



## Narrative inquiry in service learning contexts: Possibilities for learning about diversity in teacher education

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the experiences of pre- and in-service teachers through intentionally created narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) spaces within three different service-learning engagements in Canada, Kenya, and Turkey. Because the contexts where our studies were situated were culturally different from participants' backgrounds, narrative inquiry spaces shaped windows in which participants could restore their understandings of others different from themselves. We argue thinking narratively suits the purpose of learning within service learning, highlighting the potential this kind of work holds for pre- and in-service teachers' professional identities in school contexts shaped by diversity.

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### 1. Introduction

In this paper we explore the experiences of pre- and in-service teachers through intentionally created narrative inquiry spaces (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000) within three different service-learning engagements in the countries of Canada, Kenya, and Turkey. We argue that thinking narratively suits the purpose of learning within service learning. Thinking narratively, we understand, as entailing “a subtle twist of mind on behalf of the enquirer” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.4) in which questions shaped by the dimensions of an inquiry space composed of temporality, sociality, and place (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000) are asked, and re-asked, about the actions of participants, with whom we are in relationship, and of ourselves as researchers in the midst of a relational inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Specifically, because the contexts where our studies were situated were culturally different from participants' backgrounds, narrative inquiry spaces shaped windows where participants could restore their understandings of diversity.

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Our three studies inquire into participants' stories of their experiences in service-learning engagements in three different contexts. In so doing, we attend to moments of learning, particularly those moments wherein individuals, participating in activities alongside people whose lives were often quite different from their own, experienced shifts in their understandings of who they were in the world. We emphasize that repositioning the learning in service learning in this way enabled participants to restore their individual understandings of others different from themselves. Thinking in this way drew our attention to the multiple ways our participants' lives intersected with others as they participated in service-learning engagements.

The purpose of our paper is to highlight how narrative inquiry offers a way of meeting service-learning goals of learning about self in a service context. As a way to do so, we draw upon three separate narrative inquiries and focus upon participants' stories of self-learning as they lived in relation with others. Later in the paper we address the significance of narrative inquiry situated in service-learning engagements and the possibilities this holds for teacher education.

### 2. Theoretical perspectives

Our work is positioned within narrative ways of understanding teacher knowledge. The first of these ways is that teachers' and

students' lives are central to the curriculum of teacher education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). Following Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) conceptualization of teacher knowledge as embodied, "personal practical knowledge", we understand teachers as teaching who they are. For example, teachers' perceptions of the communities from which children come, shape what happens in classrooms. As pre-service teachers enter teacher education, they do so with embodied personal practical knowledge onto which theoretical notions of difference cannot simply be grafted (Mills & Ballantyne, 2009). The same may be said of experienced teachers, particularly if they have not had ongoing situated experiences in school contexts shaped by diversity. We suggest that learning about diversity is not brought forward by theory, but, rather, is an experiential-relational-reflective process, something that may be achieved by thinking narratively during active engagement in service learning.

Recognizing the importance of situating one's personal and professional identity within the temporal context of a life experience, each of our research projects began by exploring participants' past experiences to understand the composition of their identities, their "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Connelly and Clandinin (1999), in research alongside teachers, came to understand teacher knowledge as both shaped and expressed in terms of school context in which "teachers seem to more concerned to ask questions of who they [were] than of what they know" (p. 3). In response Connelly and Clandinin developed the narrative term "stories to live by" as a way to link teacher knowledge with context and identity.

Second, thinking about teacher knowledge across time, relationship and place, we use narrative inquiry methodology to study the experience of pre- and in-service teachers involved in service learning. Narrative inquiry as both methodology and phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), allows researchers to attend to the particulars, the contexts, and the participants in relationship. Each of our three studies, undertaken in differing contexts situated in the countries of Canada, Kenya, and Turkey, drew upon narrative inquiry as a methodological framework. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conceptualization of a "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space," composed of the personal and social (interaction), the past, present, and future (continuity) coalesced with the notion of place (situation), shaped our understandings of the field texts (data). The "three-dimensional inquiry space" also provided a context within which to view and to locate the field texts within the experiences of the participants and ourselves, as researchers. Directing our attention and informing our understanding of what it means to think narratively in the living of our individual inquiries, and in the after living alongside each other, the "three-dimensional inquiry space" enabled us to analyze our field texts cognizant of temporality, sociality, and place in simultaneous relation (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007).

