Capturing Transformation: Narrative Inquiry and the Transpersonal Experience

By Jennifer L. Groman

Work:
Assistant Professor
Ashland University, Talent Development Program
257 Schar College of Education
Ashland University
Ashland, OH 44895
419-289-5192, jgroman@ashland.edu

Home:
3232 Bayberry Cove, Wooster, OH 44691
sacred-la@hotmail.com
419-651-2586, sacred-la@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT: This article weaves narrative inquiry with transpersonal psychology to answer the question: How does narrative capture the transformation that occurs when humans interact, especially in teaching and learning situations? Epistemologies and methods in narrative inquiry support the values and assumptions of transpersonal and transformational philosophies. The author explores narrative inquiry, transpersonal psychology, and transformative philosophies, as well as the intertwining of them all. Ten threads of overlapping and integrated concepts are outlined and justified: tolerance for ambiguity, the place of the researcher, flexibility and responsiveness, multiple ways of knowing, multiple ways of expression, liminality, ethics of compassion, a search for wholeness and being of service. Conclusions suggest that narrative inquiry not only provides a language and framework for transformative change in the education field, but it also contains aspects that may activate transformation within the researcher and participants.

Research is often perceived as an either/or viewpoint. It can be steeped in numbers, absolutes, co-variables, and causal relationships, or immersed in narratives, coding, field notes, and reflexivity. However, it is possible to bridge the gap between research for transferability and research to understand experience in broader, deeper, and more personal ways. This gap was illustrated most powerfully as I was reading and organizing for this essay through a dream – a very transpersonal methodology. In my dream I nervously walked a low concrete wall between two bodies of dark, brackish, and ominous water. I knew that one false move on my part, and wild, carnivorous beasts would emerge, snapping. I walked with a female guide, pixie-ish, young and slight, highly intelligent and fearless. She could throw a ball into the water, run out to get it, and return without waking the beasts beneath the surface. I was amazed and enamored of her ability to do this.

To me this dream illustrates the division between these two ways of knowing. At one time I felt at risk of becoming lost – or devoured - by a false step in one direction or another. I always believed that too much quantitative work would make me mechanized and unfeeling, and too much qualitative work would make me appear weak, unstructured, or diaphanous. Yet, in my dream there is a being that can cross between those two sides – effortlessly, with humor, intelligence, and courage. I not only wished to follow her, I wished I could *be* her.

I walk this divided way in my professional life as a teacher of teachers, and in my research life in an institution of higher learning. I know that when I do it right, no matter which side I am walking on, this work is transformational for my students and for me. It is this transformation that intrigues me. I believe that teaching stories – narratives – are always going to be a powerful part of how I learn about this profession, honoring experiential knowledge and seeing shifts in being that occur as individuals live, work, and interact. I also discovered that the

methodology of narrative research shows much promise in elucidating and deepening

understanding of transformation that aligns beautifully with transpersonal ways of knowing. This

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essay reflects on the question: How does narrative capture the transformation that occurs when

humans interact, especially in teaching and learning situations?

This question forms my focus of inquiry for this effort, which is, as Clandinin (2013)

would say, my "research puzzle" (p. 41). The puzzle asked me to dig deeply into a form of

narrative inquiry that respects the full transactional experience between the researcher and the

lives of those who are researched. I found this form expressed most fully in the work of

Clandinin (2013), and Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who use narrative research almost

exclusively in the educational milieu. I use these authors and their academic ancestry to outline

the assumptions and processes of narrative research in the first section of this article. The second

section gives the reader foundational principles of transpersonal psychology related to narrative

inquiry. The introductions of the major pieces lead into the main section of the article where I

share a number of ways that narrative inquiry is a natural frame for transpersonal ways of

knowing and relating, and for the transformation that occurs alongside true teaching and

learning.

A Brief Introduction to Narrative Inquiry

Human beings are naturally story-tellers because "[h]umans, individually and socially,

lead storied lives" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13). Bruner (1990) believed that we tell the stories of our

lives in distinct patterns that contain four crucial components: human action, a sequential order, a

sense of that which is out of the ordinary, and "something like a narrator's perspective" (p. 77).

His third and most intriguing component implies that we tell stories of those incidents which fall outside of normal, day-to-day occurrences. After all, what is a story without a surprising twist?

