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**An arts based narrative inquiry into children's experiences
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academic learning program you can do it! program achieve**

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**AN ARTS BASED NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF THE FIVE
FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND ACADEMIC LEARNING PROGRAM YOU
CAN DO IT! PROGRAM ACHIEVE**

BY

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Dedication

To Aabir, Baahir, Christopher, Amanda, Katie, Farrah, Dariya, and Janette, I want to thank you all for your willingness and generosity in reliving and retelling your stories throughout the inquiry. Without you, this thesis would not have been possible. I am eternally in your debt. I look forward to the day we meet again. When we do, I will fittingly express what you've taught me and others who read this thesis. The significance of this research was difficult to discern while we engaged in the inquiry together. It is only now upon completion, that we see the true significance of the work and the crucial part you all played its creation.

To Dr Grace O'Grady, my supervisor. Thank you for your constant support, insight, and guidance. You challenged me to grow as a researcher and a narrative inquirer. You ensured academic rigour and attainment of the highest standards. Over the last five years, I have learned much about my research topic and narrative inquiry. I was a rough stone at the beginning. I have become bigger and smoother. Yet, still full of imperfections, imperfections I see as my best parts now.

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To Ken Scully, my school principal in Scoil Firtéar. Thank you for your flexibility while I carried out the arts-based workshops and engaged in my inquiry. I know at times it was inconvenient for you, and I am very grateful for the understanding and support you showed. Finally, to my wife Bríd. You have been by my side at every step of this inquiry. My box of books and notes accompanied us on every holiday and mid-term break we've taken

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Abstract

My research aims to narratively inquire into students' experiences of the five foundations of the social-emotional and academic learning program 'You Can Do It (YCDI) Program Achieve' (2007) and explore the impact the program has had on their lives on and off the school landscape. I also present and explore how eight primary school children composed their individual stories to live by, a narrative form of identity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), through stories shared throughout this inquiry. What might I learn by inquiring into these experiences, where children's stories of the YCDI foundations and the program intersect and bump against school stories and other stories we live in (Morris, 2002)? How might inquiring into emerging tensions deepen understanding of cultural, institutional, and social narratives shaping the students' lives and stories? How might my inquiry expand knowledge about the YCDI program and the meeting of diverse lives on school landscapes?

My research puzzle considered YCDI conversations as spaces where children engaged in meaning and identity-making, where tensions arose as stories bumped against dominant cultural, institutional, and social narratives in an out-of-classroom place (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999). The participants' stories and my autobiographical narratives revealed the complexity of navigating the school landscape and the workshops. This complexity led to a re-imagining of the school landscape as a space where students' and teachers' lives and stories entwined, entangled, bumped, and shifted in relation to others in creative, curious, and often tension-filled ways. I understand the context for teacher knowledge in terms of the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) and teachers' personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). I also wish to

make space for students' personal learner knowledge to attend to their embodied lives, wisdom, and school experiences.

Drawing upon the relational nature of narrative inquiry, I use the guiding metaphor of a 'life-timeline' to ground myself and my participants in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of the personal, social, temporal, and place or series of places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). During the first stage of my inquiry, I came alongside my participants as we engaged in arts-based workshops based around the students' experiences of the five foundations of the YCDI (2007) program; *Organisation, Confidence, Getting Along, Resilience* and *Persistence*. We came alongside each other again, one year later, where we engaged in one-to-one creative conversations where I shared their stories with them while also revisiting and, in some instances, restorying their pieces of art. This narrative inquiry has revealed numerous threads and plotlines such as storylines of YCDI foundations, storylines of the program's impact, storylines of competition, marginalization, resistance, tension, family, school, belonging, and care.

Chapter 1: Searching for a guiding metaphor

1.0: Offering a sense

*John's timeline – Monday 22nd March 2021: Offering a sense (Pt 1)
What's on your mind?*

I sit at my desk feeling invigorated and ready to write. My home office occupies the 'box' room in my house, but it will soon become a magical bedroom for my 16-month-old daughter. It's nearly time for her to move into her first cot bed and for my office to move next door into the guest bedroom. We both need to make space for her baby sister in our lives. It's a time of change and growth in our house. It's exciting. I open my laptop, and my introductory chapter awaits me. I re-read the chapter, contemplating ways to improve the text. I feel a disconnect between how I'm feeling and how my writing makes me feel. I want my writing to grab hold of readers and for them not to let go. This text is a performative piece (Pollock, 1998) that I hope will become 'meaningful in the material, dis/continuous act of writing' (p. 75). I could easily fall into prosaic academic modes where this chapter simply becomes a functional apparatus for readers, leaving performative aspects for later. I want to avoid this. I wish to start as I mean to go on.

The theory of emotional intelligence developed by Salovey & Myer (1990), Gardner

(1984/2011), and Goleman (1995) gave rise to the field of social-emotional learning (SEL).

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL can be described as:

the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2012: 4).

This theory focuses on the importance of attaining positive interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Elias, 1997). Many schools acknowledge that caring and responding to diverse populations of students poses challenges and difficulties (Smyth et al., 2009; Corcoran et al., 2018). In some instances, students are not well equipped with the SEL skills needed to engage in school fully, and this deficit negatively impacts behaviour, health, and academic performance (Blum & Libbey, 2004). SEL skills are acknowledged as being crucial elements for success in life and school (CASEL 2003, 2012; Lopes & Salovey 2004; Zins & Elias, 2007;

Zins et al., 2007; Tough 2012), and thus many countries, including Ireland, have endeavored to embed SEL competencies into schools (Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Department of Education, 2015; National Council for Curriculum Development, 2017; Corcoran et al., 2018).

You Can Do It! education is a cognitive-behavioural theory (CBT) and SEL-based curriculum. In 2014, my school, Scoil Firtéar Community National School (CNS), introduced the program due to the social-emotional and behavioural challenges faced by many of our students. Two programs, the *YCDI Education Early Childhood Program* (ages 4-6 years old) and the *Program Achieve-A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum* (7-11 years old) were implemented across the school from junior infants (5-6-year-olds) to 6th class (11-12-year-olds). The program focuses on developing positive habits of mind (ways of thinking), inside characteristics of students (the five foundations), and outside influences on students (effective teaching, positive parenting, and community support) to foster and promote positive relationships, behaviours, and well-being (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Bernard, 2012). The five foundations of the program are *Organisation, Confidence, Getting Along, Persistence, and Resilience*. My research aims to inquire into students' experiences of the five foundations of the social-emotional and academic learning program 'You Can Do It (YCDI) Program Achieve' (2007) and explore the program's impact on their lives on and off the school landscape.

*John's timeline – Monday 22nd March 2021: Offering a sense (Pt 2)
What's on your mind?*

I write this note and introduction chapter to offer a sense of my research puzzle and my life. To ground my inquiry in the context of my life as a teacher-researcher who is passionate about students' experiences in my school, SEL, and the YCDI program. I am also a father of two precious girls, a husband to an amazing wife, so I also wish to offer a sense of my life off the school landscape. I hope you feel the same invigoration and energy as I do, as you read my work. Soon, I will unveil my thesis structure and the creative

modes of writing I intend to use. You may already question what this current mode of presentation is and what it means. If so, I'm heartened and glad. Performative writing should be evocative, perhaps even evoking new curiosities about the self and the subject (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) while also 'demystify the research/writing process and help others to do the same' (p. 1419-20).

Moving through this chapter, I first present the writing as inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) and performative style of this text. Next, I explore how I came to know my guiding metaphor and illustrate its impact on all aspects of my research puzzle from my understanding of narrative inquiry, how I imparted and shared this knowing with my participants in a child-friendly way, to the movement from field texts to research texts.

Following this section, I discuss the theoretical considerations of autobiographical explorations as the starting point of narrative inquiry puzzles in preparation for 'Chapter 2: My narrative beginnings'. Finally, I give a brief overview of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

1.1: Narrative apparatuses and writing as inquiry

No story starts or stops, manifests, or coalesces in isolation, but rather in relation with others. 'Relationality [is] not only [a] descriptive or historical fact of our formation, but also an ongoing normative dimension of our social and political lives, one in which we are compelled to take stock of our interdependence' (Butler, 2003:27). My 'auto' story (Freeman, 2007) emerged during my relational inquiry with eight primary school children, as our lives met, entwined, and entangled in an out of classroom place (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) on the school landscape of Scoil Firtéar Community National School (CNS). I am acutely aware that it continues to emerge even as I write. In this sense, I understand the purpose of retelling and reliving is not to generate a faithful representation of a reality independent of myself (Gustaf, 1956/1980; Paz, 1973; Bruner, 1991; Barnes, 1997;

Brockmeier, 1997; Hampi, 1999), but to generate new ways of knowing and being. The remembering and revealing of our original condition, our autobiographies, 'does not uncover something external, which was there, alien, but rather that the act of uncovering involves the creation of that which is going to be uncovered: our own being' (Paz, 1973: 137). I embrace an understanding of self and knowledge as something that is articulated anew as stories are told and retold in relation with others and the surrounding milieus (Bruner, 1991; Freeman, 2002b; Gergen, 2009). For narrative inquirers, research puzzles begin with an unravelling of our own lives. By retelling, I start the process of presenting the justifications for my research; the personal, practical, social, and theoretical (Clandinin, 2000)

For the remainder of this thesis, I take advantage of several creative narrative apparatuses such as images, dialogue vignettes, word images, field notes, and personal journal entries, all of which drew from my research and guided by my 'life-timeline' metaphor. I use such apparatuses in creative ways to navigate through aspects of my own life and my participants' lives. I also use such techniques to interrupt more prosaic forms of academic writing in the hope of disrupting the writing, the writer, and finally, the reader (Speedy, 2008). The purpose of writing in such a fashion is to pay close attention to the particularities of experience and to allow them to come to life on the page (Freeman, 2004). In this way, I hope to offer new and alternative modes of grasping the fleeting essence of experience.

In Speedy's (2008) 'Narrative Inquiry and Psychotherapy,' she identifies several positions that she uses to gather material for her book. She used constructions of *writer*, *coresearcher*, *scholar*, and *activist* and so, following Geertz (1973: 5):

If you want to understand what a science is you should look in the first instance not at its theories or its findings; certainly not what its apologists say about it: you should look at what the practitioners of it do.

Like Speedy and Geertz, I understand that writing depends on the ambitions, aims, passions, and purposes of the researcher, so it is incumbent to make these purposes transparent. In doing so, I make visible the relationships and purposes of these positions clear to the reader. Through engagement with my inquiry, three positions emerged: *the teacher*, *the teacher-researcher*, and *the scholar*. Moving forward,

I encase the a forementioned narrative apparatuses in black boxes using single spaced italic Batang text, as seen here. In this way, I present dialogue, reflections, adapted journal entries, and field notes gathered throughout my inquiry. I use this writing mode to demarcate the movement from my teacher and teacher-researcher positions

to my scholarly work. In this academic mode, I use conventional text, where I have already begun to engage in discursive, self-reflexive writing as I pick my way through the threads of this thesis. Reflexive practitioners engage in critical self-reflection by 'reflecting critically on the impact of their background, assumptions, positioning, feelings, behaviour while also attending to the impact of the wider organisational, discursive, ideological and political context' (Finlay, 2008: 6). Through the practice of introspection (Finlay, 2002, 2003) to probe personal meanings and emotions, and intersubjection (Finlay, 2002, 2003), to attend to the emerging, negotiated, and relational nature of shared experiences during the inquiry, I have the theoretical tools necessary to present my stories and those of the participants.

In such sections, I intertwine my philosophical (Dewey, 1988/1939; Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Bergum & Dosseter, 2005) and theoretical (Richardson, 1994; Butler, 1993, 1997; St. Pierre, 1997; Reismann, 1993, 2012; Cavarero, 2000; Etherington, 2004, 2003; Pelias, 2008, 2011, 2018, 2019; Clandinin 2000, 2013; Clandinin et al., 2018; Luttrell 2003, 2020;

Gergen, 2009; Wyatt, 2014; Kim, 2015) understandings alongside shared moments and stories. I also apply other theoretical lenses that offer new and interesting ways to view experiences. New offerings emerged, through my exploration and readings of feminist writers, such as Cavarero (2000), Butler (1990, 1995, 1997), Arendt (1973/1998), and Todd (2010), as well as contemporary educational theorists such as Biesta (2019, 2015a, 2015b, 2011, 2010), Benner (2015), Böhm (1997) and Säfström (2011a, 2011b). These threads are tightly woven, and I do not attempt to segment or organize them neatly; instead, they emerge and surface through engagement with student stories and my own.

As I begin to unravel my autobiographical story, a story that emerged from entangled moments with children, I draw from and use my conceptual metaphor of a 'life timeline.' This 'life-timeline,' similar to a timeline used on the social media platform Facebook, serves a dual purpose. First, just as a timeline on Facebook allows you to move forward and backward, to moments and experiences in the past, I use this function to mirror the narrative movement of travelling forward and backward, inward and outward, to uncover and present experiences. This metaphor's second purpose is to act as a narrative apparatus to represent and reconstruct first-person 'I' stories. These reconstructed and diffracted (Barad, 2007) memories tell of my own experiences growing up as a child, from my time in primary and post-primary school to becoming a teacher and a beginning teacher researcher. The metaphor is inspired by Geertz's (1996) moving parade, as it provides a familiar sense of what a temporal, storied life in flux is comprised.

*John's timeline – Monday 22nd March 2021: Writing as inquiry
What's on your mind?*

In this mode, I make clear whose 'life-timeline' is presented by writing the person's name and the memory reconstruction title. The enticing question always follows this,

What's on your mind?

I use indented, italicized, single-spaced Batang text, such as this, to make clear when I use memory reconstructions. I use the 'life-timeline' metaphor to represent first-person, 'I' stories. In such sections, I reconstruct and present memories from my past and curious musings about poignant moments. I understand that such memory reconstructions do not, and cannot, resurrect the experience (Schachtel, 1959) but instead offer ways to make sense of and understand the past in the light of the present. As I engage in such tellings, I loosen the threads of more standard academic prose, as seen above. I understand that this mode of writing enables me to look back over the landscape of the past, to the present, and to move toward a supposed future. I do so to discern new meanings that remain unseen and unavailable in the immediate flux (Freeman, 2007) of life. At all times, I acknowledge the tremendous challenge that faces me as a narrative inquirer. Questions of sincerity, the shakiness of memory, and deep-rooted concern for other's feelings guide my ways of writing. This presenting of experience is laced with my subjectivity, interpretation, and imagination that I fashion through 'poiesis' (Freeman, 2002a), the act of creative and discursive meaning-making. Like Barnes (1997), all I can say is that the lives I present in this thesis are - in my eyes- the most faithful reflection of what I see reflectively.

I understand such modes of writing (as seen above) as 'writing as inquiry.' This performative way of writing is inspired by the work of scholars such as Richardson (1994), Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), Speedy (2008), Pelias (2011, 2018), and Speedy and Wyatt (2015).

1.2: My guiding metaphor: Life timelines

Guiding metaphors, such as those employed by Steeves (2000), McGarrilge (2017), and Gates (2018), provided coherence and a conceptual understanding of their narrative research puzzles. Richardson (1994) describes metaphor as the backbone of social science research where 'the essence of metaphor is experiencing and understanding one thing in terms of another' (p. 926). Metaphor has the power to make familiar that which is unfamiliar, to elucidate and to explain concepts and ideas as it can:

take us to where we have not been, or ever perceived we could go. Metaphor, because it generates lifelikeness, seems to have the power to move a human being to new levels of consciousness and perception as the various parts of a journey story unravel, are investigated and pondered (Dyson, 2007: 14).

My research aims to narratively inquire into students' experiences of the five foundations of social-emotional and academic learning program 'You Can Do It (YCDI) Program Achieve'

(2007) and to explore the impact the program has had on their lives across the five YCDI foundations of; *Organisation, Confidence, Getting Along, Resilience, and Persistence*. I also wish to present and explore how eight primary school children, Aabir, Baahir, Janette, Amanda, Christopher, Farrah, Katie, and Dariya, composed their individual stories to live by a narrative form of identity (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), through creative conversations based around the five foundations of the YCDI program, and other conversations on the school landscape. I understand identity formation narratively, as stories to live by. I wanted to avoid 'rigidifying aspects of identity into a misleading categorical entity' (Somers, 1997: 606); therefore, I 'incorporate into the core conception of identity the categorically destabilizing dimensions of time, space, and relationality' (p. 606). In this way, the constitutive, fluid process of identity formation can be seen as a 'narrative performance' (Riessman, 2008: 102) where:

the performative is not to suggest that identities are inauthentic...but only that identities are situated and accomplished with audience in mind. To put it simply, one can't be a 'self' by oneself; rather, identities are constructed in 'shows' that persuade. Performances are expressive, they are performances for others. Hence, the response of the audience is implicated in the art of storytelling. (ibid, p.106)

Thinking about my aims, I wondered what guiding metaphor I could use to keep the three commonplaces of narrative foregrounded throughout the inquiry. My thoughts and readings on the metaphors of 'Life,' 'Love,' 'War,' and 'Journeys' (Lakoff & Johnsen, 1980), of the 'parade' (Geertz 1996), the 'Crazy quilt' (Steeves, 2000), the 'Learning carnival' (McGarrigle, 2017), and the 'River' (Gates, 2018) all coalesced in my mind's eye. All perfect and unique for each inquirer and inquiry, but not for me. The 'Life' in terms of 'Journey' metaphor (Lakoff & Johnsen, 1980) resonated with me, yet as a narrative inquirer, I envisage 'Life' as 'Experience' drawing from Dewey's (1938/1997, 1939/1988) work.

If one is on a journey, then it is reasonable to think there is a physical surface that bears your weight and provides guidance and direction (Katz & Taylor, 2008). There will be twists and turns, and you may find yourself at a crossroad, at a roadblock, lost, or in a safe place (Katz & Taylor, 2008). On a journey, you may happen upon places you have passed or trying to reach. As a journey finishes, you might find yourself delighted and relieved to have made it to the final destination and so cry out, 'Yes, we've finally made it to Disneyland!'. And so, with experiences, there can also be twists and turns and meetings and moments with others. Perhaps one day, I might find myself shouting from the rooftop, 'I've finally made it past my viva!' The conceptual metaphor of 'Experience' as 'Journey' stayed with me as I tried to reconcile such an analogy to my inquiry puzzle. There was something there, but not quite. Something felt, yet unseen. As if whatever I was searching for was just out of reach, thinly veiled before my eyes. I could see the outline and shape of it, but not the details. To relieve my sense of unease and prickliness, I did what I always did, I went onto Facebook, and the thin veil dropped before my eyes.

I began thinking narratively about a Facebook timeline as a guiding metaphor. I thought about how a timeline is created and used. Starting with a picture of ourselves, we create unique profiles containing personal information such as our gender, age, sexual preferences, educational history, places we've lived, where we've worked, religious identity, political identity, musical tastes, etc. We begin with a blank canvas and, in a sense, create digital stories to live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We write and share deeply reflexive accounts of who we see ourselves as or as we hope to be seen by others. Using the life timeline metaphor, one can move inward to the personal, which contains 'feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions' (Huber & Clandinin, 2002: 4), and one can move outward to see other people and timelines they are in relation with where, 'social

conditions...the conditions under which people's experiences and events are unfolding' (Huber & Clandinin, 2002: 12). Life timelines are temporal. Using this metaphor, one can move backward and forward to different times and places to experience a holiday, a family event, or a moment of sadness or joy. These storied timelines intersect with others they are in relation with, where posts and comments add layers to stories and experiences. Using this guiding metaphor, one can see the stories we live in, the cultural, societal, and institutional narratives, as well as the stories we live by (Clandinin, 2018). I had a sense of this guiding metaphor holding me upright and firm. It allowed movement in a familiar axis and dimension. It bore my methodology's weight and was beneath the surface but connected different parts of my inquiry to make a complete, functional, coherent whole (Richardson, 1994).

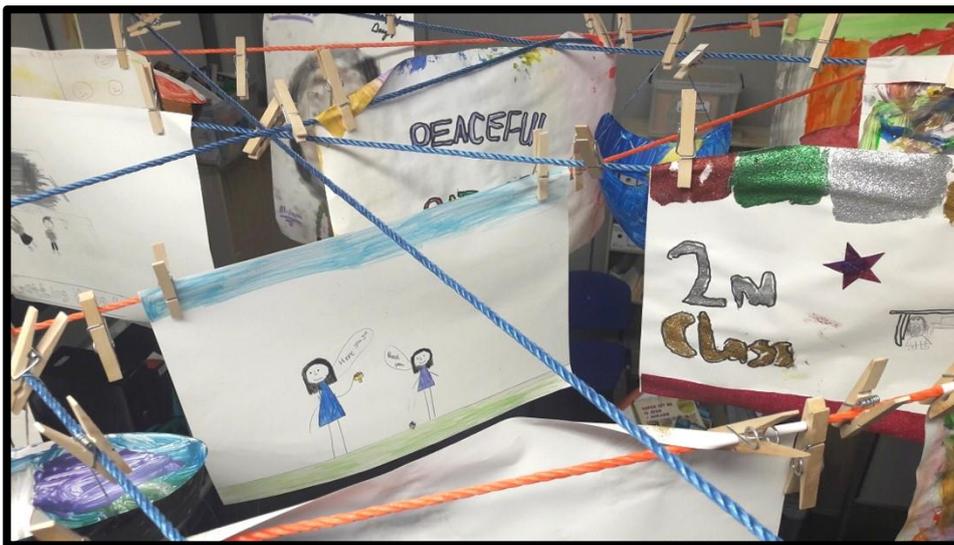


Image 1: Crossing, weaving, and intersecting timelines

1.3: Engaging with autobiographical stories

Narrative inquiries begin with and are sustained by a careful inquiry into stories of experience, and in many instances, such stories are, in essence, autobiographical.

Embracing autobiography opens up new ways to explore the dynamic features of narrative inquiry. It may even lessen the distance between science and art (Freeman, 2007) where 'the narratable self finds its home, not simply in the conscious exercise of remembering, but in the spontaneous narrating structure of memory' (Cavarero, 2000: 34). Of particular significance is the challenge posed by such inquiries' poetic dimensions (Freeman, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2004). Questions of authenticity, sincerity, and legitimacy arise whereby autobiographical stories are deemed unfit to take their place in the pantheon of positivist, academic, and/or scientific knowledge (Freeman, 2007). As does Freeman (2007), I make the case that engagement with the autobiographical opens up new ways and potentialities towards a 'more integrated, adequate, and humane vision for studying the human realm' (Freeman, 2007: 120). According to Arendt (1961: 43), 'autobiographical data are worth retelling only if they are felt unique, to possess some unrepeatable value' and so as I retrace my autobiographical beginnings, I endeavor to impart a unique life story that is shared by and through the curation of this text in the hope of it possessing an exceptional unrepeatable value in the eyes and hearts of the readers.

As a researcher who had the privilege of coming alongside eight primary school children, it was essential that I better understood who I was, who I was becoming, and who I am now. I do this because 'narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology,' where 'narrative inquirers need to continually inquire into their experiences before, during, and after each inquiry' (Clandinin 2013: 55). I understand I am fully complicit in my research puzzle. I cannot separate myself from it. The participants and I are co-constructors and co-collaborators where knowledge is generated through interaction and discourse (Dewey, 1938/1997; Biesta, 2010; Gergen, 2009). To acquire such knowledge, I must:

give up the spectator view of knowledge – the one which assumes that knowledge is about observing a static, observer-independent reality – and rather have to concede that the knowledge we gain through experimentation is knowledge about relationships and more specifically, about relationships between (our) actions and (their) consequences (Biesta, 2010: 495)

I, too, am in the midst, so I continue to make and remake my life. I view identity as performative (Riessman, 2008; O’Grady, 2014a) and storied (Clandinin & Huber, 2002, Clandinin et al. 2006) where through sharing their intimate experiences, the participants ‘performed multiple narratives of self and in the process began to unsettle fixed limiting identity categories’ (O’Grady, 2014a: 22). My understanding of identity is not confined to this singular way of knowing, and so I also turn to Butler (1990, 1995, 1997) and Cavarero (2000), who offer alternative entry points to understanding identity.

My life comprises the stories that I live, tell, retell, and relive (Clandinin, 2013). They are ever-changing and shifting in the temporal ebb and flow of my life in relation to others. We tell our stories, but we must also listen carefully as others tell theirs. In my endeavor to hear and to see children most fully, I draw on the thoughts and perspectives of Noddings (1984, 1986, 1992) to listen with care, to Greene (1994) to see ‘big,’ to Pelias (2011) to lean in, and Bateson (1994) to attend to wakefulness. I also draw elements from a critical childhood perspective (Corsaro, 1997; Luttrell, 2020), where children are seen as actively contributing to and sustaining both the social status quo and social change.

Paying close attention to who we are and understanding that we are part of the storied landscapes we inhabit helps us to acknowledge that we contribute to the making of the world we find ourselves in (Clandinin, 2013). Downey and Clandinin (2010: 387) tell us that it is crucial to return to earlier landscapes as we begin our narrative inquiries:

In narrative inquiry, we try to understand the stories under or on the edges of stories lived and told, as no story stands on its own, but rather in relation to many others including the stories of the narrative inquirers.

