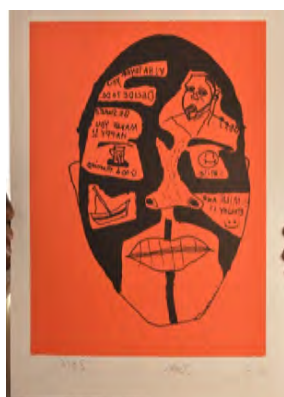
documents, the acquisition of basic Italian language skills is fundamental. Learning a foreign language means not only being able to express and be heard by developing linguistic-communicative skills, but also to open oneself to other cultures and access other world visions (Barni, 2001):

In the future I want to stay in Italy [...], now I go to school to learn Italian language.

In each narrative, there is a clear need to be heard and acknowledged, the need to not be discriminated, but valued in their own cultural characteristics. In the absence of such recognition, one might feel discredited and marginalized. On the other hand, respect for one's own cultural characteristics contributes to enhancing identity and thus to building a positive self-image (Demetrio, Favaro, 2003).

On my face is my story

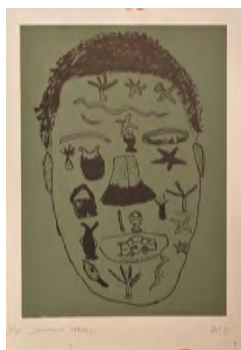
Art speaks for itself. But when it comes to recounting a journey, words can be a story's precious ally. For this reason, during the exhibition organized at the city of Bergamo, it was suggested to accompany the works carried out with these words: They are the product of those who have listened to the stories that inspired them, and echoes of those who collected their stories before they became an image. The face tells stories; it is the collection of all the elements now put into consideration. Here are some examples of these portraits.



I. P., 20 years old

Ghana, hosted in Castagneta

"If you do good things, you will receive good things." Like with a sweet melody, you let yourself be cradled by the waves of the sea and hope in life, remembering that whatever you decide to do, you must make sure you are happy. So Isaac now smiles at a cup of tea and in sweet company hopes for the future.



D. I., 19 years old

Mali, hosted at Bergamo TV

“The serpent that can not shed its skin dies. The same thing happens to spirits which are prevented from having hope.” So Ibrahim entrusts himself to those who have welcomed him. He travels nostalgically by car under the stars of the sky to the heart of his beloved land, family and home in Mali. “They will celebrate, they will dance, and they will wait for the sun to rise another day.”

R. A., 27 years old

Nigeria, hosted in Castagneta

“I drowned bad words, I walked miles and dreamed of a beautiful destination, I pushed past the window grates and now I dance.” “I can do everything with the One who makes me strong,” Remy whispers, thanking a God who he will never forget and who now leaves him to play out the game of life.



1/7 Line by Poullet

2016

P. L. 24 years old

Nigeria, hosted in Casazza

The car has become a material item without which we feel naked, uncertain and incomplete in urban complexity; it is perhaps for this wants to become a driver, leaving behind the selling of clothes that gave him life when he was in Nigeria. With roots in his beloved Niger, he hopes to flourish in the West which hosts him.



M. M., 18 years old

Guinea Conakry, hosted in Botta di Sadrina

Love is a fruit that matures in every season and is always at the reach of each and every hand. The memory that Mohamed has of his companion, who he hopes to re-embrace, is as sweet as mango. The heart has stalked far from his land, Africa stitches its limbs from which tearing hopes will shed new flowers.

A. F., 20 years old

Ghana, hosted in Botta di Sadrina

Life will divide you sooner or later, if not with this, it will be with something else. But even if you are distant, even if you are far away, you will always be brothers; Fuseini repeats this after having split from his brother in Libya. They departed from Ghana with a shared hope, and now all that's left is to play the game of life, without fun, but with the awareness of being lucky.



3. Who tells the story, who dreams and who identifies it

In each context and historical period, accepting the foreigner, the stranger – the one who is different from us and our culture – is never easy; it is, in fact, very difficult. But in the same way, it is terribly difficult to escape from your own land by abandoning everything – goods, mothers, fathers, children, companions – to throw it all away in a desperate salvation from war and despair.

Through the workshop, a collection of tales has been produced, which force the writer to return to the asylum seeker, his original task: to give voice to those who often do not have a voice due to fear or lack of listening, or simply to accompany them in recounting and building, through the

salvific instrument that only words can represent, a path of reflection, dialogue and hope. A world in which every story, even the most tragic, can find a trajectory of change, transformation and self-formation.

The self-narration is therefore an important moment in the formation of each one of us, a powerful self-training tool. In particular, it forces the subject to problematically return to himself, becoming the actor. The ego acquires a sense and an identity, becomes active on the scene of his existence. This narrative process of the "I" is, in reality, a formative process, a path of formation that the subject carries out in himself and from himself: a self-training process. This operation, however, does not arise exclusively from the need to tell us outside, but from the need to make sense of what happens to us, to link the different events that dot our existence along a temporal and spatial dimension. Rebuilding a story becomes then a construction of a piece of life, remolding parts of himself, representations of own identity and social context aimed both at dreaming and at recognizing himself.

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A.7

From Individual Perturbation of Intercultural Valence, to Collective Sense: the Development of Intercultural Competences

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Introduction

In recent decades, cultural dimension has become an increasingly important issue as a result of the intensification of contact and coexistence with people from diverse cultures. These social transformations of global importance have led scholars to understand which mechanisms can be triggered in individuals and how they react to this type of constant stimuli. While, on the one hand, cohabitation has resulted in an ever-increasing questioning of diversity, on the other hand it is also clear that the construction of a harmonious way of living together is neither automatic nor innate and it is not easy to implement either.

International cooperation provides an interesting scenario for observing processes that are different from what is usually perceived. For example, the conditions, including resources and social status, between migrants that have left their countries of origin and are “pushed” by conflicts or dramatic economic situations are substantially different from those of international professionals who migrate to a developing country “pulled” by humanitarian motivation and personal aspirations. This process of entering and exiting from the customary frames of sense, may lead the individual to develop competences for a more flexible mental structure. It is also true that individuals who find themselves in an environment that is “completely” different from the one that they are used to, as happens with international workers, will have a higher chance of facing diverse aspects of their new reality, and to question and eventually confirm (or reject) consolidated views and opinions. Thus, it is of great interest to be able to understand how an experience, or parts of it, can contribute to personal richness and collective heritage, rather than focusing on the uprooting of a person who, having lived through multiple experiences abroad, finds him or herself in a middle zone without a real sense of belonging or of feeling at home. Pierre Bour-

dieu, in the preface to Abdelmalek Sayad's book: "The Double Absence", takes up the migrant's idea of Sayad as an "out-of-place person", without (or deprived of) a place in social space, whose dimension is always very difficult to define. This double absence indicates the social not-being both at the place of origin and at the place of arrival (Sayad, 1999, pp. 3-7).

On the one hand the transformation of the experience into something positive becomes possible by exploring the moments of contrast that the subject lives in relationships with people from another culture, and on the other hand by awakening reflective thought on the episodes in which these perturbations occur. In this way one can consider that the link between the individual and the group lies not only in the understanding of intercultural competences recurring in different moments of the individual's life but may also be found in the understanding of incompetence, i.e. something that has gone wrong and that can be re-examined later on by the same person or through training courses, by others. This article explores these processes in order to understand how the topic may lend itself to countless analyses and be applied in education.

2. Theoretical framework

Several authors have explored intercultural competences in very diverse fields such as managers working in a foreign country; young people studying abroad on the Erasmus program; couples adopting minors through international adoption. If on the one hand there are common aspects in dealing with intercultural competences, which could be defined as transversal competences, on the other hand there are specific aspects, which in this case concern international cooperation workers who have lived or live abroad.

Different studies use various terms in defining and assigning meaning to competences, including cultural and intercultural competences, and identifying the main elements of the various models they propose. It should be pointed out that even if one identifies a difference between the terms used, sometimes this distinction can be blurred, since they are used in a complementary way or as synonyms. This aspect has been highlighted for the terms "intercultural" and "multicultural", but can also apply to the terms "cultural" and "intercultural". Regarding cultural aspects, Martine Abdallah-Pretceille clarifies that they should be considered in their dynamic and non-static form, in the form of cultural fragments that individuals express, and in connection with the relationships between the individual and

the groups, rather than in relation to the sum of characteristics and cultural traits. Through his or her own cultural fragments, the individual expresses the belonging and the codes of reference that he or she freely chooses and expresses in an ever-increasing heterogeneous context. Moving from the concept of culture to the notion of culturality, and from interculture to interculturality, would allow us to conceptualize cultural phenomena, starting from dynamics, transformations, weaving and reworking.

From the conceptualization of culture and interculture, intercultural competences imply a need for a wider frame of reference that does not focus exclusively on the very dimension of competences, taking instead into account the processes and the continuous learning required to consider their dynamism and development.

Jack Mazirow's work about the process of transformation allows us to maintain a broad vision about intercultural competences by including them in adult education and, in particular, regarding how individuals learn a different way of thinking in a given socio-cultural context. He founded the bases of the constructivist theory of learning and the reflective and critical approach to self and to world knowledge and on transformative learning, which generates patterns of new meaning or revised meaningful perspectives that can guide action and give sense to life experiences (Franzini, 2017, pp. 34-35).

Taking into account the dynamism of culture, the development of intercultural competences as an ongoing process and permanent, lifelong adult education, the most relevant models of cultural and intercultural competences will be further explored.

The most significant models in the field of cultural and intercultural competences include Michael Byram, Milton Bennett and Mitchell Hammer, Edward Taylor and Darla K. Deardorff. Bennett and Hammer defined the intercultural competence as: *"The ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts"* (Bennett e Bennett, 2003). The focus regarding this concept is referred to in a communicative sphere, while authors like Byram link it more to a behavioral level. In fact, Michael Byram understands intercultural competence as: *"The ability to behave appropriately in intercultural situations, the affective and cognitive ability to establish and maintain intercultural relationships and the ability to stabilize the one's self-identity while mediating between cultures"* (Alred e Byram, 2002). Byram's definition includes the behavioural aspect combined with the cognitive and affective dimension, in a perspective of internal personal stability. Byram's model affirms the classic concept

of know, know how to be, know how to do, know how to understand and get involved with different knowledge and related skills and attitudes.

Similarly, the definition of Darla K. Deardorff draws attention to a relational and situational dimension, as well as to personal dimensions that lead to the development of these competences. According to Deardorff, the intercultural competence is: *“The ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, based on specific attitudes (motivation), intercultural knowledge, skills and reflection”* (Deardorff, 2006). For authors such as Bennett, Hammer and Byram, attention is focused on the effectiveness and appropriateness of their own behavioural or communicative modalities in intercultural or cross-cultural situations, where cross-cultural means the co-existence of people from different cultures.

Milton Bennett and Mitchell Hammer’s model refers to the development of intercultural sensitivity and is the result of a constructivist conception of reality. It consists of six guidelines, three ethno-centric and three ethno-relative. The most controversial aspect of the model is the concept of stages in the development of intercultural competences, which would not take into account development only from improvements, but also from retrocessions.

Edward Taylor focuses on intercultural competence in terms of *“adaptive capacity based on an inclusive and integrative world view which allows participants to effectively accommodate the demands of living in a host culture”* (Taylor, 1994). This vision of intercultural competences is specifically aimed at people who have to live in a context different from that of their origin. Thus one could regard these people as needing to stay in a “host country”. Actually, the concept of intercultural competences could be extended to all subjects wherever they live, since interculture makes sense even in the absence of foreigners, due to the fact that interculture “dwells” in the person’s feelings. It’s also true that encounters with others make it possible to activate unknown or unexplored parts of the self.

The empirical research, which involved professionals working in the field of international cooperation, has identified significant intercultural moments in their personal and working experience. These moments can be considered as perturbations, which function as a “sentinel” to locate the transformations, where the subject becomes aware of something that does not belong to his own frame of reference. These moments show that there is a process of significant change in the individual and that this change can be activated by cultural diversity. These moments in life are interesting because they show how the person reacts in certain situations by using active competences and that there is a link between competences and incompetences, and experiences

between individuals. These observations about the question of competences recurrent in the histories of international professionals can start to be addressed. The methodology used in this research is further elaborated below, with particular attention to the tools used and the practical steps followed in order to build the model and the basic concept.

3. Research Methods

The research methods used included a semi-structured interview, administered to the Heads of NGOs of the Italian Lombardy Region, a questionnaire and a narrative interview. The same questionnaire was administered to Italian professionals working with both NGOs and to UN system organizations.

In order to build a homogenous sample, thus limiting the variables and reducing the possibility of responses derived from excessively diverse cultural backgrounds, only professionals of Italian origin were involved.

The interviews with the Heads of NGOs provided a general framework of the situation of Italian professionals working with NGOs in developing countries. The questionnaires and the narrative interviews provoked further analysis of significant change and intercultural competence. The international workers' experience permitted the identification of recurrent intercultural competences that allow people to relate to others of diverse cultures and to deal with new scenarios.

A part of the research focused on the experience described by ten international United Nations officers (six people working at the World Health Organization, WHO, and four at the United Nations Development Program, UNDP). Each person was interviewed two or three times. The 10 international officers were Italian, 8 males and 2 females, aged between 32 and 61. Their experience in international work varied from 4 to 37 years; in 8 out of 10 their experience started before the age of 30. 4 out of the 10 had previous work experience with an NGO in developing countries.

After filling in the questionnaire, a life chronogram of the interviewee was created and information was also obtained from the recording of the interview. The interviewee was asked to recount two episodes of their life in which they believed they had used intercultural competence.

The autobiographical method used for this research, was theorized by Robert Atkinson. He points out that narratives do not only have a meaning in themselves, but can also contribute to a wider meaning found in the

varying histories of other people, therefore particular and universal at the same time. It could also be that the person's history allows for the "going beyond the narrative fact to develop new ideas about histories or lives" (Atkinson, 2002, p. 112).

The ten international officers interviewed related a wide variety of situations, for example, the encounter with a Marabou (the sorcerers in Africa) and his own context, the situation of the relationship between man and woman in Morocco, and an incident with a maid in Vietnam.

The life episodes they stated lead one to understand how intercultural competences were activated, what the steps of understanding were and what competences were recurrent in narrative interviews and in episodes of intercultural value. It has also been interesting to note the link between competences and incompetences, because from the latter the individual may be able to understand something that transforms into learning.

An example is an international worker's experience with a Marabou in Tanzania. He explained how curiosity is activated in a given context with different people. One realizes the contradictions between one's own way of the following, of thinking, of believing, of representing reality, of living and of giving meaning to things, compared to the natives. In recounting the episode, the interviewee expresses the sense of giving value both to his own thinking and to that of the other person, even if one could consider them to have been in conflict. The ability demonstrated by the worker's experience is also that of decentralization, managing to make place in his mind for a different viewpoint, whose value he fully recognizes. The person had the ability to "break" his or her mental patterns and this upsetting was made possible by the pain experienced in the life event that allowed him or her to break his or her beliefs/certainties.

Based on their stories the competences used by the interviewees in their narrated events were considered, i.e. the competences that had been expressed, collected and interpreted in the course of the episode itself. The previous case shows how the person managed to make mental space for another way of thinking and conceiving reality. This aspect is found in the author's dynamic model of intercultural competences, defined as the ability to "break down the certainties (breaking of schemes) and manage the uncertainties (disagreement and paradox). This method has been used to interpret the collected histories allowing for the identification of "recurring intercultural competences", i.e. those that often recur in life episodes with intercultural valence (Franzini, 2017, pp. 359-360).

4. Research Findings

Regarding the theoretical and the practical part of the research, a dynamic model of the intercultural competences was created. The dynamic model consists of the recurring elements that frequently intervene in the moments of intercultural valence in the histories of the international professionals in the sample. The link between the individual and the group is affirmed in the repetitiveness of the way people react to the events which require intercultural competences.

The author's model is made up of 14 elements and three forces (Franzini, 2017, pp. 356-369): the force of change, of interaction and of self-preservation. The 14 elements are: Embrace a global point of view; Openness to diversity and recognition of the value of the other person and of her/his way of thinking; Listening skills; Comprehend the cultural sense (linguistic knowledge and communicative skills); Break down the certainties (breaking of schemes) and manage the uncertainties (disagreement and paradox); Capacity to decentralize; Create shared spaces and bridge significances; Re-discuss the refusal barriers (stereotypes, prejudices, racism, discrimination); Suspend judgment; Capacity to explore (curiosity and discovery); Flexibility; Empathy; Humility and respect; Trust.

These elements can be considered as recurrent competences, in other words competences that frequently intervene in various contexts where the person experiences a cultural diversity. It must be noted that the competences can develop in situations of success, as well as in situations where problems or incomprehension arise that need to be resolved in some way. The intercultural competences should not to be understood as isolated elements, but in their dynamic form. The intercultural competences develop with time and can be built. The international professionals demonstrated the ability to become a "glue" between multiple worlds, and between the infinitely large and the small. They become capable of "living the world by themselves", that is, to live the diversity in relationships with others on their own.

5. Implications for Practice and Future Research

The dynamic model of intercultural competences can be applied to any training context. The constituent elements are not specific to a topic, but cover the aspects that intervene in relationships between people of diverse cultures. Currently, the model does not include measurement tools and does not con-

sider evolutionary stages, because unlike the model of Bennett and Hammer, it does not foresee stages, but a process of development with elements that dynamize each other, as well as internal forces of the individual that allow him or her to account for a balance and a personal stability that allows the development of such competences. It would certainly be useful to have tools that could evaluate the development of individual intercultural competences, since it would allow the strengthening of aspects such as personal fragility and other difficulties could be explored, through training, especially for professionals working in the social and service spheres.

It is important to keep in mind that there is not a final level to be reached or a final stage in the learning process to be prefigured for trainees. Rather the goal is to develop the ability to return to real life situations and to employ familiar as well as tried and tested personal resources in new circumstances, with either a positive or negative solution for the same event. The issue is about building relationships that are advantageous both for oneself and for others, and of being able to benefit from diversity and of being able to recognize that richness and beauty can be gained from the co-construction of positive living contexts.

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A.8

Beyond borders: Educating and empowering between Mexico and the United States. A biographical case study

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1. The Context: Migration and Professional Mobility of University Scholars from the Global South

In recent years, migration and mobility have become widespread. Economic globalization, new means of transport, growing inequalities, conflicts and wars have led to international migration flows that have affected all countries of the world. International migrants, travellers and students are giving rise to new forms of mobility and interdependence, the development of transnational corporations, increased cultural diversity and recent forms of bilateral, regional and global cooperation. In 2007, the United Nations estimated that there were 200 million international migrants, defined as people who had lived at least one year outside their country of birth. This represented about 3% of the world's 6,500 million people (Castles & Miller, 2009, pp. 2-7). These migrations are part of a large, complex and changing global phenomenon that affects both those who migrate and those who receive migrants, and that transforms the social and cultural conditions of all citizens.

This paper explores the issue of academic migrants of Mexican origin (or more broadly Latin American origin) working in universities in the United States. To better target our theme, we present here some data and benchmarks on migratory movements in the United States as a host country. From 1850 to 1914, most of the migrants arriving in the United States came from Ireland, Italy, Spain and Eastern Europe, areas where industrialization began later. The United States of America had the dream of becoming a farmer or independent trader on the New Land of Opportunity. The most intense period is the period from 1861 to 1920, when 30 million people arrived to the US (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 84).

In recent decades, total immigration, referred to foreign nationals with permanent legal residence status in the United States, has been 4.5 million in the 1971-1980 period, a figure that rose to 7.3 million between 1981-1990, and increased to 9.1 million between 1990-2000. By nation, the largest number of migrants who obtained citizenship in the United States came from Mexico, India and the Philippines (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 120). For Mexico, the population from that country that arrived in the United States increased from 2.2 million in 1980 to 11.9 million in 2010. The United States has the highest levels of immigration in the world. Among these migrants, Mexicans are the majority group, accounting for 27.6% of the total population of the North American country (Delgado Wise, 2013; Delgado Wise & Chávez, 2016).

The internationalisation of universities and academic mobility are often presented as ideologically neutral, coherent and disembodied policies. The conceptualization of people as resources to be moved and relocated around the world with limited attention to identity, community, care or emotional issues has social, ethical, financial and equity implications. Urry (2007, p. 12) argues that mobility has been a “black box for the social sciences” and is generally seen as a neutral set of processes. There is, he says, often a minimization of the meaning and consequences of the profound experiences, including bodily ones, derived from mobility. On the other hand, in the field of higher education, we note a lack of studies on mobility from sociology and ethnography. The literature on student mobility in the global academy is highly developed (González-Monteagudo, 2016; Chang, 2011, 2015). However, only a few studies explore the perspectives and testimonies of the mobility of migrant teacher-researchers (Kim 2010). The paradigm of new mobility is beginning to be noticed, within a dynamic and open sociology (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Sheller, 2014).

2. Methodology: Biographical-narrative approach

This case study was conducted in the context of a research on Latin American migrants working at universities in the United States. The interview of this Mexican university lecturer took a qualitative and narrative approach, but included semi-structured questions to better target specific nuances. To gain a better understanding of and better understand the experiences and perspectives on mobility and internationalisation, we explored the following issues: the family and social context, the training itin-

erary, the history of migration and mobility, motivations for mobility, personal and professional advantages and disadvantages of being internationally mobile, the factors that have contributed to making mobility experiences positive or negative, social experiences, and the profile as a teacher and researcher in academia.

The interview was conducted during a research stay in the state of Texas, USA, in 2015. It covers about 10,000 words and lasted 75 minutes. Although the interview was conducted in English, Manuel used Spanish on numerous occasions, particularly about the family, its Mexican roots and questions of identity, culture, and personal and social development. This constant change between English and Spanish is one of the distinctive features of this interview and it intensely reflects the issues of cultural diversity, border crossing, hybridization and bilingualism.

The interview paid particular attention to the narration of experiences, personal perspectives, cultural and professional contexts, career paths and the interaction of internationalisation with particular identities (Yi, 2010). The interview was conducted in English and then transcribed and thematically coded. The analyses of the biographical interviews explore the dialectic between personal dimensions and social structures, trying to explain and understand the dynamics that link subjectivity with society and culture (González-Monteaudo, 2016).

To construct the narrative of the case and considering the need to be concise, we decided to tell the subject's perspective in a manner close to the content of the interview transcript, but without writing precise literal quotations. We hope this choice will be able to convey something of the freshness and deep truth that is found in this interview.

3. A successful itinerary: dialogue, identity, training and development for autonomy and cooperation

Manuel is from Mexican origin; he is a community leader and an academic working at a Texas university. The case revolves around the central ideas of border crossing, cultural crossbreeding, building the cultural identity of minority groups and critical pedagogies in formal education and community development.

Manuel's father was born in 1936 in the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon and he had 10 brothers. The father was a shepherd during his childhood. His father's father and the father's brothers grew up during the period dur-

ing which the Bracero Programme was created. The program was an agreement between the governments of the United States and Mexico to promote the hiring of Mexican farm workers to replace American workers who were involved in the Second World War, depending on the labour needs of the different agricultural seasons. Hired as farm labourers, they were called *mojados*[*mojados*], a term that refers to irregular and undocumented migrants who cross the border to work temporarily in the United States.

Manuel's mother was a Mexican-born mother, but she was born and lived north of the border. As a result, she was a U. S. citizen. Due to the illegal activity of the maternal grandfather as bootlegger, the family had to flee the United States and hide in Mexico. Manuel's father and mother met in Mexico, married and had four children. In 1968, the whole family had to leave Mexico and settled in Texas, forty kilometres north of the border. Manuel was born in Mexico in 1963. He started living in the United States when he was five years old. Initially, the parents spoke only Spanish and frequently crossed the border in both directions, mainly to visit parents who were still living in Mexico.

Manuel summarizes his family history by expressing that he and his three brothers were transnational children, with a cross border culture. Manuel emphasizes the importance of preserving Spanish and not losing it as a condition for maintaining the Mexican identity. Manuel and his brothers went to public school in Texas, in an environment he describes as very "Mexican". Manuel insists on the importance the father attaches to raising children. Manuel proudly expressed that the four brothers have obtained four university degrees, three masters degrees and two doctorates. It should be noted that Manuel followed an educational and professional itinerary very close to his brother Fernando, born in 1964, and that the two brothers worked together on many educational and development projects.

Manuel emphasizes the importance of the values held by the family and the community, elements that had a decisive influence on him and his brother Fernando: "The origin of our education is the family and the community". He and his brother Fernando studied at the University of Texas in Austin, the state capital. Manuel recalls that in the 80's of the last century there were 48,000 students in this university, but only 2,000 were Mexican. The training was good, but Manuel points out that they learned nothing about themselves, because the university turned its back on cultural and social diversity. In the mid-1980s, this was one of the reasons that brothers Manuel and Fernando, during university studies, encouraged the father to write his autobiography. This story should be based on stories, memories

and anecdotes that the father used to tell. This autobiographical writing process of the father was a critical incident that profoundly influenced Manuel's future personal and professional journey.

During this process, a new consciousness emerged in him and began to develop a far-reaching learning process. The way the father used to use anecdotes and stories as teaching aids encouraged Manuel and his brother Fernando to explore how dialogue (*plática*, in Spanish from Mexico) could be redefined in educational and community contexts. For Manuel, dialogue, conceived as a cross-cutting dimension of human existence, has implications in three different contexts: research, education and community development. Manuel's experience in elementary school, middle school, high school and university confirmed that his knowledge of the students' social world was largely lacking. In order to intervene at the same time from a pedagogical and political point of view, Manuel highlights the need to work on the formation of personal and collective identity, helping the Mexican community to be recognized as a major actor of their own progress. This leads Miquel to recognise the need to develop political work, promoting language and criticism as means of empowerment and agency. Throughout the interview, Manuel continually points out that his understanding and practice of research comes from the stories and experiences inherited from their parents and loved ones. It states that the migration perspective and border crossing is cultural, political and technical. It involves ideology and geography in a concomitant way. The lack of social and economic capital, an issue highlighted by Manuel on several occasions, has been compensated by the commitment to his own community and the territory. This hybridization, typical of cross-cultural and border-crossing contexts, has fostered a very inclusive approach to teaching, learning, research and community development, based on significant attention at the macro and micro levels and their interaction, constantly moving from analysis to synthesis and synthesis to analysis.

Much of Manuel's research in these projects is autobiographical, often in the form of oral histories. The integration of people's stories, power and wisdom produces very powerful transformative processes. Putting subjects at the centre of the process implies, Manuel manifests, supporting a constructivist and interpretive epistemology, incompatible with the myth of objectivity. It is important to redefine and broaden the meaning of knowledge, which implies, in addition to the cognitive domain, the world of emotions, the quality of interpersonal relations and the care of others.

Manuel defends a critical perspective that transcends cognitive aspects

and is transformed into a political and cultural attitude, promoting diversity and disruption. Critical dialogue between the different groups is very important in educational and political work. Good learning, as taught to us by cultural anthropologists, says Manuel, is mainly social; secondly, good learning is cognitive; and finally, it is a technical issue. Manuel supports the need to promote teachers' capacity to think and create knowledge.

This community leader sees himself as an academic in a delicate position about his status. He recognizes the need to innovate in the university, promoting group-based educational processes and empowerment of participants. He promotes innovative programmes, fostering self-awareness, agency and alternative learning, as opposed to conventional approaches. He particularly highlights efforts to broaden the participation of vulnerable or disadvantaged minority students in the University, working with families and local community groups. On the other hand, Manuel criticizes the traditionalism of universities, which continue to reproduce very classical models of learning and management, and which are unable to respond adequately to the social and cultural changes of recent decades. In this area, Manuel proposes a comprehensive redefinition of pre-service teacher education, with the aim of adapting models of teaching and university learning to the needs of future educators as well as innovative intellectuals and critics.

His viewpoint is very critical of knowledge and research that considers itself objective, neutral and distant. On the other hand, he advocates an epistemology based on social constructivism. He believes that universities risk becoming insignificant institutions in the decades to come if they are not able to reconfigure teaching and learning modes, the conditions for the transmission of knowledge. In this context, he believes that the neoliberal approach that has affected primary and secondary schools is spreading in recent years to university.

4. Engaged accounts of academic mobility: contributions and possibilities

The increasing use of auto/biographical approaches and life histories in research on travel, migration and mobility fulfils different functions:

- It promotes the production of knowledge: developing knowledge of migratory processes and complex dynamics of socio-cultural and identity change.
- It promotes awareness of the issues raised by this phenomenon and fos-

ters inter-comprehension: the life stories of migrants and their communities (families, generational groups) promote a better understanding from the point of view of others, facilitate the distance between ethnocentrism and increase the level of tolerance.

- It allows contextualization of situations: the collection of life narratives makes it possible to compare different contexts: societies of origin and host societies, generations at different points in the life cycle, different ethnic and cultural groups that have emigrated within the same country or region, comparison of the same cultural group from a diachronic point of view.
- It promotes a good posture of intervention and training: professionals involved in accompanying and advising migrants and people in mobility need to know more about this subject from a scientific and nuanced perspective. This can facilitate better professional positioning by health professionals, social services, police, justice, teachers, trainers, psychologists, labour counsellors and intercultural mediators.
- It gives access to a good level of theorization and problematisation: the objective of the research is also to produce theories that can help us better explain and understand intercultural processes. Life histories are a useful approach to deepening, at the meso and micro levels, issues related to travel, mobility and migration, as well as the relationships between these levels and macro-structural elements such as membership of a social class, gender, ethnicity and age group.
- Finally, biographical research can contribute to the study of fluid, changing and heterogeneous identities of late modernity (Bauman, 2000). For this, biographies should be seen as historically and socially shaped and conditioned. Transformations of biographical identity depend on the biographical resources of the individual interviewed, conceived as experiences and knowledge gathered throughout the life cycle. In this way, the researcher will be able to better generate interpretive strategies and deal with the cultural differences and conflicts that may arise in the life story. It will pay more attention to the “narrator” and “narrator” relationship, to the different biographical opportunities of the narrative, to the conditions in which the interviewee finds himself at the time of the narrative. Biographical analysis explores the different narrator’s discourses, the sensory structures and models of belief that the subject sets up; these discourses are culturally conditioned and lead to the construction of a personal narrative identity, but rooted in a specific social and historical context (González-Monteagudo, 2016). The case presented in

this paper shows the possibilities of an experiential, biographical and qualitative approach to the experiences of migration and academic mobility from the point of view of a committed teacher and researcher, who theorized and practiced narration as a fundamental dimension of training, local development and the construction of a tolerant and open identity, in the context of a connected and globalized world (Breton, 2014; Kim, 2014).

Manuel's story raises a great diversity of themes. We would like to highlight the challenges and opportunities for training arising from migration and academic mobility. Here are some of the central dimensions that appear in the story. We try to place these dimensions in a broad context, with the aim of identifying positive traits that can contribute to improving training policies and practices in contexts of academic mobility and intercultural diversity.

- The first question concerns the importance of cooperation, community and group. Faced with the dominant neo-liberalism, which emphasizes competitiveness and the achievement of individual objectives, we need to favour collective initiatives, both inside and outside formal educational institutions. Community values are necessary to create appropriate contexts for development and training. This includes an improved relationship between schools and local contexts, favouring learning communities. On the other hand, the creation of community links and networks can be an important factor in compensating for the lack of social capital by disadvantaged individuals and groups.
- Cross-border and multilingual contexts constitute ecosystems of great socio-cultural complexity. These contexts offer many opportunities for experiences that can contribute to improving tolerance, cultural shock management, understanding of differences, acceptance of intercultural diversity, flexibility and shared management of identities. In the Manuel's story we find political, cultural and methodological elements to advance in the construction of an eco-pedagogy of border crossing.
- Travelling, nomadic and experiential pedagogy should be based on dialogue as a central principle. The proposals of Célestin Freinet, Lorenzo Milani, Paulo Freire and Matthew Lipman, among others, can help us to identify methodological processes based on reciprocal understanding and exchange. From this dialogical perspective, knowledge is constructed in interaction, it has a contextual character and it serves to transform reality. Autobiographical methodologies and life histories show us a form

of educational work based on collaboration, promoting and enhancing the construction of identity, knowledge and community.

- We need to adopt a historical and comparative perspective, placing cultural and educational processes, training experiences and biographical itineraries in broad temporal and social contexts. Until about 30 years ago, universities have been limited to middle classes and elites. In recent years, there have been important changes in higher education, with the development of policies and practices that favour the inclusion of non-traditional students. At times, we lack a historical perspective to contextualize in a more pertinent way processes that we don't fully understand if we limit ourselves to considering them in an isolated or timeless way. Migration and crossing borders are part of these processes that we should understand in their complex and changing temporal dynamics.
- Universities, like other formal educational institutions, tend to reproduce traditional and outdated models of management and learning. Migration poses major challenges to higher education. Compared to institutions that have historically turned their backs on cultural diversity, the Manuel's case shows us the need to develop and deepen an approach to social inclusion and broadening the traditional audiences of universities to include non-traditional, under-represented, vulnerable and disadvantaged students. This task is a major challenge because it requires innovative approaches in management, curricular content and learning methodologies. Despite the difficulties, we need to overcome the routine inertia of universities, favouring diversity and adaptation.

Donald Trump's arrival in January 2017 to the presidency of the United States of America makes it even more timely and pertinent to work on the issues researched in this paper, since its content focuses on the border between Mexico and the United States. In the face of the authoritarian, xenophobic and exclusionary aberrations that are taking place in Europe, America and other geographical areas, we need initiatives of collective resistance and organised struggle to build alternatives based on equality, pluralism, tolerance, cooperation and respect for human rights.

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A.9

Narration and welfare building with homeless people

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Introduction

It is considered that the ability of narration is to create links between people with a different cultural and social background, bringing out those elements that find a common basis between the different stories. As a privileged method for learning and listening to others, it gives the individual an opportunity to start a deep reflection on themselves, building and rebuilding the organizational structures of meaning. In this way, it is possible to discover the latent needs of the person and the related explicit needs. In fact, the reassignment (creative and not preconceived), of them, become important for an improvement of the well-being and quality of life by a personal, family and social perspective (Di Nuovo, 2011). In these terms narration is an important life part of the individual that make itself explicit through the narrative thought (Bruner, 2006). It expresses in a social act that unites and declines itself in different stories (Cambi, 2009) and that fulfils a function of legitimizing existence (Batini, 2009). This depends on the close connection with the identity. In fact, the intertwining of personal and other narratives contribute to define it. Analysing the issue through a narrative perspective, the way we build ourselves depends largely on how our stories become part of other's narratives. This arises, by the general processes of recognition and mirroring that define themselves as a bridge between hetero and self-narratives. These psychic processes constitute the link between individual identity, dialogue and relationship, as indispensable elements of the latter (Barbieri, 2015). In this way, the individual self emerges from both the narratives on personal experience that the person proposes, as autobiographical narratives, and the stories that others perform on him, both elaborated by himself in new forms of consciousness (Micalizzi, Orsucci, Risi, 2006). Furthermore, as explain Striano (2005), the narrative device became efficacy to understanding events, experiences and human situations

characterized by strong intentionality. For this reason, the stories, the cultural and ethical values of the people with their intentions, motivations, choices and intersubjective relationships, are interlace both on a cultural/cognitive level and on an emotional/relational plane.

As such, the narration guides towards the personal knowledge, which in terms of a subjective knowledge, take on value through its capacity to construct meanings. In this sense, knowing the other implies a deep awareness of its specific features and characteristics that build both the relationship and one's own self. Meeting with people and with objects linked to a certain story, with a particular meaning, defines the individuality of the person (Zannini, 2008). The narrative act becomes evident and touchable, creating relationships where the bonds may have been broken and not only to know the emotional experience. Thus, the narration as a common good is a device that everyone can use but also it is a resource for an individual to increase a deep knowledge about own and other emotional experiences.

1. Well-being and narration

The characteristic of the well-being's concept is the presence of multiplicity elements that make it difficult to define it. This is due to the multitude of disciplines that face the issue, and to the subjective component, constituted by the perception that every individual has that achievement. The concept of happiness is closely related to the latter argument and equally difficult to define. An individual's well-being would increase with a high level of income (Field, 2009). In fact, people consider the economic principle as the main cause of it. However, being "happy" is influenced by further factors of economy and individuals. Happiness implies a sense of personal fulfilment that manifests itself within a shared moral framework (Schoffham, 2011). Experimenting this emotion on an individual also affects the community to which they belong. In the acquisition of an optimistic experience that increases person's curiosity and consequently a willingness to learn. People in a positive emotional state of mind tend to be more predisposed to accept and overcome problematic crisis events and to create some of the most significant relationships (id., 2011). A further definition of well-being indicates that people are focused on achieving a goal if they are aware of the actions they perform. In addition, this stimulates, a higher level of well-being characterizes the duty towards an active citizenship. It includes the possibility of well thinking within the community and in relation with others to a common aim. (Zepke, 2013).

In the educational approach, it is necessary to consider the cognitive-reflexive component further. The narrative is an instrument able to stimulate this process. It is closely related to well-being and both are influenced by the link between storytelling and education. The conception of education, from the inside to the outside, involves a work on the expression of oneself and on one's position in the world. Through comparison and verification of what has been discovered by external reality (Nosari, 2013), It is linked to the search for the well-being as a form of knowledge. Moreover, to know oneself intend as a reflective process. As Demetrio outlines in *Educare è narrare*, anyone benefits from the powers of education and narration (Demetrio, 2012). The individual can find oneself in both dimensions and that is to educate to transmit narrations or narrate to educate. In these terms, the well-being is charged with intentionality and it turns into an instrument capable of transforming the self, directing the individual towards actions aimed at personal self-realization. Furthermore, it implies an educational responsibility towards one's own self and the common good (Falaschi, 2017).

«In questa accezione, la formazione al benessere consiste in una sensibilizzazione al benessere, individuale e collettivo, basata sull'idea che tutti possiamo imparare a star meglio e che il benessere non è soltanto una questione di quantità di risorse ma soprattutto di qualità di scelte, individuali e sociali»¹ (id., 2017: 103).

Learning to feel better takes on value in terms of the realization of the self-efficacy (mentioned in Bandura) and therefore in a person's perception of having a sort of control over own choices. In addition, Mortari (2006) introduce the concept of self-care, differentiating this term from an individualistic cure, promoting the importance of a care of existence that starts and continues within human relationships. From this perspective, the individual has the power to transform difficulties into meaningful learning situations. Well-being is therefore part of the conception of health, promoted by WHO (World Health Organisation), which is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not the mere absence of illness or infirmity. Certain life skills are recognized as fundamental, such as the ability to manage anxiety, stress, and the ability to solve problems, creativity,

1 ["In this sense, well-being training consists in a sensitization to well-being, both individually and collectively, based on the idea that all can learn to feel better and that wellness is not only a question of quantity of resources but above all sorts of quality choices, individually and socially"]. Translation by the author of this paper.

and the ability to make decisions, taking into consideration that the falls within the care of the emotional and relational sphere. Therefore, the narrative re-proposes itself as the (immaterial) good that offers educational and relational spaces that a person can use to reconstruct those parts of their identity that have been lost and rediscover the meaning of their actions between the possible listeners (Longo, 2008). In general, stories are able to shape the way of thinking, consisting of the interpretations that the author wants to convey and those of the reader, who immersed in a fictional world, beginning to reflect and interpret new information in relation to previous knowledge (Cometa, 2017). Moreover, the act of narrating is a process that naturally belongs to man and helps him to live and survive, since it can be considered as a social and cultural glue that unites different minds and create relationships. Gottshall (2014) offers the history of two tribes: one is the practice and other is the stories. Only the last mentioned would survive longer. Since the activity of storytelling increases the personal well-being that through the fiction helps the individual to imagine possible and alternative worlds. As I mentioned earlier, the achievement of well-being depends on the type of choices that the individual decides to implement through the narration. In this way, he is the protagonist of his own future, which creates an environment of fiction and learning where he can train and find the right space to reflect and decide to act. In the relational space that the narration promotes, the person has the opportunity to learn new strategies of cohabitation, collaboration and participation that encourage the well-being of not only the individual but also of the community in which he participates. Therefore, the construction of well-being transforms into a social act from an individual act, because every action of the individual is closely connected to the systems (family, organizational, working, etc...). For these reasons, the narrative methodology has been used in the *Raccontare Bellezza* project will be clarified in the following parts.

2. Digital storytelling

In light of these considerations, among the many narrative practices, digital storytelling (DST) is configured as a process that build up educational paths. That enables to explore emotional experiences and metacognitive processes, guiding the person towards new forms of individual and collective knowledge. This practice has been successful in different fields (scholastic, organizational, professional training and care) (Hardy, Sumner, 2008;

Petrucchio, 2009; Gubrium, 2009; Alastra, Batini, 2015). It depends on the possibility of the narrator to express a thought linked to a specific meaning. Using multimediality and multimedia it is possible to create several different forms of communication with images, sounds, text, music and voice. The elements that differentiate it from the simple union of multimedia materials to create a video, depend on the narrative dimension, which makes the stories personal and emotionally engaging. (Petrucchio, 2009b). The DST promotes processes that differ according to the definition of the educational objective. In any case, speaking from a personal point of view, stories are particularly engaging and exciting for the storytellers. From this perspective, multimedia further encourages the possibility of bringing attention back to those significant moments for the narrator, thanks to the use of images and transitions that visually capture the attention of the listener. Furthermore, the presence of multimedia and multimediality makes it possible to overcome certain difficulties related to oral and written expression. The narrating voice gives humanity back to the story, allowing an external audience to recognize and identify each other. The neuroscientific study of Buccino (Buccino et al., 2004) and collaborators shows that there is less empathic recognition when the individual observes communicative gestures and distant are different from those belonging to man. Instead, the possibility of recognizing the other as a human being activates mirror neurons, allowing empathic involvement. The latter is the fundamental component for the narration to be understood, and transmitted. Mirror neurons would activate each time the individual observes something “passively” by giving them an intentional meaning. It is not about simple logical inference, but about an embodied simulation, such that the person concretely experiments, activating neural motor mechanisms, an action or an event of which he simply is the spectator (Gallese, 2007). With reference to the narration and the digital storytelling, it is possible to understand the potential of this practice, as the images, the music, the sounds and the text are not to be considered as an accessory of narrative. All elements are bearers of meanings and symbols that activate processes of reflection and meta-reflection in people. These are made possible by the continuous communication exchange between the protagonists of the process that promote an interest in listening to the emotional experiences of the person can be expressed and re-elaborated within a safe space. Each phase of the path takes place within a small group, where each participant has the opportunity to confront and share every thought, opinion regarding their own history and that of others. It is the process of sharing meanings that increases the in-

clusion of the individual within the group, whose role becomes that of scaffolder and that is also of moral support, thanks to which people feel motivated to continue and complete their path.

3. Homeless people: Costruire Bellezza

Researching and achieving individual well-being is not easy and it is a process based on continuous reflection on one's goals. Although, as previously stated, income is not the only element capable of defining its level, however, the lack of a stable job and a monetary income contribute to lower the degree of personal satisfaction, especially in the absence of a social network support (Filippini, 2007).

The framework of homeless people seems rather heterogeneous, but the particularity is given by the fact that the latter do not create a sub-class or subculture, but present difficulties in mutually cooperating, denying any kind of solidarity (Rossetti, 2016). The phenomenon is complex and constantly changing. The lack of home, work and health can be the cause of the lost the ability to respond to their needs, in times of crisis (Campagnaro, Porcellana: 2013).

The spaces frequented by these people can have different meanings and in the same way, the relationships between the various subjects are different (Porcellana, 2011). Moreover, in relation to what has been previously explained, achieving individual well-being implies its acceptance on a collective level, within a shared moral framework. Therefore, elements are closely linked to individual and collective identity is formed, since every individual needs to be accepted and to feel an active member of his own community. In light of these considerations, the digital storytelling activity has been included in the project *Raccontare Bellezza*, within *Costruire Bellezza* (a permanent interdisciplinary laboratory oriented towards social inclusion through participatory processes and creative languages). It is part of the Snodi project in Turin and is the result of collaboration between the University of Turin, the Turin Polytechnic and the Adult in Difficulty service in the Barriera district of Milano². The project starts from the consideration of returning new positive meanings, within the spaces occupied by homeless people. People who lives without home lives in many several places, often

2 <http://www.adidesignindex.com/it/design-per-il-sociale/2015/costruire-bellezza>

building temporary relationships. It also means base one's existence with unknown individuals with whom there is no connection. The goal was to restore and rebuild the concept of care and beauty that often leave places like dormitories. These spaces have become places rich in symbols and opportunities for building social relationships with others. The homeless people who take part in the workshop carry out an internship, inside the Ghedini dormitory³, in which there are various workshop activities, linked to the concepts of care and beauty. Participants meet twice a week to create and re-invent objects to which a new identity is given back. This not only allows people to improve the quality of their lives, but also gives back to social workers the opportunity to rethink their role. Beauty is no longer considered as a good for the few, but as a common good that all human beings can enjoy. In these terms, the reception areas can give back a new way to relive the spaces, coming into harmony with the biographies of the people. The collaboration on the same level between operators, educators, designers, students and volunteers has given way to these people to feel again, protagonists of their existence and their future. Using the DST, we tried to help the participants to elaborate and rethink their experience within the multidisciplinary laboratory, promoting the processes of empowerment and social inclusion and restoring humanity to these places through the stories of the people who live in them.

4. The workshop: Raccontare Bellezza

The digital storytelling activity has been included within this workshop, further to emphasize the reflection on the experience that the trainees have within *Costruire Bellezza*. The participants⁴ (four in total) were chosen based on the assessments previously made by the work team and the organization team. The motivation to begin the activity was one of the main requirements to get started. Two meetings have been defined each week lasting four hours each. This time was included within the days dedicated to the tutoring with a view to restore the continuation of the project. In this was the participants could focus them-selves on the task with particular attention. Each meeting has been structured to encourage comparison and sharing

3 The dormitory's name is Ghedini because it is located in Ghedini street number 9 at Turin.

4 Three women and one man, aged between 40 and 56, took part in the activity.

between storytellers and facilitators⁵. For this reason, since the choice of the dramatic question (DQ)⁶, until the final product was created, each moment was characterized by a generative negotiation of meanings, characterized by sharing a description of the motivations underlying each choice. First, the narrative themes were identified. There are incentives that encourage the subject to reflect and think in a generative perspective of meanings. Each storyteller had to choose a single theme among the ten proposed. Therefore, the definition and the construction of the story was made explicit in an individual and at the same time collective act in the perspective of a co-construction of the meanings. The group acted as a scaffolder, so that the opinions and advice of each were formulated in the form of constructive criticism and not evaluation judgment. The role of facilitators has made it possible to mediate for the construction of a peaceful and safe work environment. However, the storyboard⁷, allowed the transition from the classical, textual narratological dimension to one that includes further linguistic codes as images, sounds, music and the voice.

Each participant thus had the opportunity to use this grid, not only to organize their own story but also to place an interconnection between the different elements and the story. This part was fundamental for the next moment concerning the research of multimedia materials. We asked them to take pictures or create drawings to encourage a participative and active process in each one. Each element was inserted into the Movie Maker program, helped to create the final video story. This phase of socialization has been carried out also with the homeless people not participating in the activity but present in the dormitory participating in the project. The moment of return both internal and external was fundamental to give a sense of what they created and organized during the months.

5 The facilitators were a total of four, two educators and a trainee in the design course at the Politecnico di Torino, coordinated by Professor Barbara Bruschi, professor at the Department of Philosophy and Educational Sciences at the University of Turin.

6 Dramatic question choices: "Ghedini in the present and in the future", "I wake up in my dream, "If you were a brush what you would paint", "Until you have passions, you will not stop discovering the world" (cit. by Cesare Pavese).

7 The storyboard is a grid made up of several panels in which the words of the elements that will be added later are inserted.

Results

The activity was an opportunity for all the participants to exercise a monitoring and consequently a responsibility for their choices. Each was in fact an active actor of his own path, such that the stories created are the result of a metacognitive process that took place from the beginning. In reference to the goals of both *Costruire Bellezza* and digital storytelling, the participants were re-protagonists, they were able to tell the story from a personal point of view, choosing and defining, with the support of the facilitators and the group, each part of their own story. Where expressive difficulties have occurred, the use of drawings, images and sounds has allowed people to overcome the obstacle of writing the text.

Furthermore, improvements from the sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem point of view have been noted. Through the digital storytelling, personal passions and skills have been rediscovered. This allowed first to restore a deeper meaning to the construction activities of *Costruire Bellezza*, with a view to build together for oneself and for others. Therefore, the search for one's own skills, thanks to the story, was made explicit in the search for one's own and the other's well-being. Although slight progress was noted from a social and social inclusion point of view not only with the group of the activity but also with the dormitory inhabitants. The path generated primarily curiosity from other guests, promoting spaces for reflection and informal dialogues between the other trainees and the operators.

Digital storytelling has made some explicit needs and parts of emotional experience, inherent in the training, which before the activity had remained hidden, in terms of personal and professional aspirations. In this way, the service operators had the opportunity to deepen the knowledge of the four participants through their stories, becoming useful tools to improve their practices and educational strategies to be applied on the person.

During the meetings, there was an improvement of mood and participation by storytellers within the Ghedini community. In particular, a participant with significant integrating difficulties has shown a progress in the management and resolution of problems with a constant participation in the activity and social life during the collective lunch with the other members of *Costruire Bellezza*.

Conclusions

To conclude, it was possible to detect improvements from a social and emotional point of view. Stories have thus become goods available to the entire structure through which it was possible to know and recognize each other. The stories have made explicit the needs related to the dimension of well-being, beauty and care. The narration, in addition to encouraging actions aimed at restoring the sense of planning, has created a space for attentive and interested listening that can put constructive contact between one's own self and that of others. Specifically, it promoted a process of individual identity reconstruction that took place within the working group, in reference to a cohesive and supportive group identity. No technical skills were acquired, but relational skills, given that the chosen subjects had demonstrated difficulties in integrating into the community and in managing and solving problems. Moreover, the use of digital storytelling allowed exploring parts of the training that would probably have remained hidden with the traditional narrative approach, with a view to improving their future living conditions. The narration as a common good has been transformed from immaterial to material allowing the creation of knowledge and its diffusion, as a fundamental part of the process to promote individual and collective well-being.

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B.1

Conditions for learning in professional conversation

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This paper explores the learning conditions in professional conversations. In this context, professional conversation refers to career guidance and career coaching for job seekers. Conditions for learning refers to the learning that takes place in the interpersonal interaction between the professionals and two adult jobseekers who participated in municipal labor market projects. I will be exploring how two unemployed adults experience their participation in professional conversation retrospectively. There seems to be an increased need for different forms of support and help for adults in managing and navigating through career-related issues, for whom complexity and scope can be significantly different from the purely educational and vocational choices for the youth (Kidd, 2006; Lindh & Lundahl, 2007). Individuals are expected to enter an unstable, unpredictable, and fundamentally restructured labor market, which affects how they manage their careers (Bengtsson, 2015). Career guidance and development has expanded from the choice of education and work for entry into the labor market, to managing a career from a lifelong perspective (Athanasou and Van Esbroeck, 2008a). We, however, lack relevant evidence and facts regarding the effects of guidance and coaching (Bimrose & Brown, 2015). Short-term efforts targeting jobseekers towards effective career decisions causes 'confusion rather than ability to make decisions' (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014). Although participants learn strategies to cope with the situation they are in and move on, they can still experience psychological difficulties and contextual challenges in implementing these strategies (Borgen and Maglio, 2007). Other findings indicate that counsellors, for example, may find it difficult to identify which of their actions have positive effects on the outcome of the conversation. It is important, however, that the professional conversation leader personalizes his or her performance to the individual's needs. (Schedin, 2007).

1. Purpose and research questions

The purpose is to explore how professional conversations affects adults' learning in their career progress.

Research questions

- How do participants experience professional conversations?
- What learning conditions emerge from the participants' experiences?

2. Theoretical point of departure

This paper draws on the concept of learning from - Illeris (2009) holistic model for understanding the complex situation of career development. Learning is in Illeri's model seen as an ongoing interaction between three different aspects, namely contents, motivators (intensives), and social interaction (Illeris, 2009). Furthermore, the ongoing learning process relates to previous experiences that form how we learn, how we view ourselves, and the environment we live in. Alheit and Daussien (1999) describe this as biographicity. With this process of learning in mind professional conversation is an activity that constitutes a relationship between a participant and a professional that aims at creating a mutual dialogue and relationship based on equality for change (Wilhelmson and Döös, 2015). Recognition includes according to Honneth the three spheres of creating, revising, and recreating of self-image (Honneth, 2003). Buber (1990) means that personality develops between people, that is where we can seek answers to what thoughts, feelings and actions look like and their meaning. To explore the specific learning conditions in professional conversations, I will use a combination of Honneth's (2003) theory of Recognition, and Bubers (1990) Theory of Relations. Together, Bubers and Honneth's theories are used to analyze the dialogue and relationship between the professionals and the participants. From a professional conversation perspective, Honneth's (2003) theory of recognition, as well as other researchers' (Ikäheimo and Laitinen, 2007; Voswinkel, 2001) development of the theory, appears reasonable to highlight key aspects related to the learning process in Illeris (2009) model. With the help of these theories and concepts, I seek to explore the conditions for learning in professional conversations.

3. Methodology

Narratives or conversations are significant in studying people's stories (Kohler-Riessman, 2008). This paper focuses on narratives with two job seekers participating in professional conversations. Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001) regard narrative as human experience that appears in verbal form to understand the world and one self. Four interviews were conducted with two participants in municipal labor market projects for those who are long-term unemployed receiving professional support. During 2013-2015 I conducted interviews, both in conjunction with the professional support they were given, and during the follow-up interviews approximately one to one-and-a-half years later. The interviews lasted approximately 40 - 60 minutes each, and were recorded, transcribed then analyzed. The narratives with the two participants selected from a sample of 26 interviews with 16 participants (Langström, 2017). One of the chosen participants regarded the professional conversation as a positive, developmental experience, contributing to a further career, while the other described it as a negative experience leading to a stressful situation hindering further career development.

The interviews were analyzed during three stages. The first stage began during the interviews, where the participants' stories were crucial in the search for various circumstances. During the second stage, the interviews were transcribed, and all responses were numbered. I also made notes of expressions I interpreted as significant in the participants' story. My understanding of the participants' experiences of professional conversation deepened, as I listened, read the interviews, my notes, and added new comments to my notes. In the third stage, I made notes in the stories where I noticed disparities. As the analyzing process progressed, two main patterns were identified. The professional conversations either facilitated or prevented the learning process. It was not evident, at this stage, what or how the learning process was facilitated or hindered. Therefore, to gain this insight, I made continuous notes in the stories, where I observed variations related to the two main patterns. As the analyzing progressed, seven learning phases emerged from these variations. I could, then, trace the learning conditions based on the patterns, phases and variations, extracted from the stories.

The analysis is a two-way reflection between empirical findings and theory, at different abstraction levels. Therefore, the results did not merely emerge during a specific step-by-step order, but rather through processing the empirical findings together with the theories. The collected data has inevitably influenced the choice of theory, which, in turn, influences what

I see and can analyze from the data, in order to attain a deeper understanding of how professional conversions affect learning conditions in career development. To relate theory and data to each other in this way is described by Qvarsell (1994) as abductive approach. Thus, the narrative and biographical approach in this study can be described as a relational and co-investigative approach.

4. The narratives from the two job seekers

In this section, I present Pia's and Tor's stories about their participation in professional conversation. Thereafter, I present the analysis of the different conditions for learning found in their narratives. Participants express two different feelings related to partaking in the project: Involuntariness and indifference. However, this does not seem to affect their continued feeling about the professional conversation itself. Here, two types of learning patterns have been identified in the participants' experiences: facilitative and obstructive patterns of learning. The facilitative pattern (Pia) consists of three phases: confirmation phase, support phase, and development phase. The obstructive pattern (Tor) consists of a problem phase, followed by a demanding phase, and finally a resisting phase.

Pia's story

Pia describe herself as a young woman in her early twenties and a single mother of two children. Her education so far is elementary school and she has limited work experience. She has experiences of unemployment, different actions and meetings with professionals. Pia expresses that, so far, nothing has been helpful to change her situation. In her opinion professionals has always focused on her lack of competence and the obstacles it implies. When she started in this project, she had lost hope and saw it as something she was forced to do to receive social benefits. However, something changed her attitude, she means that the professional did not try to suggest any actions; she was interested in her situation and her point of view of her life. Pia says that she felt that she could begin telling her story without feeling evaluated and out of that story and the professional's questions about that story emerged a feeling of being seen and listened to. The beginning of a relation that expanded to a work alliance that slowly created a new hope. According to Pia's experience, the professional noted this hope in her story and that generated the professional to ask questions that re-

vealed a strong social interest. Then the professional provided information about such professions and showed her how to use educational platforms in search of educational information. Pia expressed that she learned to listen to her own will and trust her own capacity because of the professional's adaption to her needs.

In the confirmation phase, the participant being positive towards the topics discussed and this gave Pia the opportunity to tell about how she felt about the sessions, without feeling categorized, evaluated or judged.

My feeling was that I was not yet one that she would say what I would do or what I would be, she just saw me... and that was a big difference.

The whole situation created an environment to talk openly. Pia felt taken seriously, and this benefits the relationship with the professional, which, in turn, becomes the basis for a working alliance. During the support phase, Pia and the professional continued to search, in her story, for what needed to be discussed and dealt with.

In the past, there always been such a focus on the fact that I did not have any grades, that I should be happy if I could get a job at all or so. It is clear that I began to think so too.

In the investigative stage, changes emerged as Pia experienced increased control over her own situation, and as taking part in matters concerning her situation and life. This, then, opened for reassessing her self-image, and facing new opportunities.

Yes, that she was listening... I was pretty determined that I just wanted a job because I thought I'll never come further than to the supermarket if I'm lucky, but then she listened and told me that "it sounds like you like this and this". That's true, I said because that's the way ... eh she was quite right and then so ... why would I want to sit in a supermarket when I could work with something I really want. Then she also showed how I would do to become what I really wanted to become and I changed my mind, I do not want to sit in the supermarket anymore.

Pia gradually began balancing her own conditions with societal conditions. Possible actions are supported and thus the next step appears. An important turning point seems to appear when Pia in the development phase experi-

enced concrete support from the professional in dealing with the difficult issues they have been discussing. It is a confirmation that she is understood; and when the professional added something to that understanding, hope was generated.

Pia's accounts show that the goals set by societal agencies, and that are also present in the professional conversation, did not dominate the conversation. Pia got help to deal with the difficulties that still existed, not as quick-fix solutions, but as suggestions or hypothetical questions. The sense of ownership and the level of influence increased as Pia took a stand to accept or reject something suggested by the professional. Whether it is possible to identify, define or achieve desired goals through one's own effort or the right support, it seems important that the experiences and dreams that people have are not evaluated as they are, but instead examined based on the person, and the situation she is in. Previous experiences and lessons learnt about one self, and the possibilities one has, can gradually be reviewed, reassessed, and adjusted. This, in turn, is the start of initial progress that can pave the way for both major and minor, but still crucial, changes. Based on these patterns of experiences the positive learning process displays feelings about the professional support, and its contribution to the learning process. By telling her story, Pia successively revised, and improved her self-esteem and self-image. This helped her in developing increased awareness of new opportunities to help change her situation. At this stage, Pia felt that she can present herself as the individual she is. Pia felt that the professional treated her genuinely, and that her situation, and what she wants, is taken seriously. This allows for reflection on the past, present and future, and paves the way for a different attitude towards societal conditions, which have previously been considered as obstacles. This new attitude can be either shallow or deep. The crucial point is that Pia is open for a changed perspective about the situation she is currently facing.

Tor's story

Tor explains that he is in his late twenties and has been working in the media industry, mostly TV-production's in shorter or longer projects. When he joined the project he had been out of work for two years, the unemployment insurance had expired, and he was dependent on social benefits. Tor is devious about the professional support which has not yet helped him to employment. Initially though he was slightly optimistic, the professional showed interest in him as a person and his situation and it had a calming impact on him. In Tor's view, this changed when the professional started

giving him advices and pushed him to increase his job - search activity. He felt the pressure to do that he was told to do and to be effective, to please the professional and societal demands. He felt that the professional's agenda did not consider his needs or his voice. His feeling of guilt and shame in not succeeding in finding a job therefor increased. In fear of losing social benefits, he complied to the professional s demands by doing as he was told, but without any engagement or hope. To handle the situation and to keep some self-respect he secretly started resisting the professional, which he felt contributed to more bad conscious. After four months, the project stopped and Tor quitted, and a few weeks later, he found a job by his own effort. Tor meant that he learned that he should adapt rather than follow his own will and that the professional support conducted according to a standard procedure, without any adaption to his needs.

In the problem phase, Tor's initial approach was cautiously positive, but quite soon turned to being negative.

I was a bit more optimistic at first, not so exaggerated but ... yes ... the manager said yes, but this is what we will do with coaching and you will find some job within a month only and I thought that sounded optimistic so ... yes, it felt okay that this might be helpful anyway, so a bit more hopeful I was at the beginning, but it gradually declined.

When the professional focused on unemployment, unemployment became Tor's problem, and puts him in a situation of guilt and shame. The level of participation was reduced, and replaced by goals set by the societal institution, such as efficiency or economy; consequently, Tor s personal situation and goals were unheeded. In the demanding phase, Tor s previous negative experiences came to life, and this proved how easily negative experiences reappear, and how they affected him.

I felt like I could not resist, do not say no, I was basically forced to obey otherwise I could risk not receiving social allowance and then I could not afford to live, or even pay the rent.

The current negative feelings seem to prevent Tor, and the professional, from dealing with his situation. This became obvious, as the pressure to find work, as the feeling of not fitting into the norm, and the feeling that Tor's personal conditions and needs are not considered, increased. This lead

to the resistance phase where Tor seemed to turn his back on the professional, and instead took up a fight for his situation in different ways.

Hm ... yes it was tough ... but ... yes it was so big questions, I do not know what I'm ... but it was ... yes, but now you are 27 years now you have to know exactly what to do ... it was so big questions that like ... always encouraged decisions on so big questions that pertained to the rest of my life and that along with the demands of seeking so many jobs, constantly being examined from every possible angle ... I felt like a conditional release.

The feeling of guilt amounted as Tor became defensive by becoming more passive, and just doing what was required without any commitment. The experience of professional conversation became more of a struggle that tended to deplete his self-image, to the extent that he felt that he had no place in society, which also led to feelings of guilt and shame. This became evident as societal conditions dominated, and took the place of Tor's stories as well as the difficult situation he is in. The negative learning process highlights a demanding and performance-oriented professional support. This approach does not consider Tor's needs, which means that an already negative and fragile self-image is reinforced, and suspicion towards societal projects increased. Tor felt repressed in normative patterns dictated by societal structures which worsened his situation. Tor seemed to be forced into actions he had already tried and which has had not helped him get a job. This learning process confirms, what previous experiences of professional support have already established, that the support had its base in a norm he felt he didn't fit into. The negative learning process, thus, reinforced their already negative identity, prompting him to resist help, and, instead, struggle on his own. Tor learnt that he is a problem. He therefore develop both active and passive resistance methods, in order to handle the various demands.

5. Discussion

From the stories of the two participants, three types of conditions for learning could be identified: pre-existing conditions, organizational conditions, and counselling related conditions. The pre-existing conditions in the individual's life, and in the outside world prior to the counselling sessions, are divided into personal and social conditions. Organizational conditions

relates to how the professional conversation has been organized and structured. These conditions include time available, continuity, and context. The counselling related conditions refer to the professional conversation, and to everything that makes learning possible. These are in positive terms: recognition, relationship, participation, and influence. It is, however, also possible that misrecognition, contempt, and resistance can cause negative conditions.

The societal and organizational conditions are thus affected by how the participants perceive the way the professionals recognize them. If the quality of recognition opens for I-you relationships, the next step would lead to participation, and I-that relationships (Buber, 1990). This, then, can either give more influence over the whole process or only over I-that relationship, which causes resistance. These relationships, in turn, predict what the outcome will be. Thus, it depends on whether the participant can reconstruct his or her biographicity (Alheit and Daussien, 1999). In other words, the participant's perceived ability to change his or her story, the way he or she perceives self, and the situation they are in, can affect the way they perceive their future. This is significant for benefiting or hindering the individuals' career development.

Furthermore, the participants' experiences of support seem to relate to different phases of the conversation, which seems to generate different learning conditions. In this study, I have used the concepts of no recognition, non-recognition and misrecognition (Honneth, 2003; Voswinkel, 2001) to further problematize and distinguish between positive and negative emotional experiences. Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2007) suggest that recognition can be monological or dialogical, and the importance of how the recognition is perceived, because this has significance for the interpersonal relationship (Buber, 1990). It is also in the first stages of meeting the personal and social conditions that we can determine whether learning processes becomes negative or positive. It is in these phases that the interpersonal relationships and dialogue are favored or hampered (ea.). The conversation is favored when the relationship is open to shifting between discussing personal, social, and societal situations without feeling threatened.

Based on these phases and conditions, I could explore how positive and negative learning processes emerge in professional counselling. This shows that learning conditions are formed in the conversation itself, where the participants' conditions, and other external conditions surrounding the conversation, determine the outcome of the learning process. In turn, it can be understood that continued career development depends on these

different learning conditions. In the positive learning process, the influence on these learning conditions is high. Here, the counsellor helps participants to reconstruct their biographicity (Alheit & Daussien, 1999). The participants can, therefore, begin to expand their horizons, and envision a different career that they had not been able to see earlier. The negative learning process, is characterized by unchanged learning conditions, lack of ability to act and thus no career development. Here, societal and organizational conditions govern professional support, thereby ignoring the personal conditions of the participant. This inhibits the reconstruction of their biographicity (Alheit & Daussien, 1999), and instead they develop a resistance or struggle for their personal conditions.

From the learning processes identified above, learning takes place in small steps. The participants' learning, largely, depends on their previous experiences that have resulted in low self-esteem, and a suspicion towards participating in societal programs. The participants describe this as progress in small steps, where the next step depends on the previous one that learning builds on previous learning. This depends on what is added (opportunities or new obstacles), removed or transformed (obstacles or new opportunities). Moreover, learning takes place in relation to current experiences, situations, and conditions of the participants. That is, the participants' opportunity to tell their perceived situation and the conversation leaders' ability to accept that story. Learning, in this context, is a movement where participants' experiences gain new meaning. Experiences that participants earlier considered as obstacles in finding their way in life transform to an opportunity to understand a new way, and thereby more likely enable them to move towards the future. The ability to reflect upon one's past, present and future brings about movement in this direction.

The past seems to link with understanding and to be understood. The present link with managing; and the future link with creativity. The learning processes influenced by the tensions between, on one hand, the participant's self-image, and, on the other hand, societal demands on the outcome of the conversations. The learning process thus depends, largely, on how the professionals handle these conflicting demands in the conversation. The professional's attitude towards the participants seems to be important for the learning process, since it affects the participants' confidence or skepticism towards the professional helper. This attitude affects the working alliance between the two, opening or closing the possibilities for participation and influence. The professional's attitude towards the participants is crucial, since it affects the participants' confidence or skepticism towards the pro-

fessional, especially if the participant feels listened to and taken seriously. This attitude has an impact on the conversation, both in the sense of what is discussed, and how it is discussed. It could be argued that this approach seems to be extra crucial at the beginning, but also that the professional attitude needs to be upheld throughout the process of the professional conversation, so that the sense of influence, and participation, can be maintained.

An important motivating force in the learning process seems to be how the participants' emotionally experienced the counselling sessions. Negative feelings seem to halt the learning process. Minor factors in the professional's attitude seem to be crucial for the direction of the learning process. The participants' increasing positive feeling is a good motivator for learning. Positivity increases when the participants feel taken seriously, feel being treated as an equal citizens of society, are able to tell their personal history, are given the opportunity to describe themselves, and the situation they are in, in their own words. The opposite feelings, like being categorized, evaluated, or judged, is something the participants have experienced from previous encounters with professionals, and authorities, during the time they were jobseekers. The emotional links to previous experiences of unemployment is a delicate factor in the participants' experience, which the professional counsellor needs to deal with. These emotional links appear to be dependent on the tension between participants' views about their situation and society's rules and requirements. Learning is in Illeri's model seen as an ongoing interaction between content, motivators, and the ability to interact and dedicate self to the processes of learning (Illeris, 2009). The motivating dimension that includes emotions and the interaction dimension seems to be central to the direction of the learning process development.

The conclusion strongly suggest that certain pre-existing conditions highly influence the participants' experiences of professional support. Personal conditions are participants' previous experiences, not least their previous participation in different types of societal measures. How previous societal actions been carried out also has impact on the learning process. Furthermore, the participants' experiences of support seem to relate to different phases of the conversations; and these phases are dependent on relational aspects, which, in turn, create different conditions for learning. This has an impact on how participants can take on their continued career process.

In the paper, I have used the usual term career development to show how learning affects development. Nevertheless, the word development has a positive tone, and it is, of course, good if the professional support leads

to development. The study highlights, however, that this is not always the case. Professional support can also cause stagnation and difficulties, which is something else than development. Based on the results of this paper, I would like to advocate the use of career process instead of career development, when it comes to describing and understanding people's situation, in managing their careers. Already in the early 1990s, Bourdieu (1994) and Giddens (1991) described that many of the modern professions increasingly developed into conversational professions. That is, conversation as means to achieve some form of learning. I claim that this development has accelerated in terms of the general belief that professional conversation, used in different contexts, becomes an illusion of the healing power of professional conversation when it does not take into account all the other aspects of people's lives. Career development is such an example, that professional conversations, automatically, lead to career development. In the best-case scenario, it can lead to career development, but it requires professionals to consider the conversation related conditions, so that the career process really develops in that direction. Secondly, it is necessary that pre-existing conditions both allow development, and be handled based on the participants' perspective. Thirdly, organizational aspects be adjustable to current needs of the participants.

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B.2

Connecting skills and biographical resources to enter the labour market.

The experience of laboratory “skills for employability” of the Sinapsi University Center

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1. Experiential connections. The core skills for employability in the personal and professional promotion process

In the current social scenario, in the face of substantial changes of economic kind, Europe includes among its guidelines for the construction of a society based no longer and not so much on knowledge, but on skills, the promotion of strategies to favor the employability of the individuals. The scientific community, in the human and social sciences, elaborated the strategic construct of “*sustainable employability*”, with which we mean “the intertwining of the human, social and psychological capital of the person - mediated by situational variables - that allows the individual to place (or place again) himself within the labor market with a personal professional project adhering to the context” (Grimaldi, Porcelli & Rossi, 2014, p. 66). Therefore, the concept of employability calls into question the abilities of the individual, that is: “the set of skills, now regarded as crucial, to deal with the job properly and effectively: the ability to find work [...]; the ability to improve it (in terms of professional or career development); the ability to change it, either by free choice or by being forced by restructuring processes from some crisis or by the perverse effects of globalization” (Alberici in Serreri, 2010, pp. 13-14).

The *New Skills Agenda for Europe*, adopted on June 10, 2016 by the European Commission (EC), includes several initiatives aimed at favoring the development of a wide range of skills relevant and useful to labor market demands, with the purpose of promoting employability, competitiveness and growth in Europe (European Commission, 2016).

The Agenda aims to face the three challenges of contemporary

economies identified by the Commission as the most relevant and urgent ones:

- the lack of appropriate skills to meet the needs of the labor market (both basic skills, in particular mathematical and digital, and transversal ones);
- the insufficient transparency and visibility of skills and qualifications, at local, national and European level;
- the difficulty of being able to predict and anticipate the skills needed.

School, University and the other educational institutions, alongside basic skills, that is, the general ones, which are transferable to several tasks, relevant for the training and the general professional preparation of the individual, and the technical-professional skills, that is, the ones which are highly specific and specialized, must deal with strengthening and enhancing all those soft skills that allow the connection of knowledge and abilities in relation to the context, and also personal resources, namely, personality traits (perseverance, precision and rationality), psycho-social qualities (team work and effective communication), dynamism, multidimensionality, systemic character, contingency and flexibility.

According to Morin, thinking about instruction and education in terms of skills and not just contents means teaching to learn throughout life, offering the individual the ability to situate knowledge in a context and to employ his resources to face the challenges of our open, global and inclusive society (Morin, 2001).

The current socio-working contexts ask the individuals to be ready to constantly change not just the places of the practice, but also roles and professional fields. The dimension of training in today's societies is increasingly characterized as a process of 'lifelong learning', aimed at acquiring and developing the skills needed to address the various tasks in life and work.

Training cannot be limited to preparing the individual for a definitive work, but must provide him with general skills that can be used in the society of flexibility, which requires everyone remarkable adaptability. Nowadays specialized skills are replaced by multiple ones, considered in terms of transversality as they require the individual the ability to implement behaviors beyond the specific professionalism.

The '*soft skills*' or '*transversal skills*' have become today the new directives of a training process that aims at excellence and that knows well how much competitiveness is globalized, both that of products and that of ideas. Today, however, they are precisely the '*soft skills*' that weave all the conceivable in-

terconnections linking the cognitive sphere with the emotional sphere, the ethics with the ability to organize, the spirit of initiative with the ability to communicate (Dorsey, 2004).

The *soft skills*, complementary to the *hard skills*, the latter known as the technical and administrative abilities concerning a specific profession, are also called ‘transferable’, in fact in the European Union document, *Transferability of Skills across Economic Sectors: Role and Importance for Employment at European Level* (2011), it is proposed an interesting articulation of the professional skills characterizing an individual with respect to his employment opportunities in the labor world and to the possible ‘transition’ from one job to another (European Union, 2011).

This classification, which focuses on transferability from one employment to another, both in a transversal and in a vertical sense, indicates the *soft skills* as the most transferable ones, since they do not refer to a particular job and so characterize the individual open to entering any professional field with a good personal preparation to face the challenges of employability (European Union, 2011).

The European Union document ‘takes on a significant role as it has been noted a close connection between the transferability of skills and the risk of losing work and not finding another’ (Pellerey, 2016, p.43), in fact all individuals with a broader range of skills, especially transversal ones, have a lower risk of unemployment during periods of economic crisis (Pellerey, 2016).

In *Enhancing youth employability: the importance of core work skills*, a 2013 publication, the ILO observes how the education and training policies of many countries are focusing on the ‘core work skills’ at the foundation of learning for life.

The *core work skills* identified by the ILO have been grouped into four broad skill categories:

- *learning to learn*;
- *communication*;
- *team work*;
- *problem solving*.

Learning to learn covers knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities allowing individuals to set up, plan and achieve their learning goals and become ‘*independent autonomous learners*’ (ILO, 2013, p. 2).

Communication covers the ability to gain understanding from others – by listening, reading and observing, by using both formal and informal tools, oral and written – and to clarify ideas effectively (ILO, 2013, p. 2).

Team work covers the skills needed to act smoothly and efficiently within a group, including the ones related to cooperation and leadership (ILO, 2013, p. 2).

Problem solving concerns the analytical skills needed to evaluate information or situations and decide the most appropriate ways to deal with problems.

Some of these skills have been investigated, in Italy, by ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of the university system and Research) through the experimentation of the TEst on Competencies (TECO), which aims to evaluate the level of *generic skills* acquired by Italian university students, focusing the study on reading skills, critical analysis, solving new problems of logical, interpretative or scientific-quantitative kind, and communication. As stated in the final Report for 2014 (ANVUR, 2015), these skills are at least as essential as the ones more related to the specific subjects of degree, which University must place at the center of its training activity, even because they are necessary for a better adaptability to the labor market and to the present and future life of people, and therefore fundamental for increasing personal employability and *empowerment* (ANVUR, 2015, pp. 14-15).

2. The path “Skills for employability” and the self-evaluation of transversal skills

Given the foregoing considerations, within the Sinapsi University Center activities, the Services for the Promotion of Employability (SPO) are born; they are addressed to newly enrolled students and about to graduate ones (LT, LM), to PhD students and PhDs as well as to new graduates and volunteers involved in the projects of the National Civil Service, proposing them the path “Skills for employability”, with the goal of carrying out activities aimed at orientation (*Career Guidance*), professional promotion (*Self Marketing*) and job placement (*Specialized Placement*).

The idea of the operational staff of the Services for the Promotion of Employability (SPO) section is to propose a kind of training that promotes in the individuals the recognition and the enhancement of skills which are invisible, but strategically relevant in a rapidly changing global context. A training that may favor the creation of connections and relationships between individual knowledge, skills and performances.

Starting from reflections on the iceberg model of skills of Spencer &

Spencer (1993) it was decided to realize paths to promote in the involved individuals a recognition of transversal skills and those aspects which are not immediately recognizable, which are thus at the basis of the iceberg, namely: self-image, motivations, hopes, values, attitudes, unlike abilities and knowledge that belong instead to a more superficial area. In fact, we see that while knowledge and abilities, acquired in the various formal, informal and non-formal contexts, are measurable, observable and therefore certifiable, self-image, motivations, hopes and values remain at a submerged and unaware level.

The contribution presents a pilot experience carried out within the Course of Study in Speech Therapy and which involved, in particular, the Services for the Promotion of Employability (SPO) section of the Sinapsi University Center.

In particular, the training activities proposed to the undergraduates in Speech Therapy have the goal of supporting the enhancement of professional curricula, through the narrative description of transversal skills and knowledge gained during the university experience and not, and so, favoring a greater exploration of outgoing professional profiles.

The proposed activities are carried out mainly through the group system - co-led by a psychologist and a pedagogist - which becomes a comparison experience for the participants, activating the ability to reflect on their own vocations and career prefigurability scenarios. The latter turn out to be strategic for the acquisition of essential selection criteria for defining a personal professional project adhering to the context. From a methodological point of view, the alternation of moments of individual reflection and group sharing promotes the activation and interconnection of personal and interpersonal skills. The production and sharing of the individual narrations produced within the "Skills for employability" laboratory allows the individuals involved to recognize all those transversal skills that are often invisible to the individuals themselves. The autobiographical narrative approach, thus, can shed light on those resources and skills that the individual often unconsciously hold and that can make the difference in a professional and social endowment (de Carlo, 2011).

We want to run through the various stages of the path realized with the presentation of collected data. The path was realized with a group of 28 female students, undergraduates in Speech Therapy, and it was structured in 3 meetings lasting 3 hours each. The meetings were structured through the articulation of 5 work sessions, namely:

- start of a first focus group with the students;
- individual administering of the Avo Giovani questionnaire (Inapp, ex Isfol, 2016) with the aim of detecting the level of perceived employability (internal potential of employability);
- start of a second focus group on the topic: “Which transversal skills for the employability of the speech therapist?”;
- use of the two narrative devices *My skills patchwork and my self-evaluation map of transversal skills* to promote a recognition of transversal skills (Capo, in Striano & Capobianco, 2016);
- individual and group return with particular attention to the aspects related to the recognition of soft skills, and to self-marketing strategies (CV, etc) and the prefigurability of outgoing professional profiles.

During the first focus group, through some initial input, the students were invited to explicit their training needs; in this context, it emerged clearly the need to identify specific work spaces with the aim of recognizing the professional skills gained, acquiring a vocabulary to promote them and make them visible even within the CVs. The need to connect knowledge and skills and, therefore, to consolidate the application of the acquired knowledge and to develop a greater awareness of one's professional goals is connected, by the group of undergraduates, to the anxiety related to the end of the course of study, enabling immediately to the health profession of speech therapist. Although the didactic organization of the Cds (the course of study) in Speech Therapy provides wide spaces for curricular internships, the undergraduates share the need to experiment more with activities that can support thought processes about their professional action. It certainly emerges the need to take more advantage of experiences and contexts that give the opportunity to *learning to apply knowledge*. In scientific degree courses, in fact, the nexus theory-practice is strongly expected and, therefore, the students expect a didactic organization that supports such expectation and that devotes specific spaces to training through experience. Somehow the students express the need to “put their hands in the dough”, that is, to practice within internships and experiences where they can “taste” what the exercise of a certain professional profile entails.

The second meeting of the path was instead initially dedicated to the start of a brainstorming, starting from the question: “which transversal skills for the employability of the speech therapist?”. The group of students identifies and underlines both the transversal skills acquired during the course of study, and, thus, in the formal context, and those gained elsewhere, in informal and non-formal contexts; in a second moment, in which it was planned the use

of the two narrative devices *My skills patchwork* and *my self-evaluation map of transversal skills*, the students succeeded not just in identifying the skills acquired in the various training experiences, but also in grasping interconnections between the 4 different macro-categories of transversal skills, namely, management, relational, cognitive and organizational skills.

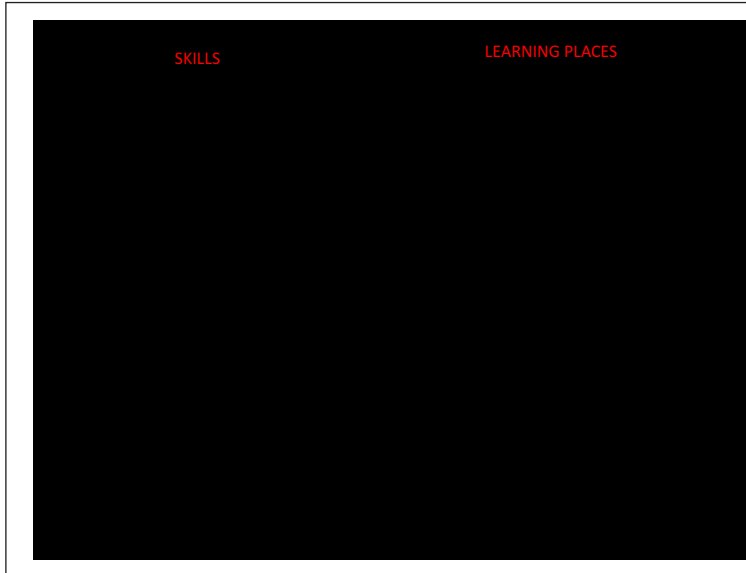


Fig. 1. My self-evaluation map of transversal skills

My training experiences

Indicate all formal paths (school, university, etc.) through which you gained qualifications, you certified and/or acquired certain skills and abilities.

Indicate all informal and non-formal experiences gained outside the formal circuits and through which you felt you had learned something significant, although no formal certifications have been released, but that left a baggage of skills and knowledges (politics, associationism, sport, etc.).

<i>My personal portrait</i> I define myself with 5 adjectives: I indicate 5 adjectives with which I would like to introduce myself to others. Motivation: Why did I choose this path of study? I explicit the reasons that led me choosing to start this training experience. My biographical proofs: I indicate the events that represented significant moments for personal growth and helped me gain greater awareness. Me as a student/undergraduate in speech therapy: I tell how I live my being a student/undergraduate in Speech Therapy. My future plans: I try to explicit my future plans. What place does the hope for the relationship with the other (colleague, user, etc.) occupy for you? Try to tell ... and the hope for the realization of your professional future? Try to argue ...