When Clandinin and Connelly (2000) first began using the terms "narrative inquiry," they believed that narrative inquirers specifically attend to the Dewey-inspired concept of *experience* (Dewey, 1938). As researchers within educational domains, Clandinin and Connelly were particularly drawn to Dewey, an educational philosopher who assumed "that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely the organic connection between education and personal experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). This idea forms the foundation of their style of narrative inquiry.

Dewey's concept of experience has two criteria, interaction and continuity (1938): interaction as human interaction with their world, with others, and themselves; and continuity as the idea that experiences grow out of other experiences. Starting from these concepts Clandinin and Connelly continue: "This set of terms creates a metaphorical three dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third" (2000, p. 50). They relate *temporality* as the continuity of past, present and future; *place* as a notion of situation; and *sociality* as personal and social interaction.

The Grand Narrative

Dewey's ideas of experience run contrary to much of our past and current educational paradigms, especially that of academia and research. During the time John Dewey explained his ideas in *Experience and Education* (1938), Edward Thorndike's (1913) philosophies framed the science of education based on the observation of behavior and of social efficiency, and the quantitative style of psychometrics that values standards, assessments and generalizable data.

The result of the conflict between these ideas and the information they valued was, in short: "Edward L. Thorndike won and John Dewey lost" (Lagemann, 1989, p. 185). Clandinin and Connelly saw,

> the competition between Dewey and Thorndike as competition between two stories of how to do social science research. The story scripted by Thorndike became so pervasive, so taken for granted, as the only valid story, that we call it a 'grand narrative' of social science inquiry. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv)

The grand narrative made them "feel that our narrative thinking was somehow less than acceptable; somehow weak, effete, and soft; somehow lacking in rigor, precision, and certainty" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 25). My dream of feeling unsafe walking between two dark bodies of water shows my own feelings of division.

Schön (1987) rejects this type of narrow thinking as "technical rationality" (p. 36) and states that it rests on a purely objectivist view. Narrative inquirers believe that we can only truly know another if we view them in subjective terms, as a unique case, and with all of the messy, interactive and particular qualities that comprise the human being. The complexity of "People in relation studying people in relation" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 22) means that we can never fully know another. Narrative, by its very nature and in all its complexities, is simply one way of knowing, one thin slice of another's life.

Ontological Foundations of Narrative Inquiry

> Dewey's ontology is not transcendental, it is transactional. It implies that the regulative ideal for inquiry is not to generate an exclusively faithful representation of a reality independent of the knower. The regulative ideal for inquiry is to generate a new relation between a human being and her environment. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 14)

How one person experiences her environment is unique, and in a narrative frame the individual's perception is a valid source of experiential information. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), there are four directions in any narrative inquiry: inward, outward, backward and forward:

> By inward we mean toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward we mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to temporality – past, present, and future. We wrote that to experience an experience – that is, to do research into an experience – is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. (p. 50)

This is contrary to the ontology of the grand narrative, which tends toward a one-time snapshot of experience with a wider emphasis on a group; it speaks of averages and generalizability of data to as many constituents as possible.

What is most powerful about the ontology of narrative is the importance and integration of the researcher into the work. "All narrative inquiries begin with an autobiographical inquiry into who the researcher is in relation to the phenomenon under study, which helps to set the personal, practical, and theoretical/social justifications and shapes the emerging research puzzle" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 191). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz realized in returning to a village he had studied intently years earlier that, "everything had changed – he had even changed. This complexity, multiplicity of change is a hallmark of his work" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 5). It is a hallmark of this narrative work as well.

Epistemological Foundations of Narrative Inquiry

Cultures value types of knowledge, and these types can shift in and out of favor over time. In the grand narrative and our current system of science and education, the types of knowledge that hold power are those pieces of information that can be expressed quantifiably. Also valued are traditionally acquired and exhibited (i.e. tested) intelligence, the ability to follow directions, objective, bias-free viewing of processes and subjects, controlled variables, and scientific knowledge gained by blind testing that can be replicated and compared elsewhere. Important words are *standards, validity,* and *measurement.* Outliers, those subjects whose data fall outside of the behavioral norm, are usually eliminated or seen as irrelevant.