As I metaphorically move forward and backward, inward and outward, across my life timeline, it is clear my story does not begin, nor end, in one particular moment, nor comprise of a single life. It includes the interaction and interdependence of many lives, all interconnected and interwoven. At the intersection of these lives, some moments stand out as more meaningful or more poignant. It is moments such as these that I am drawn to over and over again. Entering into the living, telling, retelling, and relieving (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Huber et al., 2013) of my own story, I sense my past continuing to shape how I retell and relive remembered events in the present. In this way, I understood experience as something temporal, fleeting, and fluid (Dewey, 1938/1997).

In this section, I began to weave my way through some of the theoretical dimensions of engaging in autobiographical stories and presented my guiding metaphor's narrative structure and purpose. In the final section of my introduction, I give a brief overview of this thesis's remaining chapters.

1.4: Thesis structure

In 'Chapter 2: Narrative beginnings', I attempt to answer the question that Clandinin (2013: 81) poses, 'Who are you in this narrative inquiry?' This question is one I ask myself to begin thinking narratively about my life and my research puzzle. Who am I in this arts-based narrative inquiry with school children? How did I get here? Who am I in this narrative inquiry as a beginning teacher-researcher on the school-landscape? The tentative answers to such questions emerge alongside the stories of my participants. 'Chapter 3: Narrative inquiry – philosophical and theoretical dimensions', focuses on the philosophical and theoretical

dimensions of my inquiry while 'Chapter 4: Moving from the general to the particular' focuses on international and national literature of YCDI, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Social-Emotional Well-being (SEW), Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) as well as broader educational contexts, policies, and research. 'Chapter 5: Situating my inquiry with school children' describes my negotiated entry to the field where I entered into the midst and worked alongside participants as they lived, told, retold, and relived their unique stories and experiences. In Chapters 6 and 7: 'Coming into relationships - YCDI experiences and emerging stories to live by,' I use word images (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin et al., 2006; Clandinin & Huber, 2005) created from interim texts, field notes, and personal journal entries, to present my coming into relationships with each participant across the YCDI foundation of *Organisation*. I also offer insights about how education and educational research have opened up new ways of knowing and understanding in my inquiry by presenting the ultimate educational purpose of this thesis. In 'Chapter 8: YCDI Program Achieve foundations and experiences', I weave and piece together participants' experiences of the remaining four foundations of the YCDI program; *Confidence*, *Getting Along*, *Persistence*, and *Resilience*, that speak to their intimate understanding and experiences of the YCDI foundations and of the program itself. 'Chapter 9: New understandings of YCDI and narrative as methodology and phenomena' provides the conclusion to my thesis.

Chapter 2: Narrative Beginnings

2.0 Beginning

‘Who am I in this narrative inquiry?’ I ask this of myself to begin thinking narratively about my research. To address this curious question, I start by exploring theoretical aspects of autobiographical understanding, drawing from the work of Freeman (2002, 2003, 2007), Bruner (1991, 1992), Gustaf (1956/1980), Cavarero (2000), and Arendt (1959, 1977, 1978). This exploration led me to consider the challenges and the adherent potential within the narrative inquiry's autobiographical dimensions.

Following this, I attempt to unravel my narrative beginnings as they emerged through the entanglement with (Barad, 2007) and coming alongside the participants' lives. I begin with a conversation with Christopher, a 10-year-old boy who took part in my inquiry and drawing on moments of tension that I encountered during the workshops. Here, I explore a narrative understanding of tension as the bumping of lives (Clandinin, 2000) as well as the burning desire to have one's story told (Cavarero, 2000). Through careful engagement with his story and others, I seek to self-face (Cavarero, 2000, Clandinin et al., 2010) in an autobiographical strand of this inquiry. This process dovetails into the following sections of the chapter to narratively explore lives and stories in school. In doing so, I present the ‘epistemological dilemmas’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995: 24) I faced as I moved from into out-of-classroom places where stories unfolded on the school landscape through stories of school, school stories, teacher stories, and stories of teachers (Clandinin, 2006). Throughout this thesis, I pay close attention to the lives of the children who participated in this collaborative inquiry. In my research puzzle, I recognize they were active collaborators, constructors, inventors, and interpreters of culture and not simply adult socialization recipients (Luttrell, 2020, Biesta, 2019). Adopting a child-centric approach led me to adapt

the concept of teacher's personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). So I introduce a new term, students' *personal learner knowledge* (), in the hope of offering new language for knowing and understanding the lives of students and how they too unfold on the school landscape. In the final section of this chapter, my tentative research puzzle emerges as I make evident the aims of my inquiry.

2.1: Narrative beginnings - Thinking with Christopher

Engaging in autobiographical inquiries to trace our narrative beginnings is a crucial benchmark of any narrative puzzle. Yet, it does not mean all our stories enter into a final research text. Through the careful reading, writing, and rewriting of this chapter, I have succumbed to the feeling that 'the author and the text write each other' (St Pierre, 1997: 414). Writing and rewriting this chapter focused my attention on moments and embodied experiences in my life and my participants. Thinking narratively is complex and challenging work where 'many tears will be shed on our keyboards as we engage in those autobiographical narrative inquiries that ask us to self-face' (Clandinin, 2013: 82). Working closely with stories and attending with care leads as quickly to joy as to despair. So this process speaks to the relationality of becoming a narrative inquirer and feeling the embodied, sensuous nature of stories and how they work on and with us.

Dialogue vignette with Christopher – Workshop 1: Organisation, Monday 2nd October 2017

John: Will we have a look at the stuff up here, Christopher, and see if we can find anything? (We walk over to the pile of art materials) So, is there any image you'd like to create? It could have something to do with sport...or culture...try cut out a few pictures...do you have any idea? Do you play sports at school? At home? Soccer or anything? With your friends?

Christopher: I played hurling.

John: Brilliant! Fantastic...would you like to create something about that? I can give you this [newspaper], and you can cut out the images.

My reflexive (Finlay, 2002, 2003; Etherington, 2004) and diffracted (Barad, 2007) memory of this conversation with Christopher sits with me still. Reflection is an internal cognitive process that tends to stay:

at a conscious level, using what we already know about ourselves, while at the same time opening up the possibility of knowing ourselves better, as we create new meanings and gain new understandings through the process of writing and reflection. (Etherington, 2004: 28)

Reflexivity implies working on at least two levels. In the first instance, we need an understanding of the agentic self that is complicit in the research inquiry. With such an account, we can think back and reflect on our interactions with others and the surrounding milieus (Etherington, 2004). The second mode of operating takes place at an embodied, sensuous state, where we need to know what is happening in our hearts and minds.

Reflexivity 'implies a difference in how we view the 'self: as a 'real' entity to be 'discovered' and 'actualised' or as a constantly changing sense of our selves within the context of our changing world' (p.28). Throughout this inquiry, I engage in Introspective and intersubjective (Finlay, 2002, 2003) reflexive practice to attend to the emerging, negotiated, and relational nature of my inquiry.

Barad (2007) favours diffraction rather than reflection as it allows for an emphasis on patterns of difference as opposed to more restrictive representational tropes and limiting ideas of sameness (Dooling, 2009). In turn, this way of thinking back provides for the mutual entanglement of subject and object (Barad, 2007) where Cavarero (2000) tells us the narratable self 'is at once the transcendental subject and the elusive object of all the autobiographical exercises of memory' (p.34).

*Dialogue vignette with Christopher continued – Workshop 1: Organisation, Monday
2nd October 2017*



John: That looks great Christopher, is that going to be the grass?

Christopher: Yeah

John: Cool. Have you played any matches with the school recently, Christopher?

Christopher: Yeah...in fourth class

John: 4th class? Have you played any matches this year in 5th?

Christopher: No....I didn't get in.

John: Not yet, anyway. So can you tell me about the time you played football in 4th class? Who did you play against or who were you with? Do you remember? Probably just a couple of other boys from 4th class, was it?

Christopher: Yeah, but we played for the school as well like...

John: What was it like? Did you enjoy it? Did you play well? Do you remember?

Christopher: We mostly lost but I'm doing a picture about me scoring a goal.

John: Brilliant, I can't wait to see it.

In this moment and afterward, I am reminded of how I felt as our lives met in the workshop space. Thinking back, I see how shaky and unsteady my first footsteps into the realm of my inquiry were. My questioning was frantic as I attempted to inquire into Christopher's experience.

Where does your story begin? Beginning									
'Who were you with?': invites other characters into story									
'What happened then?' 'How long did that go on?' invites temporal nature of stories.									
'When did you realise that you could/couldn't accomplish your target?' – turning point									
'What kind of sense did you make of all that? meaning-making									
'What did that mean to you, when you accomplished your target?'- meaning-making									
Was that something you usually did? - cultural contextual									
Why do you think that happened? - cultural contextual									
When did you realise you had accomplished something? Middle									
What could you see/hear? -embodied nature of the students									
How did it look to you? - embodied nature of the students									
How did that affect you/make you feel/think? - embodied nature of the students									
What did your family think of that?' - Significance of other people									
'What did your teacher think of that?' - Significance of other people									
'What did your classmates think of that?' - Significance of other people									
What made you decide to do that/go there/say that?' - Choices and actions of the student									
'Why did you want to do that?' - Choices and actions of the student									
'What were you intending?' - Choices and actions of the student									
What was happening in the rest of your life at that time?' Historical continuity									
'Was anything else going on in your life outside of school?' Historical continuity									

Image 3: List of narrative questions

During the workshops, I adapted questions from Etherington's (2013, 2004) work on narrative approaches to case studies. In her work, she describes 'stories of lived experience (data) are co-constructed and negotiated between the people involved as a means of capturing the complex, multi-layered and nuanced understandings of the work so that we can learn from it' (Etherington, 2013: 2).

Adapted fieldnote entry, Workshop 1: Organisation, Monday 2nd October 2017

Christopher is a very quiet boy, and he found this collage work challenging. He might have found it challenging for many reasons. He may not have understood what collage work was. While we discussed collage as a group, I didn't show any images to the students as examples, so maybe he didn't know what 'collage' meant. This could have been a language barrier. As we made our way tentatively over to the pile of collage materials, I tried to offer some advice and tips. I asked him a few questions, but I was very wary about being the 'teacher.' I didn't want to tell him what to create. After all, it is supposed to be his own piece of artwork, created from his experience of the YCDI foundation of 'Organisation.' He told me that he played football in 4th class. I asked him does he play football in 5th class,

Christopher: "No. I didn't get in."

I felt like I'd really put my foot in it and brought up a painful memory for him. This made me feel ashamed that I had not been more careful with my questioning.

My embodied reaction was laid bare '*...put my foot in it...feel ashamed...felt bad*'. For Pelias (2011:2), embodiment entails a 'knowing, participatory, empathic, and political body' which 'encompasses both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms' (Varela et al., 1991: xvi). I had upset Christopher. Thinking back, I wonder, did Christopher sense my feelings? Had he noticed that I was upset and deeply troubled by what had just taken place between us? In this moment of uncertainty, I clung tightly to my teacher story as it supported and sustained my way of being within the workshop space. This teacher story needs to be unearthed like soil in a garden, where root and stem lay hidden. It requires turning to reveal and to renew itself.

Adapted fieldnote entry, Workshop 1: Organisation, Monday 2nd October 2017

I felt terrible for making him relive that moment when he didn't get picked. This moment of contrast between the YCDI program and its message of positive thinking, working hard, etc., and the harsh realities of school life for a boy in 5th class stood out starkly today. These moments with Christopher affected me today. I was not careful enough. I caused him hurt by my line of questioning. I console myself because I was sincere and came from a position of honesty, openness, and respect. Even with these good intentions, I failed and caused hurt.

At the time, I chose not to stay beside Christopher to share my thoughts and feelings with him. It was a moment of potential and possibility where something curious happened between us (O'Donnell, 2018), but I chose to move away. I withdrew from Christopher to speak with another participant. My thoughts of upsetting him led to feelings and emotions that are echoed throughout this experience. I gave in to my growing sense of vulnerability. I fell prey to my unease and took solace in the sanctuary of distance. The physical and metaphorical space that opened up between our lives lessened the tension for me. I felt relieved. Did Christopher? Did he observe the widening fissure between us? Was his story to live by (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) one where people sometimes walked away from him? Was mine one where I sometimes walked away from others if tensions arose? My response to Christopher was typical of my story in Scoil Firtéar. Lamentably, it was not the last time I lacked the composure, compassion, and courage to stay present when moments of tension arose. At this moment, I attempted to smooth out the tension (Clandinin et al., 2010) by distancing myself from Christopher. Now, I turn to self-face such moments.

Who was I, and who am I still becoming? How were my ways of knowing and understanding my participants shaping and being shaped by my experiences as an educator and researcher? In moving away from Christopher, he became small like a fading passer-by in a wing mirror. Greene (1995) tells us that seeing small sees from a detached perspective where behaviours are governed by a system concerned with trends and tendencies. I saw Christopher from a teacher/school perspective. But my view was tainted, and I could not see or hear him clearly. My story was shaping how I saw and heard Christopher, and it continued to shape my ways of knowing and being before, during, and after the workshops. What was this story of mine, and how was it pressing on Christopher and the other participants?

John's timeline – Monday 2nd October 2017: Preparing for the workshops (but not to see 'big')

What's on your mind?

Today I was consumed with following a plan. I was meticulous. I knew what I was going to do. I planned what questions to ask. I concentrated on being a diligent, organized researcher in all the ways I knew and understood it. I attended to the space to ensure it was safe, welcoming, and warm. I arranged the seats and tidied and hoovered the room. I attended to the relational space. We created our workshop rules such as 'Being respectful' and 'Listening to others.' I asked participants to call me by my first name in a vain attempt to shed my teacher identity. I attended the art materials by spending the weeks collecting, foraging, and buying what was needed. I attended to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space by hanging the participants' timelines across the ceiling. These physical timelines represented the participants' storied lives. They provided a means to exhibit our artwork. Yet they also spoke to the temporal dimensions of my inquiry, of the movement forward and backward, inward and outward, to previously lived experiences and others' future potential. This was my attempt to draw students into the dimensions of our narrative inquiry in a clear way by using my guiding metaphor. Yet when it came to Christopher, I failed to see what was unfolding right in front of me. I drew away from him. Why?

By bringing this 'I' story alongside Christopher's, I see that my focus during the workshop was on my methodology, doing things the right way, and being the ideal teacher-researcher (Forrest et al., 2010). Starting out as a teacher-researcher in your school with limited experiences, researchers typically cast themselves in the role of the ideal researcher (Forrest et al., 2000). Trying to become the ideal teacher-researcher is dangerous and fraught with setbacks, and so the work of Cavarero (2000), Arendt (1973/1998), and Forrest et al (2010) offer a way to respond to such 'right' ways of doing research. They suggest that one's desire to attain an ideal teacher-researcher story has to do with a misunderstanding of the relationship between the stories we tell ourselves, tell about ourselves, and the selves we uniquely are.

I wanted to see Christopher 'big' (Greene, 1995), to see at the edge of my vision (Bateson, 1994). Bateson (1994: 103-104) reminds us that:

I know that if I look very narrowly and hard at anything I am likely to see something new—like the life between the grass stems that only becomes visible after moments of staring. Softening that concentration is also important—I've heard that the best way to catch the movement of falling stars is at the edge of vision.

I also wanted to 'lean in' (Pelias, 2011) to stories told and listen with the attention that spoke to a 'deep listening, an ability to take in, an absorption. It calls for an individual's readiness and desire, depends upon that individual to be aware of his or her own situatedness, predilections, and behaviors' (p.61). Did I listen carefully? Did I lean in, or did I lean away? (Pelias, 2011) Returning to this conversation, I see that our lives met on the school landscape. As a narrative inquirer, I use Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conceptualization of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as my thesis framework. This framework equips me with a particular way of knowing and understanding student experience and offers ways to delve into my own storied life. In the next section, I begin thinking narratively about my life and my participants' lives. I consider how my story, which I brought with me into the inquiry, emerged through the entanglement with others. Through this process of coming alongside others, tensions arose.

2.2: Thinking narratively about lives and stories in school

I am still becoming a narrative inquirer. I become something more, something else, after each experience. This speaks to a Deweyan understanding of the continuity of experience, the construction of knowledge (Gergen, 2009), and a transactional ontology (Dewey, 1958). I narratively conceptualize the school landscape by bringing narrative inquiry theory alongside my guiding metaphor. On this bustling landscape, our lives converged and met (place). During interactions with each other and through created artworks, moments of meaning occurred (personal and social) and passed us by, as we lived through such moments (temporal). Using Dewey as a foundation for my understanding, Clandinin and

Connelly (2000: 50) tells us that:

our terms are personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third.

Thinking deeply with my experience with Christopher reconnects me to other times and places. Using my guiding metaphor allows me to travel back on my life timeline to different locations and landscapes. This movement drew me to Lugones' (1987:11) idea of world travelling where she tells us that:

Those of us who are "world"-travelers have the distinct experience of being different in different "worlds" and of having the capacity to remember other "worlds" and ourselves in them. We can say "That is me there, and I am happy in that "world." So, the experience is of being a different person in different "worlds" and yet of having memory of oneself as different without quite having the sense of there being any underlying difference.

I study collective experiences and activities (Luttrell, 2020) to make sense of, understand, and explain these socially constructed processes. I know that experiences under study are temporal, contextual, situated, and in transition (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). As a narrative inquirer, I can only give a written account of how I interpreted my participants' experiences of the way they were at that moment of experiencing. My 'writing is always partial, local, and situational' (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005: 1415). I am inquiring into experience and so 'study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 18). In a chapter from Charon and Montello's book 'Stories Matter (2002)', A. Morris talks about the concept of thinking 'with' stories and not simply 'about' stories. Narrative inquiry is not merely the regurgitating of told stories onto paper. It is a far more robust methodology than this and one that I fervently

endeavor to advocate through critical and reflective practice anchored in the study of experience (Finlay, 2002, 2003; Etherington, 2003, 2004). Morris (2002: 196) makes the distinction that:

The concept of thinking with stories is meant to oppose and modify (not replace) the institutionalized Western practice of thinking about stories. Thinking about stories conceives of narrative as an object. Thinker and object of thought are at least theoretically distinct. Thinking with stories is a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative as take the radical step back, almost a return to childhood experience, of allowing narrative to work on us

As a narrative inquirer, I think with stories. I view them as primarily relational (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This relationality is multi-faceted and complex, yet crucial, as it addresses the underpinnings of narrative inquiry as a relational methodology (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Thinking narratively shapes my inquiry in a particular way. It highlights the temporality of knowledge creation by drawing attention to experience as always in flow, tending from one to the next, with each one leaving an impression on us that we draw forward from the past to affect the future. For Dewey (1938/1997), life, education, and experience are one and the same. The principles of interaction and continuity constitute them. So narrative inquiry in education seeks to 'honour teaching and learning as complex and developmental in nature, seeking connections and continuous engagement in reflection and deliberation' (Kim, 2015: 18).

Theorizing narratively also brought me alongside social constructionist discourses and dialogues (Gergen, 2009). Social constructionism invites us to reflect on our assumptions, practices, traditions, and culture, as does narrative inquiry. It provides us with opportunities to construct new forms of understanding, new ways of making lives, to create new possibilities together with participants (Gergen, 2009). Gergen describes how we approach the world differently and that this difference is rooted in our social relationships.

We also learn something from Butler (2011: xix) as she tells us:

construction is neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes place in time but is itself a temporal process

From a social constructionist standpoint and similar to narrative inquiry, I see how our worlds are co-constructed and emerge through relationships with others. My actions are not constituted by anything traditionally accepted as true, correct, or rational. I stand at the threshold of possibility and 'an endless invitation to innovation' where we can 'cross the threshold into new worlds of meaning...the future is ours together to create' (Gergen, 2009: 5).

2.3: Understanding tensions as the bumping of lives

In my conversation with Christopher, I sensed my uncertainty, inadequacy, and vulnerability, so I was drawn to the evident 'centrality of relational narrative ethics as we live in the midst of tensions' (Clandinin et al., 2010: 81). I am intrigued by this tension, as it arose time and time again. Sometimes, as the bumping of lives occurred between students...

*Dialogue vignette with John, Dariya, Janette, Aabir, and Amanda – Workshop 2:
Organisation, Monday 2nd October 2017*

John: Dariya, Aabir, and Christopher, could you turn your chairs, please? I'd like you to face the whiteboard. So, this is a very special part of the workshop. We are going to audience our art before we post any of our pieces onto our timelines. I need an artist to volunteer. Now, we might not get to talk about each piece every week, but I'm hoping to get a volunteer. Amanda, would you like to start?

Amanda: Ok

(Dariya picks up a marker and is about to write something on the whiteboard)

John: Dariya?

Dariya: Yes.

John: What were you going to write? Dariya: Boys are poopy John: Oh...

Aabir: Stop, Dariya!

(Dariya writes 'Boys are poopy' on the board)

John: What does that mean to you, Dariya?

Dariya: That boys are poopy. (Dariya bursts out laughing)

Or during moments of ambiguity or disruption where my story bumped against the lives of my participants...

*Dialogue vignette with John, Dariya, Janette, Aabir, and Amanda continued -
Workshop 2: Organisation, Monday 2nd October 2017*

John: Oh, ok, right.

Baahir: Why are you doing that? (toward Dariya)

Janette: Mr. Meegan?

Aabir: Call him 'JOHN.'

John: Yeah, you can call me John, no problem.

Janette: I thought you were a spy or something.

John: A spy?

Janette: You remind me of a spy

John: Oh...Dariya, can I have the markers, please?

Dariya: Aabir still has one

(Aabir passes me the marker)

Aabir: There

John: Thank you, Aabir. I need everyone to really concentrate because this is a really important part, well, I think it's important, and hopefully, you'll think the same.

So, we're going to have a look at Amanda's piece.

Dariya: It's Beauuutiful (she shouts out loud)

In class, teachers live out who they are and who they are becoming with their students in safe ways. This knowing and being can be described as a teacher's personal practical knowledge and so:

is in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the person's future plans and actions...It is a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988: 25)

During the workshops, I inhabited a space with students where a duality of roles, a multiplicity of positions, seemed to coexist. I was at once a teacher and a teacher researcher, and they the students and research participants. I sensed my personal practical knowledge being unpicked and disrupted as our stories came alongside each other, but what of my participants? I re-orientated and adapted the idea of personal practical knowledge to introduce students' personal learner knowledge as a means of knowing students as

'knowledgeable and knowable' (p.25). This knowledge is personal, experiential, and shaped by learners' beliefs and values. It is also practical. It is curated and formed by learners' intimate knowing of the school landscape, where they too live out stories of being and becoming as their lives unfold alongside their peers and teachers on the school landscape. The vignettes above speak to the tensions I faced as a teacher-researcher in my school. The disjunction between my personal practical knowledge where, as a teacher, I knew what ways to act and decisions to make alongside students bumped against my new positioning as a teacher-researcher with research participants. I also sensed tension as the participants, equipped with their personal learner knowledge of knowing and being as students alongside teachers and classmates, continued to negotiate this new space. From a narrative inquiry perspective, tensions are understood relationally. Tensions are not thought to have a negative weight. Instead, they offer opportunities and ways of creating a space between lives and experiences that can exist in educative ways (Clandinin et al., 2010). I felt unsure about who I was and who my participants might have imagined me to be in the moments above and many more after. This led me to wonder about the insecurities felt by my participants, as they, too, negotiated who they were and who they were becoming.

Personal Journal Entry: Workshop 3: Confidence: October 16th 2017

I wonder what role they see me as? It is very confusing to me, and I'm sure it is for the students too. I wonder if now that my role as the teacher is being eroded each time we meet, what role do I have? If I'm not a teacher and if I have now lost all the essence of being a teacher, the authority, the power, the rules, the consequences if they have been washed away, what am I left with, or left as? I am clearly in a vulnerable state. I feel vulnerable and confused, but I must persevere. Hopefully, a renewed sense of shared respect for all of us will emerge because there have been many instances when the participants showed a lack of care and respect for others and me.

I have come to see moments of uncertainty, vulnerability, and tension as integral threads, weaving through my story and my research puzzle. In my exploration of tension, the work of Adriano Cavarero in 'Relating Narratives-Storytelling and Selfhood' (2000) also had much to

offer. Next, I present a different reading of my own, and my participants shared experiences and the tensions that arose by suggesting my arts-based workshops were sites of narrative relations (Cavarero, 2000) where one's uniqueness was revealed in one's desire to have one's story told. In my case, the story of a beginning teacher-researcher (Forrest et al., 2010).

2.4: Understanding tensions as the desire to have one's story told

Fieldnote: Workshop 1: Monday, October 2nd, 2017 (Pt.1)

Aabir told me that he had read the letter and information sheet that I had sent home. He asked was I in Maynooth university. He also told me that he knew that I wanted to do an 'experiment' and that that was the reason he and the other students were taking part in the workshops. I shouldn't have been surprised. After all, I was the one who typed the information letters, one for the parents/guardians and one for the students. It was meant to be read! I was surprised by this. I was taken aback, almost as if Aabir had uncovered a secret of mine. I felt like he had unmasked me in front of all the participants. I felt immediately vulnerable and out there, wide open, for all to see.

