An Arts Based Narrative Inquiry into Learning in an Early Childhood Education and Care Degree

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LIST OF IMAGES

Dedication

I am lucky to have lived with love generated by my mother Margaret McGarrigle and my father Arthur McGarrigle. We have shared the loss of my brother James who inspired me along with his wife Judi. I have lived to tell the tale, as they say, and wish I could share this document with them. My sister, Patricia, has helped me through different parts of my life and, with her daughter Lucy, would know how proud they would be.

I am indebted to my supervisor Dr. Grace O'Grady who has guided me and grounded me when my lines of flight needed to land safely. She also encouraged me to take off when needed and allowed my confidence to grow as a narrative researcher. I would like in particular to acknowledge the support and inspiration of Eva Lindroos from our shared experiences in the narrative workshops and at the Narrative Conference in IT Sligo. I am indebted to Professor Sharon Todd, Professor Aislinn O'Donnell, the lecturing staff and my fellow learners in the PhD cohort of the Education Department at Maynooth University. I would like also to acknowledge the lecturers and fellow students I met at the Ethnography week in Maynooth as well as fellow narrative researchers from the Narrative conferences I attended.

I am grateful to my students who have grown alongside me in their own ways and provided an insight into their lives by participating in my research. Along with colleagues in the Wexford Campus of Institute of Technology, Carlow, I have benefitted from some open conversations about

education. I would also like to acknowledge my past teachers from schools, colleges and universities who have made a significant impact on my lifelong education. I am also grateful to the financial support and encouragement of my employer, the Institute of Technology, Carlow.

On a personal level, I am also lucky to have a loving family who cherish my achievements equally as much as I rejoice in theirs. My two daughters, Saoirse and Roseanne, remain my best achievements and, along with my grandchildren, Daithi, Cora and Siofra, they make my world a beautiful place to be in. They will continue to do so for others I am sure.

Lastly, Evelyn, wears my love with pride and shares my narrative:

In the now with you
mindful of the future
the feel of your skin
what it does to me
the beat of your heart
long may it last
the breath we share
the dying day
the words we make can we write it now
our obituary
in the scary times

Abstract

Within a rhizomatic, arts-based narrative inquiry into my practice as a lecturer in a Third Level Institute of Technology I attempt to deterritorialise the pedagogical spaces of an Early Childhood degree. Inspired by Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) notion of writing as inquiry and Creative Arts Practices (CAP) Ethnography I experiment with poetry, art and film in order to find my research voice and move through the complexity of learning using the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). An epistemological dialogue with my past traces a movement away from the dominance of positivist psychology as I step gingerly into autoethnography. I position myself within emerging stories of learner, teacher and researcher and formulate a research project that explores learning and teaching in an Early Years degree in Ireland.

Using the troublesome concept of intelligence in a first year psychology class a *Learning Carnival* is devised to transform the passive lecture space and mount a challenge to dominant psychometric traditions. A focus group allowed students to articulate the role of musical, kinaesthetic, linguistic and other 'intelligences' (Gardner, 1983) in the ways they learned and a film called 'Practice and the Internet' was made to playfully deconstruct some of the findings. *Troublesome knowledge* is better conceived as *troubling knowledge* embracing uncertainty in learning and promoting an active process over a static entity. Likewise intelligence as a noun already

presupposes a measurable entity and limits the potential to conceive learning as active, open ended and consisting of various creative processes.

Following a number of pioneers of arts based research and identity construction (Leitch, 2010; O' Grady, 2012), a self-study method prompted students' writing, portraits, masks and images to explore how they constructed their lives in their final year of a professional Early Childhood course. In collaboration with the students a short film called 'A Murmuration of Early Childhood' celebrated their artwork and collective poem 'Imagine a Child'. An assemblage of research data allowed individual voices within a collective participant voice to merge with the academy and maintain their primacy in a powerful evocative performance text called 'A Dawn Chorus'.

In exposing the influences on the author's researcher and learner identity the thesis performs a becoming-other and achieves a relative deterritorialization of the pedagogical spaces of teaching and learning (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). In producing a challenge to dominant understandings of learning and intelligences the thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge and scholarship through the use of arts-based narrative inquiry providing creative alternatives to teacher education in the Early Years. The autoethnographic lens highlights the complex political and social contexts that frame educational experiences and structure relationships between learners and educators and raises questions about the marginalisation and feminisation of childcare in Ireland. Of significance in this study are the ways that learners demonstrate their own agency within

limited subject positions and the power of education to provide a route to exhibit and express a personal identity beyond that of mother, father, old, young, male, female, carer.

Employing Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry, the thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge through its focus on creative processes from conception to representation producing a piece of work that is polyphonic, dialogic and novel in the Bakhtinian sense (see Kim, 2016, pp. 72-76). To open up inquiry through creative media means going beyond the predictable and stepping into the unknown world of discovery where meaning emerges from the playful interactions between learners and educators – resonating with the notion of *aesthetic play* in narrative inquiry (Latta, 2013, in Kim, 2016, ps. 85 - 88). It is hoped that this work will join a burgeoning literature in narrative inquiry that empowers other educators to enter liminal moments of risk and improvise on a tune, take lines of flight and challenge modes of thinking that limit human experience.

One: Scene Setting

Image 1 Part of an image of the Rhizome of the research

> Narrative approaches to education research practice…can be extremely useful in helping us to critically engage with the discursively established, sedimented strata of educational theory and practice that continue to be highly influential in a great many institutional and policy driven contexts…

> (Sikes and Gale, 2006, final paragraph)

Four years ago 'sedimented strata of educational theory and practice' would not have meant much to me. I understand more of its significance now but know there is more. There is always more. Explanations remain incomplete and are always in process. As I entered the ongoing story of qualitative research the *performative turn* co-existed with a multiplicity of other approaches and I saw complexity at each turn. I found relief in the *rhizome* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) as a means to cope with

such complexity and an alternative to limiting hierarchical conceptual frameworks.

> The multiple *must be made,* not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available - always *n* - 1 (the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted). Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at *n*-1 dimensions. A system of this kind could be called a rhizome.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 6)

At first, the rhizome appeared a strange fruit to me, metaphorically speaking. It grew on me though; mainly when I lay down. The rhizome appealed for two reasons. Firstly, when I considered the complexity of the topic of learning I wondered where to start. It seemed to me that just when you have formed a reasonable picture something else appears to complicate or unravel your understanding. Secondly, the rhizome offered an alternative to those explanations that impose a hierarchy between concepts and limit the possibility of change even before you start. It allowed me freedom to think critically about education in an open ended way.

This entry into the thesis explains how I came to conceptualise my study within a creative narrative inquiry methodology. A focus on creativity and student learning using narrative inquiry positions the research in the area of qualitative research. The research focused on learning, teaching and pedagogy and explored learner narratives in my context as lecturer in a degree course in Early Childhood Education and Care in the Institute of Technology sector in Ireland. A discussion of epistemological and methodological issues and the rhizome justifies the choice of qualitative research and sets the scene for the ensuing research story.

A word about format

A note about the format of the thesis: as well as prosaic academic text there are insertions of …

<div align="right">

…poetry

aligned

to

the right,

by the author

</div>

or aligned

to the left

by others

and referenced.

There are also boxed texts from the researcher's journal such as this:

Sunday 5th May 2013

Ethical issue: can I dialogue with my dead brother about epistemology? I am alive. James is dead. What is my purpose in this? I want this to be true and accurate - verifiable by him. It is my recollection and thus biased. He cannot answer to it. What are my fears? That I will not do truth to him.

(Research Journal, 2013)

There are also art images, diagrams, photographs and stills from audiovisual material. These may temporarily disturb the tyranny of the word, disrupting the text, forming 'asignifying rupture[s] against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 10). The juxtaposition of different forms aim to contribute

to a creative construction of meaning that playfully resonates with the 'serious fun' that I consider to be at the heart of Early Years practice.

What is the thesis about?

Firstly, the thesis is about a possibility of learning that is transforming for both learner and teacher. It is also about an autoethnographic journey as a researcher practitioner inquiring into my own life and practice. In examining my own history I begin with an epistemological dialogue with my past in psychology, the influence of my brother on my life and some narrative beginnings. An emerging researcher journey moves towards a qualitative methodology using Arts Based Narrative Inquiry and ventures into autoethnography. As I formulated a research plan that explored my teaching of the topic of intelligence in a first year psychology course I wished to bring a performative approach to learning through a *Learning Carnival* where students shared their learning of a new task in a group context informed by Multiple Intelligences theory (Gardner, 1983). Specifically this meant asking students to move out of the passive receptive mode and become active learners and perform their learning for their peers. I also had to move from the comfort of knowledge transmitter to performer in an attempt to explore learning alongside the students. From this stage a focus group highlighted the role of musical, kinaesthetic, linguistic and other 'intelligences' in the ways they learned. A film called 'Practice and the Internet' was made to playfully deconstruct some of the findings. Inspired by the use of arts based research to explore identity construction (O' Grady, 2012; Leitch, 2010), the

final stage of the research used arts based practices as pedagogical tools to explore how students constructed their lives in a professional Early Childhood course. In collaboration with the students a poem was produced called 'Imagine a Child' and performed through a short dance piece. A film of the dance poem and artwork, 'A Murmuration of Early Childhood', was produced in collaboration with the students. An assemblage of research data from the self-study project is presented through a performance text that blends individual voices within a collective voice. The journey through qualitative research is documented as the author's researcher and learner identity emerged in the process.

A map through the thesis

The thesis is a challenge to the traditional structure and format and to aid the reader here is a broad outline of the thesis. In chapters 1 to 3 an epistemological dialogue with my past experience as a learner and teacher in psychology traces the evolution of an arts based methodology located within narrative inquiry. As I explore creative arts practices I narrate significant influences on my life from my brother (developmental psychologist, p. 57) and father (storyteller, p. 85) allowing a qualitative creative research voice to assert itself. The first phase of the research study concerning my teaching of the topic of intelligence is specifically described towards the end of chapter 3 in the section entitled 'Devising my research project' (p. 88). This phase of the research involves the Learning Carnival and is described in the rest of chapter 3 to chapter 5. The final stage of the self-study project with the

students in their final year is in chapters 6 to 8. As the ethical story is merged with findings and other discussion the reader is forewarned that there will be side tracks and offshoots along the way. The section that begins with 'Researcher epiphany' (p. 206) offers a resolution to the difficulty of presenting findings in a democratic manner while maintaining the validity of the participant voice amidst other voices from the researcher, the field of early childhood and the academy. The final sections offer theoretical discussion that form a coda to the research making its connection to the wider context and arguing its significance (see Kim, 2016).

Each part of the research connects and there are multiple entry points into the research story. I will begin by locating the research in creative arts practices though I could begin elsewhere as …

> … any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order... Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 12)

Arts Based Narrative Inquiry

At the outset I was inspired by arts based research, narrative inquiry and Creative Analytic Practice (CAP) ethnography (Richardson, 2005) and the concept of *writing as inquiry* made sense to my desire to carry out emancipatory research though I had some epistemological concerns as this entry into my journal shows a questioning of positivist approaches to knowledge and into qualitative inquiry:

> There is also my position in relation to epistemology – as a constructivist I acknowledge the postmodern questioning of traditional

approaches. Knowledge is fluid, transitory yet there is still a yearning to establish generalisable facts about learning that can be taken from one situation and applied to another. We employ positivist rules of enquiry to some extent … Perhaps I am grappling with a big jump into qualitative inquiry as the vestiges of my positivist past cling on to my ankles.

(Researcher notes, 25th October 2012)

The issue of generalisable knowledge was a concern in my research journey

as well as where I positioned myself on the margins of qualitative research

producing…

…a thesis that challenges the traditional approach…is a brave work requiring 'extra' work to justify its approach in the dominant discourses of academia. My own narrative is bound in 'surveillance' – can I let people know that I play music, sing songs, paint pictures – have another identity in another social world?

(Researcher notes 14th December 2012)

As I report on my emerging research story I narrate in later sections my

ventures into autoethnography. Here I note how my creative identity is

concealed beneath a paranoid Foucauldian 'panoptic institutional gaze'

(Foucault, 2002, ps. 58-59).
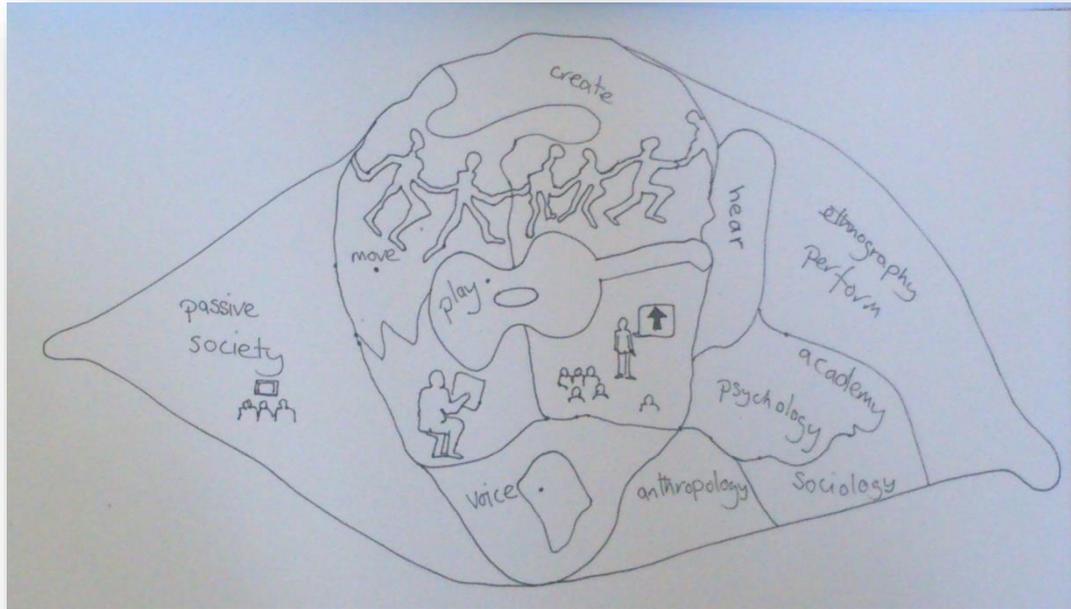
Image 2: A drawing of research ideas

A limiting *self surveillance* sometimes censors what I say and do about my teaching particularly where I deviate from the expected norm. In my context as a lecturer, I have been interested in changing the traditional lecture where the lecturer stands at the head of the class imparting knowledge to a passive student body into more active ways of engaging students in learning such as problem based learning and using creative media. My interests in the performance of learning and creativity found a home in CAP ethnography which includes the researcher as part of the story:

> CAP ethnography displays the writing process and the writing product as deeply intertwined; both are privileged. The product cannot be separated from the producer, the mode of production, or the method of knowing.
>
> (Richardson, 2005, p. 962).

To me this means that the processes involved in inquiry are equally as important as the products of research and of learning. This journey was taking me from traditional research located in positivist science to the

margins of arts based research where 'messy texts' reside. Candice Stout (2007) explains how 'messy texts' can show how research ideas and artefacts emerge in the writing process:

> Theorists like Richardson (1997, 2005), St. Pierre (2005), and Lather (1997) conceive of this generative capacity of writing as a method of inquiry. Imperatively, this conception of writing is not limited to the writing process alone, but lives vibrantly within the writing products - the "messy texts" themselves. From a postrepresentational perspective, this is where the centre shifts. Rather than imposing oneself upon the reader - my airtight interpretation, a representation of how things are - the researcher/writer moves alongside the reader.
>
> (Stout, 2007, p. 228)

There is a tension in constructing a meaning and offering it to the reader for interpretation and an active construction between the writer and reader opens up sense-making to a fluid process where interpretation is open-ended. Often one is discovered in the writing.

I used to think meaning

was all about

sign

and

signifier

but now

I'm not

Saussure

St.Pierre (2005) suggests that thought happens in the writing:

> I used writing as a method of data analysis by using writing to think; that is, I wrote my way into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytic deduction. This was rhizomatic work (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987) in which I made

accidental and fortuitous connections I could not foresee or control…*Thought happened in the writing.*

…thinking of writing in this way breaks down the distinction between data collection and data analysis – one more assault to the structure. Both happen at once.

<div align="right">(Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; p. 970)</div>

I came to experience this but it took a while to get there. As I later discovered there is a growing literature that operates within narrative and creative arts-based research approaches. For instance, Reece and Speedy (2014) acknowledge Richardson's pioneering work in writing as a method of research inquiry:

> Writing as a recognised form of creative inquiry has come a long way since Laurel Richardson's (1997) struggles for recognition in the academy and writing as a research process in its own right (as opposed to a vehicle for 'writing up' that which has already been researched) is now a well established form of qualitative research.

<div align="right">(Reece & Speedy, 2014, p. 52)</div>

A mode of inquiry that understands the writing to be part of the research process, offered a creative potential to present a variety of forms of writing and images – poems, playscripts, audiovisual imaginings – juxtaposing them with analytical discussion designed to playfully construct, deconstruct and reconstruct meaning. I had a broad definition of 'writing' that included image and film as well as poetry, story and prose. A word about validity of qualitative research may be useful here.

Validity of research

Creswell and Miller (2000) point out that qualitative research requires different criteria for validity than those used in traditional quantitative research which may rely on criterion, face and content validity. They suggest

that the choice of validity procedures is governed by the lens of the researcher and their paradigm assumptions. In terms of this study researcher reflexivity and collaboration with participants over an extended period of time would place this research in the constructivist and critical paradigms (see table 1).

Paradigm assumption/Lens	Postpositivist or Systematic Paradigm	Constructivist Paradigm	Critical Paradigm
Lens of the Researcher	Triangulation	Disconfirming evidence	Researcher reflexivity
Lens of Study Participants	Member checking	Prolonged engagement in the field	Collaboration
Lens of People External to the Study (Reviewers, Readers)	The audit trail	Thick, rich description	Peer debriefing

Image 3: Validity Procedures in Qualitative Research (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p.126)

~~Participatory~~ Insider ~~Action~~[1] Emancipatory Research

As the heading shows I have drawn attention to the terms used in '*~~Participatory~~ Insider ~~Action~~ Emancipatory Research*' by placing those problematic terms under erasure, still visible in some way and exerting an influence. I draw attention to the limits of *participation* and *action* in action research. Research positions and objectives change during research and particularly in narrative inquiry (Trahar, 2011). Action research has a long history in education and there are a wide number of approaches (see Noffke, 2009; Kemmis, 1988). At the outset of the research I wished to involve students in collaborating though I discovered insider research in higher

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[1] Under erasure or 'sous rature' is a deconstructive posture adopted by Derrida (1976) from Heidegger (1993). For its use in autoethnography see Rambo (2005; Ronai, 1999).

education complicates the picture. Collaboration means involving participants as co-researchers in order 'to respect and support…not to further marginalise them' and denotes a 'critical paradigm perspective' (Cresswell and Miller, 2000, p.128). My original notion of participatory action research intended to involve participants, take meaningful actions to improve learning and involve them in analysing the effect of a pedagogical intervention. As research went on I was less interested in 'analysing the effect' of a pedagogical intervention and more concerned with raising awareness and reflecting on their value as learners change during a course. To a certain extent, I started with the action research cycle of planning, implementing, evaluating and reflecting (Kagan, Burton, & Siddiquee, 2013) and the following resonated with my intentions:

> Emancipatory action research promotes a 'critical consciousness which exhibits itself in political as well as practical action to promote change' (Grundy, 1987: 154). The goal is to assist participants in identifying and making explicit fundamental problems by raising their collective consciousness.
>
> (Kagan et al., 2013, p. 37)

I aimed to raise *collective consciousness* and promote change in relation to early childhood in Ireland. I would not limit that collective consciousness to the participants in this inquiry but extend it to the world we share and inhabit. As an inquirer into my own pedagogical practices I embarked on insider research though I became more aware of the limits of participatory research through the ethical process which highlighted the dynamics of teacher-student relationships and the potential conflict between the

researcher and teacher role. This led to a revision of my original research objectives.

I had previous experience of the cyclical nature of action research in a research project with a second year class (McGarrigle, 2010) and this informed my research beginnings though I felt a desire to open up research to less predetermined routes to knowledge. Gale (2014, p. 679)) suggests that action research should be more unpredictable and open ended and involve 'a working into the not yet known where established discursive familiarities are made strange, [and] ambiguities are happily tolerated'. He critiques forms of educational action research that rest on Heidegerrian notions of *being* and suggests a Deleuzian *assemblage* to acknowledge *becomings* in research and to encourage experimentation. He suggests that…

> Such an approach further implies a shifting and a troubling of substantive notions of individuality, subjectivity and the signifiers of identity and group formation that are employed to represent them.
>
> (Gale, 2014, p. 674)

These concerns around individuals and groups occupied my attention during the research and, in my case, my *becoming* caused me to question the original goal of performing 'participatory action research' though I was at the start, to a certain extent, as the next two chapters show, wrapped up in my being.

As I sought to include students in the research I reflected on my role and remained responsive to their needs as learners in the process of research. Cresswell and Miller note:

> Our primary lens…is always that of the participants in a study, and we have become more reflexive in our studies acknowledging the inseparableness of the researcher and the process of inquiry.
>
> <div align="right">(Cresswell and Miller, 2000, p.129)</div>

I felt that a reflective reporting of research decisions would help to delineate those processes and I started a research journal to work out ideas and issues as they arose during the research process (see Watt, 2007). I was also drawn into arts based research from my own creative interests and to explore the boundaries between art and science.

Validity - Crystallisation through Creative Practices

Richardson and St.Pierre (2005) suggest that, rather than triangulating research data as a form of validation, crystallisation can combine data from different research artefacts/elements in order to acknowledge the many facets of meaning construction (see also, Ellingson, 2014). Following Richardson (2000, p. 254), the validity of research grounded in ethnography should have substantive contribution to human understanding expressing an embodied reality, have aesthetic merit, demonstrate a reflexive sensitivity to ethical issues and make an impact.

Polkinghorne (2007) suggests that the validity of narrative research may be limited by the language available to participants and their interpretation of the research interactions. As he notes,

> What is revealed is frequently meant to project a positive self-image to others; thus, participants' descriptions may have filtered out those parts of their experiences that they want to keep to themselves or that they believe will present a socially undesirable self-portrait.
>
> <div align="right">(Polkinghorne, 2007, p.481)</div>

Social desirability and language constraints place limitations on the validity of many forms of research and are not limited to participants – the researcher in a PhD study also wants to appear in a good light. A reflexive approach to crystallising data from different sources including checking the intended meaning with participants can provide a multi-dimensional picture to augment validity. The author who writes up the research will also have an intended meaning and others will be read into the text. In discussing the interpretation of narrative texts, Polkinghorne feels that researchers should make clear their position and I attempted to elucidate the intended meaning(s) participants strived towards and, also, explore the social and cultural context of both the researcher and the researched through rhizomatic analysis.

Elliott (2005) further broadens the discussion on validity of narrative research in terms of studies that seek to explore the cultural context of individuals sharing similar experiences. She suggests it may be possible to extrapolate from a small sample to the wider group and notes:

> If narratives become the focus of research not simply because they provide an insight into individuals' experiences and the meanings they make of them, but because their form tells us something about the cultural framework within which they make sense of their lives, then the close analysis of a relatively small sample of individuals may produce evidence that is considered to provide an understanding of the intersubjective meanings shared by a whole community.
>
> (Elliott, 2005, p. 28)

In the context of this study a small group of students of Early Childhood are the focus of the study though generalising to a wider community is limited. Elliot continues:

> The external validity or generalisability of this evidence will therefore depend on a demonstration of how widely those intersubjective meanings are shared or in other words what delineates the boundaries of the community or culture being studied.

> (Elliott, 2005, p. 28)

The issue of generalisability is a problem for all research. To some extent external validity seems to rest on translation between intra-subjective meanings within the research cohort and how these relate to the wider research field and the wider community. There is a danger that the authoritative last word is reserved for the academic research community and I would argue that the capacity for narrative research to create change in intersubjective meanings in and about shared cultural contexts is more important. To be specific, how can research with Early Childhood practitioners transform the ways we learn and think about the world? In that sense, I would follow Lather's (1986) suggestion that research has *catalytic validity* which is defined as 'the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it' (p. 260).

Education as Social Transformation

As a researcher into my education practices I am motivated by a desire for emancipatory research that is mutually transforming. Andreas Wiercinski (2011) suggests that 'Education can be understood as a kind of assistance in the transformation of the self in the better living of life' (p. 111). At the start, I wanted to argue that education as *social transformation* comes about through self-transformation – on the part of both teacher/lecturer and

student. Self-discovery is not an isolated endeavour but requires collaboration and dialogue. I cannot do it in an empty class. Wiercinski emphasises this collaboration with others in the joint enterprise of human understanding:

> Education is foremost about testimony, about sharing the experience of being human, sharing life, convictions, and knowledge. In its deepest existential sense, education is a call to transform our life by exercising openness toward the other and the unknown. It is an ethics of embracing the strange, the negative, without silencing the differences. In this respect education is about living diversity.
>
> (Wiercinski, 2011, p. 109)

The discussion on validity of qualitative research has suggested that arts based research and narrative are linked in this inquiry. I will now elaborate further on narrative.

Narrative – in the midst of stories

Once upon a time…

That seems a suitable beginning when I think of my context: a lecturer in Early Childhood. It also assumes a shared cultural knowledge of telling stories to children. Are we sitting comfortably? Perhaps I want to forefront the lives of children. It also has the idea of a beginning, middle and an end.

In the beginning was

the word

then the image

then the word.

17

In the end

there is no end

just life/death

and people

trying to make sense.

Intermezzo –

in the midst of

being and becoming

human

In terms of narrative, I initially placed what I imagined was a simple narrative frame on my research – a beginning, a middle and an end. However, as I tried to impose this on the research (and the students) I needed to refine my original idea. Their stories of learning do not fit into neat pieces with a beginning, middle and end. We find ourselves in the midst of it all. It is ongoing. My own story and the multiple stories and possible stories of my students become entwined and disengaged at different points in a course of study. Their course of study finds an ending in the final year of study and graduation and moving to the next stage of their individual lives; work with children, further study and other possibilities. We are *in the midst of being and becoming human.* Clandinin and Huber (in press) call this aspect of narrative research being in the midst – being living inquirers:

> Narrative inquiry always begins in the midst of ongoing experiences. In this process, inquirers continue to live their stories, even as they tell stories of their experiences over time. Inquiries conclude still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories and experiences

that make up narrative inquirers' and participants' lives, both individual and social.

<div align="right">(D.J. Clandinin & Huber, in press, p. 10)</div>

The context of childcare education in Ireland

In terms of this narrative inquiry, I wished to prioritize a creative exploration of how one lecturer and a cohort of early years students attempt to learn alongside the 'grand narrative' of learning in higher education. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.32) make the point that narrative works at the boundaries of the 'grand narrative' where 'the *universal case* is of prime interest. In narrative thinking, *the person* in context is of prime interest'. The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of time, the personal/social and place provide a context to derive meaning from lives (D. J. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; D.J. Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). In accordance with this, I became attentive to the specific research context located in the field of teaching and learning in an Early Childhood degree in higher education at this particular time in Ireland. I would feel the need to add a fourth dimension of the political or highlight its prominence in the personal and the social dimensions to ensure that there is some change to the conditions that maintain inequality.

In that context, the degree course in Early Childhood Education and Care is part of the professional framework of qualifications that was put forward in 2002 as part of the Model Framework (Department of Justice, 2002). Concerns about quality in Early Years practice have consistently argued for a qualified workforce that is able to enact child-centred practices

(Bennett, 2006; Duignan, 2005; Kiernan & Walsh, 2004; Walsh, 2006). Thus, since 2002 there has been a growth in qualified early years professionals (mainly female) who are responsible for the development of children in a changing society and facing a wide variety of circumstances. It is pertinent to note that a professional payscale has not been established in the same period. These issues will return in later sections of the research story[2].

Narrative theory

My attraction to narrative theory arose from my background in psychology where cognitive and developmental psychology have been greatly influenced by the work of Bruner (Bruner, 1986, 1990; 1991) who has added to the theoretical framework of narrative approaches to understanding. For Bruner (1991, p.21) 'narrative organises the structure of human experience' and he suggests 'a dual landscape – events in a putative real world occur concurrently with mental events in the consciousness of protagonists' (Bruner, 1990, p.51; quoted in Hiles & Čermák, 2008, p. 149). In their review of narrative psychology, Hiles and Čermák reference Ricoeur (1987, p. 429) who says that a story is 'always preceded by a narrative intelligence that issues from a [human] creative intelligence' (2008, p.149). Sikes and Gale (2006), in a section on Bruner and Narrative Intelligence, explain Bruner's (1996) position that story making is vital for understanding the world and logical-scientific ways of thinking contrast

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[2] In particular, see Childcare Practices – Policy Framework, p. 119; Children of the postmodern future – feminisation of childcare p. 126; and the final chapter.

with narrative forms in different cultures. This leads to arguments about different ways of being in the world and the dominance of Western colonialism.[3] Already the simple story is complicated by other conceptual issues. As a researcher one important consideration is the analysis of narrative.

Hiles and Czernak (2008) explain their analytical approach 'Narrative Oriented Inquiry (NOI)' drawing heavily on Russian structural/formulist concepts of *sjuzet-fabula;* and intertextual relations of form and content. It seems to me that such analysis has a danger of imposing an authoritative researcher interpretation on the individual story. Likewise, Gale (2007) has critiqued the analytical approach of Labov (2006) where a structural approach to analysis imposes an unwanted hierarchy on narrative. Gale suggests the rhizome can offer an alternative.

> The linear structure of the narrative, as described by Labov, from the abstract through to the coda and its method of analysis with its *central core* and its hierarchical and status-differentiated genealogical relationships to a spread of *general principles* is redolent of the arborescent figure of the tree that is criticized in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1988). They argue for a more complex, nonhierarchical, nonlinear, rhizomatic structural configuration that is defined by movement, multiplicity, and states of becoming…
>
> (Gale, 2007, p. 734)

The poststructural turn questions the effects of our analytical methods on the people we study and the topic. The individual story draws us into how a person construes him/her self in their social context. Salgado and Clegg (2011) suggest that the self as a unified concept has come under closer scrutiny:

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[3] I discuss this in a later section (p.46) and Higgs (2008)

Many postmodern, poststructuralist and social constructionist theories have begun to champion an alternative notion of the self, clearly situating self, identity, or subjectivity as something produced within (and by) history, culture, and society (e.g., Foucault, 1980; Gergen, 1994). In psychology, perhaps the most prominent of these postmodern theories are those of the social constructionist variety.

<div align="right">(Salgado & Clegg, 2011, p. 426)</div>

In their discussion they suggest that a dialogical view of the self may overcome some of the shortcomings of social constructionism:

In a dialogical framework, self is not an object: it is a vital principle, an organizing act, an arrow through time that clothes itself, constructs itself, embodies itself, out of its socio-cultural context and so is simultaneously a totally unique event and a deeply relational manifestation of a shared world. Psyche and context are inseparable because, just as the constructionists argue, identity can only be constructed from whatever resources are available in a given context … Self is event, agency, and thus fundamentally unique as well as fundamentally embedded in a symbolic, material, socio-cultural world.

… when we are born we face a previously constituted socio-cultural world that simultaneously enables and constrains the possibilities of meaningfully coordinated actions with others. Thus, a dialogical perspective requires that we consider the socio-cultural context in which a dialogical relation is situated (principle of contextuality)…in a given context, each person creates personal meanings by positioning her or himself in that same context.

This dialogical way of construing psyche and society carries with it important implications for how we conduct the social sciences.

<div align="right">(Salgado and Clegg, (2011, p. 429)</div>

The dialogical framework suggests that the self is an active organising principle – a verb rather than a noun. A *'selfing'* mediated by social context negotiates our sense of who we are and interprets how we are positioned in daily interactions. There may be some room to manoeuvre and resist social forces that impose constraints on how one is allowed to be or not be in the world? This dialogic framework would question whether interactions are predetermined by the binaries of social position –

lecturer/student, mother/child, manager/employee, state/citizen. These questions require further consideration[4].

The thesis explored some of the ways that individuals construct personal narratives. Following Bruner, it is possible to view narrative as the organising principle that simultaneously constructs the self and other through dialogical interactions in a social context. In a sense my journey into autoethnography in this research was to provide a space for that dialogue. Salgado and Clegg also suggest 'the importance of developing research practices and products that are multi-voiced' (2011, p. 431) which became a vital part of my endeavours.

Cortazzi (2001) suggests that narrative analysis in ethnography gets at *the meaning of experience* and allows for 'the representation of voice, that is, the sharing of the experience of particular groups, so that others may know life as they know it' (pp. 385-6). In a sense, validating another's experience places an ethical imperative on the researcher to move 'from behind the protective barriers of objectivity and invite others to join with us in our learning about being a researcher as well as remaining human in our research relationships' (Etherington, 2007, p. 599). I am drawn to this type of narrative research within a poststructural frame.

I will now explain my use of the rhizome in the research thesis.

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[4] See final section 'Making Strangers of Our Selves'

The rhizome

The notion of *intermezzo* referred to in my poem above connects with music and being in the middle of stories. Deleuze and Guattari explain -

> A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*.
>
> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25)

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we are in the middle, always in the process of becoming, of creating knowledge as we move along many different paths connecting and disconnecting:

> …the rhizome is made only of lines, lines of segmentarity and stratification at its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialisation as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature.
>
> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21)

In a later chapter on *Micropolitics and Segmentarity* Deleuze and Guattari suggest 'segmentarity' is in our nature:

> We are segmented from all around and in every direction. The human being is a segmentary animal. Segmentarity is inherent to all the strata composing us. Dwelling, getting around, working, playing: life is spatially and socially segmented.
>
> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 209)

The segmentarity consists of lines that may be binary, circular or linear. They explain them in the ways they create and maintain difference and the boundaries of social life:

> We are segmented in a binary fashion, following the great major dualist oppositions: social classes, but also men-women, adults-children, and so on. We are segmented in a circular fashion in ever larger circles, ever wider disks or coronas, like Joyce's "letter": my affairs, my neighbourhood's affairs, my city's, my country's, the world's. We are segmented in a linear fashion, along a straight line or a number of straight lines, of which each segment represents an episode or "proceeding"…

> … Sometimes the various segments belong to different individuals or groups, and sometimes the same individual or group passes from one segment to another. But these figures of segmentarity, the binary, circular, and linear, are bound up with one another, even cross over into each other, changing according to the point of view.
>
> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 209)

These lines of segmentarity can be supple or rigid (hard to change) and it is in the 'micropolitics' of everyday life where worlds can be re-imagined, re-enacted and deterritorialised. For example, in a study in an early years setting, Blaise (2013) experimented with 'segmentarity' and notes that 'micropolitics considers the small, everyday encounters as significant to the processes of change' (p. 189).

In lecturing/teaching everyday encounters may offer an arena for change – a common motive for researchers in education. Clarke and Parsons (2013) suggest that novice researchers experience a change in identity where they move beyond simple binaries such as quantitative/qualitative to recognise and respect different epistemological positions and are better able to hold on to paradox. My experience of the quantitative/qualitative binary was similar and I learned to embrace paradox seeing it as an invitation rather than a threat. Likewise, our students seek certainty within curricula that are complex and changing. In everyday interactions we are exposed to complex messages from a variety of different sources and media which can impact on the higher education learning environment requiring a flexible lecturer stance. Clarke and Parsons suggest that both teacher and student grow through personal agency and being able to accept multiple perspectives promoting…

> …discussion that points to the practical yet complex day-to-day interconnections with students, teachers, research, and information that go beyond the linearity of books; students and teachers as researchers grow through personal agency and multi-perspectival identities in a *rhizomic* fashion.
>
> <div align="right">(Clarke and Parsons, 2013, p. 38)</div>

To do this requires stepping out of predefined roles and taking a chance with uncertainty, improvisation and creativity which can be unnerving:

> Rhizomatic thinking steps into the *affect*, creating moments of what Deleuze and Guattari call *deterritorialization* that embrace chaos and creativity as things to be celebrated and encouraged rather than shut down, captured, pushed out, dis-affected, or diminished (made small, lessened).
>
> <div align="right">(Clarke and Parsons, 2013, p. 40)</div>

In the following comment a call to *affect* in terms of research requires to enter uncertainty and not seek predefined results:

> Researchers who follow traditional research paradigms can fall prey to searching for preconcieved results, what Deleuze calls the danger of *representation*. Researching as a rhizome highlights the possibility of seeking the preconceived and searches for ways to allow pre-personal intensities – the *affect* – to be in purview of research and pedagogy. Such affect is generated not from the researcher's agenda, but from the researcher entering the strange release from seeking to control research projects or students. Allowing a research project to control itself is easier said than done, but we believe such openness to *affect* can negate preconceived conceptions of research that stagnate towards the norm.
>
> <div align="right">(Clarke and Parsons, 2013, p.41)</div>

In the research I present in this thesis I experienced the difficulty of releasing control of the research project to students as well as its benefits. As Clarke and Parsons suggest I wished to 'problematize the status quo' and 'deflate educational hegemonies' (p. 40). In the early stages of the research I sensed a change in my researcher identity as this email to my supervisor indicates.

As Gale (2007) notes in the section quoted above, the rhizome is an alternative to the vertical hierarchy imposed on concepts by the dominant tree metaphor. The tree is a comfortable, orderly image of thought that simplifies ideas and sees their connections from root to branch to leaf. Rather than the structural hierarchy of the tree Deleuze and Guattari prefer the rhizome, a tuber-like plant that has outgrowths at any point. It exists both below and above ground in the same way as a tree, however, no part is superior or given priority. Instead there are subterranean trajectories radiating out in various directions without any prevailing or dominating images of thought – they have equal value so one can enter the rhizome at any point. Deleuze and Guattari describe six characteristics of the rhizome which include:

> Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point can be connected to anything other, and must be …Principle of multiplicity…Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they really are …Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialisation according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities…Principles of asignifying

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rupture…A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines …Principles of cartography and decalcomania: a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model.

<div align="right">(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, pp. 7- 12)</div>

The principle of connection and heterogeneity allows for an opening up of ideas and multiplicities and makes its appeal to me when confronted by the complexity of the research topic of learning. In deciding to study education and my own teaching and learning practices I wished to extend my knowledge beyond the narrow bounds of the academic discipline of psychology. Postmodern questioning challenges the framing of the research question, accepted epistemologies, as well as the dominant research methods. My interest in the area of teaching and learning had led me to a useful framework for giving feedback and developing self-regulation of learners (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006). Yet the appeal of the model is confounded when confronted by the complexity in trying to understand even one aspect of learning. When we separate out one part for specific study we still have a desire to stand back and see how each part connects in the whole. It is like shifting our gaze in a kaleidoscope - it is difficult to be sure of what happens at the periphery of our gaze. The rhizome offers an opportunity to move between shifting points in multiplicities creating connections and challenging hierarchical arrangements.

<div align="center">**The definite article maybe**</div>

A gentleman was searching in a curiosity shop

for the definite article.

When he thought

he had found it

he asked the assistant

'Is this the definite article?

'Er..I'm not sure' was the reply.

'Ah..so it must be the indefinite article'

'Eye. To be sure'

I now want to be more specific about the research and turn the discussion towards how I proposed to research my own context in teaching and learning using arts based narrative inquiry. I will describe the beginning of my research journey into the creative use of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences and then how this informed the later stage using creative methods to explore student identity. More specifically this part of the actual research project is described in Chapter 3, page 87.

Learning and troublesome knowledge

I originally entered this inquiry from my interests in teaching and learning and the discourse located around threshold concepts and *liminality* which have largely been explored from the viewpoint of the lecturer (see Cousins, 2008; Entwhistle, 2008; J. Meyer, 2013; J. F. Meyer, Land, & Baillie, 2010). As I devised my research proposal this became an entry into the field which led onto the creative work on student narratives in their third year of study. Entwhistle (2008) has pointed out the need for research into how students move through difficult conceptual areas that are central to a field of

study and to move the point of inquiry from curricula considerations of lecturers to the ways students experience them in their learning:

> So far, much of the research into threshold concepts has focused on identifying them within a syllabus and from the teacher's perspective but, if we are to understand the transformative functions of thresholds of various kinds, we must find out a great deal more about how they are experienced by students.
>
> <div align="right">(Entwhistle, 2008, p.33)</div>

Threshold concepts often contain *troublesome knowledge* that require changes in learner identity in order to manage ambiguity and complexity. It is suggested that the design of a course can assist learners to overcome the challenges of *troublesome knowledge* within a curriculum (Land, Cousins, & Meyer, 2005). One early aim of my research was to see if the first year psychology curriculum could be changed in content and delivery to help students with some of the threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge contained within the discipline. I chose the topic of intelligence as it contains many sources of troublesome knowledge in psychology. I sought to explore student experiences of learning and wished to join with students to reveal some of these in the research using their narratives of learning journals recorded in different media. I devised my research project with this in mind and also with a desire to transform learning. Inspired by Paulo Freire, I wrote this in my proposal:

> I am drawn to Paulo Freire (1993, p. 51) here and the idea of '*co-intentional* education: teachers and students…co-intent on reality, are both subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain that knowledge of reality through

common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators'.

(Research Proposal, 2013)

If critical theory is about questioning the way we research and ensuring that we promote positive transformation rather than supporting the current social situation then it requires a radical shift from product to process. Things are in a state of flux and our observations at any one time are approximations of a truth that we wish to re-orientate/dismantle/re-create. I am also part of a social construction of reality so I am led to re-consider and critique my own position in the status quo. This led to a consideration of voice which I interpreted as raising voice in terms of my own students and also in my own student life – present and past.

Power exists between lecturer and student relationships in the lecture hall/classroom. A major concern centres on what voices are heard and dominate. How can I silence my voice if it dominates the voice of the students? Perhaps these relations are influenced by performance concepts; how I present myself to students and how they present themselves to me (Goffman, 1990). At one stage, I considered the use of multimodal discourse analysis (Kress, 2012) as a way to reveal some aspects of how we both, my students and I, position and present ourselves in the shared field of the classroom. Having engaged with the literature of multimodal discourse analysis (Kress, 2012) and noted its connections to student learning, social semiotic theory and the use of audio-visual material as data to explore the complex ways meaning is made, it seemed to fit my research frame.