However, "Like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability. It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 184). With its focus on the social aspect of the human condition, probably the most important value in narrative is relationship. "Relationship is at the heart of thinking narratively. Relationship is key to what it is narrative inquirers do" (p. 189). This focus on relationship goes well beyond the traditional idea of inter-human relationship, into:

> … the relational between the person and his/her world, including the relational in the intergenerational; the relational between person and place; the relational between events and feelings; the relational between us as people; the relational between the physical world and people; the relational in our cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narrative; and so on. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 22)

Narrative inquiry also supports the nature and experience of the individual as a valid source of information. The way an individual understands and interacts with their world can give

insight into the nature of the human experience, in all of its complexity and multi-layered aspects. Important words and phrases are *fidelity to relationships, personal justifications,* and *co-compositions.* In narrative research, the outlier is a source of fascination and significance.

Dewey embodied these epistemological values; he believed experience to be both personal and social. People are individual and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood *only* as individuals. They are always in relation, always in social context. The concept of "continuity" is the notion that experiences grow out of other experiences (Dewey, 1938; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Processes of Narrative Inquiry

"For us, narrative is the closest we can come to experience" (Clandinin & Connely, 2000, p. 188). With this in mind, the entrance point in most narrative inquiries is "self-facing" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 175) through autobiographical reflection, and in this way the researcher moves out from who they were to who they become in the inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). Many narrative researchers also live and work alongside their participants with the full understanding that they join their participants' lives "in the midst" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43); in the midst of the subjects' lives, and in the midst of their own lives where a great deal goes on before, during, and after their presence which cannot be known. Narrative inquirers working within this framework know that being within the story is a better starting point than simply listening to a re-told story. "Much is in the living rather than the telling" (Huber & Clandinin, 2005, p. 331).

Living alongside participants, the researcher begins collecting data through *field texts* (Clandinin, 2013). Field texts may include many different styles and types of information such as field observation notes, reflective journals, written and verbal communication, interviews, photographs and personal memorabilia. Field texts are shared with participants and co-composed

considering the views and voices of any and all participants. Co-composing field texts works as a way to slow down the moments within events and attend to their complexities (Huber & Clandinin, 2005).

Clandinin (2013) often creates an *annal* from the field texts, which may emerge in timeline form, placing events and details within temporality and context of other events. This again is co-composed to reflect stories and events as accurately as possible. The researcher, with constant study, teases out stories and threads, which are similar to themes, but less formally structured. Threads are not only based on the repetition of ideas within a series of narratives, but also on the resonance of ideas within the researcher or participant. These help the researcher to create a *narrative account* of her interactions and understandings of the research participant's story or event. In the narrative account, the writer/researcher shares thoughts and reflections alongside ideas and threads that are meaningful to her or to the topic of study (Clandinin, 2013). These various writings do not have a specified form or structure; they flow within the context of the researcher's ideas and responses to the co-created field texts.

Often the *research text* then emerges as a more formal document written toward an end: a publication or research journal submission, for example. This form of narrative inquiry process is open to nontraditional field and research texts in the form of poetry, dialogue, readers theatre and other artistic forms as the researcher and participants wish. Thus the types of texts and processes outlined here are not as much linear as they are cyclical, passing back and forth between researchers and participants, in various formats and true co-creation. "Our guiding principle in an inquiry is to focus on experience and follow it where it leads" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 188).

Principles of Transpersonal Psychology Related to Narrative Inquiry

Interestingly enough, the Latin origin of the word psychology literally means "the study of the soul." Psyche meaning "breath, spirit, soul" and logia, meaning "study of" (Sciolist, n.d.). Psychology in its earliest context had a slightly blurry beginning, throughout the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, China and India (Mannion, 2002); but Western psychology can be dated to 1876, when William James proposed and taught the first psychology course at Harvard. He also wrote one of the first textbooks on the subject in 1890, titled *The Principles of Psychology*, and James began to write and speak widely on the topic, as well as philosophy, religion and the nature of truth (Asher, 2010). Western psychology found its voice and focus in the 'talking cure' coined by Josef Breuer and adopted by Sigmund Freud to describe the fundamental treatment of psychoanalysis as comprised chiefly of dialogue between the patient and the psychologist. As a neurologist, Freud saw many patients with complaints of ailments that he determined had no apparent physical cause. He discovered that using dialogue to search out the root of what was truly troubling the patient often alleviated the psychic distress (Mannion, 2002).