The use of stories in teacher education (Forrest et al., 2010) and identity formation (Clandinin & Huber, 2009; Estola, 2003; Webb, 2005; Cattley, 2007; Maclean & White, 2007; Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Edwards & Edwards, 2017) are ubiquitous; yet the use of stories in beginning teacher-researcher practice are less so. Especially stories of those about to enter into arts-based narrative inquiries in their schools. Here, I suggest my arts-based workshops were political sites (Arendt, 1958/1998; Cavarero, 2000) where 'who' I was, was partially revealed in my desire to have my story told, in this case, the story of a beginning teacher-researcher. 'Political' in this sense draws from an Arendtian understanding of the term where 'human beings appear to one another not as physical objects, but as men' (Arendt, 1958/1998: 179-80). They reveal their own unique identities in a plural and political space through action and discourse and confirm to identity its 'exhibitive, relational, and contextual nature' (Cavarero, 200: 22). I understand this act as

'eminently political' (Todd, 2010: 102). Forrest et al (2000) focused on understanding narratives in teacher education in the hope of 'understanding the irresolvable tension of desire to have one's story told' (Forrest et al., 2010: 2). I continue this conversation with Forrest et al (2000) but re-draw their contention boundaries by using my research to foreground the tension between my beginning teacher-researcher's life and my life-story. By attempting to understand the irresolvable tension of my desire to have my story told, I hope other teacher-researchers may better recognize their vulnerabilities and that of their participants and of researching at the starting place of ethics (Forrest et al., 2010).

Fieldnote: Workshop 1: Monday, October 2nd, 2017 (Pt.2)

My role as the teacher was gone. Aabir saw me as some kind of mad scientist doing an 'experiment.' Does this mean that he/they are my experimentees? Are they my lab animals? Oh god! This is a very uncomfortable position. I'll need to reflect on this. I wanted to position myself as a non-intrusive member of the group, but for Aabir, I am a scientist experimenting. I hope through the course of the workshops that his impression of me changes. I value his and others' opinions of me. I think all teachers do, no matter how much they deny it. Like everyone else, we like to be liked.

For beginning teacher-researchers, who are about to engage in narrative inquiries in their schools, a careful and considered negotiation of relationships and entry into the research field is crucial. There is inevitable coming into relationships with others such as participants, parents and guardians, supervisors, cooperating teachers, and school management in this process. Through this series of experiences, narratives of those relationships emerge and accumulate. The posts above speak to this coming alongside and relationship building with Aabir, and it also speaks to tension and the bumping of lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). By considering these moments as interactive and exhibitivite (Cavarero, 2000), as political sites, we also sense a vulnerability and a burning desire, my desire, to attain unity between my life as the ideal beginning teacher-researcher and the story told by others.

I write in my fieldnotes, *'I hope through the course of the workshops that his (Aabir's) impression of me changes.'* Here, I strive for a resolution or closure of this tension between us. I feel these posts are likely to resonate with other teacher-researchers as they search for unity between their personal expectations of how they should be as researchers and the realities of engaging with a living, breathing inquiry. Starting out, teacher-researchers typically cast themselves in the ideal researcher's role (Forrest et al., 2000). I hear myself saying, *'I value his (Aabir) and the others' opinions of me. I think all teachers do, no matter how much they deny it. Like everyone else, we like to be liked.'* I had an image of the kind of researcher I wanted to be, *'non-intrusive, 'we like to be liked,'* and of the values, I wanted to uphold. This quest for narrative unity where *'the identity of a unique being has its only tangible unity – the unity that he/she seeks because it is unique - in the tale of his/her story.'* (p.40) emerges from a misconception of the narrative relation between the stories we tell ourselves, about ourselves, and the selves we uniquely are.

The 'who' I am seemingly permeated from the posts through my autobiographical retelling of the events. On reading these posts, you might glean 'who' I am as an organized, diligent teacher-researcher as I had sent out letters and information sheets to parents, guardians, and students. You may also feel the embodied dilemma of my situation and see 'who' I am as *'taken aback,' 'uncovered,' 'unmasked,' 'vulnerable,'* and *'wide open.'* Although the unique singularity that I am comprised of seems to expose himself through these stories, my uniqueness is not being recognized by my participants. Amid the group, I experienced the process of having who I was being redefined by my participants in

comments, remarks, and attitudes where 'who each one is, is revealed to others when he or she acts in their presence in an interactive theatre where each is, at the same time, actor and spectator.' (Cavarero, 2000: 22)

Dialogue vignette with John and Aabir: Workshop 1: Monday, October 2nd, 2017
Aabir: I know why you're asking us these questions. I read the form and it says that you're a college student.
John: Haha...and what else do you know?
Aabir: And it says that you wanted to do an experiment, like, you want to see if the YCDI foundations if they actually help. Something like that.
John: Yes, I suppose, yes hopefully... but that's not the only reason, but yes, it's a little bit of the focus. I suppose I want to get to know you all a little bit more, and if you have something you want to tell me or to share, just like we've been doing today...that's all.

Aabir described me as someone who wanted to do an 'experiment,' and it upset me. It was not the only time the children's stories of me seemed to bump against my autonarration. In later workshops, Dariya described how she saw me as a spy as I tried to take a picture of some artwork she was working on. On another occasion, Janette seemed to story me as a spy too...

Dialogue vignette with John, Janette, and Aabir: Workshop 2: Monday, October 9th, 2017
Janette: Mr. Meegan?
Aabir: Call him John
John: Yes, you can call me John, no problem.
Janette: I thought you were a spy or something.
John: A spy?
Janette: You remind me of a spy

Such moments had a profound impact on my ways of knowing and being during and after the workshops, as noted in my fieldnotes.

Personal journal entry, Organisation Workshop 1 Oct 2nd, 2017
This felt like a big moment for me. I felt vulnerable, like Aabir had obtained some of my personal life, and blurted it out in the middle of the workshop...He also referred to the research as an 'experiment.' This conjures images of mad scientists, of testing, of cold hard labs and clean, crisp edges...nothing like the soft, embracing

nature of the research place I wanted so badly to create. Again, I have to be fastidious with my workshops. All I can do is position myself in the most nonintrusive position that I can, yet still gather stories, record the workshops, take field notes, take photographs...

Personal journal entry, Getting Along Workshop 5, November 11th, 2017
Again, what role do I have or am I trying to perform? I was positioned as a ‘spy’ today by Dariya. I was spying on her work. She said this while I was taking a photograph of her art. I have been referred to as a scientist experimenting and twice as a spy, once by Janette and today by Dariya. A spy is a person undercover, covert, mistrustful, a person being someone who they are not. I am trying to be a researcher, a teacher–researcher, but I do not know how successful I am being. Clearly to Dariya, I am not. Dariya is making the workshops much more challenging than I had expected, but this is research, and I need to be persistent and see what emerges.

Cavarero (2000) gives us an account of the self as a desiring self, where he or she is exposed and vulnerable thus conferring ‘the ontological status of the ‘who’ – as exposed, relational, altruistic – is totally external’ (p.89). In the moments above, I was vulnerable, and my desire for narrative unity created tension between my own life and its narration or life-story (Cavarero, 2000) as told by Aabir, Janette, and Dariya. In the vignette with Aabir and the field and journal note above, I am caught in mid-desire between my need to be narrated as ‘non-intrusive,’ ‘fastidious,’ and above all, a desire to be liked. My abhorrence at being likened to some kind of scientist who wants to do an ‘experiment’ or as a ‘spy’ is evident. My life story, self-narrated through my autobiographical fieldnotes and journal entries, encountered its tale told by Aabir, Janette, and Dariya, and so ‘biography and autobiography are bound together in a single desire’ (Cavarero, 2000: 33). I tentatively suggest that the narrative relation between Aabir, Janette, Dariya, and I, which saw my desire for narration encounter its own tale only to become upset by this narration, is, according to Cavarero and Arendt, a political activity. How, then, can Cavarero’s insight help other teacher-researchers as they begin their narrative inquiries and, by extension, help other researchers who may be about to embark on similar journeys?

2.5: The inescapability of desire

One way of using Cavarero's conceptualization of narrative relations is to work within the narrative tradition, which foregrounds persons' uniqueness and interactions (Forrest et al., 2010). For this, I use Cavarero's re-telling of the story of Oedipus. Oedipus frees Thebes by solving the monstrous Sphinx's riddle, 'Which animal walks first with four legs, then with two and finally with three?' with the answer 'Man' (Cavarero, 2000: 14). Cavarero's reading of this is that Oedipus shares in the Sphinx's knowledge of the universal. Universal here refers to philosophy (Cavarero, 2000). By answering the riddle, Oedipus becomes the bearer of the Sphinx's knowledge, with the implication being that the knowledge of Man, of universality, is monstrous (Cavarero, 2000). Cavarero's thinking can be understood in two ways. First, the knowledge humans possess is monstrous because it has been abstracted from personal experience's uniqueness (Forrest et al., 2010) and distilled into theory. Secondly, the knowledge about humans is monstrous, as it is universal. It presents itself as generalizable and neutral, yet it is masculine. (Forrest et al., 2010) Cavarero sees the Sphinx riddle as offering a different kind of logic to philosophy, of generalizable, monstrous universalities, that is, a philosophical discourse in reverse, 'First came the definition in the interrogative form – then its object, as a response.' (Cavarero, 2000: 8). The use of this story in teacher-researcher practice may also be seen as imposing the logic of the riddle. (Forrest et al., 2010).

Stories as an apparatus are the means through which we come to live, be, and be of the world. Leggo (2008: 7) tells us that 'When I recount a story, I seek to hold it in the present in order to understand how better to live now and tomorrow.' Stories present situations for which meaning or interpretation is absent, and therefore questions of purpose and meaning are left unanswered. The pitfall is to assume that the compelling meaning is

found in the story's particulars (Cavarero, 2000; Forrest et al., 2010). While I am immersed in my own life story, according to Cavarero, I am not constituted by the text or the performative power of narration (Butler, 1997). Instead, I coincide with the 'uncontrollable narrative impulse of memory that produces the text, and is captured in the very text itself' (Cavarero, 2000: 35) where 'the familiar sense of the narratable self...lies rather in a narrating impulse that is never in 'potentiality' but rather in 'actuality.' (Cavarero, 2000: 35) For Cavarero, the view that the specifics of a text somehow construct the self through language 'risks swallowing the unrepeatable uniqueness of the existent.' (Cavarero, 2000: 42) The point of using my predicament is not to figure out what 'I' should do. As readers, we desire conflict resolution. In my case, discussing possible solutions to my dilemma could be very helpful for beginning teacher-researchers. Such a discussion could offer others space for thinking through different outcomes and their potential consequences, but I suggest that Cavarero's insight serves a further, crucial function.

My desire for the resolution or closure of conflict imitates the desire for narrative harmony that Cavarero says remains forever incomplete (Cavarero, 2000). My point here is to emphasize the importance of this particular insight for other teacher-researcher practitioners. To enter into the midst of a narrative inquiry and to assume that there is a tangible 'right way' to act for each possible situation you may find yourself in is to misinterpret the nature of practical judgement (Forrest et al., 2010). Believing such a re-enactment is possible, by trying to live an ideal story, is to exacerbate the illusion of this unity, the resolution of one's story and hence one's disappointment (Forrest et al., 2010). In recognizing the inescapability of the desire to know one's life story in its completeness, teacher-researchers may come to understand that the disjunction between the stories they

tell about their practice as a researcher and the life they live is not irreconcilable with their ideals (Forrest et al., 2010). My life and life-story were suspended in the tension of my desire to live up to an ideal where:

Everyone looks for that unity of their identity in the story (narrated by others or by herself), which, far from having a substantial reality, belongs only to desire. The desire orients both the expectations of the one who is narrated and the work of the one who narrates. (Cavarero, 2000: 41)

Recognizing this tension may prepare future teacher-researchers themselves for the life of practice, always desiring to be a unified ideal (Forrest et al., 2010). Now, we see the importance of recognizing the impossibility of being the self of one's own story because one's own story is still being told where:

She knows she is a narratable identity, but also knows that only another can correct the fallacy of the autobiographical impulse. The unity of desire – namely, the unity entrusted to the tale that everyone desires -is...the irreflective object of the desire for the unity of the self in the form of a story (Cavarero, 2000: 40).

My desire to be recognized as a 'who' in my arts-based workshops cannot, according to Cavarero, be fulfilled by the narrative of my own life. Instead, my uniqueness emerges, not in my life story's details but in the narrative relationship itself. In this case, the narrative relation with my participants where who one is as a teacher-researcher 'is constituted in the attitudes one brings to this tenacious narrative relationship and the capacities one develops as a result of constantly coming to terms with one's desire to be narrated well' (Forrest et al., 2010: 97).

2.6: Back to school

Each time I return to my conversation with Christopher, I sense my unease and discomfort. Why? In my attempt to answer this question and see Christopher 'big' (Bateson, 1994), I

return to a reconstructed memory thread of my moving from primary to post-primary school.

John's timeline – My early school years (part 1)

What's on your mind?

In primary school, I always worked and studied hard. I tried my best to be a good student. I was never excellent. This was beyond me, yet I was quietly confident in my abilities. I was slightly arrogant, with a somewhat conflated view of my potential. This was a story I told to myself and about myself. It was one that many of my teachers told about me also, through my report cards and parent-teacher meetings. I came to know my student self as being academically capable through diligence and hard work. From a very young age, my story to live by was taking shape. I was comfortable within this story, and it served me well during my primary going years.

I view the self as fluid, contextual, and emergent (Reismann, 2008). From a social constructionist lens, our world becomes meaningful through relationships, so we look to relationships as the source of all meaning (Gergen, 2009). One's 'who-ness' (Cavarero, 2000) also emerges through stories told about us, by others, as we interact and live out our daily lives. These stories 'are stitched into the ways of seeing, knowing, and being that are made available to us in our culture: discourses that are often invisible' (O'Grady et al., 2018: 2).

During my earliest school years, I began to live out my good student story. It was a story I cherished, so I brought it with me as I moved to post-primary level. This story resurfaced alongside Christopher's, as I began to look back over the 'terrain of the personal past' to 'discern new meanings' (Freeman, 2010: 6) that were unavailable in the moment of experiencing. This search for new ways of knowing, in particular self-knowing, becomes a practice bound to historical understanding, as well as to the idea of accountability (Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001). I understand this new way of knowing and accounting for one's past,

unhinges meaning, making it more fluid, 'as much as a function of 'now' as 'then'' (Freeman, 2010: 6).

John's timeline – My early school years (part 2)

What's on your mind?

When I made the transition to post-primary level, my story to live by began to bump against the lives of many of the other boys in my school. In an all-boys school, stories of being 'hard,' 'tough,' and 'cool' were the most important. To avoid confrontation, I shifted my story to live by. I distanced myself from my good student story. This distancing enabled me to navigate the daily routines of post-primary school in a frictionless way. My story of working and studying hard, of doing my best, became marginalized at school, only to be lived out at home under the weight of my parent's expectations. My shifting story in school became one of not caring about school or my exam marks. In those first three years in secondary school, I lived a story untrue to myself. This juxtaposition, between my marginalized and shifting story, caused me much internal strain and strife. I would travel (Lugones, 1987) each day as I took the bus from home to school. Lugones (1987, p.10) describes 'world' as a complex mixture of place, circumstance, and identity all woven together to create a 'construction of life' (p.10). She explained that a 'world':

may be an actual society given its dominant culture's description and construction of life, including a construction of the relationships of production, of gender, race, etc. But a "world" can also be such a society given a non-dominant construction, or it can be such a society or a society given an idiosyncratic construction. (:10)

As I present my reconstructed stories, I am aware of the difficulties posed by such modes of writing and the possibilities. Deleuze (1993/1997:1) tells us that 'writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any liveable or lived experience' where 'no textual staging is ever innocent (including this one)' (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, 2005: 1141). Such writing as inquiry:

directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times...it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone. Nurturing our own voices releases the censorious hold of "science writing" on our consciousness as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche; writing is validated as a method of knowing (p.1414)

I interpret what has already been constructed in my imagination and present such memories as 'data' so that others might read and glean something new from my recollections. Such data might be referred to as dream, sensual, emotional, and response data (St Pierre, 1997).

John's timeline – My early school years (part3) What's on your mind?

My daily bus journey created distance between both of my worlds. I was a different person in both places. At home, my good student story prevailed, in school, my shifting story emerged. I recall my parents' expectations of me to attain good grades and continue living my good student story. They were unaware of my daily life at school. As I progressed, I found subject content and exams more challenging. I needed to work much harder to keep my marks up. Yet, I lived a shifting story that prevented me from fully engaging in class. Reflecting/reflexing on this time in my life causes an embodied reaction in me now. I feel anger and shame. I feel the embarrassment and tension that I once felt as a student leading two lives. Were those lives so incommensurable? I wonder how many other schoolmates lived a story such as mine. How many shifting stories were left at the school gates, only to be played out at home?

This memory reconstruction, and others I present throughout my inquiry, is an attempt to answer Pelias' (2011:50) embodiment task:

Take yourself back to an intense experience. Think about what your body felt. Try to bring back your body's memory. What were you seeing and hearing? What was your body doing? Reach into the past and pull it forward. Once you feel you have recreated that experience in your mind, find its language. Describe the moment so that readers might feel what you felt. Now write what your body forgot.

Retracing this embodied experience, as my life came alongside Christopher's and the other participants, led me to wonder about the children's lives and stories in my workshop. I wonder what embodied emotions Christopher felt as he told me his story of not making the team in 5th class? Did he feel anger at having not been picked for the sports team? Maybe he felt shame or embarrassment. As he world-traveled (Lugones, 1987) into school each day, did his story to live by at home sit comfortably alongside the story he was living and telling in school? It seems that the memories and emotions of my good student story and my shifting story to live by heightened the tensions I felt. My experiences were shaping my knowing and

ways of being with Christopher as a student. In that lived moment, distance provided safety for me, as it had done in the past. Bringing my story alongside Christopher's makes me keenly aware of another autobiographical thread in need of unravelling.

2.7: Becoming a teacher and teacher-researcher

Freeman (2010: 10) tells us that autobiographical understanding becomes a matter of:

wrestling with one's own inner demons, of discerning how one has fared in relation to one's own personal standards and ideals. Pride, gratitude, and a sense of integrity may emerge...Conversely, there can also be shame, resentment, and despair on viewing my life's wreckage, to think that I have fallen so sorely short of my own potential.

The purpose of an autobiographical inquiry is not to smooth out past actions to leave a neat and tidy tale (Gusdorf, 1980). Such actions attempt to reconstruct the 'unity of life across time' (p.37), which 'the resultant product being an expression of the innermost dimensions of the self' (p.37).

John's timeline – Becoming a teacher and teacher-researcher (part 1)

What's on your mind?

As a student in secondary school, I negotiated life between home and school. As I moved from post-primary school to third level to qualify as a teacher, my good student story came to the fore again. I left the tension and turmoil this story once caused behind me. In living out my good student story once again, I felt reborn and rejuvenated. This story grew to become my good teacher story, which I brought with me onto the school landscape. This continuation speaks to the principle of the continuity of experience (Dewey, 1938/1997) and is a constant reminder that our pasts continue to impact our lives.

I retell such stories, not in an attempt to reconcile past regrets or mistakes (Gusdorf, 1980), but to illuminate present opportunities and different ways of understanding. Writing in this way 'breaks down the distinction in conventional qualitative inquiry between data collection and data analysis' as 'strange and wonderful transitions from word to word, sentence to sentence, thought to unthought' (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005: 1428) to light up the page.

John's timeline –My first inspection memory poem What's on your mind?

*The inspector
entered the room.
she asked for my plans
she struggled under their weight
I began with a math lesson.
I felt
I was doing well*

*The kids started
to get very giddy
I used
my sternest voice
"Once more, Alia, and I'll move you onto the 'red' step!"
I sensed
a fearful silence*

*The inspector
immersed in my copybooks,
leafed through them
I finished
the three lessons
exhausted*

*My inspector was frank
and honest.
I was well organized
my resources were impeccable
so were my displays
but my teaching
had a lot to be desired*

*"You would fail
if this was
your final visit.
You have
an awful lot of
improving to do."*

Reflecting on my first inspection memory poem, I sense my story as a good teacher bumping against the children's lives in my class. I was too preoccupied with being organised and

diligent. I had failed to carry out my primary duty of being a caring, attentive teacher. I saw the children in a small way. They were not organised or diligent, as I expected them to be. Their stories fell outside of my focus (Bateson, 1994). I was unable to see them big (Greene, 1995). This bumping of lives caused tension to emerge between the students and me. There was also an internal struggle between my image of an ideal teacher (Cavarero, 2000; Forrester et al., 2010) and the reality of teaching in school. I see how my story shaped my ways of knowing and being with the children, but as the years passed, I learned to listen more and pay more attention to the unfolding lives in front of me.

As I attended more closely to the children in my school, I continuously faced dilemmas that disrupted my teacher story. I began to realize that my story no longer positively served the children or me. O'Donnell (2018: 38) tells us that:

Experiences of hesitation, that force us to think, are part of educational experiences, that is, of the encounter with the unknown.... Thinking can feel violent and disturbing, something seldom acknowledged in the images of smooth progression that one finds in discourses of lifelong learning.

In time the students' lives and stories shaped my ways of knowing and being as an educator. Experiences in school caused my story to shift, and I slowly let go of the good teacher story I once held so close. My capacity to change and to be changed flourished. I realise that the story I led limited and inhibited my ability to see the wonder of children, who didn't fit within my story of being organised and diligent. Because of this story, I could not see children big, like I could not see Christopher. By bringing my story alongside Christopher's and others, I understand that I was, and still am, in the process of becoming. Why do I continue to find this becoming such a challenge? This is not an easy question to answer, yet by engaging in narrative inquiry, possibilities for deeper understandings emerge. To better

understand my response to shared moments with Christopher, I turn to narrative ways of conceptualizing teacher knowledge and the school landscape.

2.8: Understanding school contexts narratively

The professional knowledge landscape creates epistemological dilemmas for teachers understood narratively as secret, sacred, and cover stories as they move from in-classroom to out-of-classroom places (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Such terms offer 'a map useful for studying the dynamics of the relations between teachers' personal practical and professional knowledge' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995:25). Secret stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) are stories teachers live and share in their classrooms. Teachers also share secret stories with trusted colleagues in the staffroom's quiet corners or far-off on the schoolyard. Moving to out-of-classroom places, they live and share cover stories with others. In such stories, teachers:

portray themselves as experts, certain characters whose teacher stories fit within the acceptable range of the story of school being lived in the school. Cover stories enable teachers, whose teacher stories are marginalized by whatever the current story of school is, to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996: 25).

Out of classroom places are places where teachers encounter sacred stories as:

Researchers, policymakers, senior administrators, and others, using various implementation strategies, push research findings, policy statements, plans, improvement schemes, and so on down what we call the conduit into this out-of-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996: 25).

I had a sense of the workshops being an in-classroom place, where I spent time alongside students in familiar ways that spoke to my personal practical knowledge. Simultaneously, I also sensed being in an out-of-classroom place as a teacher-researcher with research participants, a place removed from the familiar hum and rhythm of the classroom.

The Scoil Firtéar is a vast school complex with 24 mainstream classrooms, almost 700 children, and a staff of over 60. To fully attend to participants' experiences, I must attend to the interconnected narrative threads that Scoil Firtéar comprises. Using the map of secret, sacred, and cover stories to understand individual teacher knowledge, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) also showed how teacher stories unfold by making a distinction between teacher stories, stories of teachers, school stories, and stories of school (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). I conceptualize Scoil Firtéar as a weave of students' and teachers' lives, all interconnected and interwoven. Conflicting stories bump against dominant stories of school while competing stories live in dynamic flux with dominant stories of school (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Like other narrative inquirers (Huber 2008; Gates, 2018), I, too, felt tensions as my personal practical knowledge bumped against the storied knowledge context of Scoil Firtéar.