However, though I did make use of video footage in parts of the research as a means to represent research findings creatively I chose not to use multimodal analysis as I had limited access to the technology required and was anxious to avoid a technical analytical frame dominating the research.
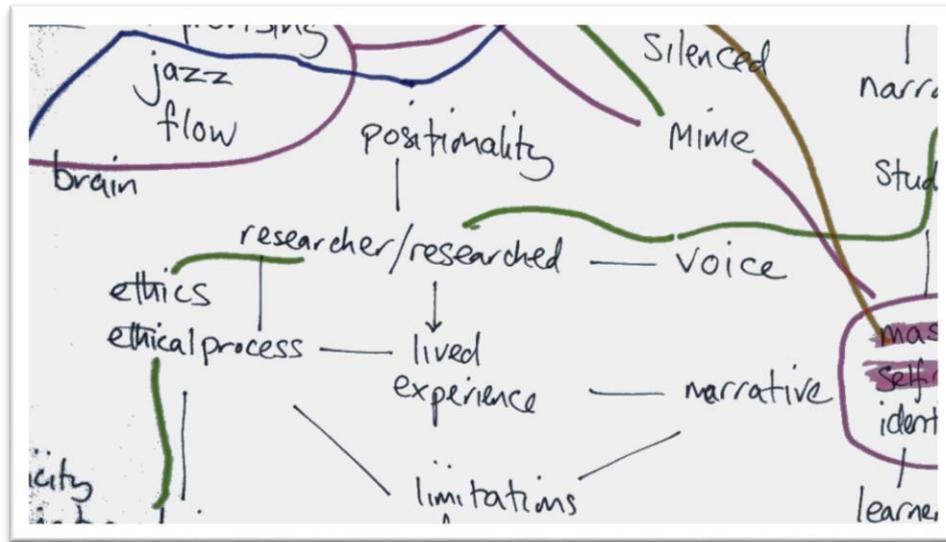
Image 4: Another part of the rhizome

Voice in research

The notion of voice has received a lot of attention in the literature and continually occupied me in the research (A. Y. Jackson, 2003; Lomax, 2012; Lorés-Sanz, 2011; MacLure, 2009; Mazzei, 2013; Mazzei & Jackson, 2012; Osgood, 2010). The literature on voice in qualitative research seemed to problematize my simplistic notions of performing transformative inquiry (MacLure, 2009; Mazzei, 2013; Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). MacLure (2009) critiques 'voice research' that is too easily read, well intentioned and sanitised by humanist good intentions. She also points out the overzealous critiques of such efforts. My journey through voice is guilty of the former as I

think my entry into voice was initially concerned with facilitating student voice without patronising it – to use 'personal experiences of meaning to provide leverage against hegemonic systems of meaning' (Rosiek 2013, p.167). As I went further into my own study I realised there were more complex interconnections in relation to voice. Firstly, I found myself finding my own voice through a personal dialogue with my past as a person, student and researcher. I do not offer this as a way to make later analysis more transparent or authentic and make no claims for it other than a creative exploration of my own being. As the author of this work I am also engaged in a dialogue with research participants on the one hand and with an academy on the other. My concerns over raising the voice of students learning in the context of an Early Childhood degree brings with it the wider implications of disempowered feminised work and the structural constraints placed on the relational aspects of voice. The rhizome offers a way to expose these influences on what is said and the choice of arts based research practices offered opportunities to deconstruct the institutional hegemony of which we are part.

Rosiek (2013, p.169) draws on the pragmatism of Pierce to suggest that 'the experiences of the interpreter is a necessary component in the generation of meaning.' In moving towards autoethnography I considered how the researcher is part of the phenomenon of study - is an interpreter of meaning and is also part of the picture. I wrote this in my notes:

> The measuring instrument being a sentient being is not the same as a burette or a pipette – what it measures will vary according to the subjective (and emotional) state of the researcher. If one tries to 'bracket out' subjectivity, eliminate bias as psychologists would describe it, to get at the 'pure facts' of objectivity one must become aware of the ways we conceptualize an area of study, our choices and our reasons for our choices. Language and how we use it come under scrutiny but not in that dull, psycholinguistic way dominated by grammatical analysis with its detached scientific cloak but through a more critical questioning of purposes and functions of language in social intercourse where discourse analysis is the obvious choice.
>
> (Researcher notes, 2013)

These early concerns with 'objectivity' and discourse analysis show an internal epistemological dialogue as I moved towards narrative inquiry and creative arts practices. Rosiek notes the value of arts-based research …

> … involves creative exploration of new ways to represent the possible qualities of human experience and sociality. Through artistic modes of representation an inquirer can introduce new ways we can individually and collectively experience the world, which, in turn, makes new forms of empirical and critical inquiry possible.
>
> (Rosiek, 2013, p.169)

I was also concerned to represent individual and collective experiences through an arts based methodology using poetry, image and film. These research methods carry with them issues of interpretation and aesthetics.

Laverty (2003) compares the hermeneutic phenomenology of Gadamer and the phemonenology of Husserl. In the former hermeneutic approach, Laverty says:

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> Specifically, the biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed aside, but rather are embedded and essential to interpretive process. The researcher is called, on an ongoing basis, to give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched.
>
> (Laverty, 2003, p. 17)

A hermeneutic analysis alerts one to the social and cultural context that frame experience and my exploration of learning must also question the underlying assumptions behind my analysis. If this process of research means translating lived experience into texts for analysis of meaning then the process by which they are constructed also frames and constitutes a political act that creates or attempts to discover aspects of power that may be concealed. I feel we enter the hermeneutic circle and leave it with notions of meaning that may resonate but are never perfect truths or representations of reality.

We are contained in the research object as viewers and as participant researchers
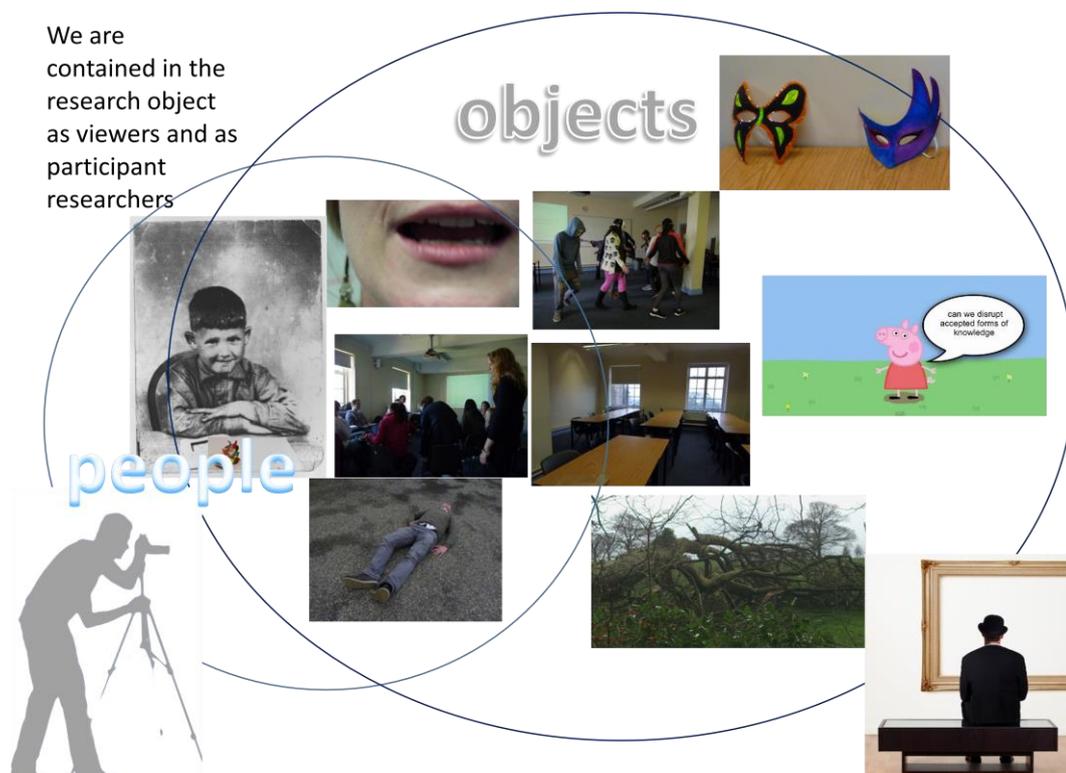
Image 5: The researcher is part of the picture

Autoethnography

The notion that my researcher perspectives are part of the research picture led me tentatively into autoethnography. At the beginning, my epistemological concerns centralized the notion of being through the research process. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010) say that…

> … autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist.
>
> (C. Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010 paragraph 3)

As I wrote myself into the research (Richardson and St.Pierre, 2005), I situated myself, the author, narrator, as the main actor; with all the inherent power connotations. Notions of authorial voice required attention as well as my entry into the field of auto-ethnography. I felt a need to dialogue with my epistemological past and what I perceived as the dominant voices of positivist psychology. The fear of challenging positivism made me reluctant to identify completely with the label of autoethnographer. These perturbations will inform the next chapter. In later learning the research process drew me to into ontological notions of becoming for both researcher and researched.

Holman Jones (2005) presents a number of definitions of autoethnography and offers some of her own. Autoethnography is…

> Setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation…and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives.
>
> (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 765)

Doloriert and Sambrook (2009, p. 29) summarise some of the criticisms of autoethnography and highlight the dangers of self-exposure and narcissism. Anna Lieblich points out that…

> …dealing with the self is much more authentic than dealing with others. Self-analysis can offer much more profound material. There is, though, a danger of too much self-exposure which can skirt too close to exhibitionism and narcissism…
>
> (Josselson & Lieblich, 2005, p. 202)

My entry into autoethnography did not offer more authentic insights into the self only access to troublesome ideas about death, reality and dreams; stuff that can easily be excluded from scientific inquiry. I felt an emotional need to look into my life and found it difficult to commit to paper personal matters that I had learned to conceal in daily life. My view of my brother was precious and I did not want it disturbed by exposure to others' gaze.

In relation to the participants of research I recognised that I (subject) am part of the research object and present my understanding of what I experience alongside co-participants. As an example of insider research in education, I sought to acknowledge, question and celebrate subjectivity. I wanted to engage, inform and affect. Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner (2006) point out the strength of autoethnography to do more than 'objectively' describe the world of lived experience:

> Art says. "Our enthusiasm for autoethnography was instigated by a desire to move ethnography away from the gaze of the distanced and detached observer and toward the embrace of intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation…"
>
> (C. S. Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433)

I chose to include personal stories with the research stories presented. Sometimes there may be moments of epiphany where an insight was gained or lines of flight out of the research that perform 'a-signifying ruptures'.

> Narrative ethnographies refer to texts presented in the form of stories that incorporate the ethnographer's experiences into the ethnographic descriptions and analysis of others.
>
> (C. Ellis et al., 2010 paragraph 17)

Ellis et al. (2010) suggest that autoethnography can disturb the boundary between art and science creating an emotional impact:

> Autoethnography, as method, attempts to disrupt the binary of science and art. Autoethnographers believe research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical and emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena.
>
> (C. Ellis et al., 2010, paragraph 39)

There is also a call for research to do something – to effect change. Holman Jones (2005, p. 767) emphasises that the performative nature of autoethnography … 'challenges us to create work that acts through, in, and on the world and to shift focus from representation to presentation, from the rehearsal of new ways of being to their performance'.

My account describes my own emergence from the dominance of positivist psychology and movement from/within/out of that binary. In some ways the autobiographical telling has been therapeutic as I try to make sense of the loss of my brother, James. I grapple with the personal and try to see its significance to others. I don't see it as self indulgent and attempt to explore the notion of disclosure. Wyatt (2008) writes of the continuing loss of his father:

This paper is

A stuttering

A stammering

A searching for words

Words that break,

That go beyond what is written,

That look for angles and lines of flight

(see Deleuze, 1994; Deleuze & Parnet 1977/2002)

…

My fear now is that as I type something will be lost.

A connection.

A newly rediscovered connection.

With him.'

(Wyatt, 2008, p.955).

I read these words and they resonate with my loss. No. Be honest I cry. I was driven by a selfish desire to write about my brother in a research study. To make him come alive. In the song 'Wordy Rappinghood' by the Tom Tom Club, they sing ironically 'What are words worth?' (Weymouth.T., Frantz, & Stanley, 1981)[5]. I began my study for the thesis with a similar question as I experimented with other forms of art – music, images and film. We return to the word. As inadequate as it may be, it can make us go beyond what is written and make a connection:

> That's it, the way that the writing helps to re-member, to reconfigure bodies, to change the emphasis of presence but essentially to maintain the feeling that they are still there.
>
> (Gale, K., Speedy, J. Wyatt, J. 2014, p.70)

---

[5] This song was used for the mime in the Learning Carnival in Chapter 5

Dream Hope

I used to dream of James

he would come to me

in various guises

some times as he was

sometimes with shaven head

and hurt

by Nature's cruel kick

but passive, silent

and staring

happy to see him

sad

to realise the illusion

I wake up crying

happy to meet

my ghost from the past.

Last night I dreamt

I was that ghost

in my grandson's dream

floating above his bed

' what are you doing

Gon Gon!'

and I silently drift away.

I wake up crying

at this future scene.

In other ways, my writing has been a questioning of the social and cultural influences that have formed my experience. Elsewhere, Denzin (2010) notes the debates within autoethnography and critiques Anderson's (2006) attempts to sanitise it under the banner of analytic autoethnography and place it neatly into the latest iteration of the Chicago School. He argues for rebellious, messy texts that discomfort, re-orient ourselves to an oppressive colonial past and can make you cry.

Poetry rebels but its allowed

aloud

art images

imagine

I'm aged

capture

mortify

make an instant

instance

music feels

film story

time passes

bodies move

Finding a structure to the thesis

I searched for form and land for years and years I roamed

(Bowie, 1973)

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note the need to balance modes of expression, the re-telling of field research and the audience:

> In writing narrative research texts, we must be mindful of balancing the tensions of writing within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, of writing in ways that narratively capture the field experiences, and of balancing these with audience.
>
> (D. J. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 154)

The search for form in the telling and re-telling is an opportunity for me to imagine and re-imagine my particular context and to make connections to the wider social and political context. So my task is to describe, make understandable and then to question, disrupt, connect, assemble and re-assemble. In order to create a coherent argument at the same time as capturing lived experience I weave in and out, applying a theoretical frame to experience.

Part of this grappling with the form of the text concerns a reluctance to ensnare creative expression within the constraining form of the word or to allow the word to dominate over other modes - the visual, the aural. I like pictures in books. We teach reading from there – creating meaning from images as children learn to relate to books. I also like film as a medium. How can I insert film into the text? Where does music go? Yet I also wish to use the form to tell a story. I wish to express my interpretation and communicate my meaning but prompt others in the reader. Form and structure exist. I resist. How can I record the nomadic wanderings of my thought as I travel through experiences of learning in higher education?

The rhizome is used to visualize the different offshoots that knowledge takes and avoid the hierarchical implications of the tree as an organizing principle with roots and branches going from a core. That word 'roots' inserts itself. A tree is uprooted on my way to Maynooth.

Image 6: Uprooted tree on my journey to Maynooth 25th February 2014

Summary

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, this thesis is an *assemblage* of pieces of writing, poetry, images, music, film that is located in the field of 'how we learned' in a particular context of higher education. I bring an arts based research focus for three reasons. Firstly, I find myself drawn to art, music, performance as ways of being in the world, and secondly, it is most suitable for the subject matter of the thesis with a focus on creativity in learning and

teaching - and, thirdly, to challenge what appear to be privileged ways of knowing in academic research. It seems pertinent that part of the message is in the manner of its transmission – the process of doing research is as important as the research products or artefacts. This thesis is about learning, lecturers, students, children and higher education; and, for me, the focus on early years lends itself to playful forms of expression. To that end, poems may provoke and prompt new ways of saying things outside dominant forms of academic discourse. Images and audio-visual material may prompt multiple interpretations, support the verbal expression of ideas and mirror our image laden cultural environment.

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest a narrative inquirer is describing their *'becoming'* in the research story. Part of my becoming consists of a dialogue with positivist research traditions in psychology which seems to elevate quantitative methodology. Another part consists of the pieces I inherit from that past. Palimpsest refers to the traces left behind when we try to rub out the past – indentations on the page that impact on new scribblings. Some of these ideas from psychology help orient me at the start: the idea that empirical research can discover things; seeking explanations in observed behavior of what someone does and says; sensitivity to language and meaning; being skeptical about commonsense explanations. They may surface through narrative description of experience as I socially construct, deconstruct and re-construct meanings within my social context.

To summarize this introduction….

Man writes

important academic text

life interrupts

hold on

can you take Siofra for a walk?

man annoyed

reluctantly

pushes pram

uphill

it's all uphill these days

workmen dig important holes

quietly please

baby needs sleep

push on

pause by field

cows lie down with ponies

sea beyond

mindful moment

baby cries

just taking in the scene love

last night's dream

I woke up

a load of feminists

looking at me

Two: Epistemological Dialogues

Introduction

> Sometimes
>
> you have to fumble around
>
> in the dark
>
> to find what you were looking for.
>
> See you at the other end.

In this chapter I describe my personal journey through the academic discipline of psychology, highlighting the different claims to knowledge, changing paradigms and power in the academy. As I move towards qualitative arts based research I present an internal debate with my psychological past. I end with an imagined epistemological dialogue with my brother, James.

> Seeing Red
>
> The woman opposite appeared at my door in a red dress.
>
> Do something.
>
> Say something.
>
> But I was blinded by the symbolism.
>
> Seeing Red.
>
> Warning – danger.
>
> The bowl of tomato soup looked back at me.
>
> Red means something.
>
> It prompts action in a man.

Do something.

Say something.

'Are you still lopping bits out of monkey brains then?'

I asked of the man sitting opposite me.

Interrogating psychology's past

In the poem I refer to an incident where I sat opposite a man in a café behind the Eleanor Rathbone Building in Liverpool in the early 1980s and I found my voice briefly. I walked out without consuming the soup. As a student in the late 1970s, I learned to train a rat to press a lever in authentic behaviourist style.[6] I didn't question the monkey house that we heard about on the top floor of the Eleanor Rathbone Building in Liverpool University where lesions to the brain were experimentally induced to examine visual processes. At the heart of this is the notion that knowledge produced in a psychology based on detached scientific experimentation and justified by the power of the academic community can silence emotional responses in students. Students and lecturers occupy different power positions. As a researcher ethical questions arise in negotiating participation in a study, the subject matter of inquiry and the chosen methodology for research. Informed consent is not available in studies with animals and usually justification is based on the benefits to human knowledge.

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[6] Shaping behaviour until the desired response of lever pressing was obtained and then the rats were disposed of as we were told that they were no longer naïve or suitable for experimentation. Shaping refers to the reinforcing of successive approximations of the desired behaviour (Skinner, 1951; in McSweeney & Murphy, 2014, pp. 172-173). Skinner's theory of operant conditioning establishes the law of reinforcement where the frequency of behaviour is increased if it leads to desired consequences.

Moving towards qualitative research in psychology

As prevailing paradigms have shifted, I now find myself teaching a subject I studied in the 1970s when behaviourism was in the ascendant (in the UK at least) and the objectivity of the scientific method as a means to establish truth was dominant. Many years later I considered my epistemological position as I moved towards qualitative research within the discipline. Toren (1996) describes her experience of studying psychology in University College London in the 1970s where objectivist methodology dominated to such an extent that qualitative research methodology would not enter consideration. She reports that…

> ... the notion that qualitative methods might be applicable to psychological investigations was virtually non-existent; at that time any aspect of human behaviour that came under the rubric of the 'social' or the 'cultural' could only be a source of error, something that got in the way of what might otherwise have been a good experimental design.
>
> (Toren, 1996, p. 106)

Superior abstract knowledge – a Eurocentric view

In Toren's discussion of ethnography she highlights the cultural influences on knowledge construction and the idea that abstract knowledge has been elevated in the Western European tradition above all other forms of knowledge:

> The very notion of 'knowledge' is crucial to people with a generically European history and informs relations between them wherever they are found. While other peoples also have a concept of knowledge and are likely too to have ideas of specialist or expert knowledge in particular domains, it is not always the case that value is placed on knowledge in the abstract, and neither is it the case that everywhere, among all peoples, forms of knowledge are hierarchically ranked
>
> (Toren, 1996, p.105)

Similarly, Graham Higgs points to growing up in Zimbabwe where the Shona-Manyika speaking people connect with each other through their music, dance and creative arts and these represent different ways of encountering knowledge (Higgs, 2008). Higgs finds this a considerable contrast with his current situation teaching psychology in a small liberal arts college in the USA where he finds that…

> Psychology for the most part is still a traditional social science discipline struggling with the popular misconception of its mysticism and countering with a positivistic standard for research.
>
> (Higgs, 2008, p.546)

Higgs suggests that arts based qualitative research in psychology can offer reflexivity, metaphor and generativity. Reflecting on the dominant western scientific tradition, I feel there is a need to question the power assigned to knowledge in different contexts both within higher education and in the wider context of the world we share.

For example, in the area of developmental psychology, Piaget's (1972) genetic epistemology understood child development to involve a progression from naïve, practical knowledge to more abstract forms of knowledge that were more advanced. His investigations into children's thinking started from the philosophical basis of seeking empirical verification of a particular view of knowledge – genetic epistemology. The term constructivist is applied to Piaget but here the child constructs ideas/schemes from experience as a logical consequence of their interaction with, rather than a guided response to, the social and cultural environment. Bruner (1991) has drawn attention to Vygotsky's ideas and the way in which

the structural framework provided by language and education in the cultural setting of schooling provide the context for the move to abstract thought, understood as formal operational thinking, in Piaget's theory.

Abstract thinking is also considered more advanced thinking in Western societies. Toren (1996) explains the underlying power and control of such forms of knowledge in European history and the way in which 'the abstract notion of knowledge constitutes in itself a value of massive cultural weight' (p.105). Western education systems are seen to place higher value on certain forms of knowledge. Research into the way we think, learn and understand the world is still dominated by what Braidotti (1999) refers to as a Eurocentric western view that diminishes other ways of looking at the world. Deleuze defines it as: "male/white/heterosexual/educated/speaking a standard European language/living in urban centres/owning property" (in Braidotti, 1999, p. 89; see also, Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 292). I note these categories apply to me and would influence how I am positioned in my study.

These considerations about the power of knowledge relate to my own situation in teaching psychology in an Early Years degree where Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner are part of the curriculum. After a period of time they become stratified into the fabric of the course and as ethnography can make us look anew at things I began to think about the colonisation of the early years. Just as I feel able to question the influence of behaviourism I begin to question the cognitive perspective in psychology.

Thus far I have been looking at my past in psychology and, though it refers to personal events, I write in a detached, academic tone. As I went further into this study I questioned my motives. I had completed two Masters degrees – why do more? As I looked into my past, I considered the legacy of my brother and the following section shows my concerns about autoethnographic disclosure, my brother and death. I want to do justice to him. I found myself considering an auto-ethnographic approach as a way to include my own story as a learner though I was filled with self doubt.

Autoethnography, Death and Disclosure

Morse (2009) warns auto-ethnographers to fully consider the ethical issue that the people one writes may not be able to give their consent. She also prescribes that one should 'leave personal stuff' at home and notes the difficult issues around disclosure:

> Autoethnographers do not hesitate to get right to the heart of their own problems, and some do not even hesitate to share intimate, personal information with readers. It will be interesting to see, in a few decades, if these researchers experience regret at such disclosure; my feeling is that it makes voyeurs of all of us.

(Morse, 2009, p. 1655)

Before I read the above I _was_ hesitating and thinking about disclosure and writing about my brother. I wanted to disclose my feelings about my brother, James, who has been a lifelong influence on my life and identity as a learner and educator and I must accept that he is dead and cannot offer consent or answer to my interpretation. I want to protect his memory in the academy also; the pride I feel when his work is mentioned in textbooks and I try to represent his work to my students both emotionally and intellectually. As

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my older brother by six years, I looked up to him and hero worshipped him. In that sense, I will always be frozen as the naïve little boy looking to the more expert other for validation. I am observing myself in this and feel a duty to acknowledge James but I am anxious to establish my own separate identity in this study. There are emotions here to be acknowledged 40 years on. I suppose it is about the power of the academy and what a PhD represents.

Margaret Donaldson (1978) dedicated her book 'Children's Minds' to James and his work was instrumental in challenging the dominance of Piaget's theory. Edinburgh University did not award a PhD posthumously. We have framed the letter she kindly wrote to my parents explaining this. So what do I want to say about this? I think there is something about me doing this PhD which is related to research into working class students in universities – 'strangers in paradise' as Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) call it. I cried when I read that article and wonder why. Perhaps it is about loss, guilt, transformation – it is hard to explain. Or maybe phrases like the following hit home:

> They may be 'strangers in paradise' but they are 'familiar strangers' (Puwar, 2004), fitting in as learners despite their class difference. As Puwar (2004, p. 128) argues 'they, at least, partially mirror and clone the self-image of the hegemonic norm'
>
> (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009, p. 1115)

As Reay et al. note there is a decline in the numbers of working class students in elite universities which is a loss. I note the use of the word 'elite'

has not been made redundant in all these years and I am still summoning the courage to disturb the 'hegemonic norm' I have become.

On the death of positivist research

When I studied for my undergraduate degree in psychology in the late 1970s we were required to examine a theme to research. I chose to do my theme on Death. It was a personal choice because James had just died and was the reason I was studying psychology. I wanted to find out more about his work and try to understand it. I wrote a survey of the topic of death and how people deal with emotions aroused by thoughts of death. I still have a folder with my essay on death and some letters from James before he died. Some of my writing is readable now and entertaining. Referring to Paul Tillich (1952) and *'ontological anxiety'*, I wrote: 'It seems we all have ontological anxiety regardless of whether we believe in an after-life or not.' I probably found the phrase amusing and ironic. I couldn't resist including it in my writing back then. My undergraduate research within a positivist framework had its limitations - though I did learn some things as I cycled around undertakers in Liverpool.

I decided to research people who worked with death and see if they engage in defence mechanisms to manage any emotional occupational side effects. I used Eysenck's personality inventory (Eysenck, 1970) and selected questions that I thought showed denial and chose 3 groups to compare scores on these measures – nurses and funeral employees as experimental groups to compare with a control group of students. My study was going

quite well as I obtained data from a small number of nurses and students but when I arrived on my bicycle to talk to a funeral director he laughed at me. "Why do you want to do that, mate?" I was discouraged and the co-occurrence of a strike by gravediggers made it difficult to obtain a representative sample and led to the abandoning of my research. As I look back I see the 'winter of discontent' was part of that context – the reason that the gravediggers were on strike (see Travis, 2015).

In including this story I have brought real life experience to research which is usually written out of positivist accounts. It is messy and shows that research in the field is not what you expect it to be. Lived experience finds it hard to be constrained by independent variables. A qualitative account would contain more contextual information as well as the opportunity to discover rather than test ideas. As I went more into qualitative research I discovered a growing movement towards arts-based research which led me to consider the use of photographs, images, film and other creative media.

Still life = 'Nature morte'= death nature

Naively, I thought photographs in research might be capturing some form of truth. As I considered arts based research I wanted to bring emotion into research. Ideas about art and death dominated my research diary as this extract shows:
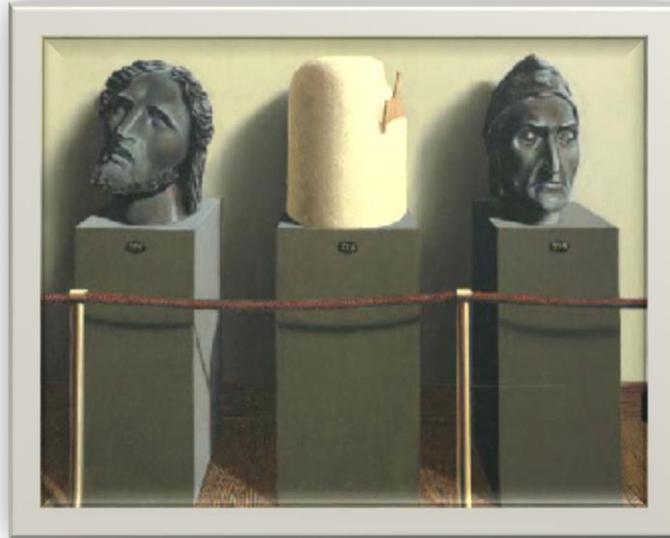
Image 7: Eternity by Rene Magritte (1935)

Still life in French is 'nature morte'. Last year on holiday I read a biography about Magritte and realized a lot of great art is about death. It's not that I am obsessed with death then. His work entitled 'Eternity' features museum pieces of bronze heads of Jesus and Dante with a slab of butter placed on the middle plinth.

(Research diary: Monday 9th June 2014)

As I reflected on the image, I realized Dante wrote the inferno and it would not take an eternity for the butter to melt. The image also denotes something about civilisation and history, recording for posterity and putting it in a museum where we go to visit death. It is like being invited into the Pharaoh's tomb to buy postcards.

Art as death – the image kills life

As I think about the commentary I read on holiday I try to acknowledge the ideas it generated. The book was by Pacquet (1982) I think though I do not have in my possession. These ideas about art and death led

me to photography and I read *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes (1993). Some of his words and ideas resonated:

> All those young photographers who are at work in the world, determined upon the capture of actuality, do not know that they are agents of Death. This is the way in which our time assumes Death… For Death must be somewhere in a society; if it is no longer (or less intensely) in religion, it must be elsewhere; perhaps in this image which produces Death while trying to preserve life… Life / Death: the paradigm is reduced to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print.
>
> (Barthes, 1993, p. 92)

When we record experience with the camera we kill it. Still life – nature morte. Barthes made me think about photographic images in a more critical way. Photographs are not capturing reality but another version that refers to truth and reality. Usually a person poses for the camera, that is, changes the way they present themselves. It is only when a picture is taken without the person's knowledge that it can be considered more authentic. So with research the process of obtaining consent entails 'posing ' the research and transforming lived experience to something which can be captured. Using photographs in research is not a more authentic reality – only part of a construction that already has a social and cultural significance.

Comment on detachment from the world

As I reflect on the pieces I collect here and what I was concerned with 40 years ago. It is the notion of being detached from the object of inquiry in research, or being detached in the care of others in emotional turmoil as in those working with death; or the detachment of the photographer at some emotional scene. Do we need to provide witness to suffering? Does it serve a purpose to deny feelings? Is it a protective mechanism to detach from

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emotional involvement? Is this a process of externalising experience as in narrative therapy (M. White & Epston, 1990)?

I decided against postgraduate research study when I graduated and went to work in a 'maladjusted' (the term that was used then) boys school in Shropshire. After a failed marriage, which is another story, I went to Kingston Polytechnic and trained as a primary school teacher specialising in art, music and drama. I then returned to Liverpool to work as a Detached Youth Worker where I organised music and photography workshops for unemployed young people. I think those ten years after James died were a traumatic time. As it is now. Death is permanent. Loss is permanent.

As I re-read a letter James wrote to me when he was ill, a small treasure which I cherish, I decided to try to imagine a conversation about his research and my own attempts. This imaginary dialogue was written between 13 - 15th June 2013 and performed with Eva Lindroos at the Irish International Narrative Conference in Sligo in April 2014. That took place a year after my mother had died in her home county of Sligo so it was a poignant, emotional event for me. Eva kindly spoke the part of James.

An imagined epistemological dialogue with my brother, James, who died in 1975

John: It's quite hard for me to start this dialogue so I re-read your letter of 24thJanuary 1975 where you try to explain your work on conservation and class inclusion. It was very funny and still is.

James: My work on conservation is funny?

John: No your letter. Of course I ended up in tears. 'Keep taking the sociology tablets ...' you say and your genuine concern for me delivered with humour and love.

James: Did you say this is a dialogue?

John: Point taken. I am getting there. So I then re-read your study Conservation accidents. (J. McGarrigle & Donaldson, 1974). So I think at this stage I understand it better.

James: What do you understand now then?

John: Well instead of resorting to my analysis of the social situation of the experiment from the sociological point of view and bringing in 'roles' to explain the child's behavior (which you acknowledge and I now see as inadequate) I can see how you emphasise the non-linguistic aspects. The child interprets what is said by what the adult does.

James: Did you say you were getting to the point?

John: Yeah. Well your work does stress how the context contributes to the meaning that is derived from a situation.

James: What are you saying then?

John: Well I wanted to discuss epistemology with you and I wondered if we agree or differ on certain points. I can see that by stressing the context in understanding human communication you could be in the situated knowledge camp.

James: What do you mean by that?

John: That understandings arise through social interactions where the context contributes to meaning rather than resting solely in the words used. This may also call into question the generalisability of local knowledge.

James: Does the second statement logically follow? What makes you say that?

John: I read it somewhere.

James: Now who's being funny?

John: I think that by saying that meaning does not reside solely in the utterances used you are opposed to narrow linguistic frameworks that focus on linguistic content.

James: So what do you think of the context of this conversation?

John: Yes it requires so much more contextual information to make sense which only I have access to.

James: Do you think it does not make much sense to the reader then?

John: No it makes sense but not in the way we know it Jim.

James: Was that another attempt to interject humour?

John: What I mean is there are many possible meanings in what we say and contextual information narrows down possibilities leading to a common understanding.

James: What do you really want to know?

John: I suppose it is about what your epistemological position would be many years on from your death?

James: Is that really it?

John: No that is a silly question and a limiting one since your work is located in a historical time. Historical relativism is another thing…

James: Is that how you see me – a relative in history?

John: I remember you talking about your work and how psychology may understand things in a particular time but that people change as a result of the knowledge they gain about themselves and this will then effect their behaviour and makes scientific truths about predicting behaviour difficult or even impossible. I suppose I am seeking clues about your position and I think I see your challenges to Piaget's work as not only groundbreaking at the time but wonder where you would go in your methodology. Your work is located in the dominant positivist tradition of the time where the experiment takes place under controlled

conditions and you repeated the same procedure with 80 children and present results using statistical procedures.

James: So what is your point?

John: I spent time learning all about psychology as a science and realize that to challenge Piaget you used the experimental method. I just wonder whether you would continue wearing the straitjacket of positivist science now?

James: What do you think?

John: I don't know. I suppose I wonder what you think of my qualitative approach and wonder would you have gone that way.

James: Are you really seeking permission?

John: I suppose so.

James: Why do you feel you need to ask permission?

John: I suppose I want to challenge positivist approaches to knowledge and your work is located in that tradition. So I see the 1970s as a time when the experimental method dominated and now I view the replication of the physical sciences as a doomed project for psychology. I get to a contradiction here in that findings from empirical research in this tradition form the basis for how we approach psychology today. My position would see psychology as a form of knowledge which is situated in its own place and time. Perhaps we should teach it as history... Actually I just want to talk to you.

James: Do you want to come back another time to continue?

John: Maybe.

             And here is a painting I did of you.

             Notice the cherry blossom.

             Judi[7] said you liked it.

             We planted them in our gardens.

---

[7] James became ill over that year of his study and died on June 3rd 1975. His wife, Judi died on June 3rd 1995. She helped fund my continuing education.

Image 8: James by John (c.1989)

Reflective Comment

In writing as research, decisions about what to include and what to leave out abound. There is a desire to communicate some emotional element and balance what may appear as abstract discussion. My emotions are mixed up with a desire to protect a memory that is personal and, for me, definitive, yet this may conflict with my social constructionist perspective seeking to acknowledge many ways of knowing. There are other versions of James that other people experienced. There are similarities between my life and others who also negotiate their way through love, pain, turmoil. How can we generalize about these and maintain a discrete version of the individual?

So, as a narrative researcher, I want to balance the universal and the particular and maintain the individual story. I have to resolve this issue – how can I give prominence to the individual's story in analysis? I pause to consider, perhaps this writing is performing a therapeutic function for me – a personal catharsis?

Personal trauma

Andrew Sofer (2013) offers an important analysis of how trauma is represented on the stage and it somehow seems relevant to my own narrative.

> Behind its dead metaphor, rehearsal is a harrowing experience. The word rehearse, whose original English meaning is "to give an account of," comes from the Old French rehercier, "to go over again, repeat." Originally, however, the word meant "to rake over," from re- (again) and hercier (to rake). To rehearse something is to say it over again. But it is also to harrow, since a hearse was a large rake used for breaking up the soil. The word came to be applied to the harrowlike framework for holding candles over a coffin, and eventually, by association, to a vehicle

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for carrying a dead body. Rehearsal, then, is Janus- faced. To re-hearse means to repeat something that has already happened— to harrow it again, to bear the (dead) body once more on the bier of performance. But it also means to practice or prepare for an event that is yet to take place. In this theatrical sense, which dates only from the 1570s, rehearsal is bracketed off as not quite, or not yet, the real thing. After all, if a theatre-event is the actual performance then it isn't (quite) a rehearsal.

<div align="right">(Sofer, 2013, p. 129)</div>

Rehearsal is a raking over the past in preparation for a future performance.

In discussing trauma, Sofer quotes AlanMeek:

Trauma may not be consciously registered at the time of its occurrence but it returns in the form of intrusive memories, nightmares, compulsive acting-out and flash-backs.

<div align="right">(Sofer, 2013, p. 118)</div>

And Caruth:

Further, "[W]hat returns to haunt the victim . . . is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known." As a memory of something that has not (yet) happened to the subject, trauma disrupts both narrative and epistemology.

<div align="right">(Sofer, 2013, p. 131)</div>

These pieces made me think about trauma as a disruption to experience, to the narrative organizing self, as a schism that cuts into a personal narrative defying definitive interpretation. When James died I got on an underground train to the Law Society in London to work as a computer operator. I later went to study psychology in Liverpool. I worked as a detached youth worker. I taught art. I worked in 'rehabilitation'. I had a family. I painted pictures. I made music. I lived. That 'closure' we hear about requires a denial of existence. The last time I saw James I wanted to put a pillow over his face. He died. He exists in my museum and comes to life in dreams. Temporarily. Closure is an illusion. Coming full circle, I am back with disclosure. Disclosure is revealing painful emotions in a trusting relationship. Closure is

contained by disclosure. I think the link to disclosure is that I may cling to a precious memory of someone I love and only reveal it to another person if there is trust in that relationship that I can share my perception. To reveal to the world takes time. So participating in research requires a respect for the stories that are shared and an attempt to express them in the language of the person's experience. There is a search for a voice to express them as well.

Trauma and Emotional Expression in Music

Amy Bretéque (2012) explores sadness in the *kilame ser* (sung narratives) which are melodic vocalizations of the Yezidi people of Armenia and she makes some interesting comments on the relationship between emotion and trauma and the expressive capacity of music:

> Research on the narration of traumatic events (Argenti-Pillen, 2003; Briggs, 1992; Grima, 1992; Wilce, 1998) has shown that the more speakers are emotionally affected by the events they narrate, the more they use linguistic and pragmatic markers of distance to dissociate themselves from their own narratives. Deeply traumatic events have to be kept away in order to be narrated.
>
> (Bretéque, 2012, p.142)

The use of reported speech in *kilame ser* has the function of detaching the narrator from the traumatic event that is being narrated. Sofer (2013) also notes that the use of reported speech can serve as a similar device in drama where violent events off stage allow the audience to reflect on their significance. Bretéque suggests:

> If music is frequently understood in the Western world as an emotional engagement with sound (Hanslick 1854; Meyer 1956; Nattiez 1987, 2005), melodized speech may be better described as an attempt to disengage oneself from an excessively powerful emotion. If this is so, melodization would be another distance regulator.
>
> (Bretéque, 2012, p.142)

Trauma and emotion, music and reported speech – how did I get here? When we transform experience into another register, another voice it helps process the emotion maybe? Food for thought. The following section I wrote at this time as I grappled with emotions, music, autoethnography and trauma.

Rebellious Pizza – autoethnography, emotion and music

Rebellious pizza

Grace, my supervisor, sent me a link to a number of articles and I spent some time downloading many. They all seem relevant. I end up reading Ellis and Bochner (2006) 'Analysing Analytic Autoethnography: An Autopsy' which is a dialogue between Ellis and her partner, Art, critiquing Anderson (2006). They are preserving the right to keep autoethnography rebellious and untamed by dominant academic methodologies that privilege analysis over emotion. Art says:

"Leon wants to take autoethnography, which, as a mode of inquiry, was designed to be unruly, dangerous, vulnerable, rebellious, and creative, and bring it under the control of reason, logic, and analysis. We want to put culture or society into motion; he wants to stop it, freeze the frame, change the context" (Ellis and Bochner, 2006, p. 433)

Carolyn replies:

"The last thing I want is for autoethnography to be tamed… Autoethnography shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate. Intimacy is a way of being, a mode of caring, and it shouldn't be used as a vehicle to produce distanced theorizing." (Ellis and Bochner, 2006, p. 433)

I considered how this relates to my writing thus far and also checked on Anderson (2006). I discover I had read one of his pieces and even highlighted text from it. I also considered how my partner, Evelyn, was also writing her essay for a course in mediation and was negotiating her way through mediation as artistry. Perhaps we could write together. She said 'Wouldn't it be nice if you could do a course and just read stuff? At the end say "Yeah I read that. It was good. Can I have my diploma now?"' She also mentioned a person called Lederach (2005) and his idea of 'voicewalking' which I remember someone referring to on my PhD group session – a man who had recently got his PhD and used a modified narrative approach - so I was interested. I just read a bit of it about how the flute makes a mournful sound seeking to return home to the reed-bed from where it was cut. I think of my picture of the heron by the river[8] and make a connection. Evelyn has wisdom to know me better than I know myself. My work is a calling home with voices from the past. She witnessed my mime practice and makes the connections I am making from another perspective. Perhaps we *are* writing together.

But separately.

Time to make the pizza. And I still haven't finished one reading.