Fig. 2. *My skill's patchwork narrative device*

Regarding management skills, a fundamental aspect it's certainly the self-awareness and, therefore, the knowledge of one's emotions and thoughts. A self-awareness that supports the orientation to the goal and, therefore, the ability to define clear goals, engaging in view of their achievement. This last element is connected to the handling of one's emotions that leads to know how to draw on one's resources in order to get self-determination in times of difficulty:

Dance allowed me to acquire a good control of my body and myself, especially in stressful situations: in fact, I'm able to keep high the concentration even in particularly insidious conditions. [...] Moreover, dance, although a largely individual discipline, allowed me to place trust in other people, rely on them, and in the presence of a competition, honesty and respect for others go first. [...]"; *"For several years I practiced volleyball. I learned that in order to win, it was not important the ability of the individual but the collaboration of the whole team: being a team means being individuals who aim to achieve a goal, the same goal, working in harmony. This ability is a fundamental requirement for a speech therapist working in a team.*

Among the relational skills, central it's the empathy, that is, the ability to listen and know how to communicate, adapting the content and the form on the basis of the interlocutor, or better, of the needs of the interlocutor:

A few years ago I started my voluntary activity at the Cisom (Italian relief Corp of the Order of Malta). From this experience I developed various relational skills, since the role of volunteer implies the desire to understand others, hence, the ability to listen, understand and respond to feelings and concerns of others even if not expressed or partially expressed, therefore, the ability to work in a group”; “Being a student of speech therapy meant to be a student and a trainee at the same time. As a student I attended lessons, I learned notions and took exams. As a trainee I attended outpatient visits, evaluations and rehabilitative treatments and performed them myself. In both the roles I learned a lot, but during the internship I learned something one doesn’t learn in books: the relationship that is established between therapist and patient. It is a complex relationship where one must not fall into excessive involvement but not even be too detached. You need to find a fair balance allowing you to be empathetic and to have an adequate professional detachment at the same time.

Regarding cognitive skills, it is underlined the importance of problem solving, which involves the ability to devise appropriate solutions to handle complex situations; in turn, the solution of problems is connected to creative thinking, and, thus, to the skill that allows us to identify alternative solutions, through the recognition of inedited connections:

Everyday we are faced with situations to be analyzed and decisions to be taken, planning at best the interventions to be performed in favor of the patients.

From this point of view, organizational skills are considered indispensable to move from an idea to a concrete level. It is called into question the planning that arises from the need to segment a situation into several sub-problems to identify the material and human resources to be activated; connected to planning is the ability to manage time (time management), that is, to set priorities and meet deadlines:

During the internship in the university hospital company of the University Federico II, I acquired good professional technical skills, transferring the theoretical knowledge gained during the course of study to the practice of speech therapist. Moreover, I refined the operational control, planning and time management skills, having to carefully compare the progress of the rehabilitation project with respect to the deadlines set by the company.

Therefore, the narrations allow the students to identify and experience connections between the various transversal skills, to revive future perspectives. This process is particularly important in a transition phase, like the one that undergraduates in Speech Therapy live:

The feeling you get when you graduate is of enormous satisfaction and happiness, but there is also a sense of disorientation! One feels to be without experience and so one feels the need to practice a lot and try to understand how the labor world really works, and unfortunately we have no way of learning that at university. I aim to practice a lot, both through post-graduate internship and through the first therapies in full autonomy, therapies in which there is no one to tell me what to do, but aware of the importance of asking for help from more experienced colleagues, also beginning to rely on my independent judgment.

Thus, with respect to professional development the undergraduates in Speech Therapy consider fundamental the development and promotion of the following skills, which are essentially interconnected:

- *applying knowledge and understanding*, in reference to the ability to apply the knowledge of the speech therapy process, within the rehabilitative setting, both in a simulated form and on the patient, also adopting above all the methodology of problem solving (clinical reasoning);
- *making judgments*, that is, being able to know and apply autonomously the speech therapy process by using clinical reasoning (diagnostic and evaluation process) as a guiding tool to respond effectively to patient's health needs. The group considers this skill to be very important in the construction of one's professional identity;
- *communication skills and management of emotions*, in reference to the ability to establish a significant therapeutic relationship with the person and an effective relationship with all the other professionals of the same or other disciplines.

Conclusions

What soft skills do students have and what should they have?

In 2015, the OCSE produced the report *Skills for social progress. The power of social and emotional skills* (OCSE, 2015), in which it is presented not just the synthesis of the work done on the role of socio-emotional skills,

but strategies to improve them are also proposed. The effects of skills on individual well-being and social progress are taken under consideration, and how these socio-emotional skills can be facilitated through specific programs and didactic practices.

The report agrees with the studies on emotional intelligence arguing that interpersonal skills can favor career success, that they are necessary for *team work* and to foster the ability for dialogue in an intercultural environment (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008).

So, if on the one hand economic discourse is the most powerful engine to favor the development of soft skills in the university curriculum, on the other we must not forget how important it is to promote social, ethical and moral education among students, respect for diversity, tolerance and empathy.

Today, however, more and more, regarding the logics of supply and demand, we hear of the '*skill mismatch*', that is, the mismatch between the skills required by the labor market and the ones that students acquire in universities (OECD, 2015).

In a society in which the only constant element is change, skills also change incessantly and are always in constant evolution. The ones that were valid in the past become obsolete, swept away by the changes and transformations introduced by the advent of the liquid society (Baumann, 2000), by the *disruptive innovation* (Christensen and Bower, 1995), and by the hybridization of the various domains of action and knowledge.

Academic training must therefore be concerned with all of this; if we consider the challenges related to employability and innovations that young workers will have to face in their future, we need to think of a training that gives them not just 'contents', but also the way in which looking for them.

Today the society of skills must invest on meta-skills, as the individual must never lose sight of the global and holistic vision (IFTF, *Future Work Skills*, 2020). Consequently, it is clear that the employability of the individual is not favored just by the formal level of qualification achieved, as it is the whole of his cognitive, social and relational skills that allows him to make expendable the knowledge and skills owned.

From the interesting research of Mc Kinsey & Company, *Education to employment: getting Europe's youth into work*, (2014) a worrying situation emerges: the unemployment that was already twenty years ago, has certainly worsened today due to the crisis, but it should not be underestimated the fact that today '*education providers*' do not adapt training to the needs and demands of the labor market, and therefore they do not take into account all the dimensions of the problem. The results of the research show that

the latter mostly offer a type of theoretical training appropriate for achieving good job positions, but they do not provide those *soft skills* that more and more employers seek and consider indispensable. A too theoretical and not very practical training is the real barrier that limits access to work; the problem must be solved by moving toward different paths: better communication between university and the labor world, greater flexibility of training, encouragement to update training and finally synergistic dissemination of good practices, especially the ones dealing with orientation. There is a strong need to revise the role and functions of the guidance practice; as action of support to the individual, orientation must be configured as a tool of active labor policy to promote employability. With this in mind, the orientation associated with the theme of *employability* is directly intertwined with the urgent dynamics of a labor market that prescribes new and more effective methods of supply-demand *matching*, as well as a reformed professionalism. It is therefore important to be able to mediate between the needs of the labor market, in continuous transformation, and personal and professional planning, through paths that must be offered by training institutions themselves.

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B.3

Autobiographic Essays of Teaching Experience to obtain the Master's degree at Pedagogical University of Veracruz, Mexico

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1. Some key concepts

To address the complexity of the object of study, we chose an anti-essentialist or postmodern epistemological approach, which is identified with the questioning and denial, from different fields (sciences, aesthetics, politics, philosophy) of the absolute or universal character of modernity thought; a perspective that renounce to political, theoretical, ethical meta-narratives, absolute truths, globalizing strategies, the search for metanarratives or metahistorical truths. This perspective allows the construction of useful, valuable and rigorous knowledge.

Among the authors who contribute to erode the absolute character of the foundations of modern thought are Wittgenstein (1953), Rorty (1979), Foucault (1992), Vattimo (2009), Lacan (1994), Žižek (1992), Derrida (1989, 1985), Laclau (1990) Laclau & Mouffe (1989), Kuhn (1962) and Feyerabend (1987). Although each one of these authors works different study objects, certain shared lines or theoretical equivalences can be seen in their approaches.

From this epistemological perspective, tools of the narrative biographical approaches of Piña (1999), Denzin (1989), Bertaux (2005), Formenti (2009), Dominicé (2006), Bolívar *et al.* (2001), Bolívar (2002), Bolívar & Domingo (2006) and González (2015) are conceptually articulated, with theoretical perspectives that emphasize the formative value of the teacher's retrospective reflection on their professional experience. like those by Dávila, (2011), Perrenoud (2004), Trujillo (2012), De Lella (2003), Caporossi (2009).

From all the theoretical tools advanced by these authors, I will recover only six for this paper.

Overdetermination.

The concept of overdetermination is introduced by Althusser who in turn takes it from Freudian psychoanalysis, a field in which it is defined as a process that is not a simple “fusion” or “mixture” (a situation that would make it compatible with any form of multicausality), but that supposes multiple forms of symbolic forwarding and a plurality of senses. Laclau and Mouffe (1989) argue that the concept of overdetermination is constituted in the field of the symbolic and lacks all meaning outside of it.

According to these authors overdetermination involves multiple symbolic forwardings and processes of condensation and displacement, two movements that occur inside.

- The *condensation* is the point that represents a multiplicity of meanings, implying a symbolic reentry and a plurality in which the specificity of the elements is not lost in the fusion.
- The *displacement* that alludes to the circulation of a meaning through different signifiers. In terms of political discourse analysis refers to the re-sending of a symbolic charge from one signifier to another, it is the transit, circulation, remission, transfer, step, of a significant load of one signifier to another or others.

This definition is very useful to avoid the temptation to explain social practices or relationships based on a cause or a determining essence ultimately.

Diachronic observation and synchronic observation.

Regarding Salcedo and De León (2003)

- The collection of data in social sciences can be done through several periods of time or in a single period of time. The first of these observations is called diachronic and the second is synchronous. In synchronous methodologies, time is not a relevant variable because observations and measurements are made in the same period. [...] On the other hand, in diachronic methodologies time is important because observations are made through several periods or instants of time. (2003: 376).

However I consider important to recover Laclau when he says that

- Diachrony, insofar as it appears subject to rules, insofar as it tries to capture the meaning of a succession, is also synchronous [...] The 'spatialization' of an event consists in the elimination of its temporality, temporality it must be conceived as the exact opposite of space "(1990: 58)

Milestone (Fictus).

Term that according to González (2015), comes from the latin *fictus* and has had different uses in geography, history, mathematics, but for the purposes of the SAT, designates a construction, event, process or extreme event (adverse or favorable) that is very significant for the autobiographer, since it marks in his teaching itinerary "*a before*" and "*an after*". These milestones are relevant insofar as they trigger changes in the teaching identity (such as the decision to enter the teaching profession by renouncing a previous profession, pursuing a master's degree or a specialization, seeking a change), they can appear at local, regional, national or international levels and may occur in an overdetermined manner in different contexts:

- a family (marriage, divorce, birth of a child, death of a family member or someone close to the autobiographer);
- b economical or labor (a financial crisis, unemployment, a promotion, a layoff, getting a job);
- c geopolitical (an armed conflict, the emergence of criminal groups, the entry of macro-economic policies that produce changes in national labor and/or educational policies, geographical, environmental, meteorological events that cause a change in the place of residence or work of the autobiographer.

Formation.

Important for the argumentation that will be developed latter is the way we conceptualize this notion, following Honoré.

Formation is a process that goes from an experience to its elucidation in common, from an originality to its deepening by a confrontation of a difference with the establishment of a reciprocal recognition. [...] It is the ability to transform the daily events generally lived on the horizon of a collective personal project into meaningful experience. (1980: 34)

From these concepts developed above, we can say that the formation of a teacher's identity is an overdetermined process in which it is possible to

observe diachronically and synchronously, condensations and displacements between the different temporalities through which it transits and between different contextual elements and realms of social life, not necessarily related with school settings.

These theoretical tools and epistemological logics allow a device of approximation that considerably extends the field of objectivity creating the conditions for thinking numerous non-essentialist relationships, where discourses, identities, influences, subject positions, relationships etc. are not static or monolithic. The notion of overdetermination allows to delimit relational, precarious, open and unstable significant constellations (influences coming from family, school, theoretical discourses, social movements, labor, political influences, etc.) that propose models to follow, that is, they interpellate to the identities of the autobiographers, as the temporalities in which they disaggregate their narratives are passing.

2. The curricular incorporation of the *Seminario de Apoyo a la Titulación* (SAT)

My argumentation will depart from the recognizing of two of the most worrying and pressing problems of México's National Education System.

The first one is related with the fact that, as in Educational Systems of many other countries in the world, in Mexico there persists the problem of low terminal efficiency in postgraduate programs. That is, the number of graduates is significantly less than the number of applicants who enter these programs. The posgraduate programs in educational matters do not escape to this problem, and that has been the case in the postgraduate programs (masters and PhDs) in UPV, in Mexico.

The second one refers to the national debate on how to raise the quality of basic education, considering the low results that Mexico has obtained in the Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) undertaken by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The debate was ignited because the solution that the Mexican State gave in response to this problem was to establish an "Educative Reform" that, among other measurements has conditioned the permanence in the service of the teachers (and the improvement of their salary and working conditions), to the results they obtain in a program of periodic evaluations to which they must obligatorily submit. The debate has grown worst because, despite the promise of improving the conditions of the entire National Ed-

education System, in reality this has not been the case. Not enough attention has been paid to improving the conditions of schools, to favor access to education for socio-economically disadvantaged students, improve or strengthen the curriculum of basic education, promote teachers training. The main part of the budget for public basic education has gone to establish the periodic evaluation for teachers. The effects of this debate have polarized the different realms of national life and have lead to teachers' stoppages, strikes that have been object of military repressions, deaths, etc., effects that in nothing have contributed to improve the educational quality.

The Autobiographic Essays of Teaching Experience to obtain the Master's degree, one response from UPV to the national debate.

In a similar perspective to the one raised by Honoré, the *curricula* of the MEB and of the MEEEI are based on the daily practices of the in-service-teachers-students, who have to study their own practices, to review and examine them in the light of pertinent theoretical tools, in order to understand and transform them, resignifying and systematizing their teaching work. These Masters programs seek to provide the students with theoretical-methodological tools that lead them to analyze their own professional practices, based on a process of reflection-action, aimed at improving their professional performance.

In this sense the last terms of both Masters programs include seminars that point to support the students to obtain the degree (SATs), which constitute the closure of the training path of these masters. So, seeking to increase the levels of terminal efficiency of the graduate programs of UPV, as well as to offer to students a final, deep, critical, hermeneutic and formative exercise of reflection on their teaching identity, Trujillo *et al* (2016) introduced the option of *Autobiographical Essays of Teaching Experience*, where the participant is required to review and recover, individually and in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the *itinerary* of their teaching identity.

Here it is important to remember that the *itinerary*

reconstructs the life story of the subjects under a semantic perspective, that is to say, recovering the meanings that the processes, the events and the displacements of those subjects or their family have. [...] Its peculiarity lies, unlike the trajectory, in that the line it traces is not straight, nor in a circle but in a spiral, that returns without ceasing and without

ceasing it moves away from the point of departure. [...] The itinerary responds to a temporal logic [where ...] past and present are not contiguous, but the one is included in the other. (García, 2000: 16)

The tasks developed in building these essays are coordinated in a double and simultaneous strategy:

- 1st The work in groups of students that are in-service-teachers, working together in PLCs, sharing and discussing the way and the social influences that led them to become elementary school teachers. The questions to be solved are: Which influences (from family, historical and geopolitical contexts they lived, school spaces, groups of friends) shaped their professional identity? Which of those have favored/unfavored their decisions since childhood, adolescence, and their professional practice? Which of these influences are recalled as positive or negative, why? What did they have to give up to become primary school teachers?
- 2nd The work of writing, both individually and in PLCs, with the support of the theory and knowledge built in their professional practices and in the Masters they are concluding,

- **In past time**, reconstructing their experiences: Which over-determinations (in time and space, and among the different realms) influence their professional identity, and are now present in the way they teach elementary school?, How conflictive or limit situations contributed to shape their professional identities?;
- **In present time**, recognizing the effects of their professional practices and of the decisions taken, in: their professional successes and failures, in their families and relatives, but also in themselves (do they feel symptoms of “teachers’ burn out”?, Do they feel their health has decreased? Was working in PLCs potentially useful towards learning about themselves, and towards enhance togetherness? What have been the costs of their professional decisions and of everything to what they have renounced?
- **In a prospective way**, drawing on the routes they want to walk: professionally, in relation with their families and relatives and in relation with their own interests, their physical and mental health. Extrapolating Dominicé’s words (2006), the point here is to use autobiographies as a research practice for inventing tomorrow’s life.

In this regard and by articulating many of the intelligibility tools described above, the students prepare an essay integrated by three major sections:

Section 1. Starting point. Here it is required from the participants to re-read and process the theoretical sources to write a presentation of the theoretical methodological tools with whose support they carry out in their research: epistemological positioning, characteristics of the biographical narrative approach, the notions of experience, experience and teaching practice, as overdetermined practice, synchronic and diachronic observation, among others. And on the other hand, they must to describe the methodological strategy for the retrieval of information and for the interpretation of the information collected in doing their autobiographies.

Section 2. How we became teachers? To write this section of the essay the participants rely on two types of instrument that are first individually requested, and then discussed in PLCs. These instruments are:

The Guide Questionnaires with which they trace the influences that along with their itineraries, were overdetermined in their teaching identities.

The Formats for the tracking of condensations and displacements in the itineraries, with which they trace the genealogy of their teaching identity and the ways in which the influences have been overdetermined in it, along with 4 open temporalities (not fixed or monolithic), some of which can be overdetermined and/or overlapped with the others:

- 1st Childhood and adolescence,
- 2nd Bachelor studies and the stage of the decision to enter teaching,
- 3rd Teaching professional practice and
- 4th Formative stage when they were studying the MEB or the MEEEI

These formats allow the students to observe and

- **describe synchronously** how some elements of the context (family, school, geopolitical, etc.) of each temporality are articulated to the identity of each teacher, tracking the beginnings (Ursprung or Entstehung, Nietzsche would say) of the teaching identity and the modifications that this one is suffering.
- **narrate diachronically** the ways in which the influence of certain aspects, events, events and/or milestones is displaced and persists throughout the four temporalities condensing, articulating, changing, re-structuring, re-signifying, in what today they are like teachers. (González, 2016) . Here the corresponding format is shown in Illustration 1.



Ilustración 1. The formats for tracking overdeterminations (condensations and displacements) in the itineraries. González (2016)

In *Section 3. By way of arrival: Closing and Opening Who are we today as teachers?*, the teachers must to do a located metacognition exercise in CPAs, to consider their strengths and weaknesses, the formative experiences that the retrospective collegial exercise offered them and build a pending agenda and an improvement plan for their teaching identity.

In methodological terms, the autobiographical inquiry that gives rise to these essays, is based on a **strategy of gathering information** that triangulates

- a. Documentary research, where personal, professional documents, biblio-hemerographic materials of theoretical, contextual and/or methodological content are analyzed
- b. Self-interviews, based on three types of questionnaires.
- c. Discussion groups in Professional Learning Communities

On the other hand, the **strategy for the analysis and interpretation of the information collected**, combined

- a. The use of theoretical tools
- b. The develop of synchronic and diachronic analyzes, based on formats as presented in Ilustration 1, that is, one biogram format for each one of the four temporalities proposed (González, 2015):
- c. The production of metacognitive reflections on the constitution of the teaching identity and on the autobiographical experience.

3. Autobiographic Essays of Teaching Experience. The research

In this section, I will present the characteristics of the study that I am reporting in this conference based on the autobiographical essays of teaching experience, the questions, assumption and research objectives, the methodological strategy used and the findings.

The methodological strategy to retrieve the information triangulated:

- a. semi-structured interviews to a non-representative sample of 20 students from both master's programs who completed their reception papers at the Xalapa headquarters of the SATs,
- b. interviews with 4 academics who work in the reference programs ; and
- c. review of a sample of completed autobiographical essays from both graduate programs.

Based on the above, the research reported here sought to answer two questions

1. How does the MEB and MEEEI graduates of the UPV signify the autobiographical experience of their teaching identity: what benefits do they recognize they have had, what difficulties, advantages and disadvantages identify in the process, what topics, situations and elements of the context are overdetermined in their narratives, what agendas are raised at the end of the exercise?
2. What is the productivity of the strategy of establishing the individual and collective re-construction, both of the professional trajectories and of the formative trajectory in the postgraduate course, through autobiographical narratives as a final integrative exercise to obtain the academic degree?

The following research objectives were derived from the previous questions:

1. Understand the meanings built by the professors-students who graduate from the MEB and the MEEEI, about the autobiographical reconstruction and collaborative work, the formation of their teaching identity: productivity, difficulties, advantages and disadvantages that they find when exercising , the themes, situations and elements of the context that are overdetermined in their narratives, the agendas that are posed at the end of these reflections.
2. Assess the contribution of this type of seminar to the curricular purposes of the MEB and the MEEEI and to the challenge of increasing the terminal efficiency of these Masters programs and the challenge of improve the quality of in service teachers of the elementary level.

4. Results at the time of closing this work

As Dominicé (2000) says,

A learning process occurs through narrating, especially when a life history method is used consciously in higher education, it is the method which can facilitate construction of knowledge. Learning from our lives and through life story telling might also arise when the life story is used as research method.

In this regard and in relation to the first objective of the meanings built by the students along with the autobiographical exercise, it is interesting to see that the 20 interviewees value it positively, mentioning that it allowed them to

- Focus their pedagogical and didactic strengths and weaknesses (10 cases)
- Do metacognitive analysis on aspects to which they do not normally have access (2)
- Approach internal and external reasons for their feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with their profession (7) or against their positive or negative self-assessments (6)
- Value themselves more positively by seeing the obstacles they have faced and overcome (5)
- Value themselves more positively and develop resilience in the face of the complexity of the teaching profession (14)
- Learn to investigate (8)

In another direction, not all the academics interviewed rated positively this option as

- 1 of them thought that it is very difficult to believe that an autobiography has methodological rigor, due to the very nature of this type of research not yet consolidated.
- 3 of them pointed out that concepts such as *overdetermination*, *condensation*, *displacement*, *diachronic observation* and *synchronic observation* are very complex for the students of these kind of Masters, that do not offer strong theoretical formation.
- 2 of them affirmed that the very abstract level of these theoretical tools is the reason why in some essays it is observed that their use appears forced, incorrect, confused or disconnected from the topics that are addressing.

The main difficulties that the students acknowledge having faced when they were working in the autobiographical essays of their teaching identity are

- Having to face themselves (12) face aspects of their past that remained hidden for a long time (8) or discover aspects that were latent in their identities (16)
- Open and discuss their own itinerary to the LPC (6)
- Recognize with sincerity and honesty the successes and mistakes made in their itineraries (10)
- To do an exercise that can sometimes be complex and/or painful (11)
- Talk about themselves (10)

On the other hand, only one of the six professors interviewed mentioned that the difficulties faced by the students had to do with the fact that sometimes the students did not remember or did not want to bring some events of their itinerary to the present, the other five pointed out that the difficulties faced by the students had to do with the complexity of the theoretical and methodological tools that they had to put into play when analyzing their itineraries.

From this, it is interesting to see how academics consider that the main difficulty that the students face in tracking their itineraries was the use of theory, while in the opposite direction, students do not consider this as a difficulty. Indeed most of the students recognized that it is because of the theories they have learned that many transformations took place in their identities. In the beginning the theories were very difficult for them, but later they stimulated their thinking.

Regarding the issues that circulate in the documents reviewed, strong imprints of the family context are perceived, in the way in which the students describe how they became teachers. In some cases it is obeying the paternal mandate, as they enter the teaching profession, but there are cases (2) in which the decision is in clear opposition to that mandate. In this sense, the influence of the father figure (both in narratives of male and female students) is perceived with a strong interpellating power that displaces diachronically along the temporalities. Secondly, the mother figure or other close relatives appear. It is important to note that 12 of the 20 interviewed come from families with at least one family member of the previous generation, was or is a teacher. 8 of the 20 wanted to study another profession

but they had to enter the teaching profession, because it was cheaper and because they considered the job to be safe when they graduated.

The family influence does not come only from the temporality of childhood and adolescence, because the members of the families that the students formed when become adults (wives, husbands, partners, daughters and sons), have an important force. Among the milestones that marked a *before* and an *after*, overdetermining with the educational itineraries, the birth of daughters and sons has a great weight, which motivates in 11 cases the need to study a postgraduate course to improve the family income or to train better to educate them. This milestone is overdetermined with another one that appears in practically all the narratives and that has to do with the insufficient salary of the teachers and the reduction of the purchasing power.

At a third level, elements that are overdetermined with the itineraries are coming from the training course in the master's program that they studied, as well as the influence of the co-workers.

Regarding the elements that are overdetermined in the pending agendas or in the professional improvement plans of the students after obtaining the master's degree, we can find:

- In the first place the students want to keep on studying to become better teachers. 18 of them announce that they will apply for a PhD program, 6 want to get another master's degree.
- 4 of the cases talk about recovering "their lost vocation", that is, the vocation that they had to renounce to enter the teachers profession.
- All of them spoke of the reforms to be made in their teaching practice, one of them proposes to encourage the autobiographical exercise with his students for the productivity he saw in this kind of research.
- 5 emphasized the need to reinforce and intensify their family life that has become deteriorated and in many cases canceled because it is very difficult to study a graduate program and work at the same time.
- Although the issue of teacher discomfort or the symptoms of "teachers bur out" was studied in the SATs and they detected symptoms of this condition in their own bodies, none of them mentioned in their agenda the desire to treat those troubles professionally.
- Finally, 11 assured that they will continue the retrospective tracking exercise and 1 of them said that he wants to comment on what he found in his retrospective exercise, with his family.

Regarding the 2nd research objective of “Assessing the contribution of this type of seminar to the curricular purposes of the MEB and MEEEI, as well as the challenge of increase the terminal efficiency level of both post-graduate programs”, it is important to emphasize that all the students who participated in the Autobiographies SATs of the different campi of UPV, concluded their autobiographies, several of those works have already reviewed and/or are in the previous stage to the corresponding degree exams. This situation speaks of the potential of this modality in relation to the terminal efficiency level, which constitutes the bottleneck of the national post-graduate program. However, it must also be recognized that the quality of the documents varies significantly between them in terms of the depth of the analysis and in terms of format (writing, syntax and argumentative capacity and content).

Conclusions

In spite of the many challenges and detractors that face this option to obtain the Master's degree, the Autobiographical Essay of the Teaching Identity can be seen as a productive option. Productive for high-quality training that involves having students reflect personally and in CLPs on the itinerary of their teaching identity, since through the exercise of critical reflection that takes advantage of practical knowledge, the teacher can become aware of the conceptions and Assumptions that have been built in their professional practice and that recover their experience in a self-critical way and not just justification. This reflexivity on the praxis itself is becoming a source of new proposals and innovations that, in turn, should continue to be rethought in a personal and academic position.

The proposal is also productive because it offers multi-referential elements for the assessment of the internal and external curricular congruence of Master's programs that, like the MEB and the MEEEI, intend that the teacher-student make a deep and meticulous reflection on the complexity of the teaching professional practice.

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B.4

Devenir enseignants ensemble

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1. Point de départ

Les élèves de Sciences de la Formation primaire de l'Université de Turin, presque à la fin de leurs études (IV année de cours) et presque prêt à entrer dans la salle de classe en qualité de professeurs, ils se plaignent de ne pas avoir appris des méthodes pratiques pour enseigner ou pour gérer la salle de classe. Comment on peut essayer de surmonter cette difficulté? Pour tenter de répondre à ce besoin, à partir du 2015 dans le «Laboratorio di Storia dell'educazione e della letteratura per l'infanzia» nous avons essayé une nouvelle méthode de formation: un professeur d'école primaire à la fin de sa carrière ou déjà à la retraite donne des conférences à l'Université, pour narrer son expérience en tant que professeur, comme dans une histoire autobiographique, spontanée et ouverte. Ensuite, un groupe d'étudiants-futurs enseignants «adopte» l'enseignant expert et réalise une interview vidéo qui cherche à comprendre en particulier «la profession enseignante» avec ses stratégies, ses solutions, les situations où on se peut trouver, mais qui cherche à comprendre aussi ce que signifie «être un enseignant». La vie professionnelle et l'expérience sur le terrain font de ces maîtres de l'école de Turin des années Soixante/Soixante-dix/Quatre-vingt du vingtième siècle de vrais experts. Et les jeunes sont prêts à aller «recueillir le témoin», en prenant aussi des «trucs d'artisanat» que les livres seuls ne peuvent pas fournir. Le cas de professeur de Turin est emblématique: dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, la Turin de la FIAT a connu la grande immigration du sud de l'Italie, les habitants se sont multipliés et les salles de classe ont été remplies avec des étudiants qui ne parlaient que le dialecte et qui ont été déra-

cinés et désorientés. Mais, en regardant de plus près, les classes où travailleront aujourd'hui ces étudiants en formation sont formés à nouveau par des étudiants étrangers, qui peuvent présenter les mêmes difficultés linguistiques ou d'intégration. Il existe donc une forte corrélation entre la situation d'hier et la situation actuelle: est-ce que en utilisant une méthode basée sur la narration et l'autobiographie on peut aider les étudiants à apprendre en même temps contenus et méthodologies?

C'est précisément le point de départ qui a conduit à un lien entre «les enseignants d'hier» et «les enseignants de demain». De cette façon, on a essayé de construire la formation par l'être ensemble et par le récit autobiographique de la vie d'une personne avec lequel nous avons beaucoup de points en commun, juste plus âgé.

2. Le parcours proposé

On a donc décidé d'étudier l'histoire de l'éducation entendue comme le passé récent de l'école de Turin à travers la biographie des «vies des enseignants» qui, en commun avec les étudiants en formation, avaient la profession choisie (l'enseignant), l'endroit où enseigner (Turin), les mêmes objectifs (l'apprentissage des élèves mais aussi l'inclusion et le bien-être à l'école), la même perception de leur figure professionnelle (l'enseignant en tant que professionnel qui réfléchit dans un cycle continu d'étude-recherche, de comparaison, de réflexion). Ainsi, les professeurs de Turin qui étaient actifs dans les années 60 et 80 du 20ème siècle ont été invités à venir en classe à l'Université et on a organisée une série de réunions dans laquelle les «professeurs du passé» racontaient l'histoire de l'éducation à Turin dans le passé récent, à travers l'histoire de son expérience de maître à cette époque, et dans lequel les «professeurs du futur» (c'est-à-dire les étudiants universitaires en formation) extrapolaient des éléments d'histoire et de littérature pour l'enfance mais aussi des histoires de vie et des histoires d'une profession. Ce dernier aspect avait pour but d'offrir aux jeunes un point de départ pour aborder de nombreux aspects concrets de la vie des enseignants: comment créer un bon climat de classe et comment organiser la journée scolaire, comment inclure les élèves ayant des difficultés de comportement ou d'apprentissage, comment démarrer les leçons de lecture-écriture, juste pour citer quelques exemples. Grâce au récit biographique, certaines de ces connaissances «pratiques», dont les élèves ont ressenti le besoin, ont pu être intégrées dans notre leçon.

En même temps, il y avait aussi un passage de «compétences émotionnelles» entendues certainement comme un pathos au moment de la narration biographique, avec l'émotion de celui qui parle et l'interprétation émotionnelle de celui qui écoute, mais entendues aussi comme l'histoire des émotions des temps passés (dans notre cas, il a été l'évocation des situations difficiles des élèves déracinés de leur pays d'origine pour venir au nord de l'Italie, de la difficulté à abandonner le dialecte pour commencer à parler italien, de la vie dans habitations étroites et insalubres où étaient relégués les immigrants du sud de l'Italie à cette époque, de la discrimination constituée par les classes différentielles et les écoles spéciales, etc.).

Dans chaque leçon sont intervenus un ou deux représentants du monde scolaire du passé afin que chacun d'entre eux, à travers l'histoire de son expérience, pourrait contribuer à un aspect spécifique de la vie scolaire, en fonction de leurs caractéristiques et leur histoire passée. Chacun en fait, bien qu'ayant connu le même contexte en termes de temps et de l'espace (Torino dans une période historique donnée), illustre des aspects très différents dérivés de leur spécificité, du quartier de l'école où il a enseigné, des livres adoptés et ainsi de suite. Et également chacun a expliqué sa propre façon de traiter les questions méthodologiques, organisationnelles et sociales.

Le point focal de la méthode qu'on a voulu expérimenter à Turin demandait une étape supplémentaire: la relation avec l'enseignant du passé n'a pas pris fin avec la première réunion tous ensembles parce que les élèves, divisés en groupes pour créer un travail coopératif, avaient la tâche d'«adopter» un enseignant-hôtes. Et en particulier chaque groupe devait le rencontrer à nouveau en dehors du cadre universitaire afin d'approfondir un aspect de la vie professionnelle d'un professeur invité. Le choix de l'aspect spécifique devait être orienté non seulement de l'expérience de la personne mais de l'identification par le groupe des «étudiants-adoptants» d'un sujet dont l'expérience pourrait, selon le groupe d'étudiants, être leur utile une fois qu'ils deviennent enseignants. Une sorte de «outils du travail» ou un cadeau que l'expérience de maîtres de conférences mis à la disposition du futur enseignant. Les étudiants, en groupes, devaient donc faire une interview vidéo qui contenait des éléments de l'histoire de l'éducation de la période qui nous avons abordé, des stratégies et des pratiques professionnelles et en même temps qui contribuerait à créer de nouvelles sources pour la recherche (faire une vidéo de ces expériences narratives de vie professionnelle signifie contribuer à la création de nouvelles sources d'étude sur une période historique).

Mais il faut aussi élargir l'analyse du chemin créé: quand on parle d'offre de formation, on a tendance à illustrer ce qu'on planifie et prépare pour l'élève afin qu'il puisse progresser dans le parcours d'apprentissage. En réalité, cependant, l'expérience de l'étude et le développement de ce projet «Devenir enseignant ensemble» a prouvé d'être une opportunité de formation aussi pour l'enseignant qui a mis en place le travail, dans ce cas moi-même.

Au-delà de la nécessité d'avoir une base solide de connaissances théoriques et méthodologiques, il était nécessaire de faire un effort pour les transformer en pratique didactique. Cela impliquait un champ d'actions concrètes qui concerne la conception de matériaux pour soutenir l'élève; l'étude de la façon de contrôler la validité scientifique des contenus liés au thème spécifique du laboratoire (c'est-à-dire l'histoire de l'éducation) en limitant les erreurs dues à la spontanéité; la réflexion sur la façon de faciliter le passage de la mémoire personnelle de l'invité à la mémoire collective qui a représenté toute l'histoire de l'école à Turin; l'attention pour sensibiliser les étudiants à la nécessité de distinguer entre la mémoire d'un épisode et l'épisode réel; la préparation à la conduite de la leçon, en facilitant l'invité dans son récit biographique sans le gêner d'une part, mais en le ramenant au sujet en limitant les digressions de l'autre. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'il y a aussi le besoin de donner aux étudiants les mêmes notions de conduite d'interview (car au moment de la seconde rencontre, les élèves deviennent intervieweurs), créant une structure qui laisse en même temps un espace autonome à l'étudiant-enquêteur et à l'enseignant interrogé, mais qui crée un contexte de référence homogène à l'ensemble des entretiens menés par les différents groupes afin de créer des œuvres cohérentes et comparables. En observant ce ensemble de tâches, on peut affirmer que même l'enseignant qui propose une méthode biographique dans un parcours de formation doit sortir de sa «zone de confort» pour être en quelque sorte intermédiaire entre les besoins de celui qui raconter, les besoins du celui qui écoute, les besoins de celui qui coordonne et organise.

Par conséquent, le travail qu'on a commencé avec ce laboratoire nous a permis d'expérimenter comment le choix de l'utilisation de la méthode biographique a créé une triangulation intéressante: les enseignants en formation (les étudiants en fin de parcours universitaire pour devenir enseignants), les enseignants à la fin de leur carrière d'enseignants de l'école primaire, un enseignant universitaire qui, d'une part, apprend des histoires des interviewés mais d'autre part agit en tant que médiateur et facilitateur.

3. La méthode proposée

Afin de démarrer le processus de planification, il était nécessaire de commencer une réflexion qui partait de la question: connecter des personnes d'âges et d'expériences différentes mais liées par le même choix professionnel, peut faciliter le processus d'apprentissage? Peut-il créer un moment formatif positif dans lequel le contenu (dans notre cas de l'histoire scolaire) est ajouté à la transmission d'éléments spécifiques d'un métier (dans notre cas la profession d'enseignant) générant ainsi la connaissance, l'identité et le professionnalisme? Les expériences de McEwan et K. Egan (1995) montrent comment les histoires des enseignants ont longtemps été utilisées dans la formation des enseignants, et en même temps il est déjà vérifié la possibilité de fournir une interprétation narrative de la réalité (Giusti, 2008) ainsi que la reconnaissance officielle par les sciences humaines au rôle du récit (Clifford, 1988; Geertz, 1988; Blanc, 1980, Bruner, 1991, Jedlowski 2000, pour ne citer que quelques-uns. Pour une image plus complète, voir Smorti, 1994). Mais, au-delà du choix de l'approche en général, une réflexion approfondie était nécessaire pour comprendre les modèles auxquels nous voulions nous référer. Nous avons pris en compte à la fois la méthode ethnographique appliquée aux sciences humaines (Clifford, 1988; Geertz, 1988 ; Gobbo, 1996) et la méthode biographique narrative dans la formation (Cambi 2002; Demetrio, 2002), tout en maintenant la marges loin d'eux: la rencontre directe « avec l'autre » est présent dans l'expérience de Turin et contribue à introduire une approche qualitative, mais quand la méthode ethnographique est utilisé dans l'environnement scolaire, il est souvent compris comme pour le bénéfice de l'enseignant dans la didactique quotidienne (Maturana Moreno & Garzón Daza, 2015) ou du chercheur qui observe la dynamique de classe (Leoncini, 2011). Élément crucial est que dans le cas de l'expérience de Turin il n'y a pas de contact avec le contexte réel (on était dans une salle de classe où l'invité était dans un contexte neutre). En ce qui concerne la place de la méthode biographique, il y a une différence importante par rapport à l'utilisation traditionnelle (écrite) de l'autobiographie dans la didactique (Birren & Deutchman, 1991 Grassilli & Fabbri, 2003): la personne était invité à raconter oralement son expérience d'enseignement et à interagir avec la classe en répondant à des questions, des curiosités, des liens avec l'expérience des étudiants mêmes. Ce n'était donc pas le cas d'une personne qui, seule dans le silence, se souvient, reconstruit et écrit sur elle-même. Au flux de la mémoire professionnelle s'ajoutaient des questions spontanées du public qui stimulaient

souvent de nouveaux souvenirs et de nouvelles histoires de vie professionnelle. Pour cette raison, il est nécessaire de distinguer le cas de l'Université de Turin de l'utilisation de la méthode biographique comme un moment de formation et d'auto-formation des enseignants en service (MacLeod & Cowieson, 2001) qui peut écrire son autobiographie et se lancer ensuite sur un chemin de réflexion métacognitive et à la fois il faut distinguer par l'enseignant en service qui applique la méthode biographique avec ses élèves, en les encourageant à dire et utiliser l'outil narratif (Karpiak, 2000). Et encore, on n'a aussi pas utilisé l'histoire des enseignants qui racontent leur vie professionnelle pour chercher la perception de soi et des expériences qui ont influencé leur façon d'être enseignants (Goodson, 1992).

La littérature sur l'utilisation des biographies éducatives dans le domaine de l'éducation des élèves (Dominice, 2000; Demetrio, 2001) a certainement été la référence théorique qui a le plus contribué au développement de l'expérience proposée aux étudiants de l'Université de Turin et à une référence particulière a été faite à la méthode historico-mémorial qui combine l'écriture autobiographique avec d'autres techniques «pour collecter, sédimenter, stocker puis retravailler, dans un contexte de recherche et de documentation/archivage, les témoignages de protagonistes et de aux communautés d'intérêt historique, commémoratif et socioculturel particulier. [...] La spécificité de la recherche historique-commémorative est que les histoires individuelles (toutes les histoires individuelles) font partie d'une histoire collective qui met en évidence les aspects les moins étudiés et négligés de la recherche historique» (Mussini, 2010). La caractéristique distinctive de l'expérience proposée est qu'elle visait à créer un lien étroit entre un interviewé et intervieweur : si les étudiants avaient dit de ne pas se sentir pleinement conscients de la façon de devenir enseignant, de comment faire le travail, de ce qui se passe réellement en classe, l'espoir était que s'identifier à un personnage déjà confronté à ces mêmes «problèmes» aiderait à mobiliser de nouvelles connaissances et compétences et que l'élève en formation pourrait en quelque sorte «changer lui-même» (Hopkins, 1994, Clark, 2001) pour devenir une personne plus consciente du travail qui l'attend.

Donc, sur le plan descriptif, pour essayer de formuler une définition de la méthode appliquée dans notre Laboratoire d'Histoire de l'Education et de la Littérature pour l'Enfance, nous pouvons affirmer que s'agit de l'expérience d'une personne au service d'un'autre personne avec laquelle ils se connectent, malgré un saut de temps, les mêmes choix professionnels. Nous évoluons dans un domaine qui implique à la fois l'éducation par les pairs (dans ce cas la formation par l'oralité de l'expérience et avec un saut dia-

chronique) et le thème des sources orales de l'histoire contemporaine et, plus précisément, de l'approche narrative en historiographie (Smorti, 1994, Jedlowski, 2000). L'histoire des «personnes ordinaires» traité avec la méthode scientifique devient une source de recherche et si ce «personne ordinaire» est choisi selon des critères spécifiques et circonscrits en fonction des caractéristiques du thème et du groupe qui apprend, alors on peut créer un résultat qui n'est pas seulement la somme des expériences individuelles mais qui dépasse les frontières pour devenir un apprentissage réellement participatif et transformateur.

4. Pour conclure

L'expérience d'enseignement présentée a duré deux années académiques et a impliqué plus de 200 étudiants menant à la création de plus de 40 entrevues vidéo consacrées à l'histoire de l'éducation à Turin à partir des années 1960. La trajectoire est double: d'une part, on a utilisé la source orale pour l'apprentissage et d'autre part on a utilisé une source orale pour créer une nouvelle source (non préexistant, qui existait seulement caché dans la mémoire individuelle) à disposition de la communauté scientifique (interviews vidéo).

Même le « travail d'équipe » a fourni une double et coexistante manière d'être groupe: le groupe d'enseignants qui a été créé grâce à la rencontre entre les «enseignants hier» et «les enseignants de demain» à certains moments et dans d'autres moments le groupe de pairs d'étudiants qui ont eu la tâche de réfléchir ensemble pour choisir l'enseignant pour l'interview, organiser et gérer le travail et l'extrapolation des significations.

En continuant la réflexion, l'expérience de Turin a vu le déploiement de trois éléments différents: celui qui raconte sa propre expérience biographique (l'hôte), celui qui entend l'expérience biographique et s'identifie (l'étudiant à l'université), celui qui apprend de l'histoire narré et en même temps essaye d'optimiser l'expérience d'apprentissage pour les élèves (le détenteur de cours universitaires). Cette opération de médiation a-t-elle perturbé le flux? A-t-elle détourné la trajectoire? Ce n'était certainement pas ce que nous avions l'intention de faire (le but n'était pas de déranger mais au contraire de souligner, de centrer le sujet), bien que ce soit toujours une intervention externe. Une telle intervention a en tout cas fait en sorte de maintenir en tout temps les deux objectifs qui étaient une spécificité fondamentale du projet: d'une part la présence et la puissance de la subjectivité

de chaque invité qui, à travers le récit de son expérience, a pu «éclairer» et soutenir l'expérience de vie des autres et, d'autre part, la possibilité pour les étudiants de modeler les histoires écoutées et leurs significations afin d'en dériver des éléments de construction de leur personnel «moi-professionnel».

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B.5

“To be born” as a professional.

A practice proposal for the care work formation

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No one can do all or everything; but you can find yourself in what you do, finding out the whole in your own work quality

(Mathieu, 1998, p. 90)

The paper is set in research field on adult learning, centered on the complexity and the reflexive oriented interaction. This adult learning develops “learning itineraries by living” (Formenti, 2017, p. 48) and promotes adult transformation (Mezirow, 2000, 2003, 2016; Taylor, & Cranton, 2012) through biographical learning types (connected to life histories and life – based methods) (Alheit, 2015; Delory, & Momberger, 2009; West, Alheit, Anderson, & Merrill, 2007). Such learning itineraries aim to answer to an authentic knowledge question (Knowles, 2010; Schön, 1983, 2006) on matters, practices, situations, interesting from a personal/professional level and also important for the whole community (Formenti, & West, 2016).

Within this framework, the paper aims at discussing the possibility of justifying a reflexive path on the professional identity within the care work formation and translating it into a particular group practice. With this aim, the paper is organized into two parts: the first is dedicated to the question of professional identity (Sara Nosari); the second one is focused on the question of the care work formation (Emanuela Guarcello).

1. The question of professional identity

1.1 *A problematic field: the experience as research question origin*

During the group formative practice on nurses educational role, led in the Nursing Degree Courses of Turin University, some critical questions have

emerged about the care professional identity. Through a written structured interview well-organized in a series of open questions focused on professional history and identity (Atkinson, 2002), the students are compared with some aspects which characterized the care professions: the transformation, the relationship, the identity, the previous experiences connected with the care work. The analysis of the emerged reflections has drawn a professional image that is still ‘unsophisticated’ and not enough defined, if we consider two factors: the students have chosen this professional path; the group practice have interested students attending the second year. This still ‘unsophisticated’ and not enough defined aspect is proved by the metaphorical images chosen by the students to represent the professions and the care work. Among the most recurrent images it is possible to mark: mother/parents/animals that take care of/nurse their children/brood, hands/smiles/hearts which relieve any kinds of sufferings, superheroes/angels offer a solution to problems of patients, giving them safe relief. In particular, some students have identified the nurse with the parent figure: as the parent, the nurse would express “purity and goodness of heart”, he/she would have in the pocket “a little book of nursing”, he/she would have “big ears ready to listen to stories and needs of patients”, and he/she would be characterized by “sweet eyes which can give comfort to sad thoughts of patients at first sight”.

For example, the reference is to the she-wolf which holds the wolf-cub in its mouth, the tiger which takes care of its tiger cubs until the day they became independent” or to the mother who “takes care of you when you need it, figure who is always present, good, you can rely on every moment”. Other students represent the nurse through the image of the angel meaning the one who “appears to the patient and gives him/her brightness and relief”; moreover others represent the nurse as a superhero who has the “power to save the others” and who is “able to change according to situations, fascinating the people around him and helping them to fight their own wars”.

Even though the images are different, the collected ones give back a unitary profile which recalls the idea of «common sense» (Mortari, 2003): the understanding these images reflect could refer to an implicit learning that the professional of the care would have as ‘wealth of start knowledge’, a wealth ascribable to what Bruner (1997) defines “popular pedagogy”.

Indeed it deals with images which insist on reassuring aspects and that only rarely and partially represent the problematic aspects of the care process, the ambivalence and the experienced and operator practice complexity and, at the same time, the resistance and the dimensions of conflicts, which can emerge with the patient.

For this reason, they are not “naive” or “harmless” because they risk misunderstanding and distorting the role of the care professions: these images point out the deep discard between imagination and daily, expectations and real duties. This discard must not be underestimated because it could take the future professional to carry out a profession very far from the one pursued (with consequent dissatisfactions, anxieties or stress) and the educator to work on a not recognized profile.

1.2 *From experience to problematizing: question formalization*

The criticalities emerged as regards the identity profile need a revision path that must estimate the future professional with specific questions: what characterizes the professional identity of care operators? Is it sufficient a formative path on contents? How can you build the professional identity which belongs to the care work?

The answers to these questions depend mainly on the identity concept premised. If it is thought – according to the current principal studies, both pedagogical and not (Boria, 2012; De Carlo, 2012; Denet, 2009; Formenti, 2017) – that the identity is narratively and collectively built, also the professional identity definition process could need a type of “second birth” (Mathieu, 1998).

As a matter of fact, though it is mostly built through a process of acquisition of knowledge, methods and tools, the professional identity is defined by a historical process which doesn’t end with the achievement of a title or with the assumption of a role.

The second birth which characterizes the professional identity – both in general and in the particular – starts a story which no professionals can know previously: every situation is new and asks the professional to take part in, deciding the continuation with the other protagonists of the situation. It follows an identity *in constant definition*.

Recalling and reassessing in pedagogic terms a long philosophical tradition (Jaspers, 1983; Benjamin, 1986), this idea of identity can find unity, comprehension and sense in the concept of threshold. The threshold, far from simply pointing out a line of transit for an overcoming, allows to mark the professional identity indicating the physical and concrete space of a “between” (Arendt, 1968): between before and after, between question and answer, between known and unknown.

The image of the threshold as a space “between” catches and gives back,

first of all, the dynamics of continuous re-definition typical of the professional identity: a dynamics played in the ‘dialectic’ that is in the debating ability among the advancement, the coming back and the restarting.

As a consequence, the threshold is not only a space of transition, it is not only a “support point” for the next step: the image of the threshold gives depth to the professional identity when it is recognized as an “open” space and inevitably “in connection”. Therefore the threshold is a space where you can stop to debate, to face each other and to decide with the others.

However this process of recursive redefinition cannot be misunderstood: it is not a sign of uncertainty nor of frailty and of precariousness. The threshold characterizes the identity of the professional making him/her a figure – at the same time – of relation and of position – taking, that is a professional figure who is continuously compared with situations (also contradictory) whose identity aspects are brought forward. Who am I? How can I or must I act? Who must I be and who can I be for the other? Who must the other be and who can he be to me? What can we reach together?

This threshold-identity must be educated. To do it, it must be attended and practised so that the professional can wholly play his own power role in every situation. How can we attend this threshold?

The formative path able of this attendance must work on aspects not based on contents but on reflection. As a consequence, the group practice are particularly suitable to this aim and they make us reflect on possible experiences which put on the contradictions, the conflicts, the questions met in the threshold space.

2. The question of the care work formation

2.1 *Translating proposal: the reflection formative path*

The argumentation of this premise lets us advocate the necessity of a professional profile formative proposal, that is also, first of all, a critic reflection proposal. Since the reflection is a process which must be generated, it follows that the hypothesis of a formation meant as a biographical reflexive path can be realized through group practices that are bounded between formal and informal. The reference is to a learning experience that we could call “threshold” path (Arendt, 2009, 1993; Colapietro, 2004; Ducci, 1999; Tarditi, 2012): this experience which involves the person and his/her rela-

tional experience in group practice can be a particularly meaningful and effective solution just because it allows the antinomic nature of the identity space to express and to question itself. The threshold – identity is indeed “continuous fluctuation between the opposites [...] and game of the extremes” (Rella, 2007, p. 91); it is a space where contradictors coexist as irreconcilable; it is the space where “the contradictors relation is contact, space of transformation, place where to live, place of research, place of a curious unrest that with interest aims at living the ambiguous spaces of the existence” (Rella, 2007, p. 92). It is exactly in these “double” spaces that the formative path of the reflection can be successfully introduced, in the “extreme situations”, in the “logic indissoluble contradictions” (Jaspers, 1983) typical of the human existence and, in particular, in the care contests.

This formation can be the most meaningful experiential space to promote a learning open to the dialogue between the opposites typical of relationship among the professionals and with the patients: it is a suitable space to promote a critic and heuristic thought which doesn’t remove contrasts and antinomies in human relations (Jaspers, 1983; Rella, 2007) but careful to catch, understand and give a sense to these contradictions (Formenti, 2017, p. 5).

The contradiction is indeed an aspect which characterizes the situations of the care professions and that the professional identity, as threshold, must necessarily comprehend and elaborate. The contradiction is not a discard to be filled, a knot to untie, a problem to eliminate: in the contradiction the parts are “both reunited as a process, that is not as effective identity, but as a continuous opposition and reconciliation, they are the expression of the vital process of the forces of the world vision” (Jaspers, 1983, p. 403). From this point of view, the approach of the care professional -between the regulating rationalism typical of the medical-sanitary techniques and the unpredictable complexity of the human relation- becomes reflective research.

A path which cares and practises this approach has to pledge to confront the future professionals with the “opposite stimuli”, “extreme situations” (Jaspers, 1983) or, more simply, “possible experiences” (Bertin, 1995). At the same time, however, the formative path cannot risk excessive disorientations (Mortari, 2003) right in the delicate phase of the formation of the professional identity. The easy polarizations must be avoided not to form a professional behaviour which performs excluding. The care professional must be educated to “think the sense” (Mortari, 2003) of the experiences and to recognize in them the contradictions. This process of thought cannot

follow the problem solving logic: to think the sense does not mean to decide of in-decidable questions through “calculation”. It deals with a thought which does not simplify the acquisition of the professional identity, “actually it makes it difficult, but at the same time important” (Jaspers, 1983, p. 147).

If this path finds in the group practice a meaningful and effective occasion of education, life based methods and tests meant as pretest are the path operative elements.

2.2 The group learning proposal for the care work formation: life – based methods and tests meant as pretest

Within the formative path the reflection can be promoted thanks to group practices realized through the use of texts meant as pre-tests: they set up real or believable professional experiences, starting a reflection on the object, spaces and methods of the relationship. The proposal of using the tests faces, bringing its own original elements, the Philosophy for Community perspective and, in particular, the pretest tests practice aimed at promoting community of research (Bruner, 1986; Fabbri, Melacarne, 2015; Striano, 1997).

The characteristic aspect of pre-tests is that it is impossible to anticipate the reflection because it is necessarily connected to the personal experience and sensitivity.

The professional experiences narrated in the tests can represent contradictory situations expressed through examples of short moments, daily and recurrent in the professional experienced. These moments don't represent “critical accidents” (Mortari, 2003) or “pedagogic cases” (Riva, 2007) personally happened to the subjects in education; at the same time the situations must be ‘lived’ by the students with deep interest.

Indeed the interest is an aspect which plays a fundamental role, first of all, because it is functional to promote the students capacities of identification; moreover, because it allows to contain the distortions and disconnections of communication which can occur when the reflection concerns a really experienced case by among some participants: self-justification on our own work, depreciation and interpretation of the others actions, aggression experiences.

The test develops through a dialogue among some people involved in the narrated situations. This dialogue aims at putting a problem on artificially, in order to bring the future professionals within an unusual question

which draws the attention, makes curious, surprises, stops and proposes again a scene of life to be inquired, analysed and understood (Nosari, 2017).

This scene is not a device, it doesn't have any tricks to understand the answering advance, it is not aimed at deepening the knowledge, but at being an active and creative force which takes the students to meet “problematic figures”. They can be ambiguous (Atkinson, 2002), antinomic, contradictory, which hide a secret only partly decipherable (Rella, 2007).

The problematic situations expressed in the tests are narrated with methods ascribable to the “philosophic” writing (Cosentino, 2005; Lupia & Miraglia, 2011). The narration must be short and inspired to a real fact, represented not necessarily in a completely faithful way. The elements of narrative contextualization (places, situations, characters, ...) must be described in a generally blurry way: indeed the test doesn't aim mainly at narrating the facts in their sequence, but it aims at bringing the readers to build a reflexive path on a general and broad situation, in which everyone can find a personal position. The test dialogues don't propose final answers in order to avoid specific stance and to allow a relaunching of the reflection to the group.

The experience, made with this type of pretest-test, shows the importance to avoid the title writing in order not to lead to simplistic and unilateral interpretations of the content. Moreover it could be functional to reduce the comments to the dialogues at the minimum requirement in order not to instill a judgement on the verbal relation nature (for example, “ask the nurse with a disapproving tone”). The number of the characters included in the narration must not be excessive (approximately 2-5) in order not to create a confused and chaotic scene; moreover the main characters must not be presented as ‘caricatures’ of the extreme points of view, which could provoke an uncritical ‘alliance’. Finally the test conclusion must not have questions or assertions which could propose already given positions based on a logic of opposites exclusion. For example: “Carlo and I look at each other with the same uncertain expression and both are perhaps thinking how difficult it is to judge and decide what it is right or wrong” (Lupia, Miraglia, Nardone & Sorbo, 2011, p. 105).

The tests can be used with 10-15 persons within a dialogue_setting (for example, forming a circle), at the presence of a teacher who has previously deepened the explanation of some fundamental concepts on the educative and care relationship. The formative process can start from a plenary reading of the test (given to each participant), also with more than one voice. After this reading the teacher can present some stimuli – questions which have a biographic and narrative nature (Atkinson, 2002).

To this phase a reflection, based on the proposed questions and realized in couple, can follow, deepening in particular their personal experience connected to the narrated situation. The couple dimension can involve the participants in the test title invention which is representative of the contradictory and antinomic observed aspects. Afterwards the formative process can continue through the plenary presentation of the main issues of the reflection made by each couple. The main issues of the reflection are shared and discussed in the enlarged group and often explained with the graphic visualization support.

This reflexive process, proposed again within the formative path, can be concluded, in each lesson, with a group self-assessment on the formative experience (participation, interest, mutual listening, ...). In the following phases, it is interesting to consider the possibility to propose the students, divided in subgroups or in couples, the writing of a test on a contradictory situation which can be later discussed paying attention to the previous phases.

2.3 The formative proposal: togetherness, antinomic spaces and professional identity

The reflection about similarities and differences on what the participants have elaborated, sets the group in a 'open' space in which it is possible to express their own argumentations and to be aware of the emerged points of view. Just starting from the differences emerged within the group thought, some deep connections with the other's thought can emerge. The connections lead to a personal and original stance on the presented antinomic situation. In this case the group works as a 'collective' mind in which the individual's point of view becomes a space of contact and connection (a type of synapse) among the possible thoughts on the debated situation. The tests themselves can be considered an 'archetypal and collective biography', typical of the human being in a broad sense, which promotes the narration of particular life histories of the single person and of the group. Indeed every person thanks to the presented situation – stimulus can get in touch with the contradictory and the antinomic spaces of personal and collective professional history. The view area on the contradictions of the situation, widens and deepens, taking the persons to experience the sense and the importance of the togetherness in the research for the knowledge construction.

In this way the formative practice allows to attend the problematic

nature, typical of the threshold – identity of the care professions, and to put to the test the threshold – identity judgement capacity. Indeed the pretest-test sets up a contradictory space in which every person is encouraged to express his/her own point of view on the situation, accepting the risk and supporting his/her own exposition with courage and humbleness. At the same time, it brings to exercise the reflection capacity, recognizing the possibility of other points of view. In this formative perspective, the tests meant as pre-tests can represent a real itinerary of a reconstruction and re – vision of the self and an interesting occasion to make the formal learning contest a setting that can be able to interconnect non formal and informal fields in which the professional is building his own identity.

From this point of view, identity and professional competence aren't established in a standardized way, but they must be created and internalized in a recurring synthesis (never seen and visible before) given by the possibility of telling and narrating about ourselves. Therefore, we can mean the tests as life – based learning types because they promote a reflection, a narration and a sharing discussion on the professional/personal experiences (biographical reflections), starting from an authentic knowledge question (matters, practices, care work situations) the test focuses on.

2.4 A new problematizing question

The presented path can implement the research on the tests use in university formative path for care professionals, identifying and supporting those topics which can give an epistemological justification.

Starting from such groundings, it will be interesting to widen the tests writing, putting on a broad selection of contradictory situations also taken from the professional histories of students and professionals, collected and analysed through narrative and biography research methods. A further research field can be represented by the realization and the analysis of formative experiences achieved through the use of these tests in order to improve phases, processes and results of learning.

Within this reflection the paper will try to conclude raising a further research question: is it possible to evaluate a reflexive biographical path?

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B.6

Beyond Boundaries: A Narrative Inquiry on Learning “Togetherness” in Scientific Education

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Introduction

Over the past 20 years, there has been growing interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education in Europe, the United States, and beyond. The inherent connection between these disciplines is obvious as we engage in our world. We need look no further than nuclear weapons, flu shots, cancer treatments, high speed railway, or space travel to see evidence of this synergy. Knowledge of and about these disciplines is integral to preparing our population to be actively engaged and responsible citizens, creative and innovative, able to work collaboratively and stay fully informed with respect to the complex challenges facing society (European Commission, 2015; Man, Go dzik & Korda, 2016).

Historically, scientific education has been an *élite* training (Man, Go dzik & Korda, 2016), resulting in limited motivation and desire to learn, two driving forces of Adult Education (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005). The pervasive lack of collaboration (and so togetherness) in scientific careers and curricula has contributed to the reckless usage of scientific and technological discoveries and led human beings toward non-empathetic behaviors (the atomic bomb, the electric chair, the nerve gas etc.), instead of more responsible applications (Dossey, 2010). Despite increasing global awareness of the need for interconnectivity among knowledge domains to promote lifelong learning (Milana & Holford, 2014), scientific disciplines are still taught in a manner disconnected from people’s lives (Man, Go dzik & Korda, 2016). This separateness and aloofness between learners and the science content is a repudiation of the relational, embedded, networked way learners view their place in the world (Gess, 2015).

With societal advances and notable shifts in international power, the global labor market necessitates movement of the educative fields of the

aforementioned disciplines toward a substantive change, with aims to educate more flexible students (as future professionals) in learning new skills to face the newest challenges. Specifically, two of these skills are *collaboration* and *transdisciplinarity*¹ (DTI, 2015).

What is STEM/STEAM education?

The acronym STEM is commonly used to refer to the separate disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Breiner, Harkness, Johnson & Koehler, 2012), with reference to no interconnections. Recently, the intentional addition of Arts (ie: STEAM) to STEM classroom presentations has been shown to result in increased student motivation, engagement, achievement within STEM disciplines (Becker & Park, 2011), improve overall learning among STEM disciplines (Henriksen, 2011; Henriksen & Mishra, 2013) and favor the inclusion and persistence of students who are historically underrepresented in STEM disciplines (women, minorities, youth of low income families, immigrants, students with disabilities) (Posner & Patoine, 2009).

The definitions of literacy for each STEAM discipline, while individualized, clearly overlap. Each cite depth of knowledge, interrelationships and problem application of knowledge as essential parts of becoming literate. Science, technology, engineering and arts take it a step further by pointing toward the necessity of knowledge acquisition for the purpose of societal applications. Nonetheless, there exists a disconnection between how the subjects are *taught* and the way that professionals in the above-referenced disciplines actually *think* and *act* (Man, Go dzik & Korda, 2016). Additionally, the subjects are persistently taught as separate disciplines to students (Katehi, 2009).

In the European Union (e.g. Portugal, Ireland, United Kingdom), as well as in the United States, innovative strategies have been created to attract adult and young people in lifelong learning (Man, Go dzik & Korda, 2016). Education professionals, in concert with political leaders are now calling for teachers to intentionally present the aforementioned disciplines (STEM/STEAM) together in an effort to close the learning gap and better prepare students to succeed in a world yet to be imagined. Perhaps, in order

1 Transdisciplinarity refers to knowledge and skills that transcend and unify different disciplines. It requires the integration of problem solving, problem framing, communication and collaboration that cross organisational and disciplinary boundaries, in addition to disciplinary skills to meet demands for a growing education (DTI, 2015).

to achieve this design-based educational context, educators should consider embracing an Integrative STEAM educational approach (I-STEAM) in their K-16 classroom where the purpose is to intentionally situate the teaching and learning of STEAM concepts and practices in either artistic or technological/engineering design (Gess, 2017). However, this could be difficult if teachers (as *adult learners*) do not experientially learn the process themselves and, while learning, become explicitly aware of *how* they are learning and how what they are learning directly *ties to classroom implementation*.

Integrative STEAM education

Literature indicates a necessary shift toward the intentional presentation of the content and practices of all STEM subjects, through the lens of “Integrative STEAM education” (I-STEAM), an inquiry-based approach that *re-designs* the course of study, in order to result meaningful learning among teachers and students who become co-inquirers in the classroom.

Shifting from the *élite* education to one “for all ages and talents”, the I-STEAM approach is anchored in the design process, an iterative process of inquiry that engineers, engineering technologists, and artists engage in to solve problems (Gess, 2015, 2017). To successfully design, the designer leverages what is known and oftentimes uses what is at hand to move through *uncertainty* and *failure*, by creating novel solutions that are retested and re-evaluated within the given constraints. However, it could be an epistemological prejudice to think that biographic interrogations are not involved in this process: as Merrill (1999) and West (1996) suggested, participation in education often has a profound effect on the self and identity by changing the lives of learners and sometimes those of their family (West 1996, Merrill, 1999). Through engagement in the design process, adult and young learners are more likely to increase in curiosity (and therefore interest), realize content relevance in their own lives, improve the likelihood for content transfer, and enhance the opportunity for significant learning to occur (Kennedy & Odell, 2014). This educational approach may be characterized by the following hallmarks:

- *Co-inquiry of adult learners and their students*. Design based learning supports not only student engagement and learning but also affords the teacher the opportunity to engage in the metacognitive and physical processes of systematic research with student subjects. Once teachers are engaged in this inquiry, they are invited to reflect on how they are “learning to learn” (meta-learning) (or *deuterolearning*, see Bateson, 1972). Teachers may, therefore, develop themselves professionally and immediately affect data driven changes in their practice;

- *Intentional extension of learning through macro systems.* This task requires meaningful collaboration among K-12 teachers of different expertise in concert with: 1. students and their families, 2. STEAM higher education faculty and institutions (Foster et al, 2010), and 3. practitioners in STEAM industries in the immediate community and beyond (Traphagen, & Traill, 2014). Building such an ecosystem of STEAM partners is an essential element to building and sustaining national and international communities (Traphagen & Traill, 2014; Pitt, 2009).

To achieve this goal, educators should break the paradigm of traditional education and commit to “learning approaches that intentionally integrate content and process of science and /or mathematics with content and process of technology and/or engineering education” and not hesitate to further integrate with other school subjects to enhance the overall teaching/learning cycle (Sanders & Wells, 2006). The integrative approach requires teachers and their students to: 1. bring together a bricolage of themes, objectives, actions, methodologies, and materials within a specific situation, in a transdisciplinary manner and 2. make connections among the disciplines, allowing them to “transfer” and apply what was learned before in new situations, and “to learn related information more quickly” (NRC, 2000, p.13).

Because learners can cross systemic boundaries to develop complex identities (Zarifis & Gravani, 2014) and because STEM/STEAM education promotes learning across the contexts, teaching “beyond the boundaries” of each discipline makes sense. In fact, while designing, thinking, and acting as designers, teachers and students engage in and realize the ways that learning necessarily converges in the real world (Lewis, 2006). Thus, in keeping with the rapidly evolving face of education, the subjects of science, technology, math, arts and engineering should be combined and presented as a *meta-discipline* (Kennedy & Odell, 2014) (μετά, “meta” is a Greek word which means “beyond” in English), existing at a higher state than each of its component parts. Therefore, another hallmark can be followed:

- *Meta presentation anchored in design.* Engaging in learning in STEM/STEAM disciplines necessitates teachers and students learning through design. Indeed, by presenting an ill-defined problem or goal that transcends all disciplines, teachers may provide an authentic context in which learners may, by engaging in the design process: 1. learn and apply content knowledge, 2. construct new curricular understandings,

3. develop habits of mind and hand necessary to succeed in a world that has yet to be imagined, and 4. develop “motivational outcomes such as ownership, agency and efficacy” (Krajick & Delen, 2017, p. 35).

The primary aim of our research was to understand the impacts of participating in an authentic STEAM challenge for the teachers and secondarily for their students. In this paper, we will show how the identities of teachers were transformed during the project, and how togetherness across boundaries of discipline and status (teacher/student) resulted.

1. Method

The study was qualitative and followed the narrative inquiry (Chase, 2011). Participants were eight female teachers of STEAM disciplines from a rural middle school in the southeastern region of the United States, who volunteered to be a part of implementing a “STEAM education engineering challenge” presented to them by an international engineering company. As part of the challenge, their students ($N = 40$) were asked to participate with them. This challenge functioned as the introduction to the theory and practice of STEAM education for both adults and students, and participants were considered as a learning community. The study was approved from the Institutional Review Board of the University of the first author.

Because teachers were required to experience transdisciplinarity, the challenge was conducted in their school for three months, with the following goals: 1. designing a custom wheel for a new line of golf carts, 2. developing a marketing plan for the new wheel, and 3. presenting the wheel and marketing plan to a panel of expert engineers and marketing professionals from the sponsoring company. In order to successfully traverse the “dialectical nature of the disciplinary and interdisciplinary relationship” (Kincheloe, 2001), teachers were encouraged to look beyond the boundaries of the discipline they teach, and embrace the available tools and ideas to achieve solutions. The design process was *experience-based* (Kolb, 1984), so that teachers and students’ *reflective journals* were used as a key methodological tool reflecting and describing the social, cultural and educational contexts in which the participants act, thus enabling a better understanding of the meaning of their praxis (Farrell, 2013; Hanrahan, 1999). Moreover, the journals allowed the subjects to reflect on their work processes and reconstruct their experience in relation to their roles and self-identities. As Lave & Wenger (1991) argued, learning and a sense of identity are inseparable.

We followed thematic analysis (Guest & MacQueen, 2012) and triangulated the results until agreement of above 80% was achieved.

2. Results

Thematic analysis on the narratives revealed two main themes appropriate for this conference: 1. *Transformative learning in adult learners' professional identity*, and 2. *Learning togetherness*. We will report the voices of teachers, as revealed in the narratives, and some quotations of their students, enlightening the metamorphic process catalyzed by project participation.

2.1 *Transformative learning in adult learners' professional identity*

The first theme we are going to consider is about the crucial transformative learning that participants had in their professional identity. The transformation that we noticed in their journals beginning third week of the project shifted from being “one who was constrained” to “one who is empowered to explore”. Some participants revealed being impacted by discontents associated with confusion, fear or perceived failure:

Even though we have been given the freedom to change, we still haven't! ... I'm not sure if it is fear of change or love of the status quo that keeps us from moving forward. (Teacher 7, after 4 weeks)

I am not an art or engineering teacher. Today, I want to quit. (Teacher 8, after 1 week)

Teacher 6 seemed to struggle more than others, and yet, her participation and perseverance proved important to developing confidence, demonstrating how initial discontent may be pivotal in achieving transformation:

I am feeling overwhelmed - confused. I don't think I can do this. I have no idea where to even begin. don't understand how this is all going to work! (Teacher 6, after 2 weeks)

I am still out of my comfort zone. I am feeling pressured and overwhelmed. Each time I get comfortable and at ease, something else is added. I am confused and muddled again. (Teacher 6, after 5 weeks)

In keeping their reflective journals, teachers were encouraged to notice if any change occurs in their thoughts, theories, perspectives, and perceptions during the project. Participants achieved an important understanding, since they become comfortable with some issues that are crucial for adult learning (e.g. failure, uncertainty, intentional learning, wonder) (see Kolb, 1984; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005; Mezirow, 2000; Zarifis & Gravani, 2014). The teachers reached an apogee of professional identity by incorporating a new frame of reference into their existing teaching schema:

Our students need freedom to explore, they need to be secure in failure, and so they need ME to be secure in failure - because failure will allow us all to try new things and new ideas. (Teacher 1, after 1 week)

Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable was necessary for success. (Teacher 5, at the end of the project)

The challenges are in changing the mindset of teachers and students. I know that my class has not been this way in the past - ...projects were just fun things to do. I have to make a conscious and intentional effort to make this [design process] a pervasive and ongoing part of my class. (Teacher 6, after 6 weeks)

I had never thought of these kinds of things [engineering, art problems/challenges] being a part of our curriculum. But during the process, I surprised myself by doing the art and engineering - and so I am not intimidated now. (Teacher 6, at the end of the project)

Additionally, we report a student’s perspective to show the counterpart of this theme:

I love this whole thing because for once in my life, I know it’s okay to mess up and make mistakes. If I don’t get something my team is there to help me and to explain what’s going on ...Whether my thoughts and ideas are good or not, they must have some value to my teammates. (Student C, after 2 weeks)

An important change was specifically found in teachers’ perception of why they are engaged in teaching, through biographically supported perspicuity and renewed sense of purpose:

Today a band of teachers joined together to make learning real... not because we are paid to WOW, not because it will increase our pay, not because of college credit, but because we want to change the face of education, we see a need for change, what we have been doing has not been working, and we have a heart for our students. (Teacher 1, after 3 week)

Today I realize I have not been teaching for understanding, but for knowledge. (Teacher 2, after 2 weeks)

Our administration gave us a "blank check". This did not mean money. This meant that we were allowed to make the learning decisions that we deemed best. (Teacher 4, at the end of the project)

This change seems to be contributing to a deepened value of their own professional motivation, and may consequently impact their desire to learn and teach. We also found a deep change in students' beliefs:

Before this project, I thought the regular work in LIFE was difficult. But then [the project] came along. I learned what struggle really was. [at one] point.. I felt like I was just about to give up. But guess what. I had a new family surrounding to support me. That's one thing I've learned through this project—trust. I have learned that I need to let down my guard a little and allow someone to help me out when I'm struggling. Before this project, I believed that I could zoom through life without any help at all. But I have changed since then—I am a new person. (Student T, at the end of the project)

2.2 Learning togetherness

A phenomenon that teachers reported during the different stages of the project was the necessity and the benefit of collaboration and togetherness between them and their colleagues, as well as between them and their students. Participants in this project had changed their dispositions to learning as revealed in their reflection on making connections:

I really stepped out of my comfort zone - I think we all did! The collaboration with others makes it worth it! I now know I can implement this kind of collaboration in my class. Students will appreciate learning, but more importantly, they will enjoy the process of learning; they will understand and make connections. (Teacher 2, at the end of the project)

This week, I want to start asking my colleagues questions to make myself begin to think more, wonder more, and create more connections. (Teacher 3, after 5 weeks)

Even when uncertainty was part of the learning project, it seemed not to be a discontent for some participants because they found strength and confidence in the collective:

I find myself questioning whether I know enough and not just in terms of content area. Do I know enough to be able to plan this kind of learning? ... I know this means letting others in and relying on them and their areas of mastery. I love working with these people... they feel like family... but even with family, admitting not knowing something is uncomfortable. No one likes to feel dumb, but this is how my students feel. How can I ask them to take a risk and trust others if I am not willing to do the same? (Teacher 3, after 4 weeks)

I have no idea about the outcome - but I trust my colleagues. (Teacher 3, after 5 weeks)

Teacher 4 expressed the importance of partnership with her fellow teachers in concert with external business professionals, University STEAM expert, and her students:

Partnerships in teaching are essential. We needed the authentic problem that came from the business. We needed the authentic day-to-day contact with a STEAM education expert. We needed to rely on each other as teachers. We needed to trust our students - because they taught us as much or more than we taught them. (Teacher 4, at the end of the project)

Moreover, the process of re-design through engagement in a community of practice was an opportunity for adults to participate in, and become part of a team:

The process was hard at times and it felt disorganized, but it came together. It took people doing things that they weren't [initially] responsible for doing because some people dropped the ball - but they did it without complaint - for the team! They did it because it needed to be done, and that makes me proud to know them! (Teacher 1, at the end of the project)

The impact of the interaction between the participants was meaningful to tie trust among them, as well as to create a more engaged relationship with their students:

Trust in each other (fellow teachers, administration) was essential. Trust in the students was equally as important. (Teacher 5, at the end of the project)

At the same time, this transformative learning transcended isolated discipline and bounded classroom into an interconnected community, and moved participants from the “isolated person” to “we are a family”, as seen not only in the teachers’ voices above, but also from many of their students:

My team will stick with me no matter what. Right now we all are going through trouble and to be honest now since we have been through all this now I can call my team my family. My *Family* has helped me through it all. They have been there to pick me up when I fall down and I don't think I have had greater friends than them. (Student Z, after 7 weeks)

Over these weeks, I have seen myself and my teammates, change drastically. I have seen my classmates grow, and become more mature. I have realized that my group and I are a good match; our brains all think differently. Since I've gotten to know my teammates, I have felt safer. (Student X, after 3 weeks)

People will finally listen and understand. My team listens to me, adults [from the engineering team] will listen to me, everyone finally stops and says “maybe he's onto something”. For once in the whole time I've been in school i feel appreciated. I don't feel like just a part of a teacher's paycheck, I feel like the people (even adults) respect and understand my mind. (Student B, after 6 weeks)

3. Discussion and Conclusions

The meta-discipline approach was supported by an authentic design task. The fact that the challenge in this study was presented by an engineering firm and was a *real* problem that the engineers were *actually* facing gave weight and importance to the task at hand for both teachers and students. All participants referenced this extra-curricular context as essential to the

successful outcome. The existence of a design problem that transcended individual disciplines and yet required application of knowledge and understandings from each area supports the application of ISTEAM as a meta discipline as defined earlier in this text.

The participant narratives in our study lead to the conclusion that establishing a community that can sustain itself through the constructive storm of learning is essential if the community members are to engage in knowledge creation and personal transformation through the process. By bringing together subject matter experts at all levels of education, both inside and outside of the regular school environment, who are willing to capitalize on the strengths of all participants toward a common goal, transformative learning can result for all. Indeed, this study supports assertions that for education to adequately address the needs of our students, teachers and students must participate “fully and jointly in activities where they can exercise the creative practices of imagine, investigate, construct, and reflect as unique beings committed to giving meaning to their experiences” (NCCAS, 2016, p.17).

While participating in the design challenge, all the participants in this study experienced some form of togetherness. They saw the initial experience of confusion as something that constrained them, and during the project they recognized the importance of understanding the transition between working alone and being empowered to explore beyond the limitations of the traditional educative design. All transitions, however, were accompanied by some levels of uncertainty and discontents. The experience of these difficulties are crucial cues in adult education because they reveal that the learner is going to reflect and re-frame his/her own previous understandings (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005).

Pedagogically, going “beyond boundaries” requires the integration of problem framing, problem solving, collaboration and communication that cuts across disciplinary and organizational boundaries, in addition to deep disciplinary skills to meet demands for a growing society. These meta-competences emerge as future requirements across Integrative STEM/STEAM approaches (DTI, 2015). The new meta-discipline relates and integrates different epistemologies, in particular experiential knowledge about concrete real-world systems from teachers as adult learners with science knowledge about theoretical and practical issues (societal and scientific stakeholders), whereas transdisciplinarity fuses methods and concepts from different disciplines. The new meta-discipline of integrative STEAM education could improve student academic achievement in core academic sub-

jects as a part of a well-rounded education. When correctly implemented by a “strong team of teachers with a shared vision” (USDOE, 2010, p. 16) it could also help provide “enrichment activities, which may include activities that improve mental and physical health, opportunities for experiential learning, and greater opportunities for families to actively and meaningfully engage in their children’s education” (USDOE, 2010). Thus, the preparation and support of STEM/STEAM teachers should be put in place to provide a strong framework for implementation. Such training should include, at a minimum, explicit opportunities for teachers to learn together, through designing in engineering or artistic contexts, in order to build the skills and confidence needed for a meta-classroom.

Given that a qualitative study may have implicit biases, values, and judgements of the researchers, this study is subject to some limitations. First, we found an association between presenting I-STEAM as a meta-discipline and rural middle school teachers’ learning of a sense of collaboration and belongingness with their students (togetherness). Further research is needed to understand if this approach can be useful in other contexts, to see if it is possible to teach this across other situations. Second, our participants were teachers (and students) of a middle-school: even if reflective journals show promising results, it would be interesting to continue with a longitudinal study, in order to understand if the effects we noted are lasting and/or if the effects correlate with student persistence in STEM fields of study. Third, this study was conducted in the United States: the replication in a European country is very welcomed, hoping to go beyond the borders and discover which best practices, experiences, and research development can contribute in the future of adult education in STEM/STEAM fields.

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B.7

The Ethics of Teacher Resistance: Acting on A Vision for Public Education

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Robin, one of the leaders of teacher protest in Seattle, Washington State, describes a decision she made, based on her vision for education:

I delivered my letter of professional conscience [to my school district]. [...] We – the four of us...took the Martin Luther King “Beyond Viet Nam” speech and recrafted it so it was about high stakes testing and delivered it the day after MLK Day. I asked for a different assignment: you can give me a different assignment and value my professional judgment or you can force me to give this test – and then I have to make a choice on whether or not I’m going to give it. And they gave me a different assignment.

Jeanne also signed the letter. Both of these teachers describe ethical decisions to not cause students harm.

The concept of ethics holds two definitions that may be applied to Robin and Jeanne’s actions: The first is that one should act in a virtuous way, promoting disposition of justice, charity, and generosity toward self and others. And second, the concept of duty to promote change in relation to these dispositions is central (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018).

Clearly, Robin and Jeanne’s decisions to opt out of giving students standardized tests hold an ethical dimension. In education, however, teachers who resist the standards movement are often characterized as being conservative, recalcitrant, or even selfish. They are rarely credited with taking a moral or ethical stance.

However, the consideration of the ethical dimensions of such decisions provides a moral dimension to a conceptual framework for teacher resistance. Teacher resistance as an animating and imaginative source for educational change runs counter to many of our root metaphors for teaching. For example, the expression “visionary teacher” is almost an oxymoron. In

other fields, such as science, technology, architecture, social care, medicine, and business, professional vision is front-page news. In education, despite the overwhelming need for people to develop imaginative capacity to envision a just society, teachers are constrained by myriad forces. First, the source of educational vision – especially including the work of teachers – lies outside the classroom: It is located in private/public certification schemes, corporate test design, corporate models for district management, the mission of independent charter schools, and individualistic-learning software design. These schemes, grounded in neoliberal policy, have shifted the locus of vision in public education from the public to the private sphere. Second, the research and discourse on teacher vision have, for many good reasons, focused on teachers' work in the classroom and how they promote the academic learning of their students. This focus on the classroom then frames the construction of teacher vision to the classroom, decontextualizes it from a political sphere, and eliminates a social impulse for the way teachers seek to improve the classroom.

In this study, we explore constructs of teacher vision in public education which connect classrooms to larger systems and discourses. We argue that as professional educators we must reclaim the space to allow teachers to develop and express their visions for the good of society (and for classrooms as part of that space). First I review the existing literature on teacher visioning, paying special attention to the boundaries of these conceptions. Next, as a heuristic, I examine and present views of teacher vision from two teachers who are standing firm against the neoliberal forces currently eviscerating public education. Finally, we discuss the discourses within their visions and then present a larger, more holistic and critical framework for teacher vision.

1. The Tension within: The Literature on Teacher Vision

Almost thirty years ago, Karen Zumwalt (1989) wrote one of the first but still little-known theoretical pieces on teacher visioning in teacher leadership. Discussing teacher preparation, she argued that preservice teachers would benefit from their development of a curricular vision of education:

Curricular vision gives them [beginning teachers] a mindset to inform their deliberations about teaching, to view the issues of classroom, school, and community in a larger context, and to be dissatisfied with the compromises and survival tactics of the first year

as they continually reassess their own teaching in an attempt to provide an appropriate learning environment for their students. (1989, p. 182)

As the quote suggests, Zumwalt consider curricular vision a form of decision-making capacity, helping teachers to consider what “might be,” rather than simply “what is.” Zumwalt’s piece, besides being an early explicit call for the promotion of curricular visions among preservice teachers, is remarkable in that outside of the field of literacy, it remains one of the few explicit calls for teacher vision in education. She draws from Schwab’s four commonplaces of curriculum (Schwab, 1961/1974) as a framework to allow the beginning teacher to consider larger questions about dynamic interactions in the classroom. Schwab’s framework is clarified by Clandinin and Connelly’s (1992) notion of curriculum making. Curriculum making as a dynamic involves the always-unique interactions of the students, the teacher, the various learning milieu, and the learning materials. Teachers do not “deliver” this curriculum, they, as with the students, experience it, becoming its participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The social aspects of the curriculum are at least as important as those related to classroom books and materials.