Stories of school are stories told about a particular school by others such as the community, the board of management, families, the department inspectorate, and practitioners, both in and outside the school context. Upon entering Scoil Firtéar, I heard one story that described how many of the children came from lower socio-economic backgrounds and had language difficulties. The school had a very high level of newcomer children (Garvey, 2017), and therefore stories of language difficulties were widely shared by parents and staff. In the first national study of newcomer children in Irish schools, Smyth et al. (2009) found that over half of both primary and post-primary school principals reported language difficulties among most or more than half of their newcomer students. This story echoed in my vignette with Christopher, as I clarify my concern about language difficulties and the potential it had to confuse and even exclude students. Christopher, Dariya, Janette, Aabir, Amanda, Farrah, Katie, and Baahir, were all newcomer children. 'Newcomer' is a term

widely used in educational policies. So I take my understanding of the term from Smyth et al (2009: 41) to mean 'students from families where both parents are from outside Ireland, whether or not the student's first language is English/Irish.' Another story of school was that it was a place of community and inclusivity. The Scoil Firtéar ethos was one where:

The school becomes a center of the local community. Children are encouraged and supported in living their lives to the full. High standards are the goal in teaching and learning. Everybody is valued and treated with respect. Diversity is recognized and celebrated. Respect for plurality of faiths is seen as integral to the daily routine of the school (CNS, 2020)

This story is uniquely told through the multi-belief and values program, 'Goodness Me, Goodness You' (GMGY). GMGY's core characteristic is belief-nurturing, where children are encouraged to share their own experiences concerning their home beliefs with their classmates (Faas et al., 2018) 'enabling each child to live their life to the full while exploring their identity and their place in the world...to be active citizens in their local and global community, to think critically and imaginatively about the world' (Irwin, 2018: 7).

Many newcomer children find the initial transition into Irish school challenging, owing to language difficulties (Smyth et al., 2009). There are also challenges faced in the social sphere, which sets the context and justifications for this study. Newcomer children often socialize among themselves and report challenges with making Irish friends (Smyth et al., 2009). Christopher did not make the 5th class soccer team. I wonder now about his circle of friends. I described him as 'a quiet boy'. As a teacher, I sometimes saw Christopher playing alone in the yard. Was the story of school, one where Scoil Firtéar was a beacon of inclusion, failing Christopher? Was his story of living on the edges of school life being further marginalized by stories of school as being inclusive and communal? Was Christopher living a shifting story that sustained him on the school landscape? Perhaps his story was deemed

‘within the acceptable range’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996:25) of school stories and unfolded like a cover story. By not being mindful and taking care with his story, was I failing him too? Bringing Christopher’s story alongside stories of school led me to think about other students who live on the edges of school life, a place where they did not feel a sense of community and inclusion.

School stories are stories told by practitioners within the school. Such stories are shaped when departmental circulars, policies, and initiatives intersect with ‘the unfolding histories of school landscapes and those who live on them’ (Huber, 2008: 15). Upon entering the school landscape in 2012, one such story I came to know was that the school was a collaborative planning place. This planning took place after school, as mandated by the Public Service Agreement (DES, 2010), and was commonly known as the ‘Croke Park’ hour, in honour of the location where the agreement was reached. Listening to other teachers outside of Scoil Firtéar, this hour was often seen as extra work for no pay. It was commonly resented by staff. Yet, our story was different. Teachers attended fortnightly meetings to plan collaboratively for the coming weeks, where curricular content and learning objectives were decided. These meetings also provided teachers with space and time to discuss and reflect upon the previous week's teaching and learning. In my last school, teachers used their Croke park hours to plan in isolation. Scoil Firtéar was a school that provided many opportunities for its staff to form communities of practice, foster professional development, and engage meaningfully with students and with the curriculum. Other school stories told of it being a place of diversity, filled with life and colour. This cacophony of life owed to many of the children's diverse religious, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.

In my third year, YCDI became a powerful school story and a story of school. The program permeated all aspects of the school landscape by integrating with the school’s

Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. It was utilized as a whole school behavioural framework where students received rewards based on the program's five foundations. Over time, it also became a sacred story as the YCDI evidenced-based (Bernard 2006a; 2006b, 2006c; Bernard & Pires 2006; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Bernard & Walton, 2011; Dayan, 2016; Yamamoto, Matsumoto, & Bernard, 2017), theory-driven intervention, was adopted and implemented by all staff. Part of this story was that students were given time to think and reflect on the five foundations of the YCDI program at the beginning of each year. The program's five foundations are; *Organisation, Confidence, Getting Along, Resilience, and Persistence*. Upon reflection, students decided and chose a foundation they felt needed improvement. In every class, teachers mounted wall displays showing each student and the particular foundation they wanted to work on. Thinking about Christopher, I wonder how YCDI school stories worked with and on him. What foundations did he choose to work on? It also led me to wonder about my class. Did I give students the time and space to genuinely decide, or did I influence them in choosing *Resilience* or *Getting Along* because I felt this is what they needed to work on? I wonder if YCDI school stories helpfully came alongside Christopher's or not. Thinking narratively about this story raises questions about its efficacy and whether this activity caused doubt and anxiety for students and teachers alike at the beginning of the year. The school expected all students to improve in at least one of the five YCDI foundations over the school year. One of my research's primary aims is to inquire into this storied process as I hope to better understand students' experiences of the five foundations and their YCDI Program Achieve experiences (2007).

Stories of teachers are stories told about teachers both on and off the school landscape. Upon entering Scoil Firtéar, I did my utmost to act professionally. I was still living my good teacher story. Some stories were told of me as being 'very serious' and 'too strict.'

Stories such as these and school stories of inclusion and diversity bumped against my personal practical knowledge and shifted my own teacher story. This movement became more apparent when YCDI became a strong school story as staff learned about socialemotional competencies (CASEL, 2012; 2020) and ways to work with students with challenging behaviours or who found social interactions frustrating and challenging. Through YCDI, we had a new lens to view maladaptive behaviour and a new language to speak to parents and children. I look back on these stories now and think about how they worked on me. Did some of my colleagues avoid me that first year as I walked the corridor? How were they composing their stories of me? What kinds of assumptions were they making of me? I wonder, did other's arrogant perceptions (Lugones, 1987) impact me causing my story to shift?

Teacher stories are stories teachers tell of themselves in their classrooms, the staffroom, at school committee meetings, or out in the yard. Clandinin and Connelly (2006: 7) tell us that:

Teachers' stories, their professional knowledge, are the stories teachers tell of who they are and what they know. Some teachers' stories are secret stories, stories only told to others in safe places on and off the school landscape. Some teachers' stories are cover stories, stories told to maintain a sense of continuity with the dominant stories of school shaping a professional knowledge landscape

Upon entering Scoil Firtéar, my own teacher story was that of the good teacher. I planned out meticulous lessons and differentiated in meaningful ways. I had high expectations of students. I would not accept students living out disruptive or uncooperative stories in class. I was responsible for all of the children in my class, a responsibility I felt emboldened by the school ethos. Over time my story shifted as I became more attuned to life in Scoil Firtéar. I came to love the rich diversity and the wonderful opportunities it afforded for learning while

also recognizing the many challenges of catering to such diversity (Smyth et al., 2009). I came to better understand stories where many students came from poor socio-economic backgrounds. In more recent times, reports of child and family homelessness in the school emerged (Scanlon & McKenna, 2018; Focus Ireland, 2019). Recent figures in Ireland (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018) tell us that families are the most significant and fastest-growing group experiencing homelessness. Children and their families accounted for 63% of Ireland's officially recorded homeless population (Scanlon & McKenna, 2018). Stories of families living in overcrowded accommodation or temporary accommodation became common. So too were stories of young students taking three buses to school due to being housed in temporary housing across the other side of the city—these stories heavily impacted my personal practical knowledge and teacher story.

As my story shifted, I became more curious about the YCDI story in school. Upon first entering Scoil Firtéar, I heard students described as *'takes time to settle,' 'very disruptive,' 'uncooperative,'* and *'emotionally unstable.'* In 2014, when YCDI became a strong school story, it shaped our ways of knowing and understanding students' lives. Teacher stories of students operationalized the language of YCDI. Now, students were described as *'Has excellent Organisational skills'* or *'Needs to improve their Getting Along skills.'* This was a new way of knowing and narrating student lives. The YCDI program offered a shared language that students and teachers used to talk about behaviour and expectations in new ways yet became very familiar to everyone. Thinking with the YCDI story of school and the story of school as a place where students had very little, sometimes not even a home, led me to wonder about the school's expectations of its students. Did we expect students, who sometimes took three buses to get to school, to live out the YCDI story of being Organised, Confident, Getting Along, Resilient, and Persistent? As a student, what if your story fell

outside of these domains? Bringing the YCDI school story alongside Christopher's, I sensed a tension between them as YCDI messages of the positive habits of mind (YCDI Program Achieve, 2007) bumped against the disappointment Christopher felt at not having been picked, or the during times he played alone in the yard. Thinking narratively about this shared moment, I see how my story and the school story of YCDI shaped this exchange. By engaging narratively with these moments of tension, I hope to better understand how YCDI experiences shaped how we knew and understood each of us and continued to shape who we were becoming.

2.9: A Research Puzzle Emerges

I began this chapter with a conversation with Christopher and have continually brought my narrative beginnings and understandings back alongside this vignette and others. Engaging narratively with stories in this chapter permitted me to make visible some of the conceptual terms that shape this inquiry. I understand narrative identities as stories to live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999) where such stories are socially constructed (Gergen, 2009), performative (Riessman, 2008; O'Grady, 2014a), and fluid. My understanding of identity also draws from Cavarero (2000: 40), who tells us that 'at once exposable and narratable, the existent always constitutes herself in relation to an other' a view also shared by Riessman (2008) where she says that 'one can't be a 'self' by oneself; rather, identities are constructed in 'shows' that persuade' (p.106). I came to understand tension as the bumping of lives and stories on the school landscape. Using Cavarero's work, I also offered an alternative theoretical lens to view shared experiences and tensions that arose by suggesting my arts-based workshops were sites of narrative relations (Cavarero, 2000) where my uniqueness was revealed in my desire to have my story told (Forrest et al., 2010).

Working within a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, I moved forwards and backward along my life timeline to other places I inhabited. This journey began as a primary school student and moved forward to my becoming a teacher-researcher. Throughout this process, I made visible how my ways of knowing and understanding my participants were shaping and being shaped by my experiences as a student, as a teacher, and as a teacher researcher. I also came to understand Scoil Firtéar using Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) metaphor of the professional knowledge landscape to describe the 'complex historical, temporal, personal, professional, relational, intellectual, and moral qualities of schools' (Clandinin, 2013: 65). Using this metaphor, I described two epistemological and moral places – in-classroom and out-of-classroom places - that teachers move between and the ethical and moral dilemmas they face when they do. Such dilemmas can be understood narratively using the concepts of teacher stories, stories of teachers, school stories, and stories of school. I also wish to suggest that students' lives unfold in similar ways through the living and telling of children's stories and stories of children. Such tellings provide insight into students' personal learner knowledge () and, viewed in this way, offers new language and opportunities for understandings the folding and unfolding of their lives alongside teachers and peers.

It also became clear that the participants' lives unfolded in the midst of stories of school, school stories, stories of teachers, and teacher stories. This way of understanding my school context posed epistemological dilemmas that emerged as tensions between myself and my participants and the participants themselves. I hope to show how central such tensions are to the relational aspects of engaging in a narrative inquiry and the writing process as I moved from field texts to interim texts to research texts. Tensions emerged through the retelling and reliving of my story. My life bumped against the story of school and

the stories of my participants, so I came to see how my story shifted. As I composed my research texts, I paid close attention to emerging tensions. They helped me ‘identify, inquire into, and represent the narrative threads that lived within my participants’ stories’ (Clandinin, 2006: 89). For many of us, and especially for teachers and researchers, tension can be seen as something to avoid, just as I had done with Christopher, yet by narratively thinking my way through such tensions, I turn and face them.

Thinking with Christopher’s story and the school context also drew a sharp focus on the YCDI program. The conversation with Christopher emerged during the first workshop on the YCDI foundation of ‘*Organisation.*’ Curiously, and very unexpectedly, other critical questions about the YCDI program emerged. I do not make any claims to answer any of these questions definitively, or in fact, lay claim as to whether the program improved students’ abilities in any of the five areas. To do so would reject my understanding of self and how knowledge is constructed as something articulated anew, as stories are told and retold. I understand that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon created through interaction and the living of one’s life in relation with others, and so new possibilities emerge. This idea of knowledge is grounded in the empirical, and with the rise of hermeneutics and interpretivism in the 19th century (Biesta, 2015), it opens up new avenues and pathways of knowing and understanding. The purpose of my research is to offer new possibilities and understandings where we may find ways of ‘making visible why people say what they say and do what they do’ (Biesta, 2015: 4). I may even expose the power structures and grand narratives that impress on us in unknown and unseen ways in my quest to understand.

Chapter 3: Narrative inquiry - philosophical and theoretical dimensions

3.0: The four turns -part 1

Chapters three and four map my research journey as I present my narrative puzzle's philosophical, theoretical, and methodological dimensions. To write and structure both chapters creatively and robustly, I draw from the work of Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) and Bruner (1986, 1990, 1991) to provide coherence and structure. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) and Bruner (1986) identified scholastic commonalities in both themes and approaches as social science researchers began to adopt and embrace narrative inquiry and narrative ways of knowing (Bruner, 1986). In their work, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007: 5) realized that 'as an individual, discipline, or group of researchers move toward a narrative inquiry approach to research, there are four turns in their thinking and action that occur.' The four turns are; a change in the relationship between the researcher and the researched, a move from the use of number toward the use of words as data, a shift from a focus on the general and universal toward the local and specific, and finally, a widening in acceptance of alternative epistemologies or ways of knowing.

This chapter is divided into two distinct sections or philosophical/narrative 'turns' (Bruner, 1986; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) that together provide a backdrop and guide as I journey through my narrative understandings and actions. By 'turn', I mean a shift in thinking which describes a movement from one way of knowing and understanding toward another (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Specifically, these 'turns' outline a move away from positivist and post-positivist assumptions to those concerned with interpretation, understanding, and human action. Each of the aforementioned 'turns' represents a movement away from four critical suppositions that Bruner (1986) calls paradigmatic knowing. Throughout my inquiry, I took each turn. Not in a sequential or ordered way;

instead, each turn took me by surprise. Such surprises emerged organically through researching and engaging with my inquiry puzzle as I came alongside my own and my participant's stories and experiences. Using a reflexive approach (Etherington 2003, 2004; Finlay, 2002;2003), I weave other voices and theories betwixt and between and so draw from the work of Bateson (1990, 1994), Bruner (1986, 1990, 1991), Biesta & Burbules (2003), Biesta (2019), Cavarero (2000), Chase (2005), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Clandinin (2013), Dewey (1938/1997, 1939/1988), Etherington (2004, 2003), Gergen (2009), Greene (1995), Pelias (2011, 2018), Richardson (1994, 1997), Riessman (1993, 2008), Riessman & Speedy (2007), St Pierre (1997, 2018), Lugones (1987), and Luttrell (2003, 2020) as I journey through the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of my research. It is against this theoretical backdrop that I proceed through this chapter. In the first section, I outline my understanding of the self, identity, and my search for a theoretical and interpretive paradigm. In the second section, I explore the theoretical dimensions of my arts-based narrative inquiry.

3.1: Turn 1: Relationship of researcher and researched - conceptions of objectivity

As a methodology, narrative inquiry is firmly positioned in the pantheon of qualitative research, and so is carried out with attention to interpretation and human action (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007). This contrasts sharply with quantitative methods where interests lie in positivist and post-positivist assumptions. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.2) define qualitative research as being:

multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter ... qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use of and collection of a variety of

empirical materials ...that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.

In a movement away from assumptions of paradigmatic ways of knowing toward narrative and narrative ways of knowing, Bruner (1986) describes four philosophical turns. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) extend and adapt Bruner (1986) when describing the four turns that researchers complete as they become narrative inquirers. Both adopt the language of 'turns' to 'emphasize the movement from one way of thinking to another and highlight the fact that such changes can occur rapidly or slowly, depending on the experience of the researchers and their experiences when doing research.' (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p.5)

John's timeline – Thursday 6th October 2016: First lecture in 'Fields in the Making –Narrative and Arts-Based' (Pt 1)

What's on your mind?

It's my first day as a PhD student, and I'm late. I couldn't get out of my classroom on time. There is always something. I'm never late. I hurriedly walk down the stairs towards the basement in the old education building. I turn a dimly lit corner and enter the lecture room. There's a group of people inside moving about. It's quiet. Not a sound. I slip my bag off my back so as not to disturb the silence. Grace is here. She smiles, nods, and approaches. She tells me to gather some materials from the items on the table, and create an aesthetic piece to represent how I feel, how my journey in life has led me to this exact point. I'm taken aback by the task. I feel eyes on me. 'Don't just stand there,' I say to myself. I pick up a selection of markers, pastels, and colouring pencils. There are magazines of all kinds scattered on the table. There is glitter, shiny coloured foil, ribbons, coloured card, scissors, and sticky-tape. This scene is familiar. I've seen it before in my classroom last year. The children had to create aesthetic artwork based on the 1916 Easter Rising. Thoughts flood back to me.

John's timeline – Friday 5th February 2016: Art class and my conversation with Fionn

What's on your mind?

Fionn: Teacher, I can't do this art. I don't know what to do.

John: Yes, you can. You haven't even tried.

Fionn: It's too hard. I'm not good at art.

John: It's not too hard. Look, you've everything you need.

Fionn: Do I have to?

John: Just give it a go. There's no right or wrong.

Fionn: I don't know where to start.

John: Ask your partner for help.

John's timeline – Thursday 6th October 2016: First lecture in 'Fields in the Making –Narrative and Arts-Based' (Pt 2)

What's on your mind?

As I gaze at the items on the table, I think about Fionn, and the brief moment we shared. Did Fionn feel eyes on him, like I felt eyes on me now? My eyes judging and assessing them. How did he see me that day? As a facilitator, a caring teacher, or something else? Other memories of Fionn come to mind. His story always intrigued me. There were many others like him in my school—students who were labelled as being disruptive, uncooperative, and needing social skills development. The post-graduate diploma project I completed last year had only begun to scratch the surface of these stories, and I needed to know more. I know Fionn's story had an important part to play in my being here, in my journey to now, but I set these memories aside for the moment, knowing I will return to him again.

In his discussion of the dynamic relationship between power and knowledge, Foucault (1976) uses the image of water to conceptualize hegemony's operation in the maintenance of subtle forms of rule (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). Narrative inquiry reflects Foucault's (1976) image of winding water paths flowing in different directions, over and across undulating landscapes. Like paths of water, narrative inquirers take turns, sometimes slow and winding, while at other times, fast, ferocious, and sudden.

In my memory reconstructions above, I am brought back to my first day as a PhD student. My hesitancy to engage in the activity caught me off guard. I paused. I needed self-talk to jolt me back into action. This initial entry triggered a memory and experience from my past. Feelings about my post-graduate diploma school-based project on YCDI returned to me. I had engaged in a short project based on YCDI in my school in June 2016, but it unearthed more questions than answers. I wanted to know more about the students' stories and experiences of the YCDI foundations and the program, questions that fell outside the project's scope. At that exact moment, I was also transported back to an art lesson in school the February before. My feelings of inadequacy, of not being an artist, made me feel out of place in the shared space with the other PhD students.

By thinking with this experience, I came to see how it worked on me in multiple ways. First, it caused me to reflect on my YCDI school-based project and the stories I yearned to hear more. I also thought about an art lesson when Fionn, too, seemed to struggle. Did Fionn feel out of place and inadequate as well? My response to Fionn emerged from living my teacher's story and drawing from my personal practical knowledge and his, from living his children's story (Clandinin, 2006) while drawing from his personal learner knowledge (). In our short dialogue, tension emerged between both narrative tellings, perhaps from my expectation of Fionn to be better and perhaps in his expectation of me to better understand and acknowledge his vulnerability of not knowing. Secondly, this experience drew forward a time in my past and so impacted my ways of knowing and being in that particular moment of experiencing my first day as a PhD student. Although I did not fully understand the theory of experience at the time, as espoused by Dewey (1938/1997) and later developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), this retelling and reliving makes clear the temporal, interactive, and continuous nature of experience.

John's timeline – Thursday 6th October 2016: First lecture in 'Fields in the Making –Narrative and Arts-Based' (Pt 3)

What's on your mind?

I was taken aback by the request from Grace. I wonder, did Fionn feel the same way. Did I notice or care?

"I'm not good at art...I don't know where to start."

Fionn was pleading with me. Maybe he stared at the array of collage materials, the magazines, the colours, and drew a blank. I didn't listen to him, not carefully, not closely. I was dismissive. I think about Fionn and the experience I'm having now. As a teacher, I feel guilt, and as a researcher, I feel hope and curiosity. It is these brief yet significant interactions that I want to delve into. I don't want them to pass me by without noticing. I pick up an A3 page, take a seat and just begin.

A paradigmatic orientation assumes that what is understudy has the characteristics of a 'thing' that is itself separate and disconnected from the researcher (Bruner, 1986). In the

first of two turns that I outline in this chapter, I begin with what Bruner (1986) refers to as a move away from assumptions of objectivity. This turn is intertwined with what Pinnegar & Daynes (2007) call the turn toward understanding the relationship of the researcher and researched, which they describe as ‘a movement away from a position of objectivity defined from the positivistic, realist perspective toward a research perspective focused on interpretation and the understanding of meaning’ (p.37). This turn is a crucial step that all narrative inquirers must take to inquire into lived experiences as we ‘recognize that the researcher and the researched in a particular study are in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter’ (p.37). Such moments ebb and flow in a contextual, situated, temporal, and relational way. Dewey (1925) contended that the dichotomous and dualistic nature of the mind and world need not be a point of departure for philosophy and research. Instead, it provides a solution for those faced with a mechanistic and objectivist worldview (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

From a narrative inquirer’s perspective, the knowledge and experiences of the researcher and researched are delicately interwoven. They cannot be disconnected by adopting distancing and objective research approaches. From a positivistic, atemporal stance and under objective conditions, things under study are understood to be completely knowable and explained, even as time elapses. Such a stance implies that phenomena under study are somehow real and static, rather than emerging through interactions and relationships with others or influenced by culture (Slife, 1993). In my research and readings that followed, I drew from many scholars who oppose such restrictive ways of knowing. Who instead embrace the relational, interpretive, and agentic dimensions of human action (Dewey 1925, 1938/1997, 1939/1988; Bateson 1989, 1994; Biesta & Burbules 2003; Biesta

2015a, 2015b, 2019; Clandinin & Connelly 1986, 1987, 1995, 2000; Cavarero 2000; Chase 2005; Etherington 2003, 2004; Gergen 2009; Clandinin 2013; O'Grady, 2014a, 2014b, 2018; Richardson 1994; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Riessman 1993, 2008; Riessman & Speedy 2007; St Pierre 1997, 2018 and Luttrell 2003, 2020).

From the beginning of my inquiry, I understood I would work closely with children during my research. This kind of close work, sharing intimate stories and experiences, is a deeply immersive and connected activity. It requires an understanding of the self and the other. In taking this turn, researchers recognize the undulating, temporal, and interactive ebb and flow of life experienced in relation with others. From my perspective, I acknowledge that the school landscape and the surrounding milieus continue to shape my inquiry where:

human interaction and humans are embedded in context, and people, cultures, and events have histories that affect the present, findings from one setting cannot be effectively decontextualized. Researchers need to provide accurate descriptions of these characteristics of the research experience, for, without them, it becomes impossible to understand and use findings from the project (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007: 9).

In the memory reconstruction of my first day as a PhD student, I attempted to present the beginning of my turn toward understanding the relationship of the researcher and researched. I also shared the intrigue I felt about Fionn's stories and experiences of YCDI that were left with me after my postgraduate course from the year before, and so the seeds of narrative interest were sown. Leaving the workshop that day, I had a feeling only. I needed to know more and understand more, so this turn gradually took hold as I immersed myself in scholarly work. At the end of the module, Grace challenged the group to write a paper on our philosophical and theoretical underpinnings. She urged me to draw on different educational ideas, conceptual thinking, and readings with which I had engaged. My experiential knowledge as an educational practitioner, my personal learning journey, my

critical reflections about ways of knowing and being guided my thinking as I explored how I am positioned in my research inquiry. As I move through this chapter, I intersperse and intertwine more theory about each turn as it emerged through my own research experience. I now proceed to my exploration of the relational self and its relationship with my philosophical and theoretical underpinnings.

3.2: The relational self - searching for a theoretical and interpretive paradigm

Theories are primarily intellectual tools used to piece together observed phenomena to discern and elucidate meaning (Iser, 2006). They are not tools to be used to predict nor to discover. Instead, they are used to achieve understanding, investigate meaning and function, and address the question of “why” (Iser, 2006). Biesta (2015: 4) tells us that:

theory plays a crucial role in making data 'intelligible,' it is important to see that theory does not just come at the very end of the research – when all the data have been collected – but also plays an important role in the initial phases of research. Here, theory is crucial for the conceptualization of the phenomenon one wishes to investigate

Deleuze (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977) provides insight into the role of theory and practice. He states that ‘practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another’(p.206). Deleuze suggests theory can derive a kind of practice, and practice can express a particular theory, while for Foucault (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977), his attempts to do theoretical work were firmly based on his experiences and ‘always in relation to processes’ (cited in Rajchman, 1985: 35) he saw taking place around him. Kim (2015) recognizes the rigorous interlocking relationship between theory and practice, describing them as interlocking gears with our personal experiences acting as the lubricant between. Theorizing is an intellectual exercise that connects lived experience to scholarship. In this way, it is paramount to utilize theory to understand and become part of the world to improve it (Kim, 2015).