Transpersonal psychology grew out of Abraham Maslow's observation that the first three forces in Western Psychology - behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and humanistic psychology – were limited in their attention to states beyond the self.

> I consider Humanistic, Third Force Psychology to be transitional, a preparation for a still
> 'higher' Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centered in the cosmos rather
> than in human needs and interests. We need something 'bigger than we are' to be awed
> by and to commit ourselves to in a new, naturalist, empirical, non-churchly sense.
> (Maslow, 1968, pp. iii-iv)

The language of transpersonal psychology gives the profession a means of expressing what Maslow termed *peak experiences* ["brief but extremely intense, blissful, meaningful, and beneficial experiences of expanded identity and union with the universe" (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, p. 2)], without espousing religion or dogma. One of the ways transpersonal psychology differs from traditional psychology lies in its appreciation for multistates of consciousness to transcend the egoic Self. Transpersonal psychology values experiences beyond the usual waking, single state of consciousness to include dreams, contemplation, meditation, and yoga. Many non-Western cultures frame their beliefs and behaviors within multistate disciplines, including Buddhist psychology, Taoist philosophy and indigenous cultures (Rowe & Braud, 2013).

Walsh and Vaughan (1993) define transpersonal experiences as those "experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche and cosmos" (p. 3). Weaving this with the etymological definition of the word *psychology*, one could imagine that transpersonal psychology uses self-transcending experiences to study the soul of the self, the soul ("breath" or "spirit") of humankind, and of the cosmos, which might include our physical world, the mysterious world and worlds yet to be known.

Three distinct themes frame Hartelius, Caplan and Rardin's (2007) analysis of transpersonal psychology as "an approach to psychology that: 1) studies phenomena beyond the ego as context for 2) an integrative/holistic psychology; this provides a framework for 3) understanding and cultivating human transformation" (p. 11).

This weaving of transpersonal and transformation is echoed in Anderson and Braud's (2011) concept of transpersonal psychology as "the study and cultivation of the highest and most

transformative human values and potentials – individual, communal, and global – that reflect the mystery and interconnectedness of life" (p. 9).

Given this article's focus on narrative research within the milieu of teaching and learning, transpersonal and transformative educational experiences are both of interest here. Rowe and Braud (2013) distinguish these topics thus:

> Transpersonal, transformative, and spiritual forms of education are interrelated. Each assumes that the seeker is on a journey of transformation (Braud, 2006; Dirkx et al., 2006; Markos & McWhinney, 2003) in which the ultimate goal is to bring personal authenticity, wholeness, a sense of relationship, and greater consciousness to self, community, and planet (Braud, 2006; Clark, 1974). (p. 670)

Maslow posited the need for a discipline with an empirical and 'unchurchly' sense that is answered in transpersonal and transformative fields of work. Walsh and Vaughan (1993) state that "these disciplines do not require dogma or religious creed, and welcome the scientific, philosophical, and experiential testing of all claims, and usually assume that transpersonal experiences can be interpreted either religiously or non-religiously according to individual preference" (p. 6). Transpersonal and transformative scholars invite serious scientific and intellectual studies of their assumptions, effects and conclusions and hope to reconcile traditional researchers to the belief that work in these disciplines is powerful and real.

Hendricks and Fadiman (1976) cite Robert Ornstein's 1972 work *The Psychology of Consciousness*, where he provides current (for the time) research on the brain that there

are two modes of consciousness at work in human beings; one, a rational, logical, and

active mode, is associated with the left side of the brain, while the other, a mystical,

intuitive, and receptive mode, seems to be a function of the right side of the brain. (p. 1)

While 21st century researchers are divided on the literal left brain/right brain placement of these

attributes, there is little dispute that these two modes of being are present in all individuals.

Hendricks and Fadiman (1976) establish that the first task of transpersonal education is to "shift

the focus from external to internal awareness" (p.5). To initiate this shift they suggest the use of

guided imagery, dreams, meditation, and relaxation techniques.