More recently and specifically, teacher visioning has emerged in the literature on teacher thinking about literacy. Here, researchers have described teacher thinking as a form of conceptual guide for teachers to draw from as they work in literacy instruction with their students. Related to adaptive expertise and drawing from a range of theories about teacher thinking (e.g., teacher knowledge structures, life histories, and personal practical knowledge), teacher visioning in this field provides a framework for examining both the conceptual and pedagogical aspects of teachers’ work (Duffy, 2002). As a framework for examining how teachers are “independent users of professional knowledge” (p. 331) within specific classroom contexts, it is focused on both teachers’ pedagogical competence and their fluency and agency in using this conceptual map to promote the learning of diverse students. Teachers with such visioning – adeptly using professional content and pedagogical knowledge – are “psychologically strong enough to use professional knowledge in creatively resourceful ways” (Duffy, 2002, p. 332). Activating their operational maps, teachers who exhibit visioning may draw from broader personal beliefs and values about the meaning and goals of education (Sawyer & Laguardia, 2010) (e.g., that education should promote social justice). These beliefs potentially add a sort of meaning-and-motivational compass to

their actions. They also provide the basis for an image of desired practice, which may guide and sustain teachers' throughout their careers (Hammerness, 2006; Vaughn & Faircloth, 2013).

Both Zumwalt (1989) and Cochran-Smith, Friedman, Barnett, and Pine (2009) considered teacher *curricular* vision a context for teachers' professional decision making. In a study on the depth and quality of preservice teachers' classroom inquiry, Cochran-Smith et. al (2009) suggested that the more substantive and critical inquiry questions of a group of preservice teachers who were working on action research projects were grounded in a form of teacher vision. Referencing the 1989 Zumwalt analysis, they describe teacher curricular vision as "a kind of theoretical vision that linked particular teaching methods or classroom interventions with larger understandings of students as learners, classrooms as cultures, and the possible worlds open to students" (p. 22).

Zumwalt's discussion of curricular vision foreshadowed slightly later work on two advancements in educational theory that deepen and expand the concept of teacher vision. The first is critical pedagogy. Rooted in Paulo Friere's (1970) revolutionary work in liberation pedagogy in South America, critical pedagogy boldly situates educational analyses and development within systems of anti-oppression education. It provides educators with a powerful analytical and formative stance to deconstruct oppressive and inequitable discourses embedded within schools and curricular projects, with the goal being the replacement of inequitable and biased educational systems with those that promote systemic forms of justice. Critical pedagogy thus explicitly frames the notion of teacher vision as a political act.

The second dimension missing from the work on teacher visioning is the notion of critical self-critique has been a develop line of critical pedagogy since the mid 1990s. For example, bell hooks suggested that teachers must be aware of themselves and their personal educational histories in relation their students' educational histories if there are to teach diverse students in a supportive way. Ladson-Billings includes the knowledge of self as a characteristic of culturally relevant pedagogy. These theories intersect with the curriculum work of Clandinin and Connelly (1995), who suggest that curriculum is embedded in narrative – the past and present – lived lives of the students and teachers as well as the thoughts of and hopes for the future.

2. Method

The following study of teacher vision is part of a larger case study I conducted of two teachers, members of the Washington State Badass Teachers (WABATS), who organized a large march against a corporation in Seattle. Specifically, in the larger study I dissected the actual march to examine their motivation, rationale, complex planning, and enactment of the march. Focusing now on teacher vision, I first observed the teachers at the march, taking photographs of them in action. I later used these pictures as part of the basis of an interview (more of a structured conversation) with each teacher. For this study, I highlighted aspects of the conversations in which they discussed their vision for education.

To analyze their thoughts, I primarily used a deductive approach, focusing on key words and thoughts related to Zumwalt's framework: for the specific classroom curricular piece I examined narrative dimensions of the four contexts of curriculum making (i.e., the student, the teacher, the environment, and the subject), but expanding this construct by placing it in a narrative and critical context. For the critical aspect of the study I drew more generally from the work of Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. Examining their words for their critical meanings within larger structures of oppression or liberation.

After making notes and writing up my version of their case studies related to their planning and enactment of the march, I shared my notes with Robin and Jeanne. As a phenomenologist, I don't present the words and actions of Robin and Jeanne as reality and fact, but rather as ways that I interpreted their considerations of education and practice.

3. Expressions of Teacher Vision

The following two case portraits will first focus on Jeanne's vision of education and the second on Robin's vision.

Jeanne - A Flashpoint for Teachers' Hopes and Questions

Throughout her teaching career, Jeanne, an elementary school teacher in Washington state, has been focused on the meaning and mandate of public education. Entering teaching approximately ten-years ago with a master's degree in education, she has, from the start of her career, held a high conceptual level toward teaching. From her beginning in education she

has emphasized not just classroom-based activities or even best practice, but larger structural issues that impact classroom dynamics. As a beginning teacher she was able to take part in union activities that expanded her work in education and provided her with an awareness of the impact of structural issues on schools. And as a veteran teacher she acts on her views by organizing marches against the new reforms and speaking publicly.

As a description of her current vision of and for education, Jeanne made the following statement at a public rally for democratic education:

[I would like] schools as community hubs; wraparound services provided for every child to be nourished and nurtured; high quality free early learning; technology integrated to SUPPORT learning, not direct it; teachers in hybrid roles working part time teaching students and part time in the area of their passion and expertise; community embedded project-based learning as curriculum; performance assessments that loosely correlate to age-appropriate academic standards; all administrators and union leaders teaching at least one real lesson per week in a real school; pre-service teachers having 10-20 practicum experiences simultaneous with coursework; community and business leaders having a “home school” at which they spend time each year meaningfully mentoring students and helping with decision-making.

As seen in this quote, central to her vision is a call for the integration of schools and community, with the community positioned to benefit schools in multiple ways. She describes community-based organizations “wrapping around” schools to provide students services, nourishment, and nurturing. Furthermore, she describes schools as places that encourage administrators to also be engaged in teaching and that respect teachers’ expertise as they work in layered ways with students and new teachers.

The following diagram attempts to offer an overview of her complex vision:

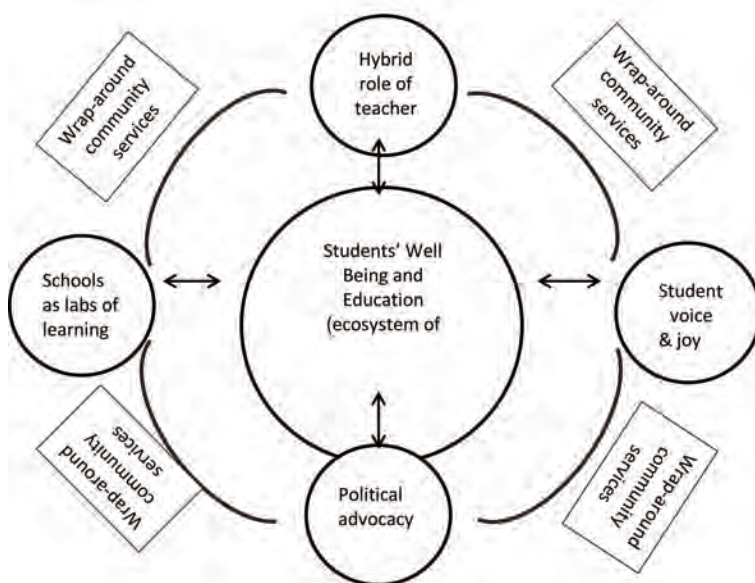


Diagram 1: Jeanne's Vision of and for Education

At the heart of Jeanne's vision are students as active contributors to schools as ecosystems of human health. As a joke, Jeanne said that she would like schools to offer "puppies for everyone. – I jest, but really?" This image – of puppies for all and classrooms as places where students are active and nurturing – provides a powerful curriculum metaphor. Hers is a critical, problem-solving curriculum in which students learn to deconstruct and solve issues facing communities within a larger global ecosystem of social and environmental justice.

Here she discussed the impact of the Smarter Balanced Test, a standardized test, on students: "I teach students to ask big questions. Not just answer questions. [...] But this test will undo the confidence that I have strived to build in them. Instead of acknowledging and nurturing kids on their path of learning, we are punishing them. Because they fail to learn fast enough." She clarified her classroom goals by contrasting them with current unacceptable practices:

[Schools do] not address the human needs of poverty. These reforms [the Common Core State Standards] actually exacerbate the real issues by drawing attention and money away from the real problems.: too many kids per caring school adult is the problem. Lack of TIME

for teachers to collaborate, plan, and authentically assess is the problem. Lack of PLAY and socializing is the problem. Lack of engagement for kids who see these new lessons for what they are—test prep—is the problem.

Instead, she works to “to train my staff on SIOP [sheltered instruction and observation] practices—and this is directly anti-CCSS in my mind because the SIOP strategies empower teachers to ignore the scripted lessons sold to us by Pearson and teach students in creative and unique ways.”

Resisting the new harmful reforms forms part of her mission as a teacher. As part of this resistance she thinks that teachers should organize with parents: “Parents aren’t used to fighting on these issues but when they hear how standardized testing has reduced their child’s classroom experience to one of ranking and sorting children instead of instilling curiosity and creativity, they are willing.” She sees it as being imperative for teachers to work together in resistance:

Of course the rank and file membership must rise up and reclaim our union’s power but I see this struggle in relation to the underlying problems with American democracy—these systems only work if people are actively engaged in them.

This is about grassroots democracy to address underlying issues with people being denied a voice and democratic agency within a market democracy:

The economy being more important than ecosystems or human health the scale of political importance says it all. Americans do not engage in ethical debate and the fact that we all assume everyone agrees with our worldview means that parents and every other taxpayer looks for schools to reinforce their expectation and worldview. Compounding this is the idea that privatization of public institutions is a good thing; teachers are just now realizing that our profession is the LAST sector under attack by profiteers who see the edu-‘industry’ as the last great cash cow of tax revenue.

Ultimately, Jeanne sees public schools themselves as being learning institutions in which both veteran teachers and students preparing to become teachers learn together with community members:

I saw that the changes to how teachers were trained were not in the best interest of children; data for outsiders ruled over the anecdotal data teachers collect. Tests were the determinant of teacher efficacy. Art, civics, project-

based learning, health and joy were diminished or altogether lost from the public school classroom.

Finally, Jeanne sees school funding as a political issues that must be addressed and resolved.

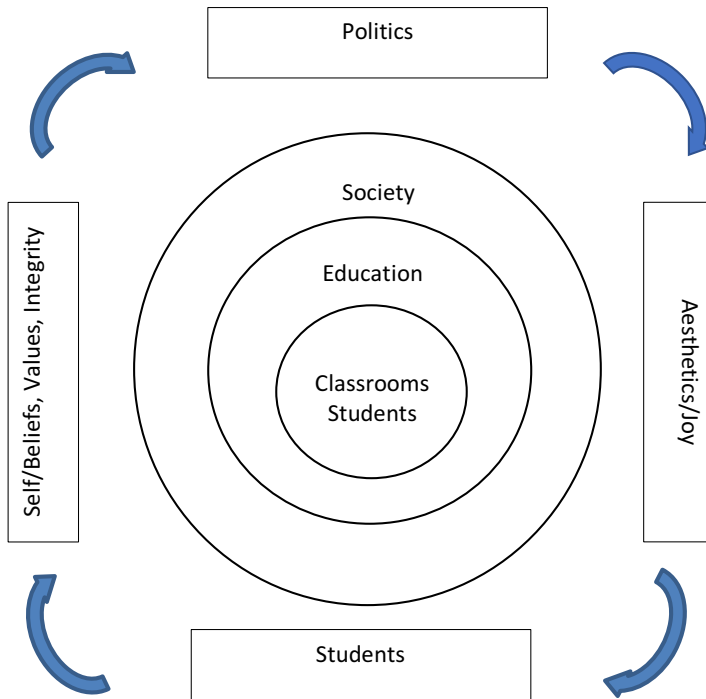
Robin – A Broad Civic Vision with Inclusive Depth

As a teenager in secondary school in the Seattle area, Robin was politically active. She started the Junior Statesman Club at her high school and was a junior senator, actually meeting with elected state senators. After she became a teacher over 25 years ago, she married and focused on home-and-school life. After getting divorced, she returned to her political roots.

In 2010 she joined her union organization and became a leader of the Washington State labor organization, the Washington Educational Association (the WEA). A year later, the organization sent her to Washington D.C. where she formally trained as a political organizer and learned about how to turn a vision into a mission and then into collective action. In 2011 also became a member of the group Save Our Schools (SOS) and took part in a large march on Washington in favor of education. She later became one of the founders of the bad assed teacher (the BATS). In 2013, along with Julianne and Susan, she helped organize a march on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

It's important to note that Robin lives her vision for resistance in education. Situated within society and the lives of students, her vision is dynamic and constantly changing. Starting with the larger society and moving toward the individual student and even herself, there are different nested contexts. In this mix, her present views transact with her past values and history, finding application in lived situated action. Figure 2 presents a diagram of these different contexts or dimensions.

It is important to note that in many ways her vision is holistic: the various aspects of her vision are generative and interconnected. Arguably, the central core of her vision is about students and children. I begin by discussing the larger conceptual pieces that focus her work with schools and students. This sketch of the larger and more foundational dimensions – personal, societal, political, and aesthetic dimensions – provide depth for her vision for students.



Here Robin articulated the role of society to education and education to society:

Thomas Jefferson said that the purpose was to help our society to be able to do the business that they have to do and to be a positive member of society – that’s what the original purpose of education was. It wasn’t college and career. It was to build this foundation in our country. [...] Here’s our vision. We are going to have this system where we meet the kids where we are, we push them – we don’t just let them sit there – we have high expectations but we also care about where they are coming from and...then public education will create a society that’s passionate, empathetic, understanding and successful.

As can be seen in the above quote, hers is a vision for a just society, one with on-going debate. This is a lived stance. “We debate this stuff all the time – how are we going to do this – and we have people who lay down in the middle of the street and then we have other people who are a little bit more non-reactive and thoughtful.”

This societal stance is in many ways mirrored in her goals for education:

This is a system whose value lies within its mission of offering free public education for a free non-elitist society. Siphoning off public funds for private or charter schools both reduce much needed resources for under-resourced public schools and the division of elitist and non-elitist districts eviscerated the goal of public education.

In this quote, she suggests that in the larger context of education in a democratic society, education and society are interactive and ideally mutually supportive. Robin sees schools themselves as offering a location for democratic engagement.

The next level is that of curriculum and classrooms – which are firmly rooted in her view of education. Here she describes a framework for class-work:

In middle school they are supposed to be exploring and figuring out the world around them and figuring out where they want to go and if they don't have the exploring part...you...they won't find that [and...] our role [is] to help these kids find their element. [...] That will help them flourish more than passing tests.

Her concern with students frames her view of educational standards. As with perhaps the majority of teachers, for Robin the issue is not about rejecting standards per se or even a somewhat externally produced curriculum. Rather, it's about what is good for students and whether teachers have the freedom to use their professional expertise to make the necessary curricular decisions to work with students “where they are” as learners:

“The developmentally inappropriateness of the standards, it's off the chart. [...] I get it: Algebra is tough. But we have kids where their brains just haven't clicked yet. So what do they do? They stick them in the class and they hope that they will be a sponge and they will soak it up. [...] When is enough enough?”

Her other criticism of standards is the way that the common core reduces the curriculum to “have” and “have not” subjects:

And we had quite a discussion at our leadership team meeting because they wanted to know how our choir teacher and how the drama teacher and the art teacher and my [computer] class—how are they going to support the ELA common core and I was like, they have their own they have their own stuff they need to be doing

and they have their own growth goals. And one of the social studies teacher was just upset with me, she's like, "Well I take offense with that because I do incorporate music." Well she plays music and she dresses up like the Queen of England. Well, that is not teaching the standards for those classes. But that's the perception if you just play some music you're reaching the arts. But that has absolutely nothing to do with the standards that they are supposed to be teaching.

The above quote suggests a lack of an instrumental purpose to specific courses. Instead of being valuable because they promote the common core (and are thus instruments for an external purpose), Robin stresses that the value of these subjects is inherent to them: it's about the value of art in art class, drama in theater, and the use of computers in computer class – not how well these subjects can help students learn the common core. The other point to note is that Robin thinks that the arts matter, both on an academic or class-based level and also as the "glue" for engagement – that joy and aesthetics can be powerful contexts for sustaining learning.

Finally, running through her vision is the importance of politics and engaged action. However, to simply characterize her vision as being "political" misses the point. Politics, of course, come into play in many ways. She organizes and even evaluates the union based on its support of equity and a specific platform (opting out of testing, working with parents, being opposed to privatization of education). But perhaps the political focus is not so much with taking a particular stance as it is with the engagement of a democratic and dialogic process. Through this process, she tries to get people to open their thinking and entertain new perspectives.

What is impressive about Robin's vision is that it cannot be separated from her life. She lives her vision and her vision animates her. Grounded in her life history, it has helped her to propel her forward as an educator.

4. Discussion: Toward an Ethical Framework for Teacher Vision

As a moral compass for a beneficence and generosity in education that protects students and society, I turn to the concept of "iatrogenesis" found within the medical field. Iatrogenesis describes an awareness of the injury a patient can receive from medical professionals who profess infallibility but engage in harmful practices. Robin and Jeanne suggest how a similar critical stance is needed in the educational field. Their resistance to their

perception of harmful school reforms is expressed within the concept of curriculum making (Clandinin & Conelley, 1992).

Both educators considered students active and collaborative learners on projects, examining, as Jeanne mentioned, the “big questions” in education. As these educators limit the testing and standardized curriculum for their students, they increase a problem based and experiential curriculum for them. Working with their students, they rejected structures and practices that sort, isolate, label, and deny students humanistic subjects such as art. Instead, they built on and extended their students’ talents, strengths, and self-esteem. Without these teachers’ awareness of themselves as curriculum makers, as players empowered to craft curriculum with their students in the classroom as opposed to simply implementing curriculum, they would not be able to engage in meaningful resistance. This stance is akin to the process that Cochran-Smith (2009) described as a “kind of theoretical vision that linked particular teaching methods or classroom interventions with larger understandings of students as learners, classrooms as cultures, and the possible worlds open to students” (p. 22). They also engage in social democracy with other teachers and community members, extended an ethic of care from the classroom to the larger society.

Also, they act on a respect for the different virtues in education (justice, charity, equity, generosity, fairness). Formal education for them plays a central role within an engaged social democracy. Schools act as sites of democratic engagement and education for students, teachers, and community members. For them, democracy is not an abstract construct, but rather a grassroots effort in a daily process. Schools can play a role in the improvement of society and elimination of structures that cause poverty. At the same time, both teachers recognized that poverty and opportunity gaps matter and impact students’ work in the classroom. In a way, both hold visions for schools as rich micro systems of health and student/teacher growth which contribute to the growth of larger ecosystems of environmental and social justice.

Viewing the ethical discourses within Robin and Jeanne’s work delineates two dynamics in teaching and education. One is that teaching embodies a sense of “mythopoesis” (Bradbeer, 1998). Mythopoesis is a metaphysical concept that suggests that animating sources of teaching and learning are deep relational negotiations of meaning making that take place in collective settings. The second dynamic is that to deny the role that ethics play in teaching and learning is to remove teaching and learning from its greater humanistic purpose – grounded in the lived curriculum of teachers

and students. Both Robin and Jeanne lived their ethical responses to their perceptions of education.

Conclusion

The world, at the moment, is deeply troubled. It was recently announced that approximately 21 percent of people in the United States have lived their entire lives in the country at war and 46 percent have lived the majority of their lives in the country at war (“Harpers Index,” 2017). Austerity schemes coupled with the privatization of public institutions (such as public schools in the U.S.) continue to dominate economies of Western countries. However, hope for making the world more equitable, educated, and respectful of diverse lives and thought exists. This hope resides in athletes refusing to accept racism, in women saying enough to sexual abuse and exploitation, in transgendered people demanding dignity, and in educators who maintain a vision for humanity and the common good.

Ethical vision in education acknowledges that students inhabit the curriculum. An ethical vision in education acknowledges that within the context of students bringing their lives – narratives with promise, talents, and, yes, social and emotional scars – into the classroom, it is the role of education to change social and political structures to benefit all students. This vision finds parallels between forms of engaged learning in the classroom and social democracy outside the classroom. It also involves action, promoting movements that challenge inequities and bring about change.

Examining ethical vision in education through the thoughts and actions of two engaged teachers shows that ethical vision in education is both specific and general. In the case of Robin and Jeanne, their resistance was and is intended to reduce harmful situations directed toward children in the name of public education. Their thoughts and actions show us that hope and humanity reside in the interaction between commitment to a vision and its meaning as the basis for ethical action.

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B.8

Getting stories in movement

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1. Connectivity is a process between doing research and marking a path

*Wayfarer, there is no path
Wayfarer, the only way
Is your footprints and no other.
Wayfarer, there is no way.
(Machado, A.)*

Qualitative research in the field of Adult Education, when following an interpretive approach (Denzin, 2000), is a process that cannot be disconnected from the researcher and the subjects under study. In the following pages, the principle of “connectivity” (Bateson, 1972, 1979) presents itself as a path in which the lives of woman, doctoral student, educator, pedagogue and teacher of the Feldenkrais method (the multiple identities of the researcher) overlap, dialogue with each other and come into resonance and/or conflict with the participants in the inquiry – in ways that are rarely described or theorised academically (Burke, 2002, p. 4). The case study which this work was taken from is the doctoral dissertation (Luraschi, 2017) that, in three years of field research and data analysis, has tried to understand the dis/orientation (Formenti, 2016) in existential terms and has questioned the processes of orientation and disorientation beyond the traditional research areas devoted to the theme of choosing a school, a university and/or a profession. I describe as a journey, a non-predefined path, the encounter with two groups of adult women living in residential mother-and-child institutions and with the professionals working with them. The name of women is a fictional name taken from the novel *Invisible Cities* (Calvino, 1978) because your stories are invisible and silenced in our society.

We will see how these dimensions have emerged since the early stages of the study, during the meeting for the presentation of the project. Here,

I gathered in particular the desire of one of the community coordinators to reflect on the issues of the educational care, and not only that:

We would like to expose ourselves. [...] We need to know how to create a space for thinking. With this job, it's hard for me to unwind, because these mothers and children are always here. When I'm at home playing with my kid, I think about the mothers here and how they must feel about living with their children in here. (Tamara, transcript from the field research journal)

For the researcher in Adult Education, entering into a system also – and mainly – means stirring new desires and generating new emotions, at times confused and contradictory, to take care of. The women's admission to the residential institution in states of presumed dis/orientation grants them, upon referral from the local Social Services and the Family Court, a source of help and support so they can live their condition of parents in relation to their own biography and aspirations of personal independence. I was told by the coordinator that every day the educators addressed with the women issues related to the concept of maternity in the strict sense, as well as those of adults with a desire for a satisfactory occupational dimension in terms of personal realisation, with an appropriate economic recognition and the possibility of reconciling working schedules and childcare. The women found themselves living in an institution after accepting the “proposal” of being admitted to a structure where they could re-orientate, re-design and re-take control of their lives. Apparently, though, most of these desires didn't seem to achieve their realisation and the women, in the words of one of the coordinators, appeared to live in a state of bewilderment. Not an inner one, but a caused one:

Sometimes these women come from places that are far from the structure and finding a job from here is impossible. They don't have their own car and many of them don't even have a driving license, so, even if they found a job, it would be very complicated for them to reach their workplace using public transportation, which is very scarce in this area. Some need to ask for a special permission from the social services, others for a court order, because, for their personal safety, they cannot leave without authorisation. (Leonia, transcript from the field research journal)

The words of Leonia begin to suggest the idea that the existential state of presumed dis/orientation might be related to the organisation of the

structure's services, and, in fact, directly connected to the social policies that, for safety or practical reasons, tend to move the women away from their places of origin. This feeling of estrangement and isolation will emerge – as we will see later – through the metaphor of “bewilderment” as a reinterpretation of the concept of dis/orientation. That of the institution appears therefore as a territory where women with “difficult” existential paths live together in a context that is not very accommodating for a woman's practical needs (house, work, child and family care services, etc.). Here is how one of the two educators feels about this situation:

Just today I was talking to Esmeralda, who has been in this institution for eight months. She was asking me: «Where is my place? Out here, close to the structure, or where I used to live before?». Honestly, this is a question that doesn't have an answer, because where she will live in the future depends on so many factors and these are issues that are usually dealt with directly by the social services and where the educators and the women has little or sometimes – and I am sorry to say – no say in the matter. (Tamara, transcript from the field research journal)

Looking at the lives of the women in a residential mother-and-child institution from a systemic perspective has meant wondering about the extended systems that they are part of – the original family unit, the community, the social, geographical and economical territory where they live. The stories reported by Tamara and Leonia give shape to the idea that when an individual appears disoriented/bewildered, he/she is never alone. There are other individuals and contexts in the system, which intersect and create constraints and opportunities. It is therefore a matter of making a change in those thinking habits that consider education, and pedagogical research, aimed at solving «new emergences» (Cambi, 2003), to highlight research as an opportunity for epistemological reflection.

In order to connect the topic of orientation to that of relational dynamics and positioning, I would like to illustrate the systemic idea of positioning. According to Morelli, the meaning of landscape as a living place and space emerges indeed from positioning and from the subject-world relationship:

[...] landscape is, after the familiar faces, the first impression of the world that everyone of us develops. [...] In this sense, landscape is an integral part of our living space and, at the same time, the result

of our acting inside it. Landscape derives from our emission – enactment – of signals and actions, from our presence. (Morelli, 2011, p. 15-19, my translation)

Dis/orientation can therefore become a generative opportunity for walking – *odos* (Baracchi, 2008) in the meaning of marking a path. In an etimological sense, this translates the movements of a wayfarer who proceeds without following a certain direction, without a clear way. From a methodological perspective, this path combines the steps ahead and the steps back of the wayfarer with the disorientation of the researcher/participant who asks him/herself questions without knowing in advance which direction his/her work will take. The following pages will explain how the theme of dis/orientation is embodied not only in the biography of the women, but also and above all in the context that they inhabit. In this sense, the institution has acquired the characteristics of a forced system that marks movable boundaries of a territory which is difficult to recognise in a clear way.

2. Learning emerges from the experience of bewilderment

The educational research is conducted in living places and situations that are limited to particular environments, events and encounters in which the subjects have the opportunity to learn. According to Demetrio, there is a space in the educational qualitative research where the research itself becomes for the researcher a holistic and polymorphic educational process in which he/she introduces him/herself:

in order to observe it and listen to it, to interact with it and provoke it, to learn and discover it in its various constitutive components, without ever moving away from it, contrary to what has happened in the research practice that believed it could lock this object into the walls of a laboratory. We should not speak of laboratories, but of living places and contexts that shape existence and are able to bring to the surface the signs of an educational process that is always in progress, therefore dynamic, and whose results are unpredictable. (Demetrio, 1992, p. 15, my translation)

This space-time of “micro-pedagogy” (Demetrio, 1992) allows the researcher to consider the subjects as living organisms on a path, i.e. in a constant change in search for states of balance that could bring them to

recognise their own complex identity. In my vision, I interpret this state of balance in dynamic terms and draw the idea from the experience of embodied learning. As a researcher with a specific training in the educational method created by Moshe Feldenkrais, my vision is clearly influenced by this somatic approach. Feldenkrais regarded posture as a dynamic adjustment of the Body-Mind system in continuous interaction with the environment; therefore, the word posture alone didn't satisfy him because it conveys a sense of inaction:

Straight posture means vertical alignment. But all the words in this area, including posture, refer to something rigid and static. A careful examination clearly shows that straight posture is in fact dynamic, with a constant adjustment of the body structure, more than statically fixed. (Feldenkrais, 1972)

For this reason, he coined the term “acture” (Feldenkrais, 1949) as the synthesis of action and posture. While weaving the threads of my experience between educational research and embodied learning, I have come to examine in depth the idea of existential dis-orientation as an embodied practice and a sensorial experience, because when we think of our body, the authenticity of the experience passes through the adoption of a posture or an “acture”. In the research I have connected approaches that are seemingly far from each another – *cooperative inquiry* (Heron, 1996), embodied learning (Feldenkrais, 1985) and embodied narratives (Formenti, West, & Horsdal, 2014) – in order to call the body into an authentic experience, by offering Awareness Through Movement (Feldenkrais, 1972) classes in alternation with suggestions for auto/biographical writing as opportunities for collecting qualitative data on life in the institution. In fact, after the presentation of the project to my fellow travellers, which turned out to be an actual moment of collaborative inquiry in which from the very beginning the eleven participants (divided into two groups) started sharing their experience and giving substance to their participation to the research process, I decided to devote an entire second meeting to the definition of a common code of ethics and to the authorisation of the use of personal data. The abstracts from the conversations generated during this second meeting will be described and analysed in an interpretive light in the following paragraph.

The definition of a common code of ethics and the authorisation for the use of personal data are routine procedures in the auto/biographical research (Merrill & West, 2009), motivated not only by the well-known issues on

privacy and informed consent, visions that are in my opinion conventional and reductionist, but also by the awareness of co-constructing a relational space with the participants which is “sufficiently good enough” (West, 1996). On the contrary, in a forced context such as that of the community, these procedures turn out to be not only disorienting, but also bewildering:

I would speak about bewilderment rather than disorientation, as I prefer the term familiarisation rather than orientation. The words orientation/disorientation are usually connoted in a positive sense and in a negative sense respectively [...]. The act of orienteering has two connected etymologies: taking position in relation to the four cardinal points and turning to face the East. The first one refers to the idea of positioning in relation to the environment, the second one has to do with the verb “orior”, to be born, to rise. (Vitale, 2016, p. 188-189, my translation)

Re-interpreting dis/orientation as bewilderment recalls to the flow of experience, an oscillatory movement of fluctuating balance of orientation in relation to an environment, at the centre of which is not the reaching of a static and fixed position, but the unwinding of a dynamic and interactive process of research. These considerations allowed me to move the focus of the research from the idea of interrogating the disorientation in relation to environment and movement, to that of facing a process of relational encounter based on dialogue, conversation and embodied experience, coherent with the metaphor of the path. In literary terms, writer Italo Calvino – who inspired the fictional names that I have chosen for the participants in the inquiry – claims that a person in movement is a “halved” subject:

I was whole and all things were, for me, natural and confusing, stupid as the air; I thought I was seeing everything and it was but a shell. If ever you become half of yourself, and I wish you that, lad, you'll see things beyond the common intelligence of the whole brain. You will have lost half of you and the world, but the remaining half will be a thousand times deeper and more valuable. (Calvino, 1998, p. 44)

Bringing the attention to the “educational landscapes”, with their related “bewilderments” expresses the ethical and aesthetic choice of a reflective researcher who experiences the relationship with him/herself, the other and the world as a structural coupling (Maturana & Varela, 1987). Following the literary system of Calvino, who tells us about invisible cities of bewil-

dering fascination, the researcher becomes therefore only a part of a bewildering universe which is infinitely small and big, and from there, in an attempt to cross these two opposites, the path of research and reflexivity takes its form. Presenting the residential mother-and-child institution from a landscapist and narrative perspective allows me to redesign my presence, participative and fragile, which recognises the relational and emotional aspects of becoming involved in a research field.

As already said, the project involved two groups of women living in facilities situated in different landscapes: one in a metropolitan area, the other in a provincial one. The dimension of context became the topic of interesting conversations during the meeting devoted to the negotiation of the code of ethics. In that moment, after I had presented my proposal to the participants and we had read it together, we reflected on their condition of women and, as you will see, of mothers “housed” in an institution with a limited freedom of movement between inside and outside.

In fact, in the institution situated in a small town, in an isolated area in the middle of a pine forest and not far from a pre-alpine lake in Lombardy, discussing the code of ethics brings up the issue of the freedom of movement. Here, sitting in a living room facing a big garden, the fellow travellers are having a conversation which describes a scene from their everyday life:

Esmeralda: “Today we can’t go outside in the garden, you know, because of the Rodent Control...”

Raissa: “Shall we go to the lake? It’s three kilometres from here...”

Esmeralda: “There’s a small sheltered beach and it’s better than staying locked inside...”

Raissa: “And the bar near the beach has good ice-cream...”

Silvia (researcher): “You seem navigated, do you often go there?”

Raissa: “Yes, not long ago I used to go out quite often with one of the mothers that was here...”

Esmeralda: “Lucky you. Nowadays, planning with the educators and the volunteers to go out is hard...”

Silvia: “What do you mean?”

Esmeralda: “Silvia, you see where we are here? We’re isolated on the top of a hill, at the end of a dirt road. I don’t have a driving license and, even if I had one, I don’t have a car. Here we depend on the good will of the educators or some volunteer and we always have to ask for the coordinator’s permission.”

Silvia: “And is that difficult?”

Raissa: “Yes, it’s difficult to imagine if you don’t live here. You need time to ask for permission. And permission for what?”

Esmeralda: "For that ice-cream that Raissa likes..."

Silvia: "If it were for some good ice-cream, I admit that I would do anything, too!"

Raissa: "Yes, ice-cream tastes like freedom, here."

Laughter.

(Transcript of the audio recording from the research journal)

Raissa and Esmeralda's words express the desire of going out into the open air to spend a nice afternoon on the shore of a lake not far from the structure. The desire for freedom of movement and the search for beauty is shown in Raissa's sensorial image that pictures to her friends the pleasure of tasting ice-cream at the bar near the beach. This desire though, thanks to the questions asked by the researcher who by the use of dialogue wants to give voice to the obvious, turns out to be almost impossible in the immediate, since the two women recount how difficult and complex it is to plan a trip by car to reach the nearest town. Moreover, Raissa explains to the researcher how their every movement depends on the authorisation ("permission") from the educators or the availability of a driver (educator or volunteer), since none of them has her own car or a driving license.

Furthermore, irony and humour are used in this dialogue, as in the previous one. The researcher, as well as the participants, use it quite often (e.g. "If it were for some good ice-cream, I admit that I would do anything, too!"; "Yes, ice-cream tastes like freedom, here"). This, according to the systemic epistemological premises for which playing is the composition of different frameworks, brings me to consider this relational model as descriptive of a complex situation, which shows the feeling of impasse that the participants are experiencing. In the conversation we are dealing with a potential conflict of premises and frameworks (e.g. "Silvia, you see where we are here?"). In fact, using a form of self-irony which they are more or less aware of, the researcher and the women express their fragilities, facilitating therefore creative communication and the creation of a delicate balance – never given once and for all – which characterises the dynamic nature of the process. It is not a case that many studies on resilience, i.e. people who are able to reorganise their life in a positive way when confronted with difficulties and to come out stronger, insert humour as a constitutive element of this condition (Cyrulnik, 1999).

The ability of the participants to deal with their limited movement possibility is experienced and recounted differently in the two structures. Whereas in the structure situated in a place difficult to reach without a car the fellow travellers describe their state of isolation by expressing the desire

to go out on a trip to the lake, in the one situated in the city the experience of life in a forced environment brings up different thoughts and emotions.

In this different landscape, my fellow travellers live on the second floor of a religious institutions, which the mother-and-child structure is a part of. The building is surrounded by a thick stone wall that delimitates its perimeter and separates it from one of the main streets, which links the city centre to the suburban area. Here, during the conversation following the reading of the code of ethics, Ersilia and Moriana share with the group a thought which is very important to them:

Ersilia: "I have to tell you something: living in an institution has helped me, even if I don't like it here. Before coming here I was very confused: I could tell you one thing and then change my mind five minutes later. I can't say I'm happy, but I can say that staying in one place for a while has helped me think."

Moriana: "What do you mean? I don't understand."

Ersilia: "What I'm saying is that before, outside, I was confused and I couldn't think straight, but, at the same time, I had never thought that I would be forced to live here. It's not fair, at the end of the day."

Moriana: "Right, maybe there are other useful solutions to help people think. In here it's hard and out there everything is different. When you go out, in the city centre, you see the other women with their kids?"

Ersilia: "Yes, I picture them at home with their kids and I ask myself how their life must be. It's always very painful to think that my son is growing up in here..."

Moriana: "I know, that's why I can't bring myself to go out sometimes. What if I go out and my son realises that it's different outside and doesn't want to come back here anymore?"

Ersilia: "Especially them, they are young and didn't do anything to deserve this; sometimes I even feel guilty..."

Silvia: "How is life in here?"

Ersilia: "It's hard living in here: when I'm at home I cook and relatives and friends come to visit. But here I can't do that."

Moriana: "I feel like I can't do anything and when I know I can do something, I feel like I don't know how to do it anymore."

(transcript of the audio recording from the research journal)

The importance of this conversation emerges from Ersilia's incipit, which catches the attention of the group with the use of the context mark "I have to tell you something"; this expression introduces the sharing of a notion which is as important as it is complex to recognise and report, be-

cause it is made of emotions and feelings that are difficult to reconcile (“before, outside, I was confused and I couldn’t think straight, but, at the same time, I had never thought that I would be forced to live here”). The narration brings up “fragments of a truth” that tastes like a discovery, where Ersilia tells that she has learnt to think because she was forced to stop and live in one place, but at the same time believes this “choice felt as an obligation” to be unfair towards her children. Moriana and Ersilia describe a feeling inside the community that refers to the image of total institutions (Goffman, 2003). Dialogue gives voice to a deep pain and the possibility to find alternative solutions to living in an institution for those women in a state of presumed fragility, or confusion, to use the word chosen by Ersilia. The deep confrontation, where once again the researcher asks few questions and lets herself be guided by the conversation of her fellow travellers, reveals Moriana’s bitterness, when she admits to be in a phase in which she is struggling to recognise her own agency in that context.

In conclusion, even though my fellow travellers and I were at our first experience of cooperative inquiry, our dialogues show how negotiating the code of ethics creates the possibility for the participants to be fully involved in the research process and also, surprisingly, to expose right away painful emotional issues of their everyday life. In this phase of the inquiry it becomes clear and tangible that conducting an embodied research means not only spending time and space in activities involving the body, but, above all, finding time and space for dialogue and conversation, so that the participants can focus their attention towards listening to themselves and recognising/consolidating their relationships with the others and the researcher. Self-awareness, the relationship with the other and the context speak about ourselves and our way of existing in the world. It also becomes clear, though, that the negotiation of the code of ethics doesn’t solve the ethical issues of the researcher, but raises new dilemmas and contradictions, because it brings up profound questions about the power unbalance between researcher and participants. These doubts and paradoxes are so routed that are there even without us being aware of them in the immediate: they fluctuate in the air and can be nominated a bit at a time, without disappearing, but always remaining part of the process.

In my case, the asymmetry between my complete freedom of movement between inside and outside and the situation of forced living of the participants and their children, always clearly present in the group dialogues and reflections, will become a crucial issue. In fact, although I dedicated space and time to negotiation, in order to build a trustworthy relationship in

which the participants could feel authorised to tell and become reflective about their context of experience. Although I convinced them that the research material would not be used for possible communication with the referents of the educational structures. Although I wanted to level the power asymmetry, a wish that is reflected by the informal tone which I used to speak to the women and by the jokes about the code of ethics and the ice-cream. Despite all this, the asymmetry remains.

The reflexive positioning is motivated by the desire not to “exploit people” (Merrill & West, 2009), but to present them with the possibility of answering or not answering my questions, without running the risk of not fulfilling my expectations. I believe, though, that clarifying the asymmetric relationship, instead of trying to deny it, can be more useful to create confidentiality and intimacy. Living in a shared space, of unpredictable actions and words and of potentially generative, as much as unsettling dialogues, is a challenge for the cooperative inquiry.

3. Sharing the actions of the research to recognise assonances and differences

My research approach is based on the consideration of the people involved in the process not as data, but as living, conscious, intelligent and wise subjects who deserve a fundamental respect and who actively work with me to generate information, i.e. differences that generate differences. This professional ethics draws inspiration from values such as collaboration, cooperation, awareness and legitimization of one's self and the other. Bringing the research into the everyday life of people and working on the indissoluble link between personal and social (Christians, 2003) requires a careful and constant negotiation that can restore power and ability to act to the people in their living contexts without definitive and predictable results. Complex systems are unpredictable and uncertain, as we are reminded by the entire scientific tradition of Adult Education; the development of a project can therefore change and accept the unpredicted modifications, and the forks in the road, generated by the interaction among the participants and by contingent aspects of an evolutionary process, in constant orientation, inside the context where the research takes place. By orientation I mean an interpretive, social, shared process where, in analogy with the research process, nobody “orientates” anybody, but everybody orientates themselves with each other. The actions of the research are therefore shared by all participants and everyone is disoriented and oriented together. In a similar

way, orientating in the research and dialoguing are complex and dynamic events that revolve around physical, relational, mental, perceptive, affective, emotional and value-related dimensions, which involve exploration in terms that are flexible and cannot be defined a priori. Interrogating the words of the participants to reconstruct the everyday meanings and thoughts (Mezirow, 1991), asking questions that lead to opportunities (Gardner, 2014), both speak of the dynamic positioning of the researcher, where the *embodied* (Shapiro, 2011) reflexivity (Hunt, 2013) in pedagogy finds expression in the awareness of having the power not to control the research processes, but only to ignite them. The research, then, doesn't pursue predictable or desirable results, but generates data that need to be interpreted in order to create new shared meanings in a relational logic between researcher and participants which is not hierarchic, but extremely collaborative, and which develops in the moment through the experience of uncertainty.

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C.1

“Let’s Lull with the words”.

Support to parenthood: the role of Narrative Medicine

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Premise

Narrative Medicine lays its foundations on the value of words, starting from the need to take into consideration, for the treatment, the personal aspects of the patient. Writing “helps doctors, nurses, social workers and therapists to improve the efficacy of care through the development of the capacity for attention, reflection, representation and affiliation with patients and colleagues” (Rita Charon).

Introduction

Entering the world of “life stories” means entering into a world of meanings that the user wishes to communicate to us by placing the facts in a certain way rather than in another. Fragments of desires and personal needs are obtained from the baggage of memories on which to activate a future project. Memories come to life and life is made through memories. From these reflections comes the idea of creating an experimental autobiographical laboratory aimed at mothers and fathers waiting for a child. In the context of care relationships, self-writing can become a powerful tool, a precious resource for accessing and welcoming questions, requests for listening, feelings of fragility and fear. Personal writing in the wake of one’s own life is transformed into shared experience, and helps to alleviate the loneliness of the person. The laboratory can become a new space for educational, thought and project relationships to be shared with everyone.

1. General objective

Autobiographical writing utilizes the profound link that exists between self-narration and personal identity, so that telling oneself becomes the principle of organization and synthesis of the Self. Through the narration we will investigate the emotions that accompany the transition to parenting. The latter refers to a series of themes such as the representation of being in relation to the internal image of father and mother, the constitution of a representation of one's child, of oneself in the role of parent and of the relationship of oneself with the child: in one word, who has matured adulthood (Demetrio, 2005, Margiotta and Zambianchi, 2011, Margiotta, 2013).

Narrating one's own experience of pregnancy and waiting affects the traditional ways in which the parental couple experiences the fantasies, the worries, the hopes, the emotions that lead to the assumption of the role and parental functions.

Entering your own life stories, improving your knowledge and understanding of yourself and your own history allows you to build a more effective and satisfying relationship with your children. As Mariani suggests (2007), there are many questions that a sensitive parent, motivated to evolve, poses: "What are the meanings of becoming a parent and of living parenting?" Participants in the course will try to give answers to these questions. through their narratives.

Objectives for the people involved:

- Elaborate the experiences of motherhood to give "meaning" and "meaning" to the experiences through the re-elaboration of the same.
- To bring out their memories and their expectations
- Develop tools to decode hidden messages that the person often carries with him.
- Improving the complicity between a person and a professional.
- Improve the relationship within the constituted group.
- To provide women and their partner with an instrument to become participants and co-responsible for their new role as parents
- Encourage the capacity for expression through the narrative tool, such as autobiographical writing / narration of personal experiences, in order to favor empowerment paths also in innovative ways.
- Improve active listening skills.
- Enhance the tool of Narrative Medicine to promote humanization and the empathic relationship between the operator and the person

- Improve the ability to grasp, as much as possible, the needs of women and offer the resources to meet them through the possible activation of a network of services.

2. Methodology and tools

During the workshop activities, the participants will be invited by the facilitator to speak and write about themselves starting from narrative, visual, filmic, photographic and object suggestions, in order to stimulate memories and stimulate autobiographical production. In the setting will be used a grid prepared in the form of semi-structured interview, or the story can take place in a free and spontaneous form behind input, suggestions or experiences lived from their childhood, friendships, relationships with others, school and work experience, the relationship with one's parents, the relationship with one's motherhood, etc. The meetings will end with the sharing of the emotions experienced in the elaboration of their writings among the participants as an indispensable moment for the strengthening of their personal identity.

Method used: Reflecting

3. To whom it is addressed

- Women at the first experience or later experience and companions (in the role of parent).
- Dads involved in the experience of parenting alongside the mother, if they shared the idea of experimenting together.

The laboratory is divided into 6 total meetings of two hours each:

Pre-birth:

I° meeting: Opening of the workshop, presentation of the project, the diary and the participants with first autobiographical ideas

II° meeting: We give words to the words to express emotions, feelings and experiences, in the journey of life.

III° meeting: The time of waiting between memories and dreams: being parents today.

Post-birth:

I° meeting: Discovering emotional tones: narration of the lived between imaginary and real

II° meeting: New expectations, meeting with the child: affection and parenting

III° meeting: Valorisation of the Self: awareness of one's own resources and one's own fragility

4. Purpose of the project

The purpose of this experimental project has pedagogical, educational and educational value, favors a path that goes from one side to recognize, reinforce and enhance the resources already present and, on the other, to develop new personal and professional skills and knowledge of all involved protagonists. The writing workshop allows the person not to feel isolated, to be recognized in his subjectivity, especially in these particular moments of life, such as the birth of a child. Therefore the laboratory is a place of exchange and silent help between future parents. This initiative will improve health care and ensure fairness on the distribution of the determinants of physical and mental well-being of citizens and the community.

5. Partial report

The project is a process of elaboration and support for conscious parenting.

The project started in the ASLTO4 company in the month of October 2017 and involved mothers distributed in several courses, in the pre and post-delivery period, until today the first phase of the project has been activated.

During the meetings there were moments of reflection and dialogue alongside moments in which the participants were involved in writing and figurative art activities to freely stimulate the expression of their emotions.

N ° 64 of narratives were collected and n ° 64 of questionnaires were distributed.

Therefore we are able to make a partial analysis of the collected data related to pre-birth meetings.

The interest and participation of women has exceeded expectations, tak-

ing into account the innovative and experimental projects in the Maternal – Child Department.

At the end of the first phase, questionnaires were distributed to the participants to allow them to express judgments concerning the course. The information gathered was useful for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the project, with a view to its effective improvement.

Particular attention was the recovery and enhancement of the meaning and responsibility of the formative role of being a parent today. This has met an effective need felt by future parents, who experience strong social and relational changes before which they often feel unprepared.

The meetings allowed the participants to acquire new modes of relationship, a deeper ability to listen and dialogue in order to deal more effectively with the role of being a mother.

Women have expressed favorable and satisfying opinions that we like to emphasize with their **own words**:

- “It would be nice to do more meetings. The course is very nice and involves you in full “
- “Very useful the presence of different professional figures with different backgrounds and points of view that make contributions from multiple perspectives that are certainly enriching”
- “It would be nice if the course spread more, because I think it is very useful as an experience of personal expression of approach to motherhood and beyond. The decision to create restricted groups of mothers at meetings has allowed us to safeguard the atmosphere of intimacy.”
- “The course is like a space of expression and comparison in which from time to time in reality nobody knows exactly what you are going to talk about and this makes us freer to express ourselves”
- “Write to look inside and see us then from outside, with greater awareness”
- “Sharing not so much what we write, but the emotions we experience at the very moment of our opening up on a blank sheet this allows you to walk unknown paths of our inner life”
- “Being together, in a serene, welcoming, free, content and respectful space. Writing and listening. Music and herbal tea ... very beautiful! “
- Also we conductors enter this space of absolute expressive authenticity, not only as conductors but as participants, putting into play our emotional expressiveness made of words that lull and relax that change us enrich us and make us grow.
- “The women who have experienced this first phase of the project have

found real positive changes in relationships in general, underlining how in a short time they have been able to receive real and effective help”.

All the meetings were held with great serenity, respect and understanding, and no particular problem was found.

6. Future prospect for the search

Within this experimental laboratory it is expected in the future the realization of a study concerning future prospect research project on the effectiveness of the Narrative Medicine Methodology:

1. The narration as a tool that enriches the informative process that relates to the person's experience and not only its clinical history, contributing to improving the therapeutic alliance between the person and the operator that should be primarily an “alliance of humanity” .
2. Narration as an instrument that allows the person to live their experience with greater awareness.
3. Evaluation of the role of the narration with respect to the modification of the autobiographical memory and the meanings attributed to one's own history according to the type of relationship that is created between the person and the operator.

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C.2

Can metaphors enhance “togetherness” in Family Medicine? A Phenomenological-Interpretative study in an Italian family practice

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Introduction

In Italy, Family Medicine is a medical field where a family physician can assist from 250 to 1500 citizens, and be supported by nurses and other health professionals to take care of them (Mazzeo, Milillo, Cicchetti & Meloncelli, 2009). Depending on the epidemiological and seasonal variables, a family physician may have a daily contact with 60-70 patients. These professionals are trained to be current to provide the newest treatments/care for their emerging diseases and disabilities, considering that each patient has a different physical, psychological, sociocultural, biographical and economic background (Kleinman, 1988; West, 2001), to sustain a respectful therapeutic alliance (Wonca-Europe, 2011). Family physicians must also recognize a wide-spectrum of pathologies in a 10-20-minute medical consultation. One part of the consultation requires listening to, codifying and reframing the story that the patient brings into a comprehensible diagnosis (Skelton, Wearn & Hobbs, 2002). It is therefore important for physicians to learn how to listen to and communicate with their patients.

Educating health professionals in communication skills is essential to understanding patients' experiences and informing patients about health risks, and sharing safe decision-making (Hamilton, & Wen-Ying, 2014). Their

mutual understanding ameliorates the quality of the therapeutic relationship (Al Odhayani & Ratnapalan, 2011), encouraging a long-lasting alliance and cooperation in the choice of treatment plans (Hamilton, & Wen-Ying, 2014). Therefore, clinical communication should be as clear as possible to help patients understand their condition. It is commonly agreed that when people communicate, many strategies can be used to clearly explain what one person wants to say to another (Hamilton, & Wen-Ying, 2014). Among those strategies, metaphors can be utilized as a means to communicate something that cannot be explained through words (Hanne, 2015).

Metaphors in health communication

Metaphor is defined as «an expression that describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to possess similar characteristics» (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2017). A metaphor links two pieces of information, one already acquired (*frame*) and one innovative (*focus*), with the goal of producing new knowledge. Even if the two pieces of information may not initially seem to possess any correlation, the connection between focus and frame in the metaphor invites finding the analogy to produce a clearer meaning on what needs to be understood (Cameron, 2003). For example, in the metaphor “illness is *a war*”, the frame is “illness” while the focus is “war”. The illness as war recalls pain, fight, fear, and loss. Conversely, in the metaphor “war is *an illness*”, the frame and the focus are transposed. The war as illness recalls something that debilitates, to be prevented or avoided.

Patients with disability (Kaplan, 1994), cancer (Gibbs & Franks, 2002), as well as those who have cardiovascular (Boylstein, Rittman & Hinojosa, 2007), dermatologic (Nations, Lira & Catrib, 2009), and infectious diseases (Sontag, 1990), often use metaphors to describe their illnesses. Metaphors in patients' narratives are important cues for a physician, because they easily represent symptoms (e.g. “nausea comes *in waves*”) (Hanne, 2003, p. 225). By listening carefully to the patient, the physician could recognize these cues, sometimes preventing a diagnostic delay (Østergaard, 2005).

Research has suggested training of health professionals to be aware of their own metaphors, especially when used in medical consultation with the following goals: improving the quality of health professional-patient communication (Harrington, 2012), clarifying difficult concepts (Ortony, 1992), facilitating the dialogue (Casarett et al., 2010), and leading patients

through behavioral changes (Krieger, 2014). When used strategically, metaphors may also produce therapeutic effects in patient care (Burns, 2007), while the inaccurate use of those expressions leads to the opposite effect. Since metaphors influence human beliefs (Gibbs, 2008), when they represent a violent image of an illness, describe a mechanical functioning of the body (e.g. “the body is *a broken machine*”) (Reisfield & Wilson, 2009, p. 4026), or convey a stigma (e.g. “AIDS is *God’s judgment*”) (Norton, Schwartzbaum & Wheat, 1990, p. 821), they can disempower and hurt the patient (Semino et al., 2017).

This qualitative case study aimed to understand the representation that a group of family physicians, nurses and administrative staff, working in an Italian family practice, has about metaphors and their use in patient-professional communication. The goal of this paper is to improve undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing health education, by investigating whether metaphors enhance or worsen cooperation in the therapeutic relationship.

1. Methods

1.1 *Participants*

The Italian Family Medicine employment contract allows a physician to work alone or in a group with other physicians, nurses and administrative assistants. This family medicine group encourages to share practices and therapeutic goals in the same place, to guarantee the patient a more cohesive and integrative cure and care. We chose a family practice group in Northern Italy with a purposeful sampling: the peculiarity of this group is that they are the only ones medically assisting an entire little town with 15.000 citizens on average. In this characteristic, we also envision a unique form of togetherness between physicians and their patients.

Participants were fifteen (10 physicians, 2 nurses, 3 administrative staff) (10 female, 5 male), and the group worked in the same practice. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the first author.

Tools and analysis

We conducted 15 semi-structured interviews exploring participants’ experience of metaphors in their previous education and current clinical communication with patients. After a month, all the participants were involved in follow-up unstructured interviews to gather further reflections on

metaphors, and for member checking. To analyze data, we followed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), a process that requires to codify and organize data, finding similarities, differences, and relations among them.

2. Results

Five major categories emerged from the interviews: a) ambiguous representation of metaphors, b) recognition of the value of metaphors in clinical and educative setting, c) indication of the advantages and benefits of the professional use of metaphors, d) indication of the limits and effects of the professional use of metaphors, and e) unconscious use of metaphors. To improve trustworthiness, we discussed all the phases of the analysis, until agreement was achieved. Finally, results were compared with the literature. We reported our results by following the case study strategy (Mortari & Zannini, 2017).

In this paper we share our results by gathering some quotations of our participants under the following themes: 1) using metaphors to enhance or worsen togetherness, and 2) using metaphors to shape the patient or the health professional's identity.

1) *Using metaphors to enhance or worsen togetherness*

The first theme we are going to introduce is about metaphor as a communication strategy. Nurses and physicians used metaphors with their patients during the consultation. Sometimes metaphors were deliberately used by participants to clarify difficult concepts:

Many patients have similar symptoms for which they came to the family physician, like palpitations. Most patients refer of a "skipped heartbeat"¹ when they try to say that their heartbeat is not perfectly rhythmic. They feel like "emptiness" in their stomach then, when a patient doesn't tell it to me, but he refers a weird symptom, I can use that metaphor asking to him "do you file like a skipped heartbeat or emptiness in your stomach?". [...]. When you try to involve them in a clear explanation of the situation, even with metaphors, they

1 To make sense of this metaphor in English, the sentence was translated from the original Italian metaphor "tuffo al cuore".

usually feel closer to you, because a patient recognizes that you are trying to let him understand you. (Physician 2, male - 1st interview)

Describing the heart as “a house with walls, floors, water and sanitary system, electric system”, to let people understand that a stroke has nothing to do with the rhythm of the heart, it is an example that patients understand. Because if you have a hydraulic problem it is very different from those that the electrician can repair. This is an example that may facilitate the comprehension of a certain pathology or detail. (Physician 6, female - 1st interview).

I believe they feel more comfortable with metaphors [...]. When I need to explain that an antibiotic therapy is not appropriate, sometimes I use a metaphor “take a hammer to crack a nut”,² or to describe the abdominal cramping, I talk about a vise that squeeze and relax. (Physician 8, female - 1st interview)

I use metaphors to understand if a patient has a specific pain. For example, I use to ask my patients “do you feel like a dog biting your shoulder?”, because I know other patients expressed that way. [...]. I perceive they appreciate it, usually. (Physician 10, female - 1st interview)

Metaphors can be useful if you want the patient to understand you, in a language that is familiar to them. My use of metaphors depends on the patient. I often use to talk in a manner the patient can grasp. I use the metaphor of “the apple pie” for drugs. A drug has an active substance (apples) and the outer part is the pill. This is one of my frequent metaphors. Another one is to compare human articulations to the train tracks... The problem is that you should keep in mind a beautiful metaphor, or a metaphor that works at least. (Physician 15, male - 1st interview)

Metaphors contribute to make an explanation more understandable, therefore they can promote closeness. Conversely, administrative assistants – involved in scheduling meetings between patients and physicians on the phone – suggested using plain language to avoid scaring or confusing the patient:

2 To make sense of this metaphor in English, the sentence was translated from the original Italian sentence: “sparare con un cannone ad un moscerino”.

I don't use metaphors that much... I prefer using very simple words so they can understand me, without scaring them, because sometimes the physician must visit them urgently, then I need to explain them what's going on with very simple word, avoiding them to be scared. (Administrative assistant 9, female - 1st interview).

The reasons why the use of metaphors may deceive the patient are clarified by some physicians:

I suggest being careful with some metaphors, because it happens a metaphor may evoke to the patient some things which are worse than those you were trying to explain. (Physician 5, female - 1st interview)

If you try to sell a different information to the patient to avoid hurting him, you're not going to be trust so far. Because if you promise they'll heal and that's not true... then it's better to say the truth. You need to know that everyone can make a mistake. Unfortunately, our way to learn is paid on our patients' skin. (Physician 11, male - 2nd interview)

It depends, when you have a metaphor that you know it works it is better than a metaphor out of the blue, because the last one may convey something you don't want to say. I mean, if you focus too much on the metaphor, the patient may misunderstand you. (Physician 15th, male - 2nd interview)

According to some physicians, the creation of a metaphor requires the professional to know the life and story of the patient, one of the pivotal characteristics of the family physician:

[...] hence, the kind of metaphors you'll use to explain the functioning of an apparatus or organ varies according to the linguistic competence and the culture of the patient, as well as his/her job. [...] We could not speak without metaphors with our patient ... actually, there was a patient with a IgG4-related disease (and that's a very rare disease in this world), and this patient worked in the construction industry. Then I had to create a metaphor about buildings to explain all the mechanisms involved in a pathology like that. Because metaphors need to be patient-tailored. I could use a metaphor like this with an analphabet and it would become very complicated, then I believe metaphors should be patient-tailored, no doubt about it. (Physician 13, male - 2nd interview)

The family physician knows the social background of the patient. [...] you know how they live, you know how they eat, you know what they like to do, then the communication is focused on examples near to their life. If you need to create a metaphor, you'll build one depending on their degree, or if he loves soccer, then you'll try to create a soccer metaphor. (Physician 15, man - 2nd interview)

Participants perceived that patients feel *closer* to them when communicating with these expressions, because metaphors recall a familiar language. It seems that metaphoric language may improve “togetherness” and cooperation or, conversely, generate disconnection and discontents.

2) *Using metaphors to shape the patient or the health professional's identity*

The second theme examines the use of metaphors to describe someone. Metaphors can be expressed by health professionals to represent their professional identity:

I could say we are the filters between the patient and the physician. We have to understand if the patient has a real necessity, or if they say it's an urgency while they just break a nail on their foot... this is difficult to understand on the phone. (Administrative assistant 9, female - 1st interview).

I remember a lesson, when my professor said that “the nurse is an ambiguous mediator”. On one hand, you speak scientifically, on the other hand, you speak a language common for everyone. Then your linguistic aptness plays a fundamental role in your communication. (Nurse 12, male - 2nd interview).

Indeed, there are those who heal and then we are happy all together, but if the problem is an arthrosis, I would never tell to the patient “don't worry about that, you will be fine within two months with this therapy”... I would better say “you will have this issue until the end”. Because this is arthrosis. We do not cure the cause, we heal the symptoms, there is a palliative therapy, and this information could be accepted or not by the patient. Not always they accept this information, but we are not wizards, and if there aren't therapies, there aren't therapies. (Physician 11, male - 2nd interview)

One participant declared that some metaphors expressed by clinicians regarding the patient may hurt and create discontent in the therapeutic relationship:

I've heard some physicians referring to a very old man with the term "the mummy". There was another case in the US. A lady who was overweight reported the clinicians who called her "the whale". I think It's important to beware of how physicians use metaphors, because a patient can be hurt or offended, even if physicians use this kind of metaphors to recall to their mind a characteristic of that patient. I know this is not good to say, but it happens. (Physician 15, male - 1st interview)

In some cases, metaphors may hurt the patient. For example, with the obese patient, you can use metaphors about the diet, to help him/her recognize the situation. Because to say "you are obese" to the patient can be very drastic. We often use the BMI formula, and the values are often high. Between 25-30 is an overweight, between 30-35 is an obesity, beyond 35 is a severe obesity. This formula is very rigid, but the person who doesn't feel "overweight" may be offended. Then you need to find some metaphors or analogies to prevent it. (Physician 15, male - 2nd interview).

Patients use metaphors too, especially to describe *who* is the health professional *to* them, as one of the interviewed reported:

It depends from the situation. Some patients tell me struggles like the death of their husband or wife, or the disease of their partner, and it is crystal clear that my language has a different impact. I am no more a *reference point* but I become a *shoulder to cry* on (Administrative assistant 9, female - 2nd interview)

These expressions should be understood more deeply by the health professional, to avoid misinterpretation of the meaning that the patient is trying to convey:

I've noticed that patients use to say that "you look like my nephew", comparing you to their nephew maybe for the age. Hence, they feel closer to you and start questioning for explanations, it's a fact. I think they feel closer to you, and guess what? They compare you to someone that is familiar to them. I mean, a young man = my nephew. (Nurse 12, male - 2nd interview)

A metaphor like the one mentioned above could be considered tricky because of the potential ambiguity of the representation. The health professional may need to further reflect by exploring each other's biographic meaning on "what is a nephew" to them:

It's quite the same for all the techniques, starting from the banal hygienic care we learn during the first year at the Nursing School, when a man comes to a female student and says “listen, you could be my niece, I don't want you to take care of me. Nothing personal”. Vice versa, when they need an explanation, they search for this comparison to be closer to you. To be closer and to be farther. It also depends on the comparison itself: “You look like my nephew, so I don't want you to do that”, or “You look like my nephew, so I prefer asking to you”. (Nurse 12, male - 2nd interview).

3. Discussion and Conclusions

The capability of professionals to critically reflect upon ones' professional communication is considered important for the development of their expertise, hence, for medical education (Mamede & Schmidt, 2004). Participants have revealed metaphors can shape the therapeutic relationship, creating a stronger connection with the patient or, conversely, disconnection and discontent. These expressions can create intimacy because they recall something familiar and, in the absence of additional information, metaphoric reasoning infers the interlocutors must know each other well (Bowes & Katz, 2015).

A professional who reflects on the learnings gained in the field takes a conscious look at the emotions, actions, strategies, experiences, and answers, using that information to bring his/her learning to a higher state of understanding (Paterson & Chapman, 2013). This reflective practitioner is engaged in a process of continuous learning, since he/she pays attention to the communication by bringing together theory and practice (Zarifis & Gravani, 2014). Because the actual policies are considering family physicians and nurses working together with other health professionals in the same context, it would be interesting to design new curricular activities for an early inter-professional education (I.P.E.) (Milano, Garrino & Arras, 2017), to allow students learning how to communicate with other professionals and, therefore, to valorize “togetherness” in their practice.

Metaphors can elicit the prejudices and hidden beliefs of health professionals, and hence may convey a sense of stigma that the patient may subsequently feel (Norton, Schwartzbaum, & Wheat, 1990). A metaphor can create a negative engagement. Mabeck and Olesen (1997) have reported patients may embody medical explanations. If a physician says, “the *war against* cancer”, the patient may feel ready to fight or, paradoxically, hope-

less. When a patient trusts the physician, the words of the physician can shape the inner aptitude of the patient to his/her illness. Consequently, a patient can be empowered or disempowered (D'Oria, 2017). This result is worth to be considered for medical education and continuing medical education (C.M.E.).

From the interviews it also emerged that participants were not always aware of their use of metaphors, when speaking to patients and other professionals. It would be valuable for adult education to train health professionals to recognize and be aware of metaphors in health communication. In line with this, the results showed participants describe identity via metaphors, questioning the perspective of their patients about their role and professional activity. Understanding each other's metaphors reveals the mutual expectations about their relationship, and it is relevant for the health professional to understand how his/her biographic meaning to that metaphor meets the one of the patient. For this purpose, workshops and curricular activities could be designed to help students/professionals reflect on metaphoric language as a strategy to promote togetherness in the clinical encounter.

We acknowledge this study has limitations. First, results from a qualitative research cannot be generalized. Quantitative and mixed research about this topic is very welcomed and necessary. Second, we have chosen a specific group of participants because of their unique relationship as the only medical provider in the little town. Other family practice groups may have a different experience about metaphors and their potential to create togetherness. Third, we chose a family practice group because their "togetherness" could facilitate thinking about metaphors from different perspectives, even though they belong to the same practice. However, physicians who prefer to work alone can be interested too in considering this issue. Further research is needed on the role of metaphors in promoting a sense of belongingness in general practice teams and, therefore, in shaping professional identity (Salling Olesen, 2007).

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C.3

The personal in the professional in mental health care: Ethical and Methodological considerations

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Introduction

The context for the paper is an evolving study exploring how use of coercion informs mental health care professionals and their practice. The immediate background for the study is that use of coercion within mental health care in Norway, and other countries, is under increased scrutiny. Attention has been brought to a variety of practices and different degrees of transparency related to use of coercive measures among service providers. This leaves pressing questions, which call for exploration: What informs the moral deliberation made prior to using coercion and how does the experience of using coercion inform the self-understanding of the professional and thus future decision-making processes pertaining to the use of coercive measures?

There is an obvious ethical side to this study, as it relates to one of the most morally contested questions in mental health care. Use of coercion in mental health is a conflicted issue. It provokes heated discussions that divide professionals, professions and disciplines. It evokes different feelings and actualizes opposing moral positions – among patients, relatives, professionals and policy-makers. Of particular interest of this project is not so much the different moral theoretical positions that can be applied, but rather to elicit the relation between the professional's choices and practical involvement in a particular situation or incident involving use of coercion and his or her self-understanding. The latter is not something s/he “has in mind”; rather it is about how s/he acts in the “world”, his or her “referential totality” (Cerbone, 2008, 41).

To explore how moral attitudes evoked in a particular practical ethical issue involving use of coercion relate to deeper strands of moral thinking and an overall self-understanding calls for methodological approaches that offer interpretive means to explore how being in idiosyncratic ways is an

issue for the individual through his or her engagement with different “world(s)”. The paper introduces two different approaches that can be applied in order to explore phenomenologically the experience of mental health professionals using coercive means as part of their professional role. It presents and discusses how Expressive writing in combination with Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method may serve as a methodological approach, which allows for both the self-report of the narrator, but also an extrapolation of tacit unarticulated meaning (that which for the individual has not yet been said and may be unsayable).

Moral issues and value judgements present themselves within the context of their actual occurrence (Zaner, 1988). This actualizes the limits of principle ethics (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013) and calls for phenomenological ethics. Hence, the first part of this paper will elaborate on where the two complement one another, where they contradict and why coercion as a clinical ethical issue in mental health calls for “moral particularism”. The second part relates to the first, but focuses on how it is possible to extrapolate from a narrative account, not only ethical positions, but manners of moral reasoning.

1. Ethical principles and moral particularism

A disputable claim is that any moral position is legitimate as long as it is consistent and whoever claims it is willing to live by it. This manner of justifying moral convictions triggers the question, not only whether any consistent and coherent system is as good as the next, but also if consistency is a viable and sustainable criteria for morality. One may feel obligated toward different ethical conviction that in a given situation or incident become incompatible. Working on a mental health unit, I may be both committed to securing the confidentiality of the one patient, but also to preventing any harm to any of the others.

In a particular situation, the one patient may confide thoughts about doing harm to one of the other patients. It is a dilemma in which one of the convictions has to give and in order to act responsibly I will have to give up the aim of consistency. If making consistency the virtue of a moral system, there is an implied understanding in regard to clinical situations raising ethical questions that they carry the same set of features that makes it meaningful to apply same set of moral evaluations to them (McNaughton, 1991, 61). As the example above illustrates, a non-moral prop-

erty is not always and everywhere relevant in the same way and to the same degree (ibid. 62). This actualizes the limits of *principle ethics* and underscores the importance of *moral particularism*.

Moral particularism, serve both as a critique of principle ethics, and at the same time, it may offer a viable complement to it. "Phenomenology can be used either to inform the application of principles by way of describing the lived experiences of moral dilemmas or to criticize the contemporary set-up of bioethics and offer alternative approaches" (Svenaesus, 2018, 16). Its main contribution lies in that it shifts focus from what "ought" to be done to what "is" the case. Phenomenological ethics doesn't come with a set of new rules, but is dedicated of identifying what is meaningful to the person(s) involved in, or feels an ownership to, a moral dilemma pertaining to a particular clinical situation or incident.

Phenomenological ethics broadens the scope as it accounts for a philosophical anthropology that moves beyond the notion of the individual as a rational agent. As it engages questions pertaining to meaning and what it means to be a human being, it contributes to "a wide reflective equilibrium" (Svenaesus, 2018, 15), expanding the dialectic between moral intuitions and moral principles. The latter is in danger of ending up making ethical principles foreign measuring sticks that misses the mark.

A phenomenological approach is committed to understanding how the other understands; it is all about seeking the first person perspective, "the natives point of view" (Geertz, 1973). The aim is thus to get a grasp on how "strong evaluations" (Taylor, 1989) is made evident and informs the questions in focus, paying attention not only to his or her self-report, but how s/he is "being-in-the-world". As the aim is understanding rather than explaining, phenomenological ethics goes beyond mere description. A part of this is descriptive accounts of the reports and self-reports pertaining to a question, situation or incident.

The above suggests that moral truths, as aesthetic truths, are very different in character from truths established in and through the natural sciences. The moral truths outlined above corresponds with the notion of truth we find in Gadamer's outline of *Geisstwissenschaft* (Gadamer, 1989). It is a truth-seeking very much marked by dialogue and an acknowledgement that there might be more to an issue than one see at the moment. This is an understanding of truth that doesn't imply pretensions of generalizability or predictability, but rather what Gadamer calls "truth-events", an "uncovering" (*aletheia*) of why something appears to be true (Gadamer & Holm-Hansen, 2010, p.12). The truth thus understood resembles what

happens when encountering art and great classical texts. It is not about confirming or expanding common experience to attain knowledge of “a law” about “how men, peoples and states evolve – but rather to understand how this man, this people, or this state has become what it is, or, more generally, how it happened that it is so” (Gadamer, 1989, p.5).

The ideal is to understand the subject itself in its unique and concrete historical appearance. Acknowledging the indefinite “qualitativeness” of any biographical narrative is never about evaluating the truth in what is being stated, but rather searching for an explanation for why something is stated. This way of understanding research experience, corresponds very well with the intentions of the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM), which informs the methodological approach of this study and is introduced below.

2. Moral particularism and Particular Incident Narratives

Moral issues and value judgements present themselves within the context of their actual occurrence (Zaner, 1988). This calls for continuously taking steps to get as close to the experiences of the interviewee as possible. Patricia Benner, nursing theorist and educator, underscores this point when she links meaning making – changes of assumptions, values and beliefs – in a professional context, to emotionally charged professional situations. She uses the concept “paradigm cases” about the kind of experiences that becomes precedents for later practice – foundational incidents marked by challenge, success, failure or emotions that make the health professional reflect in a way that changes assumptions, values and beliefs (Benner, 1984).

It is the aim of this study to make space for, and interpret, such particular incident narratives. How accessible are they for research, one may ask. Even though it is possible to pinpoint paradigm cases the existential aspect of the experience will be partly hidden to the health professional herself, because her meaning making faculties are placed on her “nose” as a pair of “glasses” through which existence becomes real to her (Heidegger). But it may also be hidden due to its emotionality, suppressed to the unconscious and defended against, because the emotions evoked are too painful or difficult to face and relate to consciously (Hollway, 2006).

Hence, the present study will employ hermeneutic methods which can interpret interview texts to indicate both tacit unarticulated meaning (that which for the individual has not yet been said and may be unsayable) and

unconscious impediments to meaning (which get in the way of saying it). Paying attention not only to what is said, but also the manner of saying it. BNIM rests on “an extreme end of the research interview intervention spectrum” (Wengraf, 2001, 13), allowing for silences in order for the unsaid to surface, for the sake of “a full gestalt to emerge”. The insistence on the uninterrupted telling of stories may be regarded the *sine qua non* of BNIM approach. Yet, as will be elaborated through the Dina case below, the researcher, by his or her mere presence, may trigger a particular narrative focus that may not align with the scope of the study.

3. Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM)

Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2001) is an approach aiming at reconstructing both the experiencing and the interpreting subjectivity of the biographical agent. The interview method and the interpretative procedures distinguish the historical record of the life as lived by the interviewee and the story (s)he tells about the same. The BNIM interview is made up of three sequences (Wengraf, 2001):

1. The first starts with a single question inducing narrative (SQUIN) framed by my research question:

As you know, I am interested in how health professionals as persons have changed, or not changed, due to working in situations involving use of coercion.

Therefore, 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.

The invitation is intentionally left open, and not restricted to clinical experience, in a realization that there is no strict boundary between the personal and the professional in relationally intense profession (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2011). In this session, there will be no interruptions from the interviewer.

2. 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). Instead of being satisfied with a thematically whole narrative the BNIM, through the focus on PINs, is continuously taking steps to get as close to the empery (the experiences of the interviewee) as possible. 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.

3. The third session is optional. It can be based on a need for further clarifications or a place of introducing themes key to the project.

A key part of BNIM is the use of interpretative panels. The panel is a heterogeneous, diverse group of people, and creates a space in which the individual researcher and members of the group dialogically develop hypotheses. The use of a panel gives the advantage “to ensure the surfacing of sleeping assumptions, blind spots and misrecognitions on the part of the researcher” (Wengraf, 2001, p.231). The panels will include members with user-experience, former patients who have been at the receiving end of coercive measures (see below for an elaboration of this point).

The analysis work will follow a twin tract in that it will focus both on life as lived and experienced and life as narrated; in other words, lived life and told story, experience and the meaning made of it. The analysis of the lived life and told story will then be brought together to write case studies which will have distinct structural traits that can then be compared. From the comparison I will be able to extrapolate how each of the professional groups integrates experiences involving use of coercion. Each case analysis will examine the ways in which the professional culture manifests itself in how the interviewees put their stories into words; personal stories can that way be emblematic to a professional discourse.

One obvious reason for letting the interviewee talk uninterruptedly at length during sub session-one of a BNIM interview – “to hold the floor beyond the limits of a usual turn” (Mishler, 1986, 74) – is in order to allow the narrative, whether a life story or critical incident, to flow – to allow for the native’s point of view. Still, my BNIM interview with the palliative care physician Dina, part of another study (Moen, 2018), may be illustrative of how even in a non-interruptive, minimalist-passive approach to interviewing the narrative is presented to an audience.

4. Dina – a case in point.

Dina, a palliative physician with decades of experience with End-of-life care, was a participant in a former study (Moen, 2018). Before the interview, we met in the hall just outside the palliative unit where she worked as a physician. After initial greetings, we went downstairs to the main entrance. Dina took me to the next building and, as we walked to her office, she probed me about my professional background as hospital chaplain – more so than the previous interviewees had done.

Her particular interest in my background did not strike me until later, when she shared about her experience as a child and teenager of oppressive religiosity. The latter was a theme that ran through her narrative, suggesting that encountering a male who was also a chaplain carried particular meaning for Dina. It seemed equally clear, however, that Dina did not see me as typical of the cast of characters that had inhabited the oppressive religious environment of her childhood. Rather than being a symbolic figure linked to the religious oppression of her past, she seemed to link me to the emancipatory process of the present.

The question actualized in any qualitative interview of this sort, felt particularly pressing after my encounter with Dina – would she have told another story at another time to another person? Was it the dynamics playing out between the two of us that made her narrative account so scarce with stories from her multiple encounters at the border between life and death? How would a narrative space without an audience, allow for a different set of stories? A question that eventually, when embarking on this study, made me consider Expressive writing as a method alongside BNIM.

5. Expressive writing

“Expressive writing” denotes non-directed “stream-of-consciousness” writing. The concept originated with Professor in psychology James Pennebaker and his interest in the relation between confession and health. In his book *Opening up* (Pennebaker, 1997), he discusses the benefits and risks of disclosure and argues that the latter in most cases outweighs the former. Inhibition, keeping emotions and thoughts to one self, Pennebaker argues, is physical work that affects one’s health and has an impact on one’s thinking capacities (ibid. 9).

Confronting experiences, feelings and thoughts through talking or writ-

ing, reduces the effects of inhibition as it provides both an emotional catharsis and a re-thinking of the events. In this Pennebaker aligns with psychotherapeutic traditions (non-directive talking cures) that originated with Freud. What he contributes is a systematic exploration of the *sine qua non* of talking cures – the value of disclosing self. It is an underscoring that the suffering of the patient, more than anything, is related to his or her inhibition, and that the healing more than anything is related to the disclosure undertaken by the patient.

Pennebaker undertook a number of different research projects, primarily among college students, but also among professionals (ibid. 38ff). He provided non-directive writing assignments and monitored the bodily changes that occurred during the exercise as well as the health benefits following it. Typically the participants were invited to write about traumatic experiences for 20 minutes for 4 consecutive days. One group was to write more superficially, focusing on what happened, while the other group was invited to “let go” and share their deepest feelings and thoughts related to the traumatic incident. The studies indicated that the latter was more beneficial – by far (ibid. 37).

Pennebaker identifies “low level” and “high level” reflections among the written pieces. He then discusses how the writing styles reflect different thinking styles among the students. The latter may relate to personality, but perhaps also to contexts, according to Pennebaker. He convincingly makes the case that most of us would respond quite differently to an invitation to share in writing our deepest thoughts and feelings about an experience or issue, depending on whom we assumed the reader to be (ibid. 173).

Pennebaker claims that expressive writing may have an impact of the progress of a grieving process and help speed up coping after loss (ibid. 73ff). His findings and perspectives have been both applied and challenged in more recent bereavement studies (Stroebe, 2008).

«Thus far there seems to be little evidence that disclosure of emotions to others leads to better adjustment following bereavement. Showing overt negative emotions is associated with a poorer outcome, both in absolute terms and relative to initial levels of distress. Furthermore, avoidance of one’s underlying emotional state may actually help subsequent adjustment» (Stroebe, 2008, 55)

The emphasis on meaning-making and cognitive re-framing corresponds well with findings in other bereavement-studies (Bonanno og Kelt-

ner, 1997). That is not a matter of how much, or how emotionally charged, the bereaved talk about the deceased, but rather the level of insight and meaning by which (s)he is reflecting (Bonanno et al, 2005). Other studies though indicate that it may be counter-effective and add stress if the cognitive processing comes too early (McIntosh, Silver and Wortman, 1993, p 55). Others find little support for the emphasis put on meaning making (Davis et al, 2000), and for the notion of “grief-work” (Stroebe), a term originating with Freud in his “Mourning and Melancholia” (Freud & Maud, 2005). In order to balance Pennebaker’s emphasis on focusing on what is lost, Stroebe and Schut (1999) introduce what they name «the dual process model» (DPM), which gives legitimacy to »avoidance» - underscoring the importance for the progress and process that the bereaved is not in a constant conscious state about the loss, but is pending between remembering and «forgetting».

Still, one of Pennebaker’s main points is that the cognitive restructuring that takes place during expressive writing is of utmost importance for longer term health benefits. He relates this to it responding to the human inherent need for meaning (Frankl) and for completion, where disruption has taken place (Pennebaker, 1997, 90). Expressive writing slows down the process, brings structure to it and makes space for a less emotionally laden assessment of it (ibid. 95). The importance of the search for meaning is a position echoed in Aaron Antonovsky writings, not least his focus on coherence as a premise for salutogenesis (Antonovsky, 1987). According to this position, a mere expressing of emotions, which can also take place through non-lingual activities such as dance or art, will not to the same degree “promote self-understanding” (ibid. 93).

Concluding remarks

Expressive writing, even though originating as a therapeutic tool, has been used in various research-projects, but, to my knowledge, only once in Norway (Haga Gripsrud, 2014) and never, as far as this researcher knows, in regard to professionals. The approach shares with BNIM that it allows for an expressing of thoughts and emotions, on the part of the interviewee, that is more open, free-associative and non-directed than other, more structured, methodological measures. It thus allows for the unique voice of the narrator and an “outlet for issues not expressing to others” (Haga Gripsrud, 2014, 5).

Yet, Haga et al et points out how the writers in their study, even when in their own solitude, report having a hard time escaping the sense of writing to an audience (ibid. 5). Having been delivered the task by the researcher, chances are that the professionals will picture the researcher and might even adjust their writing according to what they assume is his or her expectations. One way, perhaps, of minimizing a sense of the researcher being the audience, could be by providing instructions in-absentia, through a letter.

The letter may provide the following instruction, which is adjusted from Pennebaker's own (Pennebaker, 1997, 167), and that should be undertaken by the interviewee before, or perhaps instead of, the BNIM interview:

Over the next four days, I want you to write about your deepest emotions and thoughts about the most upsetting experiences involving use of coercion in your professional life. Really let go and explore your feelings and thoughts about it. You can write about the same incident every day or a series of different incidents. Whatever you choose to write about, however, it is critical that you really let go and explore your very deepest emotions and thoughts.

Pennebaker also includes the following in his instructions (after second sentence above): "In your writing, you might tie this experience to your childhood, your relationship with your parents, people you have loved or love now, or even your career. How is this experience related to who you would like to become, who you have been in the past, or who you are now?" I leave it out, as it requires a theorizing and filtering, on the part of the narrator that may result in "thinner" descriptions. Whether the interviewee is to undertake the sessions of Expressive writing before or after the BNIM interview, will have to be addressed elsewhere.

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C.4

Stories that care.

Narrative Medicine in Action in Home Care

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The last progress in medicine have taken place and led to a completely new paradigm of care focused on patient and family self-management. The treatments fail to succeed because of the human factor known for a few decades as “patient non-adherence” also caused by the factors of adherence-enhancing interventions which are lacking. The development of interventions to enhance patient adherence to medication and maintain long term persistence requires at least an understanding of the determinants of patient non-adherence to prescribed therapies. This is especially important when the determinants are modifiable risk factors, which can then be targeted for beneficial changes, once identified. [Kardas P., Lewek P., Matyjasczyk M., 2013].

The WHO report on narrative use in healthcare claims the individuals' stories of illness and well-being are a critical window to their meaning systems and values, and are nested within wider narratives of society and culture. Narrative is increasingly used in healthcare communication and education and can be effective in persuasion, particularly if it captures cultural contexts. Health education in which the message is framed as a story may be more effective than when it is given as just fact. Narrative approaches offer potential to improve health at the individual level (by informing educational programs), at the community level (by informing participatory research), at the healthcare professional level (by promoting reflexivity and understanding of the patient's perspective), at the health care organization level (by informing patient-centred redesign) and at the health care system level (by promoting a richer understanding of what policies are in place and how to influence them) [WHO, 2016].