Qualitative researchers are guided by highly abstract principles that include a combination of the researcher's beliefs about ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Kim, 2015). Together these three terms form a paradigm or interpretive framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), which acts to shape how researchers see phenomena under study and how they are interpreted. Creswell (2007) suggests that qualitative research starts with the researcher's philosophical assumptions. From this vantage point, researchers often employ interpretive and theoretical frameworks to their research, and so 'good research requires making these assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks explicit in the writing of a study, and, at a minimum, to be aware that they influence the conduct of inquiry' (p.15). Narrative inquiry is, first and foremost, concerned with lived experience. It is also a relational methodology in so far as it acknowledges that as inquirers, we too are under study. The significance of these two aspects of narrative inquiry leads us towards the importance of self-facing, whereby we turn 'the gaze upon who we are and are becoming throughout the study of our experience alongside the experiences of participants' (Clandinin et al., 2013: 16). This act highlights the importance of what Schon (1983) describes as reflective practices that enable us to identify ways to become aware of our implicit knowledge and learn from our experiences. From a narrative inquirer perspective, this reflexivity speaks to our personal practical knowledge and how it can become known. Schon (1983: 68) tells us 'the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique.' Questions of self, reflexivity, and the multiple positions that researchers and participants inhabit during research inquiries, emerge from such thinking.

Fieldnote entry, Workshop 2 'Organisation' Monday 9th October 2017

It is very difficult for me to know when I should be a teacher and let things go. Now, I am letting things go, and if I feel that it is getting a bit uncomfortable for a student, then I refer to the workshop rules. I do so with a smile, but I did feel tension between myself and Dariya. She wasn't very nice to others, and I felt she was being a bit silly. I let it go, but it happened a couple of times, and this bumping of 'teacher researcher' and 'student/workshop-participant' is obvious, especially to me. Also, most of the students are finding it very challenging to call me 'John'. It is a mix between 'John' and 'teacher'. I don't think I even sounded too convincing today when I asked them to call me 'John'.

As narrative inquirers, we enter into what Geertz (1996) describes as the metaphorical parade. This conception of narrative entails a view that we are in the phenomenon under study and that we too are under study. The 'self' in such an inquiry is a relational self that continues to make and remake itself in the midst of engaging with others (Clandinin, 2013). Etherington (2004: 15) tells us that the process of becoming 'implies movement, agency, and continuity, rather than a striving to reach a state at which we have "become" and so 'is based upon the notion that we are constantly changing and developing our identities, that they are never fixed.' This view of an emergent, fluid, narratable self is also taken up by many scholars who have explored the self and identity formation of both themselves and their participants (Cavarero, 2000; Richardson 1994; Etherington, 2004, 2013; Luttrell 2003, 2020; Riessman, 2008, Hayler, 2011, O'Grady, 2014a, 2014b, Speedy, 2008, 2015). Cavarero (2000) offers a lens to understand the self as one who is 'exposable and the narratable' (p.36) where 'the one who is exposed generates and is generated by the life-story – this and not another – which results from such as exposition' (p.36). Following Arendt in Cavarero (2000), acknowledgement of a unique narratable 'who' that emerges in the contextual site of a narrative relation cannot be reduced to categorizations (Todd, 2010). Kottman (2000: ix) tells us that, 'The unique existent in Cavarero's sense – contrary to the individual invoked in modern and contemporary doctrines of 'individual' rights – is in a constitutive relation with the other, with others.' I tentatively suggested the arts-based workshops were sites of such

disclosure where 'actively revealing oneself to others, with words and deeds, grants a plural space and therefore a political space to identity' (Cavarero, 2000: 22). In this way, the participants and I appeared to one another and did so through our speech and actions.

Moving to the sphere of narrative inquiry, this relational way of knowing and being is grounded in past and present experiences and in relation to an imagined future (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Dewey's transactional ontology and the knowledge we gain about relationships (Biesta, 2010) is better thought of as a relational approach (Clandinin et al., 2018). The term 'relational', similar to Dewey's use of 'transactional', signifies more than just a relationship between people. It is 'the relationship between the knower and what is known, between knowing and action, between how we know and what we know' (Clandinin, 2018: 18). In the fieldnote above, my relational self emerges through interactions with the participants and the surrounding milieus. This view of the self is emergent, narratable, performative, and dynamic. In the reflexive piece above, there is a sense of my embodied struggle, both cognitively and emotionally, and so we sense embodiment's double sense (Pelias, 2011) as it 'encompasses both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms' (p. xvi). There is disruption, incoherence even between my teacher self 'Mr. Meegan', and my emergent teacher researcher self as 'John'. There is also a sense of my personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), finding expression in my earnest attempt to hold tight to my teacher story. Clandinin and Connelly (1995: 7) describe such knowledge as 'that body of convictions and meanings, conscious or unconscious, that have arisen from experience (intimate, social, and traditional) and that are expressed in a person's practices.'

Kerby (1991) draws our attention to the importance of coherence and continuity in the emergence of a narratable self. Carr (1986) also pointed toward the role continuity and coherence at play in one's life, and how we may feel a lack of sense when it goes missing where 'our lives admit of sometimes more, sometimes less coherence; they hang together reasonably well, but they occasionally tend to fall apart' (p.97). The conflict between different aspects of myself impacted how I viewed and reflected on the workshop that day. Using a reflexive embodied approach (Finlay, 2002, 2003; Etherington, 2003, 2004), my emotions were brought to this account's foreground. Curiously, I noted at the time of writing how my understanding of the workshop my relationship with the participants may have been impacted by my positioning, where *'this bumping of 'teacher-researcher' and 'student/workshop-participant' is obvious, especially to me.'* My heightened emotional state is sensed and intensified by my uncertainty of how best to proceed and act in the face of tension. Again, this account highlights my burning desire for narrative unity between my life story and the desire for its narration (Cavarero, 2000). I was vulnerable on many occasions during the arts-based workshops, where my desire for narrative unity, between my teacher self and my teacher-researcher self, created a tension between my own life and its narration or life-story (Cavarero, 2000). Cavarero (2000: 20), citing Nancy et al (1990), says:

for the one who exists, what matters is existence, not essence'; that is, at stake is a uniqueness of personal identity, which, far from being a substance, is of a totally expositive and relational character.

My story unfolded and enfolded primarily on the school landscape of Scoil Firtéar. Other stories, such as my autobiographical reconstructions, took place at different times and places. During my inquiry, such stories emerged alongside the participants' stories. Similarly, participants' stories unfolded and enfolded during the arts-based workshops and creative

conversations. Through children's stories and stories of children (Clandinin et al., 2006), participants retold and relived many experiences. In this process, they drew from their personal learner knowledge () while simultaneously making, remaking, and adding anew to this knowledge.

Dialogue vignette with Katie and John – Workshop 1: Organisation, Monday 2nd October 2017



Image 4: Katie's 'Organisation' artwork: Winning Write-a-Book

John: What are you making there Katie?

Katie: This is a story of when I was in 2nd class and we had to do this story competition and I wrote a story and I won the competition.

John: Oh brilliant. And who's class were you in at that stage?

Katie: 2nd class...I was in Mrs O'Connor's class.

John: Oh good...and can you tell me a small bit about that day? What happened that day? Do you remember?

Katie: Mrs O'Connor told us to write a story about like anything that we wanted.

John: And what did you write your story about?

Katie: About spys...

John: Oh right...

Katie: And then when we wrote down the story, we wrote out a first draft and a second draft and the publishing...

John: Brilliant. And why spys?

Katie: I don't know!

John: But you liked it anyway?

Katie: Yeah

From a critical childhood perspective (Corsaro, 1997; Luttrell, 2020), children actively contribute to and sustain the social status quo and social change. In sharing stories and experiences, the participants continued to narrate and further sustain their own becoming. Students' reflexive experiences and stories emerged through the creative creation of art based on the five foundations of the YCDI program.

*Dialogue vignette with Katie and John – Workshop 1: Organisation, Monday 2nd
October 2017 (Continued)*

John: And did Miss O'Shea chose it as the winner?

Katie: No, just everyone got to pick any random book.

John: And how did it feel that day when you were picked?

Katie: I felt excited to see the prize...and my parents were really proud of me.

John: What did Mam and Dad say?

Katie: That I should write more stories.

John: And is writing stories something that you usually do?

Katie: Emm...sometimes.

John: What did your classmates think?

Katie: They were all clapping and being happy for everyone.

In the vignette above, Katie's experience of *Organization* emerges through her aesthetic artwork. Using this story, I attempt to present Katie's distilled experience of the YCDI foundation of *Organization* and how this story unfolded and was embedded in grander school narratives. In this way, I hope to make visible how the participants constructed their identities, their stories to live by, as well as making visible 'the cultural/institutional discourses, and dominant discourses of self they drew on, how they were positioned by these stories/ideas/discourses and how they positioned themselves and others' (O'Grady, 2014b: 6). In this short story, Katie brings us back to 2014 to her time in 2nd class. She describes how she won the write-a-book competition and how the experience impacted her, her parents, and the other students in her class. In this story, Katie's YCDI experience of *Organization*, unfolds within the school story of the Write-a-Book competition, a writing competition that took place across the entire school that year. There are strong links to

friendship and familial narratives and resonances to narratives of belonging and care. Katie's story to live by and her experience of *Organization* emerges in her book's preparation and planning. She describes the organization required to plan and write multiple drafts before finally publishing the book. Katie tells of the excitement she felt as a student. She also describes her parents and classmates' reactions. In the process of sharing this story, we get a sense of her personal learner knowledge as a student as she engaged in the writing process of her narrative story, as well as the joy she felt at being acknowledged by her teacher, peers, and also by her parents. Personal learner knowledge is not static, and so while we gain a sense of this knowledge from her shared experience, it is at the same time being remade and constructed anew in the telling. The example above is an example of a children's story (Clandinin et al. 2006), where Katie lives and tells a story of who she is and what she knows as a learner in Scoil Firtéar. Katie weaves her experience of the YCDI foundation into her story of an imaginative student who writes books. So continuity is felt between her story and the YCDI school story. Adopting a critical childhood perspective (Luttrell, 2020), there is also a sense that Katie is facilitating the reproduction of adult culture in school (Luttrell, 2020) by connecting her *Organization* experience and her story of one who likes to write with the school story of the importance of learning how to write narrative stories and engaging in the write a book competition.

Curiously, other stories emerged in liminal spaces (Speedy, 2008) outside of the parameters of my initial inquiry into the five foundations of the YCDI program. Liminality can be described as the space between the artist and the artefact (Speedy, 2008). This space represents the threshold relationship between the artist and the audience. Upon crossing the threshold into this space, my participants and I immediately entered into power relations in a reflexive/liminal space that, according to Speedy (2008: 28), is 'highly political,

personal, imaginative and social.’ Etherington (2004: 31) gives a rich account of what reflexivity is when she says that:

If we can be aware of how our own thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social and personal history inform us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe their conversations with us and write out representations of the work, then perhaps we can become closer to the rigor that is required of good qualitative research. This thesis is ‘part of a reflexive cycle of meaning-making’ (Speedy, 2008: 31) for myself and the participants. Many threads echoed across students’ narrative accounts and were embedded in stories of gender, competing or conflicting stories, being new to the school, continuity and coherence, discontinuity and incoherence, marginalization, resistance and tension, and belonging and care.

Social constructionism also sheds light on the relationship of the self and how we come together to form relationships which in turn construct the society we live in (Gergen, 2009). Three theories that attempt to explain the relationship between the very idea of the self and the world are symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, and cultural psychology (Gergen, 2009). These theories invite us to see how we are fundamentally social as our minds become socialized and filled with the everyday ordinary of our daily interactions. Social constructionism attempts to reconcile our minds with our social worlds, not treat them as separate parts in the process of socialization. In this way, social constructionism relates closely with Dewey’s philosophy of pragmatism, a transactional/relational ontology (Dewey 1922; Clandinin 2013), and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin 2013). Of Dewey, Biesta and Burbules (2003: 17) tells us that:

One of the most important implications of Dewey’s transactional approach is that it tries to account for the point of contact between the human organism and the world.

For Dewey, the human organism is always already “in touch” with reality, unlike the dualistic philosophy of consciousness, which separates the immaterial mind and the material world.

In this section, I described the self as emergent, performative, narratable, fluid, and relational. From this standpoint, I presented a personal fieldnote that spoke to narrative notions of self that emerged during interactions with my participants and surroundings. In the reflexive process of writing about this experience, my emergent and narratable self was and still is, becoming. This retelling highlighted the struggle, tension, and burning desire for narrative unity between the multiple positions I inhabited during my inquiry. I drew from theories of reflection (Schon, 1983), reflexivity (Finlay, 2002, 2003, Etherington, 2004, 2013), the narratable self (Cavarero, 2000), stories to live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), critical childhood perspective (Corsaro, 1997; Luttrell, 2020), narrative coherence and continuity (Carr, 1986), social constructionism (Gergen, 2009), Dewey’s transactional ontology, and Clandinin and Rosiek’s (2007) relational ontology, in an attempt to better understand this experience. From here, I presented a dialogue vignette between myself and Katie, where she shared her YCDI experience of *Organization*. I offered this vignette as an example of a children’s story and how, at this moment, Katie was drawing from, constructing, and shaping her personal learner knowledge that was unfolding on the school landscape of Scoil Firtéar. Moving forward, I wish to inquire more deeply into Dewey's work, pragmatism, and the theory of experience, which offer crucial insights into the theoretical and interpretive paradigm of this work. To inquire into experience, I first need to understand the term itself, both its philosophical and theoretical underpinnings. Only then can I begin to illuminate the educational aims of my study.

3.3: Dewey, Pragmatism and the theory of experience

As a school of thought, pragmatism emerged in the early 19th century primarily from the writings of three American thinkers: the natural scientist and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839– 1914), the psychologist and philosopher William James (1842– 1910), and the philosopher, psychologist, and educationalist John Dewey (1859– 1952). As a philosophy, it developed in opposition to the mechanised and disconnected way Western cultures had conceptualized knowledge and reality (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). For my inquiry, I focus primarily on the work of John Dewey.

Pragmatism is a philosophy that focuses on action, experimentation, and a concern with what works in human experience (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Biesta, 2007; Mintz, 2004; Hickman et al., 2009). Working within a pragmatic framework entails paying close attention to people's experiences as they live their lives. In this way, pragmatic knowledge can be viewed as relational, embodied, temporal, and contextual (Clandinin, 2013). Pragmatism was initially intended to provide an alternative to foundationalism where instead of concerning itself about the existence of a real-world that exists outside of human experience, it focused on a world of actions and consequences (Hickman et al., 2009). Dewey (1925: 235) tells us that 'we do not need to go to knowledge to obtain an exclusive hold on reality. The world, as we experience it, is the real world.' Dewey envisioned that truth is neither unconditional nor arbitrary, seeing it instead as a product of objective experimental inquiry (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). This pragmatic theory of truth rejects the notion that truth is the 'correspondence between a statement or idea and some fact or state of affairs in reality' (Hickman et al., 2009: 14). This conception of knowledge is fundamental to the philosophical tradition of Pragmatism. Biesta and Burbules (2003: 16) suggest that what Dewey's Pragmatism offers

educational research is 'a different account of knowledge and a different understanding of the way in which human beings can acquire knowledge.' This approach is especially relevant to my research puzzle, as I approach questions and conceptions of knowledge from a practical lens, as do many educators and educational researchers (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Dewey's contribution to current educational theory is significant, and through his work, the educational purpose of my inquiry becomes clearer (Biesta, 2015; 2019). In chapter six, I return to my inquiry's educational purpose, where I discuss Dewey's work and the paradigms of education as cultivation and education as subjectification (Biesta, 2019).

John Dewey calls to our attention two fundamental principles in the constitution of experience; the continuity of experience and the interaction of experience (Dewey, 1938/1997; Dewey 1988/1939). The former means that every experience builds upon those previous and modifies in some way the quality of the experiences that comes after, such that 'every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after' (Dewey, 1938/1997: 35). The latter means that we live in a world constituted by a series of situations where interaction is ongoing between an individual and other people and/or with objects. According to Dewey, 'all human experience is ultimately social, it involves contact and communication' (Dewey, 1938/1997: 38). He also states that an experience is a result of a 'transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment' (p. 44). When we understand the theory of experience in this way, we get a sense of it being comprised of past, present, and future (Kim, 2015).

According to Dewey, experience is not a self-explanatory idea; rather, it is the exploration of the meaning of experience, which is the problem to be explored (Dewey, 1938). This follows that to understand my participants' experiences better, as told through

stories, I must delve into the meaning of their experiences. His theory has implications for the organic connection between participant experience and narrative inquiry since narrative research experience is ever-present (Kim, 2015). Dewey (1916) contends that the nature of experience can only be comprehended by a combination of an active and passive element whereby when we experience something, we do something with it (active), and we then undergo the consequence (passive). This combination of the active and passive, giving rise to new situations, is the nature of experience (Kim, 2015). For Dewey, to learn from experience means to 'make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from in consequences' (Dewey, 1916: 78).

In this section, I outlined the origins of Pragmatism and its traditions as a school of thought. Next, I described Dewey's pragmatic understanding and how it can account for human beings attaining knowledge. This led to presenting the two fundamental principles of experience, the continuity of experience and the interaction of experience. Both aspects have impacted heavily on the theory and methodological approaches of narrative inquiry. With Dewey's pragmatism and theory of experience in hand, I move forward. The following section is nestled in what Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) called the turn from numbers to words as data, where I explore the theoretical dimensions of my arts-based narrative inquiry.

3.4: Turn 2: From numbers to words as data - questions of reliability

The turn from numbers to words as data acknowledges that understanding the essence of lived experience, what Dewey (1920) describes as undergoing and suffering the consequences of our own behaviours, loses all nuance and subtlety when translated into number. This movement relates to what Bruner (1986) describes as turning away from the

assumption of reliability in paradigmatic knowing. Here, the primary aim is to quantify and label a phenomenon to assert and correlate consistency and reproducibility upon which validity can be affixed (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Kuhn (1970) describes how numbers operate in social science research by specifying the phenomenon's exact nature under study. The result then is a restricted, flat, and hygienic way of knowing and understanding. Bruner (1991: 1) tells us that:

the study of the mind has centred principally on how man achieves a “true” knowledge of the world...empiricists have concentrated on the minds interplay with the external world of nature hoping to find the key in the associations of sensations and ideas, while rationalists have looked inward to the powers of the mind itself for principles of right reason.

In their exploration of this turn, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) describe how scholars such as Guba (1985), Polkinghorn (1988), and Denzin and Lincoln (1994) articulate the inadequacy of using numbers to represent and capture experience fully. Other narrative scholars, while not explicitly referring to a turn towards the use of words over number, offer rich accounts of the deep, humane understanding we achieve when using words and stories (Bateson, 1990 1994; Riessman 1993, 2008; Richardson 1997; Riessman & Speedy 2007; Richardson & St. Pierre 2005; Luttrell 2003, 2020). From a narrative inquiry standpoint, my understanding of experience is grounded in the philosophy of pragmatism and John Dewey's theory of experience. I understand experience, not as a 'veil that shuts man off from nature' (Dewey, 1925: 5); rather, it 'is a means of penetrating continually further into the heart of nature' (p:5).

*John's timeline – Friday 2nd September 2016: First Meeting with Grace (Pt 1)
What's on your mind?*

I walk down the hallway toward Grace's office. Piles of boxes, all with their individual labels, are stacked neatly along the corridor. Photos have been removed from the walls. The protected paint underneath a reminder of the once bright colours. I wonder, have the pictures found a new shiny wall to

hang on somewhere? My heart races a little. I knock on the door and enter. There are boxes scattered around the small office too. I meet Grace for the first time, and I feel instantly welcome. She smiles and asks me to sit. I begin to talk. She listens. I tell stories about myself, my school, my students, and finally, the You Can Do It (YCDI) program. "What are you passionate about, John?" I tell her I'm passionate about my school, its students, their well-being, and their YCDI program experiences. Grace tells me she's passionate about stories, about experience, about different ways of knowing. I'm a little unsure about what these have to do with research. She mentions nothing about questionnaires, stats, percentages, results, or data.

Through engagement with narrative literature, I am drawn swiftly back to my first meeting with Grace. My understanding of what research was becomes abundantly clear; it comprised *'questionnaires, stats, percentages, results or data'*. Grace made it very clear where her passions and interests laid. A primary reason why researchers find themselves turning from numbers to words as data is the *'sterility of numbers as discourse as well as the sterility of the discourse surrounding the presentations of number data'* (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007: 15). Foucault (1976) also describes the potential dangers and limitations of using numbers in research as a preferential way to access knowledge. By using numbers, researchers restrict the types of discourses available around particular topics. In so doing, Foucault (1976) points out that instead of closing down discourse, it acts oppositely, by opening up and escalating language (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Foucault (1970) draws parallels with such research and its relationship to knowledge and power. Biesta (2015b: 9), writing about Foucault (1970), tells us that:

power is not simply negative and not just to be understood as limitation, but is also positive and actually quite important if we wish to make any chance for the better. But it is also, because knowledge itself is not free from power – not only in the old adage that 'knowledge is power' but also in the sense that as soon as we (claim to) know something we also have opened up avenues for control and the limitation of opportunities for action.

*John's timeline – Friday 2nd September 2016: First Meeting with Grace (Pt 1)
What's on your mind?*

I tell Grace about my school. She listens as I describe the behavioral and social issues encountered on a day to day basis. I tell her about the low socio-economic background of many families and how the YCDI program was introduced to help students become more resilient, allowing them to regulate their emotions better and help those in need of improved social skills. Many of these children didn't get along well with others or their teachers and sometimes seemed unhappy in school. I tell her about the YCDI school-based project I recently completed as part of my post-graduate diploma in Educational Management. This short project explored students' experiences of the YCDI program, but I felt I had only scratched the surface. The project didn't have the scope required to delve deep enough into students' experiences, and I wasn't equipped with the theoretical knowledge to try and go about doing this. At least not yet. Grace listens to my stories of school, my interest in the YCDI program and my curiosity about students' experience. She tells me I should read 'Narrative Inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research' by Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly. She says that I could be onto something, that she might be able to work with me. I'm thrilled and slightly overwhelmed. I leave her office. It's moving day all around. I feel like I'm moving to.

After meeting Grace, I began to think deeply about my inquiry with school children and my insatiable curiosity about their YCDI program experiences. I had a misconceived notion that doctoral research on SEL intervention programs was expected to be quantitatively based. I was passionate about students' experience, so I realised that sterile forms of data would not satisfy, sustain, or nourish me on my research journey. I began to research the area of narrative and probing questions about the rationale, aims, and purposes of my research. My knowing and understanding of narrative research deepened and evolved over the entire course of my inquiry. Even now, it continues to shift and change. Freeman (2007: 12) tells us that 'realizations, narrative connections, are made after the fact when the dust has settled. The result is that we are frequently late in our own understanding of things.'

In the beginning, I was unsure. I had a vague outline and direction only. Having met with Grace and begun my narrative literature journey, I felt confident that 'questionnaires, stats, percentages, results or data' would not do. I had turned from numbers while not yet knowing what words had to offer. I now move forward to explore narrative inquiry

theory as espoused by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Clandinin (2013). I also draw on the work of Etherington (2003, 2004), Luttrell (2003, 2020), and Speedy (2007, 2015) as examples of narrative approaches adopted by other scholars. Following this, I outline my rationale for using an arts-based method by drawing on the work of Duarte (1996), Bach (1998, 2007), Telles (2005), Estrella and Forinash (2007), McNiff (2008), Mello (2012), Barone et al., (2011; 2012), Leavy (2015) and Kim (2015).

3.5: Narrative inquiry

The term 'narrative' is fluid. It can be used to refer to any form of research that uses stories as data and narrative analysis, such as thematic analysis, linguistic analysis, visual analysis, as well as others (Clandinin, 2013). Riessman and Speedy (2007) describe this blurring of academic disciplines when they tell us that 'narrative inquiry in human sciences is a twentieth-century development; that field has 'realist', 'postmodern' and constructionist strands, and scholars and practitioners disagree on the origin and precise definition' (p.429). Clandinin (2013) tells us that stories, or narratives, are used in methodologies such as phenomenology and case studies and, more recently, in knowledge translation in health science and other professional disciplines. In her tracing of the narrative inquiry landscape, Kim (2015) presents the use of narrative inquiry in multiple disciplines, including in law (Bruner, 2002), medicine (Peterkin, 2011), and education (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This section aims to clarify the term 'narrative' as it relates to my inquiry, as there is now a well-established view of what encapsulates narrative inquiry. For my research puzzle, narrative inquiry is both methodology and phenomena (Clandinin, 2007) under study and so can be described as:

a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participant, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with the

milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, relieving and retelling, the stories and experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated...narrative inquiry is stories lived and told (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 20)

Narrative ways of knowing and thinking emerged from concerns about the 'increasingly common faith in the value of deriving generalizations from empirical data and a widespread disdain toward knowledge based on logic or speculation' (Lagemann, 1996: 6). This concern relates to Dewey's theory of experience, especially his continuity and interaction concepts (Dewey, 1938/1997; 1939/1998). Emboldened with a Deweyan sense of experience, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) terms are the *personal* and *social* (interaction); *past*, *present*, and *future* (continuity); combined with the idea of *place* (situation). Together these terms, or commonplaces, form a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This three-dimensional inquiry space guided my research from the beginning.