It is evident that there is an overlap – even an intertwining – of characteristics in the

transpersonal and the transformative. The spiritual quality of the transpersonal experience may or

may not be present in a transformative one. As the purpose of this discussion is to show how

narrative inquiry can capture transpersonal and transformative experiences, and considering the

qualities of narrative research as outlined in this article do not necessarily present significant

spiritual experiences or encounters (although they can), the terms and understandings of

transpersonal and transformative experiences are both applicable here.

Based on multiple authors and readings, the concepts and ways of knowing valued by

transpersonal and transformative processes are varied and widely encompassing. For the

purposes of this discussion, and with the understanding that this list is by no means complete,

these concepts and values include: a tolerance for ambiguity, the relational place of the

researcher, flexibility and responsiveness, multiple ways of knowing, multiple forms of

expression, liminality, ethic of compassion, search for wholeness, and being of service

(Anderson & Braud, 2011; Frager & Fadiman, 2006; Hartelius, Caplan, & Rardin, 2007;

Hendricks & Fadiman, 1976; Maslow, 1968; Mezirow, 2003; Miller, J. 2005; Rowe & Braud, 2013: Walsh & Vaughan, 2006).

> [T]o date transpersonal disciplines stand alone in the scope of their search. They advocate an eclectic, integrative quest that includes personal and transpersonal, ancient and modern, East and West, knowledge and wisdom, art and philosophy, science and religion, introspection and contemplation. (Walsh & Vaughan, 2006, p. 10)

Revisiting the Research Puzzle: Transpersonal and Transformative Integration with Narrative Inquiry.

Research Puzzle: How does narrative capture the transformation that occurs when humans interact?

A review of the literature exposes idea threads that, when gently pulled, show areas where transpersonal and transformative visions resonate with the practices of narrative research as it is outlined above. These threads may constitute places of sensitivity toward transformation that exist in the narrative research model. At the risk of creating what might be construed as a positivist categorization of these ideas, ten threads are offered here.

Tolerance for Ambiguity

The very concept of transformation suggests movement toward the unknown. In my profession as a teacher, the act of teaching, like narrative research, is improvisational in that educators must respond to the ambiguity of unforeseen circumstances in their lives. Schön (1987) uses the term "reflection-in-action" (p. 5) for narrative or experiential inquiry, and "knowing-in-action" (p.5) for the type of knowing that leads the researcher and the educator in practice to new knowledge within each unique case.

Rowe and Braud (2013) acknowledge this ambiguity in their description of transpersonal processes and ways of knowing as a "*both/and* rather than *either/or* attitude" (p. 671, emphasis added). These terms frame the way teachers work, as improvisational and transactional, not as responding to predetermined and predictable scenarios. Without openness to the ill structured nature of human lives

> [o]ur work becomes too often a little too simplistic and, perhaps, a bit too much about the Other, the participants whom we are researching, rather than about the inquiry into the relational experience. Without autobiographical narrative inquiry, our studies can lead to work that is too technical or too certain. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 82)

The Place of the Researcher

Clandinin (2013) speaks of transformation when she states; "[n]o one leaves a narrative inquiry unchanged" (p. 201). Positivist research looks for changes in behavior or attitude shifts in research participants, but never in the researcher herself. In fact, objectivity is so valued that the researcher herself is voiceless and is expected to remain unbiased and unmoved. In contrast, the place of the researcher in narrative inquiry is founded in Dewey's (1938) "organic connection between education and experience" (p. 3). *Experience* in this context is not only for and about the research participants, but for and about the researcher herself. Teacher lore, the oral tradition of using teachers' own words, can be an "alternative to traditional notions and models of research" (Blake & Blake, 2012, p. 2). This means that when the narrative researcher enters the inquiry with a research puzzle brought on by her own experience, or teacher lore, of the profession, she is in the midst, inevitably included in the research, and changed by it.

Moreover, opening the inquiry with "autobiographical narrative inquiry" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 55) presupposes transformational change, because it establishes that the author is, in part, the phenomenon under study.

> First, we must inquire into who we see ourselves as being and becoming within the inquiry. Second, without an understanding of what brings each of us to our research puzzles, we run the risk of entering into relationships without a sense of what stories we are living and telling in the research relationships. Third, without an understanding of who we are in the inquiry, we are not awake to the ways we attend to the experiences of research participants. (p. 36)

This form of inquiry is "unapologetically subjective" (Ayers, 2012, p. 212).