Finally, we attend to the field of service learning as it relates to cross-cultural experiences. Although our focus in this paper and in our narrative inquiry work is on the 'learning' aspect of service learning, we believe careful consideration of the service dimension of service learning is also critical to its success. Boyle-Baise's (2002) conceptual framework of service as either charity, civic education or community-building, provides a useful lens for reconsidering the 'service' dimension of the service learning experience with a view to creating an inquiry-focused experience that, rather than being a 'peek across borders' (Boyle-Baise, 2002) to learn about others, might become a 'borderland' experience (Anzaldúa, 1987/1999) to learn about 'self in relation with others'.

Based on her experiences in a pre-service teacher education context, Vinz (1997) believes learning about diversity can only take place if there is attitudinal involvement. Playing on the

word *disposition*, she calls on teacher education programs to include spaces where pre-service teachers can experience being "dis-positioned" (p. 139) in such a way as to be drawn to re-examine their beliefs and practices. Being dispositioned involves both learning to *unknow* and *not-know* and Vinz promotes these practices as new literacies for teacher education. Echoing Bateson's (1989) idea of 'becoming', Vinz believes that learning to *un-know* and *not-know* are important to the process of creating a life as a teacher. A state of disequilibrium seems to be an important step to engage the kind of reflection that will focus attention on identity and narratives of experience, encouraging learners to inquire into and re-examine beliefs and practices, reformulating themselves as they move forward.

In this way we see the conceptual and methodological understandings of narrative inquiry and narrative notions of teacher knowledge and identity as well suited for learning in service-learning engagements. In part, we are trying to respond to the call of those who have been researching service learning in teacher preparation programs to "expand its scope by addressing new research strands" (Root & Swick, 2001, p. 151). Root and Swick encourage investigators to "consider combining methodologies to more broadly capture potential outcomes of service-learning" (p.151). Our emphasis is upon learning, that is, the benefits of self-learning that thinking narratively potentially brings forward for individuals engaged in service alongside others.

### 3. Situating the inquiries: study Snapshots

Narrative inquiry "as both phenomena under study and a method of study" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 4) is an undertaking infused with complex relational responsibilities that reverberate (Craig & Huber, 2007) across the lives that become connected through inquiry and, as well, as these lives continue to unfold into the future. The ways in which this ethical understanding shaped each of our studies occurred in varying ways, situated within particular relationships and contexts, as teacher researchers in relation with children and teachers. Across each of the studies, as a way to ensure mutual understanding between ourselves and participants, transcript copies of conversations were shared and interim research texts were negotiated over time.

Jennifer's study was a 14 month narrative inquiry into her identity as a teacher situated in a private high school in Ankara, Turkey. Living alongside three students and three colleagues and inquiring into their understandings of their experiences within a school service-learning project that Jennifer coordinated, enabled her to explore and reflect upon her identity within the project and the context of school. The project was composed of two groups of students: Twenty-five grades nine and ten students from the private high school in which she taught and twenty-five grades four and five primary school students from a public elementary school. Private education in Turkey is expensive and the economic distinction between the two groups was pronounced. As a participant observer, Jennifer was situated in two service-learning projects during October 2001–June, 2002 and January–May, 2003. Jennifer's field texts included field notes of her time as a participant observer in the project, audio-taped conversations with three youth and three colleagues, and a research journal. In her work she focused upon the ways her "stories to live by", her identity, shifted as she lived in relation with others within the service-learning project.

Claire's narrative inquiry explored four pre-service teachers' shifting identities through a community-based service-learning engagement. Claire involved participants as volunteers in after-school drop-in youth clubs located in ethno-culturally diverse, low-income communities in a large western Canadian urban centre.

The after-school setting provided the participants with opportunities to connect with youths' out of school experiences. Her focus in the study was to understand the participants' personal practical knowledge of diversity and how it shifted as their "stories to live by", or identities, bumped up against the unfamiliar ones of the children they came to know in the youth clubs.

Carla's study inquired into how the experiences of five in-service teachers shifted their teacher identities during a service-oriented professional development opportunity in Kenya with Kenyan colleagues. The opportunity to travel internationally and learn alongside colleagues of a different cultural context than their own is an experience that few teachers have. Even so, the study's intent was not to encourage all teachers into exotic learning opportunities. It was to come to understand how the experiences, generated by the events in Kenya, served as "disruption and essential counterpoint" (Steedman, 1986) in the development of the participants' teacher lives. Inquiring narratively into the shifts that happened in the participants' teacher identities during the service opportunity helped capture the personal and professional significance of the experience.