Community members are motivated to engage for a variety of intrinsic reasons, although financial support cannot be ignored for a long term continuity. Community level support and trust were indispensable and facilitated when communities' perceived interventions to fit with their needs and adapted to their context. External linkages particularly to the health care system were seen as important, and at times inhibited by broader factors. Institutional processes that facilitated trust, transparency, and communication were central. Contextual factors supportive of community participation included legal reforms or policies leading to include the communities, as well as specific political histories and engagement with social movements. Others have also emphasized multiple layers of factors that influence community participation, most particularly the importance of trust, acceptance, and long term partnerships [George AS, Mehra V., Scott K., Sriram V., 2015].

The draft of the Italian Health Pact 2019-2021 claims “the changed socio-epidemiological context, with the constant increase of situations of social and health fragility, requires a reorganization of the territorial assistance that promotes activities of prevention and promotion of health, paths of taking care of the person suffering from chronic illness based on medicine initiative, a strong impulse to home care, an investment in residential care for non self-sufficient individuals, mental health and a new path of needs analysis and service planning with the involvement of all interested parties” [Health Minister of Italy, 2019].

In this context, the integrated care is a very important factor for the innovation of care .

Integrated care includes initiatives seeking to improve outcomes of care by overcoming issues of fragmentation through linkage or co-ordination of services of providers along the continuum of care. Integrated care can be seen to be both a design principle and a means to achieve person centred, efficient, and safe care. Useful approaches have identified targeted areas for integration, namely functional, organisational, professional, and clinical integration. The systemic levels at which it can occur, i.e. horizontal integration links services that are on the same level in the process of health care, while vertical integration brings together organisations at different levels of a hierarchical structure under one management umbrella (e.g. primary care and secondary care). [EU, 2017].

In this chapter, we aim to describe our experience in order to share the care pathway among the person, his/her family, the healthcare and social professional workers starting by the story of the patient. The vision of

homecare service of ASLTO4 puts at the center of the care system the person and his/her family as active parts of care pathway. All activities have been realised by a different approach based on narrative and reciprocity.

Healthcare System in Italy

The Italian National Health Service was established on December 23rd 1978 and approved by 85% of the Parliament [L. 833/1978]. The NHS is founded on the principles of universal coverage, social financing through the use of general taxation, and non-discriminatory access to the health care services. From this Act onward, the history of public health is solidly integrated with the Constitution of the country, with its civil and democratic growth as well as its economic and social development. This pathway included the creation of the system based on “healthcare trusts” in order to foster efficiency and managerial skills, ensuring provision of healthcare basket benefits (so called L.E.A.) homogenously within the national territory [<http://www.salute.gov.it>].

In Piedmont Region, 4 393 000 citizens live of which 520 000 in the ASLTO4. In the District of Settimo, a medium city close to Turin, capital of Piedmont Region, live about 85 000 citizens.



In Homecare Service of ASLTO4, Settimo, Leini, Volpiano and San Benigno are the main cities in which around 100000 people are residents.

613 patients and caregivers were involved in this project on narrative medicine in 2018.

150 narratives descriptions have been collected by 15 nurses and 2 healthcare coordinators and, at the end of the project, a book has been published in order to better explain the procedures of taking charge of the patients and his/her relatives.



Experience of ASLTO4

The Homecare Service of ASLTO4 takes charge of all the people who need the healthcare interventions with no age limits.

This experience was realized with the contribution that patients and their families wanted to provide, with the participation of professionals who shared their stories and the care actions that were inspired by all of them. For this reason, narrative medicine has become an indispensable way for the professionals to follow people affected by chronic diseases, in our time where the increase in average age and chronicity are essential elements. Integration with other services and multi-professionalism was the ingredients that made this approach to care possible.

“Stories that care. Narrative Medicine in Action in Home Care” is the result of a pathway that has led to the creation of a book in which the stories of patients, caregivers, nurses, doctors, social workers, physiotherapists working in homecare are collected. These stories describe

how the person lives the organization of care, the daily life of the disease, the care, the real needs of the people.

The care project is a space where the various forms of Knowledge are taught: medical Knowledge, based on the scientific method. The “experiential” Knowledge is practical, human and reflective, that allows to ask question, to learn through their own experience. This dialogue should be strengthened and “made public” in order to renew the necessary alliance (pact) between the professional and the citizen. The dialogue seems to be an useful tool, today, in order to strengthen citizen and healthcare confidence through the support of proactive and collaborative path/attitudes. The professionals involved in the care process need to be available to focus on the real life of patients and his/her families according to a personalized approach to medicine.

The person, if he/she is accompanied and motivated, tells his/her experience on the care pathway in different times. The outcome of caring will be evaluated by healthcare professional also according to the story of patients, their real life situations, expectation, and objectives in a personalized approach to care.

The stories are described by different perspectives: patient, families, medical doctor, nurse, social worker, physiotherapist, etc. in different times and the focus of stories analysis is to improve and to modify the care pathway according to the real needs of patient and families.

The patient and the family are at the center of the care system and share the different therapeutic choices. Important is to work in integration with professionals as well as different healthcare and social profiles. Experience and scientific knowledge are important at the same level. A story may support the role of organizational who seeks (often for good reason) to change the existing system. Narrative Medicine and Evidence Based Medicine are not in antithesis but they represent integrated health care approaches where the first is focused on the person and his/her story, the second one on to the healthcare professional for identifying the most effective performances. The person's stories become parts of clinical documentation when the care plan identifies and enhances the elements of daily life making it more effective.

The relationship between patients, their family members and care professions is based on a different approach, which consists in creating a therapeutic alliance.

The therapeutic pact between different actors of care plan is an useful tool which has to be inserted in medical record.

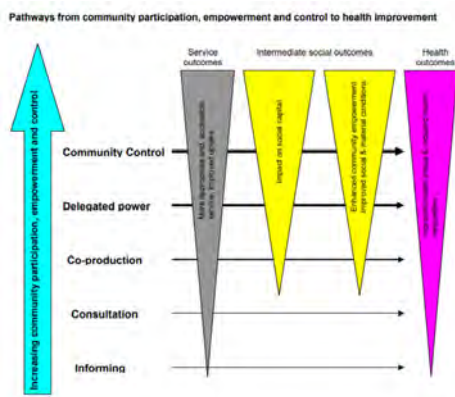
The patient and/or family can:

- read all medical records;
- fill in the narrative description which is a part of medical record;
- negotiate, accept or not accept, and sign the contract among healthcare professional, medical doctor and them;
- confirm the therapeutic path.

The health professional can:

- include other relevant patients information;
- add their professional comments on the clinical case (clinical and assistential daily record);
- communicate with other specialist for second opinions;
- explain the therapeutic plan to parents and patients.

Different levels and types of community engagement have different impacts on a range of outcomes, including the health status. As the following diagram proposes, approaches which involve informing or consulting communities are likely to have a marginal impact on people's health (or no or marginal impact on any other outcome at the individual or population level). In contrast, the more a community is supported to take control, by being involved in the design, development and implementation of activities to improve their lives (i.e. coproduction, delegated power or community control), the more likely their health (and a range of other outcomes) will improve [National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence public Health Programme Guidance, Community engagement, February 2008].



[NICE, 2008]

The advantages of narrative medicine are the following:

Patients /parents as “resources” of care project;

Flexibility of care project;

Multiprofessional approach and networking.

The disadvantages are the following:

time management;

cultural change;

change management of the professionals;

utility and effectiveness data collected by narrative description;

assessment tools of the results.

Conclusions

The experience developed by the home care team has led to a tangible change in the care of the assisted person who is considered the real motor of care. The history of the person, his experience, and his expectations are personal factors that are not found in the letter of discharge or in the reporting of the GP. This absence has allowed us to focus on the real needs and expectations of the person and his/her family which do not always coincide with the interventions of the protocols and procedures.

Knowledge of experience is as important as scientific knowledge: they integrate and work in parallel.

Maintaining respect for specific roles and skills, the operators had to be involved, considering approaches and therapeutic choices that are also different from those previously applied and / or intended to be activated.

The evaluation of patient adherence is not easy, and a full understanding of whether and why any given patient chooses and is able to adhere is often elusive.

Patients are truthful in their adherence reports only when they feel free to admit adherence difficulties in the context of true partnership with their physicians.

The assessment of adherence depends, to a large degree, on the development of a trusting and accepting relationship between the patient and the healthcare team. Adherence assessments that are simple (presenting as little burden to the respondent as possible) and non threatening will also likely yield the most honest and accurate responses. Much information about patients' beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms, cultural contexts, social

supports, and emotional health challenges (particularly depression) can be learned. These elements are central to the establishment of adherence intentions, and must be explored and discussed in the therapeutic relationship. The acknowledgment of differences is an important part of building respectful and trusting relationships between healthcareers and their patients [Martin LR., Williams SL., Haskard KB., DiMatteo MR., 2005].

Empowering and engaging people is about providing the opportunity, skills and resources that people need to be articulate and empowered users of health services. It is also about reaching the underserved and marginalized groups of the population in order to guarantee universal access to services. This goal seeks to unlock community and individual resources for action at all levels. It aims at empowering individuals to make effective decisions about their own health and at enabling communities to become actively engaged in coproducing healthy environments, providing care services in partnership with the health sector and other sectors, and contributing to healthy public policy [WHO, 2015].

Narrative Medicine and Evidence-Based Medicine are not in antithesis with each other, but absolutely integrable: the first is the completion of the second, filling the relationship void that a technical and fragmented approach had created.

Narrative Medicine aims to contribute to a more sustainable health through the identification of more concrete needs of the person avoiding waste of resources, inappropriate therapeutic choices, and unnecessary litigation.

Our experience is based on the active involvement of people, on multi-professionalism, network culture, empowerment and enhancing of the patient and caregiver in which we consider them as a resource. There are therefore many aspects that emerge from this experience that enhance the importance of service, the innovation of the approach to care. At the same time identify critical issues, spaces for organizational improvement, care relationships and setting up the service itself.

Learn to know the universe of the disease in a new perspective, to involve the person in his / her therapeutic choices not imposed but shared, to take into consideration the real expectations and needs together to outline a treatment pathway that becomes a project in chronic diseases of life has strengthened the therapeutic alliance, the motivation and satisfaction of the operators who have gradually learned to communicate and confront each other differently.

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C.5

Meaning of living alone in old age: continuity of existence despite existential threats

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Introduction

Living frequently alone, people over 80 are considered at risk of several health problems. It is a matter of concern especially for social and healthcare professionals. Staying at home as long as possible requires great investment in terms of care support services. In order to promote living at home independently in old age – and to reduce future costs linked to institutionalization – risk prevention becomes an important component of most healthcare policies and services. However, knowledge of how older people see risks in their everyday life is very limited. In particular, it is important to consider what they perceive as a risk and how these perceptions affect their daily activities and their quality of life.

Based on research that investigated how elderly persons manage risk (Piguet, Droz Mendelzweig & Bedin, 2017), this paper describes a methodological approach to reach the first person point of view. The “explicitation interview” enables extended and deeper narratives. It provides a better understanding of the experience of living alone at home in very old age, moreover, when one is facing serious functional limitations. While questioned about their vulnerability and the risks to which they are exposed, older people reveal, above all, positive attitudes towards maintaining their self-determination and a coherence in their biographical history continuity. Through their stories, older people demonstrate their willingness to stay in control of their own lives.

Risks to their physical integrity are subordinated to existential threats, such as loss of self-esteem, of their self-determination and a sense of continuity of identity.

1. Context

In Switzerland, as in many other countries, the number of people over 80 will double over the next two decades. Twenty-five percent of them will need support and care at home. In this context, health risks receive a more prominent place in clinical practice, especially in community and home-based services. They are most often referred to as “risk assessment”, “risk management” and “prevention” (Crowe & Carlyle, 2003). Consequently, the prevention of age-related health risks has become a major concern for both professionals and public health decision makers. Indeed, while facing loneliness and experiencing functional disabilities, older people face concomitantly many risks. How do they manage with this complexity?

Risk can be broadly characterized as a potential undesired event situated in the future occurring in specific circumstances or activities. The academic literature mostly addresses the phenomenon under its negative perspective, as a threat, a potential loss, a danger, a hazard, from the point of view of the adversity, the uncertainty and misfortune. Focus is put on prevention of falls, of dehydration, of the worsening of existing health conditions. Starting from praiseworthy purposes, the prevention of risks can sometimes take the form of ambiguous and mixed effects. Some authors suggest to address the risk issue with caution as considering people “at risk” might also be linked to social control over deviant behavior (Crowe & Carlyle, 2003; Rook, Thuras, & Lewis, 1990). This perspective highlights a kind of resistance by older people to be labelled as persons “at risk”. In a previous study, (Droz Mendelzweig, Chappuis, Vuilleumier, Kuhne, Piguët & Bedin, 2014) older people acknowledge taking risks in their everyday life and they depict positive effects this risk taking can have on them in terms of personal self-development and self-esteem. From this perspective, many phenomena – commonly categorised as risks – are no longer experienced as such. At this stage, decline in mobility, in strength, in cognition, in sensory perception point to the usual components of the ongoing personal experience of growing old, and are not necessarily apprehended as risks. In addition, we have shown that risk management in older people is a matter

of interplay between various factors, mainly conflicting interests, values and identity. The study from which this presentation has been drawn has been conducted in order to investigate how older people deal with the complexity of living alone at home and with the multitude of risks they face.

2. Methodology

Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to provide a better understanding of how risks are experienced by people over 80 in the course of their daily activities and to identify their resources to cope with these risks.

Setting and participants

All participants lived in the French speaking part of Switzerland (Canton de Vaud). Two home-based care facilities participated in the study. One of them was located in an urban area, the other in a rural area. The two settings helped in finding and contacting respondents fitting our criteria to join the study. Inclusion criteria were: being aged 80 years or over; living alone in one's own home; receiving home care services; absence of cognitive problems; ability to communicate in French; and mental capacity to make an informed decision about taking part in the study.

We conducted 20 face-to-face interviews with elderly people, aged from 80 to 98 years: 12 females and 8 males. All of them had functional impairments, some had visual impairment, chronic pain or limb amputation.

Data collection: the method of explicitation interview

To explore the way in which participants experience risk in their everyday life, we chose the method of explicitation interview. This approach, developed by Pierre Vermersch (2000, 2012), stems from Piaget's cognitive psychology and from Husserl's phenomenology. Its purpose is to guide the subject to explore a specific lived experience, focusing on the actions undertaken while it occurred rather than on the thoughts that accompanied it. The explicitation interview solicits autobiographical recollection of many details that made up the specificity of one particular action. When conducted thoroughly, the approach gives access to a passive memory by mo-

bilizing sensory feelings and body sensations such as hot, cold, smell, or the posture experienced in the course of the activity.

Under the researcher's guidance, the subject strives to recover sensations, gestures, thoughts and a variety of implicit aspects which constituted the concrete past situation. This method stands in contrast with "voluntary memory", i.e., memories produced due to a conscious effort so as to recall events, people, and places. The main advantage of the explicitation interview is that it offers a first person's fine description of lived experience (Mouchet, Vermersch, & Bouthier, 2011). It avoids general explanations about the subject's intentions and focuses on what was actually been undertaken in the situation. The researcher addresses some specific questions to the interviewee in order to invite him or her to foster an introspective posture.

In accordance with the goals of our research, the respondents were asked to choose a moment in the past week, in which they took a risk (leaving the definition of risk open-ended). Here is an example of the kind of questions used to guide the subject during an explicitation interview on the subject of *doing the laundry*, freely chosen by the respondent:

Researcher:

"you are going to go back to the moment when you arrive in front of your washing machine.... What was your body's position at this precise moment ?....And -just at that moment- what did you do ?....and afterwards ?.... And just before you put your laundry in the machine what did you pay attention to? In this situation, what was the most important thing to you?"

The questions are formulated in an open-ended format, using the respondent's words. The challenge is to "maintain" the subject in the evocation of the situation as long as possible while giving him/her the opportunity to explore details of the lived experience.

3. Results and discussion

Each participant chose to recall one or more specific activities and accepted to describe, step by step, how he/she performed them. Most narratives evoked mundane activities such as bathing, laundry, bedmaking, getting up in the morning, shopping or collecting the mail.

Narratives relate not only to practical facts, but also to values involved in the situations and decisions made in the course of action. Participants are aware of risks such as falls and worsening pain sensations. Nevertheless, these features are not presented as major threats, at least not in the course of the action depicted. Rather, in the participants' eyes, the main risks that surface are those related to their identity, to their wish of self-determination and self-esteem. In their view, remaining involved in occupations and simultaneously taking some controlled concrete risks enables avoidance of bigger existential and social threats. We find consistency in the dialectic balance between the "micro" – choices in mundane activities and one's own identity and values.

As an illustration of this immediate link between micro-acts and values, here is a situation chosen by Mrs B. This 86-year-old lady, diabetic and blind, never receives visitors. When the researcher asked her to choose a specific moment, she said:

"Cleaning the window. It was the moment when the sun wasn't shining yet, because when the sun is shining, we do not have to clean the windows".

And she added:

"I think if tomorrow I am gone at least it's clean. I've always been like that. If ever there is a problem..... it's clean. It's my usual habits."

Routine activities shed light on the importance of continuity for the subject. The "modus operandi" of each actor is an expression of his/her own expertise in the accomplishment of tasks. While describing the way in which they proceed, the actors carry out an identification process. For example, the depiction made by an 88-year-old man of his bedtime as a kind of meticulous ritual. In his eyes, the precise order of these activities is clearly associated to his personality. Once he has settled down as he sees fit, he quietly surrenders himself to what he likes to do: thinking and dreaming.

He said:

"I still live now as I have always lived with cleanliness... I form a triangle [with the cover], I have a geometric mind so I make a triangle with the cover that I move like this... I have a neat way of doing things you

know, the triangle is well prepared... I feel that it's done, that it's done properly because I'm meticulous. I have an intense inner life, a life of the mind. After that, I can let the spirit escape."

Hence, practical details and comments on a mundane activity have the capacity to reveal core aspects. The consistency between one's own biographical identity, one's own values and personal characteristics becomes explicit. Through the narration, the logics of the dynamic continuity of one's own experience is brought forward (Dale, Soderhamn, & Soderhamn, 2012).

The evocation resulting from the explication interviews reveals some valuable aspects of the respondents' intimate world and give access to a part of their personal insight. The narratives give voice to the monologues that the subject engages with himself. Sometimes, these dialogues also put forward judgments that the person addresses to her/himself. Older people face pain and difficulties to move. Despite the feeling of exhaustion and hopelessness expressed at different levels by each of our respondents, their narratives are completely pragmatic. They mostly focused on what they undertake in order to do what they want to be done. They highlight a great deal of resources and of practical strategies developed over time, not least self-discipline that appears as an important component of these narratives.

The explication interview: an insight on loneliness and "connectivity"

It is well known that, in most situations, proxies are present and available. Nevertheless, it is very seldom that proxies are present 24/24. On average, for the 20 respondents involved in this study being alone was their reality about 22 hours a day. Living alone with important functional disabilities boosts older people to organize themselves so that their daily living conforms to their wishes. Instead of withdrawing from activities, including from risk taking activities, each one strives to behave in accordance with his/her wishes and preferences. In this sense, we can consider that loneliness in old age triggers elderly people to maintain an involvement in life. Management of daily living sustains to some extent a power of action.

Indeed, living alone in old age is challenging, especially when social contacts are scarce. Older people deal with many losses. The elderly people interviewed in this study demonstrated ability to make decisions coherent with their own life history. Despite immediate threats to their identity and to

their social personality, older people assert the continuity of their existence.

The explicitation interview brings visibility of the repeated efforts needed daily in order to perform these activities. The narration generated by the explicitation interview may guide the participants to develop some insight: it can help them to discover some resources they possess - or raise awareness to new resources that they may be able to develop.

Thus narratives provide subtle ways of living alone in old age. In our view, this approach is a workable method to get the first person's point of view. In addition, the explicitation interview proves to be useful also to the subject himself since it gives him or her an opportunity to put forward abilities he/she was unconscious of, and to take advantage of them. However, this requires expert input from the professional. Learning the technique requires specific training. If properly analyzed, the narratives developed through the explicitation interview can enable the external facilitator to take into consideration certain initiatives that may seem inappropriate at first sight but that occur to be important for the older persons. From this standpoint, the professional can discuss with the elderly person how to draw on existing resources.

Finally, this research offers a new insight into home care activities. It shows that the material risks on which most of the professionals' interventions are focused, are less important than the existential threats. Thus, it suggests that health care should primarily focus on health education (supporting personal resources) rather than on physical safety (avoiding concrete risk). Precisely because the daily existence in old age is fluctuant and more than ever marked by finiteness, and because it involves losses and gains, the existential threats may stimulate creativity. This requires the finding of practical tips and tricks and the learning of new ways of thinking and acting.

Conclusions

This article aims to present a specific methodology that enables practitioners to get closer to the intimate solitary life of the elderly at home.

Based on concrete and daily tasks, the explicitation interviews conducted with elderly persons living alone led the subjects to depict what is most important in their daily lives. The common denominator of the interviews is the emphasis placed by respondents on continuity: their will to remain in action, to remain faithful to their selves and to remain in connection with their social environment. Whereas the narratives we collected were not

meant to draw up their biographical history, the technique of the explicitation interview reveals that daily actions are inseparable from each respondent's particular identity. Through the verbalization of the micro-decisions that accompany each specific action, they have reflected the way in which the values that marked their lives shape the persistence of their selves and extend the meaning given to their daily lives.

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C.6

Facilitating belongingness through Supported Education for adults living with mental illness

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Researchers in adult education and lifelong learning have long identified the importance of understanding the lived experiences of adult learners to better address their educational needs. Hallqvist (2014) notes that because few people now follow standardized life trajectories, it is even more important for educators to take into account biographical learning to better understand their students. While self-reflection allows individuals to learn from their own lives, adult educators also benefit from attention to learners' biographies. For those adults living with mental illness, the benefit of biographical learning has significant potential to improve possibilities for future independence and hopefulness. Clark (2006) argues that the fields of adult education and disability studies could both be strengthened by drawing on their shared interests. This paper, therefore, draws on research in Adult Education and research on Psychiatric Disabilities/Mental Health to understand what the learning biographies of adults with a psychiatric disability can tell us about the role of Supported Education (SEd) programs in facilitating belongingness and hopefulness in their lives.

Access to education and employment is a key component to moving along the difficult road to recovery. Importantly, it also opens the door to experiencing "the meaningful and stigma-free social roles of student and worker" (Best, Still, & Cameron, 2008, p. 65). Furthermore, other studies have illustrated that there is a strong connection between educational attainment and steady employment among people with schizophrenia and other mental health problems (Best, Still, & Cameron, 2008). Supported Education programs, therefore, may provide the specialized support needed as participants prepare to transition from a hospital setting to the community and to pursue further education. An analysis of the learning biogra-

phies of adults living with mental illness and taking part in SEd programs reveals the importance of access to and the impact of such programs in helping to increase participants' sense of connectivity to education. The students in the SEd programs we have been examining experience what researchers have referred to as a "double stigma" because they have both mental illness and limited literacy which means they have more limited ability to engage in both their mental health treatment as well as educational programs (Lincoln et al., 2017).

In our full project, we have interviewed 97 adult students who have taken part in three hospital-run SEd programs. For the purposes of this paper, we will focus on our interviews with 17 individuals at one Canadian hospital; these individuals are or have been designated as Not Criminally Responsible (NCR). We will set out the context of those interviews and then contrast the learning biographies prior to their current SEd program to those within that program. We then turn to the potential of SEd to disrupt stereotypes and create hopefulness and belongingness among its participants. SEd is not a panacea nor will it remove all of life's challenges for those living with mental illness and low literacy but it can be an important support to create a positive trajectory in one's life biography.

1. Context

Located in a small Canadian city (population ca. 21,000) and affiliated with a large general hospital in a large city (population ca. 950,000), the Mental Health Centre (MHC) has had a Supported Education program since 1983 that has always been led by a certified teacher. The MHC has two main units: the Secure Treatment Unit (STU) with 100 beds and the Forensic Treatment Unit (FTU) with 61 beds. The STU is a provincial correctional facility for those who have been found guilty of a crime, and who have a mental illness that did not interfere with their understanding of their crime. The FTU is for individuals who have breached the Criminal Code, but who were found not criminally responsible (NCR) or were unfit to stand trial because they cannot understand the legal proceedings or the nature of their crime. Individuals come to the MHC from across the Canadian province of Ontario and the Canadian Yukon Territory; some are transferred from other hospitals to be near family or to be in a less secure environment. The focus for this paper is on the 17 respondents who were designated as NCR and who were currently enrolled or had taken part in the SEd program located in the FTU. Of the 17 interviewees, two were fe-

male and fifteen male. The majority (n=14) were single, while one was dating, one was married, and one was in a common law relationship. There was an almost even split between in-patients (n=9) and out-patients (n=8) and between those who were still active in the program (n=7) and those who had completed it (n=10). Participants ranged in age between 27 and 71 years. Most were English-speakers, but three spoke both English and French and one spoke Persian.

Participants are referred to the SEd program after assessment by a Forensic Occupational Therapist (FOT) and a determination of their personal goals. If interested in pursuing an educational goal, the onsite certified teacher conducts an intake interview with the person. To be able to take part in the program, any in-patients must also be eligible to leave their ward, with either building or grounds privileges. Some patients who do not have privileges may receive educational support on the ward. Patients are reassessed every six weeks, at which time they discuss and update their goals. In addition, the FOT will assist clients who are transitioning to or living in the community.

The current SEd teacher is an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT)¹ and has been working in the facility for approximately 30 years. The position does not require OCT certification as it is not considered a professional teaching position, but neither is it considered a regulated healthcare professional position. This ambiguity in role means that the position tends to be underpaid and underappreciated by the hospital bureaucracy (Fernando, King & Eamer, 2017). There is an additional challenge in that the person in this position must ideally be adept at both teaching adults and working with mental health illnesses; often, instructors are only trained in one of these areas. Once participants have been released from the MHC and are deemed prepared for adult education programs in the community, they are referred to an adult education school run by the local school board and co-located in a community college. The school-college partnership affords students the opportunity to better transition from high school courses and general upgrading to college-level programs.

- 1 In Canada, education is a provincial responsibility so each of the ten provinces and three territories have separate certification for teachers who have completed a teacher education course and meet provincial standards for qualification. Ontario is a province in Canada and an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT) is the designation granted by the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers to qualified, registered members in good standing.

2. Learning biographies: past educational experiences

Most of the participants in the SEd program in our case study had completed at least some high school, while a few had attended some post-secondary education (see Table A below).

Table A: Level of education when starting SEd program

Level of education when starting SEd program	Frequency	Percent
Attended some primary school	n=1	5.9
Completed grade 8	1	5.9
Attended some high school	9	52.9
Attended some college	4	23.5
Attended some university	1	5.9

Clark (2006) argues that “[c]urrent adult education theories on barriers to participation do not include an analysis of disability as a possible explanation for why so few disabled attend our higher educational programs” (p. 311-312). Our project aims to add to the research about the educational experiences of those living with mental illness by collecting participant reflections on past and current experiences with school, teachers, and learning. It has been well-documented that people living with mental illness tend to face more barriers and disruptions to their education than most (Lincoln, et al. 2017; Gregg 2012; Best, Still & Cameron 2008), and many of the students in our study similarly described a variety of barriers to their education in the past. For many of our participants, their mental illness was not diagnosed until after dropping out of or being expelled from school. Not surprisingly, the most common barrier faced was mental health, but other barriers included family problems, addictions, and finances (see Table B below).

Table B: Past Barriers to Education Achievement

Have you experienced barriers due to:	Number*
Mental health?	n=8
Family issues?	6
Addiction(s)?	5
Financial issues?	5

Social isolation?	3
Learning disability?	3
Medication(s)?	2
Language skills?	1
Accessing programs?	1
Instruction/instructors?	1
Other?	3

* Some participants indicated more than one barrier.

It is clear from the combination of comments about the multiple challenges faced by interviewees that there was not one singular cause for problems with previous education. During the interviews, none of the interviewees specifically referenced examples of how their mental health impacted their prior education as they were not always fully able to make those connections; however, many of the comments may be suggestive of undiagnosed learning disabilities and mental health problems, while other comments reflected a general lack of engagement in their education which could be a result of family issues, a lack of connection to teachers, or bullying. For instance, various participants commented about an inability to pay attention or concentrate, being bored, and skipping classes.

- It was kind of boring. [**Client ID 005**]
- Yeah so, I don't know, I didn't even, I didn't really like even like sitting in class and having to do work. I thought it was really tedious and, I don't know. Overall, I didn't like high school that much, I thought it was really confusing at times thought. [**Client 006**]
- Yeah. Oh, back in those times I was so, kind of, behaviour adaptation-oriented, you know, skipping, defiant. Just not taking things seriously ... and learning life lessons along the way, now, helped me understand the difference between, you know, what things turn out like versus if, you know, plan for them in school is important and you stay in school your whole life. [**Client ID 001**]
- [in regards to university] It also I think a lack of ability to concentrate to understand the seriousness of the lectures. I had spent a lot of time in the Aux drinking beer and that was like the highlight of my stay there I think. [**Client ID 003**]
- I thought it was an absolute waste of time. [**Client ID 009**]
- Yeah and I didn't really try in school and I skipped a lot, so I never really went anywhere with it. Oh yeah. I stayed in school until I was 17-years-

old but I was skipping all the time. I wasn't working on my studies. **[Client ID 013]**

Drugs and addictions were also an important piece of the story for many participants. Although there was a recognition that drugs had an impact on their experience, there was no sign of regret about those past choices. Some research has demonstrated that young people with mental illness are more likely to smoke, abuse alcohol, and use prescription and non-prescription drugs recreationally (Ringen, et al. 2008; Henderson, et al. 2014).

- Doing drugs, skipping school... Bad milieu at school, trying to be popular. **[Client ID 001]**

When I was either drunk or stoned, or drunk and stoned. **[Client ID 009]**

- I'll be honest. I was into marijuana. **[Client ID 013]**
- Actually pretty good in high school until I started taking drugs. I was doing drugs and stuff. I couldn't concentrate. **[Client ID 016]**
- Like you do, but you don't – you always want to skip school. I used to do that, skip school. Yeah, and do drugs. **[Client 017]**

The presence of a learning disability often impacts both educational experiences and the likelihood of also having a mental illness (Herron & Priest 2013). In our study, only three participants indicated that they had a diagnosed learning disability, two of whom stated:

- A learning disability; I couldn't concentrate, I couldn't sit down and write a, I could write letters, but I couldn't really – Couldn't process it, it sounded gibberishy. I'm crazy I guess, that's. **[Client 007]**
- Well, my parents thought that I didn't hear certain sounds, but they tested me in sound booths with different frequencies and whatnot, but I think what they found out is I'm partially dyslexic. **[Client 008]**

Some participants indicated that they had mixed experiences with school. Some had a better time in elementary school, while others preferred high school. Friendships and teachers were important in influencing positive perspectives of school.

- I went to a kind of old school grammar school in Australia [Canberra Grammar School] because my father was a diplomat. I went to a grammar school where there was all boys in uniform and a headmaster and compulsory sports. Lots of running, cross-country running and carnivals and stuff. So I remember quite a lot and particularly I had some very good friends down there at that point when I was like 13 to 17 years old, I lived there. So what I remember most from school was my circle of friends and some of the games we played together. We played Dun-

geons and Dragons a lot together. That's more of my happy memories. The psychologist I was talking to says I'm lonely for them though, that I kind of miss my friends or other things too... I got pretty much straight A's from like – actually in fact from like Kindergarten to Grade 12, I give it like maybe 99% straight A's. I was a real promising student particularly in English they said. [Client ID 003]

- Somewhat, I liked the fact that I got to meet up with my friends every day. [Client ID 006]
- I found the teachers tried everything they could for me [Client ID 001]
- And public school, I mean, I did good. I loved the teachers because they were a lot better, but I did pretty good. [Client ID 016]

For others, teachers and other students had a negative impact.

- I picked up a lot of taunts in school and yet I was kind of pleased to be finished school so I wasn't really sure I wanted to go back [to do the SEd school program] when I had, you know, good reading skills, good writing skills, mathematical skills. They would basically serve me in the real world and I think I would like to prioritize what I read too. [Client ID 003]
- But it's, but they're just very tough in the French system back then. Like, you get like, there's physical violence and stuff in the schools then, too. Like, even with the teachers.... Yes, like we'd get the strap... Or if we got caught spitting, we'd get our mouth washed out with soap, and. [Client ID 004]
- Well I didn't like, like teachers' authority, principal's authority and I don't know, I was kind of like a little rebel kind of. [Client 006]
- They weren't nice to me, overly. But some were. [Client ID 011]

Similarly, family circumstances and lack of support from family members were important influences on school experience and success.

- No, no, they didn't care about education. [Client ID 005]
- I became hostile toward my parents. [Client ID 009]
- Switching from different locations [across Ontario] ... military base and then to Quebec and then back to Ottawa. It was kind of like switching schools were [sic] upsetting me because I had friends that were kind of bad in a sense, you know? Destroyed my whole life really but I just started taking drugs and all that. [Client ID 015]
- I started taking them [drugs] – my dad thought I was taking it. He kept accusing me of it, and I wasn't taking drugs; to the point where I just, you know, figured, "What's the use? I mean, I might as well." [Client ID 016]

These stories of experiences of schooling as children and youth demonstrate the challenges that many of our participants faced before taking part in this SEd program. To gain access to the necessary support, however, these individuals needed to be hospitalized. Without hospitalization, they would not have had the opportunity nor the individualized support that enabled them to gain the mental and social stability necessary for entrance into a supported education program. This in turn allowed them to see themselves as more than just patients by regaining a student identity, which helped to improve their confidence and hopefulness, and to work towards their personal and educational goals (Fernando, King & Eamer 2017).

3. Learning biographies: experiences in supported education

Patients admitted to the Mental Health Centre are assessed by an integrated health team that makes recommendations about programming and helps patients to set goals. Those who choose to attend the SEd program do so either because they have specific educational goals for the future or because there may not be another program that interests them. Once enrolled, participants are further assessed by the instructor to determine more specifically their educational goals, including what type of program they wish to follow (i.e., general upgrading, high school credits, or post-secondary preparation) and the types of supports they will need. The largest number of the participants were working on high school credits, followed by academic upgrading and computer skills. Only one person was an English Language Learner, while one was working on post-secondary preparation, and one was in more than one stream (see Table C below).

Table C: SEd stream

What stream(s) are/were you in?	Frequency	Percent
High school credits	n=7	41.2
Academic upgrading	4	23.5
Computer skills	3	17.6
English as a Second Language	1	5.9
Post-secondary linking and support	1	5.9
Multiple	1	5.9

The students’ feelings about belonging in education were fundamentally changed by their experiences in the SEd program. Those who had positive

experiences felt less isolated because the SED program was tailored to meet individual needs and focused on making students feel that they did indeed belong in an educational program. They felt involved in the direction of their learning and were included in educational decision-making by supportive instructors in their program. Their confidence and independence increased and they felt good about being part of this type of program because it more closely met their expectations than past educational experiences had. The SED program facilitates more than just the development of literacy skills: improvements in their social skills led some students to also perceive changes in family and community relationships because of their increased ability to interact and their ability to connect more fully with others (see Table D below).

Table D: Feelings about current SED program

	Yes	No
Has anxiety about education or school been a challenge to your learning?	n=6	n=11
Have you ever felt upset by your instruction/learning in the SED program?	4	12
Do you feel involved in the direction of your educational program?	15	2
Do you feel included in the decisions about your educational program?	15	1
Do you feel supported by the instructors in your program?	15	1
Has your time in the program made you more confident about yourself?	12	4
Do you feel good about being/having been in the program?	15	1
Are you currently or planning to participate in further education?	8	10
Has the program changed your level of independence?	11	4
Has this program changed your social skills and confidence in interacting with others?	12	3
Has this program changed your relationship with your family?	7	6
Has this program changed how much you participate in your community?	8	7
Has this program changed how you access services or supports?	8	7
Have you worked on any specific high school or college credits?	10	5
Did the program meet your expectations?	10	2

In spite of choosing to take part in the SED program and having generally positive feelings about it, participants continued to experience barriers, with motivation being one of the main problems. This highlights the limitations of SED programs which, while offering a positive educational experience, cannot overcome all external challenges in students' lives. Mental health, which includes managing the lifelong challenges of ongoing psychiatric disabilities, continued to be a significant barrier, as did medications, finances and addictions. Nine individuals indicated "other" barriers to being success-

ful in their educational goals (see Table E below). SED programs offer help, but they are not a panacea: they cannot create greater access to services or the labour market nor do they decrease stigma around mental illness.

Table E: Current barriers to education

Have you experienced barriers due to:	CURRENT BARRIER
Motivation?	n=5*
Mental health?	4
Medication(s)?	4
Financial issues?	4
Addiction(s)?	1
Other?	9

* Some participants indicated more than one barrier.

4. Disrupting stereotypes: hopefulness and belongingness

Educational support for adults living with mental illness has flown under the radar of public notice until recently. With increasing attention being given to mental illness among youth and adults through very public campaigns (such as Bell Canada’s #BellLetsTalk),² progress is being made in raising awareness about stigma around and the prevalence of mental health disorders among elementary, high school and post-secondary students, as well as the general public. These types of campaigns concentrate on reducing isolation and increasing hopefulness for those experiencing mental illness. There has also been an increase in funding for mental health services from both the Canadian and Ontario governments.³ However, the funding

- 2 Bell Let’s Talk (French: Bell Cause pour la cause) is a program by Bell Canada, a Canadian national phone company, to promote mental health education, research, and awareness, to reduce the social stigma of mental illness and to help fund mental health access and research programs. The program is most known for its annual Bell Let’s Talk Day and the associated charity fundraiser. On one day every February, Bell Canada gives money for these initiatives every time Bell customers phone or text, use social media platforms, view specific mental health information or tweet #BellLetsTalk (<https://letstalk.bell.ca/en/our-initiatives/>).
- 3 In Canada’s Budget 2017, the federal government provided targeted funding of \$5 billion over 10 years to provinces and territories to improve access to mental health services. In particular, this investment was supposed to lead to better access to and shortened wait times for mental health support to help families, including children and youth under the age of 25. <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2017/docs/plan/chap-03-en.html>

and implementation of adequate programming and access to counselling is still lagging behind the actual need in most communities. In addition, government mental health service funding is not provided for supported education programs because literacy skills and SED programs are not seen as integral to mental health, despite the fact that research shows that literacy is a social determinant of health and integral to mental health in particular (Fernando & King 2017). As Lincoln et al. (2017) argue, “better understanding of how limited literacy takes shape in the lives of people with serious mental illness is a critical step in reducing their health disparities and enlarging the scope of meaningful lives” (p. 122). It is also important to note that those who are receiving or have received hospital-based support often struggle with reintegration into their lives outside of the hospital. Having access to and support for the resumption of their educational careers is one important way of creating the sense of belonging that reduces relapses and affords them a better chance of being successful once released from the hospital; however, little attention has been paid to hospital and community-based adult education programs intended to support adults living with mental illness.

Clark (2006) points out that “each disability has learning issues that are inherently different and require individualized instructional strategies, techniques, and teaching approaches” (pp. 311-312). This is particularly true for those living with a psychiatric disability and who may not be able to cope with large groups, strict schedules, requirements to sit still for extended periods of time, and so on. While some improvements have been made over the last fifty years, these are things that continue to allow for affordable and efficient publicly-funded education systems to be accessible to the majority of citizens; however, those who cannot fit into the parameters of the public education system are often left to fend for themselves after being expelled, aging out or being otherwise excluded from the traditional classroom spaces. Providing true equal access to education means providing the “opportunity to participate and function independently within an educational activity” (Clark, 2006, pp. 311-312) and increasing the sense of belonging for those within a community. When these opportunities are provided, whether inside traditional classrooms or in specialised spaces, all students benefit.

For the students in our study, the opportunity to take part in the SED program was seen as important to their future. As one participant stated, “it gave me a challenge, like a discipline to kind of keep up with a course load. And like, live up to commitments, like if I say I’m going to be there

... three mornings a week, you do that” (Client 012). Another 43-year old student had a similar experience. During his three years in the SEd program, he successfully completed his high school diploma, a food handler certificate, and a certificate in hazard analysis. These allowed him to gain more responsibility in his job and to become a Health and Safety representative and a provider of WHMIS training. His goal is to become a supervisor at his job in a chain fast food restaurant. Now considering studying at Athabasca University, he is enrolled in a college preparation program to upgrade his high school credits (Client 001). For one participant who is an English-language learner, the SEd program has increased his confidence in using English, to attend school and to make friends, although he still struggles to understand English (Client 002). Even those participants who have had some successes in their prior education need help to get back on track. For instance, one 38-year old had completed high school on time and begun a community college program, had to drop out due to illness. Once enrolled in the hospital’s SEd program, he was able to complete a business administration diploma through a correspondence program. During this time, he was trusted by the staff to “do itineraries ... that took a lot of writing work, [and then] they allowed me out in the community because they’d seen my – some of my skills being used.” Although still struggling with mental illness, he has developed the organizational skills that allows him to run his own business and to work part-time (Client 011). Another participant who has been enrolled in the program for some four years, has been working on his high school diploma and hopes to attend a post-secondary program in fashion design, but he is still shy and nervous around other people (Client 013).

Education in any form is a potentially contradictory experience. On the one hand, education can reproduce dominant social orders; on the other hand, it can open the door to “contesting and critiquing the dominant hegemony” (Merrill, 2006). The learning biographies of our participants illustrate the difficulties that they encountered when taking part in formal schooling and that can be traced to macro and micro social factors, while also illustrating the strategies used to overcome those challenges (Merrill, 2006). Furthermore, some participants experienced abuse at home which contributed to their problems at school. One participant commented: “My dad said I would never do it ... part of my mental illness was because my dad hit me in the head, he ran my head into a brick wall and he said I would never amount to anything, I wouldn’t even get my grade 12. And I just wanted to prove him wrong” (Client 007). Similarly, another partici-

pant explained: “I left home because I didn’t want to get beat up no more; a series of group homes and foster homes. I went to school there, that’s where I finished my grade seven” (Client 007).

With the ongoing powerlessness that most adults living with mental illness experience, rediscovering education outside of the formal school systems affords opportunities for them to reclaim a student identity (in place of or in addition to their identity as a mental health patient), discover “really useful knowledge” and become active citizens (Merrill, 2006). Kaufman (2014) shows that acquiring an identity as a student is not merely an individual process involving cognitive or psychological changes but rather a social process involving both “personal avowals and social attributions” (p. 35). Sanders and Munford (2016) found that high school students would develop alternative self-stories in order to find somewhere to fit in the learning community. Dean and Jolly (2012) suggest that increased sensitivity on the part of instructors can assist in re-engaging these students so that the identity development process can proceed. An understanding of how educational experiences can impact those living with mental illness differently from other people is important, as is an understanding that people have “nested identities” (Smith, 2012, p. 129); in other words, educators must remember that their students have multiple identities.

Exploring the learning biographies of their students can also be useful for instructors. When adult educators understand the contexts within which learners have experienced prior education, they are better able to understand why learners may be frustrated or resistant in their learning. Furthermore, understanding how learning experiences are constructed by sociocultural and historical factors helps learners and instructors to turn experience into knowledge (Belzer, 2004). That knowledge can then inform the instructor’s interactions with the students.

Conclusion

While biographical learning can provide important insights into the impact of SED programs on adults living with mental illness, it is limited by the inherent power structures embodied by the institution and its workers, including the teacher. As Hallqvist (2014) notes, biographical learning “understates the power of structures over individual lives” (p. 503) which raises the need to link biographical learning with structural conditions in order to avoid passive adjustments of individuals to the individualization process.

Instead, the use of narrative processes or storytelling can become more than simply an outcome; it can become “learning-in-action” in which people negotiate meanings. In this respect, participants in SEd programs who have the opportunity to reflect upon their educational experiences may be able to retrieve some or all of their “unlived lives” (Alheit, 1994, cited in Hallqvist, 2014) through their new efforts at education which in turn has the potential to allow learners the opportunity to rediscover belongingness and hopefulness. It is through learning that individuals of all ages, abilities, and experiences are able to symbolically travel “from dependence to autonomy” (González-Monteaquedo, 2017) and therefore move from feelings of isolation to feelings of belonging.

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C.7

Collecting stories of illness experience: an undergraduate medical curriculum to develop connectedness and togetherness with patients*

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1. Developing soft skills in medical education: a route to create connectedness with patients

The development of soft skills is a crucial and challenging point in medical education. Recently, literature has underlined that physicians, if trained to critical thinking and in communication skills, can enhance the relationship with their patients (Cowen, Kaufman e Schoenherr, 2016). Specifically, these abilities are fundamental to understand the bio-psycho-social-spiritual complexity of each patient, allowing medical professionals to experiment proximity to them.

Undergraduate education has an important role in training soft skills, even if the development of Western medicine (Foucault, 1969) has progressively emphasized the biological and “hard” component of medical practice, focusing physicians’ competencies on identification and management of physical disease, namely on the sick part of the patient’s body. Soft skills, related to the ability of setting up a relationship with patients and the other professionals, were often relegated to the personal characteristics and to the background of the physician. In the past, little attention was paid to the improvement of those competencies useful to create togetherness and connectedness with patients and other professionals, with evident consequences on patients’ and even professionals’ discontents. For example,

* This paper was conceived by the two authors. Specifically, Maria Benedetta Gambacorti-Passerini wrote the paragraphs 3 and 4 and Lucia Zannini wrote the paragraphs 1 and 2.

healthcare professionals' burn-out and depression have been lately related also to their incapacity of remaining connected to the patients, the others, and themselves (McKenna et al. 2016). In the last decades, a renovated interest for human aspects of medicine has been registered (Cowen et al. 2016) and developing "soft" skills is currently considered crucial in the medical education literature.

The term "soft skills" concerns different abilities, such as communication skills, empathy, problem solving, understanding of ethical dilemmas, and collaborating with other professionals (Ray, Overman, 2014). These competences are different and they involve both emotional and cognitive aspects. In order to train cognitive characteristics of soft skills, group-based activities as Problem Based Learning and analysis and discussion of cases can improve not only students' abilities in problem solving and reflexivity, but also their communication skills and team building (Fabbri, Melacarne, 2015).

Studies have underlined that a fundamental strategy to train communicative, relational and ethical components of soft skills is the proposal of a clinical experience, where students can interact with patients and receive a formative feedback on their professional behavior from tutors (Melacarne, Bonometti, 2014). In this way, they also can learn to be empathic, a crucial aspect in order to understand patients' feelings and to develop connectedness with them. Staying "on the field" is a necessary but not sufficient condition, in order to develop this crucial aspect of soft skills (Mortari, 2003). For this reason, a number of medical schools are proposing the use of portfolio to support students' training, in order to develop reflexivity (Perrella, 2016). A portfolio can include different materials, for example tutors' evaluation, samples of medical records that give evidence of the student's ability in the diagnostic and therapeutic process, bibliographical researches, participation in quality improvement projects, self-evaluations and narrative or reflective writings (Epstein, 2007).

Typically, in reflective writing activities, students report patients' experiences. Therefore, the proposal of those activities can be an educational chance to learn to grasp patients' experience, creating an opportunity to understand their perspective and to develop togetherness with them.

Enhancing the consideration of patients' life stories and their illness experiences can be a mean to develop soft skills in medical students and therefore the competencies useful to develop connectedness (Charon, 2014; Arntfield et al., 2013). Moreover, training narrative abilities (West et al., 2007) will help future doctors in giving meaning to their experience (Bruner, 1990), without losing human aspects of clinical practice (West,

2001). Narration could be useful to take care of what has been experienced: it enables us to “give a name” to our experiences, reflecting on them and understanding them in a deeper manner (Demetrio, 2012).

2. Narrative Medicine and the attention to patients’ stories

Rita Charon, an American physician, defines narrative medicine “as a medicine practiced with the narrative competence to recognize, absorb, interpret and be moved by the stories of illness” (2006, p. vii). That competence is aimed to understand, in a deeper manner, what patients endure in their illness experience. This deeper understanding can be achieved by recognizing the metaphors or the images used by the patient in the telling, identifying the “unspoken subtexts” of that telling, and tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty of the story told by the patient. Narrative competence allows a person to understand the plight of another, through the use of imagination, interpretation and recognition.

Narrative features have always characterized medicine, but, especially after the Sixties, the huge development of technologies has progressively diminished the importance of telling the illness experience and the time dedicated to it, in the medical encounter. Nowadays “patients lament that their doctors don’t listen to them or that they seem indifferent to their suffering” (Charon, 2006, p. 3). This process caused discontents not only in patients but also in healthcare professionals, who need to find a meaning in their professional practice, as well as patients in their illness experience. It seems that healthcare professionals struggle to remain “connected” to their patients. Nevertheless, burnout and depression, which are increasing in healthcare contexts, have been related to their incapacity of remaining “connected” to the others, and themselves (McKenna et al., 2016). Specifically, four aspects seem to divide healthcare professionals and patients: the conception of illness, which is conceived as a biological phenomenon by professionals, especially doctors; the beliefs about disease causality, according to the biomedical conception of illness; the emotions that arise in the patients from the illness experience, often shame, blame and fear; the relation to mortality, which is well known by physicians, who often consider it as technical defeat.

While patients need to narrate their experience, professionals often consider listening to patients’ narratives as a waste of time. Nevertheless, as the growth of the patient-centered care movement has shown, an integrated

understanding of disease, referring it to the patient's world, enhances clinical effectiveness through the construction of a partnership with him/her. Hence, "time is saved shortly down the road, by having developed a more robust clinical alliance from the start" (Charon, 2006, p. 67).

As a consequence, professionals need to develop their narrative competences. Yet, as Charon states, "achieving narrative competence is not a trivial goal" (2006, p. ix). Specific curricula must be implemented in undergraduate healthcare training. Referring to this, reading, writing and telling are fundamental to develop narrative competencies. In particular, writing seems to render visible aspects of our experience that would otherwise remain invisible or hidden.

Rita Charon (2012) has affirmed: "Without writing, I would not have realized the illness experience of my patients. Representing those interior events enabled me to see what goes on within myself as a clinician, as patients no doubt write illness narratives to make visible aspects of their own situation". Hence, writing of patients' experience can help healthcare professionals to become aware of their own experiences of pain and loss.

While writing clinical experience starts from the description of an event, it cannot be considered an act of reporting events objectively. It is a process related to personal "perception" of a certain experience, which, of course, prompts for a description of it.

A seminal example of writing to develop narrative competence is the "parallel chart" (Charon, 2006), a method aimed at enabling healthcare professionals to recognize what patients endure and to examine their own journeys through medicine. This exercise was implemented by Charon with residents, and it consisted in writing about patients and clinical experience in an ordinary language. Residents were asked to write their lived experience using the first person.

Studies have suggested that writing, and the reflective capacity that this activity improves, may develop communication skills, empathy, collaboration and, more generally, professionalism. In particular, writing reflectively has been shown as a means to increase students' observational and reporting skills (Cowen et al., 2016), to allow students/professionals to recognize changes in their performance; to vent their feelings in relation to clinical experiences; to foster self-understanding and coping (Shapiro et al., 2006a).

Shapiro and colleagues (2006b) found that students who completed a "Point of View" (PoV) writing exercise (writing the experience of a patient in first person, from his/her point of view) were able to express more empathy and insight, if compared to a control group. Nevertheless, the authors

advised that empathic skills developed through writing may not translate into future professional behavior.

In summary, narrative competence has received in the last ten years an increasing attention in undergraduate healthcare professional training and reflective writing has a pivotal role in the development of that competence. Educators, who have developed writing activities with students and/or professionals, may have experienced that “something important” happened in those situations, especially when students and professionals clearly demonstrated to have fostered their subjectivity and professional identity. Therefore, creating spaces in the curricula, in which students/professionals can deliberately tell and share their stories, finding differences and resonances, is pivotal to develop narrative competence and, more generally, to sustain the process that Gregory Bateson considered the basis of wisdom.

3. Collecting stories of illness experience: an undergraduate medical curriculum at San Paolo Teaching Hospital, University of Milan

The use of writing as a reflective tool has been adopted in healthcare contexts since the Eighties, but medical schools show interest for it after 2000, when were published the first papers underpinning a direct connection between medical competence and reflexivity (Zannini, 2015). Health professionals’ writings usually refer to two main categories of subjects: patients (and their families) and professionals themselves (Zannini, 2008). Writing and narrating clinical practice can be intended as chance to develop a closer contact with patients and their feelings about the illness experience, offering the possibility to health professionals to become more involved, establishing a connectedness (Zannini, 2008; de Mennato, Formiconi, Orefice, Ferro Allodola, 2012). For all these reasons, narrating the experience and writing reflectively have a crucial role in training soft skills, particularly referring to the ability of understanding the others’ lived experience and developing empathy (Biffi, 2010).

A recent review (Cowen et al. 2016) outlined that, notwithstanding an enthusiastic approval of those educational strategies, medical schools propose them as electives and not as compulsory activities. Different aspects can contribute to a scarce diffusion of writing activities, even if several studies showed their contribution to the development of empathy, reflexivity and communicative abilities (Chen, Forbes, 2014). Firstly, scientific evidence about their efficacy is not currently available, also because of the va-

riety and diversity of the writing proposals. Furthermore, assessment of writing activities is really complex.

Moreover, educational activities for students based on writing request a considerable investment of human resources, able to read students' writing and to offer them a formative/summative feedback. In fact, students need to be accompanied not only in understanding the meaning of the writing experience, but also in gaining knowledge useful for their future professional activities. Giving feedback to students' writing, focusing it on a further development of reflexivity, is considered an activity of formative evaluation (Zannini, 2013). Certainly, this kind of evaluation is hard to be accomplished in medical schools, where teachers and supervisors are more used to train and evaluate clinical competences than to promote reflexivity.

Specific grids have been projected and tested in order to give feedback on reflective writings (Reis et al., 2010), showing different levels of reflexivity (Moon, 2004; Wald et al., 2012). This paper will present and discuss the medical students' learning emerged from a training proposal based on reflective writing referring to the Moon's scale for evaluating reflexivity,

This activity was carried on in the A.Y. 2015-2016, in the Medical School of the University of Milan, at San Paolo Teaching Hospital, and it was proposed to the II year medical students.

Starting from 2009, first year medical students attend a program aimed at introducing them to the patients' perspective: for three weeks they follow a nurse in the ward during the morning. This activity is accompanied by briefing and debriefing meetings held by the teacher of internal medicine. Subsequently, students have to write about the feelings and emotions they lived during their experience in the ward. These writings are inserted in student's electronic portfolio: the evaluation of this first writing contributes to the final mark of the Internal Medicine course.

In the second year, students are confronted with patients' stories: after attending a briefing focused on meaning and practical aspects of collecting stories, students are asked to collect the illness experience of one patient. Each student is introduced to a patient by the head nurse of the ward that was randomly assigned to him/her (Medicine, Psychiatry, Cardiology, Orthopedics, Urology, General Surgery, Oncology, Neurology). Students collect the illness experience, and write it using the first person, as the patient was narrating the story. Then, they share the collected stories in a debriefing meeting: working in small groups, they read their stories and then choose the most meaningful one. The student who collected the story chosen by his/her group has to tell it to the entire class, narrating it as if he/she were

the patient (role-playing). Subsequently, students reflect on the story they have collected then re-write it (maximum 3500 words) using the third person, and adding their feelings, emotions, thoughts.

Other activities are proposed to students in the same curriculum: theoretical lessons aimed to explore the meaning and the characteristics of reflective writing; medical humanities path, based on the analysis of paintings and films, guided by an expert in art, in order to develop a critical gaze.

All of these activities sustain the development of soft skills, because they are based on sharing, mediating and reflecting. Moreover, there is a strong link with one of the objectives of the internal medicine course, focused on setting the basis for a history taking competence, where the capability of grasping the illness experience is fundamental.

During the third year, students are introduced to the first exercises of history taking: in this context, the attention is focused on clinical aspects and, as literature shows (Hojat et al., 2009), the risk of a disease-centered attention is high. The proposal of collecting the illness experience that medical students of the University of Milan had lived the year before can offer a valid countermeasure to that risk.

At the end of the third year, students also attended the compulsory course of communication skills, which is intended as the continuation of the precedent activities focused on soft skills, experienced in the first and second year.

This paper will report the findings that two blinded researchers individuated in the reflective writings based on the patients' illness experiences collected by second year students in the A.Y. 2015-2016.

4. Commenting students' writings: can collecting stories be a strategy to promote togetherness with patients?

A sample of 70 students' writings, casually chosen between the 101 collected in the A.Y. 2015-2016, were analysed, exploring the reflexivity expressed by students, according to the criteria proposed in the Moon scale (for the precise analytical procedure and results see Zannini et al., 2016).

Each writing was analysed considering not only its global level of reflexivity expressed, but also in light of the student's capability to grasp his/her feelings and the patients' ones, his/her ability to understand the social context of the patient and, finally, what the student learnt for his/her future medical profession. All of these elements contribute to develop closeness to patients, their lived experience and their world.

The general level of reflexivity emerged from the writings is high (4,31 on 6). Students mostly reflected on the emotions they felt when encountered the patient and on how this experience changed their attitudes or beliefs:

I reflected on the meaning of suffering [...]. After meeting the patient I learnt that while a person is suffering, it's not easy to hope, it's necessary to have someone close, a parent, but also a professional, able to listen with humility and respect, being a source for more strength (student 68).

According to what is reported above, we believe that the student can develop a professional medical identity also based on being close to patients and their suffering, developing togetherness with them.

Students' writings highlighted a good ability in reflecting about their emotions (average 1,5 on 2). The most cited ones are insecurity, fear, anguish:

I was upset, terribly upset [...]. Anguish and insecurity went through me, probably because of my little experience in the medical field, but notwithstanding I also felt an insatiable wish of knowing and I was curious (student 33).

The quoted writing emphasize the emotional impact of this experience on students and the necessity of an educational work to accompany them in grasping their emotions and elaborating the meaning of this experience with a patient. Understanding and recognizing their own feelings is a crucial aspect for empathy. Recognizing perceptions of a patient allows health professionals to reflect on these aspects during the therapeutic relationship, also perceiving and understanding patients' feelings.

Reflecting on our own emotions is the first step in order to become able in recognizing others' feeling. We noticed that students' writing highlighted a higher capacity of grasping their own perceptions than the patients' ones.

He really struck me. I tried to empathize but I wasn't able to do that, I felt it was impossible smiling and being calm as he was in that terrible situation (student 45).

In this sense, students' writing make visible the necessity of an educational work, focused on reflecting on the passage between identifying their own emotions and the patient's ones, developing a broaden ability in understanding them. This step is really important in order to develop the stu-

dent's capacity to perceive and act togetherness with patients' experience.

Students seemed quite skilled in recognizing patients' social context, reflecting on it: this aspect is crucial in understanding patients' world, in which the illness experience should be framed. A health professional who pays attention to social context will be able to grasp fundamental details, in order to stay connected with the patients' world.

Referring to his words, I noticed that very few people was cited in his narrative... his sister was the person who was helping him more; her presence seemed fundamental in hard times (student 50).

Fifty one students wrote reflections about professionalism. The experience with the patient seems to offer them the chance of thinking about the medical profession and about aspects of their future role:

I'm reflecting to what extent, for a physician, it is important to understand the one who is in front of him/her, what kind of person he/she is. This knowledge is crucial to realize what the patient really needs. Only reaching this ability a doctor can act this wonderful profession in the best way (student 64).

Trying to offer a final reflection, students writings show that the experience of collecting a patient's illness experience can be a crucial step in training soft skills. This abilities, as we underlined, are composed of different and various educational activities, all focused on generating reflection. In this sense, collecting patients' stories can't be the only activity proposed to train soft skills, but the experience with the patient and the subsequent writing certainly outline a powerful effect of insight in medical students:

This clinical encounter was interesting and formative for me, because it allowed me to grasp something different from the mere medical history. It gave me the opportunity to recognize the importance of putting aside the disease and listening to the patient. From his/her telling fundamental clinical details can also emerge. I realized that by stopping and talking with patients a physician can learn more than I thought (student 14).

Referring to this last writing, we notice that the importance of integrating hard and soft skills has been internalized by the medical student, who seem to have understood that developing the ability to grasp the bio-psycho-social-spiritual complexity of patients helps in formulating a more accurate diagnosis.

Moreover, going beyond physical aspects of illness offers the opportunity to take into account the patients' lived experience, their emotions, their families, their social and cultural contexts. Medical students who have developed those skills could be better disposed to feel empathy for their patients, without losing their professional role, improving a clinical relationship based on connectedness with patients' experience.

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C.8

Interprofessional Education during academic training courses: promoting collaboration between healthcare professionals

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Collaboration between healthcare professionals is becoming a response to and a requirement of the new clinical and organizational features of the current healthcare system in Italy. However, the joint participation of these professionals at the diagnostic and therapeutic levels is not enough to fulfil the healthcare needs of patients. For this reason, new models for the management of health problems are needed; one such model is the Interprofessional Practice (IPP) model. In the IPP model, healthcare professionals and social workers collaborate to achieve a positive impact on care (1). The model is based on mutual, authentic professional connection; mutual knowledge of roles; and shared values, decision-making, and responsibility (1,2). This involves synergistic relationships in which different ideas and values can be discussed.

In order to implement the IPP model, its practice in professional contexts must reflect its description in educational institutions. Interprofessional Education (IPE), defined as “*when two or more professions learn with, from and on each of them in order to improve collaboration and quality of care*” (3–6), holds a central role in undergraduate courses in healthcare.

A qualitative research project was conducted at the School of Medicine

at the University of Turin in 2016 and 2017. The project focused on the development of interprofessional communication skills and on the training environment for the future implementation of IPE.

In 2018, a research group founded by the SIPeM (Italian Society of Medical Education - Giovanni Renga Project), carried out a 1-day IPE course at the University of Turin. The course aimed to increase participants' knowledge of interprofessional skills, exchange perspectives, and encourage participants to consider interprofessionalism as a strategy for improving collaborations between healthcare professionals. This included the recognition of interprofessionalism as something of added value; the analysis of one's own and others' professional role, identity, and competencies; the importance of one's own professional role and that of others; the enhancement patient contribution to create a partnership of care; the simulation of interprofessional action across different disciplines in order to provoke the exchange of ideas and values; and the use of a common language. The course was approved by the University of Turin as an elective, and was eligible for university credit. All undergraduate students from the faculties of dietetics, physiotherapy, nursing, and medicine-surgery at the University of Turin were invited to attend the course via the university website. Forty-eight students attended the course, which took place in April 2018.

The IPE course was divided in two parts: the first focused on theoretical aspects, and the second focused on practical training and interactive activities. The second part utilized narrative approaches and case studies, as well as "patient experts", who described their experience of disease/illness. In order to build a theoretical common ground, the course was divided into the following main topics: interprofessionalism as a collaborative model, healthcare teams in the international literature, the partnership with patients and caregivers from a pedagogical point of view, and the value of collaboration. Students were divided into groups with equal representation of all included faculties. During group activities, students discussed the different disciplines and synergistic actions; later, they were tasked with devising a collaborative care plan for one of the patient experts.

Students completed questionnaires before and after the IPE course. Pre-course questionnaires collected information on students' expectations of the course as well as what the IPP model meant to them, the actors and roles in a care team, and the elements and values that should be present in an interprofessional team. Post-course questionnaires were used to determine students' appreciation for, reaction to, attitudes toward, and satisfac-

tion with the course. They also reiterated the questions on the IPP model, so that pre-post-course differences could be evaluated.

In the pre-course questionnaire, four domains of expectation emerged: *to learn, to do, to know, and to understand*. For the domain to learn, students expressed their wish to learn about the meaning of interprofessionalism, about collaboration, and about new strategies for teamwork.

Today I expect to gain information on interprofessionalism, learning both theoretically and practically what it entails and what benefits it has. (...) I expect to have an extra tool to improve my professional practices.

For the domain to do, participants were mainly interested in the practical aspects of work and the practical methods for learning (i.e., confrontation, contribution of different points of view, activities, simulation).

Today I expect that we will talk about methods to collaborate with each other and that we will try to experience them. (...) Comparison with other professionals like me who are taking part in the course.

For the domains to know and to understand, students expressed the wish to understand their own and other professions through the corresponding competencies, roles, team relationships, and work.

[I want to] increase my knowledge of professionals in the multi-disciplinary care team and to know their role. (...) I expect to better understand the roles and skills of the other main healthcare professionals in order to promote better collaboration and teamwork during the work experience.

Post-course questionnaires showed that students were satisfied with the course overall. The same result was shown for students' interest in the topics presented, participation in activities, teaching techniques utilized, and didactic materials and methods. Students rated the theoretical topics and teachers' preparation as excellent; however, they gave a negative rating to time management as they expressed the need for more balance between theory and practice.

With respect to the definition of the IPP model, before the course, stu-

dents defined it as a collaboration between professionals meant to enhance the delivery of quality care. However, students from the various faculties described the IPP model differently. Medical students described it as a relationship based on the exchange and combination of capacities and skills.

The peer exchange between professionals of the same professional environment – the ability to combine skills from different fields in collaboration with others.

Physiotherapist students described it as a way of working that was centered on the common aim of effective care:

It [the IPP model] is a basic criterion for working in the best possible manner with other professionals in order to guarantee the most effective care for the patient.

Nursing students described the IPP model as a work methodology and organization that aimed to address the global needs of the patient and improve care:

A work methodology in which the patient is cared for by several professional figures who cooperate to provide care and protect health.

Finally, dietician students described the IPP model as integration/collaboration meant to facilitate the realization of the best outcomes and the management of the clinical pathway.

The opportunity to collaborate with other health professionals in the management of a patient's clinical path...the collaboration of different professionals for a common purpose.

After the IPE course, the students reported new definitions of the IPP model. Medical students described it as a patient-centered care pathway; physiotherapist students called it a collaboration between the healthcare team and patients, in which team members have to share values like reciprocal trust and the ability to listen; nursing students referred to the IPP model as sharing the responsibility for patients' needs, treatment planning, and the use of transversal management of problems through cohesion, identification of roles, and trust instead of competition. Finally, after the course, dietician students

described the IPP model as a synergy in which decisions were made by a group of healthcare professionals who understand each of their roles.

A working method that involves collaboration in the group of professionals in order to create synergy. [dietician student] – “...the ability to relate to other professionals by placing the patient at the center.” [medical student] – “...collaborating without competition.” [nursing student] – “...full cooperation between professionals and patients who are all aware of the objectives and draw up a joint project. [physiotherapy student]

These different replies obtained after the IPE course may have been influenced by the contributions of the patient experts, which were used by students during different course activities. In relation to the question on which professionals should make up the interprofessional team, before the course, students responded with a detailed list. However, after the course, students responded that members of an interprofessional team should not be pre-established; the team should be created based on the problems and needs of the patient.

When asked about the centrality of the different healthcare professions in the treatment pathway, students initially identified doctors and nurses as more central than physiotherapists, speech therapists, or dieticians. After the course, students confirmed the centrality of doctors and nurses, but the order of the other healthcare professions had changed (in order, physiotherapist, dietician, and speech therapist). This change may be a consequence of the fact that no speech therapists took part in the IPE course.

When asked which elements should distinguish an interprofessional team, responses did not differ before and after the IPE course. Instead, they confirmed these values: patient centrality, collaboration, communication, organization and distribution of work, high-quality care, respect (i.e., respect for the tasks performed by others, respect for other healthcare professionals, and respect for others' skills and work), professional knowledge, and the organization of work.

Students were also given a list of values to prioritize based on their importance (communication, organization, willingness to collaborate, mutual knowledge of roles, patient centrality, hierarchy). Before the IPE course, students rated communication as the most important, and hierarchy as the least important. However, after the course, students responded that willingness to collaborate and communication were the most important values, and hierarchy was the least important.

In addition, students reported that they considered teamwork to be:

- a possibility for professional growth (nursing, medical, and physiotherapy students);
- a method for improving clinical practice and the care provided (nursing, medicine, physiotherapy, and dietician students);
- a method for achieving goals and better results (physiotherapy students);
- an opportunity to get different points of view and use them to improve overall care (nursing and dietary students).

Teamwork is essential to the delivery of effective care. Excellent co-operation and organization among different professional figures is also necessary. [nursing student] – “I perceive it as fundamental to practice medicine in the most effective and constructive way.” [medicine student] – “I consider teamwork to be a fundamental part of patient care, because only a multidisciplinary approach can lead to a better resolution of patients’ problems.” [physiotherapist student] – “...it is essential to ensure that all aspects of health are taken into consideration when treating a patient. [dietician student]

However, there was no clear pre-post-course difference in students’ consideration of teamwork.

Students recognized the benefit of the IPP model, such as aspects related to the improvement of the care process in all its phases, and an organizational-collaborative capacity that is rich in communication and that allows to widen the points of view, human values, and ethics of the care team, and a team dynamic that consists of a plurality of components.

Learning about other professions both to better collaborate as a team, and to understand the reason for certain decisions by other professionals. [physiotherapy student] – “...improving understanding among healthcare professionals, improving the results achieved through dialogue and communication.” [dietician student] – “...better patient care but also a better work environment with the possibility of discussion between peers and others.” [nursing student] – “...adds the possibility of a professional relationship with a better awareness and understanding and to better understand when it is necessary for me to avail myself of the views of another healthcare professional. [medical student]

After the IPE course, the students also said that the IPP model allows them to better take into consideration the views of patients and healthcare professionals, allows them to better manage stress, and finally leaves room for more professional consideration (in terms of recognition of skills and value).

At present, the IPE course has only been offered once, but future sessions are planned. The course was the first recognized experience of its kind in Turin, and students and teachers deemed it interesting and useful. Students gave high satisfaction scores, but also cited aspects that needed improvement. Data from after the IPE course highlight its immediate results and its impact as perceived by students. These results are useful for future studies that may aim to determine the long-term effect of this IPE course, such as the internalization of the course objectives.

Our data cannot be generalized because the sample was small, specific to a particular student population, and specific to a particular geographical area. The course proved to be an effective space for reflection, but above all, it allowed students, who, due to environmental and organizational issues, cannot talk to each other, to meet, to get to know each other, and to discuss with each other. Although it was carried out in a small number of future professionals, the IPE course sowed seeds of collaboration and positive interaction.

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C.9

Educational pathway of people with Spinal Cord Injuries: a participatory research project starting from the illness narratives

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1. The start of our journey

Spinal Cord Injuries (SCI), due to their disabling nature and complexity, lead to severe consequences in quality of life (QoL) of both the individuals and their carers (WHO & International Spinal Cord Society, 2013). People with SCI suffer from various issues comprehending the loss of the motor-sensory and the autonomic neurologic functions that result in loss of mobility, bowel, bladder and sexual independence (Alexander et al., 2009). Thus, the achievement of self-care behaviours is essential to people with SCI, lifetime, especially given the decrease in the length of stay in rehabilitation (National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center, 2016)

Between 250.000 to 500.000 people, nowadays, suffer a SCI annually: traumatic injuries are the majority, especially in developing countries, where

working and roads safety programs are lacking (Lenehan et al., 2012). At the same time in developed countries, recent studies highlight an increase in the age of SCI onset and a progressive increment in the proportion of non-traumatic SCI, attributable to the ageing population (WHO & International Spinal Cord Society, 2013). It is esteemed that the direct and indirect costs of SCI exceed up to 20 times those related to other disabling neurological diseases, such as dementia or sclerosis (DeVivo, Chen, Menemeyer, & Deutsch, 2011), with a significant impact on expenses depending on the injury level and its completeness (WHO & International Spinal Cord Society, 2013). Direct costs may encompass hospital budget for acute care and rehabilitation and are higher during the first year after SCI onset (DeVivo et al., 2011). Indirect costs, which increase along the years, are connected to the lost productivity due to premature death or disability (Haeusler, Tobler, Arnet, Huesler, & Zimmermann, 2006; Munce et al., 2013).

SCI people have also to cope with a wide range of activity impairments as domestic, education and employment ones, together with important limitations in social participation social relationships and leisure activities (WHO, 2001). Moreover, despite the low average age in this population which presumably implies the return to their previous social condition, including work or study (Ullah, Fossey, & Stuckey, 2018), people with SCI are at high risk of secondary complications occurrence, which influences the long-term health, independence and QoL. This conditions can result mainly in higher morbidity and mortality (Biering-Sørensen, Bickenbach, El Masry, Officer, & Von Groote, 2011; Furlan, Kattail, & Fehlings, 2009), in rehospitalisation, and can limit the work participation further increasing the costs of healthcare for SCI survivors (Skelton, Hoffman, Reyes, & Burns, 2015).

In the light of all above, it seems clear how SCI assume the characteristics of a chronic disease. Skills required to maintain the highest level of performance have to be acquired during the rehabilitation process and, in order to ensure adequate standards in term of QoL or to prevent the any complications that can lead to clinical worsening or hospital readmissions, must be expressed at home by SCI people themselves or by their caregivers (Burkell, Wolfe, Potter, & Jutai, 2006). In this process of learning, healthcare professionals, and especially nurses, are viewed as the preferred source of valuable information (Matter et al., 2009). Healthcare professionals ground their educational intervention on the patient needs providing knowledges through an individualised approach. In this light, the educa-

tional pathway led in the Spinal Cord Injuries Unit (SCU) should be considered the preferred means to improve patients' self-care skills and to positively contribute to the improvement of their QoL. As such, this process implies, at first, the understanding of the patient needs and secondarily the renewal of the relational dynamics between the patients and his family, between the patients and the healthcare providers, as among the patients..

Given these premises, our research aimed to identify, through illness narratives, the educational needs of SCI people; to assess both pros and cons of the delivering of those information that healthcare professionals perceive as essential to patients and caregivers to the improvement of self-care in order to reduce complications occurrence and the risk of hospital readmissions.

2. Planning the best route

A qualitative descriptive study using the narratives of people with SCI, involving their caregivers and healthcare professionals was used.

The whole investigation was planned to occur in two separate moment of research: the first one involving the people with SCI discharged at least six months from SCU, and the second addressed to healthcare professionals, that involved 16 professional of four SCU in Italy.

The two phases were finally gathered in a Consensus Conference, combining and confirming the results of the two separate steps into a participatory process of summarization of the evidence produced.

The first step aimed to explore the perception that SCI people had about their health after the injury, highlighting positive or negative self-care behaviours, in order to identify any potential educational areas in which may have emerged the need of knowledges linked to self-management.

The second step was aimed at investigating the health providers' point of view regarding the conceptual and practical knowledges considered as crucial to people with SCI at the moment of discharge from SCU.

In both steps the sampling was purposive. Sample sizes were not fixed a priori.

The first phase included SCI people discharged within a minimum of six months and no more than five years, aged 18 or older and speaking Italian language, independently of their ethnic background; the level of injury and the functional independence was not use as an eligibility criteria but allowed intragroup omogeneity. People with mixed diagnoses, with cogni-

tive impairments or discharged at any facilities, and not at home, were excluded.

Four different focus group interviews were conducted. In each of the three group a maximum of six participants was grouped homogenously, based on functional independence level. Data collection was driven by pre principle of data saturation. Group interviews followed a semi-structured interview track, eliciting questions and probes useful at fostering participants' discussion were also used when needed. Socio-demographic data (age, gender, working status, marital status, education) and clinical information (time and level of injury, level of independence, caregiver) were collected before the interview. All group interviews were audio recorded and narratives were manually transcript verbatim. According to the qualitative methodology adopted, the data collection and analysis of every interview was performed as simultaneously as possible, in order to inform the subsequent interviews and reach the data saturation (Bender & Ewbank, 1994).

The second phase included healthcare professionals (as doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers) working in SCU on the Italian territory and expert patients (as those having an active role in any SCI patients' associations).

This phase was conducted through the use of a Delphi process. The Delphi is an iterative research design in which participants, considered experts in the field of research, are involved individually and anonymously, to express their opinion about a topic: in our case the educational and the practical needs of people with SCI. Accordingly to the Delphi method, data were gathered through semi-structured e-mail questionnaires. The whole process was developed in three different rounds (Vernon, 2009). All data were processed in an aggregate anonymous form.

All the narrative data gathered were mainly textual and were analysed through a thematic analysis approach to Braun & Clarke principles (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcriptions were initially coded as general recurring themes by using the same words provided by participants or by using words which synthesised the unit of meaning, endeavouring to keep the original meaning. Subsequently, within each theme the words used by participants were categorised and condensed into codes in order to indicate needs, worries, practical issues, barriers, and so on. The whole analyses was supported by the use of a qualitative analysis software. The quality of the study was ensured using the Lincoln & Guba framework (credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability and authenticity) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The study design was supported by the Head Office of Città della Salute e della Scienza Hospital of Turin, Orthopaedic Traumatological Centre, and was formally approved by Ethical Committee of The Città della Salute e della Scienza di Torino, (Resolution n° 0105785).

Participants signed an informed written consent before the interviews were performed.

3. Giving a voice to SCI people

A total of 22 people with SCI were enrolled in four focus groups. Six of them were independent and not using a wheelchair, five were independent wheelchair users, six were partially independent wheelchair users, and five were totally dependent. Participants were mostly males, affected by paraplegia for more than three years, with a mean age of 49 years, and only five of them maintained an active working role.

Three main themes emerged: essential preconditions to deal with the inward pathway and perform an effective self-care; the ways through which people with SCI take care of their health; the requisites to increase the effectiveness of the educational pathway.

SCI is a disrupting condition that generates a sense of fear in participants that do not completely understand the situation. In the acute phase of rehabilitation there is a lack of awareness of their effective health condition, and for this reason they referred that it is important to receive immediate clear and prompt information. When an improvement in the functional ability is seen, the approach of participants changes, banishing the concerns of the first times.

The injury aetiology introduces important differences in the way the educational and rehabilitation pathway is lived. Participants who suffer from a non-traumatic SCI consider the new acquired condition as a consequence of their disease, in which monitoring and management skills represent the main needs. To place themselves at the centre of their new life and starting from scratch, participants' narrations highlighted how the key factor of the process is the acceptance of the new condition, as a required step to find the strength to react. This turning point implies the consciousness to give up the hope of becoming functionally independent again. Participants told that the process of adaptation is partly mediated by the rationality of modifying their targets and partly unconscious.

The health perception is strictly connected to the level of independence reached. Participants declared that well-being is the essential component needed to move the frustration away. The psychological aspects are fundamental to deal with the situation and are a key factor, without which is impossible to engage in the rehabilitation process. Those aspects are essential to be more focused on the simpler aspects of the everyday life, especially giving some special values to social inclusion and relationships, increase the perceived well-being of participants.

The families play a leading role in maintaining the sense of perceived safe in people with SCI, allowing them support to face new challenges. On the other hand, the family may become a barrier, especially when it does not promote the independence of SCI survivor, due to an excessive concern.

To feel useful is another crucial element in the rehabilitation pathway, so participants highlighted that feel themselves a strain for others is a barrier to well-being. To feel useful is strictly connected with maintaining an active working role and help the peers who live the same life situation.

Participants declare that take care of their health means to take a special attention to a whole range of different aspects: this condition is perceived as struggling, and the self-care needs a lot of time to be performed. These aspects give more difficult the complete adherence to the prescriptions given by healthcare professionals, and in general, it seems complicated to follow the recommended behaviours. Participants who establish a daily routine are more satisfied and keep higher reliability in maintaining an effective self-care. The prevention is transversal to all the identified themes, and it implies the maintenance of a set of behaviours which make people with SCI free from complications. The self-care behaviours highlighted by participants are predominantly: physiotherapy exercises, use of assistive devices, pain and spasms control, sexuality, skin-care.

To know how to taking care of themselves means imply the learning of how to live differently and to acquire new knowledges and skills. Skills and knowledges can be learned through a complicated educational pathway that is time and energy consuming, that begins in the SCU and that continues after the discharge, at their home. This educational process implies that people have to learn to accomplish all the activities of daily living from the beginning, due to the completeness of SCI.

The precondition is the awareness of their condition, its acceptance, the psychological well-being and the balance between the support received by

the families and the sensation of being useful. The education is reached by a high dose of commitment and motivation; moreover, to trust in the healthcare professionals is fundamental to this process. The targets of participants are different, and they vary based on their age, personal inclination and individual prospects. The knowledge and the skills considered more urgent are mainly: to learn to reach the more independence, to manage the bowel and bladder functions, to use the wheelchair, to perform the exercises to maintain their muscular function, to manage their sexuality.

The peer education is highlighted as the best method to learn how to manage their health condition; the peers give some way advice, assistance, motivation and information. To learn from the everyday life is often cited as a method in which SCI survivors proceed by a trial and error process. An overarching theme during the focus group is the time needed for the education: participants perceived that they have to learn a lot in a short time. Instead they give some attention to the importance of learn slowly and with the right timing. The educational pathway is very long that proceed with short steps, and a relevant issue is that people with SCI are often not ready and responsive from the first stages of the rehabilitation process, due to the psychological stress and physical limitations.

From the narrations of participants, it emerges the importance of a proactive approach which is capable to stimulate them and make them in the condition to follow a routine, even with the involvement of expert patients, who serve as an example to follow. In this regard, the sport is a good ally in the rehabilitation, and the participants define it as an instrument to make them feel better, both in the psychological and physical spheres. Between the instruments used during the hospitalisation, some participants identified the week-end's licence at home or the training outdoors with the occupational therapists. Moreover, participants suggest the need of further instruments to sustain the rehabilitation pathway, especially at the discharge from the SCU, because that is the moment in which people with SCI and their families understand their needs effectively.

The potential barriers identified through our study are referred to the identity, the territory, the society, the bureaucracy, the architecture and the economy.

Identity barriers are described as the way in which people with SCI define themselves about other people: disability means to pass unnoticed due to the limitation of mobility, or being labelled as unable people. Territorial barriers refer to the lack of social services on the national territory able to answer to the needs of people with SCI; in particular, some General Prac-

tioners and healthcare facilities show a lack of knowledge on the clinical assistance of SCI individuals. Social and cultural barriers are defined as the discriminatory attitude of society perceived by people with SCI. The bureaucratic barriers imply obstacles in the funding and social support for people with disability, which do not allow people to reach the entire relief from the health policies. Architectural barriers are a real strain for people with SCI, especially for who has a bad independence level: leisure activities as moving around, going to holidays, and visit friends become complicated, because of the lack of the accessibility of several places, starting from the health facilities. Economic barriers are referred to the difficulty of maintaining an active working role or a pension which offer an adequate income to SCI survivors, especially because the high costs which the condition implies on the families.

4. The healthcare professionals point of view

A total of 16 participants took part to the Delphi. The process focused on the definition of the core knowledges people with SCI must have at discharge from the SCU, and that has to be reinforced during the outpatients' visits and the everyday life.

The sample was composed by two Psychiatrists, an Urologist, four Nurses, a Head Nurse, an Occupational Therapist, four Physiotherapists, a Social Worker, a Psychologist and an Expert Patient. The group performed a three-round study during which participants were asked to identify the core skills that people with in SCI should acquire to perform an effective self-care.

Answers to the first round were organised into two main themes: the core skills to teach to people with SCI and the actions that healthcare professionals have to do in order to give an answer to the need for knowledges.

In the second Delphi round, the aim was to take into consideration exclusively the items of the educational area, as targeted to the aim of the research. This round used a semi-structured questionnaire, built on the first round occurrences. Participants were asked to give their opinion about the item through a five-point Likert scale, and were also asked to comment whether the listed skills were thorough and whether any new categories should have been included or eventually modified. The assigned scores were assessed through two measures: the consensus and the agreement.

A check-list designed to verify the level of performance assessed by peo-

ple with SCI before the discharge at home from the SCU was finally produced through a third round of the Delphi. The whole set of items (the one obtained in the first and those added in the second round) were tested again using a five-point Likert scale. The aim of this third round was to show to participants the tentative items list, submitting them the items which did not reach the consensus of the 60% and the agreement of the 80%, and to obtain an evaluation on the new items deriving from the second round.