Flexibility and Responsiveness

Bruner (1991) wrote that one of the components of human storytelling is that the tale tends to be outside of the "canon of experiences" (p. 3). He believed that we create perceptions that order our world, and when events fall outside this "canon" of the expected, therein lies a good story. With that said, however, when we value certain perceptions, we also create frameworks and in doing so we are apt to miss experiences that might fall outside those frameworks or reject them outright.

The concept of *threads* over the concept of *themes* traditionally used in qualitative inquiry means that the researcher is more open and responsive to the truly fluid and unpredictable nature of the human experience. Clandinin (2013) realized that her inquiries began and ended in the midst of human lives; she knew that she "needed to find ways to look across those accounts, to see the resonances across stories" (p. 137), and that

looking across the narrative accounts co-composed between researcher and participant

would require a new conceptualization and a new set of processes if we wanted to

continue to hold onto our storied lives and not to reduce them to themes or categories. (p.

137)

This "new conceptualization" is responsive to events as they occur and flexible enough to

lightly frame the stories so that its emergent, transformative material may develop freely;

unbounded by process.

Multiple Ways of Knowing

The grand narrative paradigm and narrative inquiry both value traditional ways of

knowing: reading; writing; speaking; listening. These ways of knowing offer power and

precision invaluable to research work. However, narrative inquiry also welcomes multiple, non-

traditional ways of knowing. Positivist methods may be able to show that transformation has

taken place, but it cannot *be part of the transformation*. Only entering into the midst, interacting

with and being part of the experiences of another's life can the researcher and the method be

present in the midst of transformation.

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) idea of four directions in any narrative inquiry is

consistent with transpersonal knowing. "By inward we mean toward the internal conditions, such

as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (p. 50). The realm of the *internal*

condition is also the realm of previous experience, embodiment, dreams and intuition, what

Clandinin (2013) calls "resonances" (p. 131). "By outward we mean toward the existential

conditions, that is, the environment" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). The ways we

experience our environment also include the intellect of the body (embodiment) and intuition.

"By backward and forward, we refer to temporality – past, present, and future" (p. 50). Past and present may be experienced more deeply through meditation, mindfulness or "wakefulness" (p. 184), and the future through dreams or creative visualization. These ideas echo Dewey (1938) in that "experience is truly experience only when objective conditions are subordinated to what goes on within the individuals having the experience" (p. 41).

"We wrote that to experience an experience – that is, to do research into an experience – is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). These ways of transpersonal knowing – and the simultaneity of them – offer the narrative researcher what the positivist researcher will never have: the human experience *in the way it is experienced by a human*, in its almost countless ways of knowing. It is "fluid inquiry, a way of thinking in which an inquiry is not clearly governed by theories, methodological tactics, and strategies" (p. 121).

Multiple Forms of Expression

"In this style you can explore various forms of sharing information, visual, poetic, [and] dramatic" (Clandinin &Connelly, 2000, p. 135). The authors also encourage "writing and rewriting the research in different formats to try different ways and form a research group to respond" (p. 164). One dilemma of narrative inquiry is to find a form that reveals the relational aspect of the experience as well as the shifting, transformative sense of the narrative of experience (Clandinin, 2013). Researchers use forms including poetry (Leggo, 2008), storytelling (Clandinin, 2013; Archibald, 2008), reader's theatre (Donmoyer & Donmoyer, 2008), staged theatrical pieces (Goldstein, 2012), and in my own dissertation research, mandalas and Jung's four ways of knowing: thinking, feeling, sensing and intuition (██████, 2015).

Creative and artistic forms capture more effectively the uncertain and interpretive nature of sharing narrative experiences. "Emotion, value, felt experience with the world, memory, and narrative explanations of one's past do not stand still in a way that allows for certainty" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 37). Using nontraditional and creative forms of expression give space for multiple forms of experience.

Liminality

Anderson and Braud (2011) speak briefly about the liminal realm as that which exists between state-specific experiences. In transformative experiences the liminal realm is the period after the ego has abandoned or given up the known and has not yet entered into the transformed state of new being. "Egoic control is relinquished during the time the psyche is a visitor in this realm" (p. 139). These experiences are extremely difficult to research. Memory is their only evidence.