I turn on the music on my phone which plays via Bluetooth to a little speaker and I mix the dough with my thoughts. A flute begins 'My lagan Love' by Van Morrison (Traditional, 1988) as if it has been following my thoughts. The melody hints at the universal human song of pain and loss shared between Irish music and the Persian poets that Lederach (2005) refers to:

"Within Islam, these poets are the mystics, the Sufis. They speak of love, life, and the nature of the Divine. They often write in teaching parables and stories. I began to notice that many of these poets used references to the reed flute. I asked Faredun on one of our trips about the meaning of the flute. "Ah, the reed flute," he replied. "You see, the flute is made by cutting the cane, the reed. When the flute is played, lips are placed on the

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[8] see page 89

mouthpiece and breath is blown into [the] reed. The sound, you may have noticed, is mournful" (Lederach, 2005, p. 166).

I hear those notes using scales that reference loss – is it the dorian mode using a minor key[9]? – and Van Morrison's attempts to imitate sounds from another world and I think of universally shared emotions prompted by music. Lederach compares the Islamic poetry with the Christian proverbs hinting at universality where for me the poems are tapping into the music which is generating the emotional response which is universal. At this stage my random music selection gives me Boney M's 'Mary's Boy Child' and I am rolling out the dough. It resists the conformity of the round pizza tin and I consider – 'Do I rebel? Let it take its own shape?' At this stage the pizza tray is Anderson and scientific rigidity seeking to impose its norms on my freeformed dough. 'Yes let it be smaller than the tray but natural. And let's confound religious conformity by listening to Christmas songs in April'. Mary Gauthier chimes in later with 'Christmas in Paradise.' Where are the mushrooms? A rebellious pizza was taking shape and I am having a mad time of it as theory and analysis goes in the blender. I think this is what life is about.

I wish I could share this meal with James and Judy. Eve and me and James and Judy. They would share this laughter. Christmas lost its meaning when James died. Push those thoughts back. As it turned out I had the oven on too low and the dough was resistant. The pizza was rebellious to the end.

(Research Diary, 13th April 2014)

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[9] It is actually Mixolydian.

Image 9: Photograph of Judi McGarrigle c.1974 and nameplate from

Edinburgh apartment

Image 10: James and Me (circa 1964)

take a moment

<div align="right">

sit down

theorise

as Cixous says[10]

trauma

transference

transform

rehearse that moment

when we meet again

and I answer

to your

truth

</div>

In reading Cixous (1997) talking about writing, I note the distinction she makes between the poetic and the theoretical:

> What is most true is poetic because it is not stopped- stoppable. All that is stopped, grasped, all that is subjugated, easily transmitted, easily picked up, all that comes under the word concept, which is to say all that is taken, caged, is less true.
>
> (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997, p. 3)

Theory, in contrast, consists of moments of sitting down, stopping discontinuing life and is useful to make progress 'but alone it is false' (ibid, p.3). She also makes the statement:

> We do the thing we just decided not to do. We are the place of structural unfaithfulness. To write we must be faithful to this unfaithfulness.
>
> (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997, p. 8)

In my search for meaning through this chapter I have pieced together some writing that spoke to me and hope for new meanings to emanate from the

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[10] (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997, p. 8)

text as they comingle. The emotions I feel as I write have, for me, saturated the texts and I am drawn to consider Cixous' notion of *entredeux:*

> To admit that writing is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live, undoing the work of death - to admit this is first to want the two, as well as both, the ensemble of the one and the other, not fixed in sequences of struggle and expulsion or some other form of death but infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another.
>
> (Cixous, H. Cohen and P. Cohen, 1976, p. 883)

I have invited the reader into that space and to share it or create a space for death to be (temporarily) suspended. I find myself asking 'What is in the space between us; the reader and my dialogue with James?' In another way I have come to imagine the space between a child and another person when absorbed in play as another space for possible meaning(s) to be constructed.

Summary

In presenting a critical view of psychology's history juxtaposed with my personal history, I have discussed death, disclosure, trauma and emotion. In this personal reflection on psychology's path through 20th century modernity dominated by positivist methodology I have moved towards an auto-ethnographic epistemology. A personal narrative where the death of my brother, James, has been a lifelong influence on my journey brings me to now. In the next chapter I begin to find my research voice.

Three: Finding a Creative Research Voice

Introduction

Thus far my epistemological dialogue with the past has worked through the personal and emotional back story leading to a venture into autoethnography. This section charts finding a voice through arts-based research to explore the pedagogical spaces of learning and teaching in an Early Childhood degree.

Holman Jones (2005) embeds stories about her grandparents into her performative text on autoethnography. The emotional impact of the personal stories strengthens her argument that autoethnography is both personal and political and explains her motivation to write and study. I present this section rhizomatically in a performative text where images, film and poems interspersed with academic discussion and extracts from my research diary situate me in the research context. I chart the route I took to engage in emancipatory research with my students and map my attempts to de-territorialize[11] my field of teaching and learning. As part of my identity emerges from my interests in the creative arts – music, art, poetry, writing, film, drama - I sought ways to use arts-based research methodology. As I present the journey I took to perform mime at the Learning Carnival with my first year students I note a number of different ideas that were part of my thinking and reading – performance, voice, improvisation, creativity in

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[11] I discuss 'deterritorialization' in a later section.

learning, narrative forms, narrative research, structure, film and multimodal approaches to learning. A number of formative learning experiences chart my thinking about research, including the structured PhD sessions with fellow students in the Education cohort, the Ethnography week run by the Anthropology department of Maynooth University and the Narrative cluster workshops led by my supervisor, Grace O'Grady. In this period (2013-15) my ideas about narrative and CAP ethnography were forming and I produced art work, poetry and film.

There is an extensive and growing literature on the epistemological and methodological basis of arts-based inquiry where I sought validation for my social constructionist perspective (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Finley, 2005; Higgs, 2008; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Rahn, 2008). At the start, I felt the tension between taking action and talking theory and was drawn to consider *pragmatic reflexivity* and consulted Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) and their book, '*Reflexive Methodology*'. I wanted a practical approach that led to action and a philosophical base that tolerated ambiguity.

Towards a pragmatic reflexivity

My research paradigm is located within a social constructionist perspective using narrative approaches, participatory research and arts-based inquiry. The narrative approach focuses on how lives are lived in modern society. We are always in the story, in a state of flux. How we choose to describe our story reveals a lot about our own visions of ourselves and a reflective analysis can reveal how we are positioned in our particular

situations. Doloriert and Sambrook (2009) touch on this when discussing autoethnography:

> Holman Jones frames auto ethnography as "writing a world in a state of flux and movement-between story and context, writer and reader, crisis, and denouement. It creates charged moments of clarity, connection, and change."
>
> (Doloriert and Sambrook, 2009, p. 764)

The narrator can choose which excerpt from the flow of lived experience to construct their story and in doing so may reveal what they think of their situation. We find ourselves situated in a particular time in history and in society which also has its story. Susan Chase (2005) notes :

> Many contemporary researchers approach any narrative as an instance of the possible relationships between a narrator's active construction of self, on the one hand, and the social, cultural and historical circumstances that enable and constrain that narrative, on the other.
>
> (Chase, 2005, p.667)

In acknowledging my social, cultural and historical context there is the opportunity to challenge and question aspects that may be limiting experience and perform 'inquiry that is activist, engages in public criticism, and is resistant to neoconservative discourses that threaten social justice' (Chase, 2005. p. 681). In detached, theoretical discussion one can socially construct meaning and question events that occur in the world but perhaps our actions can reveal more of the underlying assumptions about the world we inhabit. To me, this seems to make an appeal to a *pragmatic reflexivity* where what we do is open to a critical, reflective questioning. Similarly, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p. 222) ask for a *pragmatic* postmodern approach that seeks pluralism in the forms of voices and identities revealed in empirical research and research texts; use of alternative forms of

presentation and a critical acknowledgment of different theoretical perspectives.

As a primary concern was the construction of meaning I found their discussion of the hermeneutic circle and the interpretation of texts very useful (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, ps. 91-143). In particular, remaining open to different interpretations acknowledges that 'the research problem will transform during the process, while at the same time the transformation will influence 'facts' as well as patterns of interpretation' (p. 101). As touched on previously the hermeneutic circle offers a way to move towards meaning though, rather than closing the circle in some definitive way, I prefer instead, a creative opening toward multiple meanings through the figure of the rhizome.

Finding a place in Arts-based Research

Even when I seek to communicate a meaning in the text which is intended to be discoverable to the reader, and to me as I write, I acknowledge that arts-based research invites different interpretations. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p. 138) note in their discussion that a synthesis into one 'true' meaning is …'strangely misleading in the context, if we bear in mind it is a question of *interpretations*.' In a poem, analogy and metaphor are deployed to denote a variety of interpretations and in 'poetic hermeneutics' there 'forms an underlying pattern of metaphor and narrative' (ibid; p. 97).

The first entry in my research diary is the following poem which refers to my creative interests in music and painting as metaphors for remaining open to discovery in learning and inspired my creative research approach. It was written on Friday May 3rd 2013.

A New Tune

Where do I begin?

Well I put on my finger picks and start to make a sound.

What is happening here?

There are some familiar, comfortable places

where I put my fingers and make a noise.

Mm sounds nice.

Harmonious.

What comes out has some predictability

based on previous phrases I have learned

and in a sense my body takes over.

That is where I have been.

What I want is to go to a new place

having started from the familiar.

I want to entertain myself.

It could be tricky – it might not sound nice.

Discordant.

Sometimes my fingers go to a different place by accident.

Mm interesting.

But I am not a complete jazz freak yet.

A new painting

A blank page a visual idea – a photo to get me started.

Again something familiar,

comfortable

but I want to lose myself in the process.

The starting point is to get into it

and then get lost in it.

In mixing paint, seeing what it looks like

– no I don't want super realism

I want to get to feel something.

Seeing what it feels like.

It is a mix of paint and me.

Moving to something.

But I am not an abstract expressionist yet.

Reflection on my creative side

The poem represents those aspects of my identity that are important to me - my love of music, art and creativity and a question arising from them - can one carry out research using these different points of entry? To a certain extent, I was asking a similar question as Gergen and Gergen (2014) -

> Why must a social scientist be limited primarily to *writing* about social life, as opposed to using paints, music, dance, theatre performance, or any other form of communication traditionally associated with the arts?
>
> (Gergen & Gergen, 2014, p. 214)

I wished to combine my creative interests with my research in education. My poem references the doing of art and making music as part of meaning making. Process learning is at the heart of my pedagogy and creates a tension with the drive to produce an end-product. The artist in me experiments to see what happens on the canvas/page. I compare that to the

empirical researcher seeking to collect data and analyse it or trying to connect it to theory or to formulate new concepts or ideas. Just as the writer can respond to the ideas forming on the page, so too, the artist responds to the marks made on the canvas/page with further marks and ideas. Abstract expressionist painters attempt to allow feeling and emotion to come into their art yet I struggle with complete abstraction. The paintings of Jackson Pollock (1912 – 1956) were his attempt to get into the moment of creation in a mystic union with the world; perhaps all process.

Image 11: Convergence by Jackson Pollock (1952)

On such works he did not start with preparatory sketches but preferred to work from what was inside him and to get lost in the painting. The comparison to free jazz is noted:

> Instead, like a jazz musician improvising on a theme, he relied on his instinctive sense of what worked, what the painting itself called for, once the process of making it was under way: "When I am in my painting, I am not aware of what I am doing . . . the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through."

<p style="text-align: right">(Toynton & Pollock, 2012, p. 57)</p>

I appreciate the letting go and becoming wrapped up in the paint, its texture, its feeling, the colour, my feelings and their associated meanings – though I prefer to get into a painting with an image, photograph or some prompt from reality. Art and research, to me, are a recycling of the images/experience we receive. Pure abstraction is like free jazz. I am not a complete jazz freak yet. Holland (2009), in his commentary on Deleuze and Guattari's '*A Thousand Plateaus*', offers a useful discussion about jazz and the distinction between absolute and relative *deterritorialization*:

> Jazz musicians will take a familiar tune, and de-code it by playing it a different way each time – sometimes to the point of making the once familiar tune unrecognisable. So called "free jazz" goes so far as to improvise without starting from a familiar tune in the first place…

> (Holland, 2013, p. 9)

Holland (2013) goes on to say that free jazz represents 'an instance of continuous, absolute deterritorialization, a creative line of flight' (p. 9). This would make my work a relative re-territorialization through improvising on a familiar tune by playing around with something familiar. As Deleuze and Guattari say…

> One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune.

> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 311)

Improvisation as an educational metaphor

My poem touches on performance, confidence, knowledge and practice and, here, I draw analogies to learning and the research process. The jazz player improvises around a structure – there is a tune that is played around with. Berliner (1994) carried out an ethnographic study of jazz

musicians and notes the music does not come out of thin air but is based on an underlying structure. As the following quote from musician, Wynton Marsalis, shows:

> Jazz is not just "Well man, this is what I feel like playing". It's a very structured thing that comes down from a tradition and requires a lot of thought and study.
>
> (Berliner, 1994, p. 63)

From that tradition of thought and study (and practice) emerges an interpretation of the tune by 'taking liberties' and striving to interpret the melody freshly through 'blue notes'. My poem notes that accidents in performance may also offer creative opportunities to explore different places, something I wanted to bring to my research and to the field of Early Childhood. Sometimes things do not go to plan in teaching and often these create opportunities to reflect and learn something different. Improvisation also connects, for me, with Early Childhood practice and how we respond when children surprise our plans. At present, Early Childhood practice in Ireland has a structure provided by the pedagogical approach prescribed by the Irish preschool curriculum - *Aistear* (NCCA, 2009). It promotes a play-based curriculum and, it seems to me, that play is a fertile site for improvisation and practitioners encouraged to experiment. We can play with play. Make it strange to make it fresh and new.

Early Learning Structure and Improvising

Connecting the notion of improvisation with the pedagogy of play in Early Years brings me to consider the psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934) and how the sociocultural context provides the structure for

knowledge to be passed from generation to generation. Wertsch (1985) explains that Vygotsky and Luria felt that knowledge is first experienced between people before being internalized – interpsychological before intrapsychological. Children learn through experiences with adults and other children and often have a different interpretation of the same situation:

> A child often does not understand the definition of the objects or the functional significance of behaviors that are assumed by an adult. In one sense the adult and child are in the same situation because the same concrete objects and events are perceptually available to both. In another sense, however, they are not in the same situation because they do not define these objects and events in the same way.

> (Wertsch, 1985, p. 159)

Children and adults interpret their situation differently and children often take liberties with the structures imposed on them. Students are trained in ways to structure these experiences to provide for optimal learning and development and are faced with a number of issues in providing for children's play. Firstly, deciding what parts of a culture are to be transmitted within a diverse cultural environment comes under scrutiny when decisions are made over what toys to use and the tacit messages they convey about identity (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006; Taylor & Blaise, 2014; Toffoletti, 2007; Wohlwend, 2012). Secondly, preparing the environment and planning for activities for children where free play is facilitated seems to me akin to making room for the jazz player to play with the tune.

Play as 'structured freedom'

The notion of *'structured freedom'* emerges for me as a way to capture the paradox and requires practitioners to be able to be responsive to new ideas

emerging. In Italy, the Reggio Emilia Early Childhood curriculum is based on sociocultural conceptions of the contexts of children's development and learning and prioritizes co-construction where ideas *emerge* from the many ways that children experience the world (see Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998, 2012; Rinaldi, 2005). An *emergent curriculum* requires a reflexive approach where practitioners become sensitive to children's active and sometimes bewildered engagement with their world. Learning ways to improvise on the 'tunes' heard in different settings seems a fruitful strategy. Lindqvist (2003) provides a useful discussion of Vygotsky's theories on psychology and art - making connections between play, creativity, imagination and reality.

Deterritorializing Pedagogical Spaces

In my own lecturing and teaching, it has taken a while to become more playful with the structure of my classes as the syllabus of psychology has clear ground to cover with specific topics and learning outcomes that seem to limit movement. To a certain extent, this research gave me the opportunity to move at the borders and de-territorialize my teaching. Holland (2013, p. 7) writes that the concepts of *deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization* changed in Deleuze and Guattari's early writing in *Anti-Oedipus* to 'converge with the terms stratification and de-stratification, and have a far wider scope of reference' in *A Thousand Plateaus*. When I conceptualised my study I wished to *deterritorialize* in terms of changing the structures around my lecturing – thinking particularly of the physical

territory of the lecture room and the practices it structures. In wishing to transform the lecture space into a performance space through a Learning Carnival I attempted a temporary *relative deterritorialization* where acts, ideas and thoughts could be connected and re-assembled. I realized more clearly the distinction between relative and absolute deterritorialization as the study progressed. The following quote from Deleuze and Guattari made more sense at the end of my study:

> How could movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another? The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome …
>
> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10)

For me I interpret this in terms of the lecture space could merely provide transport, transfer and mimicry of knowledge – the student enters, is impregnated with learning and leaves with a mirror image to further replicate the world. Social reproduction and stratification maybe. But they go on…

> …At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, surplus value of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further.
>
> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10)

I take that to mean something is added to the student as they capture the code, enhance and re-code it to use it in the world to make both become something different. They venture forth on a tune to play with children. It is

a two way process as the lecturer is also reterritorialised and learning becomes deterritorialized. And the children do the same.

A note about writing up Narrative research

Richardson and Pierre (2005) suggest that one criterion for evaluating CAP ethnography is the notion of transparency where the author provides an explanation for 'their journey through shifting epistemological ground, perspectives and positions in the construction of the text' (p. 964). As the research continued I became more aware of different influences on my thinking about the topic and I attempt to document those changes in my thinking and research decisions. In the research story, my autoethnographical formative experiences are documented as I formulated my research project along with field experiences of co-researching with participants. There is also the present context of writing up the research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note the process of writing moves us to consider the wider implications of the research:

> Research texts are at a distance from field texts and grow out of the repeated asking of questions concerning meaning and significance.
>
> (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 132)

This rhizomatic research story account seeks to explain, question and justify the decisions that were made in the research process. As the central topic of this thesis centred on *learning* I present some of my own learning as a researcher as well as my learning about the pedagogical spaces of learning. At an early stage of my research I was asked 'what were the main things that

I learned so far in my research journey?' A tentative answer included some of the following:

> Narrative research highlights that we are in the middle of complex interlocking stories.
>
> Participatory or Emancipatory research with students is problematic.
>
> Ethical issues exist inside and outside Ethical Research Committees and are foregrounded in narrative research.
>
> Re-telling research stories is an important part of narrative inquiry.
>
> (Research notes, April, 2014)

My tentative narrative beginnings

As the introduction noted, I learned that we are *intermezzo* - in the midst of stories and, in trying to impose a simplistic structure of beginning, middle and end, I encountered difficulties. When I began I thought about narrative and acknowledged the influence of my father on my identity. I grew up listening to his stories. They were entertaining and told with a mischievous, loving, smile. He was the first narrator. At the time I had a dream which informed a playful piece about my father which I called 'The First Narrator' and then re-named 'Happy Ending'. I produced a short film of this with the help of Ning, a Visual Design student, to locate me in my present context in higher education which is in the accompanying DVD. Here I present the written story and image to show how I, as a grown man, gathered the jumbled thoughts about my childhood and found myself lecturing in the Early Years.

The First Narrator

Autobiographical recollection: this arises out of last night's sleep is contentious in terms of details but perhaps the one image is central – it is Noddy maybe in a car with or without Big Ears . I was 8 maybe and maybe I got Noddy as a figure out of a cornflakes packet (or something like it: we didn't buy it). Anyway I don't even know if Big Ears was in the car or even if there was a car. I remember playing with it though. Outside my dad's barber shop and it falling down a grating and I couldn't get it back. There was Noddy down in that dark space…I think my thoughts were more about getting my toy back. I didn't really care about Noddy (or Big Ears for that matter). I thought about Noddy and Enid Blyton and Biggles – I read the latter as a child and I remember another book written in the first person by a wart hog. I didn't know what a wart hog looked like but I used to pretend to be one. The stories I loved though were the ones my father told me about the war which were funny and real. He was in the RAF like Biggles. He said he only went up in a plane once and the wing fell off. So my dad was the first narrator for me.

(Research Diary, 4th November 2013)
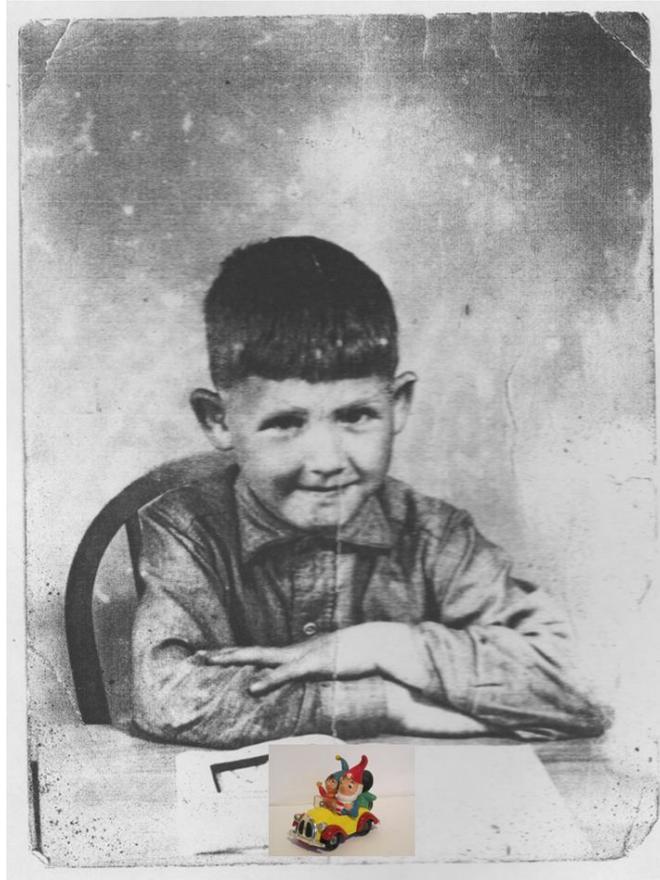
Image 12: John at School c.1960

I think at this time I was trying to understand that a dream can provoke memories that reveal and problematise truth at the same time. Truth seems to me to be less important than the emotional meaning that is revealed. I look at the photo of myself with pity and love. I feel just like my mother would. I think. It is difficult to put into words really. A mother's love becomes a son's… sometimes we need to get away from words. I have some photos in the film that prompt memories of trips to the sea with my father and other stories. I look through other photos and choose this one.
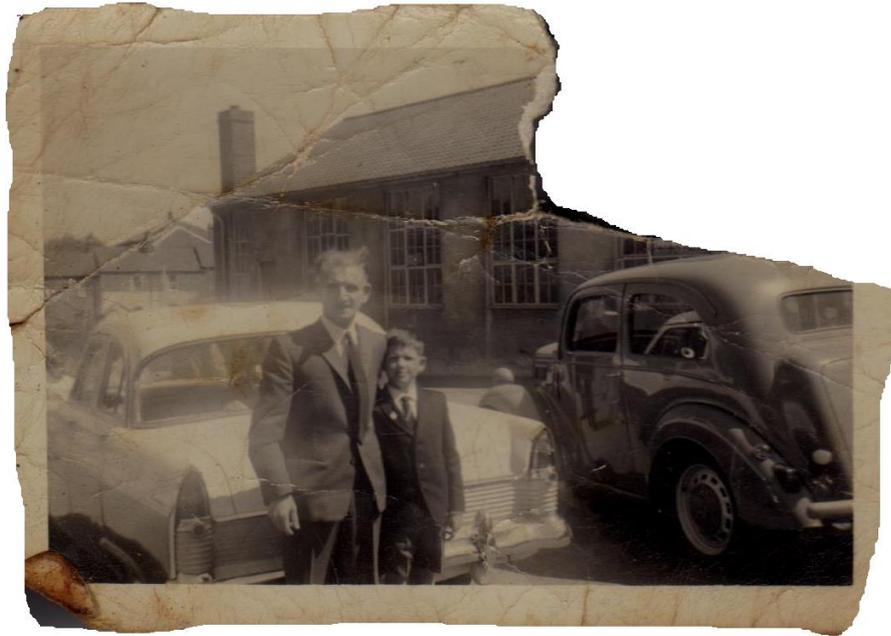
Image 13: My father and I at first communion c. 1961

Barthes (1993) notes in 'Camera Lucida' that photographs can punctuate time and draw forth feelings:

> This second element which will disturb the *studium* I shall therefore call *punctum;* for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole - and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me is poignant to me).

<div align="right">(Barthes, 1993, p. 27)</div>

These images are poignant and punctuate this chapter with an emotional meaning making their mark. St. Pierre (1997) asks whether data has to be translated into words. She proposes there are other forms of *transgressive* data that are less easily classified in the traditional research report. Such *transgressive* data may contain emotional data, dream data, sensual data, and response data. Of dream data she notes that her…'dreams enabled and legitimized a complexity of meaning that science prohibits' (p. 183). In another text, Stevi Jackson (2010), refers to George Herbert Mead and how the past is recollected in present day contexts. It seems relevant:

> The past is inevitably a present-centred construction for Mead since we cannot 'get back' the past self we once were:
>
> 'When one recalls his boyhood (sic) days, he cannot get into them as he was, without their relationship to what he has become; and if he could, that is if he could reproduce the experience as it then took place, he could not use it, for this would involve his not being in the present within which that use must take place' (The Philosophy 58).
>
> <div align="right">(Jackson, 2010, p. 129)</div>

As I made the film I was motivated by thinking of my current situation lecturing in an Early Childhood degree and considering my own childhood. Gathering these themes together – emotion, childhood, images, words, teaching, learning, syllabi – I move on to narrate the devising of my research project and researching my own teaching of psychology.

Devising my research project

As I entered the field of my own teaching, I chose to look at how students learn a topic in their first year psychology class and decided to focus on the topic of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) which has presented a challenge to the dominant psychometric view of intelligence. I set out the proposal in December 2013.

I have set myself a task – to learn a new tune – and will observe and comment on how this goes for me. At the same time I wish my students to set themselves a new task within the areas that are inspired by Gardner's notion of multiple intelligences (MI) and ask them to observe and record how this goes for them.

(Research Proposal December, 2013)

Performance and the Learning Carnival

As play and having fun are at the heart of Early Years pedagogy I wanted students to have fun with learning and work together to learn a task with the idea of performing for each other as a celebration. So the idea of a

Learning Carnival emerged as an event to perform their newly learned tasks.

Kersten Reich (2009) notes that the carnival allows a temporary disruption to the everyday reality we act out into a world of possibility or 'a world that might be' where the norms of everyday life are temporarily subverted.

> Carnival manifests and articulates a subversive culture of laughter in which … I am simultaneously an observer (or spectator) of the others, an agent in my own disguised role, and a participant in a grotesque event that for the time being suspends conventional norms and hierarchies. Carnival simulates a world that might be— and is yet impossible because of the life-worldly norms and ranks that constitute normality. This is why the strict temporal limitation of the event is so important.

<div align="right">(Reich, 2009, p.116)</div>

She explains that carnival allows people to temporarily step outside the mask of their accepted social role and behave more riskily. In some cultures men dressed as women, women dressed as men perform a critique of the other that may serve a social purpose. Reich argues that life requires these temporal disruptions but life cannot be one continual carnival. These ideas were appealing though I did not realize their significance until I actually experienced performing in the Learning Carnival. I had foreseen the Learning Carnival to be an event to temporarily transform the lecture. The following narrative sequence was envisaged:

beginnings: deciding what to do/learn,

middles: learning it and teaching it to each other,

end: performing at a carnival.

This temporary disruption to the lecture space where teacher becomes learner and learners teach each other aimed to promote participation in learning through performance.

Mime as a metaphor for silenced voices

The Learning Carnival offered the opportunity to facilitate students becoming agents in their own learning. I considered the link between action and raising the voice of students and practitioners in the Early Years which I related to gender and how childcare is constructed in our society. As a male educator in the Early Years I was concerned with raising issues of equality for a workforce that is poorly paid and that has been disempowered through social and political indifference. This concern and other ideas were occupying my attention during the creative arts practice sessions organised by my supervisor, Dr. Grace O'Grady, in Maynooth University Department of Education. I produced an image from one of the sessions which I insert here followed by the discussion that occurred in that workshop.

Image 14: Painting from narrative cluster session by John McGarrigle

Narrative Cluster Art Session and Finding voice

During February 2104 my supervisor, Dr. Grace O'Grady facilitated a creative narrative workshop which I attended along with Eva Lindroos, a fellow student, where we produced our own artistic responses to Grace's guided meditation. Afterwards we posted words on a flipchart and reflected on our generated ideas. The following discussion shows how thoughts of my brother and his wife came into my mind and how I also talked about trying to allow my students' voice to surface. These ideas were beginning to inform the structure of the research project. I had also read a poem by Leggo (2012) which was current in my mind. I recorded our discussion and present part of a transcript of the session where I try to explain my thinking. I have put some headings to organise and moved the text experimentally.

the heron watching

```
                          ...I had some images in my mind
                                 I suppose having read …
                  Leggo's (2012) poem and the heron standing
                                        observing mankind
                             as it were and womankind
                                        doing what we do
```

life is a struggle

```
                               …but really the idea I got was
                  that there are people struggling
```

in a river of life as it were

                                              and he

                the hand at the right of the picture

                              - representing me.

                              would be trying

                to help them up

                so

                        that was the inspiration…

finding voice for the unvoiced

                                … I felt that I wanted

                              the idea of a voice…

                    wanting a voice to come out

                          from the participants…

                and really those participants

                    represent a lot of unvoiced

                        in the world as it were…

        different people who don't get a chance

                to represent their life experience

                        so that to me resonated…

                        as a researcher trying

                    to find voice for some people

                              including myself

reflecting on a river

                        …I wanted the idea of a river

a river is flowing through the scene

it's like a journey

…you can reflect into a river

you get reflection back

of the world in the river

you could also be drowning and struggling

and people helping you out

along the way

...and then when we were

visualising

...I just had to relax

I didn't actually want to go

into the forest…

The forest and light

...So at the end of the forest

I could visualise

the light with the trees

...it was a familiar place to me...

lots of emotions there,

emotions about well

actually the forest I find is dark

and I like to get out to the light

of walking along the beach…

smiling back at me

...there's a bit in it where

it becomes a pathway and there,

I suppose you'd say

is there someone there?

Well there was...

James and Judi ...

they took me back to walking trips

that I had with them in Devon

and out in nature then.

...That's it took me back and

when you say

what were they giving me?

I think they just.

Smiled.

just be-ing

And I got this idea of just being,

really.

Just being I suppose.

That's why I put

be-ing.

We are having to become.

de-territorialising

...in this deterritorializing was this idea...

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from thinking of the field

                                    and the territory of …

                my academic world or teaching that's my field

          and I suppose allowing the voice of the participants

                to create a new space and territorialise that...

                        you're struggling with as a teacher

                        the territory that has to be defined

                        and then you're trying to re-shape

                it in a more imagined space with students

Reading through that again I notice how prominent James and Judi were in my thoughts. They were also in the river and their lives symbolised helping others overcome oppression. Yet I wanted to lessen their influence as if there was another part of my identity not visible. Why have I spent a chapter showing how they are a vital part of me? Do we carry people with us in our becoming?

The poetic inspiration came from a poem by Leggo (2012). Here is part of the poem:

…I write again about the heron

standing still in the river

as if I know anything at all

about herons, since taught

forever by Walt Disney

to anthropomorphize wildness,

I imagine countless stories

for the heron, but know

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only the heron's otherness

and utter disregard for me

watching it like a creature

with nothing better to do

while the world falls apart

and I write another poem

about the heron I saw

standing alone in the grass

on the edge of the river

waiting for a fish or a bug

minding its own business.

(Leggo, 2012, pp. 158-159)

As I look at my picture I see my heron as a humorous all-seeing Pink Panther and consider the music he would produce underwater. I write this poem:

> Beneath the surface
>
> muffled voices
>
> emerge
>
> emoting
>
> mouthing
>
> a mournful sax solo
>
> played by a pink panther
>
> heron

I wrote this in my research notes:

Interpretation: I am conscious that many ideas can be prompted by an image and others come to mind in the process of creating it. Also a

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> poem can generate many other ideas. No one idea is definitive. My thoughts at the time were about helping, the struggle to find voice to emotions, our tears get drowned in the river - can we find our voice? We can be lost souls. These ideas surfaced and mingled with others and contributed to my decision to choose mime as an activity in an attempt to silence the teacher in me while working with the students in order to help them find their voice.
>
> (Research notes, 2014)

In the art work I produced in the workshop I began to recognise that my hidden assumption that oppressed people cannot speak up for themselves conceals a subjective positioning. My intention to support them to verbalise their own position in a society that oppresses women and minimises caring is locked in its own oppressive discourse. As Freire (1993, p. 36) noted, our educational projects should be carried out <u>with</u> the oppressed. To avoid a patronising approach of re-education we should recognise our own roles in contributing to oppression. If teacher – student relationships are marked by subordination and dominance then oppressive practices will be maintained so it is our duty to…

> …practice *co- intentional* education: teachers and students co-intent on reality, are both subjects , not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge.
>
> (Freire, 1993, p. 51)

To a certain extent, this captures the tensions I experienced around emancipatory or participatory research.

Using Mime - Make it Strange

Ironically I felt it necessary to silence my own actual voice through the use of mime for the learning carnival and harness the performative aspect of

arts based research in order to temporarily disrupt teacher/student roles. Doing this would take me out of my comfort zone as lecturer and enable me to enter those moments of uncertainty and ambiguity where cultural expectations are temporarily subverted. It would also ensure that I become part of the performance not just an observer. It also resonated with ideas about visual communication devoid of language and exploring narrative in the area of mime. As creative things tend to do, it took me to a new territory.

Happy ending: an ironic postscript

Noddy in Maynooth car park shopping centre April 2016

On my way to a meeting in Maynooth with my supervisor I took this photograph in the car park. My childish nature makes me include it here as an ironic postscript.

Four: Making a Research Field of Teaching

Introduction

In planning to use mime at a Learning Carnival I reflected on aspects of theatre – spectacle, performance, pretend, using the body to communicate, audience. This section connects with my pedagogy and my context in higher education – specifically Early Years education and the subject discipline of psychology. I position the research into the teaching of the topic of Intelligence in the first year Psychology module within discussion of approaches to learning in Third Level that range from behaviourist to social constructivist pedagogies that encourage active learning such as Problem Based Learning (PBL). As I located myself in *narrative inquiry* I sought to follow the emergent stories of learner identity through to the concluding second stage in Year 3 where we explored self identity through creative arts practices. In order to document and lay bare my 'becoming' as a writer/researcher I reflect on my original research proposal and discuss issues around intelligence as a syllabus topic, childcare practice, pragmatic reflexivity and practical knowledge.

As I trace my learning I ventured into the issues related to embodied knowledge, childcare practices and nature. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's lines of flight the text playfully takes off into nature, the immanent buzzing of busy bees and the philosopher Spinoza (1632 – 1677). I was

drawn to Spinoza out of curiosity having noted references to him by Deleuze. I found his ideas difficult but appealing.

Liebniz – I thought would give me insight into the connection between the experiencing self and experience though I moved on quickly to Spinoza and read some work by Gatens and Lloyd (1999) – particularly interested in the idea of imagination. His actual work (Spinoza, 2001a, 2001b) is difficult to read as it is based on propositions that lead to various conclusions.

(Research Journal, 9th June, 2014)

In a valuable text, Gatens and Lloyd explain Spinoza's supportive letters to a friend, Balling, whose sense of reason was disturbed by an omen about his lost son:

> Balling's experience of the omen, moreover, is an expression of something which is of itself a source of joy: the mind's capacity to participate in the essence of those it loves – the capacity to form strong emotional bonds in which individuals come to form part of wider wholes.
>
> (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, p. 22)

From this the connection between imagination, dreams and emotions resonated with dreams I had about James. I read about Spinoza's life and his philosophy appealed in its forward looking joyful opening up of possibility. Making life possible. Deleuze and Guattari had offered a way to think with multiplicity and answered my epistemological concerns about hierarchical explanations in the social sciences through the rhizome. It seemed to me that the concept of *immanence* may be related to ideas about being in the midst, in the moment, nature, society and science. In the end, these philosophical ventures made more of a personal connection to autoethnography and I take comfort in the notion that concepts are to be used creatively. The chapter

begins with a theoretical discussion before becoming more performative in style.

The Research Proposal

As I look back at my research proposal I note some underlying themes that concerned me at the start of my research. Though I wished to gain insight into the student experience of learning I still seemed focussed on the the perspective of the lecturer, mapping the tensions between knowledge transfer and knowledge construction; behaviourist and constructivist teaching and learning; theory and practice; and the challenges to teacher identity and authority present in problem based learning. My original proposal appears detached and remote from the emotional aspects of learning. Here is an extract from my research proposal:

Phd Ed 808 Research in Education Module – Research Proposal
Title: Creating Stories of Learning with Students in an Early Childhood Degree Course
Introduction and Outline of Research Topic

The focus of this proposed study is on how students learn and how they negotiate their way through difficult material in the subject of psychology. At the heart of teaching and learning are concerns over content and process – what is to be covered and how best to do it to ensure learning takes place. The former relate to curriculum decisions over what should go into a course of study and the latter relate to curriculum design to facilitate student engagement with learning. Various learning theories have been linked to competing pedagogies in higher education particularly in relation to traditional knowledge transfer versus knowledge construction.

(Research Proposal, 2013)

Social constructivism and curriculum

My focus on epistemological concerns highlights the social influence on knowledge construction coming from theorists such as Vygotsky. If knowledge is socially mediated this underlines, for the teacher, the interactions between the novice student and the teacher as expert who draws the learner into a body of knowledge. Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development suggests that the more knowledgeable other assists the learner to move to a more advanced state of understanding. If knowledge comes under revision in the academy then the learning environment and pedagogy require a flexible approach to facilitate learning. In a discipline like psychology it can be a challenge to transmit sufficient knowledge of a course of study in order to encourage creative, critical thinking and co-construction of new insights and perspectives. Likewise, a changing society and global environment may require innovative approaches to curriculum change (see Fahey 2012) as well as new ways of thinking about subjects such as psychology (for example, Nelson and Prilleltensky 2010). My concerns centred on teaching and learning in the Early Years where complex theory is combined with practice with children.

Active knowledge construction versus passive learning

As Early Childhood pedagogies are influenced by active learning then it seemed fitting to me for students to experience learning in the same way. Active learning is generally seen as encouraging students to become more involved in their learning (Stolk & Harari, 2014; Tamim & Grant, 2013).

Moreover, active learning that acknowledges the social context can promote

engagement both with the task and peers in the learning process. In the next

section from my research proposal, I connect active learning approaches and

Problem Based Learning (PBL) in my pedagogical stance:

> Vermunt and Verschaffel (2000, p. 209) argue that 'research results have made it clear that the quality of knowledge gained by active knowledge construction is better (i.e., more accessible, coherent, usable…) than knowledge acquired by the passive intake of knowledge.' Process oriented learning may lead educators to use pedagogies located within the problem based learning field which rest on constructivist theory (Barrett & Moore, 2011; Savin-Baden & Wilkie, 2004). There has also been a growing influence of constructivist learning theory in Information Communication Technologies (ICT) where virtual learning environments have been designed to support collaboration in the construction of knowledge as well as individual learning.
>
> In seeking to improve my practice as a lecturer in higher education I have adopted a project based approach (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2005) and used action research methodologies to explore the conditions for peer learning through group work and the use of peer assessment to drive learning (J. G. P. McGarrigle, 2010, 2011). This work has forced me to consider the context of my teaching within higher education and reflect on the resistance students often appear to present to such alternative methods of learning (J. G. P. McGarrigle, 2013b). I have experienced the challenges that Savin-Baden and Wilkie (2004) refer to…
>
> …changes in role perception through the process and experience of becoming facilitators, shifts in views about the nature of power and control in the learning environment and the nature of the disciplinary knowledge on the way problem-based learning is played out in practice. (Savin-Baden and Wilkie, 2004, p. 160)
>
> It would seem fitting to dig deeper into these processes and experiences in my classes placing a critical eye on my practice in its context within higher education. I hope to do so in a participatory manner sharing my learning with that of my students – a task I anticipate to be even more challenging.
>
> (Research Proposal, 2013)

These 'challenges' revolved around my pedagogical stance and motivating student engagement through Problem Based Learning (PBL). Savin-Baden later suggested…

> …that in PBL students struggle to understand both what it is they are expected to learn and how they are required to learn it. Thus it argued that the transdisciplinary threshold concepts of liminality, scaffolding, pedagogical content knowledge, and pedagogical stance can help tutors to improve, support, and enhance student engagement in PBL.
>
> (Savin-Baden, 2016, p. 3)

I note her reference to threshold concepts which is where my study began. When students struggle with pedagogical content knowledge I often find myself questioning my own teaching and its context. Savin-Baden's discussion of *pedagogical content knowledge* has implications for my teaching in an Early Childhood degree:

> Shulman (1986) describes pedagogical content knowledge as the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others. Pedagogical content knowledge may draw on other forms of knowledge as well as knowledge from other disciplines. Students may have, for example, studied psychology in high school, but the use and portrayal of psychology in a medical or theology degree is reformulated to reflect the pedagogical content knowledge. The result is that knowledge for a particular discipline is taught and fashioned within it and for it, and thus it is for many students a threshold concept.
>
> (Savin-Baden, 2016, p. 12)

Thus, the psychology that is part of the Early Childhood degree is designed to be relevant to work with children, their learning and development within a family or social context. In the first year syllabus students are grappling with a range of perspectives in psychology and topic areas as well as modules in other discipline areas that form the basis of their degree. As I planned my research project my priority was students' learning of particular topics in psychology that may be considered *'troublesome*

concepts'. Their work with children may bring them into contact with assessment and intelligence tests so I decided to begin my research with the *troublesome concept* of intelligence in Term Two of the first year psychology module. There are examples of advice on teaching the psychology of intelligence in undergraduate courses though these were not available when I began (Deary, 2014; Sternberg, 2014). It is noted that Deary (2014) does not reference Gardner and presents a psychometric approach.

<div align="right">

Culture

I think there is something wrong

with your thesis

It may be something

logical

Or maybe something

moral

Anyway

Is it fair I have to learn

your language

first

To make an argument?