The third round resulted in a definitive list of items, divided into categories, useful to the creation of a check-list through which verify the acquisition of knowledges and skills provided to SCI people before the discharge from the SCU, in order to reduce the risk of occurrence of secondary complications. Into the instructions to the fulfilment of the third round, it was specified that the check-list was intended as an instrument given to people with SCI, independently from their level of injury or independence.

A total of 63 items distributed into 15 categories were included in the final version of the check-list, which has to be evaluated and corroborated by people with SCI and healthcare professionals.

5. To be me in your shoes

The natural end of our research was to put together the work of people with SCI and healthcare professionals. During a Consensus Conference conducted in the 2nd of May 2017, the results of the two phases were publicly discussed at the presence of an audience of 80 participants composed by people with SCI, their caregivers, and healthcare professionals. The most important part of the day was the confirmatory process during which every item contained in the check-list was discussed and modified in case of disagreement between participants.

This event represents, to author knowledge, the first collaborative experience held in the Italian context, giving all the actors of the educational process the possibility of expressing their personal view. The final result is a check-list which can be used and evaluated, about the satisfaction of people with SCI, their families, the healthcare professionals, the perceived quality of life and the occurrence of secondary complications.

6. The last step is the first

Our study have highlighted how SCI changes the individual representation of health: from the occurrence of the discharge at home, people with SCI live a stressful transition, redefining their self-care behaviours. Indeed, for SCI survivors is necessary to take care of themselves in a new way, putting themselves at the centre of their rehabilitation pathway.

Take care of themselves implies the learning of new self-care behaviours. Findings suggest that there are preconditions to learn these behaviours. In particular, people, can take care of them if they have an awareness of their condition, accept themselves whether they can count on a psycho-social balance, with the help of their families.

Self-care behaviours are time and energy consuming and is important to follow a routine to maintain the condition stable and free from complications. The educational process continues, and during its pathway is fundamental to learn again how to perform all the self-care behaviours to take care of the body, its primary needs and of the mind as well. And this process does not end with the discharge from the SCU, but continues lifetime, at home. Any educational interventions could be effective when SCI people are motivated, when they trust in the healthcare professionals and if they perceive to be ready to learn both physically than physiologically.

Peer education have shown to be a precious resource in the rehabilitation process of people with SCI, as the physical exercise or the sport.

The educational process was reported to be slow, and it implies that professionals take into account that timing is a fundamental resource to consider, in order to give a start to the process and to effectively proceed during the hospitalisation and, support the maintenance of their condition after the discharge.

A proactive approach, that motivates the people with SCI and involves them and their families in the design of the right pathway, will be also effective in increasing the satisfaction this people have of their health, of the psycho-social well-being and on the level of collaboration needed to face with the health policies. New instruments to evaluate the effectiveness of this approaches and a system of surveillance, is highly needed in order to reinforce the education of people with SCI and to reduce undesired secondary health conditions.

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C.10

Bringing the illness experience to language: between descriptive phenomenology and biographical narrative*

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Text:

Living the experience of the disease is manifested, first of all, from the patient's point of view, in terms of instantaneity. It is only in the aftermath, gradually, that the lived experience in the living present can be grasped and reflected upon as a theme. In a few words, the effect of living the disease, or receiving the announcement of being a carrier of a disease, is manifested from the subject's point of view by a state of capture, sometimes close to a state of awe. These phenomena can be examined in different ways: the exploration of the patient's (and his or her family's) feelings during particular moments such as the announcement (Masson, 2010); that of the impact on his or her history (Solhdju, 2015). For this study, we propose to analyze the processes by which the narrative of the disease's experience can be made describable and narrative. This leads us to differentiate between two major regimes of expression – the phenomenological description and the biographical narration – and then to examine their contributions to the understanding of the experiential and biographical dimensions of the experiences of illness experience. This differentiation work will make it possible to examine the registers of expression of the disease, depending on whether it occurs in the first person (illness), in the second person (sickness), or in the third person (disease) (Laplantine, 1992; Marinker, 1975).

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The illness experience: a microphenomenological perspective

Descriptive phenomenology (or microphenomenology) approaches in health and therapeutic education make it possible to explore the experiential dimensions - the effect from a subject's point of view - associated with experiences of illness. However, and this is noted by Zahavi (2014, p. 96), "the question of the "effect it produces" has two sides: "the effect the object has for the subject" and "the effect it has for the subject to have the experience of the object". In short, the domains of "perceiving" and "feeling" are distinct. For example, I can describe what I observe when I perceive unusual spots on my skin, or when I notice a dull pain in a shoulder. I can also, and the focus of attention is then changed, describe what I feel when I notice the presence of these spots or when, suddenly, a pain is imposed on me. Another example: the experience of a COPD diagnosis (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) involves different phases: waiting for and fearing the results, receiving information, taking the verdict into account...

Each of these phases can be described in its course. And each of these micro-moments is itself describable from the effects it brings to life: inferential processes, body tensions, expectations, emotions... These experienced effects generally remain un-themed by the person experiencing the disease. We find here what Chalmers (1995) called "the problem of the transparency of consciousness": the subject is aware of being in contact with objects of experience (the doctor's word, the vision of the traces of the disease on his body...) without being able to perceive the effects experienced in contact with these experiential contents. However, these effects can be explored, described and narrated. It is from this distinction - between objects of experience and lived experiential effects - that we will continue to explore the experiences associated with the moment of the beginning of the disease. This will lead us to mark out the path of this exploration with methodological considerations.

The objects of the experience when getting into disease

The term "getting into the disease" refers to different aspects of the same process. Entering is first of all crossing a threshold, experiencing a transition, changing state. From this perspective, illness experience brings is generating a life-course process that, for the subject, will take the form of an almost initiation experience. According to Arnold Van Gennep

(1909/2011), crossing the threshold is the first step in the rites of passage and the moment of separation from the community of belonging. To cross is, from this perspective, to move - or be moved - by forces which, irremediably, cause a rupture with the natural evidence that silently fused everyday life. The two narratives below provide an overview of this change of state. A first example, based on research we have conducted, looks at the effects experienced from the very first moment of getting into the disease:

I was with my son at the doctor's because he was tired and told us he had a feeling of constant thirst. When the doctor told me that he was going to call the hospital emergency department and that I had to go there immediately, I felt overwhelmed. I remember myself in the car, having to answer questions from my son, who was worried about what was going to happen when I didn't know what was going on myself [extract from a account of a moment of diagnosis of diabetes]

The analysis of the experiential microdynamics of this passage can be initiated from the temporal phasing of the narrated experience: identification of a phenomenon that leads to seeking the opinion of a doctor (T1), making an appointment with the general practitioner (T2), waiting for a recommendation (T3), receiving the doctor's verdict (T4), surprise test (T5), suspension phase (T6). The sequential sequencing of these micro-moments characterizes the granular structure of the experience. Its discovery aims to prepare the exploration of the experiential qualities of the experience known as "the reception of the diagnosis announcement". For example, examine the "effect it generate" of receiving the doctor's verdict: perceptions of disorder, loss of landmarks, feelings of fear, physical tensions, attention dynamics, disruption of expectations, inferences about the future...

The same approach can be taken from a second account, also relating to the experience of receiving an "announcement", dating from 2013:

Having noticed the appearance of two red patches on both sides of my nose on my face, I made an appointment with a doctor. Once he sat in his office, he then asked me the reasons for making my appointment. I then showed the red patches on my face, which, after a short clinical interview, led him to tell me: you have Lupus. Not knowing then this pathology, I remained without reaction,

not knowing what to say. Back home, I started consulting the websites informing about Lupus. Then I felt a collapse feeling. [Extract from a first-person account following a diagnosis of Lupus]

The microdynamics of these two narratives can be highlighted by analyzing the temporal granularity of the lived experience. This examination of the temporal structure of the experience then constitutes the preparatory framework for exploring the effects lived in contact with these objects of the experience that are given for each micro-moment.

Temporal structure and granularity of the experience during the transition to the patient state

The elements presented above made it possible, through the analysis of short excerpts from the stories, to shape a succession of micro-moments in the event of a sequence of experiences. Second point: for each of these phases, it has been shown that experiential effects can be described. Microphenomenological exploration is thus conducted in two stages: that of elucidating the temporal granularity of the experience; that of exploring the experiential dimensions associated with each of the micro-moments that make up this granular structure. The qualitative exploration in question here therefore follows two directions: that of describing a sequence of experience; that of the experiential effects for each of the micro-views described.

The study can now continue on the basis of the methodological achievements previously established. Examination of the two short experience accounts of when people enter the disease resulted in a six-phase modeling. Exploring the effects experienced during one or more of these phases (for example, the very first, the detection of a phenomenon that leads to seeking the advice or expertise of a doctor) involves asking what is noted (or noticed) by the person in terms of “feeling or experiencing”. To act in this way, the person can give himself time for the sedimented experience to present itself again to the consciousness (in the mode of memory), then question the effects experienced in contact with these sedimented experiential contents.

Exploring the lived effects and experiential quality of the so-called entry period into the disease

The examination of the experience thus has two sides: the content of the experience (which proceeds from a temporal unfolding) and what has been experienced in contact with these contents (which is a matter of resonance). What has been experienced “as content” can be scheduled and described over time. On the other hand, the description of the effects experienced in contact with the objects of the experiment must follow a “aspectual” rather than a temporal thread. More specifically, the qualitative analysis of what is experienced during the experience can be based on the temporal framework of the experience and then begin to explore specific aspects. This “digging” work concerns what Claire Petitmengin (2006, 2010) calls the layers of experience: the sphere of the sensitive, cognitive and inferential processes, emotional matter, impression mass, body sensations...

These methodological elements can be used as guidelines for conducting an exploration of the disease’s experience. The person who has experienced the event of receiving a medical diagnosis can, for example, establish a chronology of the sequence’s progress, and then pay attention to the emotions felt, the information retained, the mood perceived. This patient-led work can also be supported by the healthcare community or family members. The choice to explore the effects experienced in the stories previously proposed would lead, for example, to question what was given to live when the doctor decided to call the emergency room (Account1/Sequence4).

One way to do this would be: “*What did you experienced when you received the results of the diagnosis and the announcement?*” “The guidance can then propose to pay attention to a particular aspect: “*I now propose to become attentive to what you have felt in the body... You are there?... What did you feel, feel...?*”. The same work can be proposed with regard to the field of perception: “*What did you perceive? How was that change of atmosphere?*”

Microphenomenological exploration of the disease experience: temporal and experiential dimensions

Different methodological approaches were presented in order to explore the time of entry into the disease. The basic structure of the method differentiates between “lived facts” and “experienced effects”, the former having a temporal existence (the unfolding), the latter relating to the subjectivity of the subject (the resonance). From these elements, the microphenomenological method can be modelled as follows:

Phase 1: Revealing the temporal structure of the experience (here, the moment of beginning of the illness in this case).

MM3: waiting for diagnosis

MM4: receipt of the doctor's verdict

MM5: screening of a phenomenon that leads to a request for a doctor's opinion

MM2: booking appointments with a gp doctor

MM3: waiting for diagnosis

MM4: receipt of the doctor's verdict

MM5: surprise and experience of the shock of the announcement

Phase 2: qualitative exploration of the effects experienced during one or more micro-moments

Aspect 1: the cognitive (inferences, inner discourse, waiting, anticipation...)

Aspect 2: the perceptual (atmosphere, luminosity, perceived objects, diffuse elements...)

Aspect 3: the emotional (emotions, feelings, impressions...)

Aspect 4: the body (tension, relaxation, pain, tension, palpitation...)

Towards a science of health experience description?

The previously formalized methodological elements make microphenomenology an approach to exploring life experience based on established criteria in order to question the facts (from time perspective) and then the experiential aspects (from experiential viewpoint) of when people enter the disease. The relevance of this method is not limited to the health fields. Contemporary research has shown that it is a qualitative investigation approach whose results are complementary to experimental approaches in different fields: health, education, adult education, etc. However, the examination of the conditions of this complementarity requires the construction of criteria and the testing of their validity, via the structuring of protocols, in order to take into account the refutability and validity criteria. The aim is to establish a first-person research paradigm (Zahavi, 2005) that makes it possible to advance towards understanding the subjective dimensions of people's experiences by mobilizing forms of inquiry that are not linked to experimental science approaches. This is what Claire Petitmengin, Michel Bitbol and Magali Ollagnier-Beldame do, for example, by establishing different methodological criteria for "a science of lived experience": "the analysis of data in the first person, the description of the very acts of

awareness and description, the epistemological foundations of introspection, and finally the circulation between first and third person analyses” (2015, p. 55). Pierre Vermersch’s pioneering works (2012), and those presented in two of these articles entitled “Approche du singulier” (2000) and “Psycho-phénoménologie de la réduction” (2003), find in the microphenomenological method extensions for the constitution of a science of experience in the first person.

The narrative of the illness experience: a biographical perspective

The microphenomenological exploration of the experience therefore proceeds from a detailed description of micro-moments which, for the present study, were those experienced during the so-called “disease entry” phase. To this end, the use of words has mobilized a vocabulary that describes, details and thematizes experiences in two ways: that of the process (chronological) and that of the aspects of the experience (resonance). This descriptive activity is a form of digging: it produces a “lens effect” by focusing on sequences of experience that are the subject of a detailed examination for qualitative analysis. A gap must be noted here with the biographical work whose processes will now be analysed, first independently of the descriptive work, and then, by seeking to identify the transversal and complementary dimensions to these two regimes of narration of the experience. Three criteria can be used here as guidelines to characterize the biographical perspective: the duration of the experience taken into account in the narrative; the processes by which the experience of the disease becomes describable; the kinetic regime of the text and its consequences on the modes of manifestation of the acquired experiential knowledge.

The duration of the experience taken into account in the biographical narration.

Biographical narration of the disease requires a longitudinal understanding of the experiences associated with it. The description regime reveals the sensitive dimensions of the experience (Bégout, 2000), which makes it necessary to focus on brief moments, sometimes moments, in order to examine their aspects.

The criterion for the transition from the microphenomenological to the

biographical regime is as follows: while the former is based on a detailed description of the contents of the experience and associated feelings, the biographical narrative puts into words, through the narration, the impact of this event over time in the patient's story. The fact of thinking about the impact of the disease in the life course of the patient makes it necessary to transform the ways of expressing it. In other words, if the description makes it possible to examine the experiential dimensions of suffering at specified moments, the biographical narrative puts into words the impact of these moments by historicizing them.

The biographical perspective thus makes it possible to apprehend the effects and repercussions of the disease on the subject's spheres of existence: reduction of the agentivity, experience of dependence, inertia of expectations... This form of expression of experience takes time: awakening of memory, periodization of moments, composition of the life story, reinterpretation and socialization of the story. The time required to implement this narrative regime often exceeds the time allocated to the patient by the medical community. The time of the consultation (Weber, 2017), which is potentially an opportunity to put into words the experience associated with the illness, is in fact structurally constrained in its duration. Time to say is limited and the expectations related to the expression of the experience of the disease are multiple: announcement of the result of a medical examination, analysis of the observed effects of a treatment, description of the symptoms related to the evolution of the pathology... The consultation time seems implicitly configured for an examination work restricted to immediate or specified experiences: perceptions at the time of awakening, feelings related to treatments, feelings associated with a disorder, the evolution of a state of tiredness... These expression contexts appear structurally configured for the description regime. However, from the patient's point of view, the experience needs to be said in different dimensions: descriptive, in order to put into words the modes of manifestation of the disease; biographical, so that the experience that has become dicible is understood in the person's history.

The dicibility of illness experience

The change in temporal scale specific to the biographical narrative is therefore a result of a shift: more than an exploration of the experiential dimensions associated with the manifestations of the disease, attention is focused

on the impact it has on the individual's history. The pain test, which finds it difficult to find words to be said, is combined with a more diffuse suffering challenge, which permeates daily life, transforms existential perspectives, and changes the tonality and atmosphere of the worldly being.

The experience of suffering is reflected in a reduction of agentivity, a degradation of the ability to maintain oneself as an autonomous being. Multiple forms of dependency are indeed necessary from the very first contact with the medical world: waiting for appointments, administering protocols, experiencing passivity when receiving medical examination results, taking treatments and reports of effects... The sick patient must quickly learn to become available for interventions from the caregiver's community. This reduction is in itself a reality whose impact transforms the structures of anticipation, the horizons of expectation and the prospects for the future.

From this point of view, living with the disease is living the challenge of the fragility of the world of life (Bégout, 2007). While pain is imposed in the form of immediacy in the form of suffering, suffering requires learning to endure. To feel, to suffer, to endure... As Ricoeur (1992) notes, what is threatened here is the person's ability to remain an agent of his future: "As for the powerlessness to do, the gap between will and power from which it proceeds is first and foremost common to pain and suffering, which explains the partial recovery of their two fields. But as the ancient meaning of the word suffering reminds us, suffering means first of all to endure. A minimal degree of action is thus incorporated into the passivity of suffering" (Marin & Zaccai-Reyners, 2013, p. 20). The question of the dicibility of the experience is thus raised differently, depending on whether the person seeks to describe a pain or the suffering he or she experiences: "We will therefore agree to reserve the term pain for affects felt as localized in particular organs of the body or in the whole body, and the term suffering for affects open to reflexivity, language, relationship to self, relationship to others, relationship to meaning, to questioning. (Ibid., p. 14). We find here the distinction produced between the two previously exposed narrative regimes reinforced: the pain feelings located in the organs require to move to language to be described, possibly explored and detailed in a granular or aspectual way. And it is the biographical narrative that makes suffering comprehensible, because of the periodization work necessary for the narrative, and the identification of moments of pain, dependence, on the scale of the life story.

The effects of the life story: experiences of understanding and hermeneutics

The biographical narrative thus proceeds from a word and language transition that is radically different from the work done during the microphenomenological exploration. It contributes to give meaning to experience, because of the configuration power of the life story, which, according to Paul Ricoeur, has as one of its properties the ability to hold events and moments that occurred during existence in a sequential manner as a whole (the story). La puissance du récit tient donc d'une capacité intégrative qui permet de produire des synthèses, du fait de la compréhension générée : The power of the narrative is therefore based on an integrative capacity to produce syntheses, because of the understanding generated: "The fact is that the appearance of the unified intuition that we call "meaning" cannot be explained. It is a primary phenomenon that we are witnessing, that's all. The same applies to "understanding". The term indicates that it consists in "taking together" various elements, but does not explain how understanding itself is born or, in other words, how we perceive at some point the relationships by which these elements come together to form a whole. This qualitative leap, we can only let it happen and describe it to some extent. " (Billeter, 2012, p.27). By apprehending the experiences of pain and moments of suffering in the long history of his life, the patient works narratively to maintain (or even restore) his agentivity. Thus, unlike the description regime that promotes the formalization of experiential knowledge, biographical narrative contributes to the processes of integration and understanding occurring. Let us consider the following proposal: the biographical narrative supports the processes of understanding the impact of the disease on the life course; the microphenomenological description produces knowledge about the effects felt in contact with the disease.

Kinetic regimes of narrative, narrative power and circulation of knowledge

We have thus sought to differentiate between two narrative regimes: that of description and that of biographical narrative, one based on a focus on short-lived experiences to analyze their content and experiential effects, the second on an understanding of periods of life whose characteristic is to extend over long periods of time. The "speed of the narrative" is therefore a criteria for differentiating between these forms of narrative, each of which has its own intensity of power. This notion of speed has been the subject

of in-depth studies, notably by Jean-Michel Baudouin (2010), whose analysis of a corpus of autobiographical narratives has revealed different “kinetic variations” according to the types of experiences with language in the narrators’ stories. With the identification of these two regimes having been produced, the study can now question their “narrative power”, in relation to the issues of recognition of the knowledge acquired during these moments of uncertainty, suffering and vulnerability. The hypothesis here is as follows: the verbalization of experience makes manifest the experiential knowledge that has been built up along the way, making resources for the patient, relatives and, potentially, carers. These achievements (for example: experiential knowledge of pathologies, the effects of a treatment, knowledge of medical actors and specializations, knowledge related to the interpretation of medical examinations, etc.) must, in order to be recognized, be translated into terms that find meaning from the subject’s point of view, but not only.

Moreover, this knowledge is not only based on the first-person experience of one or more pathologies. They also result from the development of capacities specific to life support (Tourette-Turgis, 2015): maintaining a course, enduring, resisting pain, preserving oneself in medical environments often governed by functional logic, redefining life plans... The complementarity between the descriptive and the biographical - between describing and narrating - can thus be studied on the basis of what these two regimes allow us to discover in terms of knowledge. Research may also focus on examining the relevance of the narrative strategies implemented in relation to the contexts in which the patient’s experience is expressed. The hypothesis here is as follows: the combination of the phenomenological description and the biographical narrative is likely to produce power effects that must be adjusted according to the concrete situations encountered by patients. In health, these contexts are numerous and diverse: moments of consultation, exchanges with relatives on the future, self-analysis of the effects of a treatment, formalization of knowledge within a group of expert patients (Jouet, Las Vergnas, Noël-Hureaux, 2014).

The description of experiences and the circulation of experiential health knowledge

The regime of description of the illness’s experience seems singularly favourable for an activity of exploration of what Catherine Tourette-Turgis

calls “the patient’s work”. The detailed description of activities related to illness experience, whether for remission or chronic disease, requires the selection of specific times to analyze the aspects.

Apprendre de la maladie, c’est notamment, selon les travaux de Tourette-Turgis (2015), développer une capacité à agir dans des contextes inédits, vivre selon des rythmes transformés, interagir avec des professionnels qui disposent d’un savoir au départ inconnu du sujet. La capacité à dire la maladie dans ses détails, à décrire les ressentis éprouvés lors d’interactions, lors de la prise d’un traitement, ou lors de moments d’incompréhension quant à la prescription délivrée..., permet de mettre au jour des données expérientielles qui informent, facilitent, ouvrent les possibilités d’une intercompréhension entre patients, proches et soignants. Les savoirs ainsi produits sont cependant fragiles. D’abord exprimés en première personne, ils semblent empreints de subjectivité et restreints à la singularité de ceux qui les expriment. Ce premier passage – celui de l’expérience au langage – pourra cependant faire sol pour, graduellement, devenir une ressource pour le dialogue avec les soignants. De l’introspection à l’interlocution, l’expression du vécu circule d’un registre d’énonciation en première personne à celui de la deuxième personne (Depraz, 2013, 2014), afin d’élargir, du fait de la mise en mots de l’expérience, l’espace d’intercompréhension entre le sujet faisant l’épreuve de la maladie, les autres et le monde : soignants, parents, médecins, pairs aidants...

According to the work of Tourette-Turgis (2015), learning from the disease means, in particular, developing the ability to act in new contexts, living according to transformed rhythms, interacting with professionals who have knowledge that is initially unknown to the patient. The ability to describe the illness in detail, to describe the feelings experienced during interactions, when taking a treatment, or during moments of misunderstanding about the prescription issued..., makes it possible to uncover experiential data that inform, facilitate and open up the possibilities of intercomprehension between patients, relatives and carers. However, knowledges expressed in the first person point of view, they seem to be subjective and restricted to the singularity of those who express them. This first passage - that of experience to language - can, however, gradually become a ground for becoming a resource for dialogue with caregivers. From introspection to interlocution, the expression of experience circulates from a first-person register of enunciation to that of the second person (Depraz, 2013, 2014), in order to widen, as a result of bringing experience to language, the space of interunderstanding between the subject experiencing

the disease, others and the world: caregivers, parents, doctors, peer helpers....

The power of the description finds its source here in the detailed work of wordings of the sensitive dimensions, gestures, inferences and reasoning that the patient produces to manage his disease. The prolonged attention paid to these dimensions allows for thematic grasps that are sources of awareness-raising for the patient, and knowledge for caregivers.

This attention to detail that allows the description of the experience potentially opens the way to the thematization of previously blinded experiential content, by the fact that it is first (and foremost) experienced in the living present. This is the case, for example, of a pain which, when it is necessary, is first experienced in the mode of immediacy. Through the work of description, its experiential quality becomes potentially dicible: intensity, frequency, location... Practising description can therefore produce three types of results: a detachment from suffering when it occurs in the living present; the possibility of saying in detail, and in different aspects, what is experienced during particular moments of illness; the possibility of referring to one's experience in a situated way during dialogues with the medical community.

The biographical narrative of the experience and the circulation of knowledge

Biographical narration of the illness's experience directs expression towards the existential shores. What is then discussed in the narrative is no longer reduced, unlike the work of description, to an attention to phenomena that occurred during singular moments. From a biographical point of view, attention is focused on the impact of the disease of vulnerability experiences through the life-course. From this point of view, the narrative constitutes a practice of self (Foucault, 2001/1981-1982) which, in many ways, accompanies the transformation of the patient's lifestyles. It makes it possible to manifest existential knowledge that contributes to keeping oneself alive. These skills are found in life stories, even autopatographies (Rossi, 2016) that present the history of the disease that occurred in the life course. According to various modalities, what is established during the illness biographical event (knowing how to endure, maintain a course, hold, hold, wait, take on oneself, deal with it...) allows the subject, despite the suffering, doubt, vulnerability, to remain an agent of his future. The patients' life narratives thus make it possible to provide anthropological knowledge that

needs to be expressed, shared and recognized during interactions between patients and caregivers. In other words, the historicalization of the disease supports a work of biographical intercomprehension.

The narrative of the illness's experience on a biographical scale is thus situated within the anthropological horizon of human existence. The reception of these stories during interactions with the health community, during moments of hospitalization and consultation, makes it possible to reintegrate these experiences of vulnerability (Lapoujade, 2017) into the history of the human condition. Here we see emerging, in the reception of forms of biographical expression of first-person experience, the foundations of an ethic that seeks to be combined with the scientific rigor of the medical act. Biographical narration thus proceeds less from a circulation of the knowledge acquired during the illness than from a re-instantiation of a common soil: via first-person expression, forms of biographical intercomprehension can arise (Schütz, 1971/2008) whereby the expression of disease experiences reflects an art of solidarity movement (Pineau, 1998).

For synthesis

This study sought to distinguish two narrative regimes: the phenomenological description and the biographical narrative. They were examined from different perspectives: temporal structure of the experience; effects experienced during the hardship of suffering; reduction of the agentivity... This work then allowed us to analyze the contributions and effects of expressing, describing an narrating about the processes of formalization of the knowledge acquired during the experience of the disease. It is on the basis of these elements that health counselling practices were questioned, with the narrative regimes revealed serving as analyzers. Depending on the situations encountered by patients, narrative strategies must be developed. Different issues have been identified: the dicibility of experience, the formalization of knowledge resulting from the experience of the disease, the maintenance of agentivity, the circulation of registers of expression and knowledge thus named. The parity of health knowledge can thus be thought of according to two distinct and complementary dimensions: the forms of expertise built from the point of view of the patient (according to an experiential dynamic); the knowledge acquired during the disease, shaped by the biographical narrative work. Between the recognition of experiential knowledge and the opening of spaces for biographical intercomprehension,

the guidance of the passages from illness to language must be considered in relation with the various kind of over effect that are generated by the microphenomenological and biographical regimes.

The ESREA 2018 conference of the network “Life Stories and Biographical Research” held at the University of Turin was an opportunity to present the work mentioned in this article. The English version of this article was then translated into French (Breton, 2018) for publication in a book in Brazil.

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C.11

Les lieux transitionnels de la Santé et ce qu'ils nous apprennent sur l'être-ensemble

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Recherche qualitative en santé: la Santé se rapproche des histoires de vie

La Santé se rapproche des histoires de vie, et la recherche qualitative est un des lieux de cette transition. Voilà la proposition que je voudrais explorer avec vous aujourd'hui.

Mais se pose une question préalable: notre système de soin constitue-t-il un territoire pertinent pour observer les progrès dans l'être-ensemble? Il semble qu'il y ait quelques hésitations à ce sujet! Voici comment cela se présente chez certains de mes collègues en sciences humaines, et aussi chez des gens que je qualifierai de progressistes: ils dénoncent la santé comme un lieu d'emblée conservateur, pointant tel rouage qui fait grincer des dents (Mintzberg, 2018). Finalement, le monde de la Santé est plus ou moins consciemment laissé dans une zone d'ombre, avec la suspicion qu'il s'y passe des choses assez peu progressistes. Si progrès il y a, c'est dans des alternatives à la médecine, ou dans l'humanitaire, mais pas dans le système de soins tel qu'il est actuellement. C'est un ensemble que l'on ne considère pas comme une cohérence inspirante (*togetherness*), mais plutôt comme un lieu d'expression de nos mécontentements (*discontents*) les plus divers!

Cette défiance a pu être justifiée à l'époque d'Ivan Illitch (1975), quand la médecine était quasi exclusivement focalisée sur le progrès scientifique et technique. Aujourd'hui, toute personne qui s'intéresse de près à la manière dont «les gens» (ethnos) vivent la santé (qu'ils soient soignants, patients, administratif, etc.) sait qu'il se passe ici des transformations fortes, et fortement intéressantes. Quelles rancœurs projetons-nous sur nos corps soignants? Pourquoi une telle auto-flagellation, alors que nous sommes entrés dans une nouvelle relation à la santé, une nouvelle manière de prendre

soin de nous? **La science médicale se rapproche des histoires de vie, et cette convergence est fortement génératrice de nouvelles cohérences.**

Au congrès de Canterbury, j'avais présenté un des lieux où se fait cette transition, ce qu'on nomme en France l'éducation thérapeutique (Tribonnière X 2016). Aujourd'hui, je vous présente un autre *lieu de transition*: la recherche qualitative.

Pour en parler je partirai de l'expérience vécue avec les médecins et infirmiers - car c'est dans la rencontre avec les histoires de vie que naît une connaissance scientifique des réalités humaines.

1. Les souffrances ordinaires, déchirures de l'être-ensemble

La Recherche Qualitative, boîte de Pandore!?

En 2007, il y a un peu plus de 10 ans, je suis sollicité avec une collègue anthropologue pour former à la recherche qualitative l'équipe du tout nouveau Département de Médecine Générale de la faculté de Médecine. La médecine générale a été reconnue en 2004 comme discipline à part entière, digne d'être enseignée à l'Université, comme le seront les soins infirmiers un peu plus tard, en 2011. Les médecins généralistes souhaitent intégrer des approches permettant de prendre en compte l'humain, pour parvenir à une approche scientifique de la réalité de leur pratique.

Le premier jour de la formation, nous enchaînons les exposés, sans *powerpoint*, cela surprend nos interlocuteurs... La rencontre entre Sciences Humaines et Médecine ne va pas de soi, il va falloir faire des efforts de part et d'autre pour d'abord construire des ponts, et ensuite trouver des langages communs – la «*togetherness*» en construction!

Après quelques tâtonnements nous mettons en place une méthode fondée sur l'entraînement par la pratique. Pour s'entraîner à la technique du *focus group* (Marty & al., 2011), nous leur demandons de présenter des situations vécues .

Un médecin raconte une consultation de la semaine précédente : une vieille dame vient le voir, épuisée: «*Je voudrais quelque chose pour dormir*». Le médecin suit depuis plusieurs années sa famille, il nous raconte le «background»: l'époux de la dame est décédé d'un cancer l'an dernier, une de ses filles s'est suicidée il y a deux ans, laissant 2 enfants, l'autre fille a des difficultés à trouver du travail. Je pose d'autres questions, et j'invite les partici-

pants du *focus group* à en poser, pour essayer de voir s'il n'y a pas des ressources dans la famille ou autour pour soutenir sa patiente. Mais non, rien. La désespérance s'épaissit, et le *focus group* est un outil d'investigation très efficace... Plus nous avançons dans l'exploration de la situation, plus nous arrivons à des problématiques qui vont au-delà de ce que peut le médecin généraliste. Nous arrivons aux limites du supportable. J'arrête alors la discussion, et je boucle positivement: en l'état actuel de la réflexion, quelles pourraient être les réponses du médecin généraliste? Nous parvenons à des propositions assez précises et donc à une certaine stabilisation. Cependant, une transformation s'est produite: en approfondissant la réflexion du médecin sur cette situation, nous parvenons à quelque chose de nouveau. Un des médecins participant à la formation m'en reparle trois semaines après: «*Est-ce que tu ne crois pas qu'avec la recherche qualitative, on ouvre la boîte de Pandore?*». Dans la manière dont il en parle, j'entends à la fois une réelle inquiétude (quelque chose de la sécurité du métier de médecin est mis en question) et à la fois une curiosité, l'envie d'aller plus loin, comme un défi lancé à la science et à l'art de la médecine.

Ainsi s'ouvre une autre porte: le projet d'une recherche.

Après quelques mois de phase exploratoire (discussions avec les médecins, exploration de la littérature), nous démarrons, en tandem médecin généraliste-anthropologue, une recherche sur le thème «*Les souffrances ordinaires apportées par les patients, et les réponses ordinaires du médecin*». (L'ensemble de l'enquête sera réalisée en coopération entre le Dr Benoit Cambon, professeur au Département de Médecine Générale, et moi. Les analyses anthropologiques n'engagent que ma responsabilité.)

Souffrances ordinaires: les réponses qui se mettent en place

Ce qui était une formation à la recherche qualitative finalement s'est transformé en une recherche à part entière. Intrigués par l'intensité des réactions à la suite du récit sur la vieille dame, nous avons voulu y regarder de plus près. Nous avons mené une série d'entretiens avec des médecins généralistes qui n'avaient pas participé au *focus group*. Tous confirment qu'ils vivent régulièrement ce genre de situation dans leurs consultations, et certains se proposent pour participer à la recherche. Nous mettons en place une première série de *focus groups* avec les médecins volontaires. La première séance nous a laissé un souvenir fort: nous invitons chaque participant à raconter brièvement 2 ou 3 exemples de *souffrances ordinaires* rencontrées. Les situa-

tions sont là présentes et «chaudes», il n'y a pas à chercher beaucoup les faire revenir en mémoire. La difficulté sera de clore: après le premier tour de table, d'autres situations reviennent, les participants insistent pour en parler... Ce qui nous a frappé, c'est l'intensité de *ce besoin de dire*, confirmant bien la prégnance du problème.

Dans les *focus groups* suivants, nous reprenons en détail quelques situations. Chaque récit est une tranche de vie d'un patient ou d'une famille, et met en évidence cette caractéristique de la pratique du médecin généraliste: il est en première ligne, souvent la première personne que le patient en souffrance viendra voir. L'inventaire des «souffrances ordinaires» est impressionnant, la place nous manque pour le dresser ici. Disons juste qu'entre les deuils, les séparations, les souffrances liées à une maladie de longue durée ou les vieillesse dramatiques, c'est un vaste univers de souffrances peu visibles qui remonte à la surface. Bien qu'elles aient à voir avec l'enfer sur terre, nous les avons appelées tout simplement *ordinaires* (après de nombreuses discussions autour des ressources de notre vocabulaire: souffrances psychosociale, psychique, etc...) parce qu'elles ne relèvent pas d'une pathologie avérée appelant une prise en charge clairement définie, et parce que ce sont d'authentiques souffrances, pas un simple malaise.

Toutes ont à voir directement avec l'*être-ensemble* qui nous intéresse ici: elles en signalent les fragmentations et les déchirements. Et toutes posent concrètement et tragiquement ces questions: qu'est-ce qu'on peut, comment on répond, comment on répare? Nous sommes impressionnés par l'intensité de la recherche de solutions par les patients, et touchés par le souci récurrent des médecins d'y contribuer, dans les limites de ce qu'ils peuvent.

Chacune de ces souffrances a une origine systémique (et non une ou deux causes définissables avec précision). Les réponses seront donc elles aussi systémiques. Et dans ce «système des réponses», la recherche qualitative est un rouage, petit mais décisif, car il rapproche de l'humain et ancre les discours dans l'expérience vécue.

Quels sont les résultats de cette recherche? Durant les trois premières années de l'étude, nous faisons le constat d'une stagnation, d'un plafonnement: nous avons une description de plus en plus précise des souffrances ordinaires, et aussi une bonne connaissance des réponses mises en place par les médecins généralistes et les autres acteurs. Mais le déséquilibre entre l'ampleur des souffrances et les possibilités de réponses semble impossible à faire bouger. Ensuite, se dessine une transformation, qui devient de plus

en plus perceptible à travers les différentes enquêtes. Les maux sont dits, accompagnés par des analyses de plus en plus élaborées, et suivies de réponses précises et efficaces. Un exemple parmi d'autres : la souffrance au travail, qui est une des souffrances ordinaires récurrentes les plus complexes et les plus difficiles à aborder du point de vue du médecin généraliste. Aujourd'hui, elle est posée clairement comme un problème de santé publique (y compris d'ailleurs chez les soignants). De multiples initiatives sont prises pour apporter des réponses concrètes.

Au moment où nous arrivons au terme de cette recherche de longue durée, les *souffrances ordinaires* sont toujours là, parce que leurs origines diverses sont toujours là, mais *les réponses* prennent place dans le paysage de la santé, les ressources se développent, et la recherche qualitative participe à ce mouvement.

Autres résultats connexes : la recherche produit un effet immédiat pour le positionnement et les ajustements des pratiques des médecins généralistes. Elle amplifie la réflexivité déjà existante. De ce fait elle participe à l'habitude de prendre pleinement *l'humain* en considération dans la recherche scientifique en médecine, au même titre que les données relevant des sciences telles que la biologie. Ce qui était, souvenons-nous en, l'objectif des médecins généralistes quand ils se sont formés à la recherche qualitative.

2. La recherche qualitative répare et transforme l'être-ensemble?

Recherche qualitative et recherche biographique, disciplines indisciplinées...

Pour bien comprendre comment a pu s'installer dans le paysage de la santé un concept comme la recherche qualitative, le mieux est de prendre l'exemple du *care*. Tout le monde aujourd'hui connaît *le care*, à la fois un concept et manière de faire. *Le care* a pris place dans la culture, c'est à dire dans les esprits et dans les pratiques, parce qu'il correspondait à une nécessité: mieux intégrer le «soigner» et le «prendre soin». Il y a eu un gros travail d'élaboration théorique (voir les travaux de Carol Gilligan, Joan Tronto, Sandra Laugier, Pascale Molinier...) , d'expérimentation pratique et de formation. La recherche qualitative s'installe en santé en réponse à la même nécessité, comme un prolongement plus «technique» *du care*.

Le terme recherche qualitative (ou études qualitatives, ...) provient pour une part des sciences humaines – en tant qu'anthropologue, j'ai longtemps

fait de la recherche qualitative sans la nommer! La «science de l'humain» est en fait vieille comme le monde, elle est depuis longtemps l'objet de textes écrits et oraux permettant d'en formuler les principes et méthodes. La «recherche qualitative» est juste le dernier avatar de cette longue tradition, adapté à la complexité spécifique de nos sociétés modernes. Elle-même existe sous différentes appellations : anthropologie, ethnographie (Daniel Cefaï), ethnométhodologie (Harold Garfinkel, Philippe Amiel...) psychosociologie, sociologie clinique (Vincent de Gaulejac, Eugène Enriquez... on rejoint ici le champ de la recherche biographique), recherche narrative... et elle est toujours en mutations incessantes. La dernière en date étant la recherche qualitative «interventionnelle». C'est une des qualités remarquables de cette recherche, qu'il est bon de connaître si l'on veut s'y lancer : elle est à la fois éphémère et immuable. Elle est à réinventer à chaque fois, en fonction des gens avec qui vous allez travailler, du contexte, etc... Et en même temps, il s'agit toujours de la même chose : tenter d'entrer en intelligence avec ces personnes.

Elle a été massivement développée par les journalistes, les urbanistes, le marketing, le design, sous une multitude d'avatars inventifs et ingénieux, comme par exemple le *Design thinking* et ses applications dans le sanitaire et social, ou les méthodes agiles (dans le numérique, et donc avec de multiples applications en santé). On notera que ces méthodes intègrent à part entière la coopération entre acteurs différents, et un état d'esprit de «convivialité». La recherche qualitative est devenue une référence ordinaire abondamment sollicitée pour les usages les plus divers et variés, ce qui lui donne un caractère hybride, multicolore et insaisissable, et une patine aux allures familières. Il existe de nombreux manuels, de multiples méthodes des plus empiriques aux plus techniques, mais personne n'a jamais réussi à faire entrer «le qualitatif» dans une définition ou une discipline, car rencontrer l'humain implique d'être indiscipliné. Je disais plus haut que la recherche qualitative est une formalisation plus «technique» *du care*. Elle n'est pas pour autant une procédure mécanique ni un dogme académique, juste un moyen d'avancer dans les situations complexes.

Pendant de longues années, l'usage de la recherche qualitative en santé est demeuré marginal. En France, le basculement se produit autour de 2005: à côté du quantitatif qui est la règle méthodologique de base dans l'*evidence based medicine*, on voit se multiplier les études de type qualitatif.

Les médecins généralistes ont eu un rôle actif dans l'émergence du «qualitatif» dans le monde de la recherche en santé... Le Groum.f, créée en 2007 (Groupe Universitaire de recherche qualitative médicale franco-

phone), a eu un rôle d'initiateur. La reconnaissance comme discipline universitaire a été un important stimulant. Le même phénomène se développe aujourd'hui en France avec l'universitarisation de la formation des infirmiers. Ce n'est pas un hasard si mon cheminement d'anthropologue m'a conduit à coopérer ces deux professions.

Le basculement que l'on constate dans le monde de la santé depuis les années 2000 participe de ce mouvement. Dans un texte publié en 2010, *Du silence de la souffrance à la parole des patients*, Pierre Dominicé (2010) décrit avec une grande finesse le tournant qui est en train de se faire.

Les mutations que l'on constate sur le terrain, toujours spécifiques, ne peuvent être pleinement comprises que si elles sont replacées dans cette dynamique organique, systémique. Je me permets d'insister là-dessus, parce que là aussi il y a une sorte de malentendu, avec la focalisation sur une action «politique» conçue comme un mouvement organisé, structuré par des organisations pyramidales, hors de laquelle il n'y aurait point de salut pour l'être-ensemble, car on retomberait alors dans l'individualisme, le libéralisme, etc... Sans même parler de la recherche biographique, de nombreux travaux dans de nombreux domaines montrent qu'aujourd'hui existe une réflexivité de l'acteur ; voir par exemple Schön (1994), Pineau (2010), De Singly (2000), Kaufman (2012), Ray & Anderson (2001). Cette réflexivité, entrant en interaction avec toutes les autres réflexivités, devient alors une synergie forte – on l'a vu lors des élections de l'an dernier en France. Le travail sur les histoires de vie a abondamment exploré cette dimension, et la recherche qualitative participe de ce *mouvement* – c'est ce mouvement qui en a fait un concept opérationnel dans le domaine de la santé, et un outil remarquable face aux processus de défragmentation de l'être-ensemble.

C'est le même mouvement de fond qui porte les diverses approches biographiques, invitant à ancrer la recherche, l'enseignement et l'action publique dans la richesse complexe des histoires de vie et à prendre en compte la réflexivité ordinaire. Il y a une interaction étroite entre la recherche qualitative et la recherche biographique : faire une recherche qualitative, c'est enquêter sur l'expérience vécue, sur l'histoire des personnes, avec la ressource narrative.

Ici, il est nécessaire d'élargir le point de vue, de se resituer dans la vision globale, «culturelle», dans le prolongement de la vision systémique dont il a été question plus haut. Sinon on ne peut pas comprendre pourquoi les

démarches de type qualitatif se développent aussi largement et aussi rapidement: les histoires de vie ne sont pas seulement travaillées par les chercheurs, elles le sont massivement dans les séries télévisées, les chansons, les différentes presses, les blogs et les forums (voir par exemple les nombreux blogs de jeunes médecins, qui font des analyses très fines et sensibles des vies de patients). Cette *culture* n'est pas juste «un environnement», «un contexte». Il s'agit d'un acteur à part entière dans « la recherche » sur l'être-ensemble dans nos sociétés. Je m'en rends compte quand je travaille avec des jeunes infirmiers ou médecins. Ils entrent facilement dans la recherche qualitative, y compris dans sa dimension conceptuelle, bien qu'ayant peu ou pas de formation dans ce sens. Ensuite ils vont l'utiliser parfois en vue de publications scientifiques, mais le plus souvent pour amplifier la réflexivité ordinaire de leur travail. On assiste à un phénomène de standardisation. Par exemple l'utilisation de l'entretien semi-directif est devenu la méthode la plus usuelle dans le recours à la recherche qualitative. Finalement, la recherche qualitative est en train de s'installer comme un mode de pensée ordinaire pour les professionnels. Je rencontre de plus en plus de chercheurs en médecine et soins infirmiers qui font de la recherche qualitative sans ressentir le besoin de le signaler. L'appellation *recherche* qualitative, c'est à dire la marque, a peu d'importance, ce qui compte c'est la compréhension de la vie qu'elle porte.

Il existe une multitude de méthodes et d'ouvrages de référence en recherche qualitative. Les deux références de base que je recommande : Kaufmann J.C (2007) et Bertaux D. (2010). Chacun les utilise en fonction des spécificités du terrain. Au fil des ans, en travaillant avec les différents professionnels du soin, j'ai appris à mieux connaître et utiliser les qualités de la recherche qualitative. Deux exemples : Marty L & Gerbaud L (2013) et Marty L. (2016).

Les trois qualités de la recherche qualitative

Nous parlons de recherche qualitative: mais de quelles *qualités* s'agit-il?

1. L'utilité sociale

La recherche qualitative aide à poser et résoudre les problèmes de la complexité moderne. **Sa qualité principale est de répondre à une nécessité forte de notre époque : on attend d'une décision, d'un projet ou d'un programme qu'ils reposent sur une connaissance solide du vécu des**

gens parmi lesquels ils vont être appliqués. «Les gens» en question sont formés, informés, et soucieux de leurs conditions de vie; ils posent des questions, donnent leur avis, et attendent que les autorités dans quelque domaine que ce soit montrent qu'elles reconnaissent leur présence. Une décision, un projet, un programme qui ne repose pas une connaissance fine de l'expérience vécue est de plus en plus considérée comme non acceptable. L'amélioration de l'être-ensemble n'est plus un idéal lointain et clandestin, il se fait ici et maintenant au quotidien – noter que la question de l'utilité des sciences humaines est plus que sensible dans la sociologie française. Au nom d'une « critique de la domination » on a voulu fuir l'instrumentalisation, ce qui a pu conduire à une distanciation excessive finalement assez proche de l'aristocratie par rapport aux professionnels et à la science appliquée.

2. Quali versus quanti? C'est de qualité humaine qu'il s'agit!

La question des chiffres, du quantitatif, est secondaire. Le qualitatif n'est pas contre les données quantitatives (elles sont indispensables), mais seulement contre le fait qu'on réduise l'humain à des chiffres. Cette manière de réduire, voire de nier la personne, après les événements de la première moitié du 20^{ème} siècle, est désormais inacceptable. **C'est donc bien de qualité humaine qu'il est question.** Il s'agit de prendre en considération les personnes y compris dans les dimensions relationnelles, affectives, émotionnelles, et cela appelle des méthodes de connaissance particulières. Je n'insiste pas trop sur ces questions: tous ceux et celles qui sont habitués aux différents usages de la recherche biographique les connaissent bien ! Ce que je veux souligner, c'est la nécessité particulière qui la porte quand on est dans l'intention (et l'obligation professionnelle) de soigner.

3. Une intervention active dans l'être-ensemble, accessible à tous

Comme les autres démarches de connaissance fondée sur la narrativité et l'histoire de vie, la recherche qualitative est *une intervention*, une transformation active de l'être-ensemble. Les soignants ont une grande habitude du travail sur les différents niveaux de relation engagés dans leur activité. Pendant toute une époque, ces questions étaient plutôt de second ordre derrière le biomédical, considérées comme allant de soi. Aujourd'hui de plus en plus il apparaît que cela ne va plus de soi, il faut une décision volontariste pour sortir de son territoire d'expertise, se rapprocher, se mettre à l'écoute, analyser ensemble et tenter de coopérer.

Une des qualités fortes de la recherche qualitative est qu'elle permet la

confluence entre *recherche savante et recherche ordinaire*. J'entends par recherche ordinaire celle que fait le citoyen ordinaire pour trouver des solutions dans son existence et répondre à sa quête de sens. En ce qui concerne le domaine du soin qui nous intéresse, il s'agit entre autres de «la recherche» du patient et des professionnels du soin. «*Les savoirs des infirmiers sont riches en expérience, en réflexions et en histoires*», écrivent Lorenza Garrino et Albina Gargano (2014), que «le transfert des cours infirmiers et des professionnels de la santé vers l'université» a contribué à mettre en valeur. Ainsi aujourd'hui, il existe un très grand nombre de travaux en soins infirmiers et en médecine générale réalisés avec les méthodes qualitatives. Faites l'essai: posez une question ayant trait à ces pratiques soignantes sur un moteur de recherche ; quel que soit le sujet, vous arriverez à de nombreuses productions (mémoires, thèses, articles) dont certaines d'excellente qualité.

Le vaste registre des outils de la recherche qualitative fait que «Vous le pouvez»: chacun, là où il est, peut mettre en œuvre les qualités de la recherche qualitative, de manière simple et locale s'il est un acteur de base avec peu de moyens, ou de manière sophistiquée et à plus grande échelle s'il se trouve à un poste de direction. Sachant que dans tous les cas, la rencontre directe entre personnes oblige à travailler à une échelle réduite -de taille humaine (*small is beautiful...*).

Cependant, je ne voudrais pas laisser supposer l'idée que tout le monde peut faire de la recherche avec la rigueur que demande la science. Parce que tout le monde n'a pas forcément l'envie, ni le temps, ni les moyens de s'investir dans une activité scientifique. Mais tout le monde est en recherche, et l'important est la connexion qui s'établit entre les deux types de recherches (scientifique et «ordinaire»). Il est possible d'utiliser dans la vie ordinaire des outils issus de la recherche qualitative. D'autre part, il existe aujourd'hui des méthodes de recherches parfaitement au point qui permettent d'associer à des travaux scientifiques la réflexivité du quidam ordinaire, comme la recherche interventionnelle (Alla F, Kivits J, 2015), les recherches actions collaboratives (Chercheurs Ignorants 2015), le groupe nominal (Chapron A. & Pommier J 2017), et les diverses formes de consultations publiques aujourd'hui de plus en plus couramment utilisées avant une prise de décision importante.

Pour conclure

C'est un grand plaisir que d'être là pour discuter de ce que sont la convivialité et le dysfonctionnement de la convivialité; mais nous avons tous ici

pour intention que nos échanges n'en restent pas au niveau philosophique, à une conversation entre gens savants. C'est justement une des spécificités de la recherche qualitative en santé est qu'elle est forcément «pratique», orientée vers des solutions, car l'objectif est soigner et de prendre soin. Avec la recherche qualitative, la recherche en humanités sort du statut de « science molle » (que lui ont attribué ceux qui ne la pratiquent pas), parce qu'elle permet de démêler la complexité et d'élaborer des réponses. Je considère cela comme un aboutissement et un renouvellement du travail d'approche du réel par les histoires de vie réalisés par notre génération (vieillissante...).

J'ai eu la chance d'être initié assez tôt à la pratique du récit de vie alors qu'il était tout juste émergent dans les sciences humaines (Marty L 2016). J'ai exploré par la suite ses différents usages dans la recherche, la formation et l'intervention sur divers terrains, ainsi que les diverses références théoriques. C'est dans le prolongement de ce chemin que j'ai rencontré la recherche qualitative. Aujourd'hui, avec le recul, je vois ce concept devenu usuel comme un trait d'union entre notre manière de nous intéresser aux histoires de vie et celle des nouvelles générations: pragmatique, pratique, attentive à l'esthétique et à la convivialité... Bref, ancrée de l'expérience actuelle de l'être-ensemble, de la *togetherness* qui nous rassemble ici.

Ce qui s'installe c'est la conviction que pour prendre une décision juste, il faut d'abord mener une enquête permettant d'entendre l'expérience vécue qu'ont les acteurs de la situation. Et qu'à l'inverse une décision, un projet, un programme ne reposant pas sur cette démarche d'intelligence interactive n'est pas recevable. Aucune décision ne devrait être prise sans étudier attentivement les effets qu'elle aura sur les histoires de vie ! C'est la principale conclusion que nous retirons de notre coopération dans la recherche qualitative sur les souffrances ordinaires, en écoutant la recherche des patients face à l'épreuve, et la recherche des soignants pour faire au mieux leur travail: nous avons des problèmes de convivialité, de lien, de fragmentation, d'intégrité personnelle et collective, et nous avons aussi des solutions, des réponses de plus en plus appropriées. Tel est l'espoir (thème de la Conférence ESREA-Life History and Biography Network de Canterbury en 2015...) que porte la recherche qualitative.

Mais... à trop vouloir rendre efficace notre recherche en humanités, ne risque-t-on pas de revenir à des politiques rigides de «salut public», qui ont fait couler tant de sang, rouler tant de têtes? Ne faut-il pas se garder de trop

de lumière, pour cultiver une part d'ombre et de silence (Dominicé P. 2010)?

C'est sans doute une question de mesure. J'aimerais avoir votre avis sur cette question.

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D.1

Traineeship and pedagogical supervision in group: learning contexts and dialogic-reflective tools for building educators' professionalism

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Traineeship: observation and experimentation of educators' professionalism

Educational professionalism and its contents are deeply linked with the dynamic transformations of contemporaneity, that modifies the outlines of the area of educational interventions and the framework of skills required to educators in order to respond, in an intentional and proper pedagogical way, to emerging educational needs (Tramma, 2017).

The mastery of pedagogical and educational skills comes out from a continuous process of acquiring, in-depth study and integration of “general culture, psycho-social-pedagogical skills, competences towards particular sectors, and skills related to investigation, observation and research” (Fornasari, 2017, p. 358), by finding a balance between theoretical knowledge and methodological experiential skills acquired on the field, where actively making experience of the professional role and reflectively proceeding with the construction of a solid professional identity (Oggionni, 2014).

The academic programs are designed to convey theoretical and practical knowledge that can support a functional analysis of social, cultural and territorial realities, as well as to develop pedagogical and design skills, methodological and operational abilities, organizational and institutional competences, in order to enable students to carry out complex programming and planning tasks. In fact, as professionals, they should be able to make a critical analysis of needs – according to specific characteristics of people and territories – to design coherent and effective educational interventions, to make the monitoring and the evaluation of the results achieved.

They should assume different functions in relation to (more or less disadvantaged) people requiring support, accompaniment, facilitation, assistance, treatment and/or rehabilitation. They should take on the role of coordinator and/or manager of projects, activities and services through the integration and enhancement of local resources, often in collaboration with other professionals.

Facing with these complex professional tasks, a basic training is a preliminary experience, that has to be read and inserted into a lifelong learning programme: transversal and specific skills emerge from a recursive process of connection between theories and practice and a critical integration of partial knowledge; it can be accomplished by a trial of the educational role and the acquisition of meta-reflective tools, leading to the development of local theories from experimental praxis.

The traineeship programme of the Bachelor Degree in Education at the University of Milan-Bicocca runs over a period of two years and is supported by a group-based pedagogical supervision.

During the so-called “*Preparatory Activities*” (first year of the traineeship, collocated at the II AY), students are divided into small groups, experienced as pedagogical settings, as well as situated learning contexts, in the discovery of the generative potential of dialogue and comparison between colleagues, by sharing ideas, doubts, questions and experiences. They have 36 hours of pedagogical supervision in group, held at university with different occasions of meeting with professionals: two symposiums and two visits to local educational services are organized and an individual one is required, aiming to stimulate in students the ability to observe and ask questions on educational work in its concreteness and complexity, made of materiality, spaces and times to organize, ideas to be transformed into actions, that has to be coherent with recipients’ specific needs.

The setting of a pedagogically founded educational work (Bertolini, 1988) requires the ability to listen, observe and enter into discussion with educational concepts and events, questioning them in the constant exercise of doubt and in monitoring the risks of interpretative crystallization. Therefore, the development of a critical thought and a continuous practice of (self) reflexivity are central.

In the process of constructing educators’ professional identities, the transition from a self-recognition of “natural” and personal attitudes (which act as an ethical-motivational lever) to the acquisition and consolidation of expert pedagogical skills is frequent. So, the focus moves progressively from the students to the professional role: initially students are invited to work

on their motivations and expectations, needs and desires, prefiguration and professional representation.

The pedagogical supervision, proposed in groups, is an effective training method in structuring learning contests based on exchange and confrontation, which stimulate the collective re-reading of widespread educational experiences, starting from the identification of “traces of education” in the own belonging contexts (family, relationships, job...), in order to recognize primarily in the own life stories some elements of continuity and discontinuity. By unearthing personal ideas of education, it is possible to disclose thoughts and values people refer to in their practices, at different levels of consciousness; the comparison between multiple points of view leads to deeply discuss the meaning of the words without neglecting the unspoken ones, but above all to dwell on the never-thought hypotheses, on the never given explanations, on the possible answers to never asked questions. The deconstruction of what is (seems to be) known leads to the critical analysis of prejudices and pre-understandings, fears and perplexities, and makes possible to recognize their influences on personal and professional choices.

The progressive approach to the working field takes place through the mapping of services, aimed at getting students to know the territory and recognize its limits and the resources offered to citizens: students are invited to observe their territories, in search of their needs and by analyzing the related answers, in terms of coherence. In this way, they make a first experience of the effects of social policies, that are made concrete by the presence or absence of educational and social services and projects.

The in-depth observation of reality and the tension towards the multiplication of questions of meaning become fundamental competences, that support students in choosing the service where they intend to carry out the internship. A conscious choice is formulated by looking for a good balance between curiosity and knowledge, between (re)questioned personal motivations and courage to grasp a formative challenge that could lead to think about having a period of experimentation in a context never taken into consideration because it is unknown or considered too complex for a first (semi)professional experience.

The traineeship programme is based on a theoretical-methodological system coherent with the educational objectives of the Bachelor Degree and on a wide network of organizations of the territory, with which a close collaborative relationship has been created over the years, so that the students have the possibility to choose between several services where to be individually inserted in and to compare in group. During the period of *“Internship in host socio-educational organization”* (second year of the traineeship, col-

located at the III AY), students spend almost 200 hours in the field and have a parallel pedagogical supervision at university (30 hours).

Over the course of two years, work objects are progressively modified in terms of contents and levels of study, observation and experimentation of the educational role in several areas of intervention; a pedagogical reflection on actions sustains the research of specific and transversal professional skills, tools and methodologies.

The group: a reflective and working team

In both annual courses, the group is proposed and recognized as a central learning context; but in the period of internship in host organizations, the emotional involvement lived in the field puts the individual and collective experiences in disequilibrium. The students' levels of engagement are visibly different; therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the unconscious risk of splitting theory and practice, that could take place when the group is not recognized as a privileged place for their interconnection.

The group pedagogical supervision supports, therefore, the process of co-construction of a dense knowledge, promoting the integration of partial, specific and transversal knowledge, acquired not only through the significant experience of an internship, but throughout the entire process of learning and training. The core of the training proposal, therefore, consists in the assumption of a design logic and a research posture in approaching the academic and professional experience. A design logic is a foundational tool for educational work, not exclusively considered a technical-procedural competence, but moreover a general orientation of pedagogical reflective skills and actions.

Therefore, in this pedagogical framework, a group discussion can develop around many objects of investigation: the collective observation and analysis of professional tools and methods, like educational and professional relationships, teamwork, project design, documentation, evaluation etc.; the mapping and analysis of educational events, experiences and services; the exploration of educational contexts in their organizational and design components; the observation of concrete aspects of social work, taking in consideration the educational value of the intentional organization of spaces and materials; the recognition of specific traits of educators' professional role and identity.

At different levels of complexity, the group offers the opportunity of making experience of a kind of "team work": it initially can be seen as a

useful collector of doubts and worries, that can be resized when found as recurrent in the other narratives; progressively it is recognized as a formal space for discussion and comparison in which it is possible to have common criteria for interpreting social problems and educational issues or for making critical analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of design and operational methods, observed in their similarities or differences. Each group, in fact, is composed of about twenty students inserted in different organizations; the heterogeneity of the services reflects the variety of educational areas of intervention and stimulates the adoption of a multidimensional approach to educational phenomena, seeking for an integration between knowledge and skills, methodologies and tools that are traced within the different educational services.

The shared analysis of some nodal issues of the observed educational practices, even in its organizational and normative components, allows students to highlight explicit and latent aspects of educational professionalism and to go beyond the superficial aspect of organizational problems, rediscovering the foundations of a professional knowledge that makes possible to understand the problems and to formulate coherent hypotheses of redefinition, management or solution.

A curious approach is considered essential and, being part of a group, students can develop a collaborative attitude, narrative skills and a professional language, increasing the tendency to deepen and understand educational events, assuming a posture of research, open to new questions and hypotheses.

Being members of a group, students learn to observe postures, styles, dialectical and expressive verbal and non-verbal attitudes, to recognize the dynamics of latent power and to develop mediation and negotiation skills. Observation and self-experimentation in the management of group dynamics become preparatory to the assumption of an educational role within a service, in which it will be necessary to manage in an appropriate manner complex communication and relational processes, with reference to multiple interlocutors and respecting the roles and the mutual boundaries.

During the two-year course, students also approach different writing practices (Bella & Fredo, 2009). Professional writing is a competence closely related to evaluation and the ability to make visible the quality of educational work, indeed providing guidelines for a possible redesign.

When a group makes the experience of being a working team, the disequilibrium between individual and collective learning processes, between theory and practice, is reduced. Furthermore, having a period of training in educational services fosters the interaction between the various subjects

involved in the learning and training process; it allows the understanding of the professional meaning of educational work in its concreteness and complexity. Finally, the expert educators' support points to an artisan education, in which the knowledge is studied and reprocessed, but also handed down from generation to generation: the skills are mastered in practice, over time, by observing expert colleagues who convey methodologies, along with ethical and deontological models.

Pedagogical supervision: a meta-reflective professional tool

Supervision consists of a process of reflection, learning, evaluation and control, that is developed through the relationship between an expert professional and a (social) worker or group of workers seeking professional support, a suitable place and a time for (re)elaborating knowledge acquired on the job and an ad hoc setting for reflecting on the effectiveness of their professional behaviors, choices of methods and instruments, so as to constantly review the quality of their work and identify new ways of conceptualizing and planning it.

In a supervisory setting, it is possible to suspend actions temporarily and search for connections among different theories and praxis, motivations and choices, doubts and feelings, objectives and methodologies.

The supervisory dialogical setting facilitates the process of comparing multiple viewpoints on events and educational problems: fragmentation may be reconstructed into a partial, local and temporary knowledge that reduces the distance between representations, planned objectives (sometimes not realistically achievable) and possibilities of active engagement in the creation of sustainable alternatives.

The negotiation of principles and benchmarks, through which make an analysis and come to possible interpretations of social problems and educational issues, moves from thinking over what happens, looking for different meanings; in this process, educators dynamically reach different levels of knowledge, more or less explicit and conscious, in the intersection between multiple planes: personal and professional, emotional and rational, theoretical and practical, specific and transversal, cognitive and operative ones (Belardi & Wallnöfer, 2007).

Pedagogical supervision is not directly focused on practical problems and brings educators (in training and on duty) to assume a research posture: they are invited to take observational notes on their agency in action and

to gradually engage the focus on relational competences with an attention to educational design and contextual dimensions, to the development of reflective skills, to the awareness of the political meanings, implications and value of their work.

Professional relationships, between professionals and their clients and/or among colleagues, are differently regulated; the various dynamics have to be investigated in their influence on processes of defining roles and functions both internally and externally to multilevel structures (whether personal, professional, managerial, institutional). Personal and professional dimensions, problems and reflections are constantly intertwined; therefore, in socio-educational services both psychological supervision and pedagogical supervision are in use, in case of need for a main focus on individual and collective feelings surrounding an educational experience, or on the educators' agency and the coherence of actions within educational design and planning frameworks.

Undeniably, educational professionalism needs supportive reflective tools that stimulate the exercise of self-assessment skills, increase awareness of personal and professional resources, limits and resistances, disclose thoughts and values to which - more or less consciously and firmly - educators refer in their practices (Hawkins & Shoher, 2000). A functional balance in the emotional involvement inherent to educational relationships can safeguard the characteristics of authenticity and asymmetry, through a highly complex combination of respect, awareness of limits and responsibilities in caring for, and not invading, individuals' personal freedom to make plans and decisions. A psychological approach, focused on individual and collective feelings surrounding an educational experience, is functional for the process of analysis of personal and relational dynamics, in order to point up their effects on personal and professional choices and actions. However, the differences between disciplines in the way of interpreting educational events – in reason of their own specific identity and theoretical framework – and envisaging different possibilities for transformation have not to be underestimated; as well as the consequent indirect effect of evaluation on the job. The risk of tacitly invading the area of another discipline or discouraging it from being itself is real and the choice of a psychological supervision, without a parallel pedagogical supervision, as the unique form of support request or given by organizations can be considered a warning signal: when emotions and affective implications of educational relationships are perceived as a potential problem, needing to be brought under control, social workers could risk to be more focused on this fear than on

the educational subjects' needs and transformative objectives. On the other hand, pedagogical supervision looks for a balance, by stimulating the analysis of the educators' agency, enabling them to observe, analyse and critically reflect on their own work in pedagogical terms, identifying the elements that can make sense within an educational design and planning framework.

The professional figure of the supervisor is crucial, not only because his/her conceptual framework directs the focus of attention onto educational processes, but also because his/her methods of constructing the setting and managing work group dynamics, sometimes complex and compromised, determine the course and the effectiveness of the supervisory process. Therefore, supervisor has to possess abstraction and modeling abilities, which beginning from the analysis of a particular case, situation or contest and, using multiple conceptual and experiential contributions, lead to a theorization on educational phenomena. The introduction of new models of observation and analysis can open up many possibilities for interpretation and operational strategies. Reflective processes are found to be fundamental and effective at several levels: in relation to communicative and relational dynamics, planning and decision-making strategies, methodological and organizational choices, and speculative and theoretical assumptions. Inopportunately, the economic and welfare crisis that is currently undergoing forces social work to take charge of multiple and increasingly complex problems, despite scarce resources, tending to focus on techniques and managerial aspects rather than on the quality of intentionally educational experiences. Consequently, the scope for thought and experimentation are reduced, with a weaker development of reflexivity, communication and re-elaboration skills. Pedagogical supervision, therefore, can be a valuable resource for educators in training and on duty because it can guarantee the routine maintenance of good quality levels in social services and support their continuous redesign, in terms of defining their social mission, educational transformative objectives and coherent structural organization.

In order to develop a deep and transferable pedagogical knowledge, processes of communication, "reflection in action" (Schön, 1983) and interaction among colleagues and professionals are fundamental because they enhance levels of collaboration as well as "reflective thinking" (Dewey). Through reflection, educators can "gain a deep understanding of the underlying intentionalities in their educational agency, and [...] to identify the generative elements of their practices and therefore to modify and revise them" (Striano, 2017, p. 181). Making conscious of ethical and contextual, cultural and social implications in the educational agency, pedagogical su-

pervision can play a strategic role in the process of constructing professional identity and educational competences, making them visible and communicable.

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E.1

We make the road by walking: identity formation and collaborative narratives within the doctoral supervisory relationship.

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Introduction

In 2011 Paula (a newly registered PhD student) approached Alison (who in 2010 had completed and been awarded her Ed D) asking if she would consider being her PhD supervisor. We knew each other through our work in the same Faculty of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University, although we had taught on different programmes so had not previously worked closely together. Alison accepted at once, with a mixture of pride, excitement and anxiety.

Both of our identities, at this time, were fragile- Paula, as a new PhD student, had wanted to complete a PhD so that she felt she had a legitimate status in the university but was not sure about her ability or acceptance as a PhD student; and Alison, as an inexperienced supervisor, was anxious to 'get it right' for her first PhD student. The weight of responsibility was, and still is, immense for both of us.

Early in our supervisory relationship, we started to recognize and acknowledge our very different identities and perspectives, and started to reflect upon the impact and implications of this. Whilst at first glance, it may seem as if we both shared a similar identity as white, middle-aged, middle-class, female Senior Lecturers working in the same institution, and having both come from a teaching background, yet the impact of our classed childhood experiences have had a lasting impact on how we perceive situations and impact with them. This was something that had not been recognized or acknowledged by either of us until we started to explore it together through the supervisory relationship and our discussions about the direction and focus on Paula's research.

From the start of our supervisory relationship together Alison, in her role of supervisor, started to challenge and question some of the embedded assumptions that Paula brought with her to the research process. It was therefore the coming together of our two different identities, which enabled a much deeper and more critical exploration of the issues that Paula was wanting to explore.

As a result of our conversations and the very different perspective that Alison brought to the conversations, Paula reached a position whereby she realised the significant and un-deniable impact of her own identity on the research that she was planning to undertake. This became a turning point in Paula's research- where she started to open up to the possibilities that an auto/biographical approach to her research may be more authentic and may be more effective in exposing and examining the issues that were so important to her.

Throughout the supervisory process, we have reflected upon the impact of the way in which we interact with and work with each other upon the doctoral process.

The doctoral supervisory relationship

There are still relatively few texts that explore supervisory relationships, it being acknowledged that 'practices of supervision and scholarship remain under-scrutinized both in university settings and in academic writing' (Bryant and Jaworski, 2015, p.3).

The 'traditional' doctoral student is typically seen as white, male, young, and middle-class (Petersen, 2014), and in more traditional models of supervision the student has been seen as an apprentice or protégé. But as Green (2005) stated 'Doctoral education is as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production' (Green, 2005, p.153 in Petersen, 2007) and 'good supervision' takes into account our humanness, our emotions and values' (Bryant & Jaworski, 2015, p.11).

Feminist academics in the 1990s sought to highlight the emotional realm in research and doctoral supervision, for example, Aker and Feuerverger (1996, cited in Rowntree, 2015) but it has since waned (Ibid). However, Rowntree (2015) sees that the practice of supervision is both embodied and situated and although structurally asymmetrical it is a reciprocating process. Rowntree (2015) drawing on the work of Ingleton, argued that developing a confident scholar-self arises from a supervisory relation-

ship that is founded on close social bonds; that are influenced by emotional exchanges between student and supervisor.

For Paula, both supervisors have been keen to support her in going beyond the process of engaging in research and writing a doctorate per se; instead focusing on how the self is being (re)constituted and negotiated in the process (Petersen, 2014). The supervisory relationship has been a reiterative practice in recognising, repeating, and recontextualising subjectivity and intersubjectivity, enabling the experience to go beyond a merely cognitive experience; to one that has seen the process of ongoing negotiation of self and identity as equally important.

Indeed, the doctoral supervision relationship is 'where the emotional histories of both candidate and supervisor are lived and relived in fragmented moments during a range of doctoral study spaces' (Bryant, 2015, p. 23). Paula's fieldnotes and research diary throughout the doctoral journey have therefore detailed and recorded how:

Meetings with my supervisors have, over the years, involved surprise, passion, disappointment and euphoria; all of which have provided emotional and intellectual sustenance during the long marathon of the PhD. Through their love and recognition, I have learnt, or am at least beginning to learn, to have trust in myself; and to see myself as worthy of this doctorate and my position in the academy. I am convinced that the recognition I have acquired from the solid social bonds of the supervisory relationship/s and the confidence it has provided, has enabled me to flourish in my own learning.

The relationships that have been established are seen to be borne out of intersubjective love, rights and solidarity (Honneth, 1995). The fact that we value each other's qualities despite the differences between us in terms of class and gender has made Paula feel valued and accepted for who she is. Paula notes, therefore, how the supervisory relationship has:

given me courage.

Like any long-term relationship, however, the supervisory relationship is complex. It is inevitably, and properly, challenging at times, involving a high degree of emotional involvement on behalf of both the student and supervisor (Bryant & Jaworski, 2015). This was experienced in our supervisory relationship and we valued reflecting on those times of heightened emotion and the cause and impact of it:

Alison: You just became really angry

Paula: I wasn't angry actually. I was.... It wasn't anger...although know it came across like that....I think that is a class difference....it wasn't anger I don't know what it was.....it was complete and utter frustration, impotence. I felt out of control. I was not angry...not for a moment did I feel angry at anybody even myself. I just didn't know what to do with myself. I honestly didn't know what to do with myself. (Collaborative narrative: February, 2017)

There were also times when we both felt lost and isolated, Paula noting that:

During the writing process there have been incredibly emotional moments suffered in isolation.

I have just realised I have not seen Alys in ages. I really miss her provocations.... how can I contact her when she is so busy in her new role (RD: September , 2016).

It was so good to see Alys today. We both acknowledged our part in the breakdown of communication and got back to things how they were. Within 10 minutes we were both raving about how I was going to take my doctorate forward. She's woven her magic again (RD: February 2017).

Alison, in turn, also experienced feelings of low self-confidence and isolation, as Paula seemed to become increasingly engaged in a research study and methodological approach outside of Alison's immediate expertise. As a new and inexperienced supervisor, Alison spent time questioning the value of the support that she was able to offer. This coincided with a period where Alison moved into different roles outside of the University context, reducing time available to continue the regular informal meetings with Paula, and impacting on Alison's sense of her own identity as she moved away from academic roles and into senior leadership roles back in schools. The significance of this was not fully understood by either Alison or Paula until some time later, as we reflected together in subsequent supervisory meetings and as Paula has identified in her thesis:

It was the relationship with my first supervisor that has truly made a difference to my ability to be reflexive, and to remain excited about my research. I missed her when getting together became difficult. She has provided a space in which it is 'safe to feel vulnerable' (Rowntree, 2015, p. 106).

Indeed, it was this awareness that led to our consideration of the collaborative narrative approach as a way of increasing the potential of our work together and the impact that it could have on supporting the development of understanding of Paula's research.

The Collaborative Narrative Approach

As Paula was the author, the narrator and the protagonist of her research (Lejeune, 1989) our relationship therefore took another turn at the final stages of Paula's data analysis, when she called upon Alison, in her role as supervisor, to help her interrogate her data. Adapting Arvay's (1998) collaborative narrative approach we talked about our own interpretation of the data and any issues arising in which both parties contributed to the interrogation of the narrative.

Arvay (2003) intended the collaborative narrative approach be collaborative; to attend to power relations within research; and to deal with issues around voice and representation. She acknowledged that this method is time-consuming and very personal. She also pointed out that collaborative research relationships are often fraught with power issues that can be difficult (Ibid.).

For us, we adapted this approach to set up in-depth conversations where we reviewed and interrogated together parts of Paula's analysis and writing. Ahead of the meeting, Paula would share a particular piece of writing that she was working on, to give time to Alison to read and interact with it on an individual basis. We then came together and talked together about what we had experienced and identified by reading through the shared piece of writing. The conversations were all recorded, but were unstructured and informal, allowing us to interrogate and discuss the writing in a variety of ways. This approach enabled new insights to be explored, as typically Alison challenged and exposed embedded assumptions that Paula had brought to her writing, bringing those to the surface so that they could be investigated again in relation to wider literature.

The Collaborative Narrative Approach therefore enabled Paula to take

up a dual consciousness, with the help of Alison, to tell the story as narrator whilst at the same time reflecting on the story told as researcher, constantly moving between these two positions as the story unfolded. This links with Arvay's (1998) model where the researcher and co-investigator both hold multiple 'I' positions in the exchange as various possible 'selves' interact. In this way Paula was able to interpret her own 'script' from the perspective of the 'self' of the narrator, and the 'self' of the researcher. It was the opportunity to negotiate multiple and shifting meanings through voicing our understandings equitably that moved her thinking forward. To reveal aspects of oneself, the hidden; the silenced; and the private, there has to be trust- this approach therefore evolved out of the particular supervisory relationship that we had developed over time.

What kind of learning emerges from the experiences of connectedness?

The experience of connectedness that we discovered through our supervisory relationship enabled the process to become more than a merely cognitive experience, for both of us. It became a process of ongoing negotiation of self and identity which enabled both of us to challenge and question our assumptions and beliefs about the 'self' but also as the 'other' enabling the self to be (re)constituted and negotiated in the process (Petersen, 2014).

From the start, as a result of the connectedness that we felt and the emotional bonds that were developed through the supervisory relationship, Alison was able to gently challenge Paula to begin to form an academic identity through engagement in conference presentations and has resulted in an intellectually productive as well as emotional experience. This may not have happened had it not been for the strong and supportive relationship that had been fostered. Yet, as an emergent scholar who was unsure of her positioning within the institution and the PhD process, this was particularly important to Paula in terms of developing a positive relationship to self-esteem. It enabled Paula to become part of a community of scholars with particular traits and abilities that contribute positively to the shared projects of that community (Honneth, 1995).

In the joint Conference Presentation that Alison encouraged and supported Paula to engage in early in the PhD process ('It's All About Me.....? Complex understandings of the positioning of the researcher within the research process' Constructing Narratives of Continuity and change Conference, Canterbury, 2012), the feedback from people attending the presentation was interesting. As Paula later reflected in her fieldnotes:

It was interesting (and perhaps a little disappointing) that after our presentation some members of the 'audience' were more interested in our relationship than the paper itself (FN: May 2012).

Already, people outside of our direct work together could see the strength of the supervisory relationship in supporting the development of our joint learning, and the growth of our knowledge about the research area and, importantly, of ourselves.

Importantly and centrally, the benefits of the relationship were not just one-way, and Alison openly acknowledged to Paula the reciprocity of the learning experience to her as supervisor as well. As a result of our work together, we have both emerged with a much stronger and deeper understanding of our own self and identities, and there have been many opportunities where we have reflected this back to each other to support our learning:

Alison: You would have been thinking about things very differently back then...and that was part of the conversation I had with my parents. I would never have asked those if it hadn't been for the conversations that we have been having. (Collaborative narrative: February 2017).

Identity formation- changing identities:

Through the supervisory relationship we have both, individually and collectively, engaged in identity formation: our identities have changed and we have found support in reflecting about this with each other.

For Paula, the auto/biographical research approach has enabled her to create space in her life to reflect on who she is in relation to self and others and 're-collect' (Etherington, 2004) an aspect of herself that had not previously been known. Paula has confronted, acknowledged and, to some extent reconciled, the intricacy of her identity and has increased her understanding of her 'self', using it as a vehicle for growth. As Paula identifies at the end of her thesis:

In order to succeed in the world, I have become someone different. It was not intentional and it has happened gradually, and not without injury and loss.

For Alison, working with Paula to develop the auto/biographical approach has disrupted the complacency that Alison had previously experienced in relation to her identity and 'self'. As Paula has 'confronted' herself and her childhood experiences, so Alison has confronted herself and her lack of critical understanding of classed experience and the impact of those on the individual. It has taken Alison on a similar journey of discovery into the history of her own family, as Paula has undertaken with her family history, asking questions of her parents and family members that she would not previously have thought to consider.

For Paula, her confidence and sense of identity as a PhD student has been developed as she has moved from a newly registered PhD student to a student nearing completion of her thesis. For Alison, although Alison's professional identity has changed as a result of changing roles moving her away from the University setting, the doctoral journey with Paula has moved Alison from an inexperienced supervisor towards becoming an experienced supervisor once she has supported Paula to successfully complete her Viva.

For both of us, we have confronted our academic identities, allowing ourselves to start to identify ourselves as 'an academic'. This has been achieved, for both of us, by "making the road by walking": learning and supporting each other to learn within an emotionally intelligent supervisory relationship.

Concluding Comments

We did not set out to, but we have challenged the traditional notion of a doctoral supervisory relationship – the master and the protégé (Bryant & Jaworski, 2015). From a 'woman's way of knowing' (Belenky *et al.*, 1997), we quickly assumed a relationship built on 'love, rights and solidarity' (Honneth, 1995) that took into account our 'humanness, our emotions and values' (Bryant & Jaworski, 2015: 11).

As Paula acknowledges:

It may be risky to acknowledge the emotional dimension of the doctoral education but it is emotion that has been the driving force behind the risks that I have taken; and the vulnerability and the suffering that is felt in the scholarly pursuit of knowledge that has had the biggest impact on my cognition.

The importance of recognizing and valuing the impact of connectedness and relationships in the learning process, particularly in something as emotionally deep as the doctoral supervisory relationship is therefore essential.

This is not the end of the process of discovery and learning for Paula and Alison; through our shared experiences together we have identified a need to explore in more detail the impact of a range of different research relationships- we continue to ‘make the road by walking’, and the journey is strengthened through the connection with an-other.

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F.1

‘Dimensions and complexities of togetherness and voice: A symposia’ and foote

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The paragraph below is an introduction to all three papers. It should be a stand alone page

“The following three inter-related papers formed a panel discussion. The first paper, by Iain Jones, provides a starting point, examining different dimensions of togetherness and voice. The second joint paper, by Roger Willoughby and Parminder Assi, uses psychoanalytic and post-colonial lenses to study a particular case of the curriculum in action and the tensions that arose during this process. The final paper, by Richard Sanders, discusses biographical attitudes and beliefs of postgraduate students towards technology, where polarised ideological positions voiced by a student emphasises disjuncture in their learning and professional practice.”

Iain Jones, Newman University Birmingham, UK.
'A commitment to a form of togetherness'?

In February 2014 I sat, during a break in a class, talking to a student. Approximately 30 other students had been working in small groups of three or four. Each had talked about their different experiences of working in schools. But Nabeeha was frustrated. Earlier she had worked with two younger students. She was eager to listen to and learn from them- and other students- but they were awkward. Even silent. Their notes were spread on the floor. Some other students also sat on the floor- or on chairs with broken tops. After break, individuals and groups moved around the room and read one another's notes on large sheets of flipchart paper. Four years later Nabeeha has graduated, qualified as a teacher and is in the second year of full time teaching. I remember Nabeeha, and what I learnt from talking and listening to her. I don't remember the names of the other two younger students who sat in that loose huddle four years ago. I do know that the room we were in has changed. It has been re-built and re-designed. The broken partition, the long mirror and odd and old chairs have gone. The chairs all match, the seats are fixed and the two screens are neatly positioned on the wall. That is now.

Another starting point for this paper is how the incident I recall in 2014, and the critical events that followed, *were* interpreted and are *now* understood. Following Smith et al (2010, p. 57), and their study of collective praxis, the paper analyses reflective diary entries, informal meeting notes and institutional texts to interpret these characteristics and representations. It asks how critical events (Woods, 1994, 1996; Cunningham, 2008) continue to shape current and future practices and how narratives were presented and are re-presented.

Initially, the diary entries and notes were descriptive but in my recurring review these interpretations are developed further (Atkins and Wallace, 2012, p.156). In this sense, field notes in the first form were 'less emergent findings than raw musings, food for analytical thought and work' (Mills and Morton, 2013, p.88). I now review how my conceptualisation of events, and what made them 'critical', was informed by the perspectives of Woods (1994 and 1996) and Cunningham (2008). Woods argues that methodologically 'it is difficult to study critical events as they are happening' (1996, p.119), but understanding the meanings and context of the event can be explored in retrospect. Cunningham agrees and argues 'what renders critical an event in professional life is its propensity to create a dis-

turbance in our professional equilibrium' (2008, p.165). However, Cunningham adds that rather than conceiving of events in the singular it may be helpful to extend this notion to a series of events (2008). These interpretations are combined together because their views are not in opposition but are elaborations of one another.