Clandinn and Rosiek (2007) use the term *borderlands* as "spaces that exist around borders where one lives within the possibility of multiple plotlines" (p. 59). These are "spaces of tension and struggle and uncertainty" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 137) and "the space between what was and what is to be . . . creates both the time and space to play with possibilities not yet imagined" (p. 128). Transformational experiences are composed of these liminal spaces.

The researcher also finds herself slipping in and out of the experience being studied, slipping in and out of intimacy with participants and events (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Being in the field allows intimacy. Composing and reading field texts allows one to slip out of intimacy for a time. This movement back and forth between falling in love and cool observation is possible through field texts and ties into the reflective practice of Schön (1987), as a way of crossing over liminal boundaries and uniting the researcher's reflectivity and development.

Ethics of Compassion

Narrative inquiry is inherently concerned with the true and care-full representation of the research participants. The researcher, upon entering in the midst of participants' lives, is in a place of power not to be taken lightly. "Especially where I meet the other person in his or her weakness, vulnerability or innocence, I experience undeniable presence of loving responsibility" (Van Manan, 1990, p. 6). The co-creation of text throughout the process is one of the ways that narrative inquirers honor the relationship between themselves and participants. In fact, the ethics of narrative inquirers specify the participant as the most important voice in the process. "[W]e owe our care first to research participants" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 205).

Search for Wholeness

Transpersonal education and transformative learning hold inherent the seeker's journey toward wholeness (Rowe & Braud, 2013). Clandinin & Connelly (2000) believe that "collecting and analyzing stories is only part of the narrative inquiry" (p. 189). They wished to "convey a sense of wholeness" (p. 189) in their inquiry, from participants' lived experience to storied experience to the retelling of the experiences in the research texts. This search for wholeness values and honors the stories and the participants as well as the relationships they represent.

Being of Service

Transpersonal and transformative forms of education seek wholeness in the lives of teachers and students, and often this occurs through transformative experiences. A further goal of these forms of education, as outlined by Rowe and Braud (2013) is the focus "on transformation within individuals, organizations, communities, society, and the planet" (p. 668). Within the ethic of compassion Clandinin believes that narrative inquirers "negotiate relationships, research

purposes, transitions, as well as how we are going to be useful in those relationships" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 48).

      Clandinin also discusses three ways inquirers justify narrative research studies: "personally, in terms of why this narrative inquiry matters to us as individuals; practically, in terms of what difference this research might make to practice; and socially or theoretically, in terms of what difference this research might make to theoretical understandings or to making situations more socially just." (Clandinin, 2013, p. 35)

There is a sense of a higher purpose in narrative educational research, and its articulation would help those in the profession exact positive changes for teachers and learners.

<div align="center">**Conclusion**</div>

      In concluding this discussion, the research puzzle remains: How does narrative capture the transformation that occurs when humans interact? At the beginning of this article I utilized a very particular form of narrative inquiry outlining the work of Clandinin (2006: 2013), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), as well as their intellectual and conceptual predecessors. Dewey (1938), as their foundational philosopher, spoke wisely "that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely the organic connection between education and personal experience" (p. 25). This style of inquiry initially seems to operate in direct conflict with the grand narrative of positivism, but upon closer examination, narrative inquiry simply extends and expands on knowledge that positivism does not value, and can allow us to see a different picture of educational situations. In this way, narrative inquiry provides a balance to the philosophy of positivism.

      The second section outlined psychology and its evolution into transpersonal psychology and included transformative experiences. These disciplines are always expanding, and what

appears here is a small representation of the fields. I determined that to delineate the models of transpersonal psychology and transformative experiences would contain them too much. Instead, in the third section I showed overlapping concepts of the two and threaded them with ideas from narrative inquiry. I am of the position that the strongest of these threads is tolerance for ambiguity, valuing multiple ways of knowing and of expression, an ethic of compassion, and the ultimate goal of all these philosophies is to be of service to the world.

It is this final thread that leaves me with a sense of hope. The coming together of these three disciplines support a thesis with which I resonate: if we, as educators, clinicians, and researchers, are to transform this world for the better, we would benefit from listening to stories of transformation, teaching and providing experiences that transform, and exploring and investigating practices and experiences that transform ourselves and others. Most importantly, it seems critical to tell those stories. It is in telling the stories that we capture and experience transformation and open ourselves to the hope it offers the future.

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