Will you learn mine?

(Research diary, Thursday October 3rd 2013)

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Early on I felt this difficulty that academic debates have their own rules about language – as if the positivist operates from an imperialist power base. Can a language based on numbers translate to one based on qualities? Whose theory will influence practice most?

The teaching of Intelligence in a 1st Year Psychology course

Intelligence fits into psychology textbooks under the area of individual differences where one finds debates over its composition and whether it is an innate capacity, a personality trait, a single factor or combination of abilities (for example, see Sundin & Banyard, 2015). It has a contentious history since Binet and Simon devised their first intelligence tests to separate children who may need remedial education in 1905 (Binet and Simon, 1905a, 1905b in Rozencwajq, 2006). The film documentary *Race and Intelligence* presents some of the history including reference to the Eugenics movement and other controversial arguments about race and intelligence (York University, 2013). In that history, dominated by the psychometric tradition, there have been contested theories, research and an array of tests to measure intelligence. For example, the Wechsler IQ tests argue that general reasoning ability (or 'g') is composed of verbal comprehension, perceptual reasoning, working memory and processing speed with language being a major component (Flanagan & Kaufman, 2004, p. 35). Wechsler defined intelligence as "the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally and to deal effectively with his environment" (cited in Flanagan and Kaufman, 2004, p.8).

In contrast to the dominant psychometric tradition, Howard Gardner (1983) provided a challenge in the form of Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory. He proposed that there are a range of intelligences from the linguistic, logico-mathematical, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, spatial, intrapersonal,

interpersonal, naturalistic and existential (the last two were added later). Gardner (2006) later explained the origins of his challenge to a single factor theory of intelligence. He based his theory on brain research, arguing that these intelligences operate independently of each other and used examples drawn from history such as Mozart, Darwin, Martha Graham, to support his claims. For example, Babe Ruth, the American baseball player, is an example of a person whose exemplary skills and abilities in the sport arise from his superior *kinaesthetic intelligence*. Gardner (Gardner, 2011, p. 3) defined an intelligence as '…a biopsychological potential to process information in certain kinds of ways, in order to solve problems or create products that are valued in one or more cultural settings.'

Gardner's MI theory has had a greater impact on educators (for example, Ekinci, 2014; Helding, 2010; McPartland, 2012) who have seen its potential to transform educational environments compared to its critical reception by many psychologists (for example, Peariso, 2008; Visser, Ashton, & Vernon, 2006). He notes:

> Just as I had not expected the resistance and even hostility of my colleagues in psychology, I had not anticipated the extensive interest in the theory on the part of educators—initially in the United States, ultimately in many parts of the world.

> (Gardner, 2011, p.5)

Many proponents of the psychometric persuasion remain convinced that there is a discrete factor that represents a general reasoning ability (generally called a 'g' factor) and have contested major aspects of Gardner's theory from various standpoints usually pointing to a lack of quantitative empirical research to validate it (Klein, 1997; Rost, 2009). For example,

Visser, Ashton and Vernon (2006, p.51) argued against his contention that these intelligences were independent of 'g' and suggested some of these should be considered 'talents' rather than 'intelligences.' To some extent, Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence would regard musical ability as composed of analytical, creative and practical mental processes (Sternberg, 1997). Gardner (2006) argues that Multiple Intelligences comprise the individual capacities that interact with the environment to which a child is exposed and he distinguishes intelligence as 'a biopsychological construct' while 'a domain (or discipline or craft) is a sociological construct' (p.32). In constructing his theory he considers the areas of creativity, genius and giftedness and how they relate to culture. The *domains* such as art, music, sport or dance operate in a particular cultural setting and a *field* refers to how the activity is judged by experts. There are a number of suggestions he makes for education such as the *apprenticeship model* where students learn from experts in their field and to use the Multiple Intelligences to enhance *understanding*:

> Mastery of a concept or theory requires repeated exposure to that material…Understanding is far more likely to be achieved if the student encounters the material in a variety of guises and contexts. And the best way is to draw on all the intelligences that are relevant to that topic.
>
> (Gardner, 2006, p.60)

The notion of a *spiral curriculum* where ideas are re-visited originates from Bruner and is an appealing method to make learning accessible. However, I ask is MI theory arborescent in still maintaining a hierarchical view of intelligence or does it open up new possibilities to radically re-think? The references to giftedness, genius and famous people – Mozart in music;

Picasso in art - popularise the theory and appear to strengthen it but, to my mind, may risk feeding into an elitist view of education. My interests lie in education allowing ordinary people and children to develop their expertise/skills/talents and creativity in a range of areas. In my view, rather than appealing to some innate predisposition to explain creative talent, education can create and promote an environment that stimulates _all_ children to develop their talents.[12]

In some ways Gardner's argument does not go far enough. Defining intelligence as a biopsychological construct and aligning with Piaget's formal operational thought (p.132) seems inconsistent with later points about decontextualised knowledge (p.187-8). A radical change of higher education, it would seem to me, calls for all learning including the abstract concepts of higher education to follow the apprenticeship model which would involve a practical element to learning.

In general though, as an educator and a psychologist, I support his ideas of a pluralised education, creativity and his critique of standardised testing. Particularly, his promotion of assessment in context rather than testing strikes a chord:

> Few practices are more nefarious in education than the drawing of widespread educational implications from the composite score of a single test - like the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. Even intelligence tests contain subtests, and, at the very least, recommendations ought to

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[12] Perhaps it will be seen that others, such as the musician, performer, artist, David Bowie (1947-2016) meet Gardner's definition of the genius as 'a creative individual who is able to arrive at insights that are novel and strike a deeply responsive chord across the world's diverse cultures' (Gardner, 2006, p.50). In many ways Bowie challenged the 'domain and the field …yielding insight of broad human significance' (p.50) and contributed to the conditions for change in society.

> take into account the differences among those subtests and the strategies for approaching particular items.
>
> <div align="right">(Gardner, 2006, p182)</div>

As I survey the literature on intelligence and try to balance the arguments I find myself drawn to consider how the concept has written itself into history as a pseudo-concept about thinking which when scratched shows its connections to social stratification in terms of race, gender and social class. It has achieved a *'rigid segmentarity'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). To discuss it in terms of education leads one into a maze of argument and counter argument between left and right. For instance, Gardner's (2006) response to Visser (2006) and Gottfredson's (2003) critique of Sternberg (2000) are a 21st century continuation of the last century's machinations. Goleman's (1995) *Emotional Intelligence* helped to deconstruct the academic, dominance of the concept of intelligence and elevate socially intelligent ways of being. It is now incorporated into the corporate world making capitalist exploitation even more feeling oriented. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that lines of flight can disrupt the power of the State:

> Lines of flight, for their part, never consist in running away from the world but rather in causing runoffs, as when you drill a hole in a pipe; there is no social system that does not leak from all directions, even if it makes its segments increasingly rigid in order to seal the lines of flight.
>
> <div align="right">(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 204)</div>

Intelligence assumes a *rigid segmentarity* after these lines of flight enter and temporarily disrupt the social order:

> Lines of flight are realities; they are very dangerous for societies, although they can get by without them, and sometimes manage to keep them to a minimum. … You can begin with the rigid segmentarity, it's the easiest, it's pregiven; and then you can look at how and to what extent it is crosscut by a supple segmentarity, a kind of rhizome surrounding its

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roots. Then you can look at how the line of flight enters in. And alliances and battles.

<div align="right">(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 204)</div>

Let us follow one line of flight with tongue in cheek. Gottfredson (2003) argues for the validity of 'g' based on a solid century of evidence:

> It is true that g provides only a partial explanation of ''intelligent behavior,'' and that its role in everyday affairs is yet poorly understood. But there is a solid, century–long evidentiary base upon which researchers are busily building.

<div align="right">(Gottfredson, 2003, p. 392)</div>

This seems evidence of the rigid segmentarity of general intelligence. Following the busy line of research I uncross my legs and note the research base is expanding to discover that IQ and semen quality are positively correlated (Arden, Gottfredson, Miller, & Pierce, 2009). This study, in what the authors call the "new field of 'cognitive epidemiology,'" was carried out with a large sample of US army veterans where their sperm quality (as indicated by 'log sperm concentration, log sperm count and motility') correlated with IQ and was not mediated by 'age, body mass index, days of sexual abstinence, service in Vietnam, or use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or hard drugs' (p.277). These 'g' men have the right stuff then and may have regretted the end of the study. If 'g' is positively correlated with semen quality then this may pose problems initially for those who hold conservative views. Stankov (2009) found in a study of students in American colleges that cognitive abilities are negatively correlated with conservativism and he suggested a collection of factors denoting the *conservative syndrome*. Heaven, Ciarrochi and Leeson (2011) studied adolescents in Australia and found a correlation between cognitive ability and Right Wing

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Authoritarianism. Prilleltensky and Gronick (2002) have noted that conservative political climates coincide with predominantly internal explanations of human behaviour in the social sciences. Prilleltensky (1989) has also noted how psychology has not done enough to challenge the status quo and ends up providing tacit support for conservative regimes. I fear we are heading into an era of innate explanations for human behaviour.

My prose has drifted away from my context and I interrupt with a playful (imagined) episode.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

Can we all play nicely together please?

Howard, a gifted 3 year old, was playing with a baby doll. He detached the head and peered into its ear. He took it to the sand table and asked Jean to give him two equal amounts of sand. Jean held up a long thin cup and a shorter, wide one. 'Est-ce que ferai ok/Will this do?' Jean asked. 'Ok. I suppose so,' said Howard with a puzzled look on his face. Howard whistled while he poured the sand into the doll's head. Meanwhile Linda started a fight with Robert over what piece of Lego to put on their tower. Linda said, 'Gee, Robert, why three colours?' Beth asked Howard, 'Are you a good dancer? John did a little drawing in the corner. Later he walked over to the Lego tower and kicked it over. 'It's too stratified, segmented, sedentary rigid', he explained.

(Gardner, 1983; Gottfredson, 2003; Sternberg & Kaufman, 2012)

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The 'rigid segmentarity' resumes its impervious nature as I observe the psychologist's role in the process of resource allocation in the area of special needs in Ireland. In a report for the National Council for Special Education (2010) IQ testing is part of the assessment of several disabilities:

> Psychologists can be involved in the assessment of all categories of disability, and are the most frequently mentioned professional regarding diagnosis of several categories of disability requiring IQ testing.

> (Desforges & Lindsay, 2010, p. 127)

Gardner himself notes (surprisingly to my mind):

> For certain purposes, - for example, determining whether a retarded person is capable of benefiting from schooling – a single measure like IQ *might* suffice.

> (Gardner, 2006, p.74)

This shows the essentialist nature of his thinking and does not sit well with notions of inclusion and undermines the impact of his later statement:

> Karl Marx hoped one day the state would simply wither away. In my personal millennial vision, I imagine the apparatus of intelligence testing eventually becoming unnecessary, its waning unmourned.

> (Gardner, 2006, p. 189)

Sternberg and Kaufman (2012) also hope for a change in future research into intelligence away from the limiting arguments about 'g'. I concur with their sentiments.

Thus the troublesome knowledge around the threshold concept of intelligence was the choice for the start of my research and my aim was to use it as a creative opportunity to explore learning and my own teaching. I wished to influence students in their future learning in the course and their work with children. I chose to prioritise Multiple Intelligences (MI) over the dominant psychometric approach to intelligence in a qualitative research inquiry. I hoped to do this through the process of its delivery in a course and through enhancing the student experience.

> …As the first year course in psychology requires students to learn about intelligence I would hope to transmit the notion that children can express their intelligence in a variety of ways rather than the dominant (in our culture) linguistic and logical/mathematical intelligences…

> Students may learn something about themselves and how they learn and be able to reflect on how children learn and be able to bring this to their later practice…I also feel a radical transformation of the lecture into such a learning environment can provide a stimulating exploration of the two strands of content and process.
>
> (Research Proposal, 2013)

As I reflect on the intentions expressed here I note that I have set out a clear agenda to promote different ways of interacting with children that offer the potential to open up their creativity.

Multiple Intelligences (MI) and Creativity in the Curriculum

My choice of the topic of Multiple Intelligences (MI) aptly suited my interests in creativity and education. As the notion of Multiple Intelligences (MI) has broadened ideas about intelligence to include music, art, dance, sport, interpersonal as well as logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences then I wished to help students bring these into their practice as early childhood professionals. I also felt that the topic afforded practical, and potentially more accessible, ways to situate learning in third level academic study. I wished to support students to make connections that may benefit later stages of their degree and their practice through making connections between active learning, kinaesthetic intelligence and other ways of processing experience. Students would go on placement in years Two and Three, so it was my hope that these experiences of learning through a range of modalities would impact on their work with children. The social, cultural and historical context of intelligence documents a dominant view of intelligence as a measurable entity rather than a social construct. I decided to

emphasize the practical implications of Gardner's ideas for work with children.

A curriculum concern

Substantial literature exists that shows how Gardner's ideas have appealed and influenced educational practice yet our educational system seems dominated by an emphasis on two 'intelligences' – linguistic and logico-mathematical reasoning. Pasi Sahlberg, a leading educator from Finland, has drawn attention to what he calls, a 'global education reform movement (GERM)', where a narrow focus on league tables, perceived falling literacy and numeracy standards[13] has the unwanted consequence of narrowing the curriculum and leads the teacher to fear experimentation (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 178). He notes that in the USA time spent on other parts of the curriculum in schools such as social studies, art, music was reduced in some educational districts in order to concentrate on preparing for state exams in the core subjects. The assumption that reducing time on other parts of the curriculum can improve literacy and numeracy requires a critical questioning by educators. It is accepted that children learn best in the early years through a fun play based curriculum (NCCA, 2009) and a truly integrated preschool curriculum would ensure that literacy and numeracy activities are embedded within a range of stimulating learning activities. The Aistear preschool curriculum in the Republic of Ireland (NCCA, 2009)

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[13] An inaccurate interpretation as actual scores have improved in the past 20 years according to PISA (OECD, 2010) and it is Ireland's relative position that has changed as education standards have improved across the globe. Interestingly Ireland's school children are doing reasonably well – adult literacy may be of more concern.

promotes a holistic approach to learning in which play and active learning through relevant and meaningful hands on experiences are prioritised. In my opinion, it is important to be vigilant to any narrowing of the curriculum and maintain approaches to academic learning in a variety of ways that include the creative – music, art, dance, drama and the physical outdoor environment.

Childcare Practices – Policy Framework

Children bring to their play and experience the influences of their culture which requires students on placement to observe and critically reflect on childcare practices. Students are almost like ethnographers experiencing the field of childcare and the complexity of relationships with children, supervisors and the interpretation of early years curriculum such as Aistear. The praxis model aims to support the student in observing and reflecting on the connections between theory and practice and there may be some conflict between observed everyday practices and what theory suggests is desirable. In a social work context White (2002) found that her reflexive research position allowed her to question the taken-for-granted social work practice frameworks that imposed a series of normative narratives drawn from attachment theory, developmental milestones and biomedical evidence on the lives of clients. She claims that one needs to operate within a space that requires practical decisions to protect children based on culturally shared normative evaluations of risk. She concludes that there are practical

decisions that affect lives which still can be questioned using an ethnographic researcher gaze.

The notion that something practical has to be done resonates with childcare education where practitioners respond to the needs of children in the context of a changing field located within a neoliberal context. Early Years settings and childcare practices come under the scrutiny of external bodies to ensure children receive the best care and are not subject to harm or abuse. Discourse around child protection provide the context for much of the thinking about childcare in Ireland in a similar way to social work practice. Currently, inspections of childcare services come under different government agencies including Tusla (Department of Children, 2016), the Department of Education (Education, 2017), and, in some cases, The Heath Services Executive and Pobal. Experts in the field have called for a consistent child-centred policy framework that would support the integration of education and care in settings rather than their separation (Hayes, 2010; Kiernan & Walsh, 2004). What is important is that a critical analysis is applied to our actions in the field of childcare recognising it is continually evolving as societies change.

Saturday 14th February 2015

Artyofishal – the term used to define attempts to capture some aspect of life after it has happened in order to meet some external agency requirement. A play based curriculum seeks to allow children to co-construct their reality with peers and adults in the setting. Attempts are made to support the child to enter that zone where they become absorbed and engaged in their activity as they play with life and each other. Cziszentmihayli (see for example, Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993) describes the notion of 'flow' akin to what musicians experience

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when they are wrapped up in a piece going in uncharted directions as the musical phrase takes over. Being in the moment the child plays with episodes, takes them under their control in order to make some meaning – moving into their own zone where they can play with actions, sounds, movement, bodies for the fun of it. Now I understand. The *panopticon* of Early Childhood service regulation requires documentation of such practices as we try to capture what is happening. But what is happening has just happened so let's take a photo/film of it. Let's make a learning story. Show how it links to Aistear. I make my students do this. Yes you have to document your practice for others to check. Let's make it official. This really happened.

But it is… only an image of reality and once it is de-contextualised it becomes distorted.

(Research Journal, 2015)

Promoting the student voice

In wishing to make learning transformative, I became aware of the authority of the teacher in the dynamic of teacher-student relationships and how it may impact on participatory/emancipatory research. A continuing concern that I would not impose my own authoritative voice on the students had led to my adoption of mime as an activity. This concern can be noted in the following extract:

It would be my goal to bring the student voice to this area in a participatory research framework. Another challenge will be to include that voice without patronizing it. As Alvesson and Sköldberg note in their discussion of Gergen: 'every theory carries with itself the values of a research community which often lets its concepts and interpretations substitute for those that are lived by the research subjects' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 31) I acknowledge that research involves interpretation and wonder is it possible for my research to be truly participatory? I have a greater motivation than my students and asking them to partake in my research has ethical implications in the case of teacher and student. There are obvious power discrepancies in these social relations and I will need to consider how these will be managed. Of equal importance will be how I report our findings to avoid imposing my authoritative voice on students. I imagine this will be challenging as the context of lecturer presupposes expert other in relation to student…   (Research Proposal, 2013)

A pragmatic view of knowledge

In constructing knowledge, I believe, we make sense of experience through applying practical responses to situations influenced by past experiences and the personal theories we have framed within our social contexts. Making pragmatic responses to being in the world I construct ideas to decide on what actions to take and, in so doing, I act. I behave. In the process I am imposing an order on experience based on my previous socialisation and actively constructing my world. Thus, to take my teaching as an example, I have a practical response to my situation preparing students to work and play with children and contend with the everyday reality of nappies, nurture and nutrition in early childhood care. I also have to prepare students to support children in their development and relationships with people and the world - pedagogy and practice.

For me, this requires to perform pedagogy in terms of encouraging learners to question and challenge the traditional knowledge transfer curriculum as they seek an understanding of their own situation or being in the world. To cultivate a questioning of an imposed reality may require a self reflective willingness to examine positionality – how one is positioned by others and how one presents to others – and a trusting environment where exposure of thoughts and ideas (disclosure) will be respected. Thus, the environment created by the teacher should support and facilitate knowledge construction/deconstruction/reconstruction and foster trusting relationships between learner and teacher. Hidden within this are relations of power and

assumptions about these between teacher, learner and the institutional context.

It is a process then. A creative process embedded within relationships.

Diversion into nappies and men in childcare

In 'Response to Dick Pels', Rosi Braidotti (1999) defends, what she calls, nomadic poststructuralist thinking. She resists limiting thought to the cognitive *'cogito ergo sum'* - replacing it with *'desidero ergo sum'* acknowledging that thought is embodied and embedded in action:

> In other words, the activity of thinking is enlarged to encompass a number of faculties of which affectivity, desire and the imagination are prime movers.
>
> (Braidotti, 1999, p.88)

Her appeal to emotion, physical desire and the imagination challenges the dominance of rational thought which has sublimated these. Her ideas engage feminist theory and draw on narrative and memory:

> The practice of accountability (for one's embodied and embedded locations) as a relational, collective activity of undoing power differentials is linked to two crucial notions: memory and narratives.
>
> (Braidotti, 1999, p.92)

Memory and narrative connect not just with words but in feelings and the sensations that invoke recollections and memories. Rosa Slegers (2010) argues that involuntary memory can evoke strong sensations connecting to underlying feelings and this 'felt' knowledge connects with what she calls *courageous vulnerability*.

> The truths conveyed by the involuntary memories are felt, not simply intellectually registered. I will investigate this kind of truth and call the knowledge gained from involuntary memory "felt knowledge" so as to distinguish it from what could be called factual knowledge. In order to

obtain and accept this kind of knowledge, an attitude of openness is required from the subject. I will call this attitude "courageous vulnerability," expressing the courage it takes to pursue the truth at the core of involuntary memory, and the openness required to allow this unforeseeable and perhaps unpleasant truth to enter.

(Slegers, 2010, p.2)

To be open to knowledge seems to require sensitivity to others and a desire to get in touch with underlying feelings that may be present. There are also privileged moments in our interactions with other beings where we can be courageous and vulnerable as lecturer, student, parent, friend and remain open to our feelings and feel empowered to express them. As I write I wish to talk about changing a nappy and to connect some of the possible thoughts that may arise, surface or are suppressed. It is an intimate behaviour that allows for touch, physical sensations embedded in relationships. A baby cries. A carer looks at baby. Baby cries. A melodic voice asks, "Do you want your nappy changed? Yes you do". Baby looks up at carer and carer looks back. This is what one might call a 'joint interaction episode' involving shared experiences and intersubjectivity – highly valued in language development (Trevarthen, 2015). In that look a lifetime is imagined. There is a physical element rooted in sensations – the easing of discomfort. There are simple, playful ways of interacting with children and enjoying these shared experiences are what it is all about. Sing. When the soiled nappy is removed there is a sense of mutual relief, that kick of freedom and a naked, natural smile. These moments are pieces of physical and emotional joy where kisses and tickles can impart giggles and smiles – a sharing experience with another human being. My thoughts here connect to relationships and

imagined futures. John Lennon's song, 'Beautiful Boy', to his son resonates with its notions of a father being patient while his son grows up and offering protection from monsters and busy streets:

Close your eyes, have no fear,

the monster's gone, he's on the run

And your daddy's here…

Before you cross the street take my hand

Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans

Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful boy

Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful boy

Darling, darling, darling

Darling Sean.

(Lennon, 1980)

There may be sensuous experiences to come in adult life; an imagined future of the child as well as a multitude of possible ways of being. They will be a natural part of showing physical tenderness to another human being. There are other imagined futures. I move to other thoughts/fears as I spread cream between the legs and put on a fresh, clean nappy. These relationships with children comprise the physical, emotional as well as the social and the cognitive. Bodies of knowledge are appropriate terms. In order to talk freely about physical embodied experience there is a need to have trusting relationships where sensitive issues are not silenced.

Children of the postmodern future – feminisation of childcare

Within the nappy changing discourse there lurk beneath the surface other discourses of child protection and abuse, well practiced taboos about sexuality and accepted ways to be a man. In a culturally diverse society, children are growing up with a variety of home environments and influences on their gender identity construction. Taylor and Richardson (2005) describe a playful episode in their article, 'Queering Home Corner,' that captures the ambiguities children express in their play. In it some children engage in dress up play but one boy, Reg, sensing pressure from other boys, gets confused by the demands of minding a baby doll while carrying out his role as a policeman – 'I'm a policeman… and a mother. My name is Thelma and this is my baby. Can you look after her for me?' (2005, p. 169), he says, as he hands the baby to a female carer.

For me, Policeman Thelma is a man of action, protective and caring. And confused. We love him and want to care for him, to protect him but he has to come to terms with the world himself. I am Thelma. We are all Thelma.

As noted above, nappy changing, feeding and sleeping are repeated activities that provide the context for joint interaction episodes where relationships between the child and carer can develop. These repetitive episodes may often take place in kitchens and involve preparing food, making a bottle and language is embedded in these. As society changes the gender of the adult carer may become insignificant though, currently,

women still predominate in the childcare profession. Despite attempts to increase the number of men working in childcare, many countries in Europe show little change in the workforce (see Van Laere, Vandenbroeck, Roets, & Peeters, 2014). Currently, the figures hover around 1% of men in childcare in Ireland and 2% in the UK and have not changed much in the past ten years (King, 2016). Care does seem to be feminised and children are more likely to see women in the paid caring role. Gender stereotyping brings into consideration the artefacts we use in the home corner and the language we hope to generate in sociodramatic play. Children may easily respond to cultural tools that come from the media and these become the food for sociodramatic play where children recycle what they see in their own ways.

Lines of flight – life lines

> I am drawing lines, lines of writing and life passes between the lines.
>
> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 201)

I noted this line in my notebook and I present a photo of my notebook below. As if to teach me something about how children learn to symbolise experience through writing, my grandson, Daithi, borrowed a highlighter and began making marks on my page. He was 4 years old and beginning to learn about writing and books. He drew some doodles and then some lines that represented his family and asked me to write the names. I find it fascinating connecting it with hieroglyphics, mark making, early symbolisation and make a note to check the literature. Or just enjoy a moment of life interrupting the lines. The latter I think.
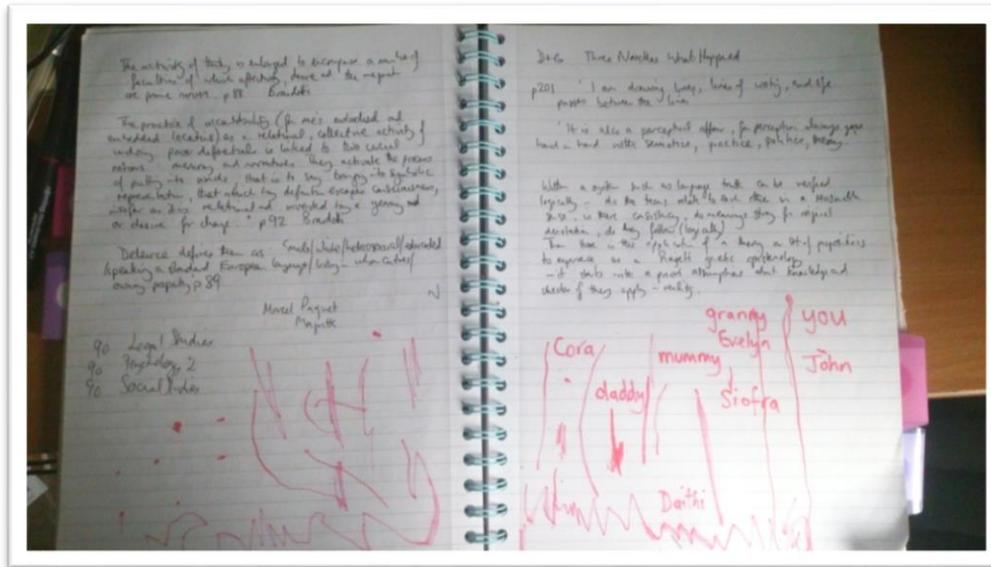
Image 15: Page of notebook (2015)

And then this concept of *immanence* teased me. What does it mean? Deleuze and Guattari seem to talk about it, and the philosopher, Spinoza – how does he fit into things? These thoughts took me on a line of flight – can you hear a faint buzzing and, yes, the music of *flight of the bumble bee* could be playing in the background…

A line of flight - Spinoza and the Honeybee

I like honey on my porridge as does my grandson. Goldilocks may also have shared this preference. Honey comes from bees. Bees make the honey by visiting flowers and they also pollinate flowers. Their lives are inextricably linked with each other but also other organisms: other narratives. The Varroa Destructor mite attaches to the adult bee and feeds on their blood, lays its eggs on the host who becomes more susceptible to infection leading to the demise of many bee colonies (see Rosenkranz, Aumeier, & Ziegelmann, 2010). We also take the honey from beehives. I buy it in a supermarket. Human, bee, mite, family relations, economics, social

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organisation. Is it a human desire to impose a coherent system on nature? Is nature ordered or is it we who seek order in it? These confusing ideas arose as I considered the role of nature in children's lives.

The grand narrative of Nature

Ideas about nature, Spinoza, early childhood buzzed around. Under the influence of theorists such as Rousseau (1712-1778), Froebel (1782-1752) and Steiner (1861–1925), nature has come to be valorised in Early Childhood both as an influence on children and that children have some affinity with nature. For Rouseau nature can provide the child with a practical way to learn untainted by society (Lindsay, 2016). Froebel sees nature and God as one providing an innate, divine impulse within the child to grow while Steiner's anthroposophy connects the spiritual and the social requiring the education of socially responsible citizens who care about the world and other humans. The term kindergarten emerges from Froebel's metaphor of children as flowers that need care and attention in order to grow which has continued its influence on later early years pioneers. For example, Maria Montessori's (1970-1952) approach encourages an appreciation of beauty in nature and the facilitation of internal, innate potential within the child. There seems to be a connection made between children and nature in which adults invest many of their desires particularly when the world humans have created becomes more removed from nature. We all love nature and retreat into it away from the inhuman modern world that has been created by man's hand. Entering into children's worlds also provides an escape but they are

our responsibility when we think of their future. But then we are all part of nature.

In my attempts to understand I felt that Spinoza offers a way out of Cartesian dualism by positing that we think through and with the body. There is no separation of mind and body. If I try to understand posthumanist thinking then I can view the human body as the instrument to experience and think with the world. As Spinoza worked with optics and grinding lenses – a machine to view the world – I wonder 'Are we walking talking sensing lenses, necessarily part of nature but also contained within it?' This notion seemed to inform my sense of autoethnography.

I reflect on how nature is used to provide explanations for human behaviour especially pantheistic notions of nature. I consider, firstly, a sort of reductionism or determinism that leads all causal explanations back to the notion of the natural order. We see structure in human organisation and wonder is it a fact of nature? Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009, p.93) refer to the Italian philosopher, Vico (1668-1723), who made a distinction between human understanding and nature. Their discussion traces the influence of the Enlightenment on philosophy and the separation of scientific knowledge based on the natural sciences and knowledge about human beings:

> Vico held that only the world constructed by humans, including society, was genuinely possible to 'understand'. Natural events must remain forever outside the possibilities of man's ability to understand *from the inside,* since they are not human creations; they can, however, be an object of certainty in 'mathematical' form. Vico emphasised above all the creative power of human beings – their 'poetic mentality'
>
> (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009, p.93-4)

The legacy of the Enlightenment is to elevate scientific knowledge into providing the one true source of knowledge about nature and possibly explains why behaviourists and others wanted to establish psychology as a science in the manner of the natural sciences. The category error of positivism is to hide human error behind statistical probability. An alternative is to try to understand the natural world from the blurry visions we construct. Or use nature to provide metaphors?

Bee-ing metaphors

I wonder about social organisation in nature and I consider the bee hive metaphor. Bees, ants and animals share some elements of organisation into complex social groupings for the common good of survival and adaptation to local circumstances. I decide to look in the online library for 'social organisation and bee' and I find the book 'Bee' (Fisher, 2010). The metaphor offered by Verilyn Klinkenborg in the foreword to the book leads to a consideration of anthropomorphic tendencies in humanity: seeking to make human or borrow from nature to explain or justify our explanations for human behaviour:

> I suffer a sort of species envy around honeybees. Not that I want to belong to the tight sisterhood of workers or be the only thing a male bee can be– a drone. Nor do I aspire to royalty. Who would, after watching the queen at work? –cosseted, spoon-fed, but really a prisoner of her ovaries, closely guarded, held to her task, doomed to be the victim of a kind of reproductive regicide by laying herself to death over the years. No, the envy I feel is about purpose. We all know about the legendary, the platitudinous industry of bees, though they also spend plenty of time resting in the hive. The busyness we attribute to bees is both social–the collective enterprise of the colony– and individual.

(Fisher, 2010, p. 9)

In that 'busyness' I see that the bee is engaged in acts that are continuously in process – events unfolding. She goes on to explain how well functioning the bee is not only in its social organisation but in its own well-designed body which serves a purpose both for its own being and for other parts of nature it interacts with. Thus the pollen that clings to the tiny hairs on its body is transported to other places inadvertently and is part of the flower's reproductive cycle and serves other purposes than the organism. As we look on, the narrative of the beehive is made up of smaller stories of different bees going about their business. Sucking at a flower is one part of the story – inadvertent pollination lies beneath the surface in another story.

I am a bee collecting the honey from the flowers of knowledge, building my hive and cross-pollenating in the process. There may be pieces clinging to my body as I move that I am unaware of. Knowledge is spread consciously and unconsciously sometimes prompting fruitful connections and sometimes like a rash, a computer virus. I serve some function in my own social organisation meeting the needs of my own and others survival. I have my roles and duties spread across various spheres:

> Unlike some species of ants and termites, which are divided into rigid castes, a worker bee usually performs many different kinds of tasks– cleaning the hive, carrying out the dead, building cells, capping cells, feeding pupae, attending the queen, gathering pollen and nectar and water, raising alarms, defending the hive, ventilating the hive, and performing the extraordinary bee-dances that are (along with pheromones), the essential language of the colony. To a large extent, these tasks are distributed by age groups–younger bees clean and cap cells, for instance, while older ones forage for pollen and nectar.
>
> (Fisher, 2010, p. 11)

It seems to be a well oiled machine each with a purpose, busy in a task that contributes to the collective goal – what is the end goal of this; the queen, the honey, survival? Using the analogy to my social situation I wonder, am I serving a higher purpose in teaching? Informing future generations of practices in learning, passing on cultural givens? Where is the discourse on education as a public good located? Is it located in a higher, idealised, imagined world or can it be created in my own situation?

I consider the issues I face in teaching within the context I find myself in. Are we educating for individual thinkers or collective workers? These tensions lie under the surface when we talk about collaboration in a competitive society. Where does the individual fit within the collective? Collaborative learning is argued to be more efficient in terms of modern workplaces and the Early Years Quality framework in Ireland, Siolta (2006), envisages early years practitioners working together to enhance their work with children. Elsewhere, the Reggio Emilia approach in Italy is founded on collaboration (Rinaldi, 2005).

Beckman (1990) forewarned educators that we should not assume that collaborative learning will make us more democratic and suggests we should encourage students to apply the same critical, classroom questioning to the workplace.

> …I do not believe that the result of collaborative learning is the furtherance of democracy. But I do believe that collaboration prepares students in the latest techniques of capitalism.

> (Beckman, 1990, p.132)

Can we conceptualise creativity and collaboration as lines of flight that assume a temporary *supple segmentarity* before being re-territorialised in the capitalist rigid agenda?

> Supple segmentarity, then, is only a kind of compromise operating by relative deterritorializations and permitting reterritorializations that cause blockages and reversions to the rigid line. It is odd how supple segmentarity is caught between the two other lines, ready to tip to one side or the other; such is its ambiguity.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 205)

The ambiguity is felt by many working in higher education in neoliberal times where managerial decisions dictate pedagogical ones. In a YouTube interview Noam Chomsky (2012) asks a rhetorical but pertinent question:

> Do we want to have a society of free, creative independent individuals able to appreciate and gain from the cultural achievements of the past and add to them…or do we want people to increase GDP…not necessarily the same thing.

(Chomsky, 2011)

Melanie Agnew (2012), in the context of Higher Education in America, notes that: 'Education sold as a commodity, is an ideology espoused by senior management [and] Education on the open market, however, relinquishes the coordination and control of higher education to the economic fittest' (p. 481). The logical conclusion is that only those courses which successfully adapt to the current global market forces will survive leading to greater inequality in higher education as those (local) places which contain the less privileged members of society fall by the wayside. Aislinn O'Donnell (2001) also notes the pervasive influence of capitalism and the assumption that there is one market. She writes:

> There is a myth of the *market* that is universal amongst neo-liberal theorists. In fact there are many markets sustained in concordance through power formations.
>
> (O'Donnell, 2001, p. 77)

As Apple (2011) notes:

> We live in a time when the very meaning of democracy is being radically changed. Rather than referring to ways in which political and institutional life are shaped by equitable, active, widespread and fully informed participation, democracy is increasingly being defined as possessive individualism in the context of a (supposedly) free market economy.
>
> (Apple, 2011, p. 21)

Yet competition exists in the workplace and in education. There is a tension between preparing for citizenship and the individualistic society that promotes competition for scarce goods. I try to promote social constructive pedagogy at the heart of collaborative learning and note the conflicts it presents to students (McGarrigle, 2013a). We are all part of the machine. Well oiled.

Yet mostly I'm a hypocrite

I sing songs about the deficit

But when I sell out and leave Omaha

What will I get?

A mansion house and a rabbit fur coat.

(Lewis, 2006)

These lines from a song by Jenny Lewis quoted above capture the ambiguity and paradox we face on a daily basis in the hive. But…

> The hive is not a machine or a city. It's a society or a community mainly in its collective sense. It's not really a guild, though it has guild-like qualities. If it's a monarchy, it's a highly paradoxical monarchy – absolute and somehow constitutional at the same time
>
> (Fisher, 2010, p.12).

The paradox mentioned in the last line is one we all face to some extent in accepting certain freedoms at the expense of others' incarceration. The drone bee flying around to get honey seems freer than the queen locked up in the castle. The dark side of the metaphor sees humanity as a kind of *Varroa Destructor* feeding off benign hosts infecting the planet.

So what do we get when looking at nature? I would preserve the childlike curiosity that looks with fascination at the patterns, shapes, sense of order when we look at the world we inhabit. Darwin (1809-1882) collected samples and specimens and asked a question that led to a theory of evolution with adaptation to particular environmental circumstances enhancing their advantages to survive. I observe its appropriation in the language of neoliberal discourse in higher education where phrases such as 'competitive advantage' 'responding to market forces' and the 'free market' justify actions that may equally infect its host with a confusing paralysis[14].

Elsewhere, we can extend the discussion to the use of biological theory to support hegemonic constructions of humanity. Paechter (2007) discusses how a 'nature' discourse dominates discourse about gender and influences the ways society assigns meanings to male and female and how these are learned and reinforced by the cultural environment:

> The key hegemonic force in the operation of gendered power/ knowledge relations is the understanding of difference as `natural' and therefore inevitable. If differences between men and women, boys and girls, are considered to be innate and inescapable, then so are the power/ knowledge relations that are encapsulated in them.

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[14] For a discussion of populist notions of how evolutionary theory that supplant nuanced sociological thought see Jackson and Rees (2007)

She refers to Walkerdine's (1984) analysis of Piaget's developmental theory as an example of how theories which naturalise difference can have consequences for how gender is learned. In using biological terms such as homeostasis to explain human nature, there is a danger that biological explanations assume a dominant position over sociocultural explanations. For example, Piaget's ideas on equilibrium, assimilation, accommodation derived from the biological principle of homeostasis is applied to thought. It would be better to consider these as biological metaphors to help us think about human development.

Thus far, I have sought to draw together some underlying conceptual frameworks that reveal appropriations of theory that serve another purpose (social, political, economic) outside the particular field of study. What is the logical basis for using a theory that explains diversity in nature to explain economic forces in capitalist societies? I am also a product of modernity subject to my own socialisation experiences as a man. The scientific, rational side of me seeks to understand my world and may see order in experience but also I observe images of nature containing both order and disorder feeding off each other. Or complexity, multiplicities that exist, co-exist. The perplexed modern man finds no easy answers and has to live with ambiguity, paradox, multiplicity. To turn to Deleuze does not simplify matters. I see cells within cells, looking inwards and outwards, events unfolding, and different lines of flight:

There is nothing more active than a line of flight among animals or humans.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.204)

In the bee,

hairs on the antenna sense,

bees suck,

produce honey,

porridge is sweetened,

societies organise,

humans disorganise…

Some of this resonates, for me, with Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of lines of segmentarity:

…It might be thought that rigid segments are socially determined, predetermined, overcoded by the State; there may be a tendency to construe supple segmentarity as an interior activity, something imaginary or phantasmic. As for the line of flight, would it not be entirely personal, the way in which an individual escapes on his or her own account, escapes "responsibilities", escapes the world, takes refuge in the desert, or else in art…? False impression. Supple segmentarity has nothing to do with the imaginary, and micropolitics is no less extensive or real than macropolitics.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.201)

I do not 'escape' into autoethnography and art and attempt to deterritorialise along different lines of flight but rather I am drawn both inward and outward at the same time. Where does my discussion fit with my attempts to deterritorialise prevailing norms of scientific rigidity? Order is disrupted and not quite returned to order – the cards have been shuffled, the deck is still marked and the game goes on.

My body dreams, my body awakes at a sound of a weighing machine. It doesn't make sense to a sense-making machine. I make it make sense with a metaphysical poem. To bee or not to bee?

Lying in the dark

Thinking about

the ghost in the machine[15]

Why did James give me that book?

When I could barely understand

Suddenly

A light

A sound

Our weighing scales

Tell us soothingly

they're there

Who stood on them?

Causing this unexplainable event

A ghost with a weight problem?

Next morning

Did you lose weight?

No put it on

Heavy with thought.

Go and write it down

---

[15] Koestler (1967)

Becoming nobody

Losing self to be no body. This section is scary. I hold on to pieces of personal identity that are precious – love and memories of my family, for example – do I lose these to become anonymous? I am a product of my culture, my different experiences have produced this distorted view of the world. And I mean 'distorted' in a good way, in a positive way as in the joy Deleuze and Guattari suggest derives from Spinoza. This I perceive to be the humanity I share. It is not about a self then. You could be my brother, my sister, father or mother. It is not about me then. It is about my relation to you. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write:

> To have become imperceptible to oneself….To have dismantled oneself in order finally to be alone and meet the true double at the end of the line. A clandestine passenger on a motionless voyage. To become like everyone else; but this, precisely, is a becoming only for one who knows how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody…

> (Deleuze and Guattari, p.197-98)

A blade of grass, a honeybee, a microscope, a weighing scales.

Back to the hive

As a lecturer in Early Childhood there are contested areas of practice knowledge such as the role of play in development; preschool as preparation for school or society or a place to be a child; how to preserve child-centred practice within regulated provision; the neoliberal context of higher education and early years. These bring internal conflicts of an educator preparing students for a marginalized profession. Yes we do have to mind what we say but we can plant and cultivate seeds. Moments of creative planting awaiting pollination. Perhaps this requires attention to critical

pedagogy which is 'concerned with revealing, interrogating, and challenging those legitimated social forms and opening up the space for additional voices' (Alexander, 2009, p. 307). My analysis would entail examining my own context as an older male working with mainly female students seeking to challenge the political agendas that subjugate the work of childcare. A conflict in my pedagogy resides in my desire to facilitate students to articulate balanced critique of social conditions that create inequality while recognizing their own practical need to prepare for unequal positions in an unequal society.