The paper also builds on Squire's review of narrative research methods (2008) and argues why an outline of an experience-centred approach to narrative, and work by Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013), may be combined together. These suggest narratives may be understood as sequential but also a re-presentation of experience and offering- or limiting- spaces for transformation or change (2008, p.17). The first two of the characteristics are also reflected in Biesta, Field and Tedder's representations of chronological and narrative time for learning (2010). For example, whilst a chronology in a narrative may provide a context for, or description of, a sequence of events, 'organising' or 'evaluative' principles (2010, pp.321-322) offer a justification for why a selection or combination of incidents are understood and felt to be 'critical'. Like Caine et al (2013), this paper shares their methodological commitment and ontological position: of being curious and wanting to understand our own experiences- in specific settings. Such commitments are bound up in our own senses of flux and uncertainty:

as we attend to lived, relived, told, and retold stories of experience; and as we begin to craft our always negotiated research texts. To engage deeply with experience, an ontological commitment is, then, a relational commitment. It is a commitment to a form of togetherness in research that seeks to explore how we are living in the midst of our stories (2013, p. 576).

Context and chronology: Positioning students and lecturers as partners

An experience-centred narrative forms the basis for the following biography of practice (Squire, 2008, p.18) in which I worked together with other lecturers and students in different forms of collaboration. First, a chronology. In April 2014, three undergraduate students began work with four lecturers on a small scale teaching and learning project. The previous month a call for projects had summarised and framed the ethos of the work:

The scheme intends to integrate students further into the teaching and pedagogic development communities of the schools and student support services as a way to enhance collaboration between students and staff. Students must be active and preferably lead members of project teams. The role of students in the project must be explained in the project application. Students engaged in this scheme will be working as partners not assistants (Central, 2014, p.2. Emphasis in original text).

The students wrote an information sheet summarising the project from their perspective:

The purpose of the research we are carrying out is to evaluate the curriculum, to ensure it is culturally diverse, that it includes a variety of perspectives and is appropriately more inclusive (Begum et al, 2014a, p. 3).

In July 2014, on completion of the first phase of the work, the students submitted their report and gave a presentation to a group of lecturers at their end-of-year review. The students made four recommendations. To

- Continuously expose students and staff to multiple views of the world and harness experiences of all the students in Education Studies.
- Increase opportunities for collaborative learning (communities of practice, group work in seminars) which exploit the diversity within the student population.
- Diversify the theorists and theories used to gain multiple perspectives and avoid repetitiveness. Include the ideas of Black and Asian thinkers and academics from local, global, past and present much earlier on in the modules.
- Include the concept of multiple identities, especially religious identity across the modules from level 4 onwards as, this will allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the concept of identities as students come from a super diverse city (Begum et al, 2014b,p.21).

In this first phase of our work together, the small-scale project began by developing a problem posing education. An essential element of the method used was a form of praxis: a recurring process of action and reflection leading to further action. Our joint aim was to begin to critically analyse a knowable object (the curriculum) and develop our own critical consciousness. As Freire argues:

To be an act of knowing... demands among teachers and students a relationship of *authentic dialogue*. True dialogue unites subjects together in the cognition of a *knowable object*, which mediates between them... learners must assume from the beginning the role of *creative subjects* (1985, p. 49. my emphasis added).

A combination of field notes and a research diary were used to reflect on critical events. In research diary entries in September and October 2014, three prompt questions were used to reflect on my sense of our work together. It is illuminating to review these entries and reflect on *why* I became involved in this work, *what* I learnt from it and *how* it also related to my own dilemmas about 'voice'. Re-reading these diary entries, I sense affective interpretations embodying *why* I chose to become involved in that work at that moment:

[T]he essence of why I wanted to contribute to the project was (in part) a reaction against other practices. For example, in single events earlier last year small groups of student representatives were called together to discuss institutional developments. They were then represented as 'the student voice'. But, by comparison, when the messy, incomplete but detailed comments of 60 students were typed up and sent to senior managers – these were ignored. My sense and hope was that by comparison the project was an opportunity for sustained work with a small group of students that promised to be 'more authentic' (29 September 2014).

When I reflected on what I learnt from the work I recognised that

It felt interesting. It felt genuine. Perhaps I am self-consciously referring to feelings – but again the essence of enjoying an activity was an essential part of it. In part that was because of working with such a highly motivated group of students. The project felt that it was important to each of us. N, R and M reflected on their own experiences at Central and of what was 'absent' from it. They were each explicit that many of their experiences were either absent or in some instances mis-recognised (19 October 2014).

Re-presenting and re-constructing stories: offering or limiting space for transformation or change?

A further characteristic of the experience-centred perspective is that narratives involve a re-presentation and reconstruction of stories within and across time and place (Squire, 2008, p. 22). In retrospect, our work together can be told, re-told and understood in its specific and wider context, by combining the emphasis of Caine et al (2013) on methodological commitments within narrative inquiry and the earlier work of Smith et al on collective praxis (2010). This commitment 'to explore how we are living in the midst of our stories' (Caine et al, 2013, p. 576) relates to how Smith et al combine praxis and collective praxis (2010) and juxtapose individual and collective processes of becoming. They argue that 'This type of collective action often emanates from a felt dissatisfaction with an existing situation that proves difficult to change alone' (2010, p. 57). Whilst a 'felt dissatisfaction' was one starting point for our collective praxis in a specific setting, these situated senses can be understood more widely too: in terms of how the 'voices' of students and lecturers are framed; in relation to 'time' and 'speed' and finally, in relation to recurring tensions between democratic and managerial forms of professionalism.

Firstly, Fielding and Moss' six-fold typology of student voice (2011) and inter-relationships between students as data sources, active respondents, co-enquirers, knowledge creators, joint authors and inter-generational learners in education relates to our practices. Whilst their examples are drawn from early childhood, and secondary education, they can also be applied to analysing and theorising the voices of students and lecturers within marketized practices in higher education. The dilemmas Fielding and Moss pose, and that Fielding addresses in other work (2001; 2012), were also significant for our work within the institution. For example, concerns as to how the 'voice' of students, and lecturers, may be mis-appropriated and mis-recognised were evident. I was troubled by this:

What are the implications of the report for 'curriculum enrichment'? Senior managers asked to meet with the students to discuss the report. Another manager has encouraged this too. (29 September 2014).

This concern was extended when I wrote:

On reflection, I am also interested in how the projects are being appropriated. Interesting to reflect on how the whole idea of the projects is being framed (19 October 2014).

A further dilemma was whether this work could extend *beyond* committed individuals working within a course or Department. I recognised this in another reflection in November 2014:

The completion of the first phase of the project was marked by the submission of a report in July. However, before that, a presentation was made at the end of year Subject Review and comments there contributed to the final report. All of the lecturers at the Review shared our enthusiasm for the project and the report. What is now interesting is how the report will shape our practices in the future (10 November 2014).

In re-presenting these stories recurring dilemmas remain: 'voice' is not only about who may speak and whether voices are heard- but if there is an 'obligation to listen' to what is spoken (Couldry, 2009, p. 590). However, two other concepts also sensitise an analysis and interpretation of capacities to 'listen'.

Pollitt suggests different manifestations of 'time' and 'speed' (2009) accelerate and fragment work and 'doctrines of radical change' embody both 'contempt for the past' (2009, p. 207) but also forms of 'compressed time' (see, for example, Sabelis, 2002 cited in Pollitt, 2009). Consequently, in a state of 'haste' and 'being busy' (Sabelis, 2002, p. 91), 'seasoned judgement', listening, may not be part of this 'compressed world' (Pollitt, 2009). Also, there is a 'declining ability- and willingness- of public sector institutions in many countries to access and make use of possibly relevant past experiences' (Pollitt, 2000, p. 6). However, paradoxically, institutions may also have difficulty in 'letting go' of procedures that may not be suitable for their original purpose. Consequently, different forms of what Pollitt calls 'cognitive and behavioural conservatism' may be juxtaposed with 'a quite radical loss of touch with the past' (2000, p. 8). These temporal dimensions provide a wider context for interpreting specific situated practices that are designed to enable 'voice'.

In addition, Sachs (2001) analyses tensions between practices and competing discourses of 'managerialist' and 'democratic professionalism' and these also have implications for 'voice' and 'listening' too. In Jones (2017, p. 60), I reviewed Sachs' work and argued that whilst managerialist dis-

courses are generated both from outside of the institution, but also from within, a ‘democratic’ discourse is produced within the profession itself (2001, p. 149). Consequently our identities in this and other practices were and are not fixed but are formed, in part, by recurring interactions between these two discourses. They are also shaped by the context we work within, how we work with others and how we make sense of our work within that setting. However, our capacity to exercise agency may be shaped by external and internal conditions and those managerialist discourses that circulate, swirl and become embedded within an institution. How can we theorise and engage with these tensions?

From restricted to extended narratives of voice

In this first of three papers in our symposium, the ‘voice’ and experiences of students, and lecturers in HE, are not simply understood as *problems* to be managed but remain a set of recurring dilemmas that need to be *problematized* (Bacchi, 2000, 2012). For example, this small scale project embodied several of the features of a ‘reformist’ narrative outlined in other research on widening participation in higher education in England (Jones, 2017). The project began as an example of *additional* practice situated outside of the formal curriculum but in relation to it. By contrast, what is the basis of an ‘extended narrative’?

The first feature of an ‘extended narrative’ is based on critiquing what ‘the problem’ is. Whilst a dominant and ‘restricted’ narrative of ‘voice’, in higher education in England, is based on the metaphor of ‘the student experience’, a re-casting of the narrative rejects this position. Instead, policies and practices may be framed by beginning to recognise that experiences and forms of studenthood are neither fixed nor linear but are complex and contested (Field, Merrill & Morgan-Klein, 2010).

Secondly, Field and Kurantowicz (2014), Finnegan, Fleming and Thunborg (2014) and Gale and Parker (2014) extend this analysis further by tracing the value of ‘transition as becoming’. The argument of Gale and Parker is that this conception of transition, compared with other forms that conceptualise transition as either ‘induction’ or ‘development’, has more potential for new thinking about transitions and ‘voice’ in H.E. They begin by arguing the need for H.E. institutions themselves to change by reflecting on questions about the design of the curriculum and forms of pedagogy

that may be developed given the diverse needs and interests of students (2014, p. 745): our starting point for our small scale work.

Finally, such practices extend beyond 'restricted' narratives of 'voice' exemplified by, and framed within, national and institutional policy texts. Instead, for example, recurring process of reflection, debate and planning, that were the basis of the 'Students as Partners' project reviewed in this paper, echo the perspective of Shanahan in which the question of widening participation and 'voice' should be inverted into that of universities accessing the knowledge of those who have been excluded from higher education (1997, p. 71). Asking what 'the problem' is represented to be, and how policies and practices are framed, re-casts the question of access, widening participation and 'voice' by taking account of the 'multiplicities of student lives' (Gale & Parker, 2014, p. 745) and extending beyond specific examples of additional practice. This suggests that multiple identities are shaped by inter-sections of class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexuality. It is these re-presentations and re-framings of 'the problem' that have implications for contested ideas of transition and 'voice' within institutions. Quinn's argues that 'there is no such thing as an identity, or a discrete moment of transition' (2010, p.127; emphasis added). This position, which I share, relates to the work of Zepke & Leach (2005). Their notion of the 'emergent discourse of adaptation' is productive. Gale and Parker argue that this is not about individuals or groups *adapting* to institutions, or the incorporation of individuals into the cultures of an institution. By asking who gets to speak about these processes and why this matters, Nixon argues what so-called 'under-represented' groups lack is not 'representation' but *presence* (Nixon, 2011, p.123. emphasis in original).

These recurring dilemmas continue to resonate and matter to us: because of how we work with one another; make sense of our work and identities within a specific setting and ask recurring questions about notions of 'togetherness' and 'voice'. They also have implications for our practices within the curriculum and it is this theme that is now addressed in the second paper in our symposium.

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F.2

International education at home

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Introduction

The academy in late modernity continues to be a site of multiple contests. One such skirmish broke out for us in 2014 (Jones, 2018), when seven people, three students and four academics, collaborated in a modestly funded small-scale research project reflexively investigating the ethnic representativeness of the curriculum that said students studied and said academics delivered, at least in part. The students volunteered for the project, proposed its focus, conducted the fieldwork research, and wrote-up and disseminated the results. The collaborating academics for their part contained and catalysed the process and would through varying efforts seek to champion the spirit of the research over the ensuing years. Such a demarcation is too neat, but it offers a possibly useful heuristic with which to begin. The synergy that developed in the project was considerable. It was, we argue, a reciprocal liminal process through which all the principal parties were to some degree changed. In the context of our considerations of togetherness, this deserves a brief preliminary discussion.

Containment, transformation and collective praxis

Our understanding of the synergy that emerged in our working together rests on various foundations, one of which is the concept of containment and the dynamics of the container-contained relationship (Bion, 1959; 1962a; 1962b) and a second is the notion of collective praxis (Smith et al,

2010). In his psychoanalytically inspired formulation, Bion advances a model in which primitive inchoate mental states (proto-thinking) require an other's receptive mind (or reverie in Bion's terms) to transform them qualitatively before both contents and process can be internalised, thus building a capacity for thinking and for the understanding and tolerance of feelings. Here, the container–contained model offers an idea of a resilient interpersonal and intra-psychic dialogic learning process. This process of containment is essentially a *meaning making activity*, which will inevitably be coloured by other factors such as the character of the relationship between the parties and the vicissitudes of our libidinal, aggressive and epistemophilic drives (Bion, 1963).

Smith et al's (2010) discussion of collective praxis resonates with this view, albeit in different language, in its foregrounding of mutuality, authentic collegiality and commitment within a non-hierarchical communicative space as one means of sustaining creativity, academic vitality and productivity in what may be a less than hospitable environment. While Smith et al's (2010) work reported principally on networks of academic staff, augmented with an occasional doctoral researcher, our work goes beyond these parameters to encompass work with undergraduate students as partners in research, curriculum development and pedagogic praxis.

Broadening the curriculum

Among the outputs that ultimately flowed from the project were recommendations to broaden or enrich the curriculum underpinning the programme through increasing the international ethnic and gender representativeness of its literature base and to diversify pedagogic examples of praxis and educational outcomes. These were not unusual challenges to curricula within the academic *zeitgeist*, wherein, sometimes pejoratively, dead white men (Hughes, 2006, pp. 348-9) supposedly still exert a zombie-like grip on the minds of the living. Thus, elsewhere, others were voicing similar ideas, in, for example, the panel discussion *Why isn't my professor Black?* at University College London (UCL, 2014; Jahi, 2014), the subsequent *Why is my curriculum white?* student campaign also there (Peters, 2015; Andrews, 2016), and more recently the *Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford* campaign (RMFOxford, 2015), all arguably part of a wider movement seeking a decolonisation of curricula (Jivraj & Simpson, 2015; Le Grange, 2016; Heleta, 2016; Kennedy, 2017).

The particularities of each situation are important. So too in our case. Our student researchers came from Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic backgrounds. This created particular resonances within the matrix of our work group, which were heightened by events on the world stage (*such as* the campaigns of al-Qaeda, so-called Islamic State or Da'ish, and their affiliates on the one hand and the on-going Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the persecution of Rohingya peoples in Myanmar on the other), on the British national stage (*such as* the government's roll out of an educational policy on promoting fundamental British values and its anti-radicalisation Prevent strategy on the one hand and the rise of Islamophobia, xenophobia and hate crimes on the other), and locally (*such as* the so-called Trojan Horse affair, a fake plot to Islamise schools in Birmingham). For their part, the ethnic backgrounds of the staff were Indian, Irish-American, and white-British.

Why had these particular students, out of all those on our programme, stepped forward to work with us? Their own overriding response centred on the concept of leaving a cultural legacy: a sense of connexion or togetherness with future generations of students. Within our own institution the student body is ethnically diverse. Considering just those students enrolled on our programme over a five-year period (435 students from 2010/11 to 2014/15), an examination of demographic data (see chart 1) showed 36% defined themselves as coming from a Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) background, with British-Pakistani students forming the largest single cluster therein (15%). How did these students fare on the programme itself during this period? Using degree classifications as a *very* crude proxy of academic achievement, and just considering those who achieved either first-class or third-class and pass degrees (see charts 2 and 3), white students *appeared* disproportionately represented among those gaining firsts (78% though they comprised 64% of the student body), while the preponderance of *some* BME students was conspicuous at the other end of the classification spectrum (46% though they comprised 36% of the student body). Notably, Pakistani students appeared evenly distributed across these classifications. We do not wish to make too much of these patterns as yet (further statistical analysis is needed), but merely wish to note them here as perhaps bearing on the question of the potential differential impact of the curriculum on student achievement across groups and as more general food for thought.

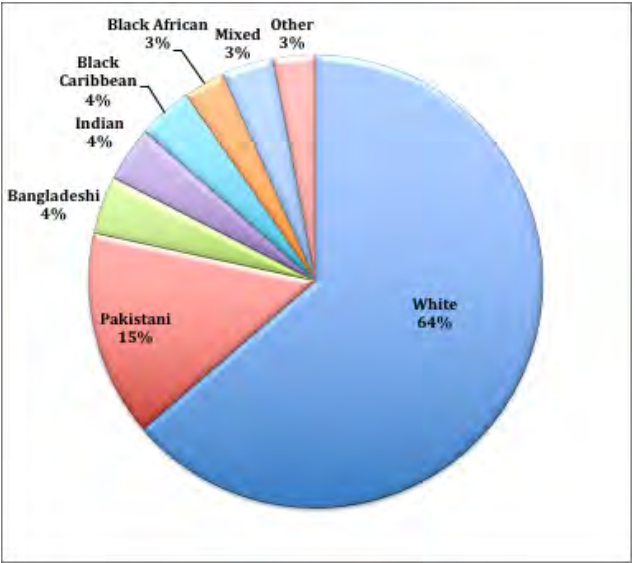


Chart 1: Student body (2010/11-2014/15) arranged according to ethnic background (n=435)

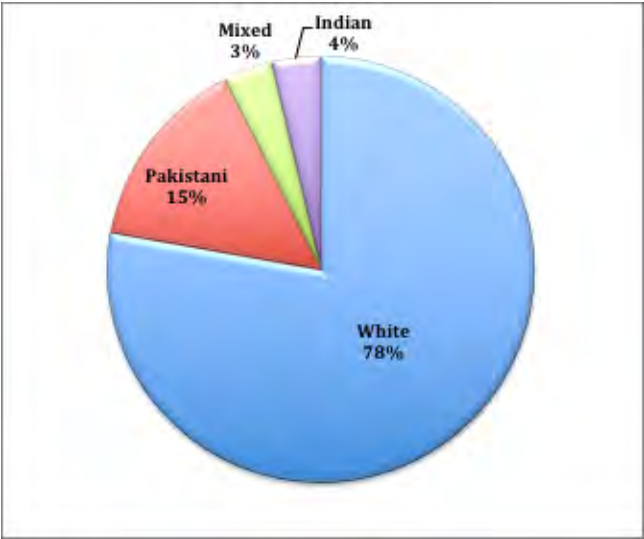


Chart 2: First class degree level outcomes by ethnicity (n=27)

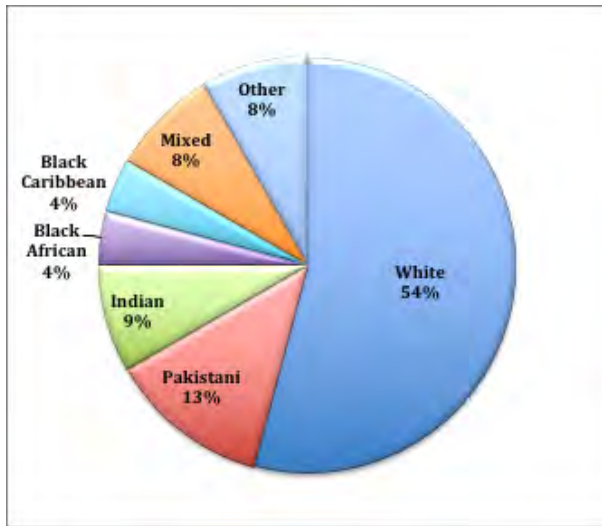


Chart 3: Third class & pass degree level outcomes by ethnicity (n=24)

With students themselves soliciting curriculum development, indications that some sections of the student body were failing to thrive on the existing curricular diet, and our own commitment to a praxis based on togetherness, we disseminated project recommendations to review and revise reading lists and praxis on existing modules and developed two new innovative optional modules, titled ‘Education in Birmingham’ and ‘International Education’ to run in the second and third year respectively of the undergraduate programme.

What follows, focuses substantively on what we have so far learned through the latter efforts. We will explore three themes; recognition of the socio-political context; situated learning in Birmingham; and some of the challenges of assessment

Recognition of the immediate socio-political context

Education is commonly regarded as one of the key ways through which ‘society transmits its accumulated values, knowledge, skills, attitudes and customs from one generation to another and influences how an individual thinks, feels and acts’ (Mortimore, 2013). There is a wealth of literature on how educational theories, content and practical activities influence, reflect and embody differing societal values (Halstead and Taylor 1996). Similarly,

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) suggest ways in which education is implicated in the reproduction of society (Sullivan 2002), through fostering the transmission of certain cultural values.

The International Education module is explicitly surrounded by such values given the degree to which the current political climate seeks to influence the English education system. Headline initiatives here include the controversial policy to 'put the promotion of British values at the heart of what every school has to deliver for children' (Gov UK 2014), in order to promote social cohesion on the one hand and support the anti-radicalisation and counter-terrorism Prevent Strategy on the other. British values are defined in the government legislation as centring on: 'Democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind'.

Nonetheless, others cogently argue that such purported British values are actually universal values, values which are inclusive and non-negotiable (Bari 2014). Given the globally connected, multi-ethnic, multi-religious nature of much of Britain, according differential rather than equal recognition and esteem to bona fide groups essentially perpetuates power relations very much akin to that between coloniser and colonised groups, with the latter invited to adopt an essentially subaltern position (Gramsci, 1971; Guha, 1982; Spivak, 1985). This hegemonic hierarchical structuring in Britain, a country that has been traditionally riven with social class distinctions, is no surprise. Seriously voicing this in the academy, however, potentially gives rise to considerable cognitive dissonance for some students. This is particularly so for those aspiring to careers within the state education system, which is substantially dominated by neoliberal policies. The entailed regulatory practices all too often disempower students and teachers, the demands for compliance in exchange for position subverting agency and compromising integrity of praxis. Such dissonance is, of course, intersectional, with gender and class divisions for example further problematizing the desire for authentic collaborative togetherness.

This dissonance was further magnified locally in Birmingham by the previously mentioned 2014 Trojan Horse affair (Holmwood & O'Toole, 2018). With Da'ish campaigns in the Middle East and elsewhere in the headlines, as well as well-founded concerns about terror attacks on the British mainland, an alleged plot by 'hard-line' Muslim 'Islamist's' to take over some Birmingham schools became breaking news. The Trojan Horse letter appeared in March 2014, claiming that some schools in Birmingham 'had been deliberately targeted by Muslims standing as school governors in

order to replace school leaders with heads who would adopt a more Islamic agenda in running the schools' (House of Commons Education Committee, 2015). This swiftly led to Birmingham City Council and Department for Education inquiries into the stories and snap inspections at 15 schools. Such regulatory gaze came hand-in-hand with a prejudicial preformed transference and hegemonic narrative about the supposed failure of multiculturalism and its subversion by radicalised Muslim separatists, which was widely and largely uncritically reported in the media. It was only in mid-2017 that the cases were abandoned following the emergence of clear evidence of abuse of process (Holmwood & O'Toole, 2018). It was rich and powerful material, in relation to which some of our students were insiders with various ties to the schools involved and all had a view. Seminar discussions inevitably revealed disconnections, mistrust and misunderstandings among participants, the recognition and dialogic working through of which facilitated collective praxis (Smith et al, 2010).

This process involved considering the contemporary socio-political context as inherently linked to collective histories, which of course included consideration of the rise and function of education systems internationally, particularly through the conceptual lenses of imperialism, colonialism, globalisation and gender. Taking just colonialism here as illustrative of the challenges these concepts entail, its reach is substantial given its recurrence across world history. By the 1930s its European iteration at one time or another stretched across over 84% of the world's land surface (Loomba, 2015; Rizvi, Lingard, & Lavia, 2006, p. 250). With education as a key agent of past colonial control (Gramsci, 1971; Viswanathan, 1992; Andreotti, 2011; AbuHilal and Abu-Shomar, 2014), contemporary education often continues to obscure and perpetuate colonial legacies (Dei, 2010; Dei and Simmons, 2010). Here teacher and taught risk becoming proxies for the colonial master and subject, while traditional education itself arguably bears some of the hallmarks of a colonizing discourse (Dei & Simmons, 2010; Hoerder, 2014).

We thus raise the question of the extent to which these living educational legacies, which shape identity (Fanon, 1952), social relations, freedom and various forms of discrimination (Gilroy, 1987; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Pajaczkowska and Young, 1992) for example, persist in impacting on contemporary educational experience and attainment. Their impact on recent socio-political and cultural contexts in Britain, including Brexit, is another story.

Situated learning in Birmingham

One of the key findings of the initial research included the desire for a locally based representation of education, exploring local theory, research, praxis, institutions and educational trajectories. This expression we saw as intimately related to the preceding discourse on power, with its implicit critique of relations between the metropolitan centre and colonial margins, prominent dimensions in both colonialism and contemporary globalisation. One effort to meet this desire was our construction of a second year undergraduate elective module titled 'Education in Birmingham'. Staff were enthusiastic about this development, designing the module to incorporate content such as Paul Willis's landmark 1976 study *Learning to Labour* about disenfranchised youth in 'Bricktown' (Birmingham), the progressive Steward Street School experiment (Burke & Grosvenor, 2013), the Trojan Horse affair (Holmwood & O'Toole, 2018), through a host of studies of gangs, child protection tragedies, terrorism, diversities, and flag-ship initiatives.

Exciting stuff you might think. We thought so. Yet, when the module was actually offered very few students enrolled and as a consequence it was deemed unviable to run it. How might we understand this apparent falling away of interest? For example: were the responses in the initial research on this point overblown? Were the alternative module options just more attractive? Had we failed to adequately promote the module? Was it, in some way, perceived as a step too far? While the reasons behind the lack of take-up are likely to be complex, our experience of student struggles on the International Education module with formative ethnographic fieldwork across the region was suggestive. This latter activity was a further way in which we sought to achieve the curricular ambition to rebalance academic attention towards the local.

Assessment, ethnography and risky practices

The International Education module offers students a comparative interdisciplinary perspective on the topic. We adopt an explicitly compound focus, examining indigenous educational practices in England alongside case studies of education elsewhere (e.g. Israel, South Africa, Pakistan, Finland). At the same time we strive, like C Wright Mills (2000), to make the familiar strange, illuminating markers of ethnic diversity and otherness that exist often quietly in the indigenous scene. In an effort to achieve this in a grounded manner,

students on the module are tasked with undertaking an ethnographic walk in pairs or small groups, the findings from which experience they are to subsequently report to and discursively unpack with the class.

The material thus gathered, captured often in the form of photographs, sometimes snippets of conversations, reported associations and affect states, etc, is sometimes very rich indeed. Here are just three examples.



Picture 1: *Keep calm and learn English*

Here, a 1939 British motivational poster (*Keep calm and carry on*), that resurfaced in 2008 to become an anthem for austerity resilience and was quickly adapted to serve a plethora of other markets (Hatherley, 2017), is used to sell English language lessons. Trading on the imaginary, on nostalgia for a lost heroic identity and an injunction to manage if not repress feelings in the face of adversity (the stereotyped ‘stiff upper lip’), the advertisement resonated widely in the seminar. The conversation thus touched on national identity, esteem, a new (linguistic) empire in which English is dominant, commodification, marketization, McDonaldisation, inter-ethnic tension, and the decline of minority languages among other issues. As such, the image engaged the seminar in a joint enterprise in an accessible and visceral way, in part as this student produced resource, a found object, was embedded within the local community.

Some students were able to document changes of use in local buildings and in this way chart changes in community ethnic demographics, whilst opening up conversations on migration, community cohesion, racism, xenophobia and co-existence. Photographs 2 and 3 partly illustrate this in their depiction of the former Victoria Public House in Bordesley Green, Birmingham, which more recently became the Dar Ul Irfan Islamic Centre and mosque. Such sites, whilst of course often encompassing learning establishments of varying degrees of formality, offer grounded insights into the lived lives of communities which are also served by mainstream educational provision.



Pictures 2 & 3: The Victoria Pub to the Dar Ul Irfan Islamic Centre

This is important in contributing to the professional formation of aspiring teachers, or indeed other human services professionals, sensitising them to a sample of issues their future constituents may face and helping to consolidate empathic resources and understanding of affective and broadly psycho-social dimensions in the process.



Picture 4: The Anglo-Boer War Memorial

Our third example is an image of a war memorial commemorating local soldiers who died during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, just one of several war memorials that have featured so far in students' documentation of their localities. Such memorials engaged us in discussion of the age of

empire and colonisation, of politics, ideology and power, of identity, of social class, of personal troubles and public issues. In the contemporary multi-ethnic context, such sites of memory are potentially ambiguous signifiers, sometimes representing triumph and defeat to different members of the same class; as memorials to the dead however, to other young local people who lost their lives from violence or disease, they were also moving human sites evoking a greater degree of togetherness.

In considering such material, we as teaching staff did not necessarily have advance warning of the nature of these offerings to the class or their potential relevance or meanings. Neither did others in the class. Yet these very features offered opportunities for students and staff to encounter each other and each other's work afresh within a local, national and international context and to engage in a meaning making process. Such engagement was often fraught with hesitation and uncertainty. Staff were at times viewed with scepticism or confusion: were we simply indulging pet ideological views rather than engaging in serious praxis? Were we inviting them to join us in some sort of risky practice (Enright *et al*, 2017), jeopardising crucial final year grade possibilities? We would regularly need to engage with sub-altern silence (Spivak, 1985) or politeness in response to ethnographic offerings, posing our own questions or thinking aloud to scaffold discussions and shore up confidence.

That this was so ought, in some ways, to be no surprise. Our students are facing a high stakes assessment within the hierarchical marketised university system, well aware of its inherent inequalities, where others hold the structural power to mandate assessment modes and focus, where commodification is commonplace, and attempting to anticipate-and-satisfy covert staff expectations in assignments is sometimes believed to be a *sine qua non* for securing good grades. These tensions were equally, if not more, evident in moving from the formative to the summative assessment component of the module. Here again student uncertainty emerged, particularly over our encouragement to further develop their formative ethnographic work into a more comprehensively written-up paper. There was increased checking and validation seeking over submission focii. Some students opted for 'safer' alternatives, such as mainstream comparative analyses of two national education systems. Others were able to sustain their earlier dialogic engagement, despite its uncertainties, and emerge perhaps not with higher grades but perhaps with an enhanced degree of filiation or togetherness.

Conclusion

In moving from research, through curricular development to a praxis that incorporates further joint research, we have here sought to build on the previously discussed notions of containment and collective praxis. Our construction of potential spaces for exploration, alongside conceptual support and emotional encouragement, was important throughout. As with Smith *et al* (2010), the endeavour has been productive, sustained and creative, though its extension into pedagogy has highlighted more interpersonal and systemic uncertainties.

That this is so should not be surprising. A majority of our students are on a trajectory into teaching and the developments here are to an extent disruptive of some of the mainstream models of transmission legitimised in ITE programmes, which model practice ‘inauthenticity’ (Freire, 1970; Glass, 2001). Focussing here on togetherness, intercultural learning and the promotion of opportunities for fostering empathy, through dialogical, democratic engagement, facilitates – we argue – the growth of important human and professional capacities (Kemmis & Carr 1986, p. 190).

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G.1

International Dialogue for Transforming Global Food Sustainability: A Batesonian Perspective

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We have to move from just fighting for saving this species or that, to working with the preservation and development of living ecologies; from thinking of the environment as a thing, to seeing that it is a complex web of connections; from seeing it as other to experiencing it as part of us. There is no self, no nature, only nature self (Hawkins 2004).

Above, Hawkins summarizes Bateson, one of the first scholars to speak out regarding the ecological crisis facing our world, on the relationship between nature and self—that is, that they are one. Our paper looks at this increasingly urgent struggle by examining the case of a multinational's attempt to consider the needs of society and the environment in their its sourcing activities. For Bateson, the mind consists of information processing interactions among *Creatura* or entities in the living world. Similar mental processes occur in the larger relational systems in which we directly engage such as families, neighborhoods and organizations. These environments are made up of mental systems (Bateson, 1972).

We look at workshops through which decision makers at the multinational intended to develop an assessment tool to drive responsible raw materials sourcing, to which they invited perceived expert collaborators, including NGOs and academia. In Bateson's view, the complex processes of food production, natural systems that enable such production, the supply chains, processing, and delivery to food consumers are beings with minds. And for Bateson, our adaptive evolution as a species is tied up in information and knowing what it takes to survive.

In an interconnected world then, each human biography evolves and works with knowledge and information of the complex systems within which it is contextualized. Bateson defines three levels of systems: the individual, the social, and the ecosystem (pp. 437-38). We can see in an individual's biography, the presence of both the social systems, and the ecosystems in which they developed as they refer to their relationships and the natural world around them. Without conscious reflection, much of this is unconscious. These are present in their language, interactions and whether and how they are sharing information. Bateson says to his young daughter in the dialogue he reproduces in *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind* (1972), "I mean – all right, so they talk about baseball and gardens. But are they exchanging information? And, if so, what information?... Sometimes if both people are willing to listen carefully, it is possible to do more... Even to do more than exchange information. The two people may even find out something which neither of them knew before." (p. 21-22).

Bateson writes, "I regard the grooves of destiny into which our civilization has entered as a special case of evolutionary cul-desac" (p. 505). He goes on to explain "...the frequency of use of a given idea becomes a determinant of its survival in that ecology of ideas which we call Mind; and beyond that the survival of a frequently used idea is further promoted by the fact that habit formation tends to remove the idea from the field of critical inspection. Bateson links this point to language in his dialogue with his daughter at the beginning of the book. He says, "We all have lots of readymade phrases and ideas...in order to think new thoughts or to say new things, we have to break up all our ready-made ideas and shuffle the pieces" (p. 26). In other words, the idea is held in place by habits of language.

The lens provided by Bateson helps us to explore the impact language had on group learning and the possibility of breaking out of the "evolutionary cul-desac".

Research Methods

Rachel has been studying issues related to Latin America and Latinx in the United States for well over a decade, having completed research projects on Latin American women immigrants to the U.S. (Brooks, Brooks-Ames & Womack, 2007) and the impact of different types of development intervention on the internal economy of an indigenous community in Pana-

ma's Darien province. She also co-founded the online newspaper Latin America News Dispatch (LAND) and managed a Fair Trade coffee harvest in Costa Rica. The research on which this current paper draws on her interest in the long history of resource extraction from the Global South, the impact this continues to have on rural communities, and what it means for the social and environmental health of our planet. Her dissertation looks at a multinational corporation's development of a social needs assessment tool. Specifically, she studied how the input from farmers was shaped by the communication channels through which it traveled and by the primary stakeholders' focus on the measurement tool. In collaboration with her co-author, she has recently begun drawing out the implications for learning.

She collected the data we use here from 2012 - 2014. It comes primarily from two Social Conditions Evaluation (SCE) workshops (name and acronym changed to protect confidentiality of the organization and participants), organized by the Multinational Corporation (MNC), which took place over a total of three days. We supplement data from the workshops with data collected in follow-up interviews with the MNC employees via telephone. Due to restrictions associated with confidentiality, Rachel took detailed notes, including verbatim quotes, instead of voice-recording workshops or phone interviews. She was simultaneously consulting with the MNC on research methods for the SCE and visited the headquarters on a number of additional occasions.

We characterize research as a mix between observation and participant observation, as Rachel was actively consulting on indicators and methods for the SCE and therefore contributing to discussions in workshops. Separate from her doctoral research, she was hired as a freelance consultant to conduct the SCE for the company's coffee supply chain in one Latin American sourcing country.

Typically, between six and ten MNC employees attended the workshops and five and seven of the external partners and NGO employees attended. The first author attended two workshops and conducted additional interviews at headquarters with five of the workshop attendees from MNC. From MNC, Peter was the head of the hierarchy when it came to the SCE; Michael was a middle manager driving the SCE process with an operational focus on coffee; Dan was centrally focused on stakeholder relations and alliances with external contributors; Thomas was a middle manager operationally focused on cocoa; Mario was a middle manager focused on beverages in general; and Gabriella was an intern hired as a coordinator for the development and implementation of the SCE.

The Case

As discussed, the case we look at involves a large global food multinational's attempts to develop an assessment tool, the SCE, for determining social needs and opportunities for business focused sustainability projects in their raw materials sourcing supply chains. Decision makers in this company, which we refer to here as "the multinational", had been pressured by their Creating Shared Value (CSV) board to generate more meaningful sustainability efforts in their raw materials sourcing activities. Creating Shared Value (Porter & Kramer 2006) comes on the heels of Corporate Social Responsibility, in that it attempts to promote more responsible behavior on the part of businesses with regard to both society and the environment. However, where CSR involves businesses making philanthropic contributions to both, CSV is centrally focused on acting responsibly while generating positive business impact as well. The idea is for companies to contribute to society, the environment, and their economic bottom lines simultaneously.

According to interviews with employees at MNC headquarters, the event spurring the CSV board to put pressure on decision makers was an internationally recognized annual meeting in western Europe, at which high-level diplomats, UN representatives, businesses, and many others discussed pressing global concerns with economic emphasis. A well-known Hollywood actress publically criticized the multinational's social and environmental record, and asked what it planned to do differently in the future. The then-CEO responded that they were a business, and would not be acting like a charity.

A widespread negative public reaction followed, and the MNC jumped to action and set targets. Out of this push, decision makers identified what they saw as a need to create a universal assessment tool for use in global sourcing communities.

The MNC was a decentralized organization. Headquarters played an ideological directing role, but "markets" in each country often behaved independently. They determined what activities made sense in their given contexts, frequently with little input from headquarters. Many countries already had sustainability activities in place, the details of which, headquarters did not always know. For headquarters to generate a universal tool was risky, as it simply might not make sense for country level activities. Yet to satisfy international regulations, expectations, and public opinion, decision makers needed to follow the trend of sustainable sourcing and generate a

tool to show their actions and impact. Since they did not know how to do this, they searched for perceived expert input from international NGOs.

“A living system”

To assist the evolution of organizational culture, one first has to start by attending to these deeper organizing principles, which are not accessible from questionnaires or individual interviews, but can be glimpsed in the oft repeated *stories* and *shared metaphors*; the collective ways of *tackling issues*; the recursive *patterns of behaviour*, the shared unwritten rules and the collective emotional patterns that rarely can be articulated but which are communicated to the outsider through ‘empathic resonance’ (Hawkins, 2004) (*emphasis added*).

At the end of the series of workshops, supplemented by additional projects and meetings carried out with the external partners, MNC decision makers wanted to have completed the SCE. They wanted it to become “the way we do business”. In saying this, decision makers verbalized a hope that the organization would evolve. However, conversations in workshops suggested that really, they hoped that there was no need for deep change. They wanted to use the SCE to show a wide audience that existing activities were already socially and environmentally responsible.

Considering how workshops played out using Bateson’s view of organizations as living systems helps us understand how relationships linking participants with one another and with the multinational shaped individual actions. For example, regarding the timing of generating the assessment, Michael said, “We see the urgency to do it [develop the tool] now since 2015 is around the corner. What are the indicators referring to plantlets, training, but also outcomes? I am here trying to find out what is a realistic work plan to make it happen. I want to establish a work plan.”

This comment shows foremost the time pressure placed on the project, a topic that emerges repeatedly in the workshops, as Michael shuts down a number of conversations he does not deem directly linked to establishing “touch points” or a “work plan”. The more pressure decision makers were under, the more they pushed for “indicators” and “outcomes”. In this excerpt, plantlets and training are parts of the system, but instead of their relationship to each other, the relationship of these parts to MNC headquarters is what’s critical to the speaker. For decision makers, plantlets

are a number, and this number has a certain meaning to a larger international audience; what plantlets symbolize in this relationship is worth money. Michael's relationship to outcomes is instrumental and personal: achieving them has direct bearing on his performance at his job. The outcomes themselves are not important, but Michael's relationship to outcomes is critical. Finally, the focus on a work plan sets the tone for all of the workshops. The generation of this work plan (or lack thereof) colors how decision makers value the external partners providing consulting. It also colors how they are later able to qualify the success (or lack thereof) of the workshops to others. The work plan is irrelevant, but relationship of all workshop participants to the work plan is vital.

Decision makers told their external partners in workshops that they wanted the tool to provide a "helicopter view" and help them identify "gaps" in which they could intervene, contributing positively to society, the environment, and business targets. Both stated objectives are worth noting, as they demonstrate the importance of relationships. A "helicopter view" brings to light how various parts move in relation to one another. The defining characteristic of a "gap" is that a relationship that is otherwise there is not there in a given instance. One challenge decision makers encountered is that the external partners they sought out could contribute feedback on parts, but not relationships. They knew what the various ingredients of social and environmental sustainability were, but they did not understand the relationships between these parts in the context of the multinational. The multinational's focus on indicators also stymied meaningful conversations and contributions. If we view indicators as parts abstracted from a complex whole, then we see that without relationships grounding them, they risk being meaningless. For example, we can count trees on a farm in Mexico, but if we do not see how they are distributed, we know nothing about whether they are contributing positively to environmental health.

Enacting cultures through storytelling

Bateson's view of organizations provides a helpful lens for understanding the course taken by conversations between multinational decision makers and their external partners. Bateson's work led to the notion that organizing principles of a culture (the MNC and each NGO and association with whom it worked each being distinct cultures) are rooted in collective mindsets and "motivational roots of those in the organization...and that beha-

vivors...are the symptomatic manifestations of these principles" (Hawkins, 2004; Hawkins, 1997; Schein, 1992).

The organizations from which decision makers at the multinational wanted input were the Human Rights Institute (HRI), Workers Rights Authority (WRA), Save Our Primary Forests Association (SOPFA) and Concurrencia (all names and acronyms changed to protect participants). Representatives of these organizations attending workshops, like decision makers at the MNC, enacted their "motivational roots" as individuals, but also the collectively generated organizing principles enacting the culture within their given organizations. Bateson called this motivation "survival" (p. 437).

Specifically, the HRI was an organization funded by the government of a European country, focused on protecting human rights within that country and internationally. It marketed itself as being experienced in collaborating with businesses in a consulting function on issues related to human rights. The WRA was an association of universities, civil organizations, and companies focused on defending workers' rights internationally. It also claimed a collaborative approach to consulting activities for companies related to compliance. SOPFA was a very well known international network saying it was comprised of farmers, communities, governments, and companies focused on promoting ongoing environmental health and livelihoods. Like the aforementioned organizations, it prided itself publically on its capabilities in collaboration. Finally, Concurrencia was an international network that stated its vision as a global reality in which producers of raw materials could contribute to prosperity for society and the environment for the sustainability of future generations.

As stated by Hawkins (2004), those working from Bateson's perspective note the importance of stories and metaphors in communicating the organizing principles of a culture, and the role these play in any evolution of organizational culture. At the multinational, decision makers used stories and metaphors to reduce complexity when explaining or trying to understand challenges across diverse, international supply chains. These stories made abstract notions such as "quality of life indicators" easier for employees to visualize. Decision makers used the same story over and over again. Peter, who was responsible for driving the CSV agenda at the multinational, often talked about "what an impact a motorbike would have". He said that in one sourcing country, workers with motorbikes found more work and as a result, had higher incomes. In his view, this made motorbikes an indicator of wellbeing. The story itself simplified the abstract notions of poverty

and wellbeing into regular bikes versus motorbikes, creating a collective understanding within the MNC of poverty versus wellbeing.

If, in line with Bateson, we use this story to gain insight into the collective mindsets comprising the multinational's culture, we see that at this organization, the normalized and decent goal was to isolate abstract parts of farmers' lives (motorbikes), and extrapolate what that meant in terms of wealth (wellbeing). Moreover, the objective in doing this was to attribute "wellbeing" improvements to actions of the multinational. Here, again, Bateson's emphasis on relationships offers critical insights; motorbikes mean nothing, but as a potential indicator within a framework for the multinational's sustainability reporting, they become vitally important.

Viewing the assessment tool itself as a story also offers valuable insights into the multinational's collectively created culture. Through it, decision makers abstracted indicators (parts) on which they would report from a much bigger picture, thereby failing to include a strong context (relationships). Since in line with Bateson, relationships are the lens through which we can best understand an organization's story, the story then told by the assessment tool would be that of the multinational's choosing, rather than a "picture" of farmers and communities.

Multinational decision makers used metaphors as storytelling tropes in glossing over complex content in their processes and conversations. That is, when they were asked about issues they did not fully understand, they inserted metaphors as placeholders, thereby not having to explore or explain them further. By telling partners that the SCE should generate "the big picture", they relieved themselves of having to consider and delineate specific outcomes. However, this made it difficult to identify the stakeholders involved in or responsible for outcomes. The lack of clarity implied by the request to generate "the big picture" also made it next to impossible for external partners to contribute valuable input. This speaks poignantly to Bateson's conversation with his daughter referenced earlier, "We all have lots of readymade phrases and ideas...in order to think new thoughts or to say new things, we have to break up all our ready-made ideas and shuffle the pieces."

Another example of this is how decision makers described their approach to developing the assessment tool. Michael and Dan both explained that it was like "building the plane while we were flying." This metaphor delivers an exciting and telling image for what went on, but using it allowed decision makers to avoid describing what they actually experienced and critically examining it, thereby forestalling any learning that might have

provided a more systemic understanding of the complex relationships between the multiple stakeholders in the process. Therefore, with the coming and going of employees in an environment of high turnover, these learnings will likely be lost.

In addition to metaphor, decision makers spoke in a “bullet point” storytelling approach, which minimized opportunities for reflection and analysis. This was particularly the case when it came to new experiences implied by unfamiliar territory. In the aftermath of the workshops, when asked what the next steps were in the tool’s development, Michael said:

We will work with partners internally and externally and follow a four-step approach through goal alliance, target planning, and bring it into organizational master-planning so that the steps are embedded in operations... to be honest, there are so many things which are interlinked. It’s about broader stratification, not just knowing people get water from the river. If coffee is going down the drain, maybe we shouldn’t distribute plantlets.

Here, we see “bullet point” storytelling in Michael’s delineation of “a four-step approach” and “target planning”. But partway through, he breaks from this method, as the high level of complexity renders it senseless: “... there are so many things which are interlinked.” Bullet point language did not provide the flexibility Michael needed to describe what he saw as important. For that, he had to use examples from specific activities, such as whether or not the company should be distributing coffee plantlets. Interestingly, it was where the point of discussion diverged most starkly from familiar organizational experience that there was the greatest potential for learning. Where just slight differences existed, it was typically still possible to discuss issues using corporate jargon, which glossed over issues of divergence and emphasized the homogenous. But where no corporate language existed to describe a given experience, decision makers had to speak and think in detail, bringing to light the people getting “water from the river”.

Time, expectations, emotions and learning

It became clear in workshops that the multinational was accustomed to working on a faster timeline than the consulting social and environmental NGOs and associations. As discussed, within the multinational’s culture,

people communicated with one another through bullet-points, targets, benchmarks and budgets. Within the workshops, they wanted a “starting point”, to know “the minimum we think we should be doing”, the “non-negotiables”, and the “compliance indicators”. The external consulting organizations moved more slowly, communicating through long, extensively researched reports. Again, we can view these differing forms of communication through the lens of Bateson, as stories—the concrete artifacts of disparate organizing principles. This difference in how both kinds of organizations told stories, however, led to conflict.

For example, prior to one workshop, the multinational asked the HRI to prepare a presentation on “gaps” and “opportunities” for CSV in a cocoa sourcing country. At the workshop, the HRI presented a report of over seventy pages. Thomas, an employee of MNC, was visibly irritated. “How can you prioritize?” he asked. “I don’t think you did. We had to read everything.” The HRI representative, appearing embarrassed and defensive, said that it was not her job to define priorities and that the multinational decision makers had to do that themselves. Thomas said, “What benefit is the report if you’re not giving us the priority?” Here, the bullet point “storytelling” method of the multinational conflicted with the long report “storytelling” method of the HRI, the two people enacting them against one another. The negative emotions and perceptions that arose as a result inhibited potential for learning on both sides.

In terms of the potential for organizational evolution in the case we examined, we turn to Bateson. According to Bateson, there are various kinds of learning that can happen within organizations, but relevant in our case are “‘zero learning’, the acquisition of data or information that does not create a difference or change” and “‘Learning I’, in which skill learning is acquired through trial and error selection of a possibility within a set of options...” (Hawkins 2004). The multinational attempted to achieve Learning I, with those responsible for developing the assessment tool expecting organizations and decision makers at workshops to delineate the set of options for indicators for them to choose from. They hoped the result would become “the way we do business”, without recognizing that the act of cherry picking indicators had little chance showing a complex whole, enabling deep set change.

Conflicting cultural storytelling methods within attending organizations made it difficult for people to understand one another. Decision makers were able to generate a tool, but the set of options they assembled from what their partners presented them did not result in information that was

important within all their subsidiary markets. This kind of learning is quickly cast aside, or viewed as just “ticking a box”—ultimately, we can view this as a ‘zero learning’ situation. Whether an assessment tool can drive improvements in the concept of “wellbeing” on farms and in communities remains a big open question, however at the very least, the tool must be generated within a systems perspective.

Unlike in the organizational learning traditions that Hawkins describes, Bateson’s work as an anthropologist also makes the point that we unconsciously enact our cultures as we communicate as illustrated by his conversation with his daughter about why Frenchmen wave their hands when they talk (1972, p. 19). Biographically, we “make” and are “made by” the ecologies we inhabit, whether natural or human-made ecologies.

Final Reflections

In Bateson’s view, “The organization is created and sustained not just by those within the organization but also the organization’s range of stakeholders. These include: customers; suppliers; investors; commentators; influencers; politicians; and the communities in which the organization operates” (Hawkins 2004).

This couldn’t ring more true in the case of the multinational corporation we consider. However, each individual *co*-forming the Mind of the organization interacts with only a small portion of a massive, dynamic, living system. Even its borders are murky, with reverberations of MNC’s activities felt by arguably everyone on the planet. How to spur learning and change in this kind of environment is daunting to consider.

At the conclusion of our exploration here, the challenges are easier to identify than the opportunities. Bateson’s “purposive consciousness” points out that our conscious awareness is mostly bounded by our efforts to satisfy our immediate desires, which we see both in the case of the MNC’s decision makers, and their external partners in workshops (Human Adaptation, 1967).

At workshops, decision makers enacted their purposive consciousness through their use of “bullet point” storytelling and simplifying metaphors. Even though many individual decision makers wanted to help improve well-being of farmers and communities, their focus on time pressures and dogged commitment to targets and work plans drew their attention away from the issue they had actually come together to address—promoting improved social and environmental health (while Bateson sees these as one,

they often remained separate for MNC). Language reduced decision makers' need to interact with specific and complex challenges that were outside their existing experience, and emphasized parts over relationships. They prevented decision makers and their external partners from seeing details of a complex situation, learning, and responding meaningfully.

Purposive consciousness on the part of consulting organizations involved wanting to appear competent and informed while getting their organizations' needs addressed in the assessment tool. But they were at a disadvantage without a clear understanding of the relationships associated with parts in the context of MNC's international sourcing activities. Decision makers' embeddedness in the Mind of their own organizational culture prevented them from seeing that their partners had little chance of contributing meaningfully without a clear understanding of the multinational's structure and sourcing operations. Lack of clarity, contrasting Minds associated with differing communication or "storytelling" styles, and language tropes that hid complexity resulted in misunderstandings and interpersonal conflicts, inhibiting discussions in the workshops, and the potential for learning on both sides.

However, Bateson also saw the aesthetic process as important to planetary well-being. For him, a commonality of human beings is that we have a deep knowledge and yearning to integrate the ancient ecosystems that we find beautiful (Human Adaptation, 1967, in Bateson, 1972). Perhaps we do not need to understand every link and reverberation in the ecosystem in which we find ourselves, including organizations. In the case we explore, the most inhibiting factors when it came to learning were time and language. When pressed by deadlines, language habits restricting insights and dynamic new approaches became binding. Language ties its users to what they know. If workshops were to be carried out again, one concrete step towards more meaningful outcomes would be for participants to specify the meanings of the metaphors and corporate jargon they use—actively rephrasing them. The process of teasing out the meanings of underspecified metaphors and terminology might take root in organizational consciousness, the collective mindsets responsible for the organizing principles. While the both the embeddedness in institutional work cultures and the motivation to survive linked to performance mitigate against the sharing of biographies as a means to understanding the various ecologies we each unconsciously inhabit within a context like the SCE workshops, perhaps we can reshape these interlinked ecologies by identifying default behavior in our metaphors, stories, and language.

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G.2

Togetherness and systemic thinking. Dealing with “deuterolearning” in educational/training contexts based on narratives

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1. Systemic thinking and togetherness

Systemic thinking is rooted in the seminal work of Norbert Wiener and, during the flourishing studies on cybernetics developed in the US in 40es and 50es, it started to influence different disciplinary domains, thanks to an heterogeneous group of scholars interested in exploring the effect of this theoretical framework in their researches. Warren McCulloch, Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead, Claude Shannon, Heinz Von Foerster, John Von Neumann, Norbert Wiener, among others, contributed to this effort and in 1968 Von Bertalanffy's General System Theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1968) became an epistemology useful to consider different “objects” (e.g. human relationships, educational processes) from different disciplinary perspectives:

[...] the cybernetic revolution (with which we still associate Bateson's name) saw not only the emergence of information and systems theory, artificial intelligence and communication theory, but contains advances in interactional psychology, family therapy and new models of cultural anthropology (Peterson, 1999, p. 38).

Also the educational field was involved in this dialogue, and it is still engaged with many systemic ideas (see Demozzi, 2011, 2015; Bella et al., 2014; Formenti, 2014, 2017).

This epistemology had a turning point during the 70es when “the first order cybernetics” moved towards the “second order cybernetics”. The focus

shifted from “observed systems” to “observing systems” (Von Foerster, 1981) introducing the observer as a part of the observed system: this single unit became the new object of inquiry. The new epistemic stance was a clear critique to realism and objectivity and allowed new avenues of development dealing with radical constructivism (Von Glasersfeld, 1995) or, more recently, social constructionism (Gergen, 1999). The importance of self-reflection – for an observer participating in the construction and interpretation of the research object – raised in the foreground too. Maturana and Varela (1980) introduced systemic ideas in the field of biology and life sciences, bringing to the development of notions like “structural coupling” and “embodiment” that stressed the importance of co-evolution between systems and contexts. From 80s the new theories of complexity (Davis & Sumara, 2006; Alhadeff-Jones 2008, 2012) influenced systemic thinking: feedback loops, self-organization, co-evolution and emergence become a common lexicon for describing living systems.

Complexity theories formalized a limit to knowledge connected to the observer’s position (Fenwick, 2009; Ceruti & Lazzarini, 2016): individuals are bound to seize only an “arch of the larger circuit” in which they act and live. As Bateson said:

Our conscious sampling of data will not disclose whole circuits but only arcs of circuits, cut off from their matrix by our selective attention. Specifically, the attempt to achieve a change in a given variable, located either in self or environment, is likely to be taken without comprehension of the homeostatic network surrounding that variable (Bateson, 1972, p. 445).

Those social sciences (like psychology and education) directly engaged with the notion of change are asked to deal with instability: morphostasis (efforts to retain the status quo) and morphogenesis (processes of changing essential aspects) are entrenched and always acting at the same moment:

In systems characterized by such a complex cybernetic web of self-amplificatory and self-regulating processes, external impacts ramify but can then be neutralized by changes in the system, which maintain its’ values in the face of change (Guddemi, 2011, p. 468).

This view tends to problematize the idea of transformation as a result of an educational process: transformation occurs in multiple ways and it is not easy to connect the effects to a specific context (Formenti & West,

2018). Learning is layered as multiple levels are always involved and it is not predictable which of them will be activated. Bateson (1972) identify these main learning levels:

- Zero learning is characterized by specificity of response, which – right or wrong – is not subject to correction. i.e., to the simple receipt of information from an external event, in such a way that a similar event at a later (and appropriate) time will convey the same information: I “learn” from the factory whistle that it is twelve o’clock.
- Learning I: changes in zero learning (as “motion” describes change of position). These are the cases in which an entity gives at Time 2 a different response from what it gave at Time 1. is change in specificity of response by correction of errors of choice within a set of alternatives.
- Learning II is a change in the process of Learning I, e.g., a corrective change in the set of alternatives from which choice is made, or it is a change in how the sequence of experience is punctuated (Context). Learning II is a learning of the contexts of learning I.

2. Togetherness and systems: an emerging form.

The idea of “togetherness” lies at the heart of systemic thinking which is continually generated through the search of the “pattern which connects” (Bateson, 1972), that can be described as “an arrangement of elements seized in their correspondences, resonances and mutual implications” (Baracchi, 2013, p. 213). This connecting attitude, in Bateson view, is recognizable in the whole living system and represents the key element to extend the concept of mind “outwards”:

All biological and evolving systems (i.e., individual organisms, animal and human societies, ecosystems, and the like) consist of complex cybernetic networks, and all such systems share certain formal characteristics (Bateson, 1972, p. 441).

These formal characteristics are:

- totality: the idea of system as an entity that transcends the features of its components, that construct and maintain its own balance, based on feedbacks;
- circularity: information in circular loops based on feedbacks;
- homeostasis: a system construct and maintain its own balance and select all those information that are coherent with its structure;

- equifinality: a system cannot be changed in a direction by single actions (neither internal or external): unpredictability is endemic (Holling et al., 2002, pp. 396-7).

A living organism could represent effectively a system but this analogy – coming from the biological side of systemic thinking – doesn't match completely with Bateson's idea of mind (1979) as a self correcting process of circular interactions that processes differences by creating information:

The 'organism' approach to larger systems also has been criticized as implying a boundedness that is a characteristic of living things but not, it is argued, to entities such as ecosystems or cultures (Guddemi, 2011, p. 467).

This consideration is important in order to reflect on the idea of togetherness from a systemic point of view. For example, many approaches focused on group relationships are based on the "organism approach": a group has clear boundaries, elements more or less functional (leaders and followers) and "internal" dynamics. Bateson was not interested in such an integrated view. In fact for him the boundary of any system is always related to the purposes and the assumptions of an observer. In this sense he was an ante-litteram complexity theorist. In fact we can consider his idea of "togetherness" as an *emergence*: an unforeseen outcome of interdependence among different actors and levels (Davis & Sumara, 2006). Assuming this view in a radical way means avoiding the risk of becoming prescriptive in relation to our assumptions regarding co-existence: system properties compose a functional description that it is not related to values. This is an heritage of systemic roots, grounded in natural sciences, that doesn't entail a language describing "normal" or "good" way to be together.

This aspect is very interesting when we approach human coexistence, as if we start thinking that systems (learning groups, families) have to necessarily reach a kind of harmony or have to necessarily share some ideas and assumptions in order to find a common identity, we become prescriptive in relation to our (implicit) idea of togetherness.

3. Designing a training context on systemic thinking based on narratives: an example

The idea of taking seriously “contingency, complexity and co-emergence of human experiential learning” (Fenwick, 2006, p. 48) and the related ecology of relationships has the fundamental effect of representing learning and reflection as a phenomena completely embedded in one context. In systemic view, subjects don’t learn only from the specific interactions and relationships they live but they develop learning (often without awareness) about the rules and the set of alternatives that characterize the context in which this experience takes place. Bateson called “deuterolearning” the specific learning about “the manner in which the stream of action is segmented or punctuated into contexts” (Bateson, 1972, p. 199). Designing a training context on systemic thinking based on narratives entails, first of all, the attempt of connecting participants’ biographies to their professional contexts and also to the emerging learning context, here and now:

Complexity theory contrasts disconnections and dichotomies by searching the pattern which connects individual and environment, mind and body, research and educational practice. In this framework learning biographies can illuminate how different constraints shape adult learning and lives, and be used to foster transitional and transformative learning by enhancing reflexivity and re-connection with the context (Formenti, 2018, p. 191).

The driving idea consists in honouring and celebrating connections. In doing research, as well as in counselling practice we act in such a way to symbolize and represent “the pattern which connects” (Bateson, 1972). This has ethical and epistemological implications for our action as trainer and a specific position in the conversation: exploring different points of view and looking for a rich and complex description.

In this sense stories are a place for collective exploration and the exploration is related to “a pattern which connects” (Bateson, 1972) them to contexts and to other elements of wider systems. As mentioned above, in Bateson’s view there is not an integrated concept of system as an organism: a system is always a processual configuration with emerging features and boundaries. Togetherness, hence, is a generative starting point for a research and not a stable idea that closes reflexive processes: it is a place where we can look for tensions, disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991a, 1991b), discontinuities, in order to challenge our ideas.

I describe now a brief example of training setting addressed to adult learners and based on learning biographies (Dominicé, 2000) and systemic epistemology. The context is a class in a triennial Master in systemic and socio-constructionist counselling where I design and manage the curriculum of the third year.

Participants during the classes are asked to connect systemic ideas to their professional contexts. In particular we discuss together about those situations that creating conflicts and disorientation in relation to their professional practices and in our learning context.

Maria, a 35 years old social assistant, describes to the group a very critical professional situation: she is taking care of a family in which a young girl has been harassed by the new boyfriend of her mother. The man has been removed from home thanks to the intervention of social services. Now the young girl, her mother and her brother are struggling against each other as the woman is charging her daughter of having seduced the man. Maria uses this story in order to interrogate systemic attitude to connect different points of view in order to create a complex description of the phenomenon.

Maria: Why we have always to "open up" stories and listen all the points of view? I mean, here there is one truth: this is a crime, the man is guilty and the teenager is the victim. Stop, end of the story.

I invite all the participants to explore the issue together, looking for the pattern which connects the speaker with his/her story and with the idea of "being together". The following dialogue is an excerpt of the discussion in the group:

Participant1: Mmmh I think there is a desire of controlling the meaning of this experience here..do you think you have the power of doing this thing?

Participant2: Why do you think that sharing this story should be so important for them? And why is so important for you?

Participant3: Why do you think that this story - based on a victim - is healthier than their current struggle?

Maria: I know that maybe things are more complex but I think that they will have time to elaborate it in the future...I would like to crystalize things in this way for the moment...

Listen, I think that this story is a kind of shelter and I would like that they come with me in the shelter, just for a little while...

Participant1: *ok, you offered a shelter to these people, but did they take it?*

Maria: *No, they didn't take it, they don't want to listen to me! They are struggling against each other and I don't understand why! I would like to protect the girl and give some peace to this family*

Participant1: *Maybe there are some risks in your shelter that we are not able to see and understand..*

Participants try to perturb Maria's professional dilemma based on the fact that her role and her desire to protect the girl prescribe to this family her model of "peaceful" relationships. As unintended consequence the family reacts to Maria's point of view refusing her narrative, a "shelter" that is not coherent with the story of this system.

4. Conclusions

As an adult educator I always interrogate myself on how is it possible to create a training setting in which deuterolearning (learning related to the context) is coherent with my epistemic assumptions.

This issue is linked to the concept of togetherness on different levels. Sharing an idea of learning where learners don't "possess" knowledge but co-construct the world through an ongoing interaction between them and contexts means always thematize this dimension (Edwards, 2009). "Togetherness" in this sense, may be interpreted as an emerging structure characterizing a certain group of individuals that is fundamentally entangled with the context in which their relationships are taking place. Representing this structure using the idea of "collective mind" (Bateson, 1979) can be misleading if we interpret the latter as something coherent and totally integrated: the risk is starting to desire a control on something that we think to understand completely. But, as Morin said, "complexity is a word problem not a word solution" (Morin, 1995, p. 18). We are bound to see only "small parts of a larger circuitry" (Bateson, 1972) and exploring different points of view entails also starting dealing with opposite visions and the risk of polarization:

But the very powers of selective attention within our consciousness [...] also systematically blind us to the wider relationships and interconnectedness in which the parts of our environment we are manipulating (and we ourselves) are embedded (Guddemi, 2011, p. 471).

In training settings it is interesting to maintain a research attitude, exploring tensions and related dilemmas. During the classes of the triennial master in systemic and socio-constructionist counselling that I described in this chapter, participants are constantly struggling with systemic epistemology, that is counter intuitive in many ways. I'm very interested in their struggle and I use my research experience, developed during different auto/biographical researches (Merrill & West, 2009), to invite them to share narratives related to experiences of disorienting dilemmas on this issue. They are invited to explore others' points of view and analyze conflicts generated by the clash of different perspectives:

When self-narratives are shared they reveal the frames of meaning and the constraints that shape adults' self knowledge, agency and learning. They become resources for transformative and transitional learning (Formenti, 2018, p. 201).

Which are the dilemmas generated in perceiving ourselves as a system, as a unit? Living together is a reciprocal orientation but also a potential perturbation to our balances. Stories tell of the constraints and structures involved in living together, not only in terms of contents and representations: linear and reductionist stories (as Maria's one: "That's it, end of the story"; "Come in the shelter with me") underlie an unambiguous idea of togetherness that entails a sort of prescription (see Maria's statement: "here there is one truth!"). Professionals rich in "truths" and "unambiguities" risk to become anti-ecological agents, not respecting a system endemic complexity.

As a trainer I would like to promote a learning context where expert knowledge is not used to instruct but to involve the other as an observed/observer system in a process of mutual learning and complexification. The accidents, the unexpected reactions, the "noise" (Snyder, 2013) always present in adult learning are a precious occasion for learning from different and conflicting views, using disorienting dilemmas to perturb participants' perspectives of meaning (Mezirow, 1991a, 1991b,) as well as my assumptions as a trainer.

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H.1

Togetherness – in times of conflict can we re-connect with our creative selves?

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This is a discourse about the power of the Arts – poetry, music, dance, film, painting, sculpture, theatre, classic novels – to transform us in times of conflict such as we are experiencing today. It deals specifically with Literature, my subject as an adult tutor. The paper describes how a recent report, published in The United Kingdom a number of arts initiatives together in order to show how they can improve people's lives. The paper describes how I position myself as an auto/biographical researcher and how, through experience in adult education, I have been able to enable a number of adults to connect with their creative selves through engagement with Literature. I begin with a summary of the report's findings and my own interest in these findings. I continue with an account of how I became a tutor in adult education and how this developed into my becoming an exponent of how an appreciation of novels and poetry can have a beneficial effect on our lives. I provide evidence for this with references to a number of books and articles, and to two case studies taken from my work as an adult education tutor. I conclude by addressing the question asked with reference to this evidence.

The Report

The report, *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*, published in July 2017 and fronted by Grayson Perry, Professor Marmot and Lord Layard amongst many others, linked together a number of initiatives that had been taking place throughout The United Kingdom, linking people's health to a creative involvement with The Arts. It consisted of Ideas such

as *Art on Prescription* to help people suffering mental health problems in Cambridgeshire; *Dance to Health* for older people in Cheshire, London and Oxfordshire; *Poems on the Underground* created by Judith Chernaik to offer people a moment of quiet reflection; *Music Therapy*, an example being a collaboration between The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Hull Integrated Stroke Service; and *The Reader's Shared Reading Scheme* in the North West, which showed an enhanced life purpose amongst participants as they shared the classics of World Literature.

These were just a few of the many art and culture initiatives mentioned in the report that help people to live well in their communities. Informing the report from the beginning is a powerful idea from the psychologist, Csikszentmihalyi, that an acquaintance with the Arts can generate what he calls 'flow' *Flow* (2002). 'Flow,' the report says, 'implies focused concentration, a sense of being outside reality, combined with a greater inner clarity and knowledge that a creative objective can be achieved, which carries its own reward.' *Creative Health*, p29 (2017). This is nowhere better evidenced than in the case of Dawn Solomon who is quoted in the report as undertaking Art Therapy. Dawn had had three courses of chemotherapy following heart and lung surgery: 'I did a huge violent drawing in art therapy./It's how I felt./How I've been feeling lately./Maybe something is changing but I need to deal with these feelings not bury them.' One of her drawings is a drawing of herself, printed in the report, of pushing an enormous rock up a hill, and then standing at the top as if awaiting what might happen on the other side, pp140-1.

Auto/ethnography

I first encountered Csikszentmihalyi as a teacher in the 90s when I was thinking about autotelic experience. This is from the Greek *auto-* self and *telos-* end and describes an activity or creative work having an end or purpose in itself. I had just finished reading *Flow* (2002) and was writing an article about how to identify the learning potential of children. At a pause in the writing I began watching an interview with bass guitarist Jack Bruce as he talked about the free form music style used by his band, Cream in the 1960s: 'The only things set are the beginning and the end,' he said, 'In between is just improvised and we never know who's going to take the lead and what's going to happen next, it just happens.' And this struck me as an example of 'flow' where the playing of the music is its own reward. This

‘autotelic’ experience is something that we can all find in our daily lives, whether we call it ‘flow’, or an ‘epiphany’ as I tried to define in my paper at last year’s conference in Copenhagen, *Can books heal us?* (2017).

I will return to the idea of ‘flow’ later. Meanwhile, in their book *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research* (2009) Merrill and West have indicated that our life histories can be used as a tool for research. Following this idea, my experience in adult education has shown me that adult students can acquire immense benefit from a guided discussion of reading Literature. I wanted to research this and my story begins when I was teaching Literature in summer schools at Grey Friars, Adult Community College in the 1980s. The college which grew into a first class adult education centre between 1983 and 2005 enabled me to further a lifelong interest in Literature and develop it as a resource for adults to draw upon and use in their post school lives. In their book, *Grey Friars, Colchester’s Forgotten Corner* (2014) Gurney J.D. and Skinner A.V. attest to the success of this establishment in providing not only Further and Higher Education courses but also a space for those who just wanted to reconnect with books they had loved when they were young or wanted to visit or revisit now that they were older. There I taught a number of courses on subjects like *The Detective in Fiction*, *George Eliot*, and *The Short Story*.

I would say that this experience was a kind of turning point in my life. Merrill and West use the word *epiphanies* (p28) to describe these ‘interactional moments which leave marks on people’s lives’ and which can be both positive and negative. Looking back at this now I can see the work at Grey Friars as a step in the positive process that took me away from teaching children and towards an understanding of the needs of adults as learners. At the end of the third chapter Merrill and West ask if there are any particular metaphors that attract you in considering aspects of your life history and one that attracts me is the idea of our lives as pieces of a mosaic.

A piece of my life’s mosaic, to extend the metaphor, was working for a master’s degree. In 1993 I was looking at how adults learned science in order to be able to teach it themselves. I found that In Allen Tough’s work on learning *The Adults Learning Projects* (1979) he defines three groups of adult learners, the goal orientated, the activity orientated, and the learning orientated who viewed learning as an end in itself. My conclusions were that this new learning rested to some extent on motivation and self-direction and that these students were generally goal orientated. It was, however, the third group with whom I became concerned when I left classroom teaching and joined the WEA as a tutor in 2007.

The WEA has a tradition of imparting what we might call ‘really useful knowledge’, a phrase that emerged at the end of the C19 to describe various non-practical disciplines, such as politics, philosophy and literature, which were taught to its students; that is, not knowledge to be used for career goals or as a social activity, but as an end in itself. This is Alan Tough’s third group, the learning orientated. It is the reason why the working man sought a new kind of education in the post war world of the 1920s. Lawrence Goldman in his essay on The First Students of the WEA in *A Ministry of Enthusiasm* (2003) speaks of R.H.Tawney’s classes where he read to them Walt Whitman’s ‘Where Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed’ (p49). ‘This,’ says Goldman, ‘moves a student to give us his favourite passage from the same source: “Pioneers! Oh Pioneers!” Another follows, quoting from a poem from Matthew Arnold that evidently had bitten him...and for some of us as we sat listening a new door opens.’

At this point in my argument I will compare the idea of a new door opening to the ‘epiphanies’ which I defined in my paper, *Can books heal us?* (2017) as the means by which reading Literature can improve our mental health. An epiphany can also be referred to as an ‘aha’ moment, defined in Merriam Webster as ‘a moment of sudden realisation, inspiration or insight...’ Returning to my auto/biographical theme, this can be a moment in one’s life when things change, such as the turning point when I realised that I might make a good adult education tutor. These moments can occur at any time. In a research study by the artist, Alice Tuppen-Corps in which I participated recently, she asked the participants to consider threshold points in their lives that have acted as triggers for change. This involved them in being given a number of prompts to recall significant life events. In one of the prompts the artist asked the participants to take a walk outside and recall a significant birthday. I did this and I remembered events which followed on from my fortieth. One of these was a visit to Ireland under my own steam and I kept a journal which was an account of travels and meetings there, ending with attendance at a concert by Martin Hayes: “I don’t remember being so inspired by a live performance before - his fiddle playing is extraordinary and it brought such appreciation from the audience...” The fiddle playing was the ‘aha’ moment, when all that had been contained in that Irish visit, *that life after reaching forty could be infinitely pleasurable, rather than an ending*, became clear to me.

From ‘aha’ moments we might proceed to a further definition of the ‘ah-ness of things’, that which in Japanese culture is termed ‘mono no aware’. This idea indicates a deep feeling or pathos of things which resides in their

transience, ie. the falling of cherry blossoms, the changes of the moon, the absence of friends or lovers. For Motoori Norinaga, an Eighteenth Century Japanese scholar, *mono no aware* was a form of knowledge and he traced this back to *The Tale of Genji*, the classic Japanese novel of the Heian period (923-1014). In the story Genji tries to win back the lover who has renounced him because of his waning feelings for her. His failure to achieve this is enacted against a background of the autumn season and the setting moon. This evokes a scene of exquisite pathos in her rejection of him, and Genji leaves before daylight, his sleeves along the way made wet with dew and with tears. The story is found in Ivan I Morris's 'The World of the Shining Prince' (1994).

One will at once see the connection with my Literature classes here and with my promulgation of the idea of 'flow'. We are now in an age far removed from Tawney's working man, and indeed the majority of student classes in the arts in my WEA experience now tend to be women, but when the importance of reading novels and poetry is looked into carefully, it can be shown that the effect on adults, both commentators and students of literature, can be profound. I now hope to show this with reference to a number of books and articles and two case studies from my teaching.

Reference Material

I think that the definitive book on the value of reading Literature in our modern age – Plato and Dante were referenced in my paper *Can books heal us?* (2017) - still needs to be written, although James Wood's *The Nearest Thing to Life* (2015) might be a good start. Wood prefaces his study with the famous quote from Georg Eliot on the subject, which I referred to in the paper, and then goes on to discourse on his theme of what makes Literature important to us. In the excellent final chapter Wood meditates on his leaving of Durham for London after university, and then his relative exile in America as a writer and lecturer. He refers to W.G. Sebald's novel, *The Emigrants* (1996) and how the author's own homesickness became the homesickness of the novel's protagonist, Dr Selwyn, for the village in Lithuania which he left at the age of 7. As I was reading Wood on this, I was reminded of my own homesickness, when I had left Liverpool, where I was born, for London University and this still resonates. When I learned, for instance, that the Liverpool poet, Roger McGough, was giving a reading in the small town where I now live I was the first in the queue for a ticket!

Articles on life-affirming experiences with Literature are now falling over themselves to be heeded to. Alice O'Keefe, writing in the Observer (7th October 2017), says that Ishiguro's recent Nobel Prize win reminds us that novels still ask the biggest questions. O'Keefe, literary critic and organiser of books events for the Brighton literary festival, says that writing and reading novels are activities that should take place 'in opposition to the frantic thoughtless rush of modern life'. Literary fiction authors, however, she says are difficult to sell unless they are talking about how to write or taking part in a discussion panel. Personally, I think that the reading of novels needs to be done in the same way as listening to a piece of music or looking at a painting, that is, *reflectively*. I followed up O'Keefe's article by turning to my copy of *Never Let Me Go* (2005) which I think is Ishiguro's finest work and I re-read the final chapter: Kathy, the book's narrator, whose two friends have been 'finished' as donors of body organs which have been harvested for other people, reflects:

'I was talking to one of my donors a few days ago who was complaining about how memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don't go along with that. The memories I value most, I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them.'

This is one of the biggest questions. How do we deal with the inherent sadness in our own fading memory and that of our loved ones? Ishiguro with his Japanese ancestry was very aware of the pathos inherent in ideas like the falling cherry blossoms referred to in *The Story of Genji* above.

There are more examples: 'An author with a fear of her own feelings finds a cure in books,' writes novelist, Lara Feigel, in the Observer (5th May 2017) about the writer Yiyun li. Her memoir, *Dear Friend, from My Life I Write to You in Your Life*, is about reading as a mode of survival and includes references to writers such as Elizabeth Bowen, Ivan Turgenev, William Trevor, with whom she struck up a literary friendship, and Katherine Mansfield. It is Mansfield's phrase from her journals that gives her book its title. Another example is to be found in the opening speech of the second international literature festival of Odessa reported in The Observer (2nd December 2016). In an era of fear and division, fiction plays a vital role in dramatizing difference and encouraging empathy, says Amanda Michalopolu. 'Nothing that is human is foreign to literature.' Using examples such as the refugee, Odysseus, the mad Don Quixote, and the crazed lover, Werther, she says that literature shows us that difference can be creative. Anthropology, psychoanalysis and sociology, she says, all offer theo-

retical descriptions for what a novel teaches by example, using ideas such as guilt, jealousy, despair violence, anxiety, irrationality, and the fear of death. 'The more education falls into decline because of a lack of imagination,' she continues, 'the more literature is called upon to serve as *another form of education*.' (My italics.)

Azar Nafisi is an author and teacher of adults, who uses Literature as a powerful tool to transform the lives of her students. Nafisi is now a Visiting Professor at John Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA, and her memoir, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) is a record of her time in Iran as a teacher. In this role she was endeavouring in some way to change the lives of women who had been caught up in the repressive regime of the clerics which had followed the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. The veil, for instance, had become obligatory for women after the revolution and Nafisi describes her doomed attempts to resist the wearing of it while she taught at the University of Tehran. Without wishing to go too deeply into the political situation of women in Iran, one only has to look at Nafisi's description of the behaviour of the morality squads and how they broke up a gathering of six girls and one boy (p 72-3) with guns, and the resultant virginity tests, confessions and punishment beatings, to know that it is dire. Her book describes how as a reaction to such prejudices against women a number of female students would secretly visit her house in order to study English Literature.

There are a number of examples she gives of what they read - *Lolita*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Daisy Miller*, and I will take *Daisy Miller* (1879) by Henry James as the main example from her book of the power of literature to enhance the well-being of her students. Daisy is an attractive American socialite, visiting Europe with her mother at the end of the C19 and staying in Geneva where she meets an American, Winterbourne, who is staying with his aunt. As her contacts with the surrounding society increase, Winterbourne observes how Daisy naively cultivates increasingly flirtatious relationships with 'gentlemen'. This is looked upon askance by the custodians of the society in which she moves and, although she is warned about her behaviour, she continues to flout the tradition that women should behave in a demure manner. Eventually this causes her downfall. One evening in Rome Daisy is out fraternising alone with Mr Giovanelli, a good looking Italian playboy. Daisy wants to see the Colosseum by moon light, and it is known that to go there at such an hour one risks catching 'Roman fever', a form of malaria. She takes the risk, however, returns to her mother, falls ill and dies.

The moral of course is that women risk all if they challenge convention. Nafisi says that of all the novels the group of nine women studied with her, this is the one her students identified with most. One of the students tells her later that she has secretly named her daughter, Daisy: ‘Why Daisy?’ Nafisi asks. ‘Don’t you remember Daisy Miller?’ the student replies, ‘Haven’t you heard that if you give your child a name with a meaning she will become like her namesake? I want my daughter to be like I never was – like Daisy. You know, courageous.’

*In a recent newspaper report I read that Vida Movahed was arrested for standing on a telephone box in Tehran, bareheaded and holding her veil up on a stick. (The Guardian 30th January 2018)

Case Studies

Returning to my metaphor of the mosaic, I will now use two case studies from my adult education practice to support the idea that togetherness enables the creative outcome which was envisaged in the Arts report.

The first is based on an Observation Report produced by the WEA course organiser for Southern Region. It is about a course I taught called, *A Matter of Money*, which I had devised with a group of students at a centre in the East of England. The course comprised eight novels dealing with the subject of money from the C19 to the present day. The observed session covered a novel called, *The House of Mirth*, by the American novelist, Edith Wharton:

“The session used digital images to discuss Edith Wharton and put in context her life and connections which form a basis for discussion of her writing. Students were well prepared and engaged positively with opinions and quotations. One student used expertise to give a prepared presentation on the economic position of women in the USA at the time. This ‘promoted some controversial debate’.

“The session included a quiz devised to test student knowledge of the plot but written to stimulate debate as questions were designed to ‘provoke reactions’. The feedback on the quiz was described as ‘well-managed’. Students were encouraged to confront and appreciate issues such as financial difficulties for women in the USA and also class differences which impacted upon the lives of people at the time. Everyone participated and the whole session was described as

‘lively, stimulating and included lots of laughter... and respect for other people’s opinions.’

“One student with poor hearing said that she appreciated the efforts made by the tutor and group to ensure she was involved. Another said that ‘It is the highlight of my week.’ The group described itself as a fairly academic one which ‘really thrive(s) on the educational stimulation’ provided by the course.”

The second case study is concerned with the development of a group of students in the East Midlands. I had taken over the group from another tutor and numbers had fallen as the tutor had been popular. The brief was to teach poetry.

I began with *The Poetry of War*, a course I had taught before but which I developed to suit the group. I have some interest in how groups evolve and used ideas for this based on the work of Helen Cowie and Jean Rudduck in *Co-operative Groupwork: An Overview* (1988). The emphasis here is very much on ‘co-operative’ and, to bring myself back to the auto/biographical element of the paper, I have used the technique often in my work with the WEA: In an article about the transition from classroom teacher to adult education tutor I say that ‘Throughout our learning journey from child to adult, the importance of lived engagement with the subject cannot be overstated,’ CPD Update, issue 20. The ‘lived engagement’ with the poetry classes was the group discussion and the reading aloud of the poems we were looking at.

In the next course *An Introduction to Modern Poetry*, the creative aspect of the engagement with learning was now very much in evidence, the course involving negotiation with the students. For example, one student had expressed a strong desire to read T.S.Eliot. I had always had an appreciation of Eliot’s ‘fragmentary’ approach to poetry and so I decided to read with the class *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, each group taking a part in the delivery. I then discussed with them Eliot’s *Four Quartets* (1943). The course happens to be run not far from Little Gidding which gave one of the quartets its name because Eliot had his ‘timeless moment’ there. I went to visit the place and, sitting in the small church where Eliot had sat, felt an immediate link with the ideas of ‘epiphany’ and the ‘ahness of things’ already mentioned. I was able to share this with the class in a moment of mutual satisfaction:

‘We shall not cease from exploration/And the end of all our explor-

ing/Will be to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time.'

The WEA has a system whereby at the end of each course the tutor produces a report based on Student Learning Records and *Tell Us About It* forms, so in order to support the argument of the paper I will refer to and quote from them. I discussed this with both my line manager and with the students and was given their agreement to refer to these records in the case study:

On the *Tell Us About It* forms over half the class said that it had improved the health and well-being of both themselves and the class. This is a selection of comments from the SLRs:

'Reading aloud and group discussion of poets' work and biographies aided understanding to a very great degree.'

'Excellent – exciting, informative – quite a lot of interaction which the class gains from...love reading aloud.'