Dialogue vignette with John, Aabir and Dariya, Workshop 2: Organisation, Monday 9th October 2017



Image 5: Full timelines with participants' artwork

John: The idea of these ropes, hanging across the ceiling, is that they are going to represent our lives and just like a timeline, just like our lives there's a past and

there's a present, what's going on now and there's a possible future. And that's what those ropes, hanging across our ceiling mean. When you look at them, and the way that they're criss-crossed, what do you think that means? What does that mean to you?

Aabir: Changing paths?

John: Changing paths...what do you mean by that?

Aabir: Like, maybe one path is success then when you overlap then one line is where you don't succeed

John: Wow...that's really interesting....what do you think Dariya?

Dariya: Like, everyone has different paths in life....

John: Yes, and what do you mean by that?

Dariya: Like if someone else, is like doing something....and then someone else is doing something different they have different futures...

As I continue to study experience and attempt to make sense of, understand, and explain this world, I know that all experiences under study are temporal and in transition (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). Throughout the inquiry, I attempted to present and physically bring to life the concept of a temporal, contextual, and situated notion of experience. I did this using my life-timeline metaphor, represented by the overlapping and interweaving ropes. Here, I aimed to bring my participants alongside the inquiry in a close way. I wanted to offer a sense of the three common places of narrative inquiry in an appropriate and easily understood manner. Throughout the inquiry, we continually referred back to the continuity of our experiences and the temporal ebb and flow of our lives, as physically manifested by our life-timelines overhead. Gradually, each life-timeline became populated by creatively created artwork that emerged from students' experiences of the five foundations of the YCDI program.

As a narrative inquirer, I understand that participants and the researcher are intrinsically linked and complicit in the inquiry. I also embrace the concept of being in the midst (Clandinin, 2013) of living as the inquiry begins, proceeds, and comes to a temporal conclusion. The lives of the researcher and the researched are embedded within 'the

ongoingness of institutional, social, cultural, familial, and linguistic narratives...which are also in the midst' (Clandinin, 2013: 44).

Dialogue vignette with John, Janette and Amanda, Workshop 2: Organisation, Monday 9th October 2017



Image 6: Timeline shapes and space

John: I want you to keep an eye on the shapes and the spaces between all of the lines. I want you to look up at the timelines and just look at the spaces and shapes that are created and as you move around, notice how those spaces and shapes change, some of the shapes, they actually disappear...and they kind of re-emerge from a different point of view. Do any of you notice the way the shapes are changing?

Janette: Ah-ha (in agreement)

John: What does that mean to you? The way that the shapes change.

Amanda: I think, that like, when the shapes change that, it means that every second of your life can change and that something new will happen.

*John: Very good. What do you think Katie?
(silence)*

John: If you don't think anything, that's fine. I'm just wondering, how do they make you feel at the moment? Those lines are empty now but how do you feel looking up at them?

Janette: Curious

John: Why do you say curious?

Janette: Say, at the start, when we were doing, 'What do you think they mean?' If one is going from there to there, it means that your life can go from good to bad or bad to good.

My research took me to in-classroom and out-of-classroom places (Huber & Clandinin,

2002). The in-classroom-place is a place of trust, co-operation, and where narrative unities

combine. Here, knowledge and meaning co-construct alongside each other, a place of 'secret stories, told and shared in relation between teacher and student' (p. 794). In living alongside others, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) acknowledged their complicity in their own research. In this process, they described pushing against other research notions of maintaining objectivity and distance. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) wrote of their dissatisfaction with this distance and objectivity when telling us that,

We found that merely listening, recording, and fostering participant story telling was both impossible (we are, all of us, continually telling stories of our experience, whether or not we speak and write them) and unsatisfying. We learned that we, too, needed to tell our stories. Scribes we were not; story tellers and story lovers we were (p.12).

Narrative inquiry is a shared, relational methodology. It is a methodology and theory of an evolving, co-construction of knowledge. This clear conception of narrative inquiry enables me to reflect on different perspectives of narrative and the many lenses through which to view narrative stories.

Chase (2005) describes five analytical lenses through which contemporary inquirers approach empirical material. These lenses suggest the distinctiveness of narrative inquiry and how it pushes against different forms of other qualitative research methods. Two distinct lenses seem to fit most appropriately with my research puzzle, although I understand that as a methodology, narrative is messy and emergent (Huber & Clandinin, 2002). The first lens is that 'narrative researchers treat narratives as socially situated interactive performances-as produced in this particular setting, for this particular audience, for these particular purposes' (Chase, 2005: 657). This co-constructed relational view of narrative also speaks to social constructionist conceptions of knowledge where 'what we take to be the world importantly depends on how we approach it, and how we approach it depends on the social relationships of which we are a part' (Gergen, 2009: 2). Riessman

(2008) also adopts such thinking when describing identity formation's constitutive process as a narrative performance. Riessman's work resonates with Cavarero's (2000: 88) postulation that 'identity which, from beginning to end, is intertwined with other's lives – with reciprocal exposures and innumerable gazes.' For Butler (2011: xii), 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act," but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practise by which discourse produces the effects that it names.' Butler (2011) is concerned with the condition of existence of becoming a subject by being called something by another and so acquiring some sense of agency (Kotmann, 2000). This is similar to Cavarero's idea of the 'self' as being exposed to others, but instead of focusing on the disjunction between life and discourse as Butler does, Cavarero instead focuses on the relation between the self and the narrative of his/her life story (Kotmann, 2000). A story told to a teacher by a student in a quiet, familiar setting of a classroom would likely differ from the same story told to a friend outside in a bustling playground. Or to an adult in a waiting room of a doctor's surgery, to a room full of peers who have had a similar experience or to the same teacher in a different time and setting. Chase (2005) tells us that participants' stories are pliable, changeable, and formed by interaction with the audience and milieus. These narratives are mutual productions, co-constructions of narrator and listener, whether the narratives develop in naturally occurring conversations or in fieldwork.

The second lens, as described by Denzin & Lincoln (2000) and referred to by Chase (2005), is that narrative researchers view *themselves* as narrators as they develop interpretations and find ways in which to creatively present their ideas about narratives studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Pelias (2019: 48) describes performative writing as a process where 'no one-two-three steps exist, no final proof given, no determined style required, no indisputable logic or truth, only the writer's and the reader's generative

constructions, constantly and continuously unfolding.’ In this sense, researchers generate meaning, order and purpose in empirical data and like a good book, it ‘evokes and provokes by creating worlds for examination. It...pulls readers in, commands their attention, makes them think, all done in part through the means of an engaging style’ (p. 49). In my effort to write in creative ways, I draw on the work of Richardson (1994) and Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) and their work on writing as inquiry, as well as Pelias (2011; 2018; 2019) for performative writing

Researchers develop their own voice as they construct other’s voices and realities as they narrate in ways that are ‘both enabled and constrained by social resources and circumstances embedded in their disciplines, cultures and historical moments; and they write or perform their work for particular audiences’ (Chase, 2005: 657). Chase (2005) reinforces what Clandinin and Connelly (1990) described when writing stories of participants merging with the researcher. What emerged were co-created, new stories to live by. Clandinin and Connelly labelled such tellings as collaborative stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). It is possible to treat such narrative analytical lenses as distinct or disconnected (Chase, 2005), but I recognize such perspectives’ interconnectedness as a narrative inquirer. I think of them as lenses contained on a single pair of looking glasses. As participant stories shine through both lenses and converge and focus on the researcher’s mind’s eye, they form a single story, sometimes coherent and comprehensible, while at other times, disjointed and incoherent.

In this section, I described the term *narrative* as it applies to my research. From here, I illustrated the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework I’m using in my research by drawing on a vignette between myself, Janette, Dariya, Amanda, and Aabir. The purpose of

this vignette was to make clear that throughout my inquiry, I grounded myself in the three common places of narrative inquiry. I used the physical life-timelines to reinforce these dimensions and present my inquiry parameters to the participants in a child-friendly way. In this way, our collective knowing and understanding about narrative inquiry and experience drew closer together. Using an arts-based narrative inquiry approach like Luttrell (2003, 2020), I wanted to bring the participants' lives alongside mine and the inquiry. So the participants were invited to 'represent themselves to themselves and one another in a group setting, where they benefitted from one another's critical eyes and reflected on shared experiences and knowledge' (Luttrell, 2003: 139). In doing so, 'we get a glimpse of their multifaceted social and inner worlds, and the nuances of their self- and identify making process' (p.139). Next, I move to a discussion on arts-based research. This section distinguishes between two commonly used terms, arts-based or arts-informed research, and how they relate to my inquiry.

3.6: Arts-based or arts-informed research?

Arts-based research (ABR), or arts-based educational research (ABER) though widely adopted in the area of social research and beyond, has escaped a complete and accurate description (Leavy, 2015). Like art itself, it takes on many forms and meanings to those who practice it. ABR literature has been flooded with many interchangeable terms meant to distinguish themselves and their authors from each other. Leavy (2015: ix) describes ABR as 'a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation.' According to Dewey (1958), art production itself constitutes an authentic experience whereby 'art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy that makes an experience to be an experience' (p.208). Barone et al.,

(2011; 2012) describe the purpose of ABER as offering new possibilities and perspectives to human action and activities that are educational in character, so while traditional findings in research are meant to explain and predict, Barone et al.,(2012: 96) tell us that ABER:

is not aimed toward a quest for certainty. Its purpose may instead be described as the enhancement of perspectives...it moves to broaden and deepen ongoing conversation about educational policy and practice by calling attention to seemingly commonsensical, taken-for-granted notions.

Estrella and Forinash (2007: 376) describe the suitability of ABR for exploring 'marginalised, controversial and disruptive perspectives' while McNiff (2008: 29) describes ABR as 'the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience' and demarcates the 'idea of using artistic expressions by researchers as ways of knowing and methods of inquiry as distinguished from approaching art made by subjects as data which are interpreted by discursive methods' (McNiff, 2011: 1). Prosser and Burke (2008) describe how ABR allows researchers to adopt a more child-centric, child-sensitive approach. This method attends to children's multiple ways of knowing and seeing the world while also allowing research to disrupt the 'hegemony and linearity in written texts' (Butler-Kisber, 2008: 268). What is evident is that there are multiple ways to define and capture what is meant by ARB and that this frenzied attempt to explain what ABR is, according to Leavy (2015), has led to much confusion about the methodology. For my ABR puzzle, I am guided by the work of Barone et al., (2011; 2012), as well as the arts-based narrative inquirer Mello (2012) and other narrative scholars such as Luttrell (2003, 2020), O'Grady (2014a, 2014b), and McGarrigle (2017).

Mello (2007) presented the work of five studies; Mickelson (1995), Duarte (1996), Bach (1998), Telles (1997, 2004, 2005), and Murphy (2005) as she attempted to describe how art has been utilized and blended with narrative inquiry. Bach (1998) and Telles (2005)

employed photographs to collect and seek out research participants' stories. Photography is frequently used when engaging in research with children (Lodge, 2009; Reavy, 2011; Holm, 2014; Luttrell, 2020). In comparison to Bach (1998), Duarte (1996), and Telles (2005), who all used an arts-based approach at the beginning of their research, Mickelson (1995) and Murphy (2005) used art as a tool afterwards to make sense of their research. Mickelson (1995) wrote her dissertation in letter format, consisting of fictionalized narratives based on conversations of stories told by boys and by mothers of boys with behavioural disabilities. Murphy (2005) also used fictionalization, as he developed a narrative inquiry into children's school experiences, as a way to make meaning of his field texts and also his own experience as a researcher. Mello (2007) draws from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1973) to explore the word 'base'. Here, it is defined as 'the lowest part of something, especially the part on which something stands' (p. 73) while also seen as 'something that provides the conditions which are necessary for a particular activity or situation' (p. 73). From such definitions, Mello considered the term arts-based research as one where art is at the beginning of a study.

An arts-based narrative inquiry is one where art is utilized as a part of the method to create, compose, and gather field texts. In this sense, it is considered the foundation of the entire research process (Mello, 2007). The works of Duarte (1996), Bach (1998), Luttrell (2003; 2020), Telles (2005), O'Grady (2014a; 2014b), and McGarrigle (2017) are examples of arts-based narrative approaches where 'art has been the way chosen to inform the analysis and the meaning made of the field text already existing' (Mello, 2007: 214). Arts informed research when art is utilized as a part of the analysis stage of an inquiry during the transition from field texts to research texts (Mello, 2007). In this method, art is seen as a way of informing meaning-making. For my narrative inquiry, I follow in the footsteps of Mello

(2005) and her description of both arts-based and arts-informed research. For my inquiry, art was used as a way of composing and gathering field texts. The research fits within a narrative inquiry arts-based methodology design, where collected student stories were used as data to explore how primary school children experienced the five foundations of the YCDI program. I also employed arts-informed approaches to creatively present my work as I moved from field texts to research texts. I take advantage of several creative narrative apparatuses such as images, dialogue vignettes, field notes, and personal journal entries, all taken from the arts-based workshops and creative conversations. This blurring of the boundaries between both approaches offers flexibility and a creative space to fully present and express both the students' and my experiences throughout the inquiry.

This chapter discussed the four turns toward narrative inquiry, as espoused by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) and Bruner (1986; 1990; 1991). This chapter was organized under two distinct turns; a change in the relationship between the researcher and the researched and a move from numbers to words as data. Embedded within the former, I outlined my understanding of a relational self, searching for a theoretical and interpretive paradigm. Next followed a description of John Dewey's work, pragmatism, and the theory of experience related to narrative inquiry. Located within the second turn, I outlined my theoretical understandings of narrative inquiry research. From here, I explored the differences between arts-based and arts-informed methods. In this section, I presented my rationale for adopting a blurred approach between the aforementioned terms. Having closely examined my philosophical and theoretical positions, as well as firmly rooting my study in the sphere of an arts-based/arts-informed narrative inquiry approach, I move to chapter 4. In the following chapter, I describe coming alongside my participants and coming into relationships with them. This coming alongside required negotiation of entry and

relationships, as we met in an out-of-classroom place on the school landscape. Here, my attention was drawn to the crucial significance of the relational ethics of narrative inquiry. In the process of coming alongside and coming into relationships with my participants, I give a detailed account of my methodological approach, as I moved from field texts to interim texts and finally to my research text.

Chapter 4: Moving from the general to the particular

4.0: The four turns – part 2

To begin this chapter, I present the literature on ‘You Can Do It!’ Education (Bernard 2004, 2006a; 2006b, 2006c, 2017; Bernard & Pires 2006; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Bernard & Walton, 2011; Dayan, 2016; Yamamoto, Matsumoto, & Bernard, 2017) as it relates to my inquiry. Moving through this chapter, I describe taking the turn from a focus on the general and universal, toward the local and specific (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) as it organically emerged from my experiences as a teacher, a teacher-researcher, and a scholar. Such a turn signals the appreciation, understanding, and value we gain by attending to personal experiences in particular settings and involving people we are in relation with (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In the process of taking this turn, I begin to present the personal, practical, and social/theoretical justifications (Clandinin, 2013) for my research.

Nestled within this narrative turn is my personal story of Fionn. I retell and relive this story to describe how I came to attend to the profound importance of the children's lives, stories, and experiences in my school and the YCDI program's impact on their lives. I intersperse this retelling with social-emotional learning (SEL) literature, well-being, and current health education in Ireland. I also paint a picture of children's lives in Ireland by drawing from the Growing Up in Ireland longitudinal study (2006).

4.1: You Can Do It! Education (YCDI)

YCDI education is a cognitive-behavioural theory (CBT), SEL curriculum based on the theory of emotional intelligence (Salovey & Myer, 1990; Gardner 1984/2011; Goleman 1995) and the CBT practices of Albert Ellis (1913-2007), Richard Lazarus (1922-2002), Donald Meichenbaum and Martin Seligman. Two programs; the *YCDI Education Early Childhood*

Program (ages 4-6 years old) and the *Program Achieve-A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum* (7-11 years old) involve teachers presenting learning activities from a formal curriculum that explicitly teach SEL competencies to children in school (Bernard, 2002, 2004, 2007; Ashdown & Bernard 2012). The YCDI Program Achieve (2007: 11) mission statement aims to:

support communities, schools, and homes to optimise the social, emotional, and academic development of all young people. Its unique contribution is in identifying the social and emotional capabilities that all young people need to acquire in order to be successful in school, experience wellbeing, and have positive relationships that include making contributions to others and the community.

The program focuses on developing positive habits of mind (ways of thinking), inside characteristics of students (the five foundations), and outside influences on students (effective teaching, positive parenting, and community support) to foster and promote positive relationships, behaviours, and well-being (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Bernard, 2012). The five foundations of the program are *Organisation, Confidence, Getting Along, Persistence, and Resilience*.

Several studies indicate the impact and effectiveness of the YCDI program and focus on the positive effect of YCDI lessons on students' social-emotional development and wellbeing (Bernard 2006a; 2006b, 2006c; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Bernard & Walton, 2011), emotional resilience (Bernard & Pires 2006; Bernard, 2008; Yamamoto, Matsumoto, & Bernard, 2017), attitudes and perceptions (Bernard & Walton, 2011) and academic achievement (Ashdown & Bernard, 2011). Dayan (2016) carried out a systematic review of the YCDI Early Childhood Program using the Collaborative Association of Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) criteria for inclusion. CASEL outlines five SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2003, 2012, 2020). CASEL recommends SEL programs as CASEL SElect once they

meet specific criteria based on robust program design, alignment to the five competencies of SEL, the delivery of high-quality training and implementation, and are evidence-based.

Dayan (2016) indicated that the YCDI Education Early Childhood Program is an evidence-based, theory-based SEL program and therefore should be thoroughly reviewed by CASEL to be endorsed and implemented in more schools. The theoretical underpinnings of the YCDI program cover three distinct areas. They together elucidate the types of SEL competencies that impact the positive development and well-being of young people: (1) learning dispositions, (2) social skills, and (3) emotional resilience (Bernard, 2012). These areas align closely with the five interrelated sets of cognitive-affective and behavioural competencies as outlined by CASEL (Elias et al., 1997; CASEL, 2003, 2012, 2020), which are fundamental for positive social emotional well-being (SEWB) (Bernard 2006a; 2006b, 2006c; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Bernard & Walton, 2011; Bernard, 2012).

Learning dispositions of students that moderate teacher effectiveness and contribute to achievement include rational beliefs (Eilis & Bernard, 2006), behaviours for learning (McDermott et al., 1999), academic regulation (Zimmerman, 1989), academic enablers (DiPerna & Elliot, 2002), internal locus of control (Rotter, 1966), and learned optimism (Seligman, 1991/2011). Bernard (2004) also identified SEL competencies of work and social confidence, persistence, and organisation as being underdeveloped in students with reading attainment challenges.

Extensive social skills research has been conducted on the cognitive-behavioural strategies that children and adolescents adopt to negotiate interpersonal problems (Spivack, Platt, & Shure, 1976; Pellegrini & Urbain 2006). From this research, five cognitive skills that appear effective for interpersonal problem solving emerged; sensitivity or perspective taking, alternative solution generation, means-end thinking, consequential thinking, and

casual thinking (Bernard, 2012). Significant to the YCDI program is the ability to accept others, or what Eilis and Bernard (2006a) called 'rational beliefs'. The acceptance of others is associated with lower degrees of anger in young people (Bernard & Cronan, 1999). The YCDI program also draws from the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (Australian Government Department of Education, Science, and Training, 2005). This framework identified nine shared values: care and compassion, doing your best, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility and understanding, and tolerance and inclusion. Many of these values are represented in the YCDI program (Bernard, 2012).

Emotional resilience has been defined as children's capacity to use coping strategies that help regulate the intensity of negative emotions in the presence of adverse events (Bernard, 2004, 2012; Bernard & Pires, 2006). Bernard (2008: 36) defines emotional resilience as 'being able to stay calm, control one's aggressive and withdrawal behavior, and calm down in an appropriate time when faced with challenging tasks or difficult people.' Bernard (2008) examined the YCDI program's impact on school students' emotional resilience who presented with social-emotional, behavioural, and achievement challenges. Results indicate the program's positive effect on students' emotional resilience as measured using the Australian Council for Educational Research SEWB survey (Bernard, 2008).

While several studies have measured the impact of YCDI on students SEWB (Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Bernard & Walton, 2011), attitudes and perceptions (Bernard & Walton, 2011), emotional resilience (Bernard, 2008; Yamamoto, Matsumoto, & Bernard, 2017) and academic achievement (Ashdown & Bernard, 2011), none have narratively inquired into children's experiences of the five foundations of the program, or the program itself. My research aims to inquire into students' experiences of the five foundations of the

social-emotional and academic learning program 'You Can Do It (YCDI) Program Achieve' and explore the program's impact on their lives on and off the school landscape. I present my findings narratively and highlight my research's ultimate educational purpose; understanding and illuminating students' intimate, social and contextual experiences (Biesta, 2015) absent from current YCDI literature and broader SEL research.

In this section, I have opened up space for my research by outlining the current literature on YCDI and how my research will add to this body of knowledge. Now, I move back to a narrative retelling as I continue to ground myself in the three-dimensional inquiry space of time, place, the social, and the personal by describing my taking of the turn from the general to the particular (Bruner, 1986; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

4.2: Turn 3: From the general to the particular- assumptions of generalizability

As I journeyed through the literature on SEL and well-being, I continued to unearth studies that indicated the positive impact of SEL intervention programs on student development (Payton et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Corcoran et al., 2018). Often such studies used quantitative methods of before and after surveys of SEWB and comparative random control trials (RCTs) to present measurable finds. From these findings, generalizations were made about program effectiveness and their applicability to be subsumed into educational curricula (Barry et al., 2017). Navigating through such literature, I found myself drawn into what Bruner described as a paradigmatic way of knowing and thinking.

In his early work, Bruner (1977) describes two ways of thinking; analytical and intuitive. Analytical thinking emerges through inductive and deductive processes, while intuitive thinking is based on implicit perceptions of phenomena (Bruner, 1977). Later,

Bruner (1986) removed the distinction between both types of thinking and instead interpreted two ways of knowing; paradigmatic and narrative. Bruner (1986: 11) eloquently describes the difference between each way of knowing:

A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used as means for convincing another. Yet what they convince of is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness. The one verifies by eventual appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical proof. The other establishes not truth but verisimilitude.

Throughout this period of my journey, I felt an inner struggle and turmoil, an embodied sense of discomfort, as I brought my initial readings about narrative research alongside the research literature on SEWB. It seemed there was a deep chasm between both ways of knowing. I was unsure as to how best to proceed. At the time, my intuitive, artistic, and creative self was only just awakening to the possibilities that arts-based/informed research could offer. Yet, I found it difficult to reconcile this emerging part of myself with the logical, reasoning, and intellectual capacities that propelled me forward in life and impacted my ways of knowing and thinking. My reading brought me alongside many ways to understand and analyse stories. Hardy (1968) tells us that through self-narrative and inter-narrative telling, we create, maintain, and transform relationships as we come to know each other. Hardy (1968: 5) says that 'in order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, as well as the social, past and present.' For Bakhtin (1984), narrative is a dialogical process that occurs between authors. In this way, all narrative knowing and telling is contextual, relational, and situated where 'every word smells of the context and the contexts in which it has lived its intense social life' (p. 262).

I had an initial understanding that narrative research and analysis meant examining raw data, such as stories, reducing them to themes through coding and recoding, and finally

representing the narrative in final research texts. In the beginning, I was drawn towards the potential of more generalizable outcomes and findings of the impact of the YCDI program in my school. I felt this orientation to research was easier to explain and rationalise to my teacher colleagues, who frequently asked questions that I struggled to answer, 'What will your research prove?' or 'What will your research find out?' Thinking this way led me to various narrative methods of analysis, including; Polkinghorn's (1995) paradigmatic and narrative modes, Mishler's (1995) typology of narratives, and Labov's Labovian model (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). My logical, reasoning, and rationalising story resonated strongly still and were evident in my first ethical application submission. In January 2017, I submitted the first draft to Grace.

Monday, January 30th 2017: Email from Grace to John

John,

I have read and edited your ethics form. Yes, there is a lot of repetition, and I have deleted it in parts. You also will need to think more clearly about your aims and objectives and also reference your role as teacher/researcher and the power differential between you and students - they may continue to position you as teacher/adult/male, which will impact on the stories they tell and retell. As a narrative researcher, you will draw on researcher reflexivity to become aware and 'disrupt' patterns of power.

John, the aspect I am a little concerned about is what reads as your lack of clarity re aims/objectives, and while it is difficult in narrative inquiry to be clear from the beginning, it is important to have a more coherent sense of what and why you are doing it. I think it wiser to wait a bit before you submit, reflect on what you mean by constructing wellbeing identities and how that is linked into the YCDI programme - write it in simple terms first, exactly what you see yourself doing and how the children will understand what they are doing.