### 3.1. Three participants: stories told, interrupted, retold

In our research texts, findings are represented by way of narrative accounts. We read these accounts with particular attention to moments that we identified as instances when participants felt shifts in their learning about who they were in relation with others different from themselves.

### 3.2. Turkey: a secondary teacher restories who she is on a new school landscape

In Jennifer's classroom in Ankara, she felt she could live out the stories she knew of herself. Outside the reassuring walls of her classroom, however, she felt less sure about her teaching practices as her "stories to live by" frequently bumped against the school's expectations of success on Turkey's national university entrance exam.<sup>1</sup> The presence of this exam as a guiding curricular force sat uneasily within Jennifer and the school context was deeply contoured by plotlines of exam success.<sup>2</sup> There seemed to be very little time for students or teachers to concentrate on any other activity. Jennifer was struck by the emptiness of the building at the end of the school day and she was drawn to the idea of developing a service-learning project that would allow students, as well as her, the opportunity to break away from the daily grind of their exam-oriented lessons.

Before the study was underway, Jennifer was initially hesitant about inquiring into her experiences. Inquiring into who she was as a teacher left her feeling vulnerable and reluctant to share the questions she had about her life and identity in Turkey. As the study unfolded, however, she could see that she was at the heart of this inquiry (Mitton, 2003). At times this was disconcerting. Jennifer

questioned her understanding of moments and the ways these were shaped by her narratives of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) lived in different cultural and social contexts.

As Jennifer considered her prior assumptions around 'care'—the original premise of the service-learning project—and how her understandings of care differed from involved others, she experienced a moment of dispositioning. This emerged for Jennifer as she reflected upon a meeting she had with a colleague and a group of teachers and administrators from the elementary school involved in the service-learning engagement. What she had originally understood as the project's purpose—a caring opportunity for those involved—was not, seemingly, what the individuals from the elementary school understood. It seemed to Jennifer, as the meeting unfolded, their partners from the elementary school were hopeful the high school in which she taught would continue its monetary assistance during the project's second year. Unfortunately, the high school was financially unable to do so.

Helping Jennifer make sense of this moment was Ayşe,<sup>3</sup> a student in the service-learning project and one of the individuals with whom Jennifer had ongoing conversations. Reflecting upon what she experienced in the project, Ayşe wrote:

*We are not the family of the children but there is heavy responsibility on our shoulders. We can't know their families. Maybe their family's care is not enough for them but we can be careful for our care, because our permission or one word can change many things in their lives. I tried to explain that if we can't be careful with the children we could make damage to their brains and their hearts. (Ayşe's letter, May 6, 2002)*

Reflecting upon Ayşe's words in her journal, encouraged Jennifer to wake up to her initial definition of care as something shaped by her understanding, knowledge experientially situated in different social and cultural landscapes. In her journal she wrote:

*...defining care poses a problem. That morning as I drank tea and watched the meeting unfold before me, I was a player and an observer, a participant and an outsider. What I had originally understood as the project's purpose seemed to unravel before my eyes. I realized that what I understood as care was perhaps not what they understood or perhaps not what they felt their school needed. The conversation emphasized our different perspectives... (Journal, December 12, 2002)*

Inquiring into her teaching experiences, in the service-learning engagement encouraged Jennifer to understand her initial sense of disruption in Turkey as connected to her prior experiences, relationships, and culture. Thinking of her learning in this way allowed Jennifer to see it as valuable to who she was becoming as a teacher in Ankara, and in the words of Ayşe it was imperative for her "to be careful for her care" in her attempts to do so.

### 3.3. Canada: a pre-service teacher restories her knowledge of diversity

Claire's study (Desrochers, 2006) emerged from a prior service-learning experience which taught her that simply placing students in volunteer assignments in cross-cultural settings did not achieve the learning about diversity she had hoped for. Intent on shifting participants' focus from 'other' to 'themselves in relation with other', she returned to service learning. Thinking narratively, she began by exploring her participants' experiences to understand how they composed their knowledge of diversity. Then, with a view

<sup>1</sup> The national university entrance exam, the ÖSS Sönav, is the exam each high school graduate is required to take and pass successfully if they are to enter into the university and faculty of their choice. In 2005, 1,671,726 individuals wrote an officially valid university entrance exam; however, in contrast, only 198,509 of these students were placed at four year universities (Higher Education Council (ÖSYM), 2005, ¶ 8).