'It has given me more confidence, especially joining in the group readings. It has been great for my wellbeing in general'

'[I] thoroughly enjoyed the class. I am not very good at joining in discussion in large groups but that's just the way I am and what I prefer. I still appreciate being part of such an inspiring course.'

'It is good to share comments in the small groups organised by [the tutor] and I'm enthused to look into poets and their work more at home.'

The comments showed that the group methods I used had also been a factor in their enjoyment.

Conclusion

There is I think an amount of evidence to show that reading Literature enhances our health and wellbeing in a significant way, both in the case studies given and the books and articles gathered. Peter Clough talks about how we are always making sense of our lives through stories *Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research* (2002: P.13) and I find that telling the story of my adult education experience in this manner makes sense of mine. Similarly Kim Etherington in *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher* (2004: p19) speaks of locating our research question within ourselves. The parliamen-

tary report on the Arts appeared to confirm the thinking I had previously done for *Can books heal us?* (2017) and I looked for ideas which supported it in in books, articles, and students' responses referred to above. The connection with our creative selves relates to the activity of reading, discussing, rethinking and even changing our ideas as a result of our engagement with Literature. We might call this 'flow', 'epiphany', 'mono no aware' or an 'aha' moment – whatever it is, it is a moment of intense realisation, like Dawn Solomon in *The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*, after her art therapy, waiting at the top of the hill for whatever will happen next.

We have always lived in times of conflict, whether it is the macrocosm of international warfare and national disagreement, or the microcosm of sparring family members and internal struggles with the self. *The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* report indicates that creative expression of our cultural experience can help us to come to terms with the pathos inherent in our lives, and the moments of happiness, our understanding of human suffering, and even death. As I hope to have shown in this paper, there are links that can be made between the report and adult education. At last year's conference Hazel Reid led a round table discussion and I was struck by her reference to Jean Luc Godard's statement: 'Sometimes reality is too complex. Stories give it form.' This mosaic of time spent in adult education is my story.

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- Peter Leyland 30/01/2018.

I.1

The Left Hand of Game Dev - Finding Togetherness through polarity

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Arcademic

“Light is the left hand of darkness,
and darkness the right hand of light.
Two are one, life and death, lying
together like lovers in *kemmer*,
like hands joined together,
like the end and the way” – *Le Guin 1980*

The games industry is growing the economy in the UK, conversely the marginalised of this country are being left behind in a business economy that shifts away from the labour market. The games industry was built by men for men, women have slowly moved into this sector but have no substantial stake in how this entertainments industry evolves. As many women in this country play videogames as men (ukie.org.uk 2017 p48-52). The market is ripe for content made by women for women. There is an opportunity to draw some of the best women in the games industry to work with under privileged women in UK society. Women who otherwise struggle with family responsibilities; ethnic and gender representation and role models; opportunities for education and employment; need to be offered a break.

This paper explores a Partnership that proposes a 3-year project that searches London for female candidates who embark on an assessment programme, receiving help and guidance from top industry and academic advisors. Candidates will receive 1:1 mentorship from leading games industry women and embark on an intensive training programme. Half way through they will be set up with roles in an incubator studio developing their first videogame with themes based on their own identified values. Year 2 and 3

will build on this studio with repeat processes, supported by the veterans from year 1. A selection of candidates each year who do not progress to the programme will be enrolled on a business track that will include an administration office to support the games development studio.

The programme supports the London Mayor's wider Digital Talent Programme by upskilling young people in a sector where there is a current skills shortage and it builds on the legacy GLA'S to make London the games capital of the world. To that end this project links to a combined agenda to link other colleges around the UK through annual national competitions and games lecture symposia meaning this can act as a means of disseminating knowledge and learning from the programme. The occupational focus for this project addresses numerous critical labour market needs appearing on the national shortages list. The process will identify young women with potential for particular skillsets in digital technical, digital art, games design, leadership, user experience, music & sound and narrative for digital games. The project team are sensitive to the complexities of young people growing up in London and have proven track records of stretching them to become champions of their industry.

With a combined partnership of responsive connection with young people at the forefront, continual work with a wide range of stakeholders from policy makers, government and industry, combined with extensive grasp of the sector, collectively the partnership is confident of continual sustainability to stay relevant to the needs of the project participants throughout the 3 years and beyond.

The paper documents the process and ideals that this very polemical project will affect the patriarchal norms in the industry to readdress the balance by showing how a polar stance can bring unification through diversity to ultimately engender the wider values and goals of being world beating industry leaders.

The project takes on the tenets of Feminist Educational Theory where participants will be immersed in a social learning environment to implicitly develop understanding of the industry but also a skills model will explicitly teach technical skills to create videogame content through one to one mentorship. Throughout the strategy "Validation of personal experience" (Hoffman & Stake 1998) will be encouraged amongst the participants, rather than dictated by the educators to ensure the project gives a true voice to the women taking part, along with activism and critical open-minded thinking.

Taking Lehrman's (1998) opposition to Feminist Educational Theory

into account which argues that the vast knowledge and experience of educators outweighs the benefits of social interaction and participatory self-validation – it is with this standpoint that an imbalance has been created in the games industry, one that is self-perpetuating the dogged notions that those already making videogames know best. As the industry has been built by men, and typically white middle-class men – if games were (and typically are) made based on the knowledge and experience of the veterans, and indeed if apprentices and students are taught with those values, then videogames will never be made with the richness of diversity.

Therefore, it is essential to grow a dynamic, responsive and relevant digital economy, that the Patriarchal norm of this sector (Code 2017) makes way for diverse thought and innovation. This paper posits how a polar response to a patriarchal knowledgebase can instil togetherness in the project, in development companies, between gender. Togetherness explicitly within the women participating and also the future of the industry.

It seems rather contradictory that a project that seeks to do something polar to the norm is indeed an effort to draw a group for the purposes of unity and togetherness. However, it is important to understand that the norm is far leaning to favour a narrow slice of society. The polarity of this project then, is about counterbalancing the customary way that the games industry work, and is structured, and generally operates, and give opportunity to do something different. It is about trying to create an opportunity for underrepresented areas of society to affect all aspects of the games development cycle, and put together a new epistemology, a new relational materiality in the way games are designed and presented. This is a chance to present an incongruous heterogenic path as opposed to the singular way in which the industry has worked for the past 40 years. It is a project to study new discourses in Feminist Science, Technology and Art Studies that disrupts the diaspora inherent in an industry where decisions are commonly made by men, for the benefit of men. Women and BAME employees are in the minority, and even those few within the industry are subject to elision when it comes to making creative decisions that influence the way that issues and content women find important are represented in games. The social ordering of the games industry is such that it is a thriving business, but not a representative one, nor an inclusive one. Creative Skillset (2016) shows that women in the UK games industry workforce represent just 19% of employees. A pitiful 5% of those women are working in the creative development teams, and those in strategic management fall far below the av-

erage UK workforce, three quarters of which is controlled by white men. 4% of the industry is represented by BAME employees, and considering the vast amount of games development companies in London and the West Midlands where BAME residents are prevalent, in the games industry, they are grossly underrepresented.

There is a norm here that needs to change. And it will not change whilst the contention is held, (which is the strongest counterpoint to Feminist Education Theory) that those with experience and knowledge know best, and everyone else should do what they say.

Consider this then: If the games industry has been built by white males, now typically in their 30s and 40s – almost all of the veterans of the industry are characterised in this way. Taking the notion that the industry should be led by those with experience and knowledge means that there is no room for new thought, there is no room for culturally different ideas, and there is no room for women to make creative decisions about the games that 48% of the UK population who are women are playing.

The main purpose of this project is to give agency to a group of under-represented women in London. To train them with female tutors, and female industry veterans. To lead them with powerful exponent women from the industry.

don't let anyone tell you you're working on the "wrong" games, either. Want to create something in a niche genre? Go for it. Want to work on something that other people don't understand? Give it a try
– lienhard & Meno 2018

There is great unity in the games industry when a team works incredibly hard together to make a product and then put their hard won art out to the world for often unreserved critical appraisal. There is relief in shipping a videogame, that a team becomes one in the celebration of the individual and micro-team efforts to make something that the world can enjoy, learn from or immerse themselves in. There is nothing to criticise in the celebrations as games development companies and their employees all work incredibly hard to stay buoyant in a prosperous but challenging sector. But it is apparent in the rolling credits of countless games that the teams banding together are lacking in diversity. And this lack of diversity can have a profound effect on the end product, which often suffers in its representation. Togetherness will happen in any mixture of teams when you work hard together on a singular product.

A shipped game invites team celebration. So we can assume that it does not matter the mixture of the team to achieve that end. More women in the industry will not disrupt the process of a company working together to ship a product. Perhaps with a female majority, the methods of which a project goes through production and release to the public may differ to those established. There is an opportunity to explore that notion in this project. However, a larger study testing the outputs of mixed and mono gendered teams would provide useful data.

There is potential for the study of togetherness between the women who participate in this project. Psychological safety is perhaps one of the important draws of the project for young women who have felt left out or let down, or indeed been left traumatised by a patriarchal system in education and wider social contexts. Women will no doubt find through the participation in this project that they will see alike participants and feel comfortable to find a voice and take risks with their learning and ambitions. The Women's only spaces offered by this project mean that otherwise precluded participants because of the presence of men in the working or studying environment will be given opportunity to prosper.

I've been extremely lucky that I'd been able to build enough money and power to leave horrible work conditions and try to create better ones. I'm not sure all my friends are so lucky. I think some of them are stuck working with horrible bros with horrifying opinions. But as the tools become even more accessible the industry is changing and maybe one day we will all have the safety that I have found. Until then, all I can say is that we are growing in number and we see each other – Code 2017

In the UK only 19% of the games industry workforce are women. With a mere 5% working in the creative development teams. Strategic management (27%) represents much less than the average UK workforce (creativeskillset p404 2016) and this paper hasn't begun to address the 4% BAME representation of the sector. The future of the games industry requires these inequalities to be addressed, and some organisations are starting to make that happen.

Levelling the Playing Field is a scheme designed to finance small studios or startups where women either equal or outnumber men in the company's headcount. – Batchelor 2018

Games development has established itself as a prosperous industry in the last 40 years. It was set up predominantly by men, and the output of which has been that which would appeal mostly to a male audience. This means that at least half of the audience for videogames are not seeing content made with them in mind. The first problem, is that with a well-established male dominated industry, it is difficult to get women to want to enter into that industry. The second problem is that because it's established by men, those that are running the industry are men, no matter how many women you attract to the sector. Problem two compounds problem one into a vicious circle. The status quo is that men know how the sector works, and what they say goes. Posing the question:

How do women establish a substantial say in how the videogames industry creates content for women? We want to find a way for men and women to work together equally on creating content for this booming industry, and I contend that it isn't by working together. Not initially. To get women to have a powerful voice in this industry, we have to show that games can be made another way and that they can be successful.

Feminist research theory contends that a student centred approach be adopted so that the thoughts, ideas and issues of the group can push the agenda of any given project. Anti-feminist contentions contend that the teacher knows best and that a didactic approach be taken to guide a group through a project. It is with anti-feminist approaches that the games industry continues to work. The big decision makers, those in lead roles and creative direction roles are invariably men. So any women that enter the industry will have to listen to and work under that guidance. Shaped by the tenets and methods laid out by the established management. Therefore, the only way to have another voice that has a chance at appealing closely to an audience of women is to create a studio that is run by women, that the people within that group are trained by women and that in this experiment there is no interference by the established agenda.

“#GirlsBehindTheGames is much more than a beautiful compilation of women standing proud in their own achievements. These women stand together; they stand with those experiencing similar struggles, and stand with those curious about the industry and how to make their way into it. These women are engineers, artists, storytellers, sources of inspiration and wisdom ready to support prospective developers/managers in their career journeys.” – Meno 2018

This will undoubtedly spark the argument that it isn't mixed, there is no unity or togetherness in doing this. However, the counter to this is that there first needs to be an establishment of new thinking and new ways of working – once proved, then there will be more choice for videogames development workers of any gender to find work in a studio that speaks to them about the kind of content they want to produce. And resultantly a plethora of content for wider consumer appeal.

The women only studio isn't an example of how studios should be. It is proven that diversity creates the best well rounded ideas. It is about establishing that games can be made in another way, and that male voices are not the only voices of authority in the games industry. So the project is about finding marginalised young women without any aspirations or influence for or by the games industry. Women who have perhaps been failed by a patriarchal system: overbearing male figures; teachers who have steered them away from 'masculine' pursuits and careers; men who have let them down in a system where they feel like they do not matter and their voice cannot be heard. To give these young women female role models and mentors from the games industry, to give them training, equipment, a safe space to talk and share their ideas about life. This will create an environment for those ideas to proliferate, to allow for new established methods of working, new roles, new hierarchies, new workspaces, new planning and delivery. A renaissance, that the games industry requires. And that women quite rightly demand.

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I.2

Tales of Transformational Encounter in Digital Arts Practice: Co-forming Connective Togetherness through Techno-Sensual Acts of Love

Alice Tuppen-Corps

De Montfort University

Gaia Del Negro

Independent academic and researcher Milano Bicocca University

Introduction: A Researcher-Participant dialogue about love

Alice's methodological research frame is embodied, artistic and practice-based. According to Richard and Sullivan,

'Artistic practice-based research is a process that is, 'dynamic, cyclical and emergent in character [requiring] artists to reflect on, develop and refine their...methods throughout the whole cycle of the project'. (2005 in Candy and Edmonds 2011, p. 190).

Through her creative engagements with her participants, Alice seeks an iterative dialogue of co-formed knowledge, engaging difference, as well as similarity in all forms; visual, auditory, embodied, social, political and performative. Moreover, the dialogic standpoint that Alice takes within this artistic process draws upon ethnographic feminist and maternal perspectives. Post-modern feminist Haraway proposes in her Cyborg manifesto,

'In the consciousness of our failures, we risk lapsing into boundless difference and giving up on the confusing task of making a partial, real connection. Some differences are playful; some are poles of world historical systems of domination. Epistemology is about knowing the difference'. (2010, p.160).

Haraway posits an argument for finding a place of 'playful' pleasure in the very confusion of boundaries, as long as there is a degree of 'responsibility' in their construction. Indeed as the orchestrator of her method, Alice holds such shifting identities, 'reachings', failings, touches, 'love' at the thresholds of becoming. Without applying interpretation or fixity, she fa-

cilitates a certain degree of ‘responsibility’, through the artwork, whereby subjective meanings bubble-up in the in-betweens of creative dialogue. Through her process of ‘noticing’, reweaving and reflecting on the narrative and imaginative strands that participants present, a certain kind of co-emergent sense-making is found between otherwise unconnected people. Meanings and new knowledge are ever emergent; acts of artist and participant seeking inwards, outwards and towards what it is to be ‘more’ human from within the intersubjective stepping off point of the artwork.

TETTT, is the final practice-based output of Alice’s Ph.D. into *‘Digital Arts Practice Techno-Sensual Acts of Love: Co-Forming Transformational Encounters in the Fecund Void of Third Space Muliebrity.’* (working title). To this effect, Alice’s artistic intention revolves around a philosophical, ethical, muliebral, ‘artistic love’ which she embodies as an enabling standpoint for participant engagement and artwork generation, in order to bring about both new forms of experiential learning and constructive dialogues.

Primarily TETTT is a ‘listening, noticing, prompting and responding space’, where together artist and participants generate and shape new learning experiences within a living ‘techno-sensual framework’, as *an architecture of love*. A relational system that crosses virtual and actual spaces, and comprises people, technology, narratives and films that form an embodied empathetic third-space, *a feeling void*, that permits humans to experience a deepening encounter with themselves, within which to search and distil meaning.

Alice’s approach is oppositional to the current socio-political climate in which any engagement with anything deemed as coming from a place of ‘hurt feelings or anger’, is confronted with direct hostility from a predominantly phallogocentric political core. Her embodied practice-based research seeks to challenge this problem from the perspective of rebalancing in the ‘human’, both our virile and muliebral qualities. Through techno-sensual third space, ‘dialogues of love’, she seeks to offer alternative relational systems of encounter that counteract individualism and serve to offer a self-reflexive and intersubjective dance of togetherness, separateness, its discontents and love.

Specifically, in our performative presentation we conveyed our stories in relation to the four experiential phases of the yearlong TETTT project to which this paper refers:

Phase 1: 21-day co-forming dialogue utilising the Evernote virtual software platform artist to each participant

Phase 2: Feasting, fashioning, filming. Face-to-face encounter final participant group

Phase 3: Filmed individual 'Transformational Encounters', artist and each participant

Phase 4: Restaging Transformational Encounter films in Interactive Installations for the exhibition, 'Transformational Encounters: Touch Traction, Transform' (TETTT)

Contextually at the time of 'our' presentation, TETTT was near the end of its penultimate fourth phase of completion. Visual, written and auditory data from phase one had already been collected using the virtual platform of Evernote, a phase two creative and purposeful meal had been generated and shared between all parties and the third phase generation of films had neared completion. The artist's fourth phase of generating the final art exhibits for the interactive TETTT installation was in process and yet not fully realised. At the time of this presentation, the artist and her participants were in a period of 'sporadic contact'. Alice, focused on exhibition generation was holding herself at a distance from her participants. She did this in order to create enough 'space' from participants to generate her artistic representations of the participants 'transformational encounters'. These artworks she would eventually gift back to participants as embodied filmic narratives and as exhibits in TETTT for audiences to explore in phase four. The participants in this 'quiet' period expressed experiencing varied degrees of 'loss, withdrawal and anticipation', having lived through the very intense earlier contact phases with the artist in project phases one and three. In anticipation of this 'dip' in communications, the artist created a virtual community 'holding' space on Evernote for participants to start to reach out to each other in an attempt to ethically bridge gaps in contact in this period.

Contextually, and of specific interest here, is how and why Alice and Gaia decided to do this presentation in this more 'disconnected' period. Gaia might say, 'we simply got in touch. We decided to try.' Alice however experienced Gaia at this time 'reaching through the project', participant to artist, and 'touching back' through 'virtual space', as Alice herself felt she had once reached through virtual space and 'touched' TETTT participants in earlier phases of the project.' Gaia getting in contact with Alice in these final phases of TETTT generation, gave a kind of support and meaning back to Alice that she hadn't anticipated. The artwork – 'Gaia' - touched back. Gaia, 'as participant' gifted Alice a reciprocal gesture of 'noticing', interest and care. Theoretically and of relevance here in Winnicottian (1896

– 1971) psychoanalytical object-relation terms, is that Alice might surmise that Gaia was reaching back towards the loss of the ‘attachment object’, ‘the project’, embodied in the metaphoric holding vessel of the TETTT process. Alice and Gaia had talked a lot about mothers and mothering in the earlier phases of the TETTT practice-based research process. Gaia also brings Winnicott into interplay in the performative dialogue that follows; so we could perhaps rightly reflect that because of the momentary loss of artist-participant relationship, we ‘both’ again needed the support of our mutually oscillating maternal interplay-child, mother, lover, other and we asked for ‘it’, ‘relationship’. And our needs were met. This is interesting. Perhaps through the project we had learned how to recognise a current ‘emotional wound’ that needed healing, to feel our ‘living loss’, where there is no body, object, vessel and therefore no closure. We allowed the felt slip-page of our suspended virtual and actual relational ‘void’ between us and could recognise that ‘it’ wanted attention. Perhaps for the first time we knew how to name ‘it’ and heal it, this ‘void’. And, it could only be healed together, by accepting the desire to connect, to step out, to get lost within the encounter of self and other, artist and researcher, both outside and inside our own selves. For Gaia such sensation seemed to reside in the very substantive ‘void’ of our imperfect connecting, deep within and between our new forms of digital arts dialogue. Of relevance for her also was that the presentation itself was taking place in the academic space of ESREA 2018, an amorphous intellectual community that had offered us both holding ‘separately’ in 2015, before TETTT 2018 was on either of ‘our’ horizons.

For Alice too, it was significant that our presentation took place in Turin, Italy at the specific ESREA conference on, “‘Togetherness and its discontents’, Connectivity (as well as belonging, cooperation, conflict and separation), in biographical narratives of adult education and learning.”, (March 2018). Gaia is Italian. The self-selected participant physically from furthest away from Alice’s place of research. We first met at a conference on ‘Stories that make a difference. Exploring the collective, social and political potential of narratives in adult education research’, (Milan, March 2015) whereby Gaia then facilitated Alice into ‘play’ within her research workshop. Maybe we had come full circle? Alice was back on Gaia’s home ground. Perhaps imminent psychologist Jung (1875-1961), whose main concerns lay with synchronicity and the collective unconscious, might call ‘our’ unconscious impetus to come together again creatively, as our ‘acting out’ of our inner

necessity to play. Moreover that the intriguing potential of the ‘mistakes’ that our largely improvised presentation might take, would somehow more *truthfully* communicate our process in relationship within TETTT and beyond. For through TETTT, each of us moved towards conscious discoveries of what it is to be ‘more’ human from within the intersubjective field of the artwork. Our expanding experiences of ‘humanness’ were paradoxically somehow bought closer through the virtual environment that TETTT provided. Under Alice’s ‘responsible’, (Haraway, 2010) and yet artful orchestration, the enabling pace, comfort and safety of the TETTT virtual-social space, provided a ‘good enough’, (Winnicott 1896 – 1971), technological environment for our ‘selves’ to slow down, intermingle and interplay. There was no pressure for immediacy, or the multiple fast projection of our ‘surface’ selves to a ‘mass’ community in the ‘normal’ manner that most online communities demand.

Indeed, through our presentation, we felt like we had some kind of unfinished emotional transaction at interplay. In relation to practice-based research this presentation reached towards a further iteration of understanding. Our relationship felt like a democratic and respectful exchange, balanced and yet uncompromising. Not artist-researcher, teacher-student, doctor-patient but a playful shifting interplay. A multi-voiced-ness emerged in ‘our’ voice within the conference context. We were perhaps generating a new mutually permitting, relational, sensing, ‘more-than’ ‘purely intellectual’ voice from inside the traditionally argumentative academic space. Interestingly our presentation was also situated in the last session, of the last day of the conference, with about 12 other researchers in the room. It is intimate. It feels timely. A stage ripe for appearance. And so, with the 12 researchers, (as though representative of the 12 TETTT ‘participants’ themselves), Little Red Riding Hood Wolf and Virginia Woolf appear.





Image 1 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Gaia Del Negro embodying Virginia Woolf and Little Red Riding Hood-Wolf, ESREA, March 2018.

What follows now is the annotation of our performative presentation. The theory distilled from this process will enter into the next and final stages of Alice's Ph.D. As such this paper is not the ultimate synthesis of Alice Tuppen-Corps Ph.D. research, but in many respects it is another investigative yet iterative, beginning.

OUR PERFORMATIVE PRESENTATION TRANSCRIPT, ESREA, Turin, Italy, March 2018.

Scene 1: Welcome and Introduction

Alice:

Hi, I'm Alice Tuppen-Corps Ph.D. Practice-based Researcher from De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, and I will be speaking from the perspective of the 'artist-researcher'.

Gaia:

And I'm Dr. Gaia Del Negro, (at the time of this presentation) Research Assistant at Canterbury Christchurch University, UK and I will be sharing from the perspective of one of the 'participant-explorer/researchers' in TETTT.

Alice:

Today, we are going to discuss our experiences of ‘togetherness, pleasure and discontent’ in relation to my Ph.D. final project, ‘Transformational Encounters: Touch, Traction, Transform’, hereon abbreviated as (TETTT).

Together we invite you into dialogue with ourselves as we talk about tales of ‘transformational encounter in digital arts practice’ and the process of ‘co-forming connective togetherness’, through ‘techno-sensual acts of love.’

We hope to demonstrate through our presentation what we consider to be a ‘techno-sensual third space of love’ and how this works methodologically to enable new spaces of therapeutic, technological and transformational togetherness, pleasure and its discontents.

Gaia:

So, let’s enter into a reflexive interweaving dialogue about our lived experiences of togetherness and separateness as we relate our stories to the four experiential project phases of TETTT and ask each other what was ‘good enough’, (Winnicott, 1971), or troublesome in our techno-sensual ‘dance’ of love?

Alice:

Contextually I am going to situate our presentation within the remit of my Ph.D. which seeks to understand how the performativity of digital technologies can be used to generate a new form of emphatic relational space between people.

I am looking at how performative digital media can serve to house a new form of empathetic void, (or space), a type of ‘feeling architecture’ (after architect Juhani Pallasmaa (2012:11) within which humans can experience a deepening relational encounter with themselves and each other, gaining through techno-sensual and aesthetic interactions, the ability to further interrogate and transform worlds.

Simply put, my objectives are to:

- 1) work with people – aims, objectives, research questions
- 2) develop a system for enhancing emphatic relational space between people using Evernote software
- 3) use creative and artistic practice methods to translate into a performative space – TETTT exhibition
- 4) capture end - user experience in order to evaluate the worth of this process

Alice:

So let's take a look at my form of Digital Arts Practice – Process and Method.

Alice:

The specific TETTT research project will undergo four key phases:

Phase 1:

Open Call for Participants. (Email, Facebook, Conference Networks, Public Domain – important that the participants are 'self-selecting'. (It is of note here that the Tales we will convey today of our 'Togetherness and its Discontents' were made possible by an emergent collaboration which started in the ESREA Milan 'Resources of Hope' Conference in 2015 in which I participated in Gaia's workshop. Peter, another participant in the TETTT project also came through the ESREA Network – now how positive is that!).

So the call asked for:

People over 18 to self-identify as being at, or wishing to reflect upon, a 'threshold' point/s in their lives and that TETTT would aim to create a form of 'third emphatic space' that would help identify how working with these 'aha moments' through the digital arts, could bring about positive recognition and change.

I made it clear that the 'Touch: Traction: Transform' project required a willingness to explore notions of identity, intimacy, communication and engagement with technology and new forms of performative encounter that could house the potential for transformational growth, shift and transition.

And that outcomes would take the form of selected interactive artworks which would form the basis of the TETTT exhibition in May 2018.

From this premise:

- 21 Participants became engaged in Phase 1 (of which Gaia is 1)
- We produced a 21 Day Co-forming Dialogue. Words, Videos, Sounds, Photographs, Objects using Evernote Software.

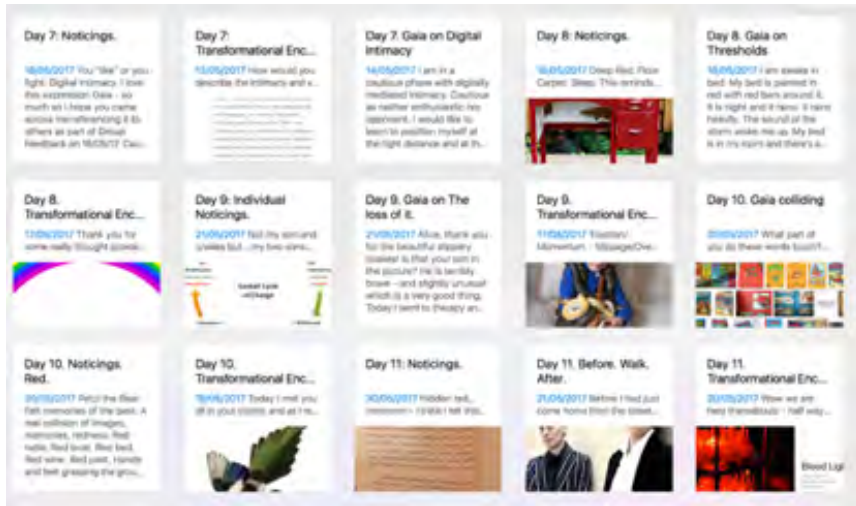


Image 2 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Gaia Del Negro, a screenshot capturing an excerpt from their dialogue in the virtual Phase 1 Evernote, TETTT orchestration space.

The Structure of Engagement was:

1. Artist 'Prompt'
2. Participant 'Response'
3. Artist 'Noticing'
4. Artist 'Reframing'

The subsequent days 'Prompt' was formed from Participant 'Responses' and the Artists original Artistic Intention.

7 Touch 7 Traction 7 Transformation 'Prompts'

Which we will look at shortly.

Alice:

Phase 2. Transformational Encounters: Touch, Traction, Transform (TETTT). This phase involved:

- Honing Participants down to 12.
- Artist and Participant spending a day together
- Filming and engaging in a Transformational Encounter and Dialogue specific to them



Image 3 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Amanda Posnett,
Phase 3 Transformational Encounters, Individual Experience and Film still.



Image 4 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Donna Loiola,
Phase 3 Transformational Encounters, Individual Experience and Film still.



Image 5 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Kerry Francksen,
Phase 3 Transformational Encounters, Individual Experience and Film still.



Image 6 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Catherine Taylor, Phase 3 Transformational Encounters, Individual Experience and Film still.

Alice:

Transformational Encounters: Touch, Traction, Transform (TETTT). Phase 2.

All 12 Participants meet, cook, feast, fashion items and film in The Gallery.



Image 7 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps, Phase 2 Transformational Encounters, Feasting, Filming, Fashioning in The Gallery, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, Nov 2018.

Alice:



Image 8 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps, testing the install prior to Phase 4, Transformational Encounters, The Gallery, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, November 2018.

Alice:

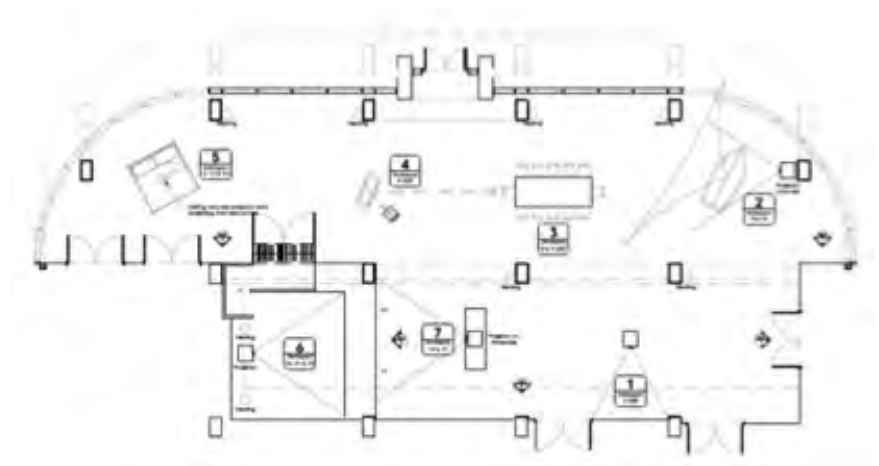


Image 9 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps, detailed plan for the install prior to Phase 4, Transformational Encounters, The Gallery, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, Nov 2018.

Alice:



Image 10 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps, one viewpoint in the final exhibition Phase 4, Transformational Encounters, The Gallery, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, November 2018. (This Phase four was not complete at the time of our presentation).

Alice:

So, let's move on to speaking about our process and experience within this initial framework by sharing with you some examples of the process of 'co-forming connective togetherness' in Phase 1 in order to see how early emergent images gain strength, focus and resonance that permeate the more final Phases of the TETTT.



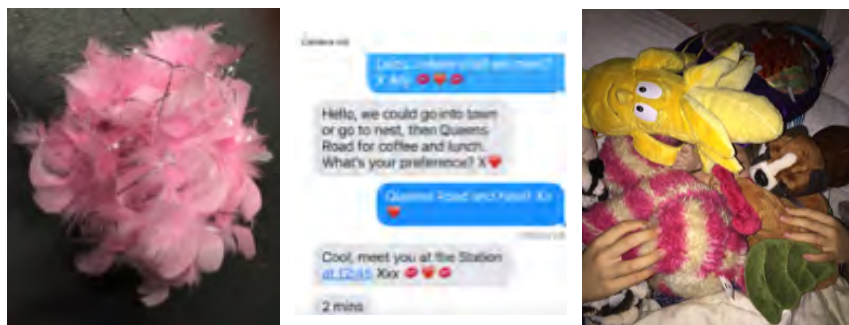


Image 11 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps, a screenshot from Phase 1, capturing an excerpt from her Day 2 'Prompt', in the virtual Evernote, TETTTT orchestration space.

Alice:

Phase 1: Evernote. Artists Prompt: Day 2. Transformational Encounters. Touch as the, 'the mother of the senses', architect Juhani Pallasmaa (2012, p.11). Nesting.

Wikipedia defines:

'A nest is a structure built by certain animals to hold eggs offspring, and, occasionally, the animal itself.'

'A nesting function in computer programming is a function which is defined within another function, the *enclosing function*.'

In his book 'The Eyes of the Skin' Finnish Architect Prof. Juhani Pallasmaa writes that 'Touch is the sensory mode that integrates our experience of the world with that of ourselves.' (2012, p.11)

How do you nest?

What is your experience of nesting?

What nests have you built, destroyed, abandoned, redesigned?

Gaia:

And my response:

Gaia on nesting

How do I nest?

I nest by choosing objects that have personal association, affective value, memory, imaginative resonance, objects of desire that make my home alive.

I grow plants.

I make tea which I get far away and bring home like birds.

I appropriate family objects for my nest: great-grandmother's wardrobe,
a cousin's mirror, mother's knitted shawl.

Mostly I read books in bed.

I open my nest to friends and cook us meals.

Nesting is relaxation and clearing.

I cannot but build nests wherever I live. My current nest in Milano I
redesigned while I lived in the UK, which gave me the right distance to
imagine myself in it - inheriting a nest by transforming it. Today I brood
my egg here and it feels safe enough

to prepare a new flight.

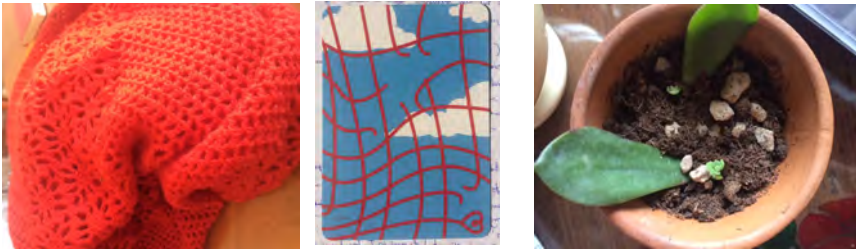


Image 12 above: Gaia Del Negro, a screenshot capturing an excerpt of Gaia's 'Response' to Alice's Day 2 'Prompt', dialogue in the virtual Phase 1 Evernote, TETTTT orchestration space.

Slide 13:

Alice: Techno-Sensual Acts of Love What does third space 'look' like?



Image 13 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps a screenshot capturing her attempt at mapping her Practice-based research in TETTTT.

Primarily TETTT is a 'listening, noticing, feeling, prompting and responding space' whereby together artist and participants generate and shape new learning experiences within a living 'techno-sensual framework', as *an architecture of love*. A relational system that crosses virtual and actual spaces, and comprises people, technology, narratives and films that form an embodied empathetic third-space, *a feeling void*, that permits humans to experience a deepening encounter with themselves through which to search and distil meaning.

Here it happens at least twice – (convergence of experience) once in the Evernote Platform and again in The Gallery as illustrated in the diagram and by the quotes from a former participant and audience member in two of my earlier pieces of research.

'If it's a unique contribution to knowledge then it's unique contribution to love' ('Situating the Reciprocal' former Artwork, Participant, 2016).

Through a form of technological, sculptural, filmic and relational aesthetics, it specifically allows us to think about the way we experience life, 'I was living in their and Alice's world during that time of engagement and yet it couldn't have been more simultaneously my own journey.' (Point. forty Audience Member, 2014).

Gaia:

A context was created that has time-space boundaries and is defined by our presence, me and Alice (and the other participants in a peripheral sort of way), (this becomes a community space later in the process although only some of us will actively participate, and each according to their time and taste).

For me a techno-sensual third space of love was the technologically mediated dialogue with another woman-researcher and artist who sent me stimulating questions to reflect about my life, my feelings, my sensations, and my imagination.

Because a medial process is involved, I can access that space from anywhere anytime, usually from my home in the morning with breakfast. This is stimulating because I am guided by example to experiment with technology and try other ways of communicating / refracting / seeing other sides of my story. It reminds me of the "writing as inquiry" approach, except that I write not just with the words. I create performative texts for the researcher to experience and respond to.

And yet this has limits. A slight sense of anxiety is created in the material being and not being available, existing and not existing. The digital note-

book could become inaccessible, (and it does at one point for research purposes). The beautiful material in neither here nor there. It is 'sensual' yet I cannot touch it. Hold it. Hang it on a wall. Show it to people, (it makes me quite proud and has become an important object – transitional? – in these months in Milan).

Alice:

Often I felt a sense of not being a 'good enough' (Winnicott, 1971), 'mother/other/artist' and of 'feeding' some participants with more 'noticings' and neglecting others. I felt a deep need to 'hold the space' and create 'poise' by not rushing in and 'filling and rescuing' participants but also not stepping back so far that I lost contact with them, causing a 'break in contact' in experiential and interpersonal Gestalt therapeutic terms, (Perls, 1893-1970). Instead I encouraged personal participant responsibility and bought my own awareness into play, trusting that participants would indeed self-adjust within my crafted digital-arts TETTT environment creatively. It was so important to me in the TETTT process that we 'met' each other with equal presence, (not adult to child) and this was a large component of how the final 12 participants self-selected into the final phases of the project from an initial 22 starters. This draws on the experience of my earlier Ph.D. formative works, particularly the piece 'Situating the Reciprocal' (2016), and about not leaning in so far with participants that I lose myself but not withdrawing so far, that I disconnect.

Gaia:

I experienced this techno-sensual third space much like the transitional space originally theorised by Donald Winnicott (1971) and his interest in exploring how an infant can separate from a primary caregiver in psychologically healthy ways.

Alice, like Winnicott, through her prompts, playfully situated a form of 'serious enquiry' in the holding framework and medial 'objects' of the Evernote platform. Like other transitional phenomena, we were suspended somewhere between inner and outer reality.

According to Winnicott this third area, is experienced by 'the baby' and here instead by the 'participant', as a resting-place. However here, instead of just a 'resting place from the task of reality acceptance', Evernote became a nurturing place of being 'reflected back' and in this 'togetherness' potentially reconfiguring what reality could be.

Winnicott said that indeed this is a space of 'love', dependent on, 'very specific conditions of being 'reflected back' (ibid. p. 86) or, in other words, of being loved. 'Cultural experience' is for Winnicott 'the common pool of humanity' (ibid. p. 133) to which we may contribute, and from which we may draw, 'if we have somewhere to put what we find' (ibid), namely a transitional space of creativity and 'play' that inspires our trust.' (Gaia, DN (2017) Thesis).

In relation to what Alice has just said about equal presence, adult to adult, Winnicott applied the same principles to processes of separation and self-negotiation in adult life also, trying to make sense of how people can 'move from dependency and defensiveness towards greater openness to experience creative forms of endeavour' (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 82).

Alice:

To this effect, my artist's intention revolved around a philosophical, ethical, muliebral, 'artistic love' which I embodied as an enabling standpoint for my participant engagement and subsequent artwork generation, in order to bring about new forms of experiential learning and constructive dialogue by adopting a stance of 'love' and fostering 'trust' through the gift of 'authenticity' within my own prompts that in turn allowed the 'authenticity' of others to become permitted, welcomed and emergent.

At its best, this felt like a co-forming and playful 'dance', or as one participant said a 'slow courtship' between adults. Yes, love and mothering comes into it. But the most affective material emerges in the space between two adults – a charged space that allows for engagement with difficult thoughts, anger, envy, painful points of traction too but a space that is 'good enough', not perfect, for disappointment and pain too, to surface, be shared, held and processed.

So, what does Third space feel like?

Gaia:

I don't know what 'third space' is in the theory but it feels like this image from Pina Bausch that Alice sent to me as her 'Noticing on Day 11', suspended, airy, wet, sensual, flowery, generative, potential, transforming/becoming. (We are unable to include the image in this paper due to copyright issues, but it shows a woman-dancer from the film *Pina* (Wenders, 2011), in a red dress suspended mid-movement, she forms a triangle shape with her body and toes. The background is black, her long black hair falls forward over her face, she is illuminated and powerful like a bird taking flight or de-

scending as water pours off her wings). Although digital, the TETTT space is sensual. It involves text, images, clips, hypertext links. It is poetic in quality, imaginative, resonant, there were many others such as these [images].

Gaia:

My mother's shawl. Which reoccurs through all Phases and that I wore for filming in Phase 2 and Feasting in Phase 3 flows with me...



Image 14 above: Gaia Del Negro, a screenshot capturing an excerpt of Gaia's 'Response' to Alice's Day 2 'Prompt', dialogue in the virtual Phase 1 Evernote, TETTT orchestration space.

Gaia:

'We swung like serpents, black carnations.'

Gaia:

One day Alice noticed, 'This is it on my 'red' altar - it is for us. For you too! [It is a card with a red butterfly on it and the phrase 'adult children'.] The image cannot be included in this paper for copyright reasons.

Alice 'notices' in a sensual way through her body. It is not brainy reasoning and argumentation. It is FEELING. (Artistic processing really), which produces insight, (she gets things about me I did not see myself).

Gaia:
And dear Frida, Frida Kahlo...



Image 15 above: Artist: Frida Kahlo.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Frida_Digital_Colorization.png
[assessed January 3rd 2019, representing an slightly different image that could not be included for copyright reasons).

Gaia:
Our Day 18 exchange.
Lift – humour – absurd.
The fear of not getting it *Missing out: In praise of the unlived life*.
Ambivalence studious glasses - openly faking it! (Me too and flowers for you!)



Image 16 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Gaia Del Negro, a screenshot capturing an excerpt of Gaia and Alice's interplay Day 18 dialogue in the virtual Phase I Evernote, TETTT orchestration space.

Alice:

Artist and Psychotherapist Bracha Ettinger's concept of 'Carriance' is theoretically foreground as a means of exploring affective places of feeling that allow, 'the other', to be 'within me charged'. Ettinger's calls this 'Thinking (M) otherwise' (2006).

I wanted to imbue the process and content of the prompts with a sensuality that whether 'we' are physically and energetically residing in male or female, (and states of in-between or be-coming) bodies right now, that what we all have in common is that we have all been 'carried' within the female womb, body - space...

When I reached out to participants with my muliebral, prompts I encouraged them to try and encounter the work from a suspended state of 'un-gendered being'...a third space, a place of becoming...

Muliebriety from the word 'mulier' means 'woman' and is a cognate of the word 'mollis' meaning 'soft'. To 'mollify' usually connotes a 'softening' action of 'hurt feelings or anger'. Indeed Gill, proposes that in our (arguably) post-feminist society a useful gyneacentric approach is to instead adopt a 'feminine sensibility' in which, 'media culture should be our critical object – a phenomenon into which scholars of culture should inquire – rather than an analytic perspective', (2007, p.6). Therefore, I approached my *inquiry* from a fully embodied enlivened body-space, virile in its muliebral strength, reaching out to encounter participants 'human to human'. This self-permission motivates in participants the same 'softening' into their own deep in-vivo selves. This activates a space of potential that cannot be reached from analytical discourse alone. This form of digital (Haraway, 2010) maternalism, (Ettinger, 2016) offers an environment that is ripe for enabling new forms of dialogue in all bodies, regardless of sexual, racial or gender identification, (Cixous, 1976).

Gaia:

This 'encountering state' that Alice talks about artistically is also one that made me think of Belenky's 1986 seminal work on *Women's Ways of Knowing*, in which she set out to explore ways in which women know.

Drawing on feminist voices in philosophy and psychology, Belenky interviewed 135 women to identify 'aspects of intelligence and modes of thought that might be more common and highly developed in women' (ibid), such as 'interdependence, intimacy, nurturance, and contextual thought' (ibid). They found that 'the development of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined' (ibid. p. 18)... in a form of *connected knowing*.

The quest for self and voice plays a central role in transformations in women's ways of knowing. In a sense, each perspective we have described can be thought of as providing a new, unique training ground in which problems of self and other, inner and outer authority, voice and silence can be worked through. (Belenky *et al.*, pp. 133-134)

A *connected* epistemology 'involves intimacy and equality between self and object' (p. 100), which means that 'the focus is not on how They want you to think [...] but on how they [...] think; and the purpose is not justification but connection' (ibid. p. 101). The most liberating way of knowing is to integrate all the different perspectives on it, in both the private and public spheres of life, as no one perspective is sufficient by itself. For constructivist women (and men) it is possible to 'move beyond systems' (ibid. p. 140) and 'make connections that help tie together pockets of knowledge. There is a new excitement about learning and the power of the mind' (ibid).

Alice:

And it is in Phase 4 when the exhibition comes together in physical form that it is hoped that audiences will in turn be able to 'tie together pockets of knowledge' experienced by residing in the objects and worlds of the participants. In a sense the TETTT exhibition will be a form of Evernote materialised.

But before we move on to the imagined 'end' of TETTT, let us just dwell a moment longer in its process.

Alice:

Day 20 "Unfinished conversations"

So today I invite you to invite someone 'out' and allow them 'in' through your listening. What is their story? What needs to be heard? How does it feel to hear it? Where do you feel it? Your listening allows their story to be heard and to emerge - you complete their story in your listening...think in your listening about always working within the interest of deepening understanding and promoting dialogues.



Image 17 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Gaia Del Negro, a screenshot capturing an excerpt of Gaia's 'Response' Day 20, dialogue in the virtual Phase 1 Evernote, TETTT orchestration space.

Alice:

And this is an important visual – the mother shawl. The mother/other that 'I get/am'. Do you remember the holey blanket – mothers shawl - a lightly held knitting with a clearing hole to breath – let's together let that breath out...these are Gaia's responses.

Gaia's video plays whilst we read the dialogue – Gaia as 'Gaia' and I reading 'Mum'.

Gaia:

Without realising it I actually collected material for this prompt. I had not spoken to my mother for a while. Not a huge while but I had not been 'really' speaking with her for a while.

In fact I had been avoiding to engage in conversation on the phone and had discharged her attempts to invite me to places / invite herself to my place. I shall remind you that my mother lives in Tuscany and I live in Milan.

When I decided to call her she had just come back from a weekend in Naples with friends and had taken a test of Japanese language, which she has been studying this year for the first time.

I was a bit nervous as I knew I had kept her away and she had sensed that obviously, and she was now offended as I could guess from her texts.

Calling her on Monday 5th June at 8pm.

Alice reads M Gaia reads GDN

GDN: "Hi Mum. How was your exam today? and How was Naples?"

M: "Exam went quite well, not so difficult. Naples was great.... (pause) I am glad you ask but I was hurt by the way you traded me recently and that answer the other day about June and I don't deserve that".

GDN: "Yes you are right. Could you tell me how I hurt you the other day?"

M: "You treated me like another appointment which did not fit in your agenda."

GDN: "You are right. Fact is, I don't know what to do. I need some space for myself and don't like when you call me at any time of the day as if I were always available. You know it is a difficult transitional time after the PhD... still working on corrections actually, never good enough."

M: "I understand that."

GDN: "It is also very exciting, and I like what I am doing but I feel under pressure. I was happy to celebrate my viva with you and friends in Tuscany and you organised such a lovely party and I thank you for that. And the card you've made."

M: "I thought there was something wrong with that and you did not like the card."

GDN: "Well no it is so beautiful, and I like it very much. When you gave it to me during the party though, we all read it and it passed from hand to hand [a collage card 4 meters long], and it felt like, don't get me wrong, but I felt like you were the show and I could to even talk about my research... I mean I just mumbled something. I don't feel adequate."

M: "I wanted to tell everyone how hard you worked for your PhD, your incredible journey. I started to collate something and as I added

more to the story the paper was not enough and so I added more and more... until there was no more blue paper!"

GDN: "Ah ah really? (relieved) It is a great card and I like it very much Mum.

M: "I am happy you do, thank you."

GDN: "It was difficult for me to read that story. I don't feel it is true.

(The full extent of the dialogue was not included in this paper, though Gaia's Mother gave her agreement to publication of this excerpt).

Gaia:

Mum and I responded to your prompt and got our stories out. We went through crisis, uncovered family patterns, and came out with an affective understanding of the problem. Possibly something has changed.

In processual terms, Gaia was now experimenting with creative writing along the lines of 'what happened', but appropriating fictional writing as a form of inquiry.



Image 18 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Gaia Del Negro, a screenshot capturing an excerpt of Alice's 'Prompt', Day 21, dialogue in the virtual Phase 1 Evernote, TETTT orchestration space.

Alice:

And finally as I bought Day 21 to a close I asked:

What's in your backpack?

So today I invite you to pack your bag for your journey. What have you learnt on your journey so far... (in life and in the last 21 days...), what is coming with you?



Image 19 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Gaia Del Negro, a screenshot capturing an excerpt of Gaia's 'Response' to Alice's 'Prompt' Day 21, dialogue in the virtual Phase 1 Evernote, TETTT orchestration space.

Gaia addresses Alice:

I would invite Virginia Woolf to have a look at my altar of intimate resources coming out from by green backpack, (a wonderful Ferrino backpack that accompanied me in India, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia).

Virginia is a dear friend. I am sure she knows that. She knows a lot of things this Virginia, in fact she is not so 'virginal' at all. She is a woman who meets the world from the inside out and writes about it. Our dialogue would be something around these lines.

Scene: Cambridge gardens, 5pm on a Tuesday afternoon in September 2017. The two characters are sitting on the grass and taking tea from a blue porcelain teapot. objects are spread in front of them on a blue shawl.

Alice Reads to Gaia.

My Altar of Intimate Resources.

“

My feet feature a lot.

My holey orange womb blanket.

My other (m) others long long card...

My m-other reborn on a book.

Virginia Woolf is a Woman. She meets the world from the 'inside out'.

“

And so Grand(m)other Woolf meets Little Red Riding Hood.

“

“It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; a great delight to put the severed parts together.” “You need to find your own land, your own words. And not take those too seriously either.”



Image 20 above: Little Red Riding Hood, Fleury-Richard, F, 1820, Alice Tuppen-Corps and Gaia Del Negro, excerpt of Alice's Noticing image to Gaia's 'Reponse' Day 21, dialogue in the virtual Phase 1 Evernote, TETTT orchestration space. Original image not included due to copyright issues but this replacement image is a close match. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Little_Red_Riding_Hood.jpg [assessed January 3rd 2019]



Image 21 above: Alice Tuppen-Corps and Gaia Del Negro, Phase 3 Transformational Encounters, Individual Experience and Film still.

Play film. We stand side by side watching the film, our backs to the audience, clothed in our red hat, green coat, red cloak and Woolf/wolf mask. Also see Image 1.

Alice leaves just as the film ends.

Gaia:

And she left. I go to the library and find the quotation. Not sure what to do with it but thought I might note it down for future reference:

... behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we - I mean all human beings - are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself.
(Woolf, 1985, p. 72)

And by way of summary, that was our performative interplay of our experiences of connective togetherness through techno-sensual acts of love. Thank you for listening, connecting and playing with us – we hope you found ‘our’ Woolf-ish tales and wolf-ish tails of transformative encounter too.

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L.1

Through the addiction experience “together”: when the word rebuilds relations

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Introduction

Relationships are questioned when a member of the family is going through a drug addiction experience. Even the slightest change within the small family microsystem can affect to other connected microsystems, for instance the neighbourhood, friendships, professional and scholar relations and so on. It seems like a wave that reaches everywhere and shakes the whole social system. On one hand, the addiction (as the ever increasing pathological gambling or alcoholism) provokes in victims psychophysical changes, and consequently trigs drug withdrawal until they lose control or become aggressive towards their loved ones. On the other hand, their relatives and especially their parents feel confused and experience different emotions, such as a strong feeling of blame and pervasive distress. Life experiences and complex interactions make hopes and lights search difficult. The most recurring and harmful behaviour of impotence is the defence against social stigma, that leads to isolation: shutting, falling silent, hiding out. The initial silence is fundamental to get to know and to elaborate difficulty; but it becomes gradually a dangerous enemy. This latter hinders the sharing of the fight with an intangible soul's suffering, that destroys relationships and shocks all existences. Pathologic addiction is never a single person experience, but it compromises and harms whole personal-social relationships (work, free time, etc...). Not rarely people risk to lose work or to commit crimes against things/people to earn illegal money for drugs. A subject suffering from addiction is an element of a system, or of a complex of elements in constant interaction: the modification of a single element transforms a series of related relations (directly/indirectly), as a long wave and the short-range repercussion. The attention on the main relations, as

family, becomes essential, because it is the first level that needs intervening. The familiar involvement in the therapy is an unavoidable element, both in preventive paths (for the first signals identification of an addiction manifestation) and in therapeutic paths. Firstly, families need to be supported by social services, that can offer tangible answers, avoiding to leave them in helplessness and fear. Then the path continues in the increase and in accompanying of awareness that concern familiar relationships. Families need to understand their own relational model (that in the main cases is implied) to modify it slowly but in a sharp way. The mutual-help group is a precious space because of its relational support, even if it does not replace direct and specialized interventions. Groups become a way to elaborate new relational styles within household, that spring from self-consciousness and from the awareness of the past, of the way to perceive parenthood and relationship. The mutual-help experience becomes essential through a constant help, given by weekly meetings and by some internal rules (anonymity, judge abstention, comprehension and listening). This experience try to voice emotions and feelings, to monitor changes and to support motivation through testimony of families, that have faced for themselves same difficulties. (Steinberg 2002; Silverman, Folgheraiter, 1985).

The carried survey, included in this prospect of studies, wants to explore conditions which allow the openness of a weak person (how is the family of a drug/alcohol addicted); then it continues to control the efficiency of an autobiographical/pedagogic-narrative method, based on the existential-phenomenological approach. In the search path, collected testimonies and their elaboration are fundamental; but also the predisposition of a suitable training setting plays a significant role in disclosing thoughts and emotions (settled in everybody's experiences) and in finding an experiential knowledge of daily lives of each person and in the whole group. In this work of meeting and experience narration, the border between the *private* family dimension and the *public* dimension (given by the contact to other families, local context and services) becomes even thinner.

The original questions of the survey were: "How can families "learn together" from the mutual (and different) experience of family members' addiction? How can narrative practice and autobiographic exercise support the awareness-sharing-involvement work of each person? Under what circumstances can the group experience be the added value in a reconstruction path of their familiar relationships?".

Methods

The research questions have been developed mainly using self-biographical writing tools. This choice has been suggested by the research participants themselves, all of them parents belonging to the mutual help group that expressed the need to leave a legacy of their meetings, based solely on oral narrative. This need has been captured and the methodological choice was oriented to the research aims, as the self-biographical tool is useful in detecting the learning *processes* based on *reciprocity* (Formenti, 1998) and in giving evidence to the acquisition and sharing of a knowledge that is based on experience (Jedlowski, 1994 ; Mortari, 2003); the participants to the self-biography writing training thus have had the chance of “looking inside themselves” and have created a place for their collective memory: reprocessing the meaning of their own experiences has brought to sense making, important both for the individual and the community.

A “free” journal, without specific guidance, had been previously used: the group participants took it on charge at the end of each meeting and kept it for a week, noting down thoughts, questions, poems, autobiographical bits in close connection with what was happening in their families and with their children. The text from the journal has been used in the course of the research in two ways: as an anchor to the specific stimula in the path (to give a concrete shape to some topics or to elaborate on crucial issues), or as relevant narrative excerpts to highlight episodes and daily life events that are significant in the formative path of their family members.

The research participants were all parents of kids and young persons (aged 18-40) who had dealt or were dealing with drug addiction. The group was formed of 13 mothers and 2 fathers, with regular attendance. In 10 weekly meetings of about 90 minutes various topics were explored: as a deliberate choice, a specific focus was given to each meeting, while fostering crossed interconnections among the topics. For the heterogeneous composition of the group of parents, with regard to age and cultural background, various writing styles have been found, also very different among each other, but no refusal nor explicit resistance arose, as the writing course was freely chosen by the participants. In the whole course 12 autobiographical writing exercises were done, in 5 major areas: the significance of words, the experience and daily relationship of family life, prejudices and stereotypes, building a group and its relationships, the openness to the future.

After each writing suggestions the group was given free writing time, at the end of which the text were read with no individual feedback from the

participants; only shared thoughts and insights were collected before the end of the meetings. Together with the facilitator, two observers have attended the meetings, who produced synthetic reports about each meeting, capturing relevant feedbacks on the emotive, relational and process levels.

The final rework was made by the identification of tags and of categories to make comparisons, based on an open codification (Tarozzi, 2008). The whole research and formation path has taken place in an association (Ass. La Ricerca di Piacenza) that has dealt with addiction prevention and rehabilitation for thirty years.

Findings

The first significant aspect emerging from the research is that the autobiographical exercise offers the possibility to connect meanings (Bateson, 1992) and to reconstruct an overall picture that is usually broken in the experience of family suffering. Pain, in fact, divides and creates meaningless voids; it disrupts the person and the relational context where he/she lives. Going through the struggles of drug addiction, having effective educational tools at your disposal, means helping the subject to search for meanings and interlace dimensions of life distant from one another. One parent writes:

When the drug gets inside a family life, it devours everything: affects, passions, work. Not only those who use the substance are linked to it, but the others too: It is like if parents, brothers, friends are paralyzed by this monster and without realizing it, they play the game (...). It is like being decomposed on the inside, creating disorder even outside.

It happens very often that family members try to oppose to the intimate and relational disorder that addictions bring, either with great firmness and intransigence or with a sort of silent assent, but tinged with despair. Having a space and a time where this fragmentation can be accepted and taken in charge means to counteract the sense of insignificance and surrender that very often a parent of a drug addict feels. The ability to write is considered, not without fears, as a possible path of recreation of the self and reconnection with others. The risk of an outburst and rumors (Heidegger, 1971), which appears also in the written forms, is limited by the orientation given to reflexivity. The re-reading and re-writing of one's own story, as an individual and as a member of a family, offer the possibility to reconnect parts of oneself that were overshadowed or forgotten, and it is precisely in the

space of ‘never seen’, ‘never thought’, ‘never granted’ that deep potentials lies for itself and for others.

In the experience of parents joining self-help groups, writing turned to be a paradoxical formative exercise: At the same time it limits emotionality and confusion – but makes sure that this confusion emerges in order to allow creative intuitions – it creates a dwelling for words and meanwhile it goes beyond them allowing us to explore the unknown.

F., a mother, writes:

The need to see more clearly inside of me has pushed me to take pen and paper, to free that part of me hidden or prisoner, thus giving life to my intimate dialogue. After writing I feel lighter, clearer, I almost feel like I love the world around me.

The opportunity to look inside oneself is a precious chance in the healing paths of family context touched by addictions, since heavy projections unfold in them and there is a subtle game of search for the whipping boy. Moving the center of gravity from the outside to the inside, we can stop blaming others and reality for our personal discomforts and each member of the family can personally respond for his/her own limits.

The power of the word (Freire, 2002) is experimented: the possibility of giving a name to things brings with it the opportunity to re-establish meanings by removing some labels and superstructures from what is taken for granted and what is connoted with prejudice and stigma. The experience of the self-help group has allowed us to search together the right words; those that restore dignity to the personal story and that allow us to face reality in a more authentic, more real and therefore more incisive way: To name situations with greater accuracy, it allows us to act more punctually and effectively.

A second aspect that emerged in this experience of education and research is the recovery of *widespread parenting* and the *strengthening of active citizenship*. The 72% of parents who took part to self-help paths are committed to an internal or external voluntary activity, more or less linked to the phenomenon of addictions. The factual passage that takes place is the transformation of shame into modesty: If shame is that state that springs from the feeling of being subject to others’ judgment, to be inferior or not corresponding to the model, then decency arises from the desire to protect something precious, even in the disintegration and suffering. Writing in a

community context means breaking a sterile silence, although preserving the secret and the mystery that accompany human dynamics. In this sense, parents have developed a greater “benevolence” towards themselves and have lightened the sense of guilt that inevitably becomes embedded in their own history because of their children’s drug addiction.

The autobiographical approach returns the uniqueness of each person and each family, bringing out the variety of paths and this testifies the personal way in which everyone can get out of the problem or, otherwise, find the way home. The re-discovery of the uniqueness of their own family life gives to the parents the opportunity to re-attach themselves to it, even in the suffering it provokes and to strengthen the trust networks that have been strained hard.

When a person writes within a community context and delivers words and feelings to another person, s/he not only frees himself from something heavy (letting off the steam), but starts a new story and experiences the co-construction of a unique social history. Who writes carries out an initiative, and ‘who says initiative says responsibility’ (Ricoeur, 1989). The common narrative promotes fiduciary relationships because the other is not purely passive, but relies on part of one’s own experience to accept the different gaze on reality, of which the other is the bearer. E., a mother, writes:

Writing helps me truly a lot to look inside me, to overcome my fear of being alone for the rest of my life. Re-reading what I write gives me the awareness that something, even if slowly, is changing in me. The despair of a week or a month before is reduced, the contours gets faded. I learned to have more trust in myself and in my actions. Writing helps me to think differently.

The opening of the experiential field (Bertolini, Caronia, 1993) and the widening of possibilities is a third dimension that has been highlighted in the educational and research path: *writing* and *writing together* about one’s own history of difficulty and suffering has implicitly created greater trust in life and a concrete hope for the future. The testimony of others and the knowledge of not being alone in crossing a significant ford offers parents a fruitful ‘phase shift’, putting them in a position to regain energy to fight against addiction and, at the same time, unconditionally welcome their children.

Conclusions

One of the biggest benefits of this process of education and research can be identified in the experience of *generativity*. Regarding the relationship between parents and drug addicted children, we can highlight how the parental exercise took place in a renewed way, giving life to them again and giving to themselves and to their children the possibility to re-born. If it is true that we born more than once (Zambrano 2004, Arendt 2000), in the parents' experience to re-start / re-give birth has first of all meant taking distance, namely accepting the partiality of one's responsibility and the limit of one's commitment.

Parents who take care of themselves in the experience of their child's use of substance learn to distinguish error from failure, others' mistake from being wrong, and their child from their group of friends. In this sense, autobiographical writing is a 'discriminatory' practice since it asks to separate, to discern, to pass through the thoughts and in doing this it makes a paradox: The more it distinguishes, the more it mixes and approaches. It is exactly in tracing the perimeter between one's own existence and that of others that family intimacy and social conviviality are re-designed. In delimiting a territory of meaning, the act of writing allows the subject and the family to position themselves, to be there, to *stay in the situation*, which are essential prerequisites for planning in authenticity. *Generativity*, as a category of a new welfare, (Fondazione Zancan, 1994) develops when a subject modifies the perspective of his/her questions: not only “*What can others do for me?*” but mainly “*What can I do for others?*”.

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L.2

Roots and connections.

The genogram as a narrative instrument

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The research is the result of discussions and comparisons between the authors. Regarding the individual responsibilities in the drafting, the paragraphs are as follows: Francesca Marone §1, 2; Maria Navarra §3.

1. Family as a device for the construction of professional identity

As educators, we need narrations, personal histories, but frequently we do not manage to reconnect this necessity to our family history and consequently we seek to find histories from the world outside, missing the opportunity to come in contact with ourselves. The work on one's own family history is something that anyone is able to undertake and it proves to be a pivotal element for anyone who works in the field of education. The “Saying or not saying” expressions in a family should be situated within a plot: from personal life stories emerge the personal struggles of people and exactly in the passage from the “saying” to the “telling”, educational facts are developed (Demetrio, 1996). If family is a group of individuals in a significative relation, thus is different and greater from the sum of its parts and it is impossible to understand its functioning without understanding the functioning of every member. In other words, if we can talk about a mental family function (systemic), we should observe it in relationship with mental individual sub-systems, and the behaviors in themselves, as the emotions, are also an expression of this dialectic connection. Family is that specific and unique organization that keeps together primary differences of the human soul, between genres (masculine and feminine), and among generations (fathers and sons) and lineages (the genealogical tree, both maternal and parental), whose main goal is generativity and its originary element in the couple relationship. “Transition” is a term widely used in Social Sciences and, in family studies, it refers to critical moments of passage in family life. In transitions discovering the strengths and weaknesses is possible,

the meaning that a family attributes to events and the resources, within it and in the extended family network, on which it can count (Andolfi, Cigoli, 2003). As Cigoli (2006) argues, transiction is a passage from a certain condition to a new condition, which repropose to the members of a family the need to rework their own mutual relationship, giving to them new meanings, in view of changed conditions". In a sistemic way, this passage is seen as a "difference" that changes maternal function, marks boundaries between different levels (husband – wife, couple – son, extendend families – nuclear families) and also forces a rehash of the allegiances. In particular, it seems that for the mother this reorganization takes place within a new, peculiar and independent psychic organization. For this reasons, the paper focuses on the need of exploring the use of autobiographical metaphors in educational work and on the chance to restore the meaning, the direction, the rhythm of the plot that That frequently proves to be misplaced through a family history.

Therefore, in this work the opportunity will be analyze for psycho-pedagogic educators still in training to meditate on their personal experience related to the connection between their own family history and their educational choices.

2. The genogram as a training tool

From this perspective we present a study with the collaboration of the students attending the course of "Pedagogy of Family Relation" offered at the University of Naples "Federico II" in which the most prominent methodology used to shape the familiar plot has been the so called "tri-generational genogram" (Bowen, 1979) used both in psychotherapy and in the field of education (Mazzoni, Veronesi, 2007) . The genogram consists in a form of representation of a family tree able to report pieces of information concerning the members of the same family and the relations among them over at least three generations, highlighting them through a graphic representation aimed at giving an easier global outlook over the usually complex family patterns. This "pencil-paper method favors the development of an individual perception of family relations, of the transformations that have been characterizing it over the different phases of the life cycle as well as the ways thorough which a family has guarded its own myths and has handled different critical situations. This a tool that allows to detect the physical and emotional distances between people, to highlight

the most hidden emotional dynamics, to express the subjective and to observe formal redundancies, differences or regularities in the configuration of relationships, events or family behavior. The genogram is a heterogeneous, flexible, ductile and multifaceted instrument; its use proves to be transversal to different contexts and settings, of a therapeutic and not therapeutic nature, from couple counseling, to family therapy and training fields. Bowen first spoke about it in 1967, during a conference on Family Researches. The necessity that lead Bowen to elaborate this “technique of reconnaissance of family fields” was to retrace the transmission of family characteristics over the generations (Bowen, 1979). According to Cigoli and Tamanza, the genogram graphically highlights family information, in order to provide a quick overview of complex family patterns and, therefore, it is a form of family tree that records information about family members and their relationships, for at least three generations. Notwithstanding, even if it derives from the prospect of the genealogical tree, it differs from it because it includes the relational and functional aspect. “It is what remains once the family tree has been forgotten” (Cigoli, 2006). It helps people to grow aware of family scripts, myths, secrets, roles, beliefs. From this perspective the contact with the situations relating to the so called tri-generational histories proves to be less difficult than it. Furthermore it allows, in addition, to understand the symbolic meanings that are organised over throughout a series of transgenerational conventions (Byng-Hall, 1995). Starting from a purely descriptive structure, like a map, the genogram stands as a syntactic, semantic and pragmatic instrument. Furthermore, in this piece of research we have made use of different narrative supports including texts, photographs and various significant exhibits. This brings us on to analyze the results topicality of the genogram; it derives from the fact that events that embrace more than one generation are seen in a perspective that refers to the present, namely, to the meaning they may have in the here and now. In this paper, the genogram has been analyzed as an intervention and training tool with the aim of describing its possible pedagogical uses. Its application is very frequent in the training of the family psychotherapist (Lupoi et Al., 2009). The genogram experimentation allows the therapist in training to elaborate his family history, working on relations with the Family of Origin through the active and supportive participation of the group and the teacher. Additionally it enables the therapist to deepen the work on the therapist’s self, in order to promote personal and professional growth and evolution (Cirillo et Alii, 2011; Canevaro & Gritti, 1995). Among the extra-therapeutic applica-

tions of the genogram, we examined university and career counseling developed mostly in the United States (Daughhetee, 2001).

Its applications in the university counseling allow students and counselors to detect the influence exerted by family models on their educational background. In order to investigate this aspect, a variant of the genogram, known as the “academic genogram”, has been proposed. In this field of application, the genogram gives the opportunity to identify the individuals who have proved to be significant for the formation of students’ expectations of success. Furthermore, in career counseling it is useful to determine the influence of family systems on career choices and decisions and also to identify the subjects that have conditioned the formation of client career expectations. For instance, school counselors Mallott and Magnuson used the genogram to investigate family influences that affect career choice and to explain professional models, themes, and values. In professional consultation the genogram performs the accomplishment of different purposes. Firstly, the genogram is a useful tool for the exploration of the family system influence on career decisions and a privileged approach modality to the treatment of intergenerational problems for those who take career changes (Moon, Coleman, McCollum, Nelson and Jensen-Scott, 1993). Secondly, it is an instrument that can help the counselor and the client to define the subjects that, within the client’s family, have assumed a significant role in the formation of the client’s career expectations. Consequently the counselor is enabled to achieve a better understanding of the client’s business vision. As a result possible to identify any barriers posed by significant others or that are perceived by the client as restrictions. Stereotypes related to sexual roles can be identified. This brings us on to argue that is also possible to detect a potential ambivalence between the positive perception that the client has of the lifestyle of another family member and the negative perception that he has of his occupation. Furthermore, it is useful to assess the reinforcements to role models. Okiishi has extended the use of the genogram to career counseling in order to explore sources of influence, values, life roles, strategies for decision-making and obstacles to success (1987). The approach proposed is an intervention divided into three phases: 1) the construction of the genogram by the counselor based on the client’s instructions; 2) the registration of the professions carried out by the individuals mentioned in the genogram; 3) the exploration of the influence of family models on the vision of the world, on career values and on other related constructs. With the client, during this third phase, we analyse the way these models have been perceived and internalized by the client himself

and the reinforcements, that continue to support the models mentioned above, are identified. With the authorization of the client and based on a previous knowledge, the counselor can deal with omissions, inconsistencies and possible alternatives in a later stage. The three- phase cycle ends with a discussion with the client about the members of his family. The graphic construction by the interviewer follows the technical prescriptions of the genogram traditionally intended. The second phase opens a range of different alternatives. An option would be to indicate the dates of significant life events in order to provide a temporal perspective. Subsequently, during this second phase, are listed the working occupations of each family member included in the genogram. During the interview phase on the contents of the genogram several or all of the four evaluation areas suggested by Mitchell and Krumboltz are investigated, especially when the problems regarding the decisional processes seem to be related to a dysfunctional or inappropriate self-perception of the client.

These four areas investigate: a) the contents of the client's self-perception and the generalizations concerning his personal vision of the world; b) the processes for which these beliefs have been structured; c) if these beliefs really create problems; d) if such beliefs conceal even deeper and, at the same time, unexpressed convictions. Discussion areas may include client perceptions about: a) the success of the members of his family; b) the increase or decrease of mobility related to being a member of the family and having a career; c) the way to manage time, space, money and relationships inside and outside the family; d) the integration by each member of the different roles of life. Moon, Coleman, McCollum, Nelson and Jensen-Scott have further expanded Okiishi's career decision-making processes and predictions for career changes. Combining Bowen's theory and Super's career development theory, formulated in 1984, these authors use the genogram to investigate and explain gender roles, decision models, career values within intergenerational family related issues. More specifically, the genogram in this field of studies can be used to explore seven areas:

1. Multigenerational themes concerning education, career, gender roles;
2. The multigenerational decision models of the family;
3. Family rules about the acceptable range of possibilities and occupational positions;
4. Changes in career patterns across the generations;
5. The influence of important social changes and / or historical events on the professional choices of family members;

6. The career models of the various family members, the effects of the professional role in leisure time, the role of citizens, the roles that the members of the family are expected to transmit over time;
7. Influence of the family loyalty system, broken dreams, expectations on career issues.

Investigating all the seven areas described above is not necessary, we must argue, nevertheless the counselor will be guided by his professional judgment in deciding which areas to explore for specific clients (Moon, Coleman, McCollum, Nelson and Jensen-Scott, 1993). The aim of the exercise is firstly to help students to reflect on the relationship between generations and their own training path and, secondly, to acquire a methodological observation and evaluation of family relationships that can be used both with families and with groups, couples and individuals. For several years the genogram has also been used in a pedagogical perspective as a reflective device on its own formative history and on the professional choice. The telling of oneself can arise spontaneously, within families, just to try to break the barriers of silence, especially in the presence of (or later on) strong conflicts. We need narration, but frequently we are not able to transpose this need into our family history and so we look for stories outside. Therefore, we have to ask ourselves, on the use of the autobiographical metaphor, on how our personal and family history can take back the sense, the direction, the rhythm of the plot and of the weave that very often we're missing. For these reasons, "to say and not to say" in the family must be placed in the outline of the story, because educational and training facts are created right in the passage from saying to telling.

3. The exploratory study

As part of the academic year 2017-2018, students who participated in the Course in Pedagogy of Family Relationships, Degree Course in Sciences and Psychological Techniques, were asked to draft their own genogram through its design, possibly with the help of a specific software (Genopro), at the level of three generations (children, parents and grandparents, with related uncles and nephews). The criteria of assignment included a further develop of the genogram through the drafting of a brief elaboration of the story centered on three points: 1) Observation: the genogram shall be followed by a short narration that includes an introduction on the family with

some essential characteristics (components, context in which it grows and / or lives, essential kinship, life cycle in which it is located, some of its particularities) 2) Evaluation: students were asked identify in the previous narrative resources and bonds that are perpetuated in the family through generations. In this sense, family history served as a context to better understand the family. In the criteria of assignment, it was put in evidence that everything said had a precise reference to what was told in the genogram 3) Intervention: In conclusion, it was necessary to draft a reflection on what would be useful to “untie the knots” in that family and to promote its own resources with reference to both present and future development tasks. This research analyzed 25 stories of students in Family relation Pedagogy at the University of Naples “Federico II”. In order to analyze the texts from a qualitative perspective, we choose NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software often used in the grounded theory researches (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). NVivo helps researchers to organize and explore links between ideas. In this work, the use of the software should be considered to be a guide to address the reasearcher’s analysis (Gambacorti – Passerini B., Biffi E., Zannini L., 2017). First, we examined the word frequency in the texts, highlighting the most common. Using this input, we created a word cloud, showing the key words used by students. In the cloud, the most important terms are shown bigger than others, underlining also their weight.



Fig.1 Words Cloud.

The cluster analysis, instead, provided us with information concerning relationships between elements, through similarity and affinity, comparisons and distance present in the corpus (Giuliano e La Rocca, 2008).

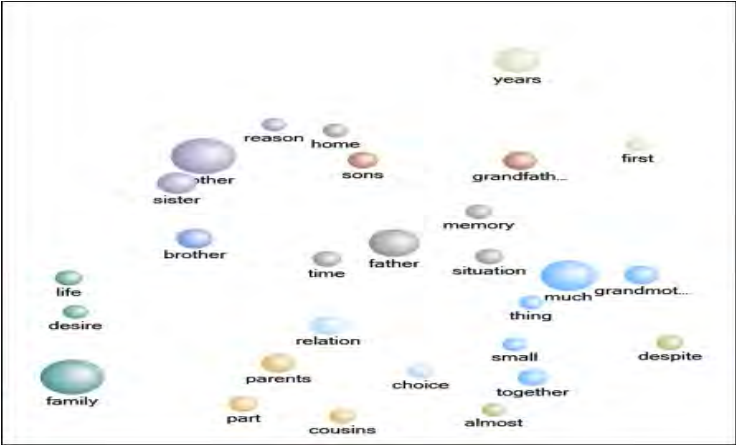


Fig. 2 Cluster Analysis.

In the tree map, as in cluster analysis, the mother’s role appears to coincide with the whole family one, since the motherly, as the organizer of the sense, leads what derives from it. Moving from the “roots” to the side area of the graph, we can notice an openness to external relations in which desires and reason, memories and situations, life and choices connected to it take form; the compromises (represented by “almost” and “despite”) that involve the challenges of the adult age and of the processes of individuation.



Fig. 3 Tree Map.

The age of university education coincides with a crucial phase of the process of personal and professional identity development. In this period there is an increase in intrapsychic conflicts related to many aspects of the maturation process, conflicts that affect the relationship of the young person with all the institutional subjects - the family, the society, the educational institution. The theme of the construction of identity linked to professional action today manifests itself in ways that were not previously known not previously known, in a time marked by crisis and precariousness. Considering that professional choices and identity is also influenced by family mandates, Rita and Adejanju (1993) constructed "academic genograms" to examine reenactments of family patterns in school and settings. Focusing on students' responses to family events and circumstances, the authors suggested questions like "What are the messages in this family regarding education and academic success?" and "How was academic achievement encouraged, discouraged, and controlled?" (p. 22).

The genogram presents an image of the family system that is both current and historical, additionally evolutionary. The actuality derives from the fact that events that embrace more generations are seen in a perspective that refers to the present and to the meaning that behaviors of individuals belonging to a family system can have (Montagnano, Pazzagli, 1989). It helps to reformulate, re-signify and subject one's own story. Only by re-acquiring the plot written in the family memory, an individual can open his life to the generativity of his desire, freeing himself from "invisible loyalties", breaking the chain of credits and debts that nail our desire. Giving, receiving and reciprocating: this is how some authors have effectively summarized the dynamic that is clearly evident in the family bond. As Scabini, emphasized "if we place ourselves in a truly relational-intergenerational perspective, we understand that the gift / obligation relationship is not one-way but rather mutual (Scabini, 1985). Parents are not solely on the side of the gift, just as children do not place themselves only on the side of the debt, with the obligation to repay the life received; thus, even the parents were children and, therefore, these two generations are united by both the gift and the debt, they are invited to recognize in themselves the gift of life received and urged to retransmit to the next generations the care that makes life meaningful and human, through a generative project that, as Erikson reminds us, can coincide with the generation of a new life but also be directed towards other creative and donative forms ". The genogram, as an instrument of "growth", is an opportunity to write a new story that, while accepting the history of one's own family of origin, allows to differentiate

itself , opening the individual to his own desire and enabling him to get out of triangulation (Bowen, 1979).

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L.3

Linkedness: Relational Transformation and Narrative Conflict Resolution

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Introduction

Family relational systems offer our first learning experiences, generating learning blueprints or patterns. Giving value to childhood stories can enhance adult learning, offering a way to access these formative moments. These learning narratives could provide the basis for experiential learning processes. How can we develop learning models that connect different phases of life experience, recognizing a kind of fluid continuity? As we separate from our family and choose a field of study, the individuation process is furthered. The learning continues, expanding out from family to mandatory schooling, and then further expands, encompassing academic achievements within recognized institutions where diplomas and certifications open up professional pathways of practice.

In the case of mediation certifications, transformational practices are learned within accredited institutions. The connection between individual and collective conflict narratives becomes apparent when adult learners seek to master practices in conflict resolution. Personal narratives are intertwined with professional aspirations and practice. This is especially relevant when mediation is defined as 'linkedness'. Adult educators can enhance experiential learning in environments that give value to biographic approaches, tying them to narrative mediation and conflict resolution practices. Narrative methods contribute to the enhancement of democratic processes and social justice, both central themes in mediation.

Relational transformation occurs within our learning encounters. Professional practices like mediation require reflexivity, allowing mediators to

embrace self-knowledge in relation to their professional role. Giving value to these dimensions, contributes to the transformation of individual life trajectories and even possibly societal transformation. How can we better integrate these aspects into adult learning contexts, reinforcing a sense of connectedness and celebrating we-ness?

Allowing time for storytelling can be a way to generate the good life, and a just society, engaging citizens in community action. Formal certification processes interact with professional associations, giving legitimization to professional practices in the field of mediation. Using an autobiographical approach, I will connect my family history with my mediation practice and my academic work in narrative mediation. I will further discuss the pedagogical framework used in the DAS/CAS in mediation at the University of Geneva's Bramois Campus where I teach narrative mediation and narrative conflict resolution.

In this paper, I hope to enkindle a shared awe for the beauty of our unique storylines, showing how this aesthetic approach contributes to the configuring of our pedagogical frameworks. Biographical research can be used as a theoretical support in relation to narrative conflict resolution. A theoretical bridge between biographical methods and narrative mediation can reinforce practice and pedagogy. I propose to investigate how transformational processes can be generated when adult learners enter into continuing education such as mediation trainings and certifications. Also, I would like to explore how adult educators can better model this transformative continuity within formal learning settings and research. How can we use our own stories to reinforce our teaching methods? How can my teaching story be integrated into a model or template capable of fostering shared understanding?

Honoring Knowledge Transmitted Through Family Lines

Nel Noddings is one of the most well-known scholars that gives recognition to the knowledge we gain within our families in relation to care. As professional learning has become the most recognized form of life-long learning, knowledge gained within the home environment has been marginalized. Caring for family members is often modeled and taught within the family circle. Traditionally, care has been performed by women family members. Nel Noddings writes about *ethics of care*, bringing recognition to women's contributions to education. Mediation is a form of conflict resolution that

is often used within family and community settings. There have traditionally been designated family and community members that served the role as the peacemaker or peacekeeper, accompanying conflictual situations and seeking conflict resolution for the involved parties. Elise Boulding's scholarship stands out in her descriptions of women working from within the home to teach their children peacemaking and peacekeeping skills. Her life's work conveyed how families are the foundation for peace.

In my doctoral thesis, *Conflict Narratives: Mediation Case Studies in an Intercultural Context* (S. K. Riva-Mossman, 2009), I discuss the skills I used in my first mediation on a helicopter accident site, questioning where my skills and ability to intervene was learned. How were the skills that I learned from my parents interwoven with the professional skills I learned during my European Master's Degree in Mediation? As I was not formally trained to intervene in emergency situations, I improvised, combining both formal training and intuitive responses that configured the mediation process. The helicopter crash event initiated me, offering me the opportunity to prove my worthiness as a mediator while serving the greater needs of the accident victims as well as the authorities who had called me to work with the emergency intervention team. Abraham Joshua Heschel, a rabbi, scholar and social activist that walked next to Martin Luther King in protest wrote, "To speak of events is to imply that there are happenings in the world that are beyond the reach of our explanations" (A. Heschel, 1955, p. 210).

Narrative mediation provides a template that values storying processes. My own story of becoming a mediator on the accident site is a way for me to teach adult learners about mediation practice. Using my story as a teaching story is a useful pedagogical tool. However, when I tell my tale, I honestly add that the know-how I employed was not all gathered from my professional training. I acknowledge that some of my skills were learned from my family and community, growing up in Omaha, Nebraska. I built upon that foundation during my different mediation trainings that included professional training with role playing as well as academic training during the master's degree. As a doctoral fellow, I was given the opportunity to analyze these various influences. I do my best to be authentic, remembering these different aspects of my becomingness that have sensitized me to appreciate the becomingness of others and the co-construction of our lifeworlds. In *Unfinished*, the authors explain their approach to the anthropology of becomingness:

We tell stories that are as much material and political-economic as personal and ethical. We are always working outward: pulling into line

with our subjects, moving sideways to follow them, getting out of their way, returning and sitting with them, drawing out characters, probing philosophical questions, bringing certain concepts into focus, and letting others emerge only partially, but meaningfully so (J. Biehl, P. Locke, p. xii).

Linking Narrative Conflict Resolution and Social Change

John Winslade, Gerald Monk, and Sara Cobb are scholar practitioners that have written extensively about the narrative model in mediation and conflict resolution. Their books and teachings have influenced both the practice and the theoretical framework of mediation by proposing an alternative approach, stemming from social constructionist theories and models. Their contributions create new lines of flight, opening pathways for transformative practices that englobe scholarship, practice, and social transformation.