Don't be disheartened, remember it took seven iterations for some narrative inquirers to get through ethics. It is best to have this thought through before handing it in. It sharpens your thinking.

Attached is the edited draft so far.

With best wishes,

Grace

Grace's feedback was clear. I felt my stomach tighten and twist. This embodied reaction became more commonplace throughout my research inquiry. The sensation is temporary, but each time unforgettable. Varela et al (1991) describe the body as both a physical and a lived experiential vessel, as both 'outer' and inner' where 'these two sides of embodiment are obviously not opposed. Instead, we continuously circulate back and forth between them' (p. xiv). I read and re-read the email '*think more clearly about your aims and objectives...your role as teacher/researcher and the power differential between you and students... a coherent sense of what and why you are doing it.*' A thought from Clandinin & Connelly (2000: 73) spoke to me at the time:

The purpose, and what one is exploring and finds puzzling, change as the research progresses. This happens from day to day and week to week, and it happens over the long haul as narratives are told, puzzles shift and purposes change.

I responded to Grace.

Tuesday, January 31st, 2017: Email from John to Grace

Hi Grace,

Thank you for your feedback...I won't get disheartened yet ☺

I understand what you're saying about my aims and objectives, and I could certainly use some guidance on writing them when the time comes, but before we go there, I will take some time to reflect on what I actually want to do with my study and why.

I'll get back to you on this,

Kind regards,

John

For many years, the primary concern of social science research was that of generalizability.

This paradigm of knowing removed the particular's impact, enabling findings to be generalised and extrapolated beyond the context under which they were observed (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Research inclined toward cause and effect dualities and to theoretical relationships (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Emerging from such paradigms of knowing were laws

based on facts, ensuring agreeable and docile cultures easily controlled and influenced (Geertz, 1973). Geertz (1973) critically analyses the relationship between facts and laws, detailing how facts may predetermine laws, or conversely, how laws actualize and spawn realities. Such findings augment grand narratives or theories that can be universally applied regardless of time or place and, in doing so, dismiss 'the value of the local and the particular in favour of the power of prediction and control provided by the universal' (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007: 26).

Having received feedback from Grace, much soul searching, reflecting/reflexing, questioning, and reading was required.

Tuesday, 31st January 2017: John's Diary Entry

It's been about two months since I've added to this journal. I think I felt like I've been cruising a bit. My 'Life-Timeline' metaphor idea received positive feedback from Grace, but now with the feedback from my ethics form, I am not sure how to write my objectives. I want to use YCDI as a means to access students' experience of the five foundations. Through an arts-based inquiry, I hope that by doing this, I can discover what factors are most influencing their experiences, what influences their well-being. Does this mean I am saying that YCDI and the five pillars are a way of experiencing well-being? Can I even say this? This is the first setback I have had.

CHILL OUT, JOHN!

There will be many more, and is this really a setback? Grace said to reflect more, so reflect more! I need to reflect more on my aims/objectives. I need a more coherent sense of what and why I am doing it.

I wanted to research the YCDI program in my school, but as Grace had suggested, I was still unclear as to why I wanted to and what I hoped to achieve. In the vignette above, I speak of 'discovering what factors'. Had I been seduced by the lure of more structured narrative analysis approaches?

My first few months as a PhD student were exhilarating yet daunting. The field of narrative research was all-consuming and so navigating through swathes of articles and

journals exacted a toll on my story as a teacher-researcher. In the intervening weeks and months, I immersed myself in narrative literature while also holding fast to my reasons for engaging in my inquiry. I was passionate about my school and the lives of its students. I wanted to learn more about the YCDI program and its impact on their lives on and off the school landscape. These aims would sustain my passion, curiosity, and interest. As a narrative inquirer, my personal justifications set the context of my own life experiences, tensions, and unique puzzles alongside my participants. Clandinin (2013: 36) tells us that our personal justifications are crucial for several reasons:

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 relationship. 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.

Coming alongside my students lies at the heart of my research interest. This 'turn' to the particular emerged as I began to think narratively about their lives on the school landscape and my ethics form. As a teacher in my school, I had the privilege of teaching many wonderful students. Through completing my ethics form and my continued journey through narrative literature, I came to understand that their lives were complex and profound. This confirmation of my passion for studying student experience emboldened me to move forward again with my ethics form adopting a conception of narrative as both phenomenon and method (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Wednesday, March 15th, 2017: John's Diary entry

I've finally gotten my ethics form to a place where Grace feels it is ready to submit. It was a challenging form to complete for many reasons, but primarily because I didn't know what it was I wanted to do! What was my question, and what were my objectives? This took time, and I was very unnerved by the whole process...but I've gotten it to a stage that I'm ready to submit. That is a success!

As I reflected on my ethics form and research conundrum, I was brought back to autumn 2015 to a personal experience that affected me in powerful ways. Even now, it continues to reverberate across my inquiry. This experience disrupted my personal practical knowledge and story on the landscape of Scoil Firtéar. In a sense, it encapsulates and presents my personal justifications as to why I began my research project. Curiously, I encountered the setback upon submitting my ethics form, my disappointment, and confusion as to how to best move forward that brought me back alongside this experience again.

4.3: Social-emotional learning

In this section, I retell Fionn's story from reconstructed memory fragments. Betwixt and between this narrative, I thread and bring alongside the literature of SEL, well-being, Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) in the Irish context, and my reflexive thoughts. By retelling Fionn's story, I narratively present the personal justifications for my inquiry. I also acknowledge that my personal justifications will not suffice, and that practical and social/theoretical justifications are also required (Clandinin, 2013). Already, I have introduced the concept of students' personal learner knowledge, which I hope will add new disciplinary knowledge to the field of narrative inquiry and address aspects of the theoretical justifications of my inquiry. I also endeavour to deepen our understanding of students' experiences of the five foundations of the YCDI program, identity formation, and how becoming teacher-researchers may navigate tensions that arise while engaging in arts-based research in their schools. Together, these aims comprise the practical and social dimensions of this inquiry.

John's timeline – Tuesday, October 13th, 2015: Fionn's Story (pt1)

What's on your mind?

I knew about Fionn before I started teaching this year. I knew him from the yard. He would often get very upset with his classmates and end up standing alone by the fence. Before the summer holidays, I attended a meeting with his

teacher, a trusted friend, and colleague. She proceeded to give me a lengthy summary of how Fionn had gotten on during the previous year. It read like a rap sheet, listing out a long list of descriptions such as 'takes time to settle', 'very disruptive', 'uncooperative', and 'emotionally unstable'. I was told that Fionn had been taken out for social groups last year. He did focused work and lessons from the YCDI program with other boys, who had been identified as having social needs like making and keeping friends, being disorganised, and regulating his emotions. I was told that he had had an 'OK' year. He was only suspended three times. My colleague's last words to me were, "You need to be prepared for September."

SEL emerged from the theory of emotional intelligence developed by Salovey & Myer (1990), Gardner (1984/2011), and Goleman (1995). This theory focuses on the importance of attaining positive interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Elias, 1997). Many schools acknowledge that serving and responding to diverse populations of students poses challenges and difficulties (Smyth et al., 2009; Learning First Alliance, 2001, cited in Corcoran et al., 2018). In some instances, students are not well equipped with the SEL skills needed to engage in school fully. Such a deficit negatively impacts behaviour, health, and academic performance (Blum & Libbey, 2004). SEL skills are also acknowledged as crucial elements for success in life (CASEL 2003, 2012; Lopes & Salovey 2004; Zins & Elias, 2007; Zins et al., 2007; Tough 2012). CASEL (2012: 4) describes SEL as:

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Whereas success in life was primarily associated with cognitive ability and academic achievement, much research now presents evidence-based findings that positive social emotional skills are linked to improved outcomes and dispositions in areas such as social relationships, academic achievement, and school attendance (Zins & Elias, 2007; Weare & Nind, 2011; Taylor & Schellinger, 2011; Durlak et al., 2011; Clarke et al., 2015; Durlak et al.,

2015; OECD, 2015; Corcoran et al., 2018). Corcoran et al (2018) meta-analysis found that SEL programs had positive effects on reading, mathematics, and science compared to traditional methods. Findings from the Durlak et al (2011) meta-analysis of 231 controlled studies showed that SEL programs are among the most effective interventions to promote students' positive developments. Research also indicates that engagement in SEL programs leads to improved academic development, social behavior, and reduced emotional distress for students (Weissberg et al., 2011). Effective SEL programs are underpinned by an understanding that:

the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging and meaningful, social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker; and many different risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropout) can be prevented or reduced when multi-year, integrated efforts develop students' social and emotional skills (CASEL 2012: 9)

SEL programs intend to develop five core competencies in students (CASEL, 2003; 2012); self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Embedded within these categories is the ability to recognize the impact and influence of emotions on one's behaviour, to self-regulate emotions and thoughts, to empathize with others, conflict management, as well as making positive choices about behaviours and social interactions (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; CASEL 2003; McKown et al., 2009).

4.4 Honouring Fionn's story

John's timeline – Tuesday, October 13th, 2015: Fionn's Story (pt2)

What's on your mind?

Throughout summer 2015, I thought about Fionn many times. As the days ticked down toward September, I felt worried and apprehensive about having him in my class. Isn't this awful? I wish I hadn't felt this way about him. What would our relationship be like? How would he react to me as his teacher? Was I in for a 'long year', and was I "prepared" as my colleague had warned? Would Fionn see me, as he may have seen his previous teacher? As someone

who caused him to get suspended. His connection with the school is fragile. I remember deciding before the year started that I would do my very best by Fionn. I cared about him, even before I'd met him. All I wanted to do was to work on building a relationship with him. I wanted Fionn to be happy in school. Nothing else.

SEL skills are best developed through whole-school engagement (Barry et al., 2017), effective classroom instruction, student participation, as well as parental and community support (Nation et al., 2003; Bond & Hauf, 2004; Hawkins, Smith, & Catalano, 2004; Weare & Nind, 2011). By explicitly teaching SEL, positive social and emotional abilities become ubiquitous in a students' day to day life (Zins & Elias, 2007). For SEL skills to prosper and flourish, opportunities to apply and practice new learnings are crucial (Weare & Nind, 2011). In this way, intervention programs integrated into the curriculum and adopted as a whole school initiative are most successful (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Zins & Elias, 2007; Barry et al., 2017).

Like YCDI, many SEL programs are seen as universal interventions. Schools adopt such programs to promote and foster healthy emotional development and decrease the development of at-risk behaviours (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Zins & Elias, 2007; Jones, Aber & Brown, 2011). Extensive research also demonstrates that school-based SEL interventions enhance students' connection to schools (Durlak et al., 2011; Barry et al., 2017). Dayan (2019) discusses the importance of SEL across five dimensions: the positive impact on student social and emotional functioning, the positive contribution to academic success, the positive relationships between teachers and schools, the presentation of prosocial behaviours, and the prevention of maladaptive behaviours.

Emerging from my ethics conundrum, the reflexive story of Fionn came to the foreground of my thoughts. His story resonates strongly, and I hold it close to me still. As I share this story, I am aware it is incumbent on me to honour Fionn and his story through my retelling. Fionn graduated and left the school before I began my inquiry, but my research

seeds lay in the coming alongside of both our lives on the school landscape. In retelling this personal story, I am drawn to the importance of what Maxine Green (1995) terms wide-awakeness to ongoing experiences. Green (1995: 35) tells us that ‘without the ability to think about yourself, to reflect on your life, there’s really no awareness, no consciousness. Consciousness doesn’t come automatically; it comes through being alive, awake, curious, and often furious.’ This attention to ongoing experiences calls us to be wakeful to others’ lives and the living and meaning-making process. As a narrative inquirer, the importance of being wakeful focuses on both the researched and the researcher, where we are mutually mindful of the experiences of both. Thinking about Fionn’s story and others leads me to question what it means to live out a relationally ethical inquiry, where I see wide-awakeness as a crucial part of the process. This way of relationally thinking draws my attention ‘to the importance of passion and curiosity in our work as narrative inquirers and to the ways we tell and listen to our own participants’ stories of experience’ (Clandinin et al., 2018: 34). My reconstructed memory of Fionn continued to draw me into the nuances of his life, his background, and his experiences in school. He had been attending smaller YCDI social group lessons in school with a group of boys identified as needing direct intervention. I was intrigued as to what this experience was like for Fionn. I wondered about the impact of the YCDI program on his life both on and off the school landscape. As a student in my class, we had started well.

John’s timeline – Tuesday, October 13th, 2015: Fionn’s Story (pt3)

What’s on your mind?

Since September, we’ve been getting on great. Yes, there have been moments of tension, but we’ve been able to work through them. I am drawn to Fionn’s story as living on the edges of school life, as not being a ‘good student’. What is his place in our school if the stories being told of him are ‘very disruptive’, ‘uncooperative’, and ‘emotionally unstable’? What do you say to a child like that, to embolden them with confidence and a value of their own self-worth? How do I gain his trust? Fionn is the best athlete in the school. He’s a

champion swimmer and runner. He excels on the sports field and in the swimming pool. Not many students can say this. But today, there was a very upsetting incident.

SEL programs are also linked to school success, as they play essential roles in facilitating positive relationships between teachers and students (Dayan, 2016). When based upon positive attachments and good communication, such a relationship enhances students' abilities to learn and focus in the class setting (Elbertson et al., 2010). By strengthening the teacher-student relationship, research also shows that school attendance also improves (Catalano et al., 2002; Zins et al., 2007; Elbertson et al., 2010).

Findings from several SEL studies also indicate improved attitudes about the self, others and enhanced prosocial behaviours. Such behaviours include expressing care and helping others, reducing conduct issues, setting positive goals, and taking responsibility for their actions and choices (Durlak et al., 2011). Many SEL programs also have a dual purpose of instilling in children the SEL skills to prevent maladaptive behaviours. According to Dodge and Crick (1990: 18):

Aggressive behaviours in children are a function of how they perceive, interpret, and make decisions during social interactions, interventions that target children's cognitions related to interpreting social information can help reduce aggressive behaviours

In their research, Durlak et al (2011) demonstrate that students who participate in SEL are associated with fewer conduct problems than comparison controls. SEL skills equip students with the ability to deal with social-emotional problems that occur by enabling them to consider other people's perspectives, recognizing emotions, making controlled decisions, and communicating effectively (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Zins & Elias, 2007).

4.5: Health education in Ireland

John's timeline – Tuesday, October 13th, 2015: Fionn's Story (pt4) What's on your mind?

During a Gaelic football match against a visiting school team, an accusation was levelled at Fionn by the visiting coach/teacher. He was accused of using inappropriate language toward an opponent and the visiting coach/teacher. Fionn denied all wrongdoing. He may, or may not, have said it. I can't be sure. Fionn has lied in the past to other teachers and me. The incident was handled by another colleague of mine, who coaches the team, but who does not know Fionn, who does not know his story. The situation escalated out of control. Fionn began to shout and swear.

In Ireland, the Department of Education (DE), the Department of Health (DOH), and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) play a vital role in the promotion of positive life development in young children and adolescents. Many national policy documents focus on student mental health, well-being, or well-becoming. (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognises the need to promote wellbeing through interventions that promote competence and psychological strengths (WHO, 2005). Well-being is a multidimensional construct that has been operationalized by many different researchers (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014; O'Brien & O'Shea, 2017). The National Council for Curriculum Development (NCCA, 2017: 3) tell us that 'student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community.' In Ireland, child and adolescent well-being have been afforded increased attention in policy development over the last three decades. This has seen a significant shift away from objective measures of well-being, such as educational participation, towards the affective realm of children's feelings and attitudes (Banks et al., 2015). The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 (DE, 2018) builds on many existing frameworks and guidelines available in Ireland to promote and support well-being in schools, such as Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009), Get Active

Physical Education: Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Young People – A Guideline Framework (DES, 2012), Well-Being in Post Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH & HSE, 2013), Well-Being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH & HSE, 2015), Framework for Junior Cycle (DES & NCCA, 2015), Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools (DES, Inspectorate, 2016), Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Post Primary Schools (DES, Inspectorate, 2016), Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (DES & NCCA, 2017), A Whole School Guidance Framework (NCGE, 2017) and Youthreach Soft Skills Framework (Gordon & County Meath ETB, 2015).

As with the WHO (2015), contained within the Wellbeing Framework 2018-2023 (DE, 2018) is an explicit reference to the positive impact of SEL interventions as well as the link to the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. Durlak et al (2011: 14), cited in the framework, states:

Furthermore, social emotional learning programmes have been shown to significantly improve children and young people’s social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and learning performance (Durlak et al., 2011). Such programmes can be delivered universally, to all children and young people as part of the SPHE curriculum

There is a widespread international and national consensus of the importance and value of SPHE (WHO, 2012; Byrne et al., 2012) and the SPHE curriculum in Ireland (NCCA 2008; DES 2009; NicGabhainn et al., 2010). Since the 1990s, the Irish educational landscape has seen many national health-promoting programs come to fruition. These programs include; The Health Promoting School (1994), On My Own Two Feet (1994), Bí Folláin (1994), Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) (1995), Walk Tall (1996/2016), and Stay Safe (1991/2016). The SPHE Curriculum (1999) was designed and developed due to the continued focus on health education and a need for a specific health education curriculum to:

provide particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health, and well-being of the child and to help him or her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society. (DES, 2009: 2)

The SPHE curriculum has an absolute value in supporting children and students to better understand areas such as their mental health and well-being, body image, gender, relationships and sexuality, substance abuse, and prosocial behaviours (O’Sullivan, 2014).

The relationship between positive health and educational outcomes indicates that the quality of pupil health has a positive impact on educational outcomes and vice versa in many countries (Byrne et al., 2012), and investment in effective health education programmes advances education and health in students (WHO, 2012).

4.6: A picture of children’s lives in Ireland

John’s timeline – Tuesday, October 13th, 2015: Fionn’s Story (pt5) What’s on your mind?

Fionn was brought into the Principal’s office, where he continued to scream and shout. After some time, he calmed down, and his mother came to collect him. His mother is a single parent who, at times, struggles with Fionn. He is often late for school. I have met her on several occasions this term. Thankfully those meetings were about Fionn’s progress in class. They have a very close relationship. Fionn’s father does not live with them, and his relationship with him is unknown to me. He never shares stories about his dad at school. Fionn is being suspended for a day. I’m devastated. I wish I’d been there. I feel very guilty for not being there. Not necessarily to defend him, but I know him. I know his story. We have a close and caring relationship. I could have helped to defuse the situation. Maybe he wouldn’t have been suspended.

Several publications from the Growing Up in Ireland-National Longitudinal Study of Children (GIU) offer insights into the home life (Harris, Doyle & Greene, 2011), school life (GUI, 2009a, 2009b; Smyth, 2017), community (McCoy, Quail, & Smyth, 2012), relationships, self-perception, and body image (Layte & McCrory, 2011), gender identity (Williams et al., 2009), well-being and social-emotional dimensions of the lives of young children (Williams et al., 2009), adolescents (Watson et al., 2014), and children with disabilities (McCoy et al., 2016).

Harris et al (2011) found that exercise, a healthy diet, and lifestyle were the main factors necessary for positive health outcomes in young children. Children tended to focus

primarily on physical health, while a small number of children considered family and peer relationships significant in promoting well-being (Harris et al., 2011; McCoy et al., 2012). Children's understanding of self-perception, body image, and gender identity were perceived in a positive light. Children felt comfortable with their physical appearance and possessed an overwhelmingly positive perception of themselves. Children also recognized and acknowledged the value of personality and character as being more valuable than appearance. They also eluded to the significance society places on physical appearance and identified defined gender roles across several traits, including behavior, personality, appearance, and interests (Harris et al., 2011).

Children's perceptions of parenting acknowledged the problematic and stressful task that parents face (Harris et al., 2011; Nixon, 2012). The issue of positive parenting explored the 'ideal' and 'perfect' parent. Concepts of positive parenting centered around the care and nurturing of children and creating boundaries for behavior. Children also described negative or harmful parental traits, including neglect, emotional abuse, and physical punishment. Parenting styles and the child-parent relationship's quality was also a factor in the social-emotional development of children (Nixon, 2012). Findings indicated that authoritarian styles of parenting (low levels of responsiveness and high levels of control), as well as neglectful parenting (low responsiveness and low control), impacted negatively on children's development in school (Nixon, 2012). Increased levels of social-emotional difficulty were associated with high levels of mother-child and father-child conflict. Low levels of closeness in mother-child relationships were significant for girls' but not boys' social and emotional outcomes (Nixon, 2012).

Furthermore, a diverse picture of home life emerged from the GIU study. 70.5% of children lived with two-parent residents in the family home, while 29.5% with one parent.

16% of the children had experienced parental separation (Harris et al., 2011). Overall, children reported having very strong relationships with their parents, especially their mothers. For those that experienced parental separation, relationships with non-resident fathers were reported as strained. Children also noted that while brothers and sisters provided good company to siblings, such relationships were often fraught and tension-filled (Harris et al., 2011). Social standing and family structure also impact children's social emotional development (Nixon, 2012). Children in single-parent households presented with more difficulties, as did children from lower-income earning families. Overall, the findings suggest that the parent-child relationship's quality is more critical for social-emotional development than family structure and income level.

4.7: Questions and wonderings

John's timeline – Tuesday, October 13th, 2015: Fionn's Story (pt6)

What's on your mind?

My experience with Fionn has gotten me thinking. It seems like teachers, including myself, often use terms like 'difficult' and 'disruptive' when describing students to other teachers. Do these words describe anything particular about our students or their lives? I wonder now how stories teachers tell of students work on other teachers and also on students. They leave an impression on us both. I feel shame and discomfort. How many stories have I told that have burdened and impressed unwanted stories onto other students? Quite a few teachers have started to use the language of YCDI to speak about students. I feel this is a good thing. Or are we just substituting one label such as 'difficult', for another, such as 'Organised' or 'Persistent'? I think the language of YCDI is an improvement, but we must take care and pay attention to how YCDI language is used and how it operates in the school. Does YCDI language or its stories limit us or set us free? Do they allow for emancipation and the telling of our own stories? These questions keep running through my head. I feel they need to be explored more.

Much empirical research on targeted SEL interventions has focused almost exclusively on quantifiable outcomes. While a vast amount of SEL research focuses on scientific findings, qualitative studies explore the impact of SEL in schools to deepen our understanding of the complex nature and relationship of SEL on the lives of students and teachers. Such studies

pay attention to the impact of SEL implementation in schools (Humphrey et al., 2009; Humphries, Williams & May, 2018), the potential of SEL programs to promote and marginalise children's SEL experiences (Wood, 2018a), SEL schemes as tools for cultural imperialism (Wood, 2018b), teacher voice in SEL programs (Reeves & Mares, 2017; Martínez, 2016), the connection between academic achievement and SEL (Hoffman, 2017), infusing SEL components into other curricular areas (Waajid, Garner, & Owen, 2013), transformative SEL program (Jagers, Rivas-Drake & Williams, 2019) and the role of teachers to scaffold SEL in students (Morcom, 2014).

My understanding of Fionn's story is embedded in the Scoil Firtéar landscape, a vast school complex. His story, which emerged alongside my ethics process's challenging story, brings me to the threshold of my research inquiry. Thinking narratively about how I remembered those moments with Fionn, there was a conflict between my story as a teacher, Fionn's story as a student, and school stories of Scoil Firtéar. How can I understand personal experiences of YCDI and life in school in ways that do not try to smooth out conflict and tension? Like knots on a piece of wood, they are part of the story of the wood. They give it character and texture. The different look and shape of these knots draw the eye, and when you run your hand over them, the knots impress on your skin differently from the rest.

In this section, through the narrative retelling of Fionn's story, I have outlined the international and national picture of SEL, well-being, and health education in Ireland. I also offered the rationale and position of SEL programs in school from a quantitative and qualitative perspective. Quantitative research is beneficial for collecting and collating data on SEL experiences. This research type informs wide-scale SEL policy development, the scrutiny of SEL programs, and program design. On the other hand, qualitative research can

explore and inquire into the affective realm of SEL. In this way, we gain a more profound understanding of relationships, attitudes, perceptions, transformative learning, marginalisation, and teacher-student experiences of SEL programs and interventions. While both research dimensions shine a positive light on SEL programs' role and that the link between SEL and positive student outcomes is overwhelmingly clear, there are also criticisms of the role of SEL programs in schools (Wood, 2018a, 2018b). Now, I move to the next chapter, where I describe negotiating entry to the field.

Chapter 5: Situating my inquiry

5.0: Entering the field

Narrative inquiry research, where the researcher enters in the midst and works alongside participants as they live, tell, retell, and relive their stories, is envisaged as collaborative, participatory research (Clandinin, 2013). I acknowledge that the stories I present in this thesis did not just begin as I entered the research space, nor did they finish when I left. The bustling school landscape, comprising the lives of children and staff, continued to live on. Moving from my safe academic position, enthralled and captivated by literature, the school landscape was full of doubt and uncertainty. Geertz (1996: 4) wrote about the unease he felt in his work where he sensed:

all the really critical things seem just to have happened yesterday and just about to happen tomorrow, induces an uncomfortable sense of having come too late and arrived too early, a sense which in my case never afterward left me.