Richardson (2000, p. 666) points out reflexivity in autoethnographic research entails paying continuous attention to documenting the researcher as part of the research process and demonstrating awareness of ethical issues for participants and researcher at each stage. These concerns around power, authority, teacher, researcher, learner, student positioning, participant voice, transformative education, participatory research and researcher/teacher positioning inform autoethnography within a Creative Arts Practice frame drawing on narrative inquiry methods. The next chapter describes the first stage of my research story from negotiating ethical consent to the Learning Carnival and the creative presentation of the focus group findings through the medium of film.

Image 16: Daithi by John McGarrigle

Five: The Learning Carnival

Introduction

This chapter presents the process for obtaining ethical approval for the research and outlines the story of the Learning Carnival including its performance and the analysis of the focus group findings presented through the medium of a creative film. Ethical concerns lie at the heart of narrative inquiry (D. J. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Speedy, 2007, pp. 68-69) where the tensions between research, academic disciplines and ethical responsibilities towards participants come to the fore. In order to satisfy specific requirements of two ethical committees the present study required significant changes that impacted on the process and data that was produced. I hope to explain how this stage of the research evolved and elucidate the learning I made as a researcher. After presenting the ethical story I move on to present the findings and Learning Carnival creatively.

Ethical story

Having prepared a narrative inquiry research proposal I applied for approval from two ethical research committees in Maynooth University and the Institute of Technology, Carlow (IT Carlow). In the process of obtaining approval, I was required to explain my research methodology and respond to queries related to procedures for collecting, storing and analysing data. What exactly would my research comprise? How would the Learning Carnival deliver data to be analysed and what methods would be used? The technical questions relating to blood products in institutional ethical policy

documents are from another land (I.T. Carlow, 2015, p. 12). We don't shed blood in qualitative research only sweat and tears. The language of positivist research paradigms seemed to dominate such texts and arts-based research operates from the margins. Qualitative research presents a challenge to traditional research traditions and discussion has noted the influence of prevailing paradigms on Ethical Review boards (see Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2013; Lincoln, 2005). As my inquiry centred on *emerging narratives of learners* I felt that the methodology was under scrutiny rather than the ethical issues relevant to the study. In keeping with creative, rhizomatic approaches to research writing, I attempt in this section to recreate some of the emotions, imagined hopes and fears that I experienced at the time. In choosing the metaphor of approaching a customs border to describe the ethical story, I am drawing attention to the power that operates between dominant discourses in research methodology and the margins where narrative arts based research operates.

Image 17: Scene from 'Touch of Evil' (Welles, 1958)

Narrative inquiry seeks to research lived experience which is constantly under change. It may not be predictable what will happen in a narrative research inquiry and I felt that my arts based research occupied a space on the borders of accepted forms of academic research. This feeling arose particularly in conversations with other colleagues who chose positivist methods. Walling and Jagodzinski (2013) make a pertinent comment on arts-based research and the language of ethical research forms.

> One wonders whether art is 'research,' which is knowledge creation through an epistemological methodology. Doesn't art raise questions concerning ontology: the way of the world? …This, of course, is the great irony when it comes to Academia. When it comes to research grants and support, academics have to learn the jargon of application language, the key master signifiers that are required, which a university's research office(er) helps you with when filling out the bureaucracy of forms.
>
> (Walling and Jagodzinski, 2013, p.25)

It is accepted that ethical research forms are a necessary process that help to transform one's thinking into a shared research language where terms can be related to the wider field and ensure that what is done in the name of research is ethical. The overall goal to minimise potential harm to participants often requires imagining future possible events. Sometimes though, in my opinion, there is a danger that in transforming lived experience into research we may lose it. Kill it, put it on the slab and dissect it. The paradox of researching lived experience is that it becomes reified. The tensions between narrative inquiry and arts based methods and the dominant paradigms of positivist research bring these issues to the fore.

In narrative inquiry, negotiating entry to the field is understood in terms of collaborative relationships of trust. As an early article by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) notes:

> This understanding of the negotiation of entry highlights the way narrative inquiry occurs within relationships among researchers and practitioners, constructed as a caring community. When both researchers and practitioners tell stories of the research relationship, they have the possibility of being stories of empowerment.

(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4)

As narrative inquiry in education attempts to facilitate emerging stories of empowerment I wished to ensure participants were fully informed of the aims of the study. The process of negotiating informed consent in educational research also has to come to terms with differential power positions that impact on teacher-student relationships. Of course, these considerations are relevant to other studies in education but the desire to find out more than a cursory tick to an online questionnaire requires a stronger commitment to research relationships. Narrative inquirers face ongoing issues related to the conflict between the needs of the participant and the research question that are not easily answered in advance and, if they were, would render the research pointless.

Outline of research method

As previously noted the research was originally designed to focus on how we learn and promoted the links between peer learning, children's ways of learning and the benefits of active learning. The context was the 1st year Psychology module and the troublesome concept of Intelligence. I asked the class to choose, plan and prepare an activity within the creative multiple

intelligences to perform at the Learning Carnival. They could choose to learn something completely new or something of which they had some experience and to form groups to share their learning. As a participant researcher I joined in learning a task and the goal was to observe ourselves learning and document that in our individual learning stories using our own chosen media which would provide the data for the participants (myself/students; n=16) to analyse qualitatively. I planned that the students would have learning journals to analyse together through a focus group.

In the planning of the first stage of the research it was hoped that the insights gained into the process of learning and creativity could be followed up in a later research stage using Creative Arts Practices. This extract from my proposal shows how my ideas were rooted in the pedagogy of collaborative group learning projects.

> The problem based learning project fits within an action research framework and requires small groups of students to learn using creative areas such as art, music, drama, film, poetry and to present the products of their learning at a *'learning carnival'* where they share and interpret their performances. Their reflective research diaries will provide data to interpret how an individual learns in a group context and the insights gained may facilitate an exploration of how practical learning activities can impact on later learning of discipline related theory.
>
> There may be involvement from artists, musicians, dancers, sportspeople from the locality.
>
> (John McGarrigle, Ethics Form, Maynooth University 2013)

As the last quote shows, I had high hopes for creative developments out of the research. In that regard, one outcome was a creative arts workshop facilitated by an invited artist in year two of the course as part of their

pedagogy and curriculum class. This was arranged in response to a suggestion by one of the students, Bella, who had attended a summer creative workshop. Following on from the first research stage, a creative exploration of emergent learner identity comprised the final stage of the research in Year Three of the study. This is reported in detail in the next chapter.

Research Ethics Committee – what is your problem?

The language of ethical research forms translates an idea into a researchable project and brings ethical issues to the fore. What is the research question you are investigating? Will it cause harm to you or the participants? How will you obtain consent? Is this part of their course and will non-participants be disadvantaged in their learning? As I formulated my ethical application it served the purpose of grounding me in a feasible project. It brought me into focus.

Research artefacts – audio-visual data

What data will I produce? Have I thought about storing it? How will it be used? Anonymity, artefacts produced in research, audio-visual material and their use – all of these needed considering along with any possible, ethical implications. At the time, in reflecting on and reading further into it, I became more aware of the ethical implications of using audio-visual material in research. The material can take on a life of its own as it becomes available through the internet and anonymity may be more easily breached. I therefore sought permission from participants to limit use to academic

conferences even though there may be a wider interest. In the process, I revised my naïve notion that audio-visual material was somehow more valid, more real and less biased than the data produced by the artificiality of interviews. As editing audio-visual material requires decisions of artistic merit and interpretation then bias is also present. To that end, the audio-visual material was under my editorial control and presents my interpretation of the data though I sought to engage students in the process as much as possible. As Janice Rahn notes:

> …there will always be an intellectual process in "reading" the resonance of images that often leads to different and even opposing interpretations of even the most stable signifiers… One of the most important aspects is to be critically aware of the authority and hegemony of mass media visual codes, and to possess a good grasp on the academic tools to deconstruct these. It means to be trained to go beyond the cliché in the production of images and to critique the material processes of constructing and viewing images as a viewer.

<div align="right">(Rahn, 2008, p. 304)</div>

In the film material that forms part of the research, I attempted to highlight, critique and deconstruct visual material by playful editing. In 'Research Line of Flight', produced for the Narrative conference in Maynooth (2015), I edited data from the focus group along with readily available images and audio-visual material from the internet to deconstruct the concept of 'practice'. This was produced in collaboration with the students and their consent to show it at conferences was obtained. It is available in the accompanying DVD and in order to comply with ethical requirements this text is limited to reproduce images of myself with those of the students modified to protect anonymity. The accompanying discussion

paper is presented in a later section called 'Practice and the Internet - lines of flight.'

As I journeyed through my study I wished to include different media such as film, art, writing and eventually mask-making and wondered how these could be used in research. Initially, I hoped that students would produce video diaries though only two students used film. Other film material was produced under my direction such as the focus group and the 'Murmuration' film in Year Three.

Ethical conformity

Being aware that educational interventions should be available to all I avoided creating experimental and control groups. I consulted the literature and ensured I applied for garda vetting as one of my participants at that time was under 18. I ensured I did what was needed and prepared the two forms required along with other participant information forms[16]. I applied to the UK and Ireland for police and garda vetting. I conformed to ethical procedures with hope in my heart. As I look back I note how I feared pressures from positivist paradigms as indicated in the email to my supervisor below:

From: JOHN GERARD MC GARRIGLE
<JOHN.MCGARRIGLE.2013@nuim.ie>

Date: Wednesday, October 16, 2013 10:56 pm

Subject: Ethics approval

To:

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[16] See Appendix 2

Dear Grace,

I have completed the relevant forms for ethical approval for NUIM, the informed consent form and participant information form to submit to the November meeting if possible. I attach them here for your consideration and welcome advice or comment. I still have to do IT Carlow's form and will forward that when I have it done.

I suppose the anxiety I feel could be easily relieved by taking some positivist tablets but I will persevere with the uncertainty of knowledge construction.

see you tomorrow.

yours

John McGarrigle

At the time I conformed to the requirements imposed on me and waited in hope for a favourable decision that would benefit my research.

A bump in the road

Educational research carries an ethical duty that any possible benefits from an intervention are available to all. The use of qualitative methods ensured all would be able to receive the same educational intervention – participate in the Learning Carnival. One of the issues raised by the ethics committee concerned the potential disadvantages non-participants in the Learning Carnival may experience in later learning. I was asked to make a clear distinction between the teaching and research elements. In modifying the original proposal so that the Learning Carnival became a mandatory part of the formative assessment I had to jettison the narrative learning diaries to avoid the possible conflict between teacher and researcher. Thus, the data for this stage of the research would be limited to the focus group discussion after the Learning Carnival. This was a significant change to my original

plans and reduced the scope of my study. I had thought that their diaries would produce ideas and insight into student learning that would inform the next interview stage of the research.

In the following extract from the proposal, I detail how the formative and summative parts of assessment related to the Learning Carnival.

> In the context of this research this learning project (carnival) would fulfil a formative role and contribute to the students understanding of related theory which would be assessed summatively through an essay marked by the lecturer meeting the following learning outcome 'Discuss intelligence as a construct and evaluate the psychometric approach' (Carlow, 2010)…

As the Learning Carnival was mandatory and I felt that performing in front of peers for first year students may be an extra pressure, I encouraged participation by allocating the full 8% and asked students to fill out a self assessment sheet to facilitate meta-cognitive aspects of learning. The issue of unequal power between lecturer and student was also considered and I learned a lot about this during the research. Perhaps my notion of transforming the learning space into a collaborative mutual learning environment was revised as a result of the research. It may be possible for temporary transformations – relative deterritorializations.

Researcher anxiety – imagined hopes and fears

At that time, the end of January 2014, I decided to go to the Ethnography week organised by the Anthopology Department in Maynooth University. The following extract from my research diary shows my trepidation before the Learning Carnival and is followed by an imagined research scenario in the format used for a scene from a playscript.

> Monday 27th January 2014
>
> Here I am at the Winter Ethnography Writing School in Maynooth. As Rebecca King O'Rian suggested before you go into the field know what it is you want to discover, be informed by theory. Mark Maguire talked about ethical boundaries inhibiting research imagination and Luke Gibbons talked about the imaginary being an Irish cultural resistance to realism. I respond to that. Having gone through and obtained ethical approval and ready to start my research when I return next week … If I am true to my chosen methodological frame there would have to be an imagined and creative aspect to this. At this stage, my aim is to write an imagined story of how my research will turn out. I think the form of a dramatic one act play would suit my research imaginary.
>
> (Research Journal, 2014)

"Research in the field: behind closed doors"

Scene - A corridor in Educational Building. Day.

(Three academics walk and talk. They stop outside a door.)

Academic 1:   Yes this research is quite interesting. Trying to capture the student perspective on learning.

Academic 2: A lecturer co-researching with his students?

Academic 1:   Yes. Insider research. Lecturer and student exploring knowledge and how we learn. Quite exciting.

Academic 3:   Some ethical boundaries to overcome there. Issues of power between actors from unequal positions within a social context.

Academic 1:   In fairness he addressed all the ethical concerns presented by the Ethics Committee and provided opportunities for the students to make an informed decision whether to participate or not.

Academic 2:   No coercion to participate? No extra marks for engaging in the research process?

Academic 1:   No. His reasoning was that the students will be stimulated and excited by the opportunity to be co-researchers of their own learning.

Academic 2:	*So let me get this straight – he is going to ask students to learn a dance or song or poem or some such creative piece and perform it for each other. How is this research?*
Academic 3:	Quite.
Academic 1:	Yes. To capture the lived experience. The ways that students are learning are changing and this is aiming to capture those new forms of engagement in learning. He will also perform a piece he has been working on himself and share his ways of learning. And it should give insight into those troublesome concepts we all have trouble with.
Academic 2:	*Speak for yourself. I have no trouble with my classes.*
Academic 3:	What will be quantified? What will be proved?
Academic 1:	Well qualitative research can be eye-opening sometimes. Let us see for ourselves. The research or performance or whatever you call it is taking place now. In here.

(Academic 1 knocks on door. They enter the room.)

John:	Oh hello. You are very welcome. I just finished.
Academic 1:	But where are the students?
John:	They demonstrated a commendable resistance to the research process.

In this imagined piece, I reveal some of my fears concerning participation which were an ongoing concern for me. After all the ethical process is gone through, will anybody turn up to the Learning Carnival?

Hopes, fears and unexpected events are the currency of narrative research.

Friday February 14th 2014

Happy Fridays – a colleague has just suggested we celebrate happy Fridays from now on to avoid descending into a negative cynical whirl.

> And happy Friday it is as the final ethical approval came through from IT Carlow committee. Wahay!!! All steam ahead.
>
> A knock at the door. Two students from the 1st year cohort inform me that one of their colleagues'sister had died.
>
> (Research Journal, 2014)

A narrative turn

This puts things into perspective. This requires an ethic of care where research is put on hold while real life issues are attended to. I delayed the process of informed consent. Ethical issues are a continual concern in narrative research. The next section will outline the research story that emerged from the Learning Carnival.

Research method and findings

> Sunday 16th February 2014
>
> The day before I start my research with the class and go through process of informed consent – anticipation, hope, fear… I decide to go to the funeral of the student's sister with the class.
>
> Monday February 24th 2014
>
> A week behind as I didn't start last week. A student had a bereavement – her sister. I reflected on this and remembered how James died when I was a similar age. More to say about this but later maybe. I will go through the process of informing class about the project this afternoon. Hopefully that student will return today.
>
> I gave out the assignment brief and consent forms. One student asked if she could do horse riding. She said she could present a film of her doing it. I said ok though I wasn't sure. She was very excited at the idea. I thought about it afterwards – yeah why not? It is a physical activity that fits with kinaesthetic intelligence.
>
> Wednesday 26th – 27th February 2014
>
> This is week 1 of the research – Beginnings. At times I was worried as students seemed to be taking their time to decide what to do. I have to relax myself in this respect. After the first class we had agreed the following topics and groups.

> **Week 1   Deciding what to learn/Getting into groups**
>
> Group 1: Joe, Sally, Sue[17] - To learn self defence
>
> Group 2: Jack, Abigail, Breda - To play bodhran
>
> Group 3: Lisa, Lauren, Mary – to learn musical tune/dance/To ride a horse
>
> Group 4: Olga, Helen, Bella – to learn the cup song
>
> Group 4: Eve, Katie, Cora - To learn sign language
>
> Group 5: Padraig, Rachel, John (me) – to learn mime or musical
>
> I let the class go to research their topic and get started. There is a bit of trust in this – will they engage? Fear on my part. Trust. Trust.
>
> (Research Journal, 2014)

As can be seen from my research notes the students made decisions on what to learn and teach each other based on shared interests. They spent some time deciding what to learn and organized themselves to learn their own task. Some would teach each other from their own particular skill base – such as horse riding, playing the bodhran/guitar, martial arts. The request to ride a horse was a challenge and one student said she would teach the other student on her own horse at her home. I thought it would be difficult to perform at the Learning Carnival but they said they would film it to show in class. Another student asked her daughter to teach her the tin whistle while one student taught two others some simple martial arts moves. Three others learned some basic sign language.

To ease matters I put myself in the group of absentees which in the end meant learning on my own. I prepared to perform a mime and realized

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[17] The names are anonymised except for me.

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that, after some research into mime referring to online YouTube videos, I needed a storyline. I prepared a mime to the song 'Wordy Rappinghood' by the Tom Tom Club (Weymouth, Frantz, Stanley, 1981).

What are words worth?

What are words worth? Words.

Words in papers, words in books

Words on TV, words for crooks

Words of comfort, words of peace

Words to make the fighting cease

Words to tell you what to do

Words are working hard for you

Eat your words but don't go hungry

Words have always nearly hung me

What are words worth?

What are words worth? – words…

(Weymouth, Frantz, Stanley, 1981)

The mime told the story of the difficulty of writing and how we can use our bodies to communicate because sometimes words can dominate. It showed a writer at a typewriter having his/her piece taken, read and thrown away only to be picked up again and regurgitated. One student said it was about marking their assignments. Maybe. Or a PhD candidate filled with self doubt? There are many possible meanings to an art piece.

Image 18: My mime at the Learning Carnival (2014)

The actual event – the Learning Carnival

I have moved from the ethical story to research reporting and blurred the usual boundaries between method and analysis. I will continue with reference to my research notes and then move into analysis of the focus group findings. Looking back, I note that I wanted to play with poetic ways to present 'findings'.

> Thursday 13th March 2014
>
> Yesterday was the Learning Carnival and it was great. I had trepidation and fear going into it in relation to my own piece – the mime – and also in relation to the students' parts and participation. But I have to say you could feel their excitement, fears, and enjoyment. Firstly, one girl showed film of her learning to ride being taught by another girl in her group. We saw her approach poles on the ground on a beautiful grey horse…a poem
>
> (Research Journal, 2014)

I experimented with a way to report research in poetic form where each line referred to the participant's performance and some brief analysis.

grey horse

elegant pose

ride them poles

my name is jo

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how do you do aitch

speak to me with your hands

irish dancing

legs going high

elegant moves

in self defence

choking Heimlich

saving lives

wordy miminghood

the cup song

sean south on the whistle

and you can't beat the bodhran

line dancing

cotton eyed

(Poem: The Learning Carnival)

My research notes show my attempts to incorporate creative practices into each stage of the research and provide analysis of what was learned about multiple intelligences at the time. There emerged an underlying theme that connected active learning to kinaesthetic intelligence, its relation to the early years and children which would inform the later stage of the research using creative interviews. At this stage I was performing the role of novice researcher questioning ideas and my own research practice on the way.

Is that all of them? I think so. Need to work on the poem. I suppose we all chose something to do with kinaesthetic intelligence – using the body. Some music and dance. Manual dexterity in the cup song. I need to ask the students for links to what they did. Will they continue with these stories of learning? I might develop mime as a new interest - it

does awaken some motivation. The sign language is very useful for early childhood practice as is the music and dance. My fears about participation were overcome then. There were 2 other students who were not present and I am not sure if they have dropped out of the course – a shame as one was a very accomplished musician. In fact I thought he would have enjoyed this project very much but he was absent since the beginning week. The other student has been absent for longer…I told the class that their essay would be submitted at the end of the month and we would then do the focus group session after that date. This would ensure the teaching and research remain separate components.

(Research Journal, 2014)

Creative time

The journey to ethical approval and the first stage of research contained moments of hope, imagination and anticipation. The teacher in me plans and thinks ahead while I learned that time is needed for creative ideas to germinate. Trust comes to mind in the process of learning. There is a trust that ideas will emerge and that students will be motivated to become active in their learning. A phrase from 'Shakespeare in Love' (Norman and Stoppard, 1998) offered temporary reassurance:

Henslowe: Mr. Fennyman, allow me to explain about the theatre business. The natural condition is one of insurmountable obstacles on the road to imminent disaster.

Fennyman: So what do we do?

Henslowe: Nothing. Strangely enough, it all turns out well.

Fennyman: How?

Henslowe: I don't know. It's a mystery.

(Norman and Stoppard, 1998, p.18)

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Sometimes performance and creativity seem out of control. Learning can sometimes appear likewise as other factors influence the situation. I felt challenged by the student's request to learn to ride a horse but went with it and asked her to film it. How will it turn out?

Making strange

The Learning Carnival provided a temporary moment to de-territorialise the lecture. The students performed different pieces in a range of different areas as noted in the poem. I remember the moment I put make up on my face and prepared for the mime and entered that space of risk. At the time I became aware that I was stepping out of my comfort zone, transforming the field, even if only temporarily. As I stood in the corridor with my face masked with white I thought I was stepping into the unknown – how will it go? What am I doing? Perhaps I can categorise it in terms of those moments of *relived epiphany* (Denzin, 2014). As Denzin explains,

> Elsewhere (Denzin, 2001, pp. 34–38) I have distinguished four forms of the epiphany: (1) the major event, which touches every fabric of a person's life; (2) the cumulative or representative event, which signifies eruptions or reactions to experiences which have been going on for a long period of time; (3) the minor epiphany, which symbolically represents a major, problematic moment in a relationship or a person's life; and (4) those episodes whose meanings are given in the reliving of the experience. I called these, respectively, the major epiphany, the cumulative epiphany, the illuminative or minor epiphany, and the relived epiphany.

(N. K. Denzin, 2014, pp. 68-69)

James's death would fit the first being a major event that touched my life in ways that could never be undone. As Denzin explains, there are moments where the meaning arises from the re-living of an event and the

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moment before my performance of the mime seems to represent a significant moment where I stepped outside my teacher role. Once you take that step is there any going back? When I actually stepped into the room to perform the mime brief thoughts about the audience were pushed aside as I concentrated on the actions, words and music. Ironically, after all my agonised discussion about audio-visual material, the camera switched itself off prior to the Learning Carnival and did not record our performances. We re-did it the next week to facilitate one previously absent student and recorded it but those moments of the first performance remain in the memory. It is anticipation that adds to performance – the… 'not-yet' consciousness, modes of anticipation that continually redirect attention to the fact that something has still to happen or become' (Reed, 2011, p.528).

Image 19: Performing at the Learning Carnival (2014)

As noted before, the audio-visual material related to the project had certain requirements about reproduction and presented above is a collage of the performance containing edited images to conceal identities.

Focus group findings and primary analysis

Having performed at the Learning Carnival I arranged for the class to get together in a focus group to report back and discuss what they learned. Focus groups are a method that allows for discussion on a research question where the researcher acts as a facilitator to prompt participants to contribute their ideas on the topic. Kamberelis and Dimitradis (2013) argue that 'focus group research exists at the intersection of pedagogy, activism, and interpretive inquiry' (p. 352). As a method it has received some attention with regard to possible limitations and various authors have suggested broadening the scope of analysis beyond what is said to the interactions between group members (Kitzinger, 1994; Parker & Tritter, 2006; Smithson, 2000; Wilkinson, 1998). Parker and Tritter (2006) offer a useful review of the method and make the critical comment:

> We are of the opinion that typical approaches that apply the same techniques as the (traditional qualitative) analysis of interview data are inadequate. Rather, attention must be paid to the dynamic aspects of interaction within the group, for it is this dynamic nature which is at the heart of focus groups and which endows them with the power to generate insight often negated by other methods.
>
> (Parker & Tritter, 2006, p. 34)

Erickson (2011) also notes that non-verbal behaviour is relevant to the interpretation of audio-visual material:

> Thus, the listening activity of listeners while speakers are speaking is considered as having as much importance in an analysis as is the

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> speaking activity of speakers – listening and speaking, as enacted together, sometimes in conjunction with the use of artifacts, constitute both explicit and implicit meaning in social interaction.

<div align="right">(Erickson, 2011, p. 181)</div>

In my context, I found myself unable to offer the in-depth analysis they suggest for practical reasons. Though my thinking at the time drew me to see connections between multiple intelligences and multimodal aspects of learning I did not wish to be drawn into the technology of video recording required to analyse non-verbal behaviour (see Bezemer & Mavers, 2011). With the added limitation of working on my own, I positioned the camera behind me and sought to capture the spoken word. I filmed the focus group and transcribed the discussion with a primary focus on what was said rather than other aspects of the interaction (see Dressler & Kreuz, 2000).

I read and re-read the transcripts to identify themes that emerged. In doing so, I sought to connect the Multiple Intelligences theory to the student experiences of learning as well as other relevant points that arose in the discussion. As previously discussed I wished to involve students in the research in a collaborative manner though recognised that they have limited time to devote to my research and have other studies to prioritise. To that end, I produced a feedback sheet summarising the themes I identified in the focus group discussion to give to students which is present below. They include questions that arose from the focus group discussion.

Research themes from Focus Group
Transcribed October - November 2014[18]

---

[18] The students were now in Year Two of their course.

Researcher: John McGarrigle: Participants in focus group: 15 students

Thank you for participating in my research for my PhD in Education with National University of Ireland, Maynooth. This report presents my summary analysis of themes from the focus group where we discussed how we learned in different ways (modalities) and how this relates to the concept of intelligence. As this topic was part of your studies in the 1st year psychology module it was hoped to explore how learning a new task using one of the creative areas broadly suggested by Gardner's Theory of Multiple intelligence – visual, kinaesthetic, musical – can be part of our own learning story. The Focus group took place in April 2014 after the Learning Carnival. An audio tape (50 minutes), a film of the focus group and the learning carnival was produced. These are some of the broad themes I identified in the focus group.

Points related to the research topics – learning, Multiple Intelligence, teaching

Performing/Embarassment/Participation: doing things in front of each other, adults, children. Sometimes people feel inhibited in doing things in front of other adults, their peers and less so in front of children who will do things more easily. When we are learning we may practice on our own and have to overcome our fear of learning with someone watching. What is going on here? Is it that we are fearful of what others will think of us? Why do we feel easier performing in front of children? Do children vary in their joining in? Seeing oneself on film is also difficult though it can be useful to get feedback on how we are doing in a particular task – to see where we are getting it wrong and getting it right.

Motivation: If a person really wants to do something then it can motivate them to overcome fears and learn the task. Sometimes if a person is not interested in the task they are less motivated to learn. Making a decision to choose something comes into this and will effect the effort that is made.

Practice: Discussion of learning through practice in order to remember how to do something like play an instrument or sign language. It was felt that some people need more practice if they do not have a natural ability in the area. Learning by rote may not be real understanding for children who can play a tune by following the numbers – is that real music theory or just following instructions? Does learning need to follow a sequence?

Teaching/learning: Using the internet to learn through looking at youtube helped by seeing how to do something and fitted in with the practical learning of sign language, line dancing, self defence, mime.

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Being shown by a teacher was also useful as in Irish dancing, horse riding and some participants acted as both teacher and learner in different activities. There was little comment on the interpersonal aspect or using the internet to learn about the theory behind multiple intelligence. The idea of a sequence in learning arose and was suggested could be applied across different tasks. This raises the question is there an order to learning something that makes it more efficient and what would be that order be. Is it to see an expert perform the task, to do it oneself, practice and receive feedback?

Multiple intelligence theory: Kinaesthetic intelligence was identified as being part of all the chosen activities and was connected to practical ways of learning, learning by doing, active learning and children. It was seen in mime, dancing, movement, horse riding, self defence, instrument playing, sign language. Linguistic intelligence was noted in sign language, music, mime. Interpersonal intelligence and logico-mathematical were not discussed though one person noted how the activity enabled her to see the talents within the group. Some view these as internal traits/abilities that may be present in people and may be linked to parents and children. Some people are more skilful in some areas though it was stated that this could be due to being exposed to those types of experience in one's environment. Learning sign language may be easier for a person who has studied different languages at school such as Japanese.

Personal way of learning

A variety of preferred ways of learning were experienced that linked to personal interest, motivation and learning style. Getting the feel of playing the bodhran may be aided through choosing the preferred style of music with a strong rhythm.

Emotional aspects

One person uses the bodhran as an emotional release of aggression and music represents a form of emotional communication. Some fears over learning a new task challenge self confidence and one person had to overcome their 'inner critic'. One's view of oneself may impact on motivation and capacity to succeed.

Learning stories

Some small episodes of learning were presented though my envisaged idea of documenting them in a beginning, middle and end did not come through in discussion. Participants did not tend to document their learning story in this way. In some way participants were in the middle of developing their understanding of multiple intelligences having had these learning experiences.

> **Points related to doing research**
>
> **Positioning:** as a lecturer I have power in the learning environment to decide what to do and also the power to change my role as in becoming a learner alongside the students. Within this context this may be seen as a temporary disruption to the knowledge transmission mode of higher education in order to create possibility/opportunity for a different learning experience. Students do not have the same power to move between roles but can indicate some control of their situation by their participation/non participation. Within the relationships between teacher and learner there are various negotiations of positions throughout a course of study.
>
> **As a researcher/teacher** I found myself directing the discussion towards connecting what we experienced to the theory of multiple intelligence, to childhood practice and sometimes the teacher voice dominated. I attempted to silence my own voice by choosing to do mime in the learning carnival which told a story that was interpreted by the participants.
>
> As participants in the research students were asked to swap the teacher/learner role with each other and some were comfortable in either role while others remained in the learner role.
>
> **Participation** – as researcher I was not sure how the project was going and fearful that nothing would happen at the learning carnival. As an older, male lecturer in a female dominated discipline such as early childhood I am conscious of the potential of age and gender to impact on the learning environment. These may also impact on participation in the focus group.
>
> **Thank you**
>
> I would like to thank you for your participation in my research and I hope to continue further in the next stage by inviting you to be interviewed. If you feel you wish to add anything to this analysis please add below:
>
> **Participant comment:**

As can be seen in the above there were some links made to Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory and other points that related to motivation, active learning and positioning. As I observed myself in the film of the focus group discussion I became aware that I moved into a didactic role seeking to

develop points of the discussion and this led to the comments on positioning. As I went through the research I became more aware of positioning in relation to research.

In the page from my transcript analysis presented below I note my performance as a researcher anxious to direct discussion to the topic of Multiple Intelligences and one participant named Bella made a connection to hand eye co-ordination.
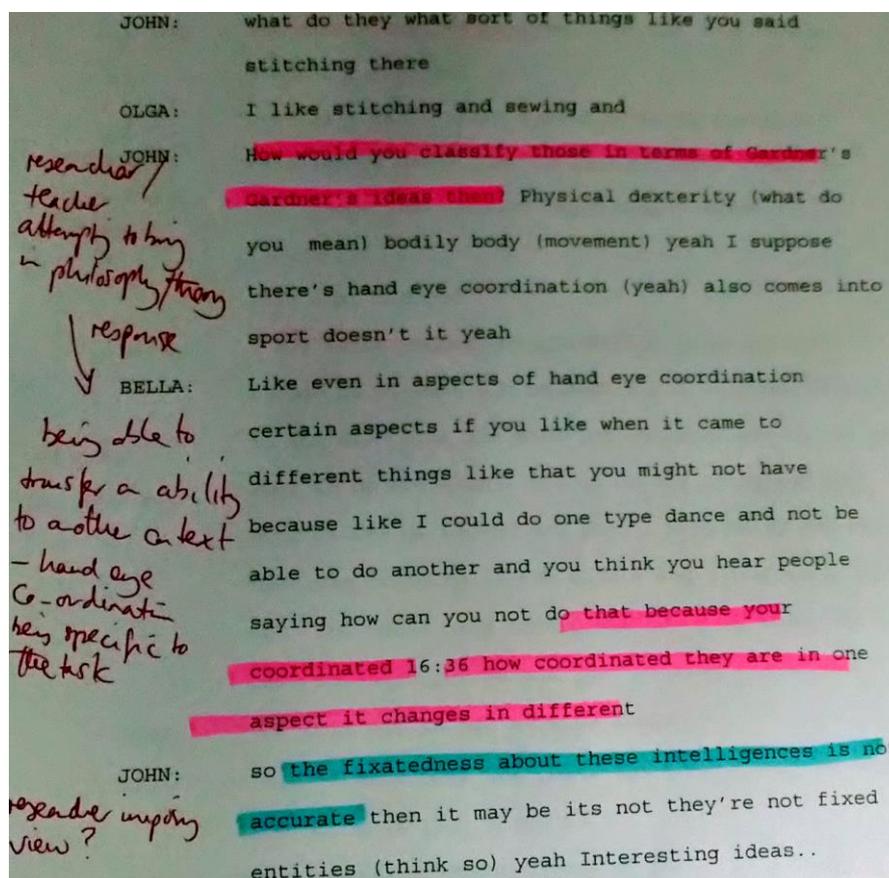
Image 20: Page from Transcript of Focus group (2014)

In the film *Research Line of Flight* I show hands playing the piano along with students' hands making sign language in a collage of these interconnected ideas. I note how I question my own research performance and the need to follow the participant's ideas rather than impose my own.

The following collage of images shows the teacher dominating discussion though some images where I am standing were part of a lengthy introduction to explain the focus group.

Image 21: Collage of Images from the focus group

The feedback sheet that I provided to participants with results of the study offered an invitation to the next stage of the research where individual interviews would build on the insights into learner experiences. The comments that participants volunteered were also used in a film which took the themes of 'Practice' and 'the Internet' as starting points which is reported in the next section. Here is one comment on the Learning Carnival by Jack:

> This carnival might have seemed scary to some but nobody was going to do something they didn't like. Although it was scary to sit in front of people we were doing something we like. I learnt a new way to play guitar - something I love doing. I am still learning that style as I enjoy that sound. Multiple Intelligence might be a hard topic to discuss but the way it was done here and explained made it so much easier to understand.
>
> (Jack, student participant)

In the next section I present the film that took those two themes that emerged from the focus group discussion as a starting point. In the focus group it was noted how a new task required practice to enable performance in relation to learning to play an instrument, ride a horse over a pole or dance. As students also referred to the internet when engaging in a new topic, I followed a line of flight into 'Practice and the Internet'. The following section can be read along with the film in the accompanying dvd.

Practice and the Internet – a poststructural analysis

I wished to go beyond the primary thematic analysis of focus group data and took the notion of 'practice' and its many meanings in different contexts as a starting point to make wider connections to ways of learning, creativity, multiple intelligences, childcare and society. In trying to bring creativity to each stage of the research process I was discovering my own research identity in the process. How could I connect ideas around research data, arts based research, creativity and early childhood practice imaginatively, creatively and childishly? A rhizomatic analysis suggested a line of flight into practice, music, childcare - going beyond the classroom. As I am drawn to autoethnography I see the process of knowing is bound up with the knower and the object of study. As Richardson (1999, p. 661) says:

> CAP ethnographies are not alternative or experimental; they are in and of themselves valid and desirable representations of the social. They display both the process and the product. The product cannot be separated from the producer or the mode of production or the method of knowing.
>
> (Richardson, 1999, p. 661)

In the context of my research I wished to trouble the easy distinction between ways of knowing that arise from different discipline areas and how they are valorised in our culture. In the accompanying notes for the film I argue that language presents a paradox in relation to the area of multiple intelligences.

Language is

ir- resist-able

ir-resi-stable.

I face a paradox. An ambiguity. I have tried to research how we learn by using the concept of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983; 2006) which I see as a critique of the dominance of linguistic and logico-mathematical intelligences (Gardner, 2006, p. 503) with its irresistible urge to assert a lofty position in hierarchical arrangements between them. In the latter part of the film on 'Race and Intelligence' (York University, 2013) it is suggested that IQ tests are heavily loaded for these two intelligences because they are what are most useful to adapt to the modern world. If the modern world is constructed on the basis of science and ways of the word then can we ensure that other forms of experiencing the world are equally validated? Could our world and education be different? Could artistic ways of knowing achieve equal prominence with the scientific objectifying world within our culture? Graham Higgs (2008) refers to the Shona-Manyika speaking people of Zimbabwe who experience the world through the arts where…

Music, dance, storytelling, sculpture, pottery-making, and fabric arts and crafts are so much part of the natural expression of the culture that, to

understand the a-Shona individual's psychology, one must at least be
aware of this sustaining, creative, cultural expression.

<div align="right">(Higgs, 2008, p. 545)</div>

I wanted to use arts-based research practices to deliberately disrupt

dominant research paradigms and here I am

<div align="right">writing</div>

<div align="right">this up.</div>

As Patricia Leavy (2015, p. 11) notes: '…the writing of qualitative research, as

with the work of artists, is ultimately about (re) presenting a set of meanings

to an audience.' In writing I want to convey a variety of meanings that I have

obtained from experience and give due attention to the way I present and

(re) present them in order to promote dialogue. Leavy (2015, p.14) suggests

that 'The kind of dialogue promoted by arts-based practices is predicated

upon *evoking meanings,* not denoting them.' In that sense, an image can

provoke ideas, suggest meanings but remains open to further

interpretations. Leavy (2015) also makes a valid point about representing

performance art forms on the written page:

> Many of the methods used in this book either create data or
> representations that cannot be held on to, such as dance, or they create
> data that cannot be textually described without losing the very essence
> the method seeks to reveal, such as music or performance.

<div align="right">(Leavy, 2015, p. 12)</div>

Likewise this research faces a similar difficulty in describing creative

research presentations such as film. I am drawn to film as a vehicle for

playing with meaning and its capacity to prompt different readings and

interpretations in the viewer. Janice Rahn (2008) views video as offering

<div align="center">170</div>

much more than gathering research data and can involve the research participants and audience in promoting change.

> Video as a method of research can be more than a means to collect data. Like the culture I was documenting, it can also involve an audience in a process of change…if video is regarded as a language that involves the researcher, the subject, and an audience in constructive dialogue, it opens up the possibilities for fluidity, communication, and therefore personal and political change…

<div align="right">(Rahn, 2008, p.311)</div>

I ask myself the same question:

'How could I produce something that was entertaining, experimental, and critically analytical?' (Rahn, 2008, p. 307)

Auto-ethnographic journey into the field

In reflecting on the academic field of play my research attempted to de-territorialise the lecture through performance. I connected my epistemological journey into the field of ethnography from its psychological roots to the field of auto-ethnography. Here I focus attention on the ethnographic notion of *going into the field*. At the winter ethnography week held by the Department of Anthropology of Maynooth University in January 2014 I began with the heroic idea that I could break through the overly protective disciplinary borders of the social sciences to a re-drawn map of interdisciplinary practices in knowledge construction. I was again feeling like a 'stranger in paradise' (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009) and I got the feeling that anthropology was acting like an endangered species. I was 'going native in ethnography' and jumping up and down in muddy puddles.

I thought of maps of disciplines, anthropologists travelling to far off lands, and a children's cartoon about a pig family (Peppa Pig). I was inspired to connect this to Professor Luke Gibbons reference in his speech to the surrealist map of the world which made Ireland significantly bigger than England (see Morris & Voyce, 2015). Here is what I playfully wrote then:

Going native in ethnography
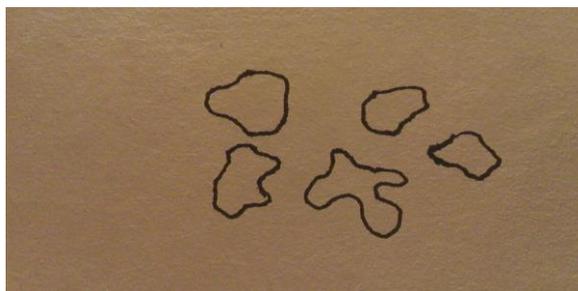
Image 22: My abstract expressionist map of the social sciences

As I reflect on what I got from the week in the Anthropology school I have a number of conceptual areas to bring to my research. At the beginning of the week I wondered as a tourist might – what am I doing here? How will I get to grips with their customs? Academia as another country with its own language and peculiar ways. Thesis – antithesis – my default position. Anthropology an endangered species fights back. The discipline defends itself from intruders. Positioning within the field requires argument and discussion. The map above, in my mind, could contain psychology, sociology, anthropology and whatever else you like as floating islands with their own language and preferred ways of looking at the world. This is the first piece I got from this journey into a strange land – territory and how it is defined seems to relate to positioning. I had a few pieces to work out in relation to description, analysis and representation. Anthropologists seem tired of the representational turn as it happened ages ago in the late 1980s. This was a shame as I am grappling with the notion that the way ideas are represented structures the meaning. Apparently this t-shirt is in the wash. I will need more evidence of the representational turn to discuss here.