The TAOS Institute recently created Worldshare Books that offer free access to scientific publications from affiliated scholars. I contributed in the book *“Education as Social Construction”* edited by K. Gergen, S. McNamee, and E. Tseliou, writing a chapter entitled *“Culture Change in Educational Contexts”* (Riva-Mossman, 2015). In my contribution, I recount the transformative process that I initiated at the Lausanne school for hearing impaired children. Learning processes are oriented by how we determine what is valuable. We can look at evaluation in a traditional way or we can understand evaluation in a new light by focusing on e-evaluation “Here we see that not only do multiple inter-relations become central but so too does the move from evaluation to valuation. Evaluation is, as we have said, a question of value” (McNamee & Hosking, 2012 p. 94).

There is an institutional culture change when evaluation is implemented within the social constructionist framework. Ways of evaluating students in mediation trainings requires a congruent approach, aligned with social constructionist theories that are relevant guideposts. The evaluation process should serve the experiential learning process and be transparently explicated beforehand. The practice of narrative mediation implies a culture change in conflict resolution. This social change is reinforced by utilizing new forms of evaluation. Only an integral approach can maintain the transformational process.

The authors stress valuing over evaluating by asking organizations what they value. By questioning the different professional groups, that represent

the various practices within an organization, they shift from a relational focus rather than an individual focus. The transformative processes cultivated within the learning experience can be transferred to the way professionals position themselves as they perform their practices. Ways of “e-evaluating” in reference to social constructionist positioning, influence narrative mediation trainings for adult learners. In the case study involving the special education department, developing a culture of care became a unifying goal for the educational and therapeutic professionals facing new challenges in relation to multi-handicapped children.

When teaching mediation, it is important to establish a coherency between learning and practice, reinforced through shared values as well as shared academic orientations and research ethics. Teaching narrative mediation requires a coherent integration of the theoretical foundations that are implied in the literature throughout the pedagogical program. “For us, social construction is not a theory that proposes particular techniques or methods for practice but is more of a general orientation or thought style—a way of engaging with the world that centers on dialogue and multiplicity—an orientation that gives new meaning and value to ongoing and open dialogues” (Hosking & McNamee, 2006, p. 23).

Mediation Defined as Linkedness

I have previously defined mediation as *linkedness* in my thesis (S.K. Riva-Mossman, 2009). Linkedness, is a way of being linked to or in relation to the other. Linkedness is opposed to de-linkedness a form of ‘delinquency’ that implies that the relationship has been broken. Johan Decklerck’s lectures at the Institute Universitaire Kürt Bösch in 1998 familiarized me with this terminology. Decklerck’s work in prisons allowed him to look at mediation from the lens of delinquency. Imagine a chain with links. When one of the links in a chain breaks, reparation is required. Linkedness is similar to connectivity. As a mediator, I actively make links, weaving together a relational fabric capable of sustaining the transformational process inherent in conflict resolution settings. One of the *American Heritage Dictionary* definitions for mediation is “being in the middle”. My posture in mediation can be described as offering myself as a connecting, relational force or relational glue, permeating the process.

There are ways of being in the world that reinforce the transformational processes that we partake in. As both teacher and mediator, I am relating,

narrating, and making sense of the world in which I live. I offer my mediation knowledge and services, taking responsibility for my thoughts and actions. The narrative approach offers scholar practitioners the opportunity to give value to the aesthetic dimensions of Self and life history. Our family memoirs also configure our becomingness. They are the backdrop on the stage of our life's performance. In the anthropology of becoming social scientists look at the unfolding social processes as unfinished paintings that show the etched outlines containing the forms and colors that will be painted on the canvas (Biehl & Locke, 2017).

Building on the unfinished painting metaphor, may I suggest that we are all writing our life story within an outline or story arc. There may be a foreword, chapters in the middle, and even possibly an afterword. It is our *authorship* that contains the process, floating on a sea of stories. The way we narrate our stories and the flyways that we imagine, in the storytelling process, offer the framework for transformation. Our intention to ethically participate sets the course of our journey. By consulting historical maps that have pinpointed the good life that may have existed before us, our journey is accompanied by descriptions of imagined castled cities like Camelot where the Knights of the Round Table convened, and chivalry reigned. Navigating historical cartographies, we travel forward, using their inspiration to map our own trajectories in the quest for the Holy Grail that may shapeshift over the centuries, as humanity finds its way forward. Our illnesses and conflicts can be seen as chalices, holding transformational potential. In reference to Arthur Kleinman's *Illness Narratives*, my thesis looks into conflict narratives, using the eight questions that Kleinman proposes to better understand the meaning of illness in a patient's life (Kleinman, 1989).

Our relationship to both illness and conflict carries an inherent viriditas, or greenness that can empower, allowing future relationships to bud and bloom. Hildegard von Bingen's visions contribute to the understanding of greenness and the essence of life transforming practices. She lived and wrote in the 1200's.

Hildegard Von Bingen wrote:

*"O most honored Greening Force,
You who roots in the Sun;
You who lights up, in shining serenity, within a wheel
That earthly excellence fails to comprehend.*

*You are enfolded
 In the weaving of divine mysteries.
 You redden like the dawn
 and you burn: flame of the Sun.”*
 Hildegard von Bingen, Causae et Curae

Often times historical facts are transposed as we recount our legends. Just like the Arthurian Legends that have been re-written and reinterpreted through time depending on the lens of the teller. We may not be able to change the events in our life; however, we can transform our perception of those events. The theoretical development of the Narrative Mediation Model underscores this aspect, “Taking stories seriously, to us, means treating them as having the power to shape experiences, influence mind-sets, and construct relationships. It also means seeing them as having a life of their own, as embarking on a mission that sometimes seems to drag people along behind.” (J. Winslade, G. Monk, 2008, p.1) In a chain of events, our legends capture our imagination and connect us through time. Much in the same way, our search for a culture of peace continues to evade and hearten us, in a kind of historical connectedness valuing the questing process. So do our family lines of inheritance and filiation bind us. Our linkedness is interlaced in an archetypal and holographic continuum.

*“So do our minutes hasten to their end;
 Each changing place with that which goes before,
 In sequent toil all forwards do contend,
 Nativity, once in the main of light,
 Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown’d,
 Crooked eclipses ‘gainst his glory fight,
 And Time that gave doth now his gift confound”*
 (Shakespeare’s Sonnet LX)

Politics and Poetics: Underscoring the Aesthetic Quality of Narrative

Sara Cobb’s reference to Hannah Arendt’s theories of natality provide a central placeholder, marking the fragility of human dignity. She defends a solid position, grounded in birthright, stating that because we are born into the world, we deserve to be treated with dignity. Each unique way of being born elicits a kind of awe for the beauty of individual self-expression.

Arendt argues that people are human because they were born. And I would add that because they are born, they are legitimate as human beings. The dimensions of that legitimacy and its relation to its own underbelly are constructions that can be created in interaction, at any time. But love is not just a moment within a narrative transformation process. It is the practice of continually, persistently, appreciating the complexity and the beauty of people, and continually and persistently constructing them so, with them, about them, with others. It is, in fact, an artistic project, one that calls for new “lines of flight”, new configurations of meanings, and the social construction of a relationship through which complexity emerges without destroying legitimacy (Cobb, 2013 p. 284).

It is through the artistic project that we can reinforce new “lines of flight”. New meanings and relationships are generated by engaging in the narrative mediation process. When beauty and complexity are valued, each life story elicits a form of radical amazement that calls forth wonder for the ineffable as Abraham Heschel explains:

Concepts, words must not become screens; they must be regarded as windows. The roots of ultimate insights are found, as said above, not on the level of discursive thinking, but on the level of wonder and radical amazement, in the depth of awe, in our sensitivity to the mystery, in our awareness of the ineffable. It is the level on which the great things happen to the soul, where the unique insights of art, religion, and philosophy come into being (Heschel, 1955, p.117).

The aesthetic nature of our narratives and becomingness is indeed a wonderful art form. Narrative conflict resolution places the aesthetic at the heart of the transformative process. The beauty of each life story when met with wonder, awe, and radical amazement, enkindles transfiguration. Here, new relational possibilities arise, opening into previously unimagined flyways. It is through our appreciation for the ineffable in life stories that we are transported to relational encounters capable of engendering transformation.

Much like our narratives expressed in mediation sessions, our auto-biographies are written testimonies that often include our descriptions of injustices as well as our triumphs and hopes for a better life. Hannah Arendt’s coverage of the Nuremburg trials allowed her to witness Adolph Eichmann’s testimony, developing theories that continue to guide scholars in their pursuit of defining the good life in contrast to the horrors committed during

World War II. Eichmann's testimony and Arendt's analysis of the court proceedings during the hearings transformed our collective understanding of "the banality of evil". Arendt underscores the importance of thinking and taking responsibility for one's actions in opposition to following orders that can lead, as in Eichmann's case, to Nazi War Crimes and genocide (H. Arendt, 1963).

Sara Cobb asks a fundamental question in *Speaking of Violence, The Politics and Poetics of Narrative Conflict Resolution*. She goes beyond her previous theories in relation to narrative conflict resolution, insisting that we must have a way to evaluate the storylines or 'lines of flight' that are co-constructed during the mediation process. She asks this compelling question: How can we develop criteria that allows us to distinguish which story is a better story?

The better formed-story is one that requires this destabilization of the main storylines, so that closure and narrative compression are forestalled – if the subject positions could be more complex (legitimacy and its underbelly), the storylines would remain open, slightly destabilized, and the implicit connections to subordinate storylines would multiply (Cobb, 2003 p. 271).

Narrative mediation and conflict resolution imply that we can transform our narratives and therefore our perceptions of the conflict that we are participating in. Yet, how do we know that the new emerging story, our co-constructed becomingness, is truly a better storyline? Even more so, how can public 'hearings' like the Nuremburg trials sensitize us, rendering us conscious of our responsibility to think and act appropriately, with dignity and reverence for life? When we truly hear the other, embracing their complexity, there is a multiplication of new possibilities that can emerge. Through processes where parties are encouraged to maintain enriched dialogues, new flyways are mapped, and better stories are told.

Language constitutes our lifeworlds. Words are vessels that carry transformative potential within their meaning. This is where the aesthetic dimension comes in to *play*, giving rise to the poetics of narrative. During this dance of words, we *play* with dialogues that link us to our environment, relating us to and constituting our social worlds. "Although the labor of men and women to improve their world is rooted in the material conditions of their era, it is also affected by their capacity to learn from the past, to imagine, and to plan for the future" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 129).

Vygotsky's work gives importance to both play and speech in human developmental processes. Narrative conflict resolution builds upon Vygotsky's findings. "These observations lead me to the conclusion that *children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as their eyes and hands*" (L.S. Vygotsky, 1978 p. 26). His observations can help us to better understand how speech, and the narrating process, contribute to problem solving and therefore conflict resolution. Dialogical practices support problem solving processes. We use our words to find ways to resolve the dilemmas and problematics we are confronted with, just as we use other tools. Narrative mediation recognizes how our speaking of violence and of our hopes is in fact and intricate part of our developmental process; our evolutionary way.

Narrative models in mediation and conflict resolution are also grounded in theories that explicitly refer to power. John Winslade and Gerlad Monk refer specifically to Michel Foucault's work in *Narrative Mediation* (J. Winslade, G. Monk, 2000). Sara Cobb's references to Hannah Arendt solidify her own theoretical groundings, adding yet another important layer to the development of narrative models by giving a considerable place to philosophical references. These scholar practitioners have chosen to accord a central place to philosophers seeking to expose social injustice. The analytical deconstruction of conflict, both individual and collective, can ultimately serve to foster more flourishing ways of relating, by shedding light on the factors that can be shown to sustain oppression.

Our connectedness and belonging are often enhanced through the mediation process when the mediator is positioned in-between, to separate that which is linked, in an attempt to bring together parties in a transformed way of relating. Narrative mediation elicits social change through the enactment of its methodology. Narrative approaches can be applied to a variety of conflict resolution situations, generating relational practices that foster social transformation.

By accessing stories of hope, people are invited to construct bright and hopeful futures. However, stories of indignation and despair, speaking of violence, are also an integral part of the narrative model in conflict resolution. Narrative practices are used for restorative conferencing and mediation in organizations, schools, health care, divorce cases, employer and employee problems, and civil and international conflicts. The narrative model's contribution to post-modern conflict resolution analysis and practice supplements scholar practitioners and their practices, as they generate new ways to go forward within emerging social and political contexts. In reference to Jacques Derrida's *démocratie à l'avenir*, or in English "democracy to

come”, practitioners seek to demonstrate how narrative practices can reinforce democratic principles, safeguarding social justice.

While teaching narrative practices in the field, offering engaged scholar practitioners a reflexive space to learn more about narrative mediation and social change practices, teachers must be sensitive to the life trajectories of their lifelong learners. While speaking about human rights, mediation, and conflict resolution within educational and international contexts, teachers not only outline analytical frameworks, but also teach their practices in small group settings, modeling what it is to be ‘in between’. Role playing is often used as part of the experiential learning process. But despite all the focus on theory, models and role playing, charisma may also play an important role in the transformative process.

While presenting a course on narrative mediation, referring to charisma as a characteristic that can influence mediation outcomes, a student recently asked me, “So are mediators gurus?”. Historically, the word charisma is rooted in the Christian religion. The Church writings underscore the downpour of charismatic gifts that happen the moment one goes through Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is frequently represented as both a healer and mediator. As mediators strive to embody Jesus’s example it is important to cultivate a kind of reflexivity that can assure a healthy balance.

The influence of today’s media that portrays certain outstanding individuals as possessing powers greater than life, requires us to cultivate humility. There may be a risk of becoming a mediation ‘guru’ in the present when the healing gifts are not kept in check with a dose of humility. Mediators must seek a healthy balance between confidence in their practice and humility in their ability to perform even when they are not affiliated with a particular religion. Post-modern implications might be understood in the following way:

In order for Charismatics to continue shaping their image in the ‘likeness of Jesus’, they need to recall the values of pride as well as saintly humility. This means a withdrawal from the world of fame to safeguard the boundaries of religiosity threatened by media popularity (D’Abreu, 2002, p. 240).

Furthermore, the methods that allow mediation participants to co-construct meaning, uphold a more egalitarian posture, positioning the mediator as a facilitator and not an expert like a psychiatrist, psychologist, lawyer or judge. This aspect is reinforced by the multi-partial positioning of the

mediator within the process, that further acts to safeguard the mediator from becoming a modern guru. The embodiment of humility contributes to the flattening of hierarchical power structures that seek to place charismatic leaders on a pedestal, uprooted from grounded and proven methods. The mediators posturing is not only a central defining issue, but an ongoing balancing act. As mediators, we are challenged to not *know for* but to *know with*, an expression of we-ness in the process of co-constructing resolutions; a form of mediatorship.

Enacting a Pedagogy of Radical Democratic Hope

The University of Geneva has a program designed to bring together scholar practitioners working to promote social justice through narrative approaches as well as other mediation models, crafting a bridge of transdisciplinary understanding. Social suffering is addressed through the lens of the social sciences by speaking of conflict narratives presented through case studies. The aim is to allow participants to have experiential learning encounters. The pedagogical focus on learning conversations is designed to inform participants through close relational encounters within narrative learning circles.

By integrating these experiential teaching methods in the mediation training, the certification process offers a coherent pedagogical approach. As learners become mediators, they enter into a socializing process designed to foster individual and societal transformation. Following the certification, mediators can choose to belong to professional organizations that are actively involved in the promotion of mediation as an officially recognized form of conflict resolution, accessible to all citizens. As more and more professionals go through the experiential learning process, the social fabric is progressively transformed, when mediators become active participants in their communities, organizations, and legal systems. As mediators engage in reforming their judicial processes, by including mediation as an official and recognized option for citizens facing conflicts, democracy is upheld. Mediation as a form of participative governance gives voice to citizens, by allowing them to be active participants in the resolution of their conflicts.

Schools and other state institutions are also integrating mediation as part of their officially recognized procedures. For instance, teaching methods have been transformed using cooperative educational methods introduced by Johnson and Johnson (D. Johnson, R. Johnson, 2009). Their

work has helped to change the game from competition to cooperation in classrooms during the formative years of young children. Peer mediation has also been introduced in schools to foster cooperation, empowering young leaders with conflict resolution skills. Finally, states like Nebraska have incorporated mediation in special education in relation to individual curriculums that are defined yearly for special needs children. Another example of innovative practice and legislation is *The Nebraska Parenting Act* that outlines mediation procedures for families with children that are separating and divorcing.

Nebraska's legislation is citizen centered, placing children's rights at the forefront of legal proceedings. Nebraska transformed legislation, offering mediation and collaborative practices that are founded on a culture of cooperation. Omaha first initiated a pilot project for the State of Nebraska that offered a course entitled, "What About the Children", educating parents before they enter into the mediation process concerning custody issues. Omaha is one of those castled cities where mediation is a legitimate conflict resolution practice integrated into state legislation and also where the license plates read, "Nebraska The Good Life".

However, there is often a resistance to mediation practices that may be seen as subversively undermining hierarchical power structures by giving voice to the marginalized. In my own practice with political asylum seekers in Valais, Switzerland, creating an open mediation service was perceived to threaten both social workers and psychologists. The introduction of the mediation service within the professional landscape was challenged by other more established professionals. Mediation gave voice to political asylum seekers that were allowed to co-construct meaning with their hosts. They also were permitted to participate actively in the conflict resolution process as more equal partners among decision makers. Eventually, political pressure forced the Social Action Service to stop providing mediation services to political asylum seekers, costing me my full-time job. My own destiny meshed with the political asylum seekers that I was serving, in what may be comprehended as an entangled fight for social justice.

Participative governance can be interpreted as a threat to traditional power structures. Mediation practices do not always align with organizational or institutional objectives. The core principles of mediation aim to uphold democracy. Giving voice to those who are not heard, by bringing them into the decision-making circle, can often elicit a defense mechanism in the recognized circles of influence and power. Entering into cooperative processes may appear risky for certain stakeholders. The future of democ-

racy depends upon our ability to innovate, creating participative processes that can engender new forms of group mind that serve the greater good.

Needs assessment processes within institutions can engender this form of organizational intelligence, using *Appreciative Inquiry* as a tool for organizational transformation (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). There is a collaborative continuum that can be implemented within organizations that coherently incorporates various participatory methods, reinforcing dialogical and collaborative practices. Conversations and processes can be designed to fit the needs of the organization. Organizational intelligence is fostered through dialogues that generate efficient self-organizing systems.

Narrative Mediation and Narrative Conflict Resolution are methodological tools that can be used for social transformation in conjunction with other methods. Social change processes can require the use of a plurality of methods at different moments, depending upon the agreed upon goal of the intervention and the rhythm of the participants. The spectrum that can be targeted ranges from the individual to the communal, and even global, generating an integral transformation inclusive of the multi-levels existing in society. Still, what happens when stories clash? “Good faith efforts to resolve conflict rest upon the desire to move past the entanglements, frustrations, and ragged circumstances that occur when conversations get stuck” (Winslade, & Monk, 2013, p. 122). In this way, the mediator models conflict resolution leadership in the field. The charisma that the mediator brings into the mediation process, reinforces the methods inherent in the narrative mediation model. Embodying a certain confidence in the process is a way of exemplifying good faith and eliciting participants to engage in a concordant manner.

Autoethnography is yet another tool, engendering self-transformation. It can also be seen as a narrative practice. My own autoethnographic process has allowed me to express my perceptions about adoption, reunion, and belonging. By telling my story and using my manuscript to elicit healing conversations within my family and social networks, I have co-constructed a transformative process that has incorporated my parents, siblings, and dearest friends and mentors in a special kind of kinship. I am currently playing with the title: “Homing In: A Story Mandala Connecting Adoption, Reunion, and Belonging”. By remembering our family stories and sharing our letters that lead to my reunion with my birth family, I created a dialogical space. This ongoing process has offered a form of narrative conflict resolution, opening up new relational possibilities and flyways stemming from the complexity that I faced as an adopted child who found her

birth family. The writing process has been a form of ‘manumitting’ that I have understood as an emancipatory process. I have used my *penmanship* and *authorship* as tools to more freely act and create ‘lines of flight’. As the storyline has unfolded, relational trajectories have been simultaneously transformed through a portal of creativity. The bondages of the past are undone, as new relational bonds are fostered. Synchronicity revealed new configurations of time and space that sustained my families’ relational processes, allowing us to move beyond undesired entanglements. My hands wrote me free from enslaving patterns, confining memes, and painful perceptions, allowing us all to share in more empowered and fulfilling relationships, despite our original relational brokenness. What was delinked, became relinked, in an ongoing relational linkedness.

When I refer to my autoethnographic work, I allow students to embrace their own stories and writing processes. By sharing my stories, I give value to narrative. In giving value to narrative, I facilitate the inclusion of the narrative model of conflict resolution within the curriculum at the University of Geneva. In this way, I belong to the Narrative Mediation school of practice, as both a scholar practitioner and social constructionist and affiliate with the Taos Institute. My thesis as well as my qualitative research reports have incorporated narrative methods and approaches. More recently, I have been inspired by autoethnography methods (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). Qualitative research methods and research designs that further reinforce the narrative model within learning environments, buttress and ground my research tools, adding more transformational options to my personal tool box. This form of qualitative research gives voice to individual experience, “the micro, the singular, and partial, which requires a different more fine-grained, and humble logic than that of a generality subsuming all things into aggregates, repetitions, and models” (Biehl, & Locke, 2017, p. xi). But it is also what Kenneth Gergen calls, “future forming”. When we face pressing contemporary problematics, we must not forget the aesthetic relevance of our narratives and how they play into our shared becomingness. In our connectedness, we are charting the course of “*Earthship*” through *fellowship*; both are vessels of transportation.

Referring to a *pedagogy of hope*; “It blends intentions with consequences” and “enacts a performance pedagogy of radical democratic hope” (Denzin, 2014, p. 80). Teaching Narrative Conflict Resolution is one way for me to participate in a performance pedagogy in a space where I can co-construct a hopeful democratic future. It is a kind of journeymanhood. Still, the question remains. What constitutes a better story? Subsequently, how can we

continue to foster lifelong learning experiences that reinforce the good life; the life we hope to live and share?

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M.1

The “Table for Education”: learning from community life experiences

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The paper aims to propose the learning potential of dialogue as well as of breakdown and conflict in a special context (the “Table for education”) and using a particular tool: the MAG (*Méthode d’analyse en groupe*, ie. *Method of analysis in a group*) (L.Van Campenhoudt, J-M.Chaumont, A. Franssen, 2005).

The complexity of community contexts implies the presence of diversity and requires to implement not only a plurality of levels of action, but also a plurality of interpretations. In this sense, MAG represents a useful methodological device that allows to face the analysis of phenomena that characterize the life of a community, while promoting in people involved capability to engage with diversity and otherness.

In groups, or in general in the relational contexts that involve more than one subject, the representations of the phenomena are divergent, as well as the needs and resources that each one brings. Assuming that this heterogeneity is unavoidable, we propose a possible way through which it could be managed and also promote learning.

This perspective of a relational, plural and conflictual construction of social phenomena and their hermeneutics refers to a theoretical framework that allows to assume conflict as precondition for a cooperation that is intrinsically conflictual but, precisely for this, enabling awareness of a real togetherness (Ricoeur, 1969).

1. The “Table for Education” and the research approach

The paper presents a research experience carried out in the municipality of Orzinuovi, a large municipality in the Province of Brescia (Italy), which adheres to the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC).

In Orzinuovi, in 2010 a “Manifesto for Education” was shared and, in 2012, an “Educational Pact” was signed. In addition, in 2013, a widespread educational sensibility and a strong sense of community led to the creation of a “Table for Education”. Around this “Table” the representatives of main educational institutions working in the territory sat: family, school, immigrants, entrepreneurs, cultural-sports-voluntary associations, Catholic Church, politics.

Even today, the aim of the Table is to create a renewed educational alliance among various community members. For this purpose, the themes of dialogue, mutual listening, negotiation, participation are considered strategic, not only as goals to achieve but also as elements characterizing the way of working within the Table itself. It is important that those who participate feel themselves as an active part of community life and have the ability and responsibility to contribute to it, creating sense of agency and social responsibility.

For these reasons, in 2014 it was decided to propose a research approach that could also become an educating way of working, capable of promoting different views, sharing ideas and projects, pooling resources and actions. It was also important to start from community life experiences, by telling stories, and creating opportunities for reflection.

The method chosen was the MAG, that is, the Method of “analysis in the group” (Van Campenhoudt, Chaumont, Franssen, 2005). This method is based on the hermeneutic approach of P. Ricoeur, namely the conflict of interpretations (Ricoeur, 1969).

The MAG has the peculiarity of addressing a heterogeneous group of people who share the same object/matter of research, but carry out different representations and divergent interests, even though they are all on the same plane (regardless of age, sex, status ...). As researcher, I opted for MAG, precisely because this method of research (but also of intervention) has the particularity of addressing groups composed of people who are directly involved and affected by the problems faced, while maintaining different positions and roles.

In concrete realization, people who are part of the Table jointly analyze the experiences/situations actually happening in the community. These

events are narrated by participants themselves, following a rigorous methodological procedure, conducted by researchers themselves. The MAG, in fact, provides a sequence consisting of a series of collective analysis on the proposed storytelling. A research or an intervention conducted through the MAG follows a well-defined sequence of multiple collective analysis (at least 2 or 3) of narratives proposed by participants. In its essential structure the MAG was divided into four phases (narration, interpretations, analysis, practical perspectives and evaluation) and 15 stages (as illustrated in the following summary table) and requires that the group meets two or three days.

Active participation by all the people sat around the table was promoted at each stage.

First phase:	THE STORYTELLING
1st stage	Story Proposals
2nd stage	Choice of stories
3rd stage	Narration
4th stage	Issues seen by the narrator
5th stage	Information requests
second phase:	INTERPRETATIONS
6th stage	First “turn of table “
7th stage	Reactions of narrator
8th stage	Re-listening to the narration (optional)
9th stage	Second “turn of table”
10th stage	Reactions of narrator
third phase:	ANALYSIS
11th stage	Convergences and divergences
12th stage	Theoretical contributions
13th stage	Researcher hypotheses and new issues
fourth phase:	PRACTICAL OUTLOOK AND ASSESSMENT
14th stage	Practical Perspectives
15th stage	Assessment

Van Campenhoudt L., Chaumont J-M., Franssen A. (2005). La méthode d'analyse en groupe. Applications aux phénomènes sociaux, p. 66.

Without going into the specific, it is important, however, to clarify some essential steps of the process, providing essential details for each phase:

- In the first phase each participant must tell a fact/event related to a situation directly experienced, which seems significant compared to the theme/issue of the meeting. It is fundamental that narrator is directly involved in the story. The narration lasts about 5 minutes and it is also necessary that each one gives concrete and evocative title to his own narration. Already this first phase offers an interesting opportunity to take note of the plurality of stories and experiences.

Afterwards, a single story is chosen by vote (providing arguments). The narrator of this story proceeds with a new narration, more detailed, carefully explaining the reasons for the choice and also responding to the informative (and not interpretative!) questions formulated by participants.

- The second phase leaves space to participants interpretations, avoiding however judgments. Narrator can further integrate his story, following this “tour” of interpretations. If it is deemed necessary, it is possible to proceed to a new listening to the story and narrator’s replies.
- In the third phase researchers propose to the group a synthesis of the interpretations, highlighting in particular the convergences and divergences emerged with respect to the explanation of the situation. Basically, all possible interpretations are put in relation, in order to find “an agreement between the disagreements”. In order to foster the growth of knowledge compared to the issues addressed, researchers can offer some theoretical and interpretative contributions. The phase closes with the possibility, for participants, to further re-problematize the issues, starting from concrete experiences.
- The fourth and final phase leads to the identification of practical perspectives, starting from shared analysis, with the aim of booting change processes. Remaining faithful to the peculiarities of MAG, even the choice of actions to be taken has no absolute value and contemplates the presence of divergent interests and conflicting opinions.

What is actually needed, to close the MAG research process, is that participants make an assessment of how they have experienced the process, what has turned out to be problematic and what were the resources.

For their part, the researchers involved draw up a report according to the following track: an introduction about the object of the work and the peculiarity of the device; the presentation of narratives; the report of partial

analysis (transcription of narration, main information gathered following participants’ questions, convergences and divergences, theoretical contributions, hypothesis and practical perspectives); a general conclusion in which the main outcomes obtained and their relationship with the aims of the research are indicated (Van Campenhoudt, Chaumont, Franssen, 2005, p. 167).

Concretely, therefore, among all stories brought by each participant, one is chosen and, through well-coordinated “rounds of table”, where convergences and divergences emerge on several occasions, each one expresses his own interpretation of the events.

The process of confrontation and negotiation makes it possible to arrive at a “synthesis scheme”, which collects the different interpretative hypotheses and problematizations, arriving at a formalization of disagreements and dissent. The summary scheme also includes a specific area dedicated to exploring and discussing possible concrete actions to be undertaken in relation to the question/problem analyzed. The elaboration of this scheme represents a crucial passage of MAG device.

The “Table for Education” is a context particularly suited to MAG, which, to better fulfill its potential, requires the presence of a special circumstance: that of bringing together people affected by the studied problem and willing to be involved in a “collective exercise”, on a plan of equality, regardless of status, age, gender.

The reciprocal is also valid: the MAG tool is also particularly useful with respect to the Table’s mission. The Table for Education is in fact designed as a space for dialogue and reflexivity, in which relationships are experienced as resources and occasions for learning. By listening to the narratives and interpretations of others, people who participate in the Table could discover their role in shaping experience and meaning, and how they are part of the construction of togetherness, common knowledge and we-identity.

In Orzinuovi, the MAG was tested in the year 2014/2015, in correspondence with the initial phase of multi-annual community planning. Following the conclusion of MAG, in 2016 an idea arose: to put in place interventions that could be closer to community needs, as the expression of a specific attention to the territory of Orzinuovi. A participative methodological device has been prepared, assessing community needs and resources: the Community Needs Assessment Survey (Neuber et al., 1980; Allison, & Kaye, 1997).

The “Table for Education” therefore continues its path of research and training in the perspective of togetherness, remaining faithful to the inten-

tion of functioning as a real “coalition”: ie as an organization of social subjects with different interests, who “put together” their resources (human and material) to achieve change (which they would be unable to obtain on their own). Sociological literature teaches us that coalitions also increase the sense of sharing projects, they help groups to have mutual trust (Chavis, 2001).

The fact of creating a coalition implies, however, a precise commitment (and training) towards the ability to develop more systemic visions of problems, becoming also “incubators” of original solutions. The coalitions have a coordinated, holistic, collaborative, promotional, comprehensive and culturally relevant action (Wolff, 2001): in this direction, the MAG device has set up a tool with a potential for “Table for Education”.

2. MAG’s potentiality

From the beginning to the end of the research process, the involvement and active participation of people is necessary.

The enhancement of each participant is a central element of this device, proposed to groups of people who are committed to analyze situations in which they are involved in various ways. Participants, for some aspects, find themselves in the condition of “knowing more” of researcher himself, by virtue of their competence.

Moreover, the contribution of each one is fundamental, as it brings a piece of truth and delivers it to others, not only through the narration of one’s own story but also through the analysis of other people’s narratives (Demazière, & Dubar, 1997). It is an important recognition and an activation of reflexivity both in the narration of one’s own experience and in the critical analysis of the cases proposed by others. This makes it possible to enhance the knowledge that comes from experience, that is, the fact of living within contexts and experiencing social situations (De Certeau, 1984).

Along with the enhancement of experiential knowledge, however, MAG leads, moreover, to weave this knowledge with scientific knowledge (the one represented by the researcher). Thus a virtuous circle of interdependencies is created between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge. This is considered one of the most special aspects of MAG, also distinctive compared to other methods (such as focus group), whose final analysis and understanding of social phenomena remains a matter managed by researcher (Bajoit, 2003).

In addition, this research tool generates “shared reflection”: participants don’t learn individually, but through interpersonal relationships. The resources of reflexivity, in a sense, is distributed and disseminated among all participants. This is because each person offers a unique point of view, a specific knowledge (in the case of “Table of education”, a specific knowledge of Orzinuovi community).

Finally, relying on real experiences narrated by participants, it is possible to experience the learning potential of narrative research and build togetherness through a common construction of knowledge without excluding discontents. This aspect is particularly significant for nowadays contexts, in which it is increasingly important, according to Nussbaum, to be able to put ourselves in the “shoes of the other”: it’s an essential requirement for developing democracy (Nussbaum, 2010).

The complexity of life contexts, the fragility of relationships and individualism keep people away from the possibility of sharing representations and developing overall visions of events, especially social events. The individual perspective is absolutized, with the risk of not entering into dialogue with other points of life (Habermas, 1987). Certainly each one has its own legitimate way of interpreting reality, but it is a fragmented and isolated point of view, which cannot coincide with the overall vision, for which a work of comparison is necessary, but also of conflict of interpretations.

This way of doing research and of constructing the knowledge of phenomena can explain the diversity of experiences, the complexity of representations and the dialectic of positions, precisely because it starts from them and remains anchored to their concrete occurrence. Practices are really put at the center and with respect to them we take note of the interpretative plurality that characterizes them, a plurality that is constitutive of every social and community situation.

In the specific case of the Orzinuovi “Table for Education”, the MAG allowed to create a sense of agency, sharing responsibility for and participating in the building of community projects. It was also fundamental to have the opportunity to develop complex readings of social phenomena and not to simplify the inevitable peasantry and conflict. The plurality of interpretations and the coexistence of divergences are conditions that are not only ineliminable but also generative.

Togetherness implies the ability to value the singularity of individual experiences without undocking them from a collective construction of social phenomena. It’s a tension that strongly characterizes every community life and on which it is important to work in a rigorous way, not to cancel tensions and not to simplify processes (Corcuff, 2007).

For this reason, beyond the example shown here, MAG lends itself to be used in other contexts such as, for example, neighborhood groups, school classes, educational institutions, services, professional groups, associations ... (Mercier, De Muelenaere, 2007). It isn't a coincidence that, since 1980, MAG has been proposed to groups made up of social workers, or teachers, professionals in the health sector, psychologists, magistrates, state officials, etc. We can also mention the NGOs and associations, as well as various realities referable to private sector.

3. Togetherness and educational approach to conflict

The fact of being a "relational" device makes MAG particularly formative even compared to the challenge of togetherness. By promoting people's participation and involvement at every stage, this approach allows to experience the complexity of social relationships. It is in the game of relationships and in the dialectic of confrontation that individual practices and representations can be generative. Educating people not only in the interpretative and reflective attitude, but also in taking on conflict as a paradigm intrinsic to that of cooperation, is an important educational challenge.

The MAG is configured to all effects as an organized confrontation, which begins with a story, follows certain procedures and is guided by precise tasks (Van Campenhout, Chaumont, Franssen, 2005).

People confront and clash around the same situation, but in an "ordered" way, that is listening to the narration of others, gathering information, giving space to the plurality of interpretive approaches and accepting both agreements and disagreements. This structure in a certain sense "obliges" not to bypass interactions.

The fact of organizing communications following the "turn of table" criterion, together with the acceptance of both convergences and divergences, gives everyone the right to speak and makes the participants feel challenged to express their point of view. The organization of the debate, in this perspective, is aimed at favoring the full expression of interpretative contrasts and conflicts, avoiding that only a few people take the upper hand. Guaranteeing a word space to everyone is a useful condition to bring out all differences.

The construction of the interpretative approach doesn't reject some hypotheses in favor of others, but makes them coexist and interweaves them into a deeply dialectical (but also dialogical) hermeneutic framework, which

aims to formalize dissent rather than consensus. The relational characterization of the device allows conflictuality to express itself and be analyzed, because where there is a divergence it means that a melting pot of interpretations is in action; there are glimpses of novelties and the hermeneutical processes are less static. In this perspective, contradictions and divergences express a heuristic potential.

Correlating divergences and convergences constitutes the truly distinctive element of MAG, making it useful to bring out the presence of both a cooperative dimension and a conflictual dimension in approaching social phenomena. Working to find an “agreement between disagreements” allows to give space to new thoughts, problematizations, interpretative nuances.

In order to reach the outcome of the process, the dialectical dimension is not flattened. The fact of not bringing the participants to a single thought, rather accepting the complexity of interpretation, allows to stand in divergences, resisting the temptation to reduce them to mere search for consent.

Regarding specifically the theme of conflicts and togetherness, they are included in MAG within a democratic vision of knowledge (but also of power). In this sense we can employ Ricœur perspective, according to which a democratic society recognizes itself as “divided” and its purpose is to manage its conflicts, through confrontation and debate (P. Ricœur, 2017).

Furthermore, the comparison is not merely theoretical and intellectual. By dealing with direct experiences and concrete situations, identity aspects also surface in the play of interpretations, as well as experiences, fears, defenses and resistance, the emotional world of people, doubts and questions, previous stories (Bourdieu, 1997, 2001).

In short, through the experience of Orzinuovi “Table for education”, we can recognize that MAG offers the possibility to understand relational processes and social phenomena in a more reflective way, also measuring with the presence of limits, divergent interests, systems of different values. It is a device that allows to work on different perspectives, also enhancing conflict as a triggers for transformative learning. Participants are really offered an opportunity to learn how to deal with discordances in a healthier, safer, more respectful and rewarding way (OECD, 2009). People who participated in the “Table for education” have repeatedly expressed the satisfaction of having developed a less passive and more dynamic conception of togetherness, welcoming the dialectical coexistence of cooperation and conflict.

4. Conclusion

The MAG stands out as a method based on a not merely consensual conception of community life. On the contrary, it allows to put at the center a dialectic of both cooperation and conflict (the conflict of interpretations and judgments).

Living fully this dialectic allows everyone to discover diversity as a resource, welcoming the dialectic coexistence of cooperation and conflict: it is an opportunity to learn how to handle disparities in healthier, safer, more respectful and rewarding ways.

In the case presented here, that of the “Table for Education”, this tool provided members with a device to be used in order to favor learning and make more effective and democratic decisions for Orzinuovi community. By pursuing a democratic vision of learning and developing the ability to share “critical resources”, it is possible to increase togetherness (L. Tanggaard, 2016).

Certainly what emerges from the MAG application cannot be generalized; it strictly concerns the context to which participants belong. The local dimension is an unavoidable aspect of this approach. What is produced is valid and relevant to those who have been implicated: it doesn't represent a “scientific truth” (Van Campenhoudt, Chaumont, Franssen, 2005, p. 196). Surely participants are called to overcome a merely subjective view of the facts, passing through a systematic comparison of interpretations and a tension between convergences and divergences, but the outcomes of this process cannot be generalized.

However, the device, while producing a “local” knowledge, favors decentralization, comparison and reflexivity, through the narration and the construction of a truly “collective” analysis of problems. An analysis that values interpretive pluralism and doesn't encourage people to take on the dominant interpretation. In this way the complexity of experiences is left open and value is given to diversity/plurality of hermeneutics (Lategan, 2015).

In conclusion, the MAG experimentation at the “Table for Education” allowed the participants to realize the results achieved through work in the group. New ways of comparison and new forms of relationality and being together have been established among them. The mutual recognition of common aspirations and divergent representations has accompanied people to develop a truly democratic vision of knowledge and power.

From an educational perspective, this is a very strategic objective, in order to allow people to accept the complexity inherent in the pluralism of our communities, making it a real resource.

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M.2

Lost in Paradise. Separation and Toghetherness in the Lives of Migrant Workers in Fuerteventura

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1. Methodological and theoretical framework

This paper is the result of three months of field work spent in the resort town of Corralejo, from the 19th of September to the 13th of December of 2017. Research was conducted employing participant observation, recorded semi-structured interviews and informal conversations. Interviews and conversations were carried out either in English, in Italian or Spanish, and are here translated into English for the sake of clarity. All interviews were overt, and participation was voluntary. The identities of my informants are nevertheless kept undisclosed and their details kept to a minimum, to maintain their privacy: their initials, age and nationality are specified if available.

This paper focuses on the autobiographical narratives and the participant observation of the daily lives of about twenty non-Canarian individuals between 24 and 50 years of age, who at the time of the interviews had been living and working in Corralejo for no less than a month and no more than three years. Two hostels, located at the opposite sides of town and occupied by two different groups of people, act as homes to distinct “learning cultures”. The actors who constitute these cultures “mold” (Remotti, 2007) their (collective and individual) identity accordingly: they embody their own hostel’s “culture”, their role as members of the group overlapping with their individual identity and shaping their perception of the reality around them and the way they act in it (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This analysis will also account for problematic data that emerged from interviews and observation during the research, concerning the internal conflicts in the Italian community in Corralejo, or the differences in narratives between the actors who were part of one of the two hostel “cultures” and those who were considered outsiders from both groups.

2. Historical context

When the first flights began landing in Fuerteventura's new international airport in 1973 (Delgado Arbelo, 1994), the island's economy stopped consisting mainly of fishing and goat farming and started attracting foreign tourists and international investment. This sudden economic boom boosted a massive construction development especially along the coasts, and created more workforce demands in the construction and service sectors, attracting waves of foreign workers (Morales Matos, 2002). These new arrivals, coupled with consistent migration from Western Sahara, determined a rapid increase in population, which grew from 18.192 people in 1970 to 49.542 people in 1991 (Domínguez Mújica, 2006; López de Lera, 1995). The massive, tourism-oriented land developments contributed to the burst of a speculative bubble following the 2008 global financial crisis. Spanish and foreign investors abandoned the island, leaving its economy damaged and the environment scarred by hundreds of half-built construction sites, deserted luxury resorts and housing complexes vastly oversized compared to the island's needs.

Recently Fuerteventura seems to have partly recovered. Tourism is still the essential sector by far, accounting approximately for 80% of total economic activity, and around 2 million tourists flock every year to Fuerteventura's sandy beaches. For the most part, these tourists come from Western or Central Europe: about 40% of them are Germans and around 25% from the UK, while domestic tourism sits at a mere 6%, as shown on the website *Fuerteventuraintel* (2015). The need for skilled, multilingual workers capable of communicating with international tourists, in an island where the native *Majoreros* had always been excluded, until recent times, from higher education (González Pérez, 1996, 2005), caused a large number of people again to move to the island from Spain, Europe, Latin America and Africa (Pérez, 2017). Despite the job opportunities resulting from increased tourism, the unemployment rate sits, as of the end of 2017, at around 30%: one of the highest values in Spain. Additionally, tourists today favor accommodations more inexpensive than the traditional hotels: in the South, hotels specialize in family-oriented, all-inclusive offers; in the North, the visitors can choose to stay in hostels (formally 'surf houses' or 'surf camps') or even rent entire apartments.

As a result, while sale prices for lots or buildings remained relatively low – allowing big investors to buy and develop larger parcels of the remaining building land – rent prices in touristic destinations soared, doubling in

prices in the last five years. Low-income workers found themselves displaced; many sold their properties and moved to more affordable parts of the island. According to the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE), only about half of the 30.000 official residents of the municipality of La Oliva are Spanish; even those who remained often prefer moving to the interior, far from the shores, leaving the coastal towns inhabited by a disproportionate amount of foreigners (Fernández, 2016). Corralejo, the main tourist resort in La Oliva, encapsulates all the main aspects of the changes undergone by the island in the last fifty years: just a fishing village until the '70s, it grew dramatically in a few decades, reaching a resident population of almost 17.000 people. The town spreads today in every possible direction from its *casco viejo* due to the many hotels, malls, restaurants, and above all residential areas, that make up more than half the total surface area of the town. Corralejo offers a wide variety of services to tourists and would-be settlers: restaurants, bars, clubs, car and buggy rentals, real estate agencies and clinics. However, many of the town's inhabitants, especially seasonal or foreign workers, lack the money to rent a place and are forced to live in hostels indefinitely.

The many hostels of Corralejo are hidden in plain sight in its residential areas; each one of the many rows of identical, two or three-story villas has its share of 'surf houses', as they are called even when they do not offer surf lessons. These hostels usually employ foreigners in the 20-35 age range; these workers can be either regularly paid and employed full time, or more frequently recruited via *Workaway* or similar online platforms and employed part-time for a few months, without pay. In both cases, they have access to free accommodation, usually bunk beds in a basement. The two hostels considered in this paper, which will be referred to as respectively *Strawberry* and *Pineapple*, differ from each other in a few significant ways, and their characteristics contribute to shaping two very different learning cultures.

3. Pleasure Island

The *Strawberry* hostel, in the Southern suburbs of the town, is made up by the opposite halves of two semi-detached houses, with a wall that separates the two adjacent verandas. Both buildings share their respective party walls with private houses. The hostel is operated by *workawayers* in five hour-long shifts, five days a week, in exchange for accommodation and compli-

mentary breakfast. They are in charge of cleaning, handling check-ins and check-outs, assisting the guests and acting as intermediaries between the guests and the owner. They are never really alone, however, as the manager visits them at least once a day to pick up payments and to make sure everything is in order. The manager also sees and hears everything through a couple of cameras and microphones installed in both houses, although not every employee (or guest) is aware of it. There's a curfew at 11 PM, and outside visitors aren't allowed on the premises. The workers don't appear to be excessively bothered by these working conditions since, as they explained: «it's not a very hard job, it's for a limited period of time, and it leaves lots of spare time to surf, go to the beach or relax». When asked if it doesn't bother them to work for free, they all reply that the main goal behind their choice is «not to earn money, but to avoid spending too much for what's basically a two or three-month-long vacation». One employee, a 29-year-old French woman, explains how she usually spends the whole summer working as a waitress 4-5 hours a day, seven days a week, in the French Riviera; for her Workaway, being more relaxing by comparison, is a vacation as well as an opportunity to make new experiences. As a 24-years-old Belgian workawayer put it: «it's like being in Erasmus». Only when the manager's requests become too excessive the voluntary nature of their job resurfaces, making the requests even worse: «they're not even paying us!».

Workawayers get along well with each others and with tourists. In many cases, the seemingly perennial summer weather and the repetitive activities create the illusion of being «in a bubble outside of time», reminiscent of Pinocchio's *Pleasure Island* or similar places. The location is relevant only because it offers what they are looking for: sun, sea, surf. When I ask C.C., a 26-year-old Spanish man, the reason why he chose Fuerteventura, he replies:

It was a last-minute change of plan. In short, I've been travelling for a long time. The important trip I was supposed to take now, I was supposed to go to California, to harvest marijuana, but I got afraid and on the same day I decided not to go I looked for a Workaway, and a lot of people had suggested me Fuerteventura because of surfing, the weather, the atmosphere (C.C., 13/11/17).

C.C. has already been in California once before, working in a marijuana plantation during harvest without a work permit. He did it because it gave

him the opportunity to explore the continent – in the span of a few months he managed to visit not only California but also Mexico, where he worked in a *chiringuito* for some time – and the pay was very good. However, work conditions were very harsh and the chances of being caught without a visa were high, so he decided against trying his luck a second time. He also worked as a tour guide and translator for Spanish groups in East Asia; he liked that job because it paid well and gave him the opportunity of travelling far; however it forced him to move from one place to the next, visiting «up to three sites in a day, without really absorbing anything». About Fuerteventura, C.C. is conflicted. On the one hand, he's happy to be travelling far from home, meeting new people, surfing almost every day and not being obliged to go around visiting places; on the other hand, he feels like the place «is too touristic». Asked to elaborate, he explains:

In Mexico I know lots of local people, I work with local people. Here I don't know any locals. [...] It seems as if here the locals stay [just] within locals, the tourists with other tourists, the surfers with other surfers, the Germans with other Germans, the Italians with other Italians. [...] I don't know, this is what I don't like, the atmosphere. Like it's a good atmosphere, because there are no troubles, but it's like a touristic bubble, like it's a place just for vacation. [...] If I didn't surf, I'd stay... [no more than] a week (C.C., 13/11/17).

When I ask C.C. how he feels about the friends he made in the hostel, and if he isn't worried about losing them when he's going to leave Fuerteventura, his reply inadvertently explains the idea of being in a 'bubble' as well:

I'm used to [friendships ending]. When I meet someone, and we become good friends, I really enjoy that friendship. I learn a lot from these people, but in the end... I know from the first moment that it's going to end. I never think "it's going to last forever". [...] It always has an expiration date, even when you say "we're going to meet again", it's very unlikely. But at the same time, since you know it's going to end, [...] it's more intense. I feel better with these people than with my life-long friends in Barcelona, that I see everyday, with whom I go out every day, we've always been the same people, for the last ten years... Here you feel like a little kid, you know? [...] When we were kids, and we played games, or had some kind of activity that we really loved... like I loved going to the park, playing soccer, it was really fun, it was the best, no? But then this sensation, as the

years pass, it ends, and you don't feel it anymore. And now I notice that with this kind of places, like *Workaway*, or the hostels, it's like some kind of place where you can meet people your age, and you get a little bit of that feeling you had when you were a little boy... it's a bit weird, but... it's a bit like the same feeling because it's the same [kind of] people as you, doing the same things you're doing, they're taking things the same way as you, and everybody wants to take things the right way... everybody is more or less on vacation, everybody wants to play instruments, listen to music, have barbecues, go surfing, looking for chicks, looking for guys, I don't know, it's unreal. It's unreal. [...] It's like being in another world, it's crazy. In the end I don't know where I am. [I'm] out of reality (C.C., 13/11/17).

C.C. talks about everybody being «more or less on vacation», not making distinctions between hostel workers and real tourists. At the same time, he is not talking about just 'any' tourism: he specifically means a relaxed, easy-going, surf-oriented kind of tourism. These limitations reduce the age range of these ideal tourists so, in his narrative, the older tourists and the workers (who reside in the hostel only because they lack a house) disappear. Daily car trips to remote beaches, entire days spent chasing waves, long nights of watching surf documentaries constantly reinforce the surfer identity. At the same time the curfew, the ban on outside visitors, the almost constant surveillance mean that practically all interactions are limited to the group of workers, guests, and the few people that the staff manages to sneak in.

B.P. is a 30-year-old woman from Argentina who moved to Fuerteventura in search of a place where it was «summer all year round». Although at the time of the interview she is working in retail, she spent her first months on the island employed as a *workawayer* in the *Strawberry* and became friends with C.C. and her other coworkers. With C.C., she shares similar convictions about tourists, even though she acknowledges the existence of non-surfers:

It seems to me like it's kind of a dirty tourism, a kind of tourist that doesn't fit too well in the island. I'm going to be tremendously honest, it's a lower middle class tourism. [...] There are two types of tourists. There's the people aged 40-60, lower-middle class, who come here to go out and drink alcohol [...] and the surfers, who come from September to December, and it's a 'travelling' tourism, they don't think... they think less about moving here, but all those who arrive here think about settling down (B.P., 19/11/17)

She adds that surfers are a much-needed presence on the island, as they bring «fresh air». Identifying this kind of younger, more active tourism as «travelling», far from being an innocent or casual remark, means consciously endorsing the tourist/traveller dichotomy and implicitly recognizing the latter as both one's own and the better category. The perceived difference is the same that C.C. noticed when he complained about “not absorbing anything” of the places he visited as a guide for Spanish «tourists». However, since both tourists' and travellers' presence and impression are short-lasting, the tightest bonds are usually formed between workers, especially those who manage to be together during work hours as well as during their meals and free time. Sharing free time in the *Strawberry* is also a good opportunity to learn in the most conventional sense: thanks to C.C. and B.P. I learned to speak basic Spanish, for example, as did a 30-year-old woman from the UK thanks to another Argentinian woman; B.P., in turn, used conversations with English-speaking staff and guests as a way to improve her English.

During our interview, she sheds more light on the division in groups that takes place even between the inhabitants of the *Strawberry* and those from another nearby surf house, as well as on the prominence of English as the pivot language in the hostels of Corralejo. Talking about her commitment to improving her English, she compares her attitude with that of her boyfriend – also a foreign worker in the nearby surf house – and his friends:

It seems to me like it's a bit selfish, you know? Also I feel like it's almost about 'defending' his language. He speaks Slovenian at work, in his hostel [...] also he speaks a very harsh, a very 'Russian' English, and I always tell him, 'you don't speak Spanish and your English is very hard to understand', but he replies 'well it's my accent and I don't intend on changing it', like he has something to defend. [...] He says 'I'll never speak like an Englishman, because I'm not interested', as if with [this attitude towards] English he linked the idea of defending his roots. [...] I see this in a lot of his friends also, we went on a boat trip and they spent the whole time speaking Slovenian, and then we had a pool party and again they spoke Slovenian [...] while having the barbecue we were in two separate groups, the Slovenians and the ones from [our] hostel (B.P., 19/11/17)

Far from being preoccupied with facilitating communication and openness towards other groups, her boyfriend and his friends actively try to take

distance from «Englishmen», and by extension from other non-Slovenian people, be it tourists, other foreign workers or Spanish people. This stubbornness vilifies any attempt at communication, even if the two communities effectively share the same spaces and partake in the same activities, precisely because it reflects two utterly different learning cultures. B.P. reveals that she notices this exact behavior in another group of people: the Italians.

4. Runaway Island

The Italians are the largest and fastest-growing community among the foreign residents of La Oliva. Official estimates for the year 2014 counted 4.200 Italian people regularly registered as residents in the Ayuntamiento of La Oliva, but by 2017 their number was up by almost 38%. This is particularly evident in Corralejo, where most Italians live, work and in many cases own businesses or apartments. At surface level, they appear as a highly cohesive group, capable of growing and thriving in a foreign environment. The Italian community, however, isn't as tight as it seems. In more than one occasion my Italian informants advised me and others against trusting our countrymen, because «some people just want to scam you». In many cases, they point out that they speak from personal experience, one of the most frequent warnings being something along the lines of «I've taken the worst *inculcate* ("swindles") from other Italians».

The term «l'Isola degli Scappati di Casa», roughly translated to «Runaway Island», is used as a synonym for Fuerteventura from a surprisingly high number of Italian nationals, where the term 'runaways' stands for 'Italian immigrants'. Sometimes it is a reference to the poorly devised, rushed plans Italian immigrants make when they decide to move to the island; other times it is an allusion to someone being literally on the run from something (i.e. taxes, the law, responsibilities). The Italian community seems to be divided roughly into two subgroups. Individuals belong to one or the other subgroup depending on a few meaningful parameters: for example, when they arrived on the island, where they live, how good is their knowledge of the Spanish language.

M.S., a man from Southern Italy who works as a barber, recognizes me as an Italian despite us both initially speaking Spanish to each other, but quickly comments: «it's better if we speak Spanish, they hate us less this way». When I ask if he can clarify what he means, he tells me:

There are at least ten thousand Italians in Corralejo officially, but who knows how many others are here irregularly. We ruined this island [...] just listen around, everywhere you go they speak only Italian. [...] Italian people behave here as Albanians did in Italy twenty years ago, and like we did everywhere else. We're like Attila, grass doesn't grow anymore wherever we pass. The upside is that the people who soiled this place were from Northern Italy, so we [Southerners] look better by comparison. [...] I've been living here for three years, since before this new wave of Italians arrived. You can recognize them: they go around barefoot, dressed like fake surfers. They live all together, in six-bed rooms (M.S., 26/10/2017)

This description of «new wave Italians» applies surprisingly well to the stereotype of the hostel guest, especially in a surf resort like Corralejo, and might at first glance appear just as a stereotype of tourists and travellers. However, as previously mentioned, even foreign long-time workers who find themselves unable to buy or rent an apartment are left no choice but to live in hostels and surf houses, usually in shared rooms with up to six or seven other people. In this case, living conditions are an effective way of separating oneself and one's group from these poorer, disorganized newcomers, while more or less explicitly delegitimizing them and their presence on the island.

Some 'outcast' Italians live their relation with their nationality, their national identity and the meaning it assumes in Corralejo as problematic. L.P., 24 years old, has been working in another hostel next to the *Strawberry* for one year, since first arriving on the island. During our interview, she offers some insight on the old/new wave divide:

the ones who arrived ten, nine years ago, they all learned Spanish, they have more respect [...] the ones who arrived five, four, three years ago up until now [...] they don't speak a single word in Spanish, they only mix with other Italians, and it's the thing that irks me the most since I'm first of all a migrant, I made my first pilgrimage from Argentina when I was 9, and the things me and my family had to do to integrate in Italy... In Italy nobody gives a shit about you if you don't speak Italian. [...] I don't get how it's possible that people who have been living here for two years don't know a single word in Spanish. Two years! Speaking that horrible Italian stuff and thinking it's Spanish just because they change a few words. It's very disrespectful (L.P., 16/11/17)

Despite having an Italian passport, L.P. does not like to identify as Italian. The negative experiences she faced during her time in Italy, and the way many Italians act in Fuerteventura, prompted her to take distance from it and embrace her Latina identity, or her «fake-native» identity, as she called it. She is not the only one looking to reshape her identity. E.V., a 37-years-old Italian construction worker I met while we were both staying at the *Strawberry*, confesses:

when I'm in public with my daughter I tell her to either speak Spanish to me or shut up. I'm ashamed of being Italian sometimes. I'm proud of what my grandparents did, of what my parents did, but Italy did nothing for me.

M.G., another 35-years-old former construction worker I met at the *Strawberry*, arrived on the island last March. He had bad experiences with Majoreros both on the workplace and outside of it for being an Italian immigrant, and while not rejecting his identity like L.P., he despises an Italian acquaintance and former employer of his, who in his words «ruined him» way more than any Majorero. All three of these people, L.P., E.V. and M.G., in some way agree that «you're ultimately alone» on the island, that «Fuerteventura gets out either the best or the worst out of people», and that the Majoreros, representing the “will” of an almost personified island, can accept or reject you.

The *Pineapple* hostel is on the other side of town from the *Strawberry*. It occupies a terraced house a few blocks away from the dock, near the town center. The owner, a Canarian man, visits once every few days; the hostel is managed solely by L.G., an Italian man in his twenties. Due to its convenient, central location and its strict rules even compared to the *Strawberry* – no outside people, no parties, curfew at 10 PM – the hostel does not attract as many short-term workers and tourists as long-time workers without a home, or people looking for a long-time job. Coincidentally, many of the guests are Italian.

The ‘new wave Italians’ who live the *Pineapple* in most cases lack the ‘capital’ (money, business connections, a house) necessary to form relations with and to gain the acceptance of both the ‘old wave’ Italian and the Majorero communities. However, contrary to the identity crisis and rejection faced by the three disenfranchised people mentioned above, the guests of the *Pineapple* shape an independent ‘Italian’ culture inside their own hostel. They eat together, spend free time together, help each other with finding

jobs if needed, sometimes look for apartments to rent together. As noticed by B.P., they are unconcerned with making themselves intelligible to foreigners; most conversations in the hostel are carried out only in Italian. When they choose to speak to the Spanish guests, they do so either in Italian or in the ‘fake’ Spanish described by L.P., more rarely in English. One time, during one such difficult conversation in fake Spanish, a frustrated Spanish man cried «You’re not speaking Spanish! I don’t understand you!» to his unfazed Italian interlocutor.

The *Pineapple* Italians are as supportive of one another as they’re generally hostile to the Spanish migrant workers and the tourists who live in the hostel (Lave, Wenger, 1991, p. 100-117). In this case, the “technology” employed by the Italian “community of practice” inside the *Pineapple* hostel is the use of the Italian language for communication, which systematically excludes foreigners from social relations and the relative learning. Moreover, some resources (access to kitchen utensils and food) and practices (smoking in a small internal courtyard is officially forbidden, but Italians usually don’t get reprimanded for doing it) are withheld from individuals who are outside the group. At the same time, they’re also wary of ‘outside’ Italians, with whom many of them had bad experiences. This behavior appears to be a complete reversal of the attitude expressed by M.S., and at the same time a confirmation of the boundaries between the two groups, the ‘us vs them’ hidden even in interactions between members of Corralejo’s Italian community. L.F., 47 years old, while trying to comfort the 27-year-old H.G., recently fired from a job by his Italian employers, explained:

The Italians who own businesses here, 90% of them [...] you’ll have trouble finding someone among them who treats people with respect. They’re the ones who exploit their compatriots the most. Worse than Romanians in the ‘90s. [...] like you arrived ten years ago, your place works well, but in the end you’re making fucking hamburgers (L.F. - H.G., 30/11/17).

Interestingly, both ‘old wave’ and ‘new wave’ Italians, like M.S. and L.F. respectively, draw parallels between their conditions and those of Balkanic immigrants in Italy at the end of the 20th century. Another parallel is the one created by the shared opinion Spanish and Italian guests of the *Pineapple* have of Majoreros. «They’re thirty years late», the Italians usually say; «if it weren’t for us, they’d be still herding goats»; «they’re lazy, even lazier than other Canarians»; «the locals can’t work». The Spanish guests, for their

part, justify the high unemployment rate by saying that «the locals just want to collect welfare, rent out their parents' house and live in Puerto del Rosario without working».

On the other hand, the Spanish guests in the *Pineapple* don't see any difference between the Italians in the hostel and the ones outside of it: they often talk about the «invasion» of the island by Italian *trapicheros*: «they're going to colonize the place like they did with Ibiza and Formentera, we've sold off this fucking country», an Aragonese man exclaimed once, frustrated with the scarcity of jobs and the impossibility of finding a reasonably priced apartment. Another Spanish man, not finding «a single good knife» in the kitchen, complains about it with G.L., the Italian 'manager' of the *Pineapple*, who tells him that the good knives «are all in the other hostel». Another time, a Japanese tourist wakes up because of one of the Italians going around the hostel, singing, throwing doors open and shutting them closed. He comes down and complains to me and the rest of the Italians about the fact that the guest «doesn't behave as a tourist, isn't a tourist, and shouldn't stay in a hostel». We all shrug, as to say 'such is life'.

5. Conclusions

In the resort town of Corralejo, where hostels and surf houses are home not only to tourists and staff but to other short-term and long-term immigrant workers as well, such closed spaces can act as ideal environments for their respective communities to form and develop as "learning cultures". These cultures are tailored by the single social actors who constitute them, re-shaping, in turn, the individual actors and their skills, interests, attitudes, beliefs, actions. In some cases, like for example at the *Strawberry*, this means building a narrative of openness to other groups and individuals in the name of perceived common interests and goals, as well as sharing and training personal skills (learning to surf, speaking new languages). In some other cases, like the *Pineapple*, the community acts as a barrier against groups and individuals perceived as foreign, while simultaneously acting as a safety net for members against isolation and disenfranchisement and as a social network of a sort. In both cases, the individual actors end up learning and embodying the collectively-defined characteristics of the "cultures" in which they participate.

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N.1

Togetherness supporting those who care: An Interprofessional Education Experience

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“We cannot direct the wind but we can steer the sails”, Seneca

Introduction

ISTAT data 2017 announced a population growth of 2,5%, particularly of elderly people and Italy is ranked first in Europe as for the over 80 years old (+5,4%), in the wake of the phenomenon that Americans called Silver Tsunami. ISTAT estimates that in 2020 1 out of 4 will be over 65 years old: this means an increase of chronic diseases, of multi-morbidity and loss of autonomy. Meanwhile, a reduction of resources and public funding is announced, especially in the health sector, resulting in a strong impact on what will be the home care and with a particularly onerous burden on families.



Geroscience-and-the-Silver-Tsunami

Nowadays 80% of family caregivers are women, with an average age of 55 years, patient's wives or daughters, 1/5 of them are totally dedicated to the care of the patient, 2/3 are supported by other family members and only 17% by professional caregivers. The risk of getting sick, even because of burnout is very high. In this socio-economic context a functional caregiver becomes a basic health resource that allows greater compliance, better therapeutic adherence and less improper access to the emergency department.

How is home assistance structured? Who are the actors? With which rules, resources, human and economic costs?

We know from the literature, that the InterProfessional Practice (IPP) redefine tasks and responsibilities among the professionals involved. At the same time, practice-based learning increases collaborative practice. During the training in IPP, the different points of view enrich and integrate experiential learning: the idea was to put in contact those who are institutionally responsible for the care and the informally family caregivers, trying to shed light on their mutual mandates and discomforts. Avrahami and Reis state "The core insight of narrative medicine is that medical knowledge is stored in narrative schema while medical care is a narrative mode of making sense of, and being moved to action by, an individual's predicament". So, since it is through the narration that we succeed in representing our world to others, full of its expectations and fears, we decided to use a narrative approach mediated by an expert moderator.

1. Aims

To promote the creation of a supporting network for family caregivers in the area of Pianezza (a little town of 15,000 inhabitants, near Turin, in Italy), by leading caregivers, General Practitioners (GPs), non-profit voluntary local associations and Healthcare Institutions to a common discussion and to survey critical issues and solutions, tackled at home.

2. Methods

Participants were divided into three Thematic Tables in order to address specific critical issues for family caregivers of patients in Palliative Care, with Neurodegenerative Diseases and Frail Elderly people.

We were aware of the need on the one hand to overcome the barriers of

participation and on the other to recognize each one's own role: in order to facilitate the interaction we have chosen to explicitly entrust leadership to experienced moderators.

Each institutional participant introduced its service activity; then the caregivers talked about their experience highlighting the difficulties they have faced, the solutions they have adopted and the needs that remained without support: a general discussion followed.

The group works were recorded in order to create a "master book" for providers and users.

3. Results

12 caregivers and 18 doctors (8 GPs and 10 different medical specialists working in the following areas: neurology, palliative care, public hygiene, geriatrics, anesthesia and pain therapy, including clinical area managers), the District Director, 7 representatives of non-profit voluntary local associations, 2 social workers, 7 nurses, 2 psychologists, the Mayor of the town, and his councillor for Social Services and Equal Opportunities participated by accepting the invitation. On Saturday morning and without economic return: this alone is a huge achievement that demonstrates the real interest of the participants in the topic. The atmosphere of great participation and multi-professional sharing generated 3 project works rich of reflections and constructive ideas which went far beyond the original goal of surveying critical issues and solutions tackled at home. The many difficulties for the family caregivers emerged, including recognition of one's role ("today I discovered I was a caregiver, I thought I was just a daughter") and a lot of effort and solitude. The difficulty of communication and the sense of isolation within the health network has also emerged ("I've been working in this area for twenty years and now I find out who you are and what you do" or "I authorize the aids, I never see patients, I did not realize, I am sorry if sometimes I have chosen the cheaper way than the more functional one"): as if everyone worked in a pressing way in their own area without interacting with other colleagues and services.

4. Discussion

Shared storytelling makes possible to give a shared meaning that suddenly becomes real and allows solutions to be found together.

A shared decision-making process leads to significant changes in behavior and greater job satisfaction, reduction of the fragmentation of care, decrease of professional boundaries related to multidisciplinary care. It is strategic to facilitate shared decision making to acquire relevant communication skills, coaching and team building skills.

The event was a very rare opportunity for multi-professional dialogue, enabled connections and collaborative opportunities in support of family caregivers. Integrating experiences and knowledge by creating shared common knowledge and circular communication could allow to minimize costs and maximize results with everyone's satisfaction, even for the mutual recognition of the work done.

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Sitography

<https://leagueofgrey.wordpress.com/2017/04/25/geroscience-and-the-silver-tsunami/>

N.2

Togetherness in learning lives as experienced in an Italian Centre for cognitive stimulation

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Educatore

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the role of togetherness as experienced by a group of elderly people, with or without mild cognitive impairment (MCI), attending an Italian Centre for cognitive stimulation.

The Centre

Socialmente is the name of a Centre for cognitive stimulation (in Italian: *Palestra Cognitiva*) near Turin. *Mente* means mind and *Socialmente* means in a social way, while *Social-mente* recalls a social mind. *Nomen omen*, in Latin.

Some people attending *Socialmente* are mildly impaired. World Alzheimer Report (2014) states that “cognitive stimulation may be beneficial for cognitive function in old age in both people with and without dementia” (p. 57), while the others are not impaired. Moro (2013) points out that “research shows that a lifestyle with high levels of cognitive stimulation, formal or informal, allows the maintenance of a cognitive performance of high level” (p. 61).

Organization of activities¹

People in staff at *Socialmente* consist of a female cognitive psychologist 33 years old, of a male professional educator 65 years old (me) and of a female graduated in physical education 24 years old, with the supervision of a neu-

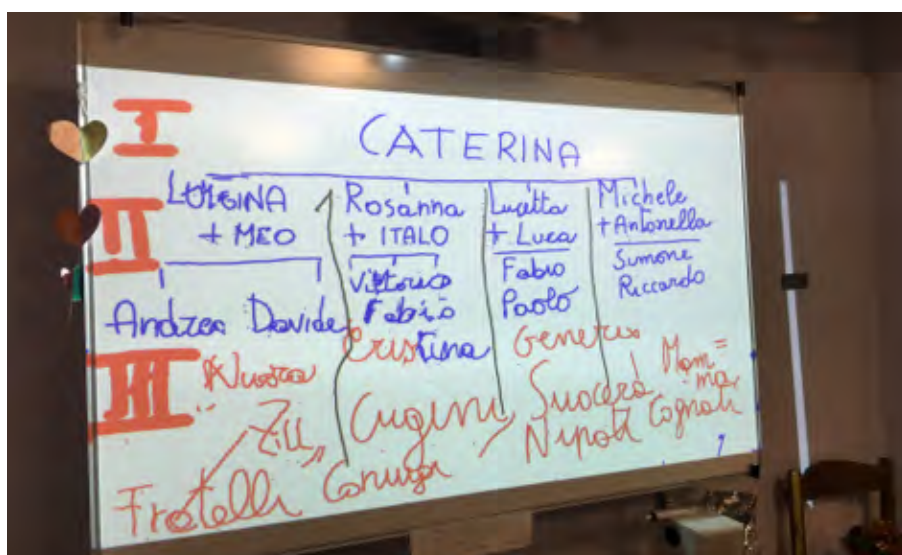
ropsychologist. Participants seem to like this female-male staff and difference in age also helps, allowing the oldest of the staff to recall many experiences well known by elderly Participants (i.e. separate school classes for boys and girls), while the young teacher of gym brings to the group a lot of smiling energy. Meetings last 3 hours each morning, from Monday to Friday with a break at mid morning for barley coffee or a cup of tea and, quite often, tasty homemade cakes prepared by the ladies of *Socialmente*. In the average, people attend *Socialmente* twice per week. Staff works in couple, one of the two with the group, the other one tutoring single attendants, when required. No more than 7-8 people each morning, 60% of them women, from 60 to 85 years old. Some people were addressed to *Socialmente* from Geriatrician or Neurologist, as soon as Mini Mental or Montreal Cognitive Assessment (Moca) Tests show MCI. For these people, to attend *Socialmente* was not their choice, it's important to make them to feel at home right from the beginning, free to complain and even to cry. The cognitive psychologist sends reports to Geriatricians or Neurologists just before they visit Participants, usually twice in a year. She also meets regularly people's families. Palma (2004) points out that "to collect biographical data from relatives and other relevant people is equally important" (p. 390). Other people came to *Socialmente* spontaneously, to keep their mind trained and to meet other people. For them, *Socialmente* was their choice.

People are self-sufficient but not independent. Scortegagna (2005) points out difference between self-sufficiency and independence. They sit in a large room at ground floor (zero), with air conditioner and two adjacent and convenient bathrooms. The entrance to our room is completely independent from the entrance of an adjacent rest home, as people attending *Socialmente* wouldn't like to cross wheelchairs. Chairs are comfortable, with armrests. We sit round a board connected to Internet. Music, pictures, news, everything allows the group to recall the past, to get in touch with the present and to compare the both. The acoustic of the room is excellent and the board allows enlargements up to 500%, so even short-sighted people are able to read and see. Each morning we try to stimulate language, memory, orientation in space and in time, attention, reasoning. We discuss the news, we look at paintings, we stand up to write on the board, we do cross- words, we train with gym while listening to the music, someone plays pianola, all together we sing pop music, *Va Pensiero* and traditional Xmas songs, we read all together or in smaller groups.

Socialmente started with standard tests and exercises, the ones you find

in a cognitive manual. But then we realised that standard exercises and brain software proved quite boring to everyone. Instead, we prepare *tailored* exercises. *Socialmente* is a centre for cognitive stimulation; therefore some effort is required to follow the exercises. Music, songs, pictures and art are our way to make the effort almost pleasant. Then possible, the exercises start from Participants' biographical lives: "Today it snows, can you remember when it happened at your home?" Due to the fact that people may attend *Socialmente* for years and years, they begin spontaneously to share biographical episodes with the group. E.g.: one of the Participants tells the group the names of all the relatives with whom he/she spent her/his Xmas. The staff writes these names on the board: Grandfather and Granny in the first line, then their

Daughters and Sons with their respective Husbands and Wives; in the third line, the staff writes the names of Granddaughters and Grandsons:



Then the staff invites one of the group to imagine to be her/his granny who calls a friend and tells him who were the relatives who attended Xmas with her; eventually the staff invites another of the group to do the same from the point of view of one of the nephews, and so on. This exercise is designed to maintain the rich vocabulary employed to describe relationships among relatives, where the same person (*Caterina-Catherine*) is *Rosanna's* Mum, *Cristina's* Aunt and *Italo's* Mother-in-law (not an easy exercise, indeed).

It's important to notice that the names written on the board are not invented, they are the names of the Members of a Colleague's family and that we are not just speaking of Xmas, but of a specific Xmas. This experience is so involving, that eventually another Participant begins to regret about his own family, about the quarrels among sisters –in-law and between himself and his son. His face looks sad. The group listens to him in religious silence, then someone says: "*Try never to shut the door, as difficult as it may be*" and someone else takes the hand of the Colleague who is speaking into her hands.

Gym is very important to make people feel together:



People with difficulties in speaking can relax, as they notice that they are more fit for gym than most of their Colleagues. Doing gym, we count with fingers, we throw a ball calling the receiver by name, we pretend to play music with different instruments, we dance *Macarena* and *Gioca-Jouer*, at first following teacher's movements and then alone, in the same sequence.

We organize at least 1 half-day excursion per year, whose destination has been chosen by the majority of people. Pizza together at the end of the excursion and for Xmas is a must.

Formal education and working learning lives of people attending Socialmente

For many of elderly people at Socialmente, formal education was quite poor. A common pattern of their biographical lives is that, due to the lack

of money, they attended school only for few years (3 to 5) and started working in their early “teens”. Not surprisingly, some of them have difficulties in reading. To listen to old songs is one of the few things almost all like. Women prefer practical tasks, i.e. to prepare a cake. Many topics, like foreign countries, art masterpieces, news, sound brand new for most of them. “*I didn’t know that..*” is one of their favourite expressions. Most of them realize that now things have changed, as some of their sons and daughters and almost all their nephews got a degree. For many of them *Socialmente* represents an educational process completely new, almost the first one, as attending school ended for them some 50 up to 70 years ago. As a result, adult education, as practised at Socialmente, do not add to previous formal education and may look odd to people who just received workplace education (almost) without formal education. When multimedia board enhances Da Vinci’s *Monna Lisa* and Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* beauty, there is nothing to recall and nothing to be remembered. There is only the pure joy brought by beauty. In our experience, only art makes formal education enjoyable for people who don’t like theories but only practical activities. Through paintings and music, many new topics become approachable and even pleasant. To learn something new can lead to joy and surprise, but only if beauty and emotions are involved. Listening to Ludovico Einaudi’s cd *Onde* during gym, may be with shuteyes, is something relaxing and magic. A world of art and beauty is worth to be discovered, even if it requires the effort to look at something new. And surprise is a powerful help to keep interest alive. All this takes place in-group.

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and togetherness at Socialmente

The first choice of the staff was to mix people with mild cognitive impairment with people not impaired. This caused problems with some people attending Socialmente for the first time, who didn’t like to see impaired people: “*What am I doing here? I’m not like this lady; I don’t want to stay here!*” and never came back. Nevertheless, there are many advantages in mixing people with and without MCI, mainly because people who are not impaired are ready to help people with MCI. Caring rises spontaneously; people without MCI begin to sit always near the same person, to speak low to her and to repeat to her difficult topics. Little by little, people with MCI realise that they can ask the same question to the Colleague who sits next to them again and again, without feeling ill-at-ease. Then gym begins and

people with MCI are happy to help Colleagues with some difficulties in movements. So each one finds her/his own way to care for the others, who were looking after him short before. In other words, from time to time everyone becomes Caregiver and eventually is cared. So each one feels that she/he has an active role to play. At the level of the group, attitudes change more slowly. Let's take the satisfaction of being the first to answer to a question. Even if it's not your turn to answer, you just can't wait. But when people become fond of the others, they finally learn to wait. To be the first becomes less important than to give the Colleagues enough time.

Each one assumes that Colleague's words have a meaning. For instance, if a Colleague says: "*I was where Missouri sank*", it's quite exciting to find out the meaning of these few and cryptic words, i.e. I saw American Warship Missouri sank by Japanese at Pearl Harbour. This explains why people without MCI don't get bored: because it's up to them, to their skill, to find out the meaning, a quite demanding and exciting task. Another example: the synonymous for "pretty" may well be *Pucci*, i.e. one of Participants' cat's name, the prettiest thing she knows and the Colleagues ... understand and applaud.

This is an important way in which togetherness helps education and learning. First, every one assumes that she/he can be understood from the others, despite her/his impairment. Second, education helps in finding out the meaning of a Colleague's words and this way of helping her/him gives value to one's education. Instead of showing off their education and memory, people not impaired prefer to help Colleagues.

It's for this reasons, as well as because each one becomes fond of Colleagues as I already told, that the group proves to be able to engage with diversity (MCI).

Togetherness and differences at Socialmente

The second choice of the staff was to mix people, despite relevant differences among participants in social conditions and formal education (instead of reserving for instance Monday for people with high formal education, Tuesday for people...). Activities are focused on everyone's attitudes, difficulties and biographies and everyone, in turn, plays the main character. For instance, one has travelled; the others spent all their lives within few miles and are not at all interested in travels, least of all in foreign countries. It's nice to have an audience who listen when I tell my travels. But why the

others don't get bored while listening? Grezzana (2013) examines the origin of boredom (p.74). Well, one reason is that people who listen are fond of the Colleague who's speaking, and when this Colleague tells the group how she/he got lost in Myanmar (Burma), the others pay attention. Not just togetherness, but mainly togetherness among nice people makes one ready to tell and share, the others ready to listen and learn. Also, the group appreciate very much all-autobiographical stories, as a sign of trust and confidence in the group. At *Socialmente*, everyone feels at ease and the group, due to the participation of the same people for many years, proves able to establish positive relationships among Attendants, such as mutual trust and sense of belonging and cooperation as defined by Putnam (1997), (quoted by Di Nicola P., 2013, p. 84). Just one example of cooperation: to suggest the right answer to a question to the Colleague sitting aside. Of course there are new entries as well as abandonments and new Participants are not chosen from current participants (they apply spontaneously or they are addressed to *Socialmente* from Social Services). Therefore people at *Socialmente*, despite a strong sense of belonging, do not form a closed group and new entries are received kindly, as many Attendants remember their first time and the importance of finding nice people.

Look at someone who asks the same question again and again to her/his Colleague. Then look at her/his Colleague, who tries to answer again and again. Wait until the first one finally understands and listen to the clapping of the group for the two Colleagues, when this does happen. At *Socialmente*, togetherness is able to deal with differences.

Biographical narratives of adult education and learning at *Socialmente*

Participants' lives have much to teach about education and learning in different Regions of Italy for people now aged 60 to 85. When Participants speak about their lives as young boys and young girls, one relevant point for almost all of them is the large number of their brothers and sisters: from 6 up to 13! So far, however the staff never heard someone regretting his or her childhood. In such large families, one had to earn money as soon as possible and this meant stopping school after few years and look for a job whatsoever: in the fields to collect hay and grapes for boys, as servants in wealthy families for girls. With such an extreme poverty, formal education lasted only few years. Children had to get up very early in the morning and to walk a long way to reach their school. In the afternoon, children had to

work in the fields or at home. As many of them told me, they felt their duty was to help their families sending money at home, not to study.

As noticed, separation from families took place very soon for young girls, who often went to live in larger towns. Despite the hard work, the new context seemed to most of them better than the misery of their previous lives. They learned new things (e.g. embroidery) and were able to send money to their families, which made them feel good. Now, when they reflect about their lives, they realise that separation from their families was an opportunity for them to develop. For instance, a lady participant to *Socialmente* told the group that she started to work at the age of 9 in her mother grocery in Calabria (still nowadays the poorest Italian Region), in the late Thirties of 1900. She was not allowed to go out with other girls, not even at Sunday afternoon after the Holy Mass. At the age of 14 she was engaged to a man chosen by her parents. Before marriage, the couple was able to meet only few times, always in the presence of parents and or brothers. In this situation, the lady told us that marriage and migration from the South to the North of Italy were better choices than to stay at home. It was only after she told us her story that the staff understood that her difficulties in reading were not due to short-sight but to lack of formal education. Yes, because also after marriage no time was left for her formal education, but only for growing up her children. The same happened to most of them, males and females. They spent their lives working, both out and at home. Sometimes they tell us that *Socialmente* represents the first opportunity to share experiences, to reflect on their own lives and to compare their lives to Colleagues' lives. As well as to listen to topics never dealt with before.

Poverty and workplace learning played the main characters in their early and adult lives. Not surprisingly, their sons' and daughters' formal education represented a relevant goal for them and now they attend with enthusiasm to their nephews' and nieces' graduations. One could say that their own adult education started quite late in their lives, but still in time to see it achieved by their sons and, mostly, nephews.

When our family seem unable to evolve with us

Families and Caregivers are not allowed to attend, this seems very important for group's freedom of attitude. Families in Italy are a wonderful place for life-long caring but a price has to be paid for it: life-long impinging on rel-

atives' lives. "*It's not true dear that you prefer to go than to stay?*" "*She likes this, she is shy*". Very often, relatives decide who we are and what we like. Virgin Mary was not the only one to be "*Figlia del tuo Figlio*", i.e. Daughter of your Son, as Dante seems to think (Paradise, Canto XXXIII, verse 1). There are many daughters who become the mothers of their mothers. The fact is that when people are no more independent, power shifts from parents' hands to sons' hands. Quite often, anxiety for parents' safety gives birth to over caring, which unhappily seems to be one of the subtlest kind of oppression. "*You should not do this and that*" are their preferred words to avoid dangers. Group's members listen from Colleagues that the same happens to them and learn how to react. Providing a firewall between the group and attendants' relatives, *Socialmente* offers to participants a context of freedom, where words may be said that at home would sound inappropriate or even cruel (e.g. criticism of daughters' over-caring).

Why people learn together successfully at Socialmente

Q.: Why people at Socialmente really care for Colleagues' learning, despite all differences of formal education, of social background and of cognitive condition?

A.: Because at Socialmente togetherness is not just a word, but a feeling.

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In an era of new racisms, of walls that rise in the name of indifference and hatred, of seas where the desperate lives of men and women are lost hosting a conference whose title starts with the word "Togetherness" is a privilege and at the same time a sign of hope. It is a privilege because it means being able to bring together to our country an international community that, for more than 25 years, has put people and their stories at the centre of its research and training activities. Humanity has an urgent need to find interests that unite rather than divide, indeed interests that orient the different forms of individual and social actions in the view of a common well-being. However, the title of this conference also includes a second key term, "discontents". Discontents is seen in its necessary and fundamental dimension of human existence and complex organizational systems. This was the meaning of the Turin conference in which, for three whole days: scholars, operators, students and researchers tried to give answers to questions such as: What kind of learning emerges from the experiences of connectedness? Can life-based or narrative research itself enhance togetherness, and if so how, in which conditions and with what effects? Can togetherness become a delusion, a mystification, a prison for the mind, or an obstacle in a world that celebrates individualism? This volume collects the numerous answers that arose during the working days and offers a plurality of looks as well as a variety of proposals that do not claim to be exhaustive, but offer themselves as starting points for other "conversations". The variety of themes and approaches presented in this volume allows us to represent the togetherness as a kind of kaleidoscope: the elements are always the same, but depending on the rotation and position the shapes vary by proposing different figures.

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