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the national university entrance exam is the national university foreign languages exam, the YDS Sönav; students who plan on studying foreign languages and literature in university are also responsible for this exam. The students at Jennifer's former high school, with the exception of her first 3 years as a teacher there, did not choose to study in the foreign languages stream and, thus, in this aspect the national exams did not directly affect the language lessons in the school.

<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms for the participants, with the exception of Jennifer, are used throughout this paper.

to interrupting this storied knowledge, she involved them in volunteer work for 4 h a week over a 13-week period in two after-school youth clubs where they interacted with youth of diverse social and cultural backgrounds in the context of their out of school lives. As participants' "stories to live by" intersected with those of the children, moments of interruption occurred. By inquiring into these moments, Claire and her participants attended to how their stories of diversity shifted as a result of their service-learning engagement. One participant's story is shared to illustrate how the process of restorying took place.

#### 3.4. Monique's story told, interrupted, and retold

Monique's understanding of diversity was shaped by her lived experience of growing up close to an aunt with special needs. Her openness and positive attitude toward her aunt's difference were clearly evident, both in the loving perception (Lugones, 1987) she had of her aunt and in the sense of responsibility (Anzaldúa, 1987/1999) she felt for educating others about the challenge of living with disability. Yet, as open as Monique was to mental and physical differences, her "stories to live by" reflected a very different attitude towards Aboriginal culture as a form of difference. Although she had little direct experience of Aboriginal families, she had grown up hearing stories from members of her family and her home community that characterized them as deficient.

These stories, as part of the personal practical knowledge she unconsciously carried into the research project, were brought to her attention one evening as she baked cookies with a group of boys, including Willie, an Aboriginal boy who attended the club along with four siblings. Willie's hands became the focus of conversation among the boys which provided a glimpse into the way Willie's hands shaped his life both in and out of school. Willie told how he was born with small, unusually shaped fingers and how he learned to fight in response to the constant teasing and exclusion from games. Reflecting on the conversation, Monique shared how it prompted her to reconsider prior assumptions.

*I had never noticed his hands before... But and this is kind of mean on my part but... I assumed, which I probably shouldn't have, that it was an abuse of some sort ... where...moms...would put their babies in scalding hot water cause they just wouldn't stop crying and the babies bodies would be in blisters because...the moms were so strung out... I know, obviously, that's prejudice on my part but that's where my mind went, straight to that there must be an abuse of some sort is the first thing I thought. (Individual conversation, December 6, 2003)*

The personal knowledge she now had of Willie's lived experience interrupted the story she carried of Aboriginal families and he began to matter to her. Having felt compelled to intervene on behalf of persons with disabilities, she began to do so for Willie in ways that Claire saw as evidence that Monique was telling and living a new story of herself in relation to diversity.

*I've learned to see the kids' point of view. It wasn't just a matter of reading, you know, so and so died of a stabbing in this part of the city... These kids live certain realities that I can never dream of and that's their realities. I'd seen them [in the youth club] every week, week to week... just to see things through their eyes I think was ...an eye opener. ...I think seeing their reality through their eyes, I could get past some of my negative opinions on their parents and what must be going on (Individual conversation, October 21, 2004)*

Monique's story highlights the complexity of understandings in relation to diversity. That she could, at once, be so accepting and resistant of two types of difference highlights her complexity as a human being whose knowledge of diversity was shaped by early

family and school experiences. Her expressed shift in understanding shows the potential service learning has to change pre-service teachers' attitudes towards difference, providing that engagements are structured to allow for ongoing inquiry in relationship, over time and with particular attention to the nature of the contexts in which service learning takes place.

#### 3.5. Kenya: an experienced teacher restories her knowledge of diversity

Carla was given the opportunity to travel to Kenya with four Canadian colleagues in order to be in conversation with and to work alongside a group of Kenyan teacher colleagues who were registered in a two year professional development program. Carla remembers thinking, 'what an amazing experience this will be!' and wondering, 'how will I ever be able to understand the impact this time will have on me and my teaching life?'

Carla felt her research beginnings seemed illustrative of Schön's (1983) starting points for inquiry – a reflection on a practical event in the life of a practicing professional rather than an application of a working theory in the life of a would be academic. Carla settled on wanting to research the shifts that would occur in her, in the other Canadian teachers and in their teaching lives because of the experience during the service learning opportunity in Kenya.