There were other turns that have driven people round the bend – ontological, narrative, creative, affective – again I need to go back to the travel guide for these. Or get off the bus. But my bus driver feels the potholes and bumps. As long as I don't take a nasty turn.
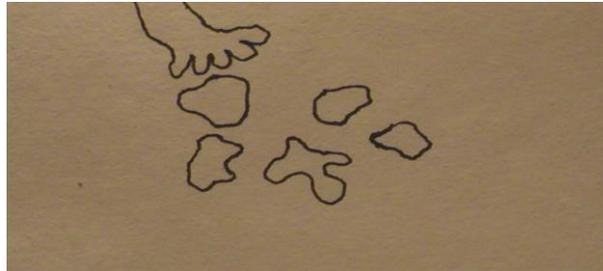
Image 23: Stepping into the field

The field and fieldnotes are also a vital part of the area. I played with this and for my perspective *field* can be transformed into feeled work – *feltwork* – to acknowledge the affective component. I think that learning has to acknowledge the feelings ideas stir up. As I consider authority and power within the institution I learned to appreciate the distinction between the academy and scholarship. A scholar does work hard to make the best argument because it is close to his or her heart – it touches on something vital. This requires respect and a trusting relationship and immersion in the field. I admire the scholarly pursuit in far off fields and I take from this that my own immersion in the field requires similar demands of time and commitment. So as I play with immersion it seems to suggest immersing in water and, for me, there seems to be an idea of the field being messy and muddy. Field has a solid earthy feel to it but the boundaries are fluid possibly. I originally thought (like an insensitive tourist missing out the social and cultural givens of academia) that disciplines may merge together but now realize there are structural forces maintaining their independence. Maybe I could reverse the imagery and think of these discipline areas as areas of water surrounded by land. Puddles in a knowledge field. Messy puddles of knowledge in a field of experience. As my grandson and Peppa Pig (Astley, Baker and Hall, 2004) love jumping in muddy puddles that may be a suitable pastime for me in academia.

Image 24: Jumping up and down in muddy puddles of academia

I re-cycled the Peppa Pig Muddy Puddles cartoon to illustrate this metaphorical idea and incorporated it into my short film.

can we disrupt
accepted forms of
knowledge
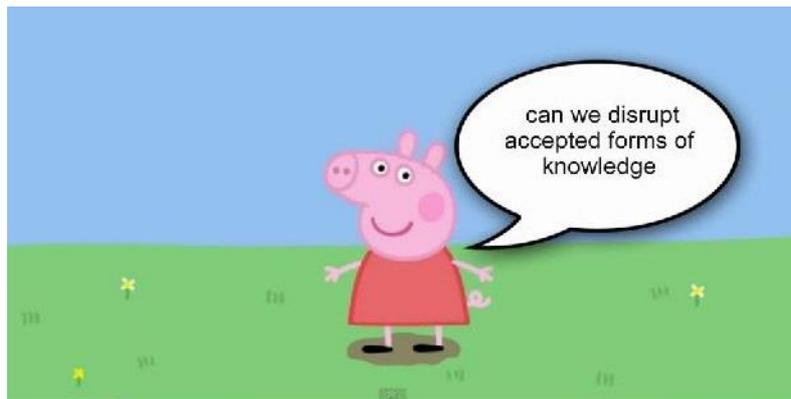
Image 25: Edited image from the film 'Practice and the Internet'

Transforming the field?

These notions of entering the field also made me question whether I had really transformed the field of the lecture and the image of the student in the Learning Carnival learning to ride a horse suggested a literal interpretation of 'going into the field'.

Image 26: Student learning to ride a horse

I included footage of her happy scream after achieving her goal of riding over the pole as it symbolised the joy of learning a new task. They had fun – central to early years practice. A happy moment. Other ideas about entering into the moment as we do when we enter the worlds of children and creative representations of research were occupying my attention. The mime referenced the dominance of the spoken/written word over images in meaning making. I was questioning the relationship between children's active learning and language. Also, as images are saturated with meaning – are the ways we play with images constructive of alternative meanings that language does not completely generate?

Critical comment on data as objects

As I thought about the research data I found myself using the word 'capture' a lot - to 'capture' the research and imprison meaning within accepted disciplinary constraints. My preliminary analysis revealed themes related to performance, motivation, teaching/learning, active learning, kinaesthetic intelligence, practice and using the internet. I wanted to be

faithful to the data and yet it can become elevated into something precious. The empiricist in me seemed to whisper in my ear that the ultimate truth is hidden in it somewhere. Even though I know there are many possible interpretations of the data there is a strong desire to find something significant to report to the research community. In many ways I have been trying to manage the detachment that Bernstein (1973) refers to in part of his lecture on musical creativity. At one point Bernstein argues that emotive pieces of music are produced by composers who are emotionally detached using their craft to manipulate the rules that exist in the way notes behave when placed in a particular order. In part of the lecture he says…

> …a cleaner, cooler, slightly refrigerated kind of expression which was the result of placing the creative self at a respectful distance from the created object taking a more removed perspective.

> (Leonard Bernstein, 1973)
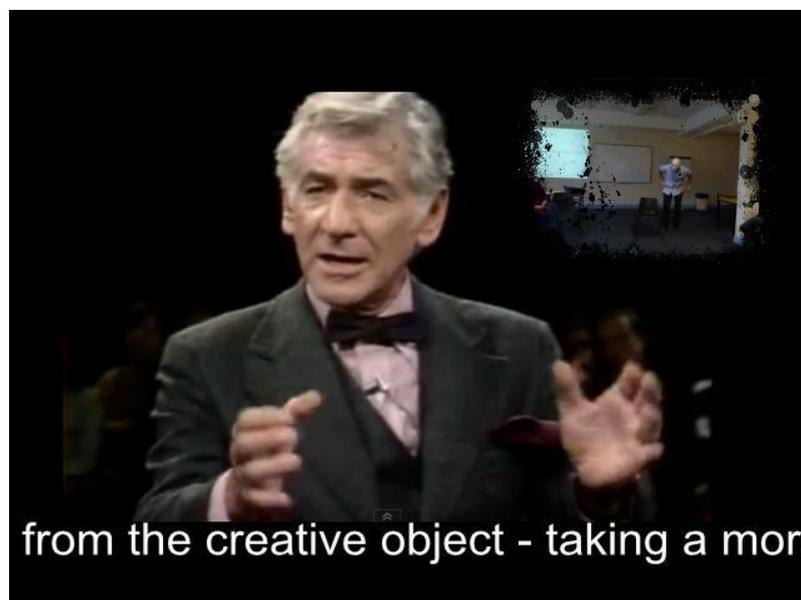
Image 27: 'The creative object…' Image from edited film

I picked this phrase out as it struck a discordant note with my own autoethnography. As I worked with the data, questions of representation

were in my mind – particularly how it is transformed at different stages; the experience of learning, its performance, how we talk and reflect on it in a focus group, how that is transcribed and analysed and reported. They become objects that are analysed in a detached way though does it create a more emotive piece as Bernstein suggests? Maybe there is some merit in considering how to maintain an emotional feel to research data and participants and question the cold analytical eye? Then again, there may be an art to manipulating the emotional impact in the receiver – the use of music in films by knowledgeable composers may be a detached process. Perhaps there is a moving between the two?

Practice and the Internet

In taking those themes to explore - practice and using the internet - I took suggestions from the data and followed the discourses that were readily available on the internet. These bring an engagement with the wider cultural context which impact on our lives. The discussion of the focus group highlighted musical intelligence and students noted the importance of practice in learning a new task. In constructing the film I wished to give prominence to the student perspective and used a comment from one of the feedback sheets as a conclusion to the film:
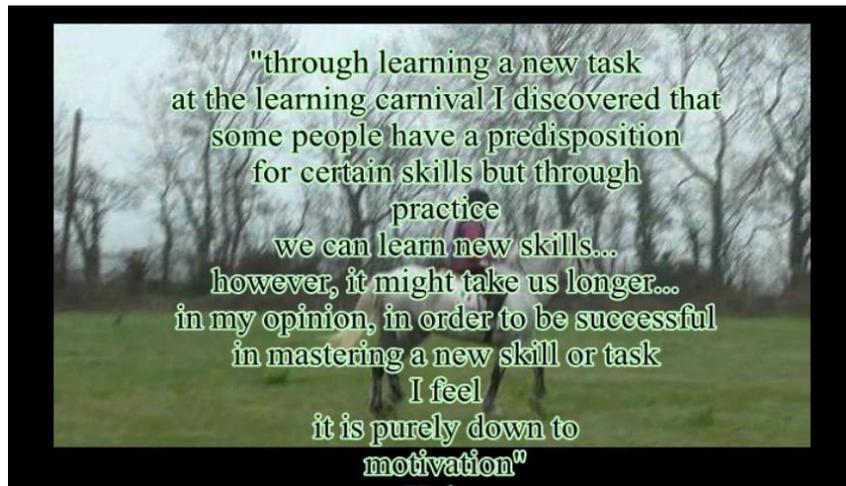
Image 28: Comment by Helen on learning a new task

The students participated in producing the film through reading out their statements and I edited it and inserted other pieces. Other parts of the film consisted of what some would call 'surfing the internet' using readily available images and film found from entering terms related to 'practice', 'music' into 'Google' search. I brought these together into the film, interspersed with parts from the focus group and learning carnival. There is an American sportsman making a speech about practice which seems to be saying practice is secondary to what he can show on the field.

Music and practice

I include a piece of the focus group transcript being analysed leading into lectures on classical music given by Leonard Bernstein in the 1970s. In terms of multiple intelligences, music seems to me to connect up the kinaesthetic, the mathematical and some form of sensory training. A person learning to play is creating some muscle memory for making different sounds and patterns of where the fingers go. When I play the guitar my fingers can make similar shapes and produce sounds that prompt responses

to entertain the listener/musician. It is a constant moving between the two – hearing and responding – the created object does not solidify in one predictable piece – it flows along a continuous line of flight. Bresler (2008) refers to the flowing of experience that music can represent when she says:

> Sound and music, like life itself, are always in flux. Sound does not have the stability that colour does; it passes by as soon as it is created. This aural flow is represented by musical concepts (e.g; form, rhythm, harmony). As with all concepts, they are abstract, masking the fluid quality of musical experience. Yet as my first educational research encounter taught me, they can capture important aspects of the 'flow' of social life, the processes of teaching and learning.

(Bresler, 2008, p.232)

She also draws attention to the embodiment that music entails where 'the performer unites with the instrument to produce sound' (p. 231). This comment was pertinent to the focus group where a participant drew attention to the connection between the performer, the instrument, emotions and communication.

ABIGAIL: …I found that I noticed with JACK when he's playing the bodhran that it's almost like himself and the bodhran have a conversation he's leaning in to the bodhran and its almost like he's talking having a conversation, you know.

CORA: He tells me he takes his aggression out on it.

ABIGAIL: Does he?

JOHN: He takes what?

CORA: He gets his aggression out through his music on the bodhran.

ABIGAIL: Yeah

CORA: So he communicates with it

(extract from Focus group transcript)

The emotional aspect that music plays in lives is noted later in the research in stage two and comes into the next chapter. My guitar playing…

```
                        ...In terms of my own practice,
                           I discover little inlets,
                          new lands on the fret board
                         and the sounds they lead to.
                         Sometimes these are enjoyable
                        sometimes they are frustrating.
            Performance in front of other people
                                          is another thing.
                 Performance never seems
                    to meet expectations.
                                      I like practice.
```

Can guitar playing be a metaphor for the performance of teaching?

Music and the family context

In the focus group, when Helen talks about how she learned to play a tune on the tin whistle taught by her seven year old daughter she talks about rote learning, children's sense-making and that practice can improve performance. I focused on the family context and the relationship between mother and daughter in relation to learning a musical instrument. I think about my father's love of music.

```
It is 1968. A boy of 14 plays a classical piece on the
piano. It does not sound good. The lessons cost six
pound a term. He plays 'The Minstrel boy' (Moore, 1777-
1852). It is barely recognisable. His father listens in
```

180

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the next room. His smile passes through the walls. Later
he sings 'oh Danny boy the pipes are calling...'
```

These ideas about music led me to look at piano practice and this page caught my eye.

Image 29: Piano, practice: Page from The Class Mum (2012)

The image came from a blog called 'the Class Mum' where a mother is talking about her child's practicing and her expectations. The discourse of 'The Class Mum' (O'Day, 2012) represents trying to balance being a good parent and the pressures of a busy life. The points made are accessible and tempered with humour:

> As a working mum I sometimes wonder whether having too much going on in my life disadvantages my kids… I see musical education as another creative outlet, an opportunity not so much as a career path. I'm not expecting them to become concert pianists or composers. I don't need them to be musical prodigies. I just want them to develop a love of music.
>
> (O'Day, 2012)

This resonates with the idea of developing musical intelligence – this parent would like their child to have some access to musical expression for the love of it rather than the demands of a professional musical career. My

father shared that desire for me and the cost of the piano lessons did not matter to him even though I knew we did not have much money.

As I look at the advertisements on the page[19] I see a particular lifestyle is being promoted – fashion, food, children, values – and the pressures this exerts on female identity. I make a connection to Lafrance and Stoppard (2007) who present a coherent argument for re-storying women's depression as connected to societal pressures to be a 'good woman':

> Discourses of femininity can be viewed as sets of shared cultural beliefs that converge to define what it means to be a 'good woman'
>
> (Lafrance and Stoppard, 2007, p.27)

The extra burden of care that often falls on women who combine being mothers with employment is evidenced in this quote from one woman in their research:

> I get up in the morning, I get my daughter ready, we are off to work. My lunch hours are spent running around the malls to pay bills or to pick up this or whatever. I get home, I cook supper, I do homework and then there is the bath. Then there is quality time of playing and she (my daughter) is off to bed. Then I'm in the bedroom ironing…And the next thing I have to go to bed because I have to get up early again the next morning and start all over again…
>
> (Lafrance and Stoppard, 2007, p.26)

At the end of their chapter on autoethnography Karen Scott-Hoy, a visual artist researcher, writes to her co-author Carolyn Ellis,

> I hope I pass on to my kids and others my passion for people and justice…There does not seem to be enough hours in the day. As I've hit 46, I can no longer see without glasses and am concerned that will affect how I see colours, and my ability to paint and interpret the world… Perhaps that is where I should end, with autoethnographic expression evolving and interpreted according to people's needs and responses,

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[19] Monetizing is a way to make money from a webpage through agreeing to advertise products.

because it's time for this mum to go prepare tea and change over a load of washing.

(Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 137):

Burden of culture

So as I relate this to some of my mature students – mainly women also similarly burdened and going into the care industry I consider my role in their education. How am I transforming the patriarchal sociocultural society that we share? I am drawn to consider the feminisation of care in our society and its impact on identity. *The Class Mum* advertises goods that offer a culturally valued way of life and verbalises everyday troubles on the way – yes it is hard to get the children to practice the piano and get some art and vegetables into them and do the good things society expects. This resonates with some middle-class aspirations. It resonates and jars also. *The cultural consumer eating culture and all-consuming consumption.* The world eats itself but preserves good table manners in the process. Then another side of me asks, 'Is the class mum experiencing an *extra burden of culture*?'

Concluding remarks on the first stage of the research

The film was a playful presentation of the research to an academic audience. I have explained my decision making throughout the research process and used autoethnography to connect knowledge with the knower and the process of research. The research object is not detached but necessarily contains the researcher within an emancipatory research process. In writing these accompanying notes to the film I am conscious that the simplistic notion of a learning story with a beginning, middle and end was

an artificial imposition on experience. I found myself in the middle of stories of learning. At any one time reporting back involves ordering experience and drawing conclusions – but these remain open to change and modifying. In making sense of experience in a culture narrative imposes an accessible frame to organise experience and make it communicable. As we look at stories in our culture a shared cultural knowledge that exists outside of the frame helps to make sense of experience. To make sense of the film I draw on common, cultural understandings of childhood, care, parenting, music and hope to deliberately distort and disrupt accepted forms of knowledge. I hope at least to muddy the field if not transform it. Make it strange.

At first I imagined a narrative that would track the journey of students through their studies with different inputs from each year of study. The ethical process had made me aware that my research should ensure it does not interfere with their studies and I decided to use a creative research process to facilitate student narratives to emerge for the second stage of the research. These would be produced in interviews after the students worked on self portraits in a creative workshop. In year two I promoted the Learning story approach suggested by Margaret Carr (2001) in the Pedagogy and Curriculum module and the students participated in a creative workshop from an outside facilitator suggested by one of the students. Then in year three I devised my own creative arts workshop in a self study project and invited students to interpret their art-pieces which provided the data for the

next stage of the research. The next chapter presents this phase and describes

my concerns to allow a student voice to emerge in the research.

Six: Learning to Fly

Flying is woman's gesture-flying in language and making it fly. We [Women] have all learned the art of flying and its numerous techniques; for centuries we've been able to possess anything only by flying; we've lived flight, stealing away, finding, when desired, narrow passageways, hidden crossovers... It's no accident: women take after birds and robbers just as robbers take after women and birds. They go by, fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures, and turning propriety upside down. What woman hasn't flown?

(Cixous, Cohen, & Cohen, 1976, p. 887)
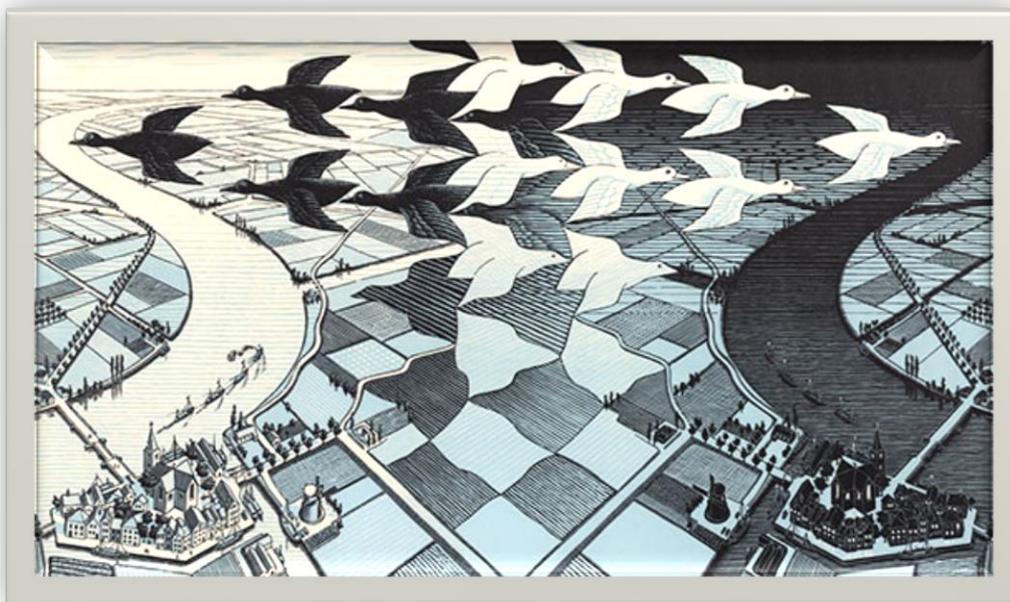
Image 30: M.C. Escher – Night and Day (1938)

The goal of autoethnography, and of many performance narratives is to *show* rather than to *tell*' …and to disrupt the politics of traditional research relationships, traditional forms of representation and traditional social science orientations to audiences.

(Chase, 2011, p. 88)

Power/force understood as *potentia* describes an immanent mode of existence in which a body is defined in terms of its capacity to affect and to be affected. The operations of *Potestas* (Power) can be found wherever thought and existence are cut off from their powers of acting.

(O'Donnell, 2001, p. 52)

Introduction

I begin with a poem inspired by a visit to the hospital with my grand-daughter and a brief discussion of universality. Earlier in March 2015 my grand-daughter, Cora, was sick and I waited with her in the hospital for the doctor to arrive while her helpless cries tore into me. Amidst her cries I felt helpless – a feeling shared across the globe. For a moment her cries subsided. I later wrote this poem:

<div align="right">

Holding her in my arms

conscious of my own fears

Don't move

Try not to cramp up

Don't want to wake her

look at her

my hand

lines of experience

written in the crevices

against her smooth

blank page

her legs dangling

don't think it

almost lifeless

this little creature

with the life being sucked out

- Do they know what they are doing?

Just stay quiet and wait

She must be exhausted

We are helpless

We will trade our souls at these times

Poor thing

I have become

</div>

The poem is part of an inner dialogue between my logical and feeling self that connected to my reading, the research and the world I live in. I grappled with the notion of what is universal in human experience. Is it pain and suffering that reduces experience to our essential humanity? As human beings we share experiences of birth, sickness and death which generate feelings mediated by the social context. So my poem asks 'Are these feelings universal when we hear a sick child cry? Are they motherhood?' Can motherhood be de-gendered? Then I think of a universalising tendency in the social sciences that can gloss too easily over individual differences. My pain is not the same as yours. I do not suffer the pain of childbirth. I am a man.

These stories of learning contain their own sources of pain and joy and episodes of significance in individual lives. A lot is going on behind the learning to which this educational researcher was given privileged access. In previous chapters I considered links between art, emotion, creativity and knowledge and how I wished to forefront these in my research. In presenting a film of the focus group analysis I went on lines of flight into practice, music and attempted to muddy the fields of academic disciplines – to de-territorialise the social sciences. Some points about multiple intelligences, creativity and childcare came to the surface to influence interpretation.

The second stage of my research centred on creative research interviews in a self study project. Each student, now in their third year, produced a self portrait which they were invited to discuss and explain in a follow up interview. Throughout this process I sought ways to preserve the individual voice of each student alongside a collective story of early childhood professional identity. The result was the production of a collective poem written by the students called 'Imagine a Child' incorporated into a film[20] produced with the students called 'A Murmuration of Early Childhood Students' which I presented at the International Narrative Inquiry Conference in Galway (March 2016). The following sections describe the tensions I felt in balancing the individual and collective story in the re-telling of the research story and explain the context for this stage of the research.

The story of this research, as in other narrative inquiry in education (Trahar, 2009), saw an emergent methodology in response to the changing parameters of the study. Trahar notes,

> True to many of the principles of a broader qualitative paradigm, however, this eventual methodological positioning was not fully conceptualised before the study began. Rather, it emerged and evolved during the research process itself.
>
> (Trahar, 2009a, pp. section 2, last para)

The nature of narrative inquiry requires a reflexive response from the researcher as things change in the field. Polkinghorne (2010, p. 396) notes that narrative inquiry is practice oriented and produces storied accounts from specific life spaces:

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[20] Available in the accompanying dvd.

> Unlike theoretically driven research, they do not produce a list of techniques or procedures that are promised to work in every setting. They offer their readers a vicarious experience of how a practice was conducted in a concrete situation.
>
> (Polkinghorne, 2010, p. 396)

In autoethnography, as Trahar also notes, the researcher's story is intrinsic to narrative inquiry but requires sensitive arrangement within the account to avoid drowning out the participant voice.

> Narrative inquirers engage in intense and transparent reflection and questioning of their own position, values, beliefs and cultural background…Making oneself apparent via such reflexivity, however, carries with it a danger. One risks making oneself more central to the discourse and pushing "other" voices out to the margins (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998)
>
> (Trahar, 2009, section 7, para 1).

I pay attention to 'other' voices in the text presented through an artful performative text that aims to enhance multiple readings within a constructed research story which…

> …might result in a thesis text that acknowledges the limitations of representation, that is neither vehicular nor non-vehicular, but is always already vehicular and … and … and …The heterogeneity of these semiotic systems, the confusion of a montage, the juxtaposition of words, images and sounds might draw on the referential discourses of art, music, drama and poetry.
>
> (Honan & Bright, 2016, pp. 737-738)

The artful piece will appear in the section 'A Dawn Chorus'.

Narrative inquiry – a diverse field

Firstly, I discuss methodological issues related to narrative inquiry, arts-based research and interviews in order to justify my approach. Narrative inquiry has become a wide-ranging and diverse field with many offshoots. Chase (2011) notes the pragmatic approach to narrative of Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) means to stay with the stories that emerge from

lived experience and avoid 'the academic impulse to generalise from specific stories to broader concepts or to impose theoretical concepts (such as false consciousness) on people's stories' (Chase, 2011, p. 83). I think at the start of gathering the student voice I was thinking un-problematically - to interview students, get the data, analyse the transcripts and seek themes that link to my research questions about multiple intelligence and learning. At the end of that process I learned that the stories that emerge take precedence over my narrow research questions. I was operating within the frame critiqued by Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013) who say:

> …we distinguish our commitments from research practices that use stories as data; view narrative and story as representational form, as content analysis, and as structure; or treat stories as the phenomena under study.
>
> (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 575)

As I looked for ways to analyse the stories produced in this stage of the research I wished to foreground the student voice and in the process identify oppressive discourses that constrain and impose on lived experience. As I found my way as a researcher I tried to listen to the voices within each student narrative, becoming attentive to the narrative strategies employed in narrating a life. To that end, I felt a need to go beyond the three-dimensional inquiry space to highlight the political context of higher education, early childhood education and the society we inhabit. Similarly to Trahar, 'I wanted my research to make a difference to me, to my participants, to my practice and to those who read it' (2009, sect 12, para 1).

Problematising 'voice' in narrative research

In wishing to prioritize the student participant voice I attended to the social performance of the research interview by both interviewer and interviewee. In transcribing and analysing what is said by both researcher and participant I was anxious to strive towards the expressed meaning and prioritise the participant voice. Recent discussion has highlighted problems in literal interpretations of 'voice' and 'self'. The discussion will focus on 'voice' here and turn to 'self' in another section.

Mazzei and Jackson (2012) critique the romanticised notion of 'voice' in some qualitative research and suggest to 'give up on a search for meaning and, instead, look for the places of rupture that signal the partial, incomplete, and always-in-process tellings' (2012, p. 750). The 'places of rupture' and 'incomplete tellings' frequently inhabit messy texts of narrative inquiry where unpredictable stories may not provide readymade answers to a research question. Mazzei and Jackson propose a 'refusal to let participants speak for themselves' and to move beyond the transcript to discover the function that 'voice' serves in discourse. To me, this may risk disempowering the participant voice as the researcher voice is enhanced. Trahar (2009) refers to Chase's description of three types of voice of the researcher that emerge in narrative inquiry – the authoritative, the supportive and the interactive (see Chase, 2005). It would seem that a nuanced notion of 'voice' would be alert to the multiple voices (and negotiated selves possibly) that are articulated in discourse.

Mazzei (2012) goes further to suggest that we think of voice as produced from 'an enactment among researcher-data-participants-theory-analysis (p.733).' Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) concept of the body without organs (BwO), she proposes a Voice without Organs (VwO) that separates the individual subject as the source in favour of conceptualising voice as an assemblage. This seems appealing as a means to assemble the collective ideas that surface in research and it has enabled me to think differently about how to draw together the strands of this research.

In many ways I share the desire to bring together researcher-data-participants-theory-analysis as Mazzei suggests though the rhizome has been my tool thus far. In seeking to bring together the strands of this inquiry – narrative, arts-based inquiry, autoethnography I faced a similar task to Schultz (2008) who applied an eclectic arts method (after Schwab, 2013, 1971) to his research into his own classroom practice with fifth grade students. Rather than a 'more complete interpretation' I seek a more complete representation that offers multiple entries into the research story from autoethnography, narrative and creative arts practices in order to construct an incomplete version – a patchwork quilt maybe. As Denzin and Lincoln (2013) note:

> The qualitative-researcher-as-bricoleur or a maker of quilts uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand…
>
> (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.30)

What will this quilt look like? It will contain images, poems and other forms of writing arranged on the page to play with meaning.

Time and time again I've said I'm not content

with one thread to make a lustreless dress,

and I need lots of them dyed in colours.

With labour, I've made a fine but single thread

to be knitted into others…

 (Azam, 2012, p. 115)

Arts-based research

What is an image of thought then?

Is it an image?

Pause for thought.

Susan Finley (2011) stresses the political activism that arts-based research performs through a 'radical ethical aesthetic' in order to counter colonial forces that constrain and oppress. Finley (2011, p.121) suggests that the arts-based researcher must ask "How do we break through the complex barriers of colonial social conformity to an inclusive, pluralist aesthetic situated in the lives of others?" Arts-based research can change qualitative inquiry but there are political barriers in the way. She notes,

> Although arts inquiry holds promise for an emerging research tradition that is postcolonial, pluralistic, ethical, and transformative in positive ways, the forces of neoconservative political agendas jeopardize its implementation.

(Finley, 2011, p. 122)

Hence, to counter these forces I employed creative arts practices in order to perform an activist pedagogy. In sharing my own stories with participants I exposed my own vulnerability as a lecturer/researcher. In attempting to embed my own learning as a researcher, teacher and a person within these

student narratives, I am drawn into areas of identity, positioning and discourses of learning. I am mindful of the need to balance discussion between the autoethnographic 'I' and the 'ethnographic eye' (C. Ellis, 2004).

Chase (2011) notes a move away from the dominance of the word and the text towards more visual methods in narrative inquiry. She mentions Luttrell's (2003) work with young people who made self portraits to prompt discussion which was then presented in combination with her ethnographic observations. Similarly, Leitch (2010) and O'Grady (2012) used mask making and collage as entries into discussions of identity with teachers and young people respectively. Day and Leitch (2001) allowed teachers to express the emotional aspects of their lives using writing and mask-making as tools for participants to express symbolically how they felt when their personal ethical standards were compromised by their institutional setting. O'Grady (2012) used self-portrait drawing, collage and mask-making to collaboratively inquire into identity construction with Fifth Year and Transition Year students.

Prosser (2011) notes that the use of visual elicitation is a popular method and explains:

> Visual elicitation involves using photographs, drawings, or diagrams in a research interview to stimulate a response and remains the most popular and common method in participatory visual research.
>
> (Prosser, 2011, pp. 233-234)

I was drawn to use this method as I asked students to create self portraits and invited them to discuss their meaning(s) in an individual interview. Visual methods bring issues around presentation of research and attention is drawn to the dominance of text based media.

> Representation of visual research is in a depressingly stagnant state because mainstream dissemination in academia remains hard copy text–based and conservative. The passion for the printed page, the "thingness" of books as a sensual experience, continues to dominate, and only slowly the screen is emerging as a site for presenting findings of visual research.
>
> (Prosser, 2011, p. 261)

In the context of the present study, I considered the issues involved in the presentation of visual and textual data. The images produced showed ways that participants symbolically represented their lives and the ways they construct stories of themselves in their context of learning.

There are issues related to power and positionality in emancipatory educational research and the use of visual methods. Leitch (2010) used mask-making as a self-study method in early teacher professional identity and makes pertinent points about presentation of participants' work.

> By foregrounding their personal voice(s) and the symbolic power of mask images through the interpreted texts, I attempt to remain faithful to participants' own subjectivity and experience and avoid any excessive charge of 'interpretive theft' of others' subjectivity (Maclure, 1993, p. 312).
>
> (Leitch, 2010, p. 335)

I shared these concerns in the present study and, as I have intimated, there is an overlap between creative arts practices and narrative inquiry which echoes with Leitch's description of self-study:

> As an approach to teacher professional development, it is not manifest in one method but draws upon and is affiliated to many, including narrative inquiry, life history, autoethnography, personal experience methods and, increasingly, arts-based methods (Leitch, 2006, 2008; Weber & Mitchell, 2004)
>
> (Leitch, 2010, p.331)

To a large extent, what I chose to call a 'creative interview' is essentially the self-study method and used self-portraiture as a point of departure into

individual student lives. I initially sought to highlight the origins of my research into the teaching of multiple intelligences and explore its links to creative childhood practices and devised questions around these starting points. What emerged were individual stories that provide the context for their learning and related issues that connect to the societal context. A collaborative creative performance piece aimed to express a collective story.

The Self Study Research Stage

To provide a context for the study I will outline this final research stage process and then discuss methodological issues that arise in narrative inquiry, highlighting my own learning as a researcher and doctoral student in the process.

Mime: Opening the Box

As the student cohort entered their final year I was anxious to gather their insights into learning and decided to use their Supervised Professional Practice workshops to bring their learning stories to the fore. These workshops are designed to prepare students for their final year placement in an early years setting. To connect with previous work and to silence myself I began with a mime and then asked the students to write down a childhood story and their own story as a learner in the first session. As with previous mimes I tried to tell a story – in this case, opening a box. Here is a written account of my mime:

> I mime picking up a box, carrying it over to a flat surface and opening the lid to take out what is inside. The first thing I briefly

> inspect and throw over my shoulder. Another being takes off from my hands and flies away while another crawls out of my hand. I turn round to a tap on my shoulder and look up at someone looking down at me.
>
> (Researcher notes, 2015)

Many students thought of a butterfly taking flight and one student wrote this:

> The box represents our class group we move from second year to third year. At the end of third year you set us free and we all go our different ways in life. The person that comes back and taps you on the shoulder comes back to do their Masters.
>
> (Lauren, student participant)

After the mime I asked the students to write freely on the following:

- To be a child
- My story of working with children
- My story of learning as a student
- Being creative
- Becoming an Early Childhood practitioner
- Being human

These topics were relevant to their course and influenced by my reading at the time – particularly animal-human stories (for example, Taylor & Blaise, 2014). These pieces of writing were followed at a later session by the students working on self-portraits using art materials or blank masks after which they were invited to offer their interpretations of these - either in writing or in a research interview that was taped. These were transcribed and the thematic analysis was shared with each participant in private and their feedback was invited. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest writing and re-writing a person's story in research requires a continual process of

checking with the participant the accuracy and interpretation possibly entailing ethical dilemmas between responsibility to the research field and the individual. This process can be a transformative one for both the researcher and the participant as new meanings are discovered. I offered my transcript analysis to some participants in the Autumn term and others in the Spring term at times when they were not overburdened with assignments or course work including work placement and their own research dissertation which necessarily limited their time for collaboration. I asked for feedback and responses to what I had written and at the end of the study I checked their feelings about the research. There was a generally favourable response and I was asked questions about dissemination and where they would be able to access my thesis.

Individual narratives embedded in a 'Collective story'

As I considered the students in their final year and the individual narratives they presented I wondered if there was a 'collective story' to be told and how could this be done creatively. Elliott (2005, p. 166) briefly refers to Richardson's notion of the 'collective story' as …

> …a type of research account that represents the common experiences of a group of people who are typically marginalized, silenced or excluded from more dominant narratives and discourse in society
>
> (Elliott, 2005, p.166).

Richardson wrote her research up with the intent of making the women in her study the central characters and structured the story around their experiences of marginalisation. In this extract from my research diary I

consider how to report individual and/or collective stories in a creative

manner.

Sunday 22nd November 2015

Student narratives – collective or individual

I am in the middle of transcribing interviews with students as they talk about their self portraits and feelings fluctuate between thinking it's going well to whether I have something significant to discuss. There are a lot of underlying stories going on in each student narrative with some connected themes making me think about the idea of a collective narrative…There is an underlying story we all share of being on the same course exposed to the same events which may lead to similar feelings, thoughts and experiences but each person has a different context from which to interpret what is happening. Sometimes it is useful to know that you are not alone particularly if others are experiencing similar stresses.

Presenting findings in arts based research

I feel there are some stages for me to go through and as I transcribe I am becoming immersed in the data where themes emerge, connections are made between stories, ideas for further reading and problems over representation and ethics intervene. If I am to maintain an arts-based focus how can I present the data in a creative way? As I am invited more into student lives how do I negotiate entry of their stories to the research community? I would love in true participatory style to share their stories with each other and devise a short piece of drama to perform for the world. As Mienczakowski (2001, p. 469) notes…

'…ethnographic performance texts are about *speaking with* informants and audiences rather than *speaking for* or *about* them.'

 However, he draws attention to issues surrounding validity in arts based research which not only must satisfy aesthetic demands of the medium but also validity claims for the research data. This can often mean '…the transgressive arts ethnographer must produce double the work to gain the credibility and status afforded to ethnographers who chose more traditional data presentation approaches (ibid; p.473)'

This tension between making research accessible through creative arts practices and maintaining the requirements of the academy seems to place an extra burden on the qualitative arts based researcher. In his discussion of Laurel Richardson's poetic research texts Mienzakowski

seems to be suggesting that making an emotional impact is only useful for an audience that expects it:

'The use of transgressive poetic-literary writing styles undoubtedly evokes deep emotional and intellectual impacts on those audiences who are comfortable with these particular expressive idioms – whilst it may perforce deny access and disenfranchise other audiences.' (ibid, p.472)

Rather than denying access I fear that we are left talking to the converted and not making an impact on the dominant research field – and they are certainly not disenfranchised.

In my context, I think asking the students to collaboratively perform the research is desirable but possibly an extra burden as they already have a large amount of work to do in their final year. I have to consider that it may meet my goals more than theirs. I will seek to produce a creative piece that will complete the research circle of informing the participants of the findings – in an art piece combining words and images. A collective collage seems to be emerging as a way to represent the collective story. What images would go in it?

(Research Journal, 2015)

These reflections show the ideas that led to the collective dance poem and the film '*A Murmuration of Early Childhood*' that will be presented in the section '*A Dawn Chorus*'. Meanwhile, I was becoming more aware of positionality as a facet of qualitative research and this poem seemed pertinent.

Researcher positionality

Elephant in the room

(a poem for two voices)

I suppose it would be good to agree

what is the subject of our study.

Or object?

Yeah.

You mean agree on the object of our study

not object to the subject?

Yeah.

Mmm. (Pause) I see what you mean.

What's she doing?

We all looked over.

Something about groups. I think.

Oh.

On her own?

What about conflict?

Maybe.

Prejudice.

Nah. Nah.

I think we have to think about our position…

Ning.

What?

Positioning.

Yeah.

Wait a minute.

I think there's an elephant in the room.

We all looked around. How could that be possible?

It was a small room.

Gradually and slowly

a trunk slid onto the table before me.

Everyone looked at me/*Everyone looked at me.*

(John McGarrigle, 2014)

Age, gender, ethnicity, unsocial class

As an older man teaching a class of 14 females and 2 males I am conscious of my age and gender. I have highlighted the issue of gender in this text in relation to the discussion of men in childcare and acknowledge my own position in a male dominated society. If I were teaching

Mathematics or English would gender be so relevant? In early childhood gender is implicated in wider societal structures which create inequality and I am part of the State Machine which institutionalises inequality. My stories as a grandparent contextualise my play with children and position me as an older person. Age is something I feel. Ethnicity is something others may feel on a daily basis in our society. These categorisations can imprison us within dominant discourses.

<div align="right">

other

mother

smother

another

brother

</div>

Positioning – levels of analysis

The interview is a space to reveal what it feels like to be seen as different.   Slocum-Bradley (2010, p. 91) offers a useful discussion of the concept of positioning in discourse devising the 'positioning diamond' as 'a framework for analyzing meaning construction in discourse'. Acknowledging Bamberg (Bamberg, 2007), she suggests that analysis can focus on different levels such as the content, narrator-interlocutor (actors) or the ideological and the points of the diamond can refer to the social forces of discursive acts, storylines, identities and rights and duties. This points to a movement between positions as stories are told and identities negotiated in interview discourse. Of relevance here are the positions assigned to dialogue

partners based on previous knowledge, student- teacher relationships and the social forces that contextualise discourse.

The research interview

At the start, the participant was asked to explain the ideas behind their self-portrait or art piece and subsequent questions aimed to understand and clarify what the student is saying. As the previous stage of research had identified related points about multiple intelligence, learning and creativity I was primarily interested in these. As participants engaged with the process there arose stories of student experience that contextualise their learning creating a nuanced understanding of early childhood students' lives and concerns. My original motivation to add the learner perspective to the literature on threshold concepts to counter the teacher dominated discourse was itself transformed through narrative inquiry.

Narrative analysis and interpretation

As I considered how to approach the analysis of the research narratives many issues came to mind: in particular, how to analyse discourses within a post structural frame and the representation of research data in arts based research. Polkinghorne (2002) distinguishes between two types of narrative inquiry - analysis of narrative which treats narrative as data to seek commonalities and is paradigmatic and narrative analysis which uses narrative reasoning. I used narrative analysis to extract narrative meaning and struggled with the competing goals of maintaining participant

voice and interpretation. As I reflected on the creative interviews I used the following aspects to inform my methodological approach:

a) The students produced images that expressed a meaning about themselves.

b) The interview provided an interpretation of the image by the creator.

c) The interview is a dialogue between me as a researcher and the student as artist where I ask questions from various positions:

   i. As inquirer into the deeper meaning of symbols/story/narrative/ ideas

   ii. as teacher interested in learning

   iii. as facilitator of communication.

d) The interview took place in time so that questions move towards a clearer understanding and sometimes go through misunderstandings.

e) When texts are produced through transcription of the interview the researcher becomes the interpreter of the text – with a wider audience in mind.

Using these as a guide I produced an individual transcript interpretation which was shared with the participant for comment. My concern to preserve the individual voice created a lengthy piece of writing which had the opposite effect and succeeded in drowning their voice. In trying to follow their ideas I ended up inserting my authoritative interpretation onto the participant which lost their voice. I was grateful for an independent reviewer who reminded me to use their words. As in the previous chapter I felt the need for a secondary stage of analysis and a critical editing to the data in order to highlight what is of interest to a wider audience in education. Then a moment of epiphany occurred (Denzin, 2014). I move from the academic discourse to a performance text in the next section.

Seven: A Dawn Chorus

Researcher epiphany

One night as I struggled with this notion of voice I wrote until near midnight and went to bed with some unresolved issues. How to represent multiple voices and selves? How to be artful in presentation? I woke at 3.34 am and a way to perform the text emerged as I lay in bed for an hour thinking. I got up to write some ideas down. A comment from my supervisor about a previous chapter losing some of its performative aspect was in the background but it took a while for me to work it out. I separate out the next section which might be called findings in traditional research texts.

Performing the research story

In seeking the multiple voices contained in the research I realised each stage has been a research performance and I must find a way to allow the text to perform multiple voices including those tacit voices that are hidden in the text. Music, practice and voice made me think of a childhood incident. I illustrate the ways these creative connections manifested themselves. I insert this episode in my life reiterating the point from the 'First Narrator' story that recollection is faulty, inaccurate and often a reconstruction serving the purpose of the narrator at the time when the story is told.

On the way home from school

I went to a Roman Catholic primary school in Chatham and a Church of England Grammar school in Gillingham. These towns are situated on the

River Medway and it is possible to walk from one town to another in a more direct route than the two buses I was meant to take from my home. My friend from primary school lived near me and sometimes we walked home when we had spent our bus fare. To avoid verbal abuse or being beaten up by boys from other schools we took a circuitous route and 'roughed up' our uniform (lose the cap and tie). My friend and I had a lot in common having been to the same primary school and having Irish parents. On the way home we may have performed a Noel Coward song such as 'Don't put your daughter on the stage, Mrs. Worthington' or some other anachronous perversion. These musical interludes may have led to his narration of the story of the Christmas choir practice. What is of interest is that I had blocked out the incident and his telling brought it to mind at the time and the sense of injustice. I position our dialogue in the middle and my thoughts to the right where my poetry has been positioned.

<div align="center">
Don't you remember?

No

It was the Christmas choir practice.

I remember I did drawing in another room.

Yeah but you got the cane

For groaning
</div>

<div align="right">
I remember that word
</div>

I didn't get the cane.

<div align="right">
As he told me I began to remember.
</div>

Just sing that again

<div align="center">Once in Royal David's city</div>

Stop

A little boy becomes aware of the voice behind him getting closer…

Again

<div align="center">Once in Royal</div>

Stop

A hand grabs the boy and takes him out of the line of singers.

You.

But I wasn't doing it on purpose.

He thought you were.

Yes you're right.

It was horrible to watch.

I was struck by my friend's concern.

Witnessing injustice

may be harder

than experiencing it.

I don't remember the cane.

I liked drawing though.

A performance of the text using the text style and position on the page seems to offer possibilities to convey meaning arising from the multiple voices contained in the research story. In the extract above I have left aligned a teacher voice in italics, actions are indented, voices that sing together in tune (somewhat) are centred, and thoughts are right aligned.

The teacher voice is often critical. My singing was silenced.

I returned to the focus group and remember one person talking about her ʹinner criticʹ. I apply this type of analysis. I remove the names assigned to each person in the transcript to see what voice emerges.

A choir of voices

<div style="text-align: center;">

```
I thought on the bodhran

you were keeping a good rhythm

yeah you said that to me

and it's funny JOHN now

you weren't sense sensing it yourself

you've kept being critical of yourself
```

</div>

leading question
Is it? I was just trying to get in tune

<div style="text-align: center;">

```
I did and

and it's funny

when we watched the film back

I was kind of looking at myself and going jeez

I actually do know

I do look

Well you were holding the thing in the correct way
```

</div>

Wait! Let them speak!

<div style="text-align: center;">

```
you know

Yeah Yeah

I mean that's something that was

a learning curve for me

yeah
```

</div>

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```
                    that that I you know

                    for starters like

         I sent my inner critic off on holiday

          and said well look well this was

                       actually

                         yeah
```

Some of her words have migrated to the right as if thought. Similar to Mazzei's VwO (2012) I think I am getting to an artful performance piece as researcher and participant merge and separate and other voices manifest themselves. I like the choir metaphor with its musical connotations. My 'groaning' voice may learn to sing by the end.