The word "shift" Carla used intentionally. It is a particular word used in the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1999) and it took on a narrative meaning for Carla as she listened closely to the stories the teacher participants were telling her. As she began the study, Carla thought more about the word 'change,' about how it is that our experiences change individuals – change their identities, change who individuals are in their worlds. In Carla's first conversation with one participant after their return from Kenya, Carla asked how it was that she thought that being in Kenya changed her. In response to Carla, she said she did not think that change was the right word. What she experienced was a slight movement in another direction (Individual Conversation, September 19, 2001). Carla decided to think about 'a slight movement in another direction' as a shift, not a change, in their identities. In order to understand how teachers' identities are 'changed' and 'transformed' through the experiences they have, Carla thought, she needed first to be attentive to the shifts and the ways narrative inquiry facilitated this.

Carla's study first tells the "stories to live by" that she came to know from the intentional interactions she had with the other participants prior to the service-learning engagement in Kenya. Then, she tells the 'stories from the borderlands' – stories that she and the teachers lived together during their time in Kenya. And finally, Carla retells their "stories to live by" after returning to their home landscape (Nelson, 2008). The purpose was to detect the shifts that occurred in their identities. One teacher participant's story, Wendy's, is offered to demonstrate how the process of detecting shifts occurred.

#### 3.6. Wendy's story told, interrupted, and retold

At the beginning of the study, Wendy spoke of diversity as a concept in the formalistic sense – as an idea. However, as relationships were developed in the context of the service-learning project, Wendy's thinking shifted from what might be interesting to learn and think about, to what impacted her relationally and therefore, shifted her identity.

*I am curious to find out what it is like to be in a different context because sometimes difference is a really welcome thing in our life and sometimes it can be a scary thing. When those two things*

meet, it is a good learning opportunity (Individual conversation, June 30, 2001).

Just prior to leaving for Kenya, Wendy wrote:

*Up till today, I think I was going to Africa because I thought it was a 'good' thing for me to do. Yesterday, I'd had enough of being a teacher in my backward-looking school board and in my school with obstructionist people! I was feeling like the last thing I wanted to do with my summer was spend three more weeks being an on-duty teacher. But you know, today, my heart kicked in. I get to spend time this summer with dedicated teachers who truly want to learn and grow professionally – both in Canada and Africa! I get to hang out with some remarkable friends and participate in a neat program all at the same time. I'm really lucky (E-mail, March 27, 2001).*

After returning to her home landscape, Wendy reflected not so much on the concepts of difference but on the people she encountered.

*It's the people who resonate – Juliana, and Kiamba because he taught English and wanted to do more literature – a kindred spirit there, the sense of fun with Mary and Lenah. Lenah was in my group twice. What a wonderful woman she is. I thought those kids must just be so blessed to have those people as teachers. And with Musyoki – he has such a big warm heart that he is almost like a primary kid in an adult's body and I thought, 'little kids must absolutely love him because he can be with them and not expect them to be something that they are not.' I guess I was just really glad to be able to look at these (pictures) and think about people. They are not just a bunch of faces on this photo sheet. I can look back and know a little bit about all of them and others to a greater degree. There are good wonderful people everywhere. It doesn't matter where you are from (Individual conversation, October 13, 2001).*

### 3.7. Looking ahead

Making sense of these moments as exemplified in the experiences of Jennifer, Monique, and Wendy, we came to see the ways in which the individuals' understandings of diversity shifted, not only as a result of being dispositioned through service but also through the process of deliberate inquiry, of being asked to share their experiences and inquire into them through intentional reflection. Participants' awareness of their learning shifts encouraged them to think about who they were prior to their service learning involvement, to inquire into who they were becoming as a result of these experiences and to imagine who they might become in the future.

In what follows, we pull forward narrative threads that resonate across our three studies to highlight the possibilities of narrative inquiry as a way to inquire into individuals' experiences and to enable them to move beyond learning about others through service to learning about themselves in relation with others.

## 4. Discussion: learning shifts: self in relation with others in unfamiliar contexts

Working with our field texts as a way to think across three service-learning engagements situated in different contexts emphasized for us the multiple ways participant learning occurred. We inquired into Jennifer's, Monique's, and Wendy's experiences in relation to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (as shaped by the personal and social, the past, present and future, and place) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thinking in this way we

considered how they entered their service-learning engagements with contextual and relational knowledge shaped by prior experiences and relationships. Drawing upon past experiences that informed who they were as individuals and as in- and pre-service teachers, their "stories to live by" bumped against (Clandinin et al., 2006) others' which, in turn, contributed to their sense of dispositioning.

Attempting to understand Jennifer, Monique, and Wendy in relation to moments of being dispositioned and the learning that emerged for each of them, however, are very different things. Their sense of being dispositioned is important to consider as are the unfamiliar contexts in which they were situated. This is not to be dismissed. Yet, what fascinated us, as we considered each participant and the emergence of their learning, was the reflective-relational process informing their learning, something lived out between Monique and Claire, Wendy and Carla, and Jennifer and Ayşe as they considered who they were in relationship with diverse others.

Repositioning the learning of service learning in this way, awoke us to the complex interplay of reflective-relational thought as Jennifer, Monique, and Wendy strove to consider who they were in unfamiliar contexts and relationships. Keeping this in mind, in what follows, we suggest the importance of context, dispositioning moments and the reflective-relational process as informing participants' self-learning and their understanding of who they are and might be in the world.

### 4.1. Structuring for and attending to learning possibilities in moments of dispositioning

What comes forward in each of our field texts was the importance of the unfamiliar, that is, the unfamiliarity of each of the service learning contexts and the individuals situated there. We mention this, presently, within our description of the practical steps that shaped each of our service-learning engagements. In our conversations, as we noted how we developed our inquiries and service-learning engagements, we all emphasized the importance context played in the self-learning shifts participants experienced.<sup>4</sup> It is important to emphasize that planning a service-learning engagement is a critical factor when entering an unfamiliar context, but is not to suggest that even the best planning will ensure that learning will happen for the individuals involved. Rather, we planned for the unfamiliar in the hopes that unknown settings would encourage in participants an attentiveness, a kind of wakefulness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to what they were living. We feel learning possibilities are more likely to occur when individuals are engaged in meaningful activities alongside others, outside of contexts familiar in their lives and daily routines.

Each of the three narrative inquiries described, fit the logistical parameters of a service-learning engagement – each identified a specific task with a negotiated group of people for a particular time frame. In Jennifer's study, the parameters were an in-addition-to-school club offered to private school senior and public school primary students from two different schools at different times over two school years. In Claire's study, the parameters were after-school clubs at which pre-service teachers facilitated various activities for 4 h a week over the span of a university semester. And,

<sup>4</sup> The nature of service-learning engagements, whether in the paradigm of charity, civic education or community-building (Boyle-Baise, 2002), takes participants into places and spaces that are outside of regular timetables and schedules. Traditional program limitations are supplemented by activities that are an expression of some type of service. From a programmatic service learning viewpoint, facilitators often struggle as to how to evaluate the participant because of being in a context outside of the larger program's boundaries.

in Carla's study, the parameters were the preparation of experienced teachers for and facilitation of a two-week intensive professional development program in Kenya for Kenyan teachers. From our perspectives as narrative inquirers, we looked upon this opportunity of being outside our regular routines as an advantage, not a disadvantage. Being in a separate space, we believe, facilitates the possibility of relationship. It fosters the possibility of connecting with others in the contexts of their lives rather than in the context of subject matter and evaluation.

In addition to contextual parameters, each service-learning engagement, on any given day, required additional logistical negotiation: who was doing what and when along with the additional materials required. Thinking of service-learning engagements' practical demands, one can understand how particular dispositioning (Vinz, 1997) moments, as Claire describes them, can be missed.<sup>5</sup> We believe thinking narratively, as we attempted to do in ongoing ways during our service-learning engagements, helps to ensure that crucial learning moments are not missed.

In Jennifer's inquiry, the service-learning project held on Saturday mornings lived outside the school's weekly timetable. For Jennifer and those involved, the high school on Saturday became a very different place as bells and traditional evaluation were suspended and relationships with children from a public elementary school were developed. The participants' understandings of their lived and told experiences in the service-learning project enabled Jennifer to reflectively write about her own alongside them. Through these field texts, particularly her journal, Jennifer came to understand the ways the service-learning project helped her to better understand her identity on her school landscape. Reflecting upon who she was allowed her to rethink the ways she was a part of the school community as well as her cultural, contextual, and relational understandings of care.

When they entered the youth clubs, Claire and her participants found themselves together on an unfamiliar landscape. In the absence of timetables, textbooks and the captive environment of the classroom, they struggled to connect with youth, not as students, but as youth in the context of their lives. Access to the cultural and social realities of the youths' life context provided a window into lived experiences that would likely not have been possible in a traditional field experience placement. Also absent from this youth club landscape were evaluative concerns traditionally associated with field experiences in schools. Without having to focus on subject matter and evaluation, participants had time to explore unsettling moments in the company of supportive others.