This 'critical voice' occurs elsewhere and can silence learning. Breda wrote this about a childhood experience.

> So I decided to bite the bullet and walked to the teacher's desk with my maths copy. I said "Miss, I don't get this". She looked at me and said "What's not to get?" She then proceeded to explain it to me but I was so embarrassed that I didn't even listen to her. I never asked a question in her class or any class again and I carried this embarrassment through to secondary school as well…I learned not to ask questions (Breda)

The 'critical voice' can silence and do harm. It is also present when she explained the lips in her mask in an email.

… The glitter on the eyes shows my love for getting dressed up and wearing make-up. However it is the lips on this mask that I love the most. The different designs and colours represent the things that we say both to other people and to ourselves. The black designs on the lips represent the not so nice things we may say that damage us or other people, the things we say that feed our insecurities. The different colours

on the lips represent the nice things we say that give us confidence and help us to see the good things in life! (Breda, student participant)

Image 31: Breda's Mask

The 'critical' voice can come from different sources not just the academic to be fair – peers, parents. In the present context I wish to represent the multiple voices that combine in an academic critical voice which can be authoritative, supportive or interactive (Chase, 2005). I use this to demonstrate tuning in to students and becoming alert to the effects of the language used and its potential effects on learning. I use two different text styles on the left to represent these academic positions in dialogue. The research data moves between the different positions on the page to allow meaning to emerge from the multiple voices and positions. The following piece begins with an entry into the multiple data sources as images,

transcripts, academic, researcher voices intermingle. As in any border crossing learning a new language takes time.

Lauren used a jigsaw motif for her mask to show how she needed to organise her life so that the pieces fitted in her final year of study.

```
                    this year
               I'm trying to incorporate
                all the bits of my life
                it's a kind of a struggle
                          and
          I thought the jig saw pieces were good
                 because it showed that
                   each of the pieces
                   had to fit together
                       in order
                     for the year
                      to work
```

Image 32: Lauren's Jigsaw Mask

That does speak for itself alright but

Are you just reiterating what they say

Connect it to the wider field

Do I have to?

It's what you ask your students to do

Ok but sometimes their interpretation is sufficient. Look here.

<pre>
                It may represent the idea

                  that the faceless head
</pre>

213

can be everyone's self portrait,

left blank for the viewer to visualise

their own image over the piece.
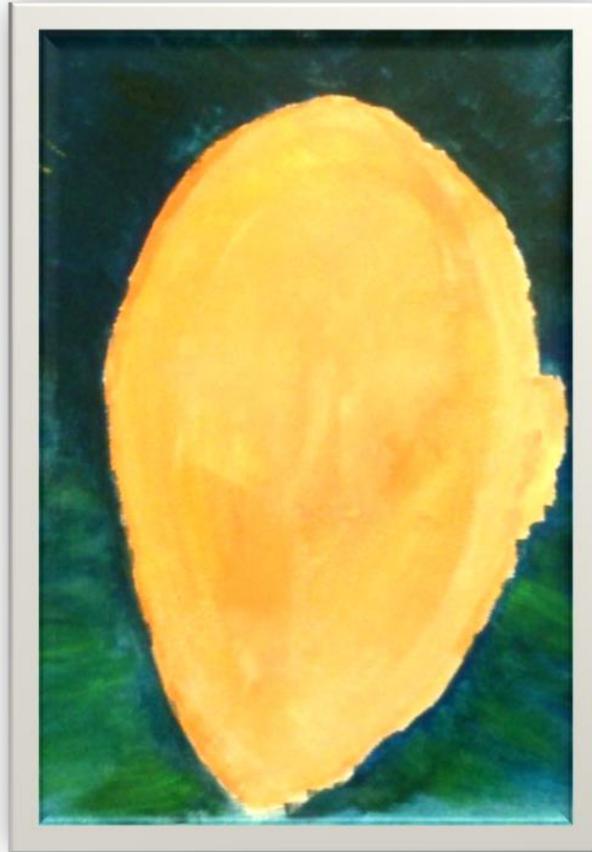
Image 33: Julie's Portrait

It may represent the split

that I currently feel between

myself

the head in darkness...

as Bella will tell you

when she saw my piece

her immediate reaction was that

it was a barrier

the blank face

represented a barrier

that I tend to

ok

block off that personal side

I'm not very good at expressing

that I tend to hold back a lot

yeah

from people first and

takes a while to get to know me so

that was how she interpreted

what I had painted.

...and my identity the sad face

Image 34: Julie's Portrait 2

It's interesting because the class were making masks and they are a way of disguising and hiding behind the mask that sort of symbolizing and you actually did an art piece which created its own mask you know.

`yeah`

Image 35: Julie's Mask

`How will I connect to the literature?`

The mask does not hide the face, it is the face.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 587)

`So well I mean`

216

in what you have to say

there's lots of points of interest

you know the idea of identity

I suppose you know

has your identity changed

as a result of being a student?

Leading question.

get in tune.

I've started answering back now

O yes. Even in just being

becoming a student

ok

I've worked understand

before kind of coming back

as a mature student

and things

so I've had the identity

of a professional

and then I was

a mother for a while

and now I'm back

in the student role

ok

A lot there – unpick it.

Another voice (Helen) comes in from another interview.

…it's like when you become a mother

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```
                you are supposed to become

                     this supermum

                          ok

              and you're supposed to be able

                 to handle everything and

                          ok

           I guess it's the stereotypical belief

                    and the society

                  imposes this on you.
```

An episode intervenes in the text.

Children get in the way of the writing

I am called with my wife to collect a sick grandchild from the local community play centre. It is approaching lunchtime and on the way we pick up some medicine from my daughter who nips out of her workplace. I observe how she has to negotiate her way between her anxieties as a mother and maintain her work duties. We reassure her that the children will be ok till her husband picks them up after his session on work placement as a primary teacher. As we arrive at the play centre and enter the room I recognize a female student from the second year cohort who has just started this week. Cora, our granddaughter is asleep on the couch and we pick her up to carry her out to the car. I put her in the car as she cries and negotiate the buckles strapping her into the chair while my wife collects her baby sister, Siofra. A female friend arrives at our home as I carry a screaming child into our house to temporarily mind the children. I notice how I am again the only male in this setting – two female grandchildren, two adult females. My daughter arranges to come home from her work and I try to console the child who gets so upset she is physically sick. Things

calm down as the women take over and I return to write till I am
called to some lunch.

The authoritative male writing takes precedence then?

<div align="right">I know.</div>

<div align="right">A collective poem begins.</div>

<div align="center">This moment imagine a child.</div>

It will evolve with the research as each participant contributes a line.

Another mother enters the discourse.

<div align="center">Do you like studying then?</div>

Do you think that is a useful question?
Think about it.

<div align="center">Yeah I do</div>

<div align="center">as obviously there is a time constraint</div>

<div align="center">there is a pressure there</div>

<div align="center">with the two kids</div>

<div align="center">so as my partner he lives abroad</div>

<div align="center">it doesn't</div>

<div align="center">right ok</div>

<div align="center">make it any easier</div>

<div align="center">yeah he has to live in Switzerland</div>

<div align="center">because there's no job opportunities here</div>

<div align="center">for him at the moment</div>

<div align="center">yeah it's ok you know</div>

<div align="center">I get the kids to bed</div>

<div align="center">and I do set a couple of hours</div>

<div align="center">and there's slots in the day</div>

<div align="center">219</div>

```
            when they're free here so I use that

                    but there are times

                 it can be overwhelming.
```


Image 36: Louisa's Self Portrait

A male student became a father during the summer before the final year of the degree. His voice joins.

```
        then the thought of coming back to college

                    was so difficult

               you know trying to balance

                          ok
```

```
                  college family and money was

                      very very difficult

            but ... I have to come to college

              and not just for me any more

                 now I have a baby at home

           that I am going to have to provide for

                 when I am older as well
```

<div align="right">more of the poem</div>

```
              This moment imagine a child

          full of interests, free minded and wild

                   Wobble by wobble

                    Step by step

              Children grow and flourish
```

Now where is the narrative?

Yes.

```
          Am I losing the individual story in all this?
```

That is what I feared at the start. A sense of duty to preserve each individual's identity intact in the reporting led to my original analysis that drew out the stories and events that affected each student life. Here is a piece from Jack's transcript analysis.

> Jack explains that the mask represents the struggles he currently faces as he adjusts to major changes at home - becoming a father, struggles with finance, working in a hotel, caring for the baby and study. As he tells the story of the birth of his daughter he narrates several events which fit together into specific storylines (Slocum-Bradley, 2010). The mask is divided into two and he explained that one side is 'everything bad that happened around that time' – the time of the birth of his daughter. There

are a number of events and elements that become entangled in his storyline as they fit within his personal and social context...

Let him speak

That's an ambulance

the reason ...

... is my daughter
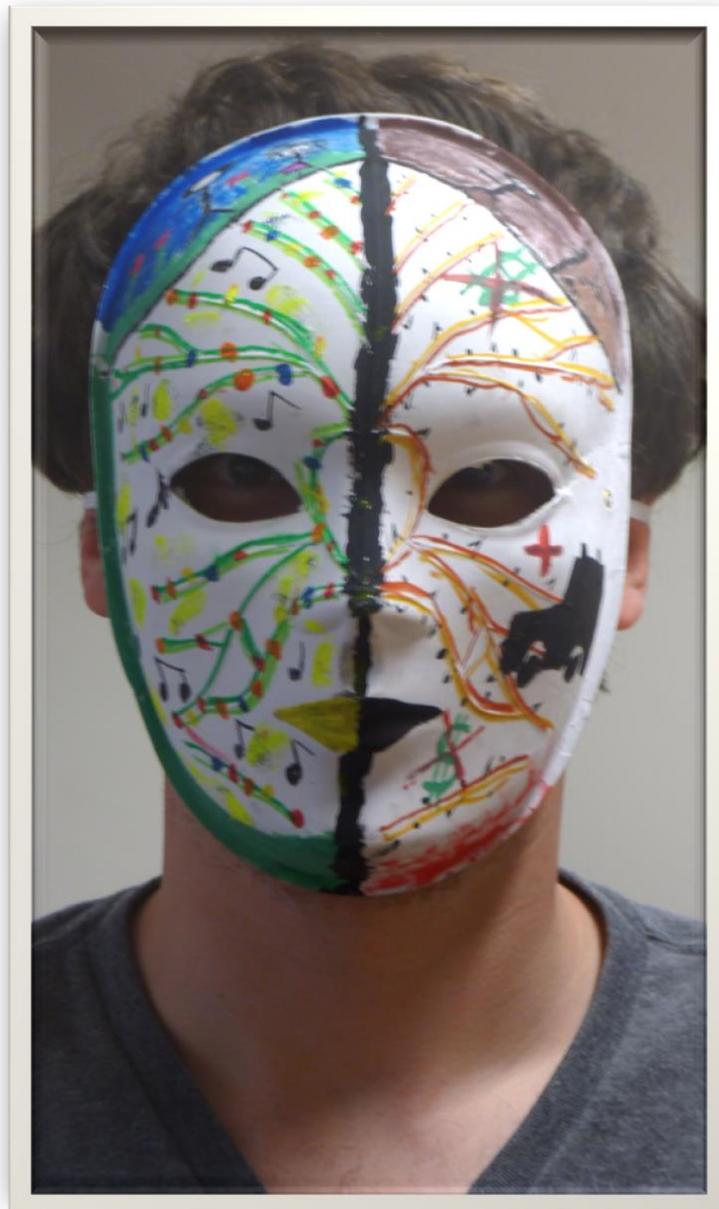
Image 37: Jack's Portrait Mask

was born on the 18th of July

and on the 20th of July

driving to the hospital

I crashed my van

Oh God

I was just very tired

with everything that happened

...yeah I crashed the van

so that put me in more financial debt

ok

...so I do enjoy the course

but now with a baby

it's it's very very hard

to manage at home

ok

because you go home

and you have feeds

and you have baths and nappies

and

ok

the minute you sit down to college work

something else comes up

she has to be changed

yeah

you know what I mean so it is very hard

to balance it

and then I'm working every weekend

as well because I need the money

```
                                    ok
```

Interpret?

Do I have to? I could quote:

> In narrative inquiry it is important to always try to understand people, places, and events as in process, as always in transition.
>
> <div align="right">(D.J. Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 27)</div>

But becoming a father and crashing a van are two different events. We can prepare for one and plan the transition. We respond to the other.

How does this relate to learning?

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px">

In my discussion with another participant I wrote the following: Reissman (1993) suggests that interviewees construct a personal narrative in the course of an interview and in some sense these can be viewed as *preferred narratives* (see M. White & Epston, 1990) though I would stress they are only one possible narrative among many. As lives are in flux they may capture a picture of a life in process of becoming not a fixed entity.

</div>

'And the writer? The writer of a thesis is usually, comfortably, positioned as becoming-researcher, as learner and apprentice'

<div align="right">(Honan & Bright, 2016, p. 735).</div>

```
                         I am constructing

                                            my

               'preferred researcher narrative'
```

Mary also had an event that effected a transition in her life. There are several stories in her discussion piece where a personal narrative can be constructed. These include; recovery as a child from a fall that required extensive physiotherapy; her growing confidence and self esteem and resilience to childhood adversity; her experiences and interests in equine assisted therapy in the area of special needs and related stories inspired by the Horse Boy (Isaacson, 2016).

This seems to have drifted away from the choir of voices.

I know. As a researcher I wanted to draw attention to the connections made between learning and kinaesthetic intelligence, and in her interview she talked about animal and human (haptic) connections through the senses.

Stick to her words.

Ok. The picture first then. But I will come back to it later.[21]

Image 38: Mary's Portrait

[21] see kin aesthetic section

I think I did it in pencil

because I ...

stuck on the side

I wasn't as confident when I was younger

ok

...and if I go to new things

like I'd be really quiet

like I wouldn't show myself

right

...I kind of hold myself back and

...and I suppose

being at college changed that.

Ok how has that happened then?

being more confident in myself

believing in yourself

that you can do stuff

ok

and going for something

that you really care about

Yeah ok

so these the flower here

is that significant or

on your painting

Yeah it reminds me of

a child growing through life

ok

This moment

imagine a child

full of interests, free minded and wild

Wobble by wobble

Step by step

Children grow and flourish

Imagine a child with a smile from ear to ear

who will never live their life in fear.

bursting with self belief about everything they do.

and like they're my colours

children might have different colours but

ok

...so these colours represent you

me

feeling

Yeah

how you've grown or

Yeah

grown like independent confident

like having self esteem

going through journeys

that many other people haven't

Colours have a meaning in the images and symbolize different things for each person. Another student, Lana, enters the room.

```
          this colour is representing

             ...entering college

            and here for education

            that's the purple then

             yeah purple colour
```
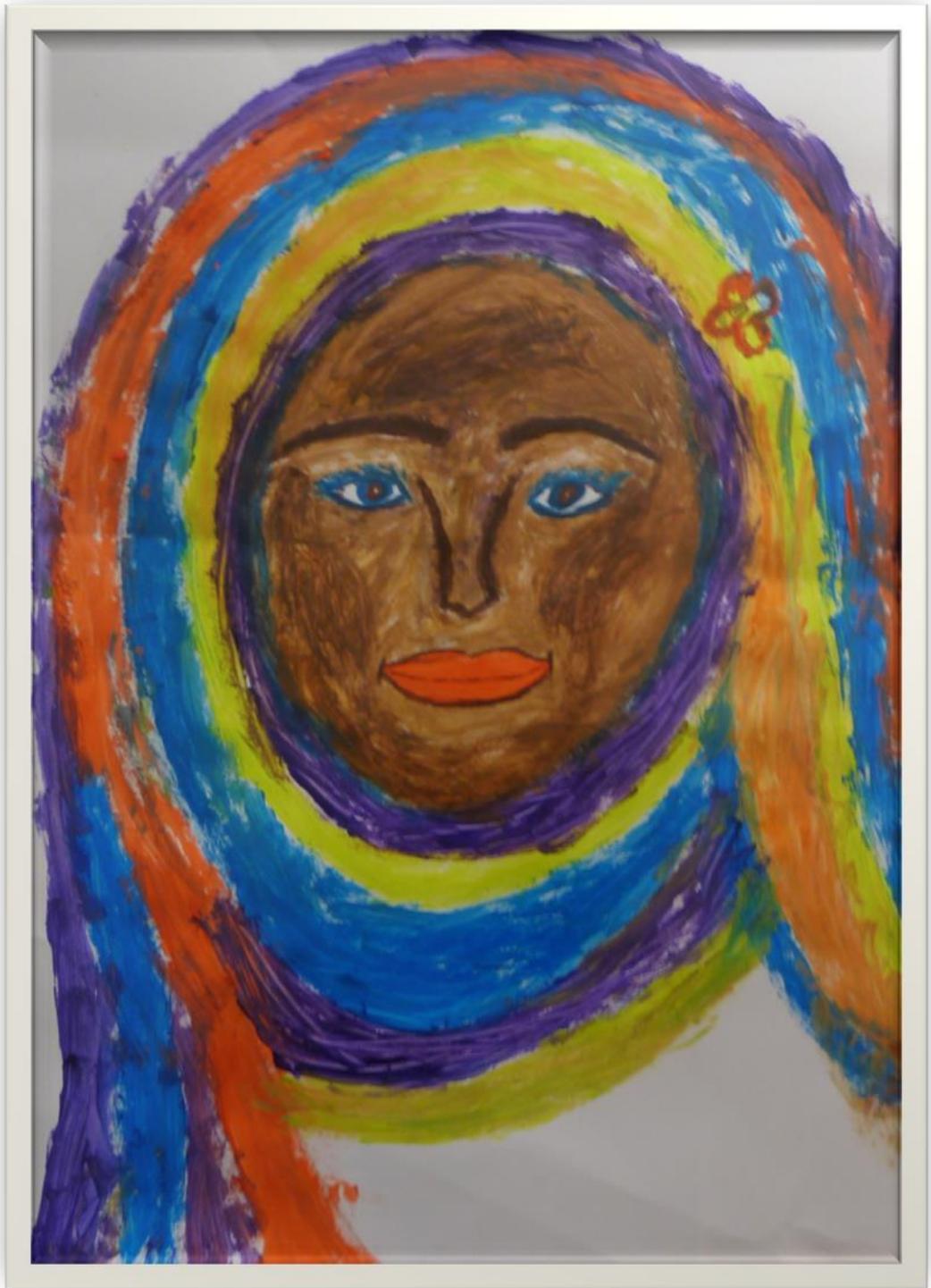
Image 39: Lana's Self-Portrait

oh I see

and the yellow colour

I thought second year

ok

and this one actually

is my happiness

ok

I successfully passed my second year

ok

So this is an interview with LANA about her self portrait.

So LANA looking at your picture here and all these

bright colours and your face smiling

so do you want to talk or explain

yeah basically

the idea comes in my mind

I did this self portrait

there may be two meanings

ok

so first of all I did

because of my ethnicity

ok

so I am the only one wearing

She points to her scarf

in my class so

the ethnicity the different skin colour

ok

so it is representing this

ok

other things yeah

I match up with these things

230

each colour

Another student talked about the feeling of painting blue.

                                        I just started with loads of

                                               shades of blue

                                                     because

                                        I wasn't feeling

                                        that good that day

                    She laughs.

                    Ok.

Ok. Not ok. Go back.

                                              but internally

                              I don't care about externally

                                           they smile

                                           they like

              oh your scarf is really nice

                    I like

              why do you wear these things

                    ok yeah

                                              but when

    she laughs

          I get a job interview or anything

                                     this happens

                    the problem

                 is happened there like

                              it look like my job

               they will definitely offer

231

```
                           a job

                              but eventually I found maybe

                  they don't want a woman

          who is wearing a scarf

                           ok
```

- the convergence of two forms of oppression in prejudice.

If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.

<div align="right">Spivak (1992, p. 287)</div>

The operations of Potestas (Power) can be found wherever thought and existence are cut off from their powers of acting.

<div align="right">(O'Donnell, 2001, p.52)</div>

```
                  but I had to face

                     some children

              maybe most of the children ask me

                  why do I wear these things

                     this scarf and
```

She laughs

```
              and why my skin colour is like this

                           ok

                  why my skin colour

                     black or brown

                  why I talk differently

                           ok
```

When I was in my late teens my father's car broke down outside a house in another road (a regular occurrence with the 'old bangers' we had growing up). I went down to try to fix it with him. As the bonnet was up the owner of the house came out and said that we

had to move it quoting laws that seemed to support his sovereign ownership of the particular piece of road outside his house. As soon as my father started to speak making an appeal to the entitlements of road tax the man said,

" 'Ere, you're Irish…"

This was at the time of the Troubles (1970s).

I understood how my father was being positioned on a daily basis.

This moment imagine

A child

Running

mother at the railings in a pinafore no not that the thing they wrap around you around your yes it is a pinny not my word worried look on her face I'm playing oblivious I was six and running around in the playground just had school dinner that's it that's why she's there I usually go home to dinner. I forgot to go home.

In my mother's story I see another person who emigrated from her rural roots in Sligo to work in service in England. She met my father during the Second World War and lived in Kent. My father had stomach ulcers and continuous health problems after the war and worked as a gentlemen's hairdresser. As money was scarce she went to work in the Bull Hotel, Rochester when I was about six years old and then worked in the canteen of GEC-Elliots. She enjoyed her work. I vaguely remember her in tears on the stairs when she found out her mother had died. Maybe there wasn't enough money for the trip home for the funeral.

```
                    So I thought I'm feeling quite blue

                            as it progressed I thought

                                           oh yeah

                     I'll change this into the sea

                         because when I was young

          I used to live very close to the ocean
```

233

and whenever I got upset about anything

I would walk down

it was a very isolated beach

I would walk down and

just scream on the top of my lungs

and I'd just feel a lot better

so the beach

has always been a very close place

ok

just going to the beach

and just the smell

and the wind blowing through

like its blowing all my problems and stuff away ….

and it just seems to blow all

your stresses and worries away

ok

until you get back

She laughs.

And where do I go now? The rhizome- colour, emotions, stress, laughing, screaming, wind blowing, sea... What am I scared of as a researcher, teacher, student? Getting it right?

but it's really hard to be able

to change your way of thinking

when you've always strived to be number one.

I don't know where that's coming from

because

my parents were never that way inclined.

234

So I guess it's just me

ok

I don't know

I think it's ever since I had my children

I thought

I was

right

I'm going to be supermum.

I have to have the house clean

I have to have dinner

everything has be spotless.

I'm still like that with the house

ok

The house has to be perfect

and like if anyone was to come in

the house be dirty

I'd be

o my God

they think I can't handle

taking care of the kids

and the house

and doing college.

I have to show that

I'm on top of everything the whole time

right

Probably an insecurity thing coming out

She laughs.

Image 40: Heart on sleeve/Helen (supermum)

Everything stresses.

ok

there's a heart on my sleeve

because I do tend

to wear

my heart on my sleeve

and inside the heart is a symbolism

of the people

who are very important to me

like my friends and my family

                who I'd do absolutely anything for

    she laughs

                            ok

                                So yeah I never tend

                                to rule with my head

                            so this is why my head

                                is under my heart

                        Ok

                    This moment

                imagine a child

        full of interests, free minded and wild

            Wobble by wobble

                                        Step by step

                        Children grow and flourish

    Imagine a child with a smile from ear to ear

                who will never live their life in fear.

    bursting with self belief about everything they do

                hoping their voices will be heard

                so they can fly through life

                    like a bird.

Have we missed something?

Silly question. It is never complete.

There is always another entry into the rhizome. Colour has symbolic and actual physical meaning. There are public meanings as in flags, county colours that can evoke strong feelings and there are personal, private meanings that can be expressed through colour. Emotional meaning – seeing red. I lessen the power desire to synthesise and connect by the rhizome, n-1, always there is more (Sellers, 2015) In

each student's art work there are also shapes, symbols and metaphor and, and, and. Translate them. Speak. What are words worth...

Image 41: Padraig's image

I think of this portrait as a snapshot of

a part of my 'inner' reality,

as I look at it I see different things.

Maybe it's a phoenix rising out of the ashes,

I like that.

The tower rising behind

seems to loom threateningly.

There are lots of very tiny people

scrambling over each other,

massing to a distant light.

There are some things I see

238

<div align="right">

that I'd rather not talk about,

but I get them.

</div>

I think this type of drawing has massive therapeutic benefits for our profession. Very young children may not have the language skills to deal with difficult or traumatic times in their lives. Therapeutic art techniques could be very beneficial in helping these children work through complicated emotions. (Padraig)

Image 42: Bella's Portrait

<div align="right">

The pink flower –

this represents my guiding factor.

I believe my sister,

even though she has passed away

guides me in my decisions and actions.

</div>

And so did you, you know if your sister is represented by this pink flower

<div align="right">

yeah

</div>

how did you feel when you were doing that when you were putting that on there then?

Is that appropriate?

there was a couple of times last year

when I just felt so stressed

I was like upset about things

and I'd be like

I just wish I could tell her

but part of me was going

I can tell her

she's still there

when I made a decision at the end of it

I went

that's like her influence

telling me that this is

the right thing to do

...we've had some of the major life changes

in a year and a half

like my sister passed away

then we had to move house

and my niece got like

diagnosed with cancer

as well so it was like a lot

God

like its it's been ongoing now

for a year and a half

and it's just a lot to deal with like and

then I'm in college at the same time

...this is my family and

```
             this is my college commitments

                        ok

                          like how do you balance that

                            kind of impossible at times

                    right

                          because like I don't always

                              get an opportunity to

            work on my assignments and

        I'm trying to get in here earlier

          to work on them and stuff

                    ok

                        but then I know a certain amount

                                you have to put

                            your family first

                                  because

                      your family are always going

                          to be there for you

              and college is not

                    ok

                      but I also want to get through it

                          and succeed this year
```

How does this connect with your research topic of learning and multiple intelligence?

> Lecercle (2002, p. 195) writes that as the enunciation of a collective assemblage the aim of a minor literature 'is not to foster or extract meaning, but to give rise to intense, and intensive, expression … the point of minor literature is not to make recognisable sense, but to express intensities, to capture forces, to act'

<p align="right">(in Honan & Bright, 2103, p.734)</p>
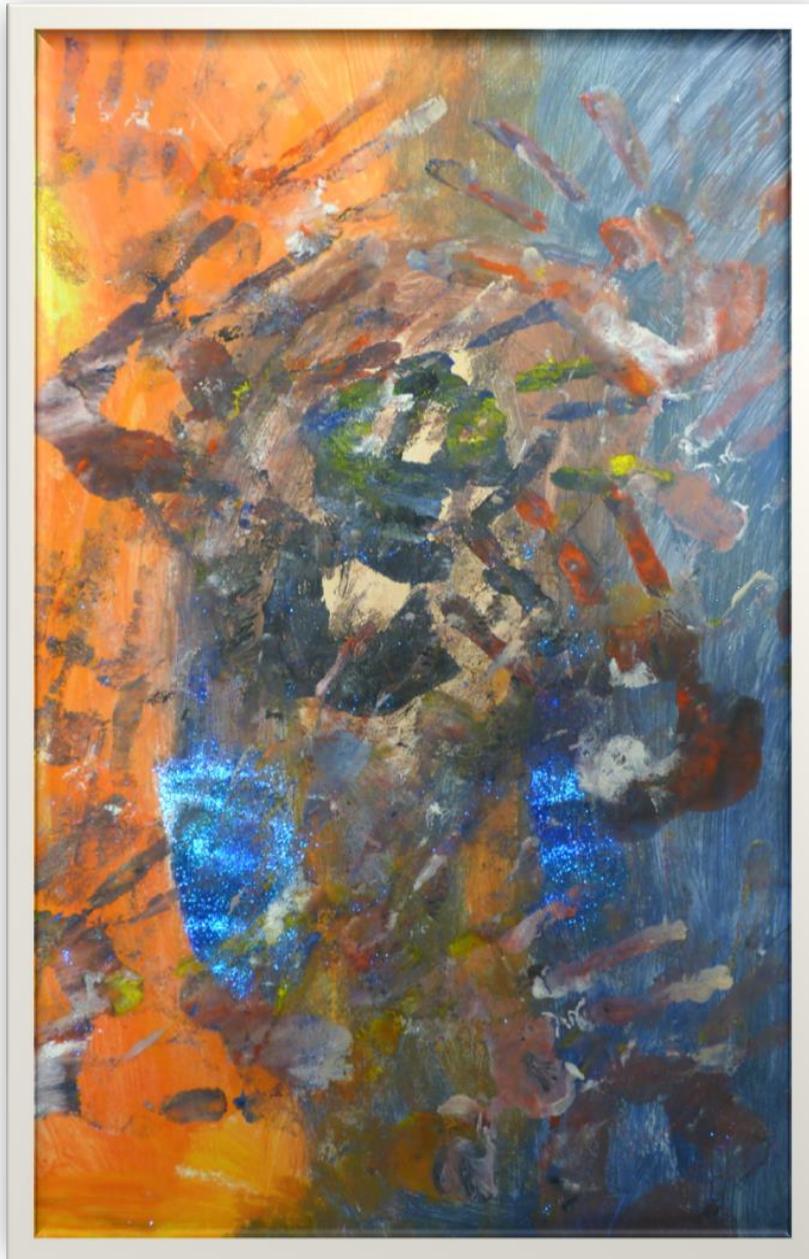
Image 43: Portrait: Olga

It is a mix of paint and me.

Moving to something.

But I am not an abstract expressionist yet.

```
                        well I had come across a little poem

                               kind of thing years ago

                        and I've always loved butterflies
```

242
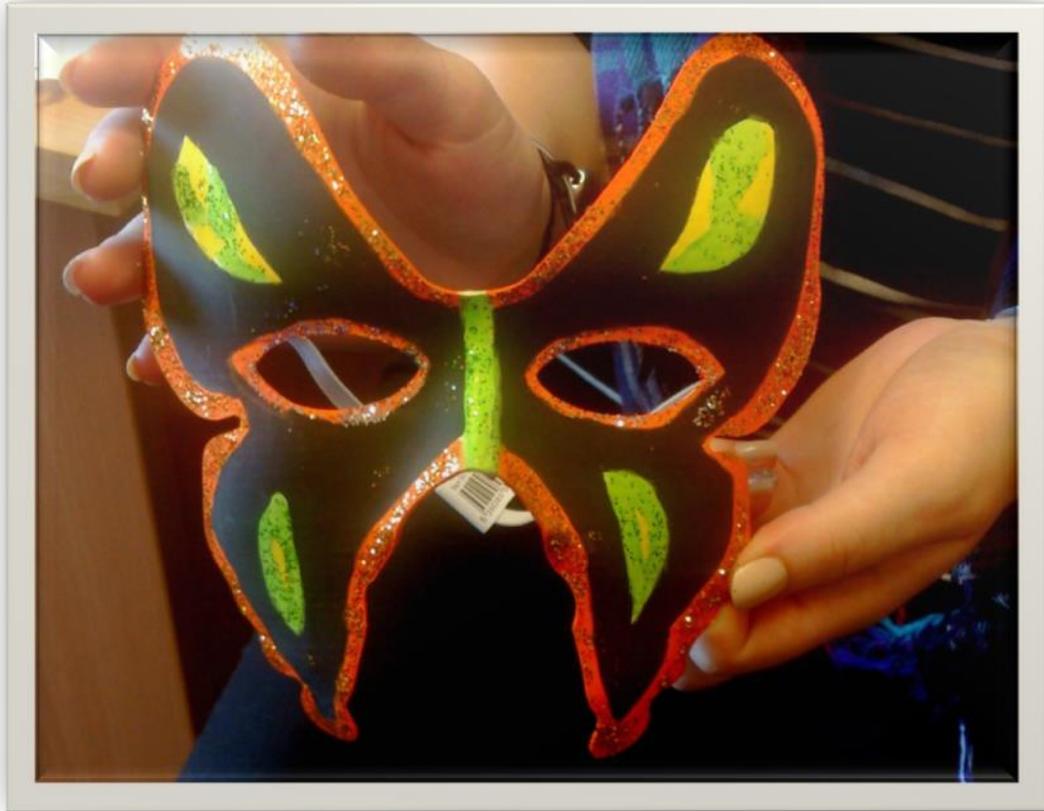
Image 44: Cora's Mask

```
                                         I don't know why

                                                right

                                              but this
```

She reads poem

```
                                          A child is like

                                  a butterfly in the wind...
```

'The butterfly is a transformation from an ugly worm. The butterfly is a philosophical Cinderella. The butterfly does not change back into an ugly worm. Its transformation is one way and it is a transformation from a state of ugliness to a state of envied beauty. .. a sighted creature whose inherent nature contains, nay symbolizes, the potential for transformation from a less valued state to a more valued state'

<div align="right">(Allinson, 2009, p. 215)</div>

```
         ...you could see the changes

                      Ok
```

and like if you were working with

                       one child in particular

                  you could see them change over that

                       and it was just that

                      made you feel so good about yourself

                             you know

                               o

                  that you're actually influencing someone and

                               yeah

                     your work is actually worthwhile

            I move Cora's voice to the academic left of the page.

*Well one child in particular there was he was difficult and he wouldn't do anything
and I had a study about music that was due at the time*

Remember

*you had done music with a drum with the class and that inspired me this could
work like rhythms and I went and I practiced with the child I tried different types of
music. I researched it and things like that and I told the practitioner what I was
doing and we played classical music fast and slow angry like you know that kind of
and his reactions to it*

                             ok

*it calmed him down completely and I was like oh my God you know the difference in
the child all the energy he had in him angry energy he got it all out just dancing and*

                             ok

*banging things give him an instrument to bang he just got all his aggression out
and he would be able to sit down at the table and eat his lunch he would never have
done that for the whole time I was there you know*

he was calm

                                          butterflies

                                           birds,

flowers,

                                         nature

                                    metaphors...

                        these ideas were floating around

Floating?

Yes.

            Have you ever watched a bird float on the wind?

                        Then birds gather together in a

                                    Murmuration...

                        Early childhood murmurs

                        does not raise its voice

Loud enough

                        For fear of

                    waking the children

                        Society

                        Un-selfish

'We swarm together temporarily in the collective of transforming lives before we depart'. These metaphors of flight, swarming offer a way to imagine freedom, movement and travel to new places and through the course I note how journeys have come to symbolise how learners move to new understandings.' (McGarrigle, 2016)
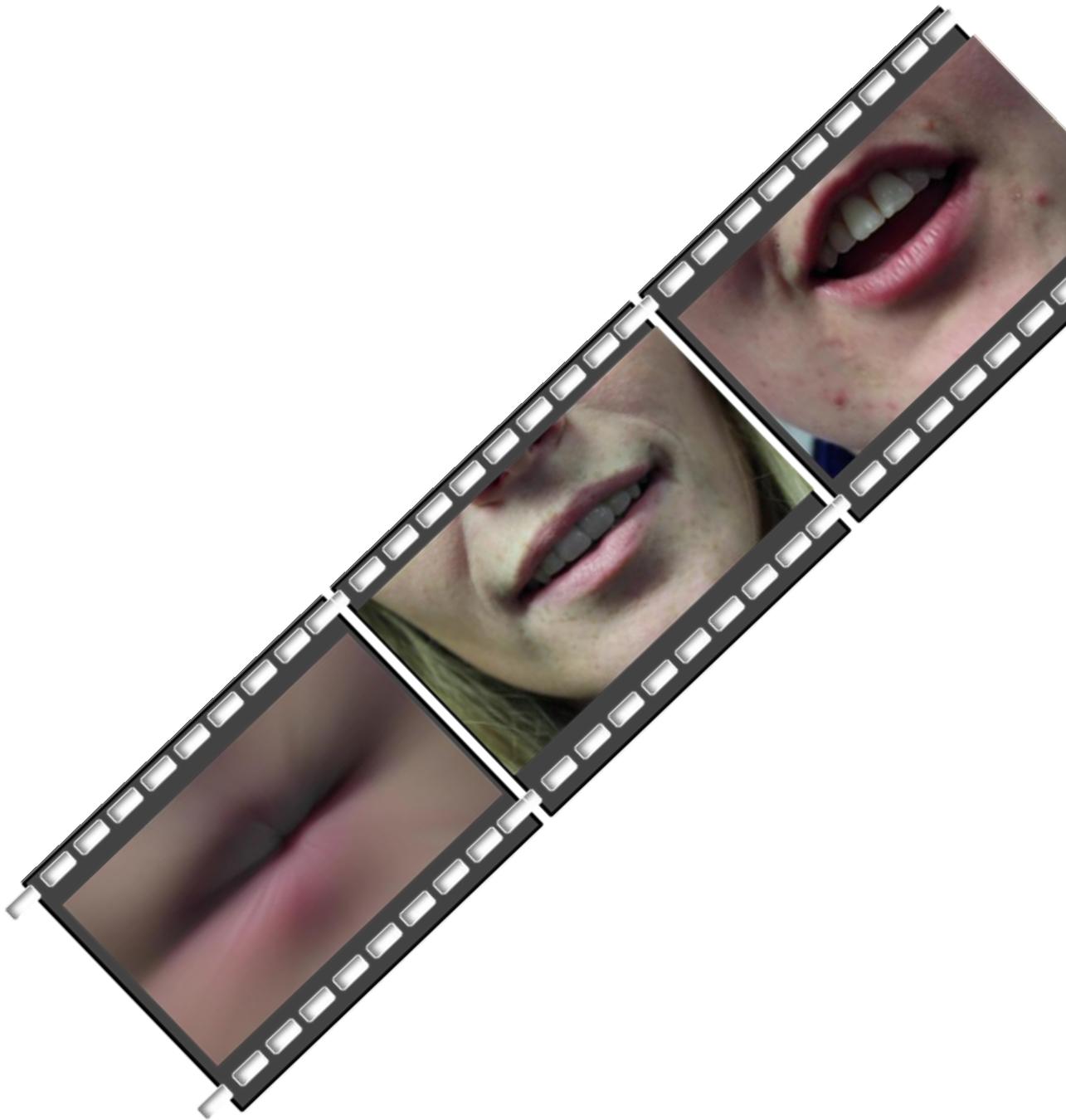
Image 45: 'Murmuration' Film images

A Murmuration of Early Childhood Students

This moment imagine a child

full of interests, free minded and wild

Wobble by wobble

Step by step

Children grow and flourish

Imagine a child

with a smile from ear to ear

who will never live their life in fear.

bursting with self belief about everything they do

hoping their voices will be heard,

so they can fly through life like a bird.

A branch that doesn't break

Stronger than any other broken vase

Imagine their uniqueness, beauty and innocence

Help me shine a bright light on my way

Facing a ten thousand foot drop

looking for a parachute

to guide them

Still and quiet,

caught in their own thoughts.

Collective Poem: Imagine a child by us (2016)

Eight: Kin Aesthetic - learning to move/sense/feel/emote

Sitting in front of a mirror

Alone in a hotel room

Reflecting

On being a reflective

researcher

It is not how I represent

reality

It is how I

re-present it

To the viewer

My critical self

our (multiple) selves

Artistic as well as scientific

Endeavour

(John McGarrigle, 2013)

There is more to the research story to create from the focus group data, the learning carnival and the self-study transcripts using lines of flight through kinaesthetic intelligence, active learning and embodied knowledge. Here is a second entry into the data – a kin aesthetic connection. In the focus group transcript the discussion made connections between kinaesthetic and musical intelligences as the students reported their experiences in learning a new task. I begin with my introduction to the focus group and then allow the

student voices to surface. I then go on to voices from the self-study and connect to the literature.

                         mime itself

                                    to me had a language

                                 you have to imagine

                                       the object

                                     being there

                             and then imagining...

                            threading a needle

              I like stitching and sewing

                                and putting it through

                                   my hands and feet

                              to be a human puppet

                                      a lecturer

                   being a puppet

                   manipulated by

                                    the invisible

                   hands

of higher education

    They laugh

                      I'm not really good

                      at using

                   my hands fast

              I prefer doing smaller things

                 like cross stitching

                      ok

it was handy

... I'd like to learn further

with the sign language

It's handy alright

Yeah its handy

They laugh

we initially

set up to do

self defence

and we started looking

at youtube videos

to learn more about it

and what I noticed after

doing

was that it was more

like

dancing

that it was like a series

of like rhythms

like sequences of moves

you could see that

It was like a dance

I thought she was very good

like her balance was

and her posture

and sitting on the horse

like she wasn't slumped

                                           or like if you turned

                          she didn't fall off

        They laugh

                                   I think it's whatever way

                                          you're taught

                                      how you teach

                        other people

                  I found it interesting

                that every single person

                    got something

                      active like

                         Yes

              that's what I found interesting ...

                        everybody

                chose to do you know ..

                     Kinaesthetic

                     Thanks JOHN

        Can we put the chairs back and the tables?

        Jack describes his hopes for his daughter:

                                     I'm hoping she will be

                    very musical

                                        I'm hoping

                  she will like the garden

                         Ok

                                   I'm not the person

```
                    to sit down and read a book

                              yeah

                    I'd rather if you handed me

                     a block of wood and told me

                    build something for a child

                               ok

                                    I think myself I am

                       a very visual person

                     so I like to make things

                             visible

                                        to myself

                       and I feel like

                         in a class

                    or reading a book

                    it's very black and white

                       the whole time

                               ok
```

In this I want to draw attention to the potential conflict between experience and writing about it. Part of Early Childhood practice is about being present in the lives of children and the reference to music, visual learning and making things with the hands are what got me started on research into my context. There is a tension between encouraging students to enter that space of structured improvisation as active participants and then seeking ways to document it. I encounter it when students go on placement and have to write about it. Does it have to be written? Are there other ways

to talk about learning? What do other media have to offer such as artwork/film for students in their practice and in the ways we learn? Is enough attention given to movement, kinaesthetics, and learning with our bodies? Attention has turned to the body and emotions recently. Renold and Mellor (2013) quote Grosz' critique of postmodern writing which turns the body into text:

> Thinking with Deleuzian notions of intensities and flows, Grosz (1994) has emphasised the importance of the complex materialities of the body and critiqued some postmodern writing for effectively turning the body into text.
>
> (Renold & Mellor, 2013, pp. 26-27)

Then through writing as inquiry I found a creative release from the 'tyranny of the word' in poetry and writing that can perform and evoke feelings. The disembodying of individual voices and their location within an academic text aims to liberate this work as a departure into meaning. Mary again:

<div align="right">

Yeah I'm very relaxed

on the horse

but I'm very excited at the same time

yes

and people wouldn't realize that

you don't see that

because I'm so concentrated

on what I am going to do

but inside

I'm excited but

</div>

my body is so relaxed

I think the horse teaches you

something like

the body movements

that relates a lot to

reading the

movements of the child

and what they're thinking

what upsets them…

So you're able to tune into children, is that it?

Yeah

I'm able to read

their emotions

when they're sitting there

like I know

whether they're

happy

sad

thinking of something else

like I don't know what it is

but I just have

that vibe

often I

can feel it

it's like I'm

```
                    inside their body

                         going what's the story today

                              but I can actually feel

                              what they're feeling
```

JOHN returns as questioning researcher and asks of the text -

Do I see

```
              bodily sensations horses children feelings

                              merging in this?