In Carla's inquiry, the participant teachers created the physical context of their three-dimensional space in a country in Africa. They anticipated that nearly everything in this space would be different from their home landscapes and, indeed, much of it was. Relationships with each other and with their Kenyan colleagues provided opportunities by which to rethink their understanding of themselves situated as they were in unfamiliarity.

#### 4.2. *The intentional reflective-relationship process*

In many service-learning engagements, the documentation participants are required to complete are hour-logs signed by a supervisor to ensure that the parameters of the project are met. In

other service-learning engagements, participants may be requested to write a list of goals and expectations prior to the engagement and then complete a self-assessment afterwards.<sup>6</sup> In narrative inquiries, the participants enter into an intentional-reflective process in relation with self and others. In each of the three studies presented, participants agreed to involve themselves in a reflective-relational process that began prior to the engagement, was structured within the duration of the project, and continued over time after the engagement was completed.

As noted earlier, Jennifer entered the study attentive to the ways she felt uncertain about inquiring into her experiences as a teacher living in Turkey. At the outset she felt her inquiry would be mainly focused upon the learning of students as they participated within the project. Over time, however, this shifted as Jennifer grew more attentive to the ways she was learning about herself. In conversation with participating students and colleagues, Jennifer wrote in her journal upon the ways their discussions encouraged her to think reflectively about her experiences, something she shared with each of them. This shift in Jennifer's research focus emphasized to her the sense of vulnerability she felt at the beginning of the project and the ways she could not imagine, initially, sharing with others her uncertainty about who she was as a teacher. As Jennifer's relationships developed with each of the participants and as she became more wakeful to moments of dispositioning and the vulnerability she felt, Jennifer inquired more deeply into what her understandings of events were saying about her rather than others.

While dispositioning participants to shift their attention was important, it was critical to provide safe relational spaces in which to explore their experiences. Claire created a relational response community in the following ways: Prior to entering the youth clubs, she conducted extensive conversations with each participant to explore their family, school and social narratives. Throughout the service-learning placement, she asked her participants to join her in creating field notes about what they experienced in the youth club. These notes were used during off-site conversations each week to focus reflection on dispositioning moments. Claire continued to meet with individual participants for several months after the service-learning engagements ended; she explored how they were making sense of the shifts they had experienced in their knowledge of diversity as they moved forward with their lives. Being dispositioned created, at times, a sense of confusion and discomfort for participants; working through these moments of uncertainty through intentional reflection in the presence of trusted individuals is what enabled the participants' knowledge to shift and change. The opportunities for inquiry allowed them to consider, reconsider and reshape their knowledge of diversity as part of their narrative histories.

As Carla proceeded with passing the ethics review for her study, she was very aware that the "risk" she was asking the participants to face was most significant at the relational level with self and others. Each of the participants chose to be part of the professional development program with Kenyan colleagues independent of the research project. They had, as fully capable adults, considered the risks, the costs and the possibilities as best as anyone can prior to becoming involved in a cross-cultural travel adventure and eventually came to choose to participate. As much as each participant's personal maturity and decision-making ability was highly regarded, Carla, as the researcher, felt obligated to address additional potential areas of concern which their involvement in the study

<sup>5</sup> Carla describes these moments employing Steedman's notion of "disruption and essential counterpoint" (1986) to our way of being in the world. Jennifer, in her attempts to be attentive to such moments, employed Noddings (1992) notion of "engrossment" and its emphasis upon caring with "full receptivity" (p.16) to another.

<sup>6</sup> We appreciate the various ways service-learning engagements are structured in many learning contexts. Our comments here are meant to emphasize the potential, we feel, narrative understandings of service learning holds for participant learning.

might bring. She presented these to each participant in the form of a “wave” of questions which flowed from the emotional, psychological, intellectual and spiritual risks associated with entering into an intentional reflective-relational process.

These potential areas of risk have everything to do with narrative inquiry's attention to interaction. This methodology invites researchers and participants to attend to both the inward and the outward interactions of experience. For those involved, it is an invitation to attend to the values, beliefs, opinions and assumptions individuals hold as well as an invitation to attend to relationships that becomes the mirror in which participants can come to see themselves and others in new ways.

#### 4.3. *Re-storying — learning who one is in the world*

Restorying is different from and more than the completion of a self-evaluation or an evaluation check-list. In narrative inquiry, restorying is considered identity work for it is the process of articulating how an experience has been educative. We advocate a narrative inquiry stance for service-learning engagements because, as evidenced by our inquiries, we and participants encountered, not only an aspect of the world, but also the opportunity to examine who one is in the world.

The intentional inquiry conducted as part of Claire's study helped Monique shift who she was in relation to Willie, how she chose to respond to him in the youth club and how she spoke of Aboriginal family realities beyond it. The story she told of being open and responsive to diversity was difficult to reconcile with the assumptions she had made about Willie's hands and once awakened to this contradiction, she could not ignore it. She began to pay closer attention to Willie's lived experience in the youth club and to inquire into her own lived experience of Aboriginal families. Through this process, she came to understand how her initial reaction to Willie had been conditioned by her experience of growing up “beside” and “hearing” about Aboriginal home life, but never having experienced a personal connection to it. Her awareness helped her think about who she wanted to become, how she imagined herself in the future.

For Jennifer, understanding who she was as a person and as a teacher in Ankara, Turkey was initially fraught with tension. Bumping against dominant school stories of a teacher as subject matter specialist and stories of mandated assessment that shaped the professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) of schools in Turkey, Jennifer felt uncertain about how to make the lives of the youth she taught and their families a part of her classroom landscape. In Jennifer's inquiry, restorying occurred as she reflectively considered the ways her learning shifted in relation with others. This was an ongoing process and did not occur in a chronological manner. As she considered how her understanding of moments and events differed from those with whom she was in relation, Jennifer began to shape a new story of who she might be as a teacher, as a curriculum maker (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992), on the landscape of her school in Ankara.

In Carla's inquiry, restorying was a formal step in the research process. In the conversations prior to going to Kenya, several “stories to live by” of each of the participants emerged, were given titles, were written and were intentionally considered for their degree of verisimilitude. After the time in Kenya, these same “stories to live by” were retold, rewritten and re-considered. It was through this process that shifts in the participants' identities were noticed. By being in Kenya, Carla discovered identities she never knew she had. She went to Kenya thinking that she was living out her identities of teacher, professor and researcher. However, she was also confronted with identities of consumer, tourist, colonialist and materialist. By being made

aware of these identities, Carla was invited into the possibility of shifting who she was and is in hers and in others' worlds.

#### 5. Conclusion: a forward looking story

Constructing new knowledge and learning to live differently in relation to service learning, albeit a complex process, is possible with careful attention given to narratively inquiring into experiences. The three studies drawn upon illustrate the ways in which Jennifer's, Monique's, and Wendy's understandings of diversity shifted, not only as a result of being dispositioned through service but also through a process of intentional inquiry. This process enabled them to move beyond learning about others through service to learning about themselves in relation with others. Emphasizing their learning in this way enabled Jennifer, Monique, and Wendy to story and restore their individual understandings of diversity and of who they were and might be in the world. We see this as a critical step in preparing teachers for the diversity they will and do encounter in today's classrooms.

Our goal in sharing these studies is to contribute to the discourse around shaping spaces for pre- and in-service teachers' learning within service learning. We demonstrated how structuring learning activities in service learning contexts, so that learners become narrative inquirers, helps accomplish the goals of service learning – that is, to learn about self through service. We believe there is a need for teacher education programs to stretch beyond traditional boundaries of teacher education and extend learning beyond the academy<sup>7</sup> while being mindful of the possibilities in mediated reflective practice around cross-cultural experiences.

As we understood how our own and participants' lives and learning were relationally-reflectively shaped by thinking narratively in a service learning context, we became hopeful about the promise this kind of work holds for pre- and in-service teachers' professional identities. Situating service learning in a narrative inquiry framework suggests those involved learn ways of being that reach forward as individuals consider who they are in the present while creating beginnings to who they might be in the future. This kind of self-learning realized in relation with another not only helps reach the goals of service learning, it is also profound teacher education. In an attentive-relational way, thinking narratively repositions the learning in service learning. Connecting with teachers and students in the context of their lives, rather than in the traditional contexts of subject matter and evaluation, asks individuals to consider their identities—to inquire into them as a way to understand how their teaching and learning lives were and continue to be shaped.

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<sup>7</sup> Informal learning through service has the potential to challenge deficit perspectives (Delpit, 1995) in a way that is not often possible in traditional school field placements because these experiences focus inquiry on the lived experiences of children in the context of their everyday lives.

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