                         leave out the commas

                                   let them

                    merge in the writing.
```

As the author of an academic text I cannot avoid placing my mark on these textual manoeuvres which attempt to resist the authorial and academic voice. Trahar (2009b, para 24) notes, though, that it is possible to represent both individual and collective voices in narrative research without privileging either. I want to connect to the literature. The talk of bodies, touch and affect is in the following research from the nursery:

> For example, in early years settings, children's bodies are not just inscribed by external societal or semiotic forces; children themselves participate in the material production of themselves and others as 'doing bodies' (Rossholt 2010). Thus, where there are no or very few words in a situation, we can focus on other practices, such as the material, affective and discursive practices of touch, that are embodied in body/place/object assemblages. In this way, movement and touch become important ways of being in the world.

> (Renold & Mellor, 2013, p. 27)

Elsewhere, in an article on 'feminisation' of childcare Van Laere, Vandenbroeck, Roets and Peeters, (2014) note how countries with a tradition of an 'ethic of care' view education and care as entwined which

> ... implies that...activities such as nurturing, feeding, blowing noses, going to the bathroom or putting children to bed are educational in nature, and that supporting learning requires a caring attitude and behaviour (Jensen 2011; Urban et al. 2011)

(Van Laere et al., 2014, p. 235)

Admitting the body and feelings into the discussion can be problematic where...'physical as well as emotional feelings involve vulnerability, emotions become uncomfortable in a context of increasing evidence based practice' (Van Laere et al., 2014, p. 239)[22]. They place their discussion in the context of the Cartesian mind-body separation which has effectively silenced the body in professional childcare practices. In Ireland, care has been devalued in a profession dominated by low pay and part-time employment[23]. There have been consistent arguments for a change to policy to recognise that education and care are inextricably linked and childcare has a vital role in promoting social inequality (OECD, 2006).

For example, Noirin Hayes (2010) pointed out:

> Among policy-makers the care and education dichotomy has led to a situation where the care element in early childhood care and education is regarded as the childcare dimension. The dichotomy allows care to be characterised within a child development framework whilst de-emphasising the educational nature of the work. This privileges education over care and can be seen in aspects of education, pay, conditions of service and influence (McFarlane and Lewis 2004).

(Hayes, 2010, p. 69)

```
Because you always get

    oh sure you're

        just
```

---

[22] For a discourse analysis of UK policy see Osgood (2009)

[23] A report by Pobal (Cahalan, Hogan, McGrory, Quigley, & Simmons, 2016, p. 69) found that 44% of staff in childcare services were part-time. In the same year, Early Childhood Ireland (2016) reported that the average hourly rate of pay was 10.27 euro and for a Manager with a level 9 qualification it was 12.32 euro compared to the average industrial wage of 21.46 per hour.

going to work in a crèche

yeah

I go

NO

I'm not

just

going to work in a crèche

she laughs

there have been

the raised eyebrows

I think that

childcare practitioners

get anyway

from the perception

there is of the job

yeah

but I hope that once I'm in it

I'm able to argue that it's more than

just woman in her sitting room

minding somebody's children

yeah

Yeah when a child is born

the ears are the only fully developed part

ok

and that's why they give

the child to the mother

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because the mother

is the voice

that they hear constantly

oh right

and they feel the rhythm of the mother

the vocals inside as well

and they find a lot of comfort in that

ok

the voice the sound

they will recognize

sitting on her

ok

and the voice

the vibrations and all that

they'll remember that

yeah

it's very interesting

It is isn't it?

It's amazing

Even before

the child is born

they can bond

like that you know

Reissman (2012) notes how the researcher 'infiltrates' a transcript:

Selection of segments for closer analysis—the textual representation of a spoken narrative we create and the boundaries chosen — is strongly influenced by the researcher's evolving theory, disciplinary leanings, and

research questions. In these ways, the investigator variously "infiltrates" a transcript.

Reissman (2012, p.377)

As I 'infiltrated' the transcripts I revealed my own philosophical poststructural leanings and researcher position. Williams (2005) suggests that poststructuralism offers a disruption to the certainty that is attached to dominant forms of knowledge enshrined in normative thinking by seeking a radical re-alignment of the relations between the core and the margins. In terms of unsettling normative thinking one needs to be aware of the categories assigned to individuals and how they define them. Norms can be understood in two ways. Firstly, there are norms of behaviour where a particular way of behaving is imitated and becomes the accepted way of doing things in a group of people in a particular situation. The second meaning arises from social scientific research that establishes norms to describe a group of people such as the performance on a psychometric measure of intelligence by a particular group differentiated by age, gender or ethnicity. Normative thinking is when a comparison is made to the average and what is problematic is if this narrows expectations for that particular group. One should celebrate difference rather than homogenising. Williams (2005) suggests disrupting normative thinking can come from being open to difference and creative practices:

> Poststructuralism is constantly revived through openness to the new (to pure difference). It is opposed to any absolute certainty, but can only work through this opposition in repeated critical and creative practices.

Williams, (2005, p. 6)

So playing with words – kin aesthetic meaning movement body and kin meaning family and aesthetic meaning a thing of beauty. A concept in the making awaiting further definition...

At the time I was reading about poststructuralism there were storms on the island of Vanatu (2015). A walk in St. Helens Bay, on the south coast of Ireland, with Evelyn, my wife, when fierce winds stirred up the sea came to mind as I wrote this poem.
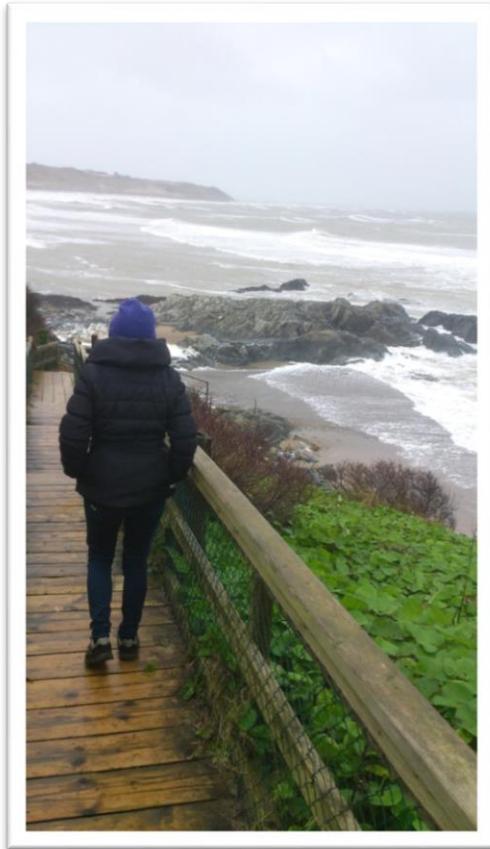
Image 46: Evelyn at St. Helen's

Bay, 2015

Poststructure

The wave comes in
all powerful a force of nature
seeming unnatural
I am battered at my edges
and fall away
my boundaries recede
I retreat to the core
the granite rocks resist
water seeps in doing its work
defining cracks worn down by the ages
I used to think that these rock formations
are the structure
that is slow to change
but it is the waves
shaped by the wind and rain
and moved by other forces
harder to see
natural and unnatural
that is the structure
and I am the land
Poststructure (2015)

Nine: Making Strangers of Our Selves

Troubling the 'self' in autoethnography and self study

In autoethnography and a self study art project issues of identity come to the fore and there is a need to attend to assumptions about the self. Roth (2009, paragraph 6) notes that autoethnography has 'a responsibility for the Other, which both exceeds and is the same as the responsibility to Self'. His words draw attention to an ethical duty to write about *our selves* giving due attention to others in the construction to avoid accusations of narcissistic self interest.

> This Other is the ground against which the Self becomes figure, but this becoming figure requires the Other not only as ground but also as material and as tool. The Self and Other are co-constituted in their relation, having emerged from a singular plural *with*. As philosophers such as Paul RICOEUR (e.g., 1990), Jacques DERRIDA (e.g., 1998), or Jean-Luc NANCY (e.g., 2000) write, there cannot be a Self without an Other. The Other is a pre-condition of and model for the Self.
>
> (Roth, 2009, paragraph 11)

George Herbert Mead (1934) also pointed to the same notion that self and other are parts of the same coin existing in relation to each other (for example; see Alex Gillespie, 2005; A. Gillespie & Cornish, 2010; S. Jackson, 2010). In the autoethnographic insertions to the text I have explored my own history in psychology, epistemology with my brother and made references to members of my family. These other lives have been inserted into my own learner journey and identity alongside the learner stories of being and becoming. In telling my personal story and the influences on my identity I have made connections to the lives of others. Similarly, in the self study project each person spoke about other people in their lives making symbolic

use of colour and image. As well as acknowledging others in our constructions of the 'self' it may be better to acknowledge the plural selves in the singular self.

Kraus (2007) notes that the notion of identity as a coherent unified self has been challenged in favour of highlighting the many ways a person negotiates their sense of self in interaction:

> The self turns out to be a 'surprisingly quirky idea - intuitively obvious to common sense, yet notoriously evasive to definition' (Bruner, 2002, p. 63). It must be understood as processed, socially embedded, and readable through the self-stories in which it discursively, manifests itself. In order to understand this construction, we need to analyse the processes (the telling) as well as the relationships (between teller and listener) and the form and content of such self-stories. As an individual, the author of a self-story must be seen as a person with many selves, constantly trying to reorganize him - or herself into a provisional unity.
>
> (Kraus 2007, p. 127)

Accepting the self as multifaceted means attending to the different ways participants construct identity – including the author in an autoethnographic study. A recognition of the other moves subjectivity to *intersubjectivity* a concept with a long history as Gillespie and Cornish (2010) note with their call to a dialogical analysis:

> Subjectivity entails shifting I-positions, uncertainty, ambiguity, internal dialogues and dialogical tensions (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Knowledge, society and subjectivity are produced through dialogue and are dialogical in their structure and dynamics...we highlight three ideas which are of particular significance for a dialogical approach to intersubjectivity: situation-transcending phenomena, addressivity, and voices.
>
> (A. Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p. 33)

By addressivity they mean the way 'utterances orient to, and position the audience' (p. 34) and I relate this to positionality in discourse. It is noted in the research interviews of the self study project each person contributes to

the construction of the other through dialogical interactions that move between positions assigned and adopted. For example, young/old, mature, male/female, lecturer/student, teacher /learner, researcher/participant, positivist/social constructionist, artist, musician, scientist, humanist/posthumanist, mother/father, sister/brother, parent/child, ethnic, white/black/coloured, Roman Catholic/Church of England/Ireland /Islam may be terms to assign to each other on the basis of overt or covert signs. Accepting difference requires sensitivity to the other person in attempts to construct a preferred identity within a specific context. As I list these I try to move beyond the limitations of age, gender, ethnicity but aware of their influence. This is the paradox of research – how to identify without limiting identity?

Jackson (2010) offers a useful distinction between subjectivity and self that allows for some personal agency within subject positions. In my responsibility to the research participants I draw attention to the person's room to move within and beyond these subject boundaries. This is where inequality resides – how free is a person to claim their own identity? Before this research from the comfort of my position as a white, male researcher, ethnicity was an abstract concept that did not materially affect my life whereas it does enter many daily lives where prejudice limits a person's agency, opportunity and experience. When I visited Kenya in 2008 I became aware of my own skin colour though I did not experience prejudice but the opposite – privilege assigned to an older male. I was a strange white man

conscious of my own difference. Being an outsider to a culture facilitates looking anew at the taken for granted assumptions one makes about identity. Making the familiar strange in educational research can be facilitated by a reflexive approach that may be unnerving. Hamdan (2009, p. 385), suggests that a 'reflexivity of discomfort' is useful in insider-outsider research where she acknowledged...'...my subjectivities are multiple, fluid, and not easily disentangled.' The discomfort I experienced when a participant drew attention to her distinctive appearance as a person of difference and ethnicity is not easily disentangled. In that interview the discomfort arose from how we are mutually positioned within different cultures and the consequences of those subject positions. From my privileged position as researcher I can reflect and write about this and note first my own clumsiness in the interview as well as highlighting the way she demonstrated personal agency within a limiting subjectivity. As I look back at the transcript Lana says her self portrait has two meanings:

```
... I did this self portrait ...

   there may be two meanings

              ok

     so first of all I did

   because of my ethnicity

              ok
```

As I continued to ask about ethnicity I missed the important second meaning and her happiness with her achievements in the course and ambitions in education. Education offers a route to personal agency within limited

subjectivities for Lana and other participants in the study. In relation to other participants ethnicity does not limit their personal agency.

The problems of subjectivity and self are written in a variety of texts. For instance, Hodgson and Standish (2009, p. 314) criticise some poststructural approaches in educational research that place 'the subject as central, as it is seen as the site of rights, justice, voice and identity'. Not only is a unitary self-organising experience a problem but they question the categories that are typically assigned to people - often used to make research relate clearly to policy and practice. Thus, terms such as male, female, social class and ethnicity are often used to make research representative but their effect on the systems they aim to change needs to be questioned. Instead of ameliorating the situation a stronger challenge would expose the ways in which we are subjectified by the social processes of categorisation. They suggest that the rhizome offers a way to resist…

> …those categories of identity around which discussions of social justice ossify and instead questions the truth on which they are based; thereby it avoids the overcoding of the excess, inclusion on someone else's terms.
>
> (Hodgson & Standish, 2009, p. 325)

To attend to the ways participants construct themselves and highlight their moves to assert their agency may deterritorialise and offer an emancipatory route. In the research interviews the ways people talk about themselves are not in isolation but in terms of other people. Here Helen is anxious to explain that her own motivation is beyond what is expected of her as she refers to part of her painting:

everybody thinks this is the letter 'f'

but it's actually not

this is what this symbolizes as well.

This is the first line here

is what other people have

like their expectations of me

ok

but this is my expectations of me

which is a lot higher.

And I'm still trying to lower

it to kind of go down

but I always strive

to do

ok

to get as high a grade

as possible

the highest success rate

as possible…

The motivation is seen as internal but not isolated from outside influences – a resistance to limiting views – and exhibiting a personal agency. In other interviews there were similar aspirations from students who identified themselves in various ways – parent, mature learner, student. Louisa had studied before and obtained an ordinary degree in Early Childhood Education and Care and worked as a Manager of a service and was returning after having two children. She joined Year 3 to gain an honours degree award and found her motivation was different.   She positions herself -

```
                                      ...a lot rests in third year

                                          and a lot rests on it and

                people have different agendas

                or different expectations
```

yeah I see what you mean

```
                                                         that can be
```

someone might be aiming lower or higher than you?

```
                              and I do try to understand that

                I was there fifteen years ago

                  and I just wanted to pass…

                    to finish the course

                        get qualified

                      and get a job

                                  and now I'm kind of saying

                                       that's so interesting…

                                  I don't just see through
```

```
                     the eyes of a practitioner

                                         I see it through

          the eyes of the parent as well
```

Julie also moved within different positions to assert her own choices
in identity:

```
                          ok

          ...before kind of coming back

             as a mature student

               ...a professional

          and then I was a mother for a while

                          ok
```

In these individual cases there is a juggling between different role
expectations and there are different versions of the self being argued for.
They demonstrate a personal agency that offers a site of resistance. Not just
a mother comes to mind and a desire to do more than mind children. Being a
student has more value, to know more as Louisa says...

```
             It's really it's excited me

             to go back into childcare ...

          I had my own two children to look after

             so it would be like children

                    children

                    children

                the more children

                 the whole time

               but I kind of feel
```

```
                              yeah

                          more excited

                          to go back
```

   Mazzei (2012) notes that a discrete self at the core is not part of

poststructural approaches to agency but it creeps back in when researchers

resort to reflection:

> ...however, the humanist subject creeps back into methodological
> practices when researchers assert a reflexive stance that assumes a
> posture of knowing in an attempt at greater self accounting and
> authenticity (Barad, 2007; Lather, 2009).

<div align="right">(Mazzei, 2012, p. 733)</div>

The reflexive autoethnographic stance has been a groping towards self

awareness through discursive formations rather than a superior posture of

knowing. Julie's image shows the self is not an assumed internal core and

acknowledges the other as she says:

```
        It may represent my esoteric belief,

          that all things are created from

            and of the same energy...
```

Image 47: Julie's Faceless Portrait

```
It may represent the idea

   that the faceless head

can be everyone's self portrait,

  left blank for the viewer to

  visualise their own image

        over the piece.
```

At the time I was not wise enough to understand it fully.

The autoethnographic troubled self of researcher

Having acknowledged the influence of others on self construction within the study I now offer a self-reflexive questioning of the troubled self

in this autoethnography not as a final word but as a future hope. It is framed

as a researcher note.

> This self troubled as it is – there is no core they tell me though there is something that creates a continuity in experience and is constructed as we learn our ways through a culture. When cultures meet self and other become manifest. Multiple selves in the process of becoming - we seek a consistent inner core to hold on to - otherwise it is too scary if it is all changing all the time. A PhD needs an inner core to argue and defend. I remember walking with a friend a few years ago and he said something about being too agreeable – that sometimes it's not that good to always agree. Do you want beef or salmon, potatoes or chips? I don't mind. Have blind stew[24] then. He said something about losing your shape – people come in on you and you bend inwards to receive them but you must come to an inner core or place of resistance where a solid shape or some boundaries exist – possibly where values and beliefs reside. So what is at the core of this PhD that offers resistance? What is the inner shape? It is a belief that learning is a creative process where uncertainty can generate new ideas and ways of understanding. It is about finding and using a variety of media from the arts to understand and express something about the world that opens up moments of learning that are exciting and empowering and stressful generating mixed emotions. It is an argument about being open to learning in new ways and bringing that to the lives of children and supporting the people who do that.
>
> (Researcher notes 19th January , 2017)

Making strangers of our selves invites the other in.

---

[24] 'blind stew' – a stew without meat when families were too poor to afford meat.

Ten: Make Strange not Make Do

> Performance autoethnography allows us to bring the world into play, to make it visible, to bring it alive …It allows me, in fits of nostalgia, to forge a link between myself and the world, the living and the dead, a reaching out to "what seems to be slipping away, or transmogrifying into something harsh and loud" (Stewart, 2013, p. 660). It allows me to make fleeting sense out of a world gone mad, and I need this because "the world does not make very much sense to me right now" (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2013, p. 609).
>
> (N. K. Denzin, 2014, p. 101)

Future generations will know more.

`Imagine a child`

I was drawn to arts based research and autoethnography because I felt for many years positivist psychology remained separated from the object of study. I know that psychology is a broad church and it contains many strands and perspectives but I felt sometimes stifled by some dominant arguments within the discipline. Arts based narrative inquiry and autoethnography offered a route to honesty and equality between researcher and participant which resulted in a different focus to the inquiry and a different conceptual framework. So how do we create dialogue between different research positions? I chose to pursue this study in Education rather than Psychology because of the interdisciplinary nature it offered. My roots in psychology remain *sous rature*. Gillespie and Cornish (2010, p. 21) note the problems in isolated discipline areas when they assert ʹThe separation between psychology and sociology has also stunted research on intersubjectivity.ʹ

I have sought to highlight the emotional aspect of learning and research which bring emotional demands that are sometimes overwhelming. The study has demonstrated that the students and I have multiple storylines in their lives that interact with their learning. These storylines can emanate from areas such as the family, work, finance, childcare, being a mother, a father, a parent. Sometimes it can make learning a difficult task and sometimes a respite. Learning can stress but also be good for our health and wellbeing.

Pedagogical Spaces of learning

I have explored the troublesome concept of intelligence and used the device of a Learning Carnival to deterritorialise the lecture space. I think I have found a new place after experimenting within my subject position in higher education and this quote seems pertinent -

> …Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times.

> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.161)

In seeing a route to inspire children and move away from the decontextualised language of measurement multiple intelligence theory offered a starting point to go beyond limiting language. If the brain is malleable and plastic and forming in childhood then an environment that stimulates creativity and active ways of being can inform a broader definition of intelligence that includes, in equal measures; language, understanding the world, the other, numeracy, expression through the arts,

music, dance, drama and using the body. The role of the latter in kinaesthetic intelligence is apparent in much of the learning highlighted in this research.

As the limits of insider research within education became exposed through ethical boundaries and an emerging awareness of my researcher position I now see this as a relative deterritorialization. It is pertinent to ask how will the field of education change? The academic literature still contains its corrals where the likeminded preserve their ideologies. The psychometric tradition in intelligence remains relatively intact and aloof to critique.

Troubling measurement in education

If I am to make one substantive claim it would rest on the notion that measurement tells us where we have been and will only predict if we make the world fit our predictions. As an educator there is a responsibility to ensure our measures give useful information that can assist learners in improvement. Thus feedback from teachers' assessment of student material plays a valuable role in supporting individual learning but there is inherent danger in the use of standardised measures with large groups of students used for other purposes. In arguing for using Multiple Intelligence theory (MI) – or something like it - in education, I suggest that there is a greater opportunity to imagine futures where children are motivated to believe in their capabilities in different areas rather than expose their limitations in some. At the moment of writing there are concerns over the extension to younger children of tests such as the Performance In Student Achievement (PISA) (Development, 2013) which provides data on scholastic achievement

at age 15 in selected domains of literacy, numeracy and scientific reasoning. As discussed in a previous section (see p. 116) a failure to recognise the contextual basis of knowledge and a focus on a narrow range of abilities can result in a safe, homogenised curriculum that does not actively motivate learners. Urban and Swadener (2017) have raised a concern over the selective use of test data by governments to justify neoliberal policies that do not adequately acknowledge the specific cultural context of participating countries (Urban & Swadener, 2017). Apart from the narrow range of capabilities used which ignore creativity, it is also recognised that IQ and other measures of achievement are unstable with young children whose capabilities are developing in different areas and at different rates. Measurement conveniently ignores individual differences and maintains its normative influence on human behaviour. It is ironic that the chapter in a psychology textbook which contains the theoretical and methodological context for the psychometric tradition in psychology is usually placed under the heading 'individual differences'.

Make a difference

It would seem imperative to enhance individual capacities to learn in a variety of environments and make a difference to lives. As a researcher I have struggled to maintain individual voices within a collective voice of early childhood students and found arts based methods a useful resource. I hope to make a difference to the world that receives this work in terms of the challenge it makes to common conceptualisations of intelligence and

learning. In focusing on the individual in learning there is the opportunity to allow some freedom to move in the processes of identity construction. Kim (2016) offers useful advice for narrative inquiry to 'plant a seed for social justice' and to avoid an 'epic closure'. Thus, this research is an ongoing story and the revisions to knowledge are not paradigm shifts but provocations to dialogue. I have found likeminded people in the literature that resonate with my perspective which has given me confidence to pursue an unorthodox research methodology. Am I changed and will I change others? I have ventured into muddying the puddles of academia and wonder if it is always a case of relative de-territorialization? The cards are shuffled but the dice are still loaded. It seems hard to shift those who are resolute in their views as can be seen in the academic history of intelligence testing but it is time to move on to more interesting research questions.

In the risk of arts based narrative inquiry and stepping into autoethnography I have taken a step beyond simplistic correlations that are hard to defend even in their own methodology. I brought myself into the topic of study - a thesis which is about learning, early years' practitioners and children. Finding a voice that doesn't minimize, that celebrates and looks to the future with joy. The research has sought to transform the learning space through making learning a challenge that is of value to our selves as teachers and learners and the society we inhabit by becoming aware of our role in each other's lives offering mutual trust and respect.

Shine a light of liminality

On the way to a writing workshop in the newly built Maynooth University Education building I couldn't find the right room so I went outside and was on my way back to the old building to check with someone for the exact location. Outside I saw a woman in the distance who I couldn't make out clearly. She was carrying a lamp.

`Probably a student`

`moving accommodation.`

As I got closer, I recognised it was Professor Sharon Todd moving to her new office and she was able to guide me to the right room. I shine a light on her words about pedagogical relationships and *liminality*…

> …Teachers can desire certain changes in their students, but students'
> lives change in unpredictable ways, outside of these desires.

(Todd, 2014, p. 233)

Referring to Conroy, Todd points to three aspects of *liminality* in education which opens up…

> …the practice of education to its own role in human becoming. He
> suggests that with respect to education, the notion of liminality can be
> deployed in three ways: a liminal education, a liminal disposition, and
> liminal communities.

(Todd, 2014, p. 233)

Moving beyond my original thinking of threshold concepts within a curriculum, such as intelligence in a first year psychology module, I interpret this to mean being disposed to the vulnerability of being on the threshold of knowing in an ontological rather than an epistemological sense. A liminal disposition would mean being open to those moments of unpredictability that are special and in-between people – 'a space that is neither inside or

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outside, to a liminal space between words, ideas, images, writing styles so as to see differently, hear differently what we take for granted and to make that visible' (O' Grady, 2012, p. 303). The physical and mental spaces of education require liminal communities where these dispositions can be encouraged. Todd says that rather than seeing the teacher/student roles disappear …

> …the categories of teacher and student are suspended; it is more that the opportunities for becoming - and not the roles as such - become more equal in liminal encounters.

(Todd, 2014, p. 235)

In my research I realised that blurring the teacher/learner binary through the Learning Carnival was less important than creating space for 'becoming more equal in liminal encounters'. To me, this means that in the activities where I shared a space of uncertainty with students then there was a vulnerability to enter that liminal space of possibility – to open up learning. This is a more important meaning that goes beyond 'roles' of teacher/learner and enter those spaces where we become more aware of each other as people in a mutual enterprise of learning. These are also the spaces where young children can discover and learn in a supportive environment with practitioners who are trusted to enter those moments of risk and uncertainty.

The value of research

As Kim (2016) notes narrative inquirers at the end of their research will seek to make a connection with the wider audience and ask the question 'So what?' At one stage I began to question the value of research. In transforming the area of interest into a research problem and devising a

method to study and report the findings do we move further away from lived experience? It is all contested and problematic. In this quote by Riessman (1993) the difficulty of representation in narrative analysis is highlighted. She references Said (1979, pp. 272-273):

> (The) real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representor.

(Riessman, 1993, p. 16)

This made me think about my own positioning in the study where my own language and culture framed the questions within an argument about creativity, educational spaces and multiple becomings. I have found literature to support and critiqued others from another paradigm. If learning is about change then how have I changed? I do recognise that scientific and logico-mathematical thinking connect with creativity in ways yet to be discovered. I have a refined view of intelligence rather than a reified view as represented in the psychometric tradition. More importantly my students have changed and will change with the children they play with. Society will change as a result. They know that and I know that. Take it on trust. Relationships are built on trust. I have a renewed belief in the power of research. It changes things. It changes people and it changes me. It changes us in process rather than product. It is valuable in many small ways that do not reach the academic literature; such as a child being freed to play because a student has learned its educational value. My practice is improved by practice whether it is the guitar or the lecture.

The entry into the rhizome research journey moved through and with being, becoming, emerging identities, improvisation in music, the beautiful risk of being in the moment with children, students and liminality. After three years in the field researching and creating stories of learning with this particular cohort of students I have emerged with a different relationship to research methodology, the field of early years education, student learning and its connections to education and society. Along the way we have found ways to incorporate music, art, dance and movement into lives and make an argument for bringing curriculum to life through moments of risk.

'draw me the uniform of an early childhood professional'

In November 2015 I attended the Reconceptualising Early Childhood Education conference in IT Blanchardstown, Dublin and went on a visit to Glasnevin cemetery where some important people from Irish history were buried. I learned that Parnell's funeral stopped Dublin. I also learned that the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins was buried there. I wrote the following poem:

Being Becoming

entering that space between is magical

risking the moment

improvising

jazz

playing with structure

knock it down build it up again

recombining

stuck for words

human nature animal creatures

the natural order is dis-order

re-arrange to own purpose

genetic epistemology

developmental dogma

practical reflexivity

learning by osmosis

the history of early childhood

brings us to this moment

re-arrange re-combine re-conceptualise

entries to the field

in the midst

of becomings

resistance

passive silence

finding voice

draw me the uniform

of an early childhood professional

Spinoza and the honeybee -

The human body is the imperfect lens

to see the world

the instrument

scientific technical

or musical

And Gerard Manley Hopkins

<div style="text-align: right">

in Glasnevin lies

inscape

instress

</div>

Back to painting

In a youtube video Ken Gale (Douglas & Carless, 2016) distinguishes between being and becoming and says we should ask not 'what is?' but 'what if?' In this research I moved from matters of epistemology to ontology and noted my own and students' becoming in the research. In the self-study I decided not to do a self-portrait alongside the students as I thought it would move the focus from them. At home I set myself the same task – to paint a self-portrait and offer an interpretation. To improvise with paint as suggested in my starting poem:

<div style="text-align: right">

…The starting point is to get into it

and then get lost in it.

In mixing paint, seeing what it looks like

– no I don't want super realism

I want to get to feel something.

Seeing what it feels like.

It is a mix of paint and me.

Moving to something.

</div>

Image 48: Bee-coming imperceptible by John McGarrigle (2016)

                                    I started with the eye

                              because I was thinking about

                              the lens of autoethnography.

                                      I wanted an eye ...

                      beneath the image to come through

                                          a self portrait

                                    or whatever emerged.

                              Then I added the yellow

                                  remembering the bees.

                          I was conscious of colours

                              and trying to be abstract

                  and covered the paper with watercolour.

                              Then the idea of a mouth open

                                  occurred to represent

finding my research voice

                                            and as I did it

                                       I began to partly see

                                        the face of a clown

                                  and it reminded me of ideas

                                      about the 'trickster'

                                            I had resisted

                              earlier in discussions with Grace.

                                       I saw my made up face

                            from the Learning Carnival emerging

                                 and decided to enhance that.

                         Perhaps the clown is part of my essence.

                              Ideas about

                                becoming

                              imperceptible

                               emanate –

                             an eye lash,

                                a bee,

                            hair harmonise.

                              But I am not an abstract expressionist yet

        I feel there may be more to add later. The self is a work in progress -

often contested and troubled.

Reaching a wider audience

        When I was asked to report on the RECE conference at our staff

meeting I chose to recite the poem. I was encouraged by the reception of my

colleagues so I feel hope for creative research and arts based methodologies.

I am still aware of the physical structure of our buildings and the mental

structures that lecture halls impose on our being though I feel there is a

growing desire to change these to recognise that learning requires

opportunities to perform in different ways. Holland (2013, p. 99) notes

in…'the ongoing struggle between stratification and de-stratification,

between normalization and free experimentation, autonomy…how can we

de-stratify?' Play with it. Turner's (1979) words resonate with their emphasis

on playing:

> Liminality is full of potency and potentiality. It may also be full of
> experiment and play. There may be a play of ideas, a play of words, a
> play of symbols, a play of metaphors. In it, play's the thing. Liminality is
> not confined in its expression to ritual and the performative arts.
> Scientific hypotheses and experiments and philosophical speculation are
> also forms of play, though their rules and controls are more rigorous and
> their relation to mundane "indicative" reality more pointed than those of
> genres which proliferate in fantasy.

(Turner, 1979, p. 466)

It is fitting that I return to play. With children we enter their world ready to

play and improvise if we can tune into their experience. They lead us into

freedom if we let them and we should create space for them to express theirs.

It is mutually beneficial. Children are natural ethnographers who continually

render the world strange. That is why we like being with them. They subvert

our conformity with natural fun. Anticipation heightens attention - we look

closer and may learn more through seeing something different than what we

have been taught to expect. My hope is that my students bring that to their

work with children and I will continue to 'make strange' in my lectures in

order to (temporarily) transform. Enter that space. A curriculum is a guide to

discovery not a limit on experience. It seems more about learning the process to apply to a topic rather than specific knowledge about a topic. It is more about using multiple intelligences creatively than a rigid subject based knowledge that may imprison our thinking.

I have played with research, children, narrative and pedagogy. I have played with creative ways of learning and performance and explored students' emerging professional identity through self portraiture and mask-making. Narrative inquiry brings us to lived experience and prioritises the learner's emerging identity over curriculum content. I would make a call for more learning events that disrupt the expected and the use of creative arts practices can facilitate a new engagement with pedagogical content. These are *relative deterritorializations*.

An impoverished sector?

Finally I would argue that the field of Early Childhood is producing practitioners who are knowledgeable in the various ways that children learn within diverse circumstances and has an abundance of committed professionals. In my discussion I have argued for the complexity of practical knowledge embedded within changing sociocultural contexts and students have to grapple with a variety of issues in providing an inclusive learning environment for children in their care. Despite the introduction of a child centred curriculum (Aistear, 2006) and a quality framework (Siolta, 2008) neoliberal policy has ensured limited investment in the workforce. Quality has been addressed in terms of offering a child centred curriculum and a

professional training framework though establishing a commensurate professional payscale framework similar to teaching remains an ageing elephant in the room. As I write I am fearful that the continuing failure to address this issue will see a migration of early years graduates to primary teaching or the special needs area where clear payscales exist and there are better financial rewards. No doubt they will bring their child centred focus and enrich that field of education but the early years sector will remain impoverished. As Special Needs Assistants (SNA) fall under the Department of Education and relevant legislation (EPSEN Act, 2004) then there are clear guidelines for the payment of teachers and SNAs. The Education of Persons with Special Needs Act (2004) ensures a right to education for school going children and has the consequence of maintaining the artificial separation of care and education and denying the rights of preschool children. A change to legislation giving rights to education from birth to 18 would address this inequality and provide extra resources for preschool education[25] and services and also mean the anomaly in pay would be revised. If there is a genuine desire to create a more equal society then early years graduates can play a major role in supporting all children to become inquisitive and disposed to learn. If a professional workforce is being established in Ireland to provide a quality learning environment for our children through a child centred curriculum then the issue of pay and conditions requires immediate attention in order to avoid a migration of expertise from the sector.

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[25] Perhaps eradicating the need for expensive psychometric tests.

Summary of the thesis

In using a variety of creative media to impact aesthetically I have taken a journey exploring and questioning my own epistemological and ontological framework. It has meant a good deal of self searching, pre and post-hoc analysis, death analysis. After the indulgence of the 'ethnographic I' there was a need to engage the ethnographic eye (C. Ellis, 2004) and I sought ways to find my research voice and promote the student participant voice through performance at the Learning Carnival. The event was a temporary transformation of the traditional lecture. The focus group made me aware of my own positioning in the research process as an older, male teacher. The original entry to the field concerned my teaching of psychology and the topic of intelligence deliberately prioritized the concept of multiple intelligences to destabilise the normative notions of intelligence as an entity that can only be conceptualised in terms of measurement. As I focused on creative ways to construct understanding I tried to let these inform each stage of the research process and hoped that this participatory research would inspire students in their professional practices with young children. In the students' final year workshops I encouraged creative expression through writing, mask-making and image-making/self-portraiture which provided material for interpretation in creative interviews. In trying to preserve the individual voice within a collective experience a dance poem was collaboratively written in an effort to celebrate the students' becoming as professional childcare practitioners. This was re-told in a performance text using the

metaphor of a collective choir getting in tune. In offering this work for consideration I invite judgement of a research text that demonstrates an ethical sensitivity to the research voices through a creative assemblage that provokes an emotional response.

In the introduction I discussed validity and referred to Richardson's (2000, p. 254) criteria for judging work according to its substantive contribution to human understanding, expression of an embodied reality, aesthetic merit, reflexive sensitivity to ethical issues and its impact. As an exploration of learning the thesis has employed creative approaches at each stage of the research. Through arts based narrative inquiry and autoethnography it has made connections between stories of learning and sought novel ways to express these that support the emerging identities of both researcher and learner. To that end, the rhizome offered routes to question dominant hierarchical frameworks in research and in psychology. Rather than generalizable facts to be incorporated within arborescent structures and become 'sedimented strata of educational theory and practice'[26] within institutional contexts, the thesis has questioned troublesome knowledge of intelligence in a psychology module and promoted creative learning processes in the particular context of an Early Years degree. The thesis makes a challenge to higher education curricula to develop interdisciplinary routes to understanding and a critical eye has posed further questions about creativity, learning and intelligence and the generalizability of knowledge gained from research. The self-study portrait

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[26] See page 1 and reference to Sikes and Gale (2006)

project revealed hidden stories that place learning in the context of lives in process. In the connections made to children, family context and recognition of the other as learners sharing a pedagogical space the thesis has made its contribution to human understanding. In merging data from multiple sources in poetic form individual participant voices have been validated within a collective story of becoming.

The section entitled 'Kin Aesthetic - learning to move/sense/feel/emote' presents an embodied reality through a poetic arrangement of the text. An underlying thread of the research consisted of ways of experiencing the world through movement and action and using the body. It took a while for me to fully 'hear' what participants said and how they connect in many ways to the field. The kinaesthetic and musical intelligences were continuing themes of the research and made an argument to move beyond the dominance of linguistic and logico-mathematical. In acknowledging the equal value of physical ways of being and learning I wish to seek their inclusion in the scientific and logical.

In terms of aesthetic merit a work of art may be judged in terms of the ideas it communicates and in terms of prompting new ways of looking at the world. The poetic pieces offer ideas or thoughts to prompt and provoke responses and evoke new meanings. In visual art beauty may not reside in the subject matter but in the manner of its representation. For example, Rembrandt's portrait of Margareta de Geer (1661)[27] shows how a painting of

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[27] available at https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/rembrandt-portrait-of-margaretha-de-geer-wife-of-jacob-trip

an old woman moves away from old age to see a person and think about their life.

Image 49: Portrait of Margereta de Geer (Rembrandt, 1661)

Rembrandt's use of colour and the garments allows the head and hands to shine out from the canvas (and at the same time almost dismember them) and inspired my painting of James. The pastel painting of Daithi appeals in the reflective quality of skin where the colours of the face are composed of the objects he is playing with. The film pieces have been edited to prompt ideas about representation and research – particularly 'Practice and The Internet'. The artwork produced by the students deserves consideration in terms of aesthetic merit. As well as individual portraits they collaborated in a

collective poem and performances in the Learning Carnival and the filmed 'Murmuration' dance piece. Each piece has contributed something of value to the thesis and contributed to its impact.

I have documented my reflexive sensitivity to ethical research and draw attention to the potential conflicts of insider research in education. In separating out the teacher and researcher role I conformed to ethical requirements and the research became transformed as a result. Of more importance in qualitative research are the moments where responsibility to participants becomes prioritized over the research topic. These tensions continue as one tries to locate the research in the wider academic community and my priority has been to make the best argument on behalf of the research participants. What will make a difference to their lives in the future? One hopes to generate more understanding of the value of work with children. In considering catalytic validity (Lather, 1986) I have sought to transform the object of study in the research process as we become enmeshed in each others' stories. I have made strange situations where…

<div align="right">

ideas

float in the atmosphere

like bodies

(but disembodied)

seeking a mate

a friend

not one

but many

</div>

and not with any reproductive goal

for company

to have a chat

and for

a change

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