The unease that Geertz speaks of resonated strongly with me as my story as a teacher and a becoming teacher-researcher came alongside the lives of the parents and children who would take part in my research. Entering the field, I was aware of the many narrative trajectories that comprise the school landscape and the challenge of reaching across this space to work meaningfully with others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As I crossed the threshold into my inquiry space, I sensed my own life unfolding and enfolding alongside others, where my apprehension and unease emerged through a narrative understanding of the history and school story of Scoil Firtéar.

5.1: Negotiating entry with parents and the principal

Beginning my research in September 2017, I had a sense of entering in the midst of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space but also being amid the temporal ebb and flow of the

school landscape. This movement signalled multiple entry points into my inquiry; in the midst of my personal and professional life as a teacher and a becoming teacher-researcher, of stories of school and school stories of Scoil Firtéar; and amid the lives of my participants.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 63-63) tell us that:

As researchers, we come to each new inquiry field living our stories. Our participants also enter the inquiry field in the midst of living their stories. Their lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave. Their lives continue. Furthermore, the places in which they live and work, their classrooms, their schools, and their communities, are also in the midst when we researchers arrive. Their institutions and their communities, their landscapes in the broadest sense, are also in the midst of stories.

Re-entering school that September, I felt the weight of my history and autobiographical story bearing down on me. Would I be taken seriously? Would my research? As I imagined my inquiry unfolding, my previous sense of knowing, understanding, and ease of movement within the bustling rhythms of life in Scoil Firtéar had evaporated. Every step I took was unsteady.

At the beginning of the academic year, I arranged a meeting with the principal. I explained my research proposal to date and shared copies of my plain language statements and consent/assent forms during this meeting. I explained how I wished to inquire into students' experiences of the YCDI program's foundations using an arts-based approach. The principal was very encouraging and helpful in all matters regarding the research. We both shared a passion for YCDI, Scoil Firtéar, its staff, and its pupils. We both wished to positively impact the students' lives and improve our collective understanding of YCDI. Having negotiated entry into the school landscape with my principal, my next step was to negotiate my relationship with parents to gain entry into their children's lives.

As per the university ethical guidelines, informed consent from parents and informed assent from the students were necessary to attain for me to begin. With this in mind, I held an information meeting for parents and children to present and make clear my research aims and objectives.

John's timeline – Monday, September 18th, 2017- After school information meeting with students and parents (Part 1)

What's on your mind?

From the moment I woke this morning, I was distracted and worried. I'd that terrible knot in my stomach again. I visited all three classes this morning just to give another GENTLE reminder about the after-school information meeting. Of course, the usual doubts began to creep in. What if nobody comes? What if nobody wants to take part in the research? After a hectic day, I rushed down to the sports hall.

As a teacher-researcher in my school, I was already immersed in the history, culture, and rhythms of the place. This pre-knowing equipped me with a heightened sense of the world view of parents and children's lives (Kitchen, 2006). To become thoroughly enmeshed in an inquiry, the researcher needs 'to be there long enough and to be a sensitive reader and questioner of situations in an effort to grasp the huge number of events and stories, the many twisting and turning narrative threads' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:77). This closeness entails coming to an intimate knowing and understanding of the particular and specific where 'you don't exactly penetrate another culture, as the masculinist image would have it. You put yourself in its way and it bodies forth and enmeshes you' (Geertz, 1996: 44). In *Auguries of Innocence* by the poet William Blake (1757-1827), he tells us that we may 'see a World in a grain of sand' through close observation. Narrative inquiry is research that attends to the unfolding and enfolding of lives to examine the intimate and nuanced moments at a particular time, in a specific place (Kitchen, 2006). Thinking narratively with the memory reconstruction above, I understand that my apprehension emerged not from thoughts of standing in front of parents and sharing my research puzzle. Instead, it was my

narrative knowing and understanding of the school landscape.

John's timeline – Monday, September 18th, 2017– After school information meeting with students and parents (Part 2)

What's on your mind?

Our sports hall is a beautiful space. We use it for all sorts of school occasions; cake sales, intercultural night, YCDI assemblies, PE, the book fair, etc. I've always loved it, but today it felt different. Less inviting than usual, also bigger, much bigger. I pulled the large partition walls closed and put out the chairs. But how many? I didn't want the meeting to have an empty feel, but I also wanted to ensure I'd have enough seats. I went with 30. I set up the projector and connected my laptop. It seemed to take forever to start. As with everything else today, time seemed to be toying with me, running inexplicably fast or torturously slow. Once the presentation was showing on the screen, I was ready. I grabbed the sign I'd made that day and fixed it to the hall door. I didn't want to stand outside the hall like an intimidating doorman. Instead, I waited just inside so I could welcome the parents and children. So, I waited. Minutes felt like hours. A solitary head peeked around the frame of the door, "Hello, is this the parent's information meeting for You Can Do It?"

"Yes, it is. Please come in and take a seat. My name's John, and I'm delighted to meet you."

During my five years teaching in Scoil Firtéar, a reoccurring and sometimes complicated school story was a lack of parental engagement. On many occasions, the school found it challenging to contact parents over matters pertaining to their child or school life, such as celebration days or parent-teacher meetings. Over the course of the day, my knowing of this particular school story worried me. I was anxious about how many parents would attend. I also worried about not gaining consent/permission for participants to take part. What if nobody wanted to? There was a real risk of having no participants to carry out research with. I had sent out 87 invitations, one for every child in 5th class. I wanted to allow all students and parents to come and meet me to discuss my research. Grace and I had previously agreed that eight participants would participate in the workshops, so I made clear on my invitation that only eight participants would be chosen. Narrative inquiry research, as a relational approach to understanding experience, is a 'collaboration between researcher and

participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 20). This narrative way of thinking acknowledges lives embedded in social, cultural, institutional, familial, and countless other narratives.

Such narratives are enmeshed in the lives of participants and researchers. Educational research also adds weight to this way of knowing, as it highlights the importance of understanding the many contexts in which education occurs (Alanen, Brooker & Mayall, 2015). Such research has led to an increased focus on parental involvement in education. This involvement has been described as parental interactions with children and their schools to enhance academic success (Hill et al., 2004). The influence parents have on the educational and holistic development of children is well established (Hayes, O'Toole & Halpenny, 2017; O'Toole et al., 2019) and is seen as a foundational principle of good educational practice (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; Emerson et al., 2012; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). This extensive research space also indicates that designing school spaces that bridge communication between home and school is a significant factor in children's educational outcomes (Hayes et al., 2017). Through the open and sincere sharing of my imagined research and experiences as a teacher-researcher, my aim that day was to foster and negotiate my relationship with the parents.

5.2: Acknowledging and disrupting power relations

John's timeline – Monday, September 18th, 2017– After school information meeting with students and parents (Part 3)

What's on your mind?

The parents and children made their way into the hall in drips and drabs. It dawned on me then that this was my first time being in relation with my imagined participants and their parents within my research space. I wanted to make a good impression. Just be yourself, be honest and open, I thought. I went through my presentation, attending to the language I used. I spoke as clearly as possible and used images and short bullet points instead of long text. I did my best to fully engage with the crowd of 18 parents, most of whom

were mothers. I made it interactive. I asked them and their children for their thoughts on YCDI and the five foundations. I explained my research puzzle as it was in those early stages. In the end, I opened the floor up for a question and answer session.

I understand that teacher-parent relationships are crucial in educational settings (Dockett & Perry, 2014). My memory of Fionn's mother comes alongside this memory reconstruction of the initial information meeting. I wonder how Fionn's mother felt as she sat in the office listening to the principal's recount of the day Fionn was sent from the football field. Did she see herself as an equal partner with the management of the school? Was this coming together to resolve and reconnect Fionn's and his mother's stories with the school story? Or did Fionn's mother perceive the school story as inaccessible, as one that caused tension in both her and Fionn's lives? Often, parents do not perceive schools to be as open and accessible as teachers perceive them to be (Hall et al., 2008), and when parents feel undervalued, it impacts negatively on parental involvement and engagement with schools (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1997; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2012).

John's timeline – Monday, September 18th, 2017– After school information meeting with students and parents (Part 4)

What's on your mind?

The parents' questions related more to the workshops' practical aspects: the time, day, and how long they would run for. One student asked, "Do you need to be good at art?" I fielded all of the questions openly and sincerely. When the information meeting came to an end, the parents and children seemed in no hurry to leave. I had arranged a table of refreshments at the back of the hall with juice and some biscuits, and so the parents lingered on for some time afterwards. I was wary of looking hurried to leave, so I didn't. I stayed in the hall amongst the crowd. Parents and children mingled. Some children began to play a chase game, while others sat close to their parents, drinking their juice. One parent spoke to me about how much her child loves You Can Do It, especially the foundation of 'Confidence'. Eventually, the conversations drifted off, and the parents and children departed. I tidied up the hall and gathered my belongings. I walked upstairs to my office to sit quietly while I reflected on what had just taken place.

Later that evening, I made an entry into my diary about the day.

John's diary entry, Monday, September 18th 2017

I'm delighted to have this initial meeting finished. I think it went well. The parents and children were curious and encouraging about my research. I had a sense from the attendees that they understood the rationale and aims of my inquiry. It was clear from the conversations I had afterwards that parents value the YCDI program in the Scoil Firtéar. There seems to be a common agreement that the program is beneficial. Today, I wanted to clarify why I was engaging in my research. Even though my aims and objectives would more than likely shift throughout my inquiry, my passion and interest in the children in Scoil Firtéar and the YCDI program would not. This was the story I had wanted to share. Yet questions still linger within me about my position in my inquiry and the power-relations involved as a teacher-researcher working with children in my school. Grace warned me about this when I was submitting my ethics form. I must go back and check her email.

In this narrative inquiry, power-relations are acknowledged and, indeed, disrupted through careful engagement with stories. Yet, care is needed as my positioning on the school landscape impacts the telling of stories and 'how they are told, who tells them, when they are told, how many stories are told' where the relations between us are dependent on power 'not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person' (Adichie, 2009 n.p.). The opportunity to tell participants' stories in this work is a position of undoubted power. I endeavor to disrupt this relation by honoring the lives and stories that I have come alongside and by continuously acknowledging the impact of my position and story in this inquiry.

Before, during, and after the initial parental meeting, I was mindful of being a teacher in my inquiry and the power that this position imbued me with. Historical and ongoing school stories can be considered grand narratives on the school landscape and may legitimise existing power relations and traditions between teachers, parents, and students (Lyotard, 1984). To disrupt such power relations, Lyotard (1984) tells us to focus on the individual stories lived out in particular contexts and celebrate difference and respect plurality (Todd, 2011). Gergen (2009) tells us that such grand narratives are often embedded in larger institutions and organisations and, as such, come to wield extraordinary influence

on our lives and matters of reality. Religious institutions serve as authorities of the spirit, medical science the authority over matters of health, schools, and universities the authorities over education. From a social constructionist perspective, we gain a heightened sense of these dominant narrative constructions and how we might come to construct alternatives and challenge long-held, institutional beliefs. Issues such as this were of central importance to Michel Foucault as he was primarily concerned with people's willing subjugation to institutional forms of power (Gutting 2005; Gergen, 2009). The Foucauldian use of the term 'power' here does not refer to apparent forms of power such as control by arms or law, but to subtle, insidious forms that permeate the every day, taken for granted aspects in our lives (Gergen, 2009). With these power/knowledge relations in mind, Foucault attempts to encourage us to mobilise resistance in the hopes of combatting processes he termed as 'cultural disciplining'. Foucault demands resistance, subversion, and transformation as methods by which to fight against power/knowledge relations through dogged antagonism toward the dominant order of things (Gergen, 2009).

5.3: Piquing my interest and negotiating my position

John's timeline – Monday, September 18th, 2017– After school information meeting with students and parents (Part 5)

What's on your mind?

I had started my research. I was in the field, in the midst. At once, this was both terrifying and terrific. I thought about the questions that I was asked and also those that weren't. I had imagined what this information meeting might have been like. As with other life experiences and my research journey thus far, moments never play out the way we think. It seemed to me that the parents and children were just happy to 'be' with each other, more so than having any particular curiosity about my research and the YCDI program. They did ask questions, but it was being in relation with others afterwards, as they shared a cup of juice or a biscuit, that piqued my curiosity and interest. It made me think about the upcoming workshops. What will pique my interest then? Will it be the talk about students' experiences of the YCDI foundations? Or, will it be the other stories and interactions outside of YCDI conversations that may offer up new possibilities and potentials for knowing? My understanding of what an emergent study is was made clear today. I never

expected the juice and biscuits to provide a space where the parents and children's relational and storied lives would emerge and intertwine. I am still passionate about inquiring into children's experiences of the YCDI foundations and the impact of the program on their lives both on and off the school landscape. Further still, I'm now curious about the other stories and experiences that may emerge and the exciting potential for new learning and knowing.

My positioning within my inquiry offered many different perspectives and ways to see the participants and parents on that first day and throughout my inquiry. Speedy (2007: 14) describes how multiple ways of knowing 'inculcates less sense of adherence to one overarching truth or belief system, but rather, aspires to an acceptance of many possible truths, many ethics to live by, multiple cultures, various forms of social organisation.' For Bateson (1990, 1994), learning and living are inseparable, and so she mirrors Dewey's notion of the wholeness of life comprised of experience and the connectedness of experience, education, and art (Dewey, 1938/1997; 1958). On an undulating school landscape, attending to ongoing lives offers a way to think about learning that adapts to movement and change (Bateson, 1994). For Bateson (1994), attending in this way includes being wakeful to feelings and embodied knowledge (Pelias, 2008).

At the initial information meeting, I was acutely aware of the diverse lives of those who attended. This story of diversity was another strong school story, and I was mindful of language difficulties that might be present. This story of diversity also informed my way of being throughout my inquiry and in the initial parental meeting. With this knowing, I attempted to use appropriate language at all times. Recent CSO figures (CSO, 2016) paint a picture of immigration into Ireland as very diverse, with over 200 nationalities and 183 languages (CSO, 2012). These figures also indicate that most first-generation newcomer children and their parents may have poor language skills. In 2007/08, newcomer children made up 10% of primary schools and 6% of secondary schools (Smyth et al., 2009). Byrne et

al (2010) found that newcomer children were overrepresented in larger schools, schools located in urban areas, and those with a socio-economically disadvantaged intake. This grand narrative analysis of newcomer children in Ireland seemed to map easily onto the school landscape of Scoil Firtéar and, in doing so, embeds the school context and this research in broader national educational contexts and discourses. Yet, I aim to move away from such widely cast generalisations to offer local and particular insights into children's lives in my school.

In this section, I described my negotiated entry to the field with the principal and parents. This negotiation was the beginning of a negotiated journey that lasted right up until the end of my being in the field in December 2018. Even now, as I engage in writing my thesis, I continue to negotiate with the stories that were shared with me. I continue to be mindful and wakeful to the power relations involved between the researcher and the researched and between the researcher and the research text. In the next section, I describe the methodological approach taken to my arts-based workshops and creative conversations. Within this context, I also describe the movement from field texts to research texts.

5.4: Arts-based workshops

My inquiry comprised two key data collection phases: engaging in participatory, arts-based workshops (Knowles & Thomas, 2002; Lutrell, 2003; Mello, 2007; O'Grady, 2009; McGarrigle, 2017), followed by 1-to-1 creative conversations a year later. Following the information meeting, letters of consent/assent were sent out to all of the parents of 5th class students. Twenty consent letters were returned from the eighty-seven that were issued. Of the twenty returned letters, nineteen represented newcomer children, while 1 represented an Irish native student. I organised the returned student forms into their class groups. Next, I spoke

with the class teachers. This was an important step and negotiation. I had never taught this cohort of students during my time in Scoil Firtéar, so I did not know them well. In this negotiation, I relied on the knowing relationships that the teachers already had with their students.

I was very aware that my research would create a space where students would creatively create artwork and have an opportunity to share experiences about the YCDI foundations. I knew such conversations might lead to other possibilities where tension-filled moments might emerge, so it was crucial participants would take up conversations around these moments. I selected an even number of boys and girls spread across all three 5th class classes to participate in the workshops. Through open and careful conversation with the three-class teachers, four boys and four girls were chosen. The participants were selected by drawing on the teachers' intimate practical knowing of each one and their capacity to engage in both creative art activities and share and speak about their experiences of YCDI and other topics that might arise throughout the inquiry. This group contained seven newcomer children and 1 Irish native. On the morning of the first workshop, the native Irish student informed me that they would be unable to participate in the research due to an after-school commitment they had forgotten about. Another student was chosen by returning to conversations with the class teachers, and so finally, five girls and three boys were to take part, all of whom were newcomer children. Acceptance letters were sent out to the participants, while thank you letters were sent out to all others who had submitted assent/consent forms as per the university ethical guidelines.

The workshops ran after school for ten weeks, from October 2017 to December 2017. Each workshop lasted 1 hour 45 mins and took place in the school's computer/board room. We focused on creating one piece of art based on one of YCDI Program Achieve's five

foundations every two weeks. As described in Chapter 3, an arts-based narrative inquiry is one where art is utilised as a part of the method for creating, composing, and gathering field texts. In this sense, it is considered the base and foundation of the entire research process (Mello, 2007). Leavy (2015) suggests that using visual arts offers up paramount issues for researchers to consider. The first is that visual art 'does not represent a window onto the world, but rather a created perspective' (p.224) and that 'visual art inherently opens up multiple meanings that are determined not only by the artist but also the viewer and the context of viewing' (p.224). The art pieces created by the children during the workshops were unique. They evoked particular kinds of emotions and responses that otherwise would not have emerged using surveys or interviews.

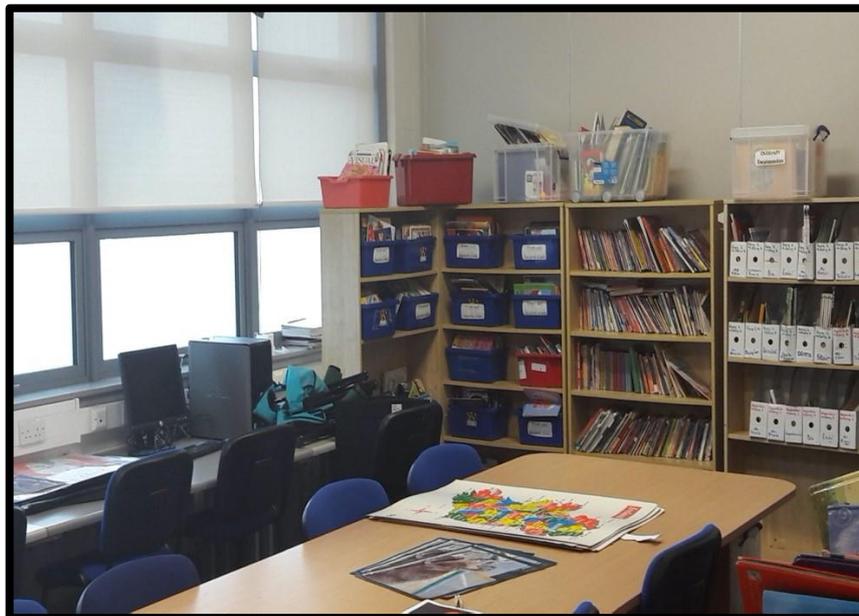


Image 7: The computer/boardroom workshop space

To keep my inquiry grounded in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, my questions were informed by Etherington (2013) and Luttrell (2003). Using this approach, I was attuned to what I had to gain from narrative knowing using creative arts methods. Each art piece took two weeks to complete and focused on a different art style for each foundation. At the

end of a two-week block, completed works were audienced and posted onto the participant's life timelines. We created collage/aesthetic pieces for *Organization*, abstract art for *Confidence*, drawing/sketches for *Getting Along*, mask making for *Resilience*. and finally, self-portraits for *Persistence*.



Image 8: Collage/Aesthetic artwork for 'Organisation.'

The 'data' collected during the workshops comprised transcribed conversations and stories, student artwork, pictures of the ongoing workshop, journal, and field notes. Together, this collection of 'data' comprised my field texts. Each workshop began with a catch-up on the previous weekend and week. Following this, we engaged in several activities across all workshops to encourage and promote conversation and discussion among the group. Such strategies included group conversations and discussions, using pictures, images, and questions to stimulate, explore, unpack, and share our understandings and experiences of the YCDI foundations.

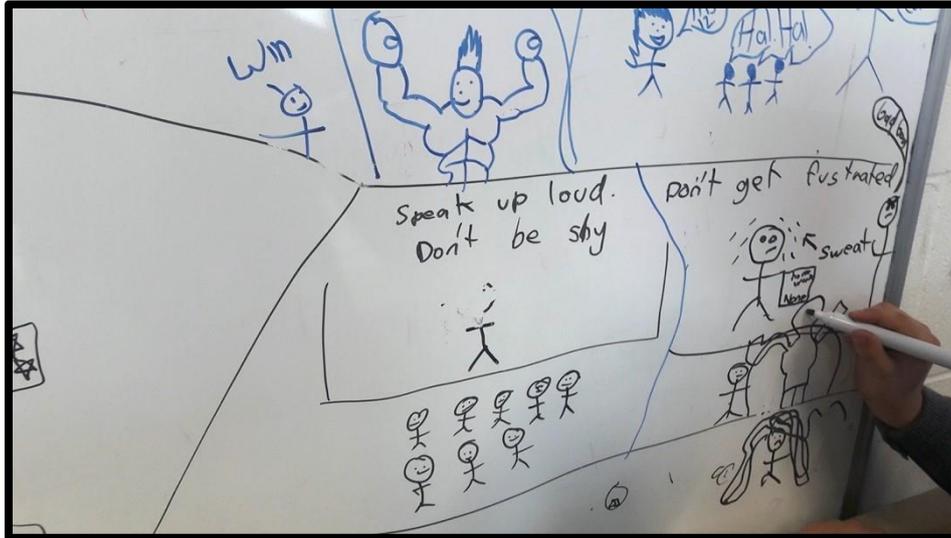


Image 9: Large whiteboard activity for 'Confidence.'

We also took advantage of the large whiteboard mounted on the wall of the computer/boardroom and mini-whiteboards for activities where students could further explore and share their experiences.

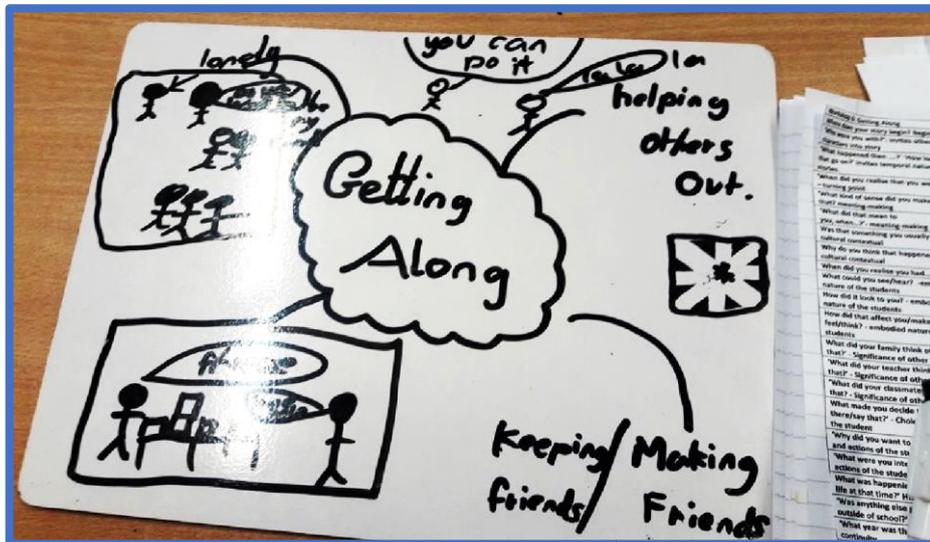


Image 10: Mini-whiteboard activity for 'Getting Along.'

Students wrote or drew images and words that spoke of their understanding and experience of a particular foundation during these activities. I also used a simple visualisation technique to focus their thoughts on their experiences of each foundation.

An integral aspect of my research design was the use of a 'life-timeline' metaphor. This guiding metaphor shaped the entire research puzzle, from design to analysis, and finally, to composing my research text. Using the 'life-timeline' metaphor, I wanted to clarify my research puzzle in a child-friendly way. I also wanted to ensure that I stayed grounded in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.



Image 11: Life-Timeline's with student art

At the beginning of the second workshop, I introduced the participants to our 'life timelines'. Before the workshops, I tied and crisscrossed eight lengths of rope across the meeting room ceiling. Each length of rope represented an individual participant's life timeline. I explained to the participants that the timelines were very similar to a Facebook, Instagram, or historical 'timeline'. All of the participants were familiar with the concept of a timeline, so there was an immediate sense of shared understanding. As a group, we discussed what timelines are and what they are used for. I described how each timeline represented an individual student and how, just like our own lives, the timelines above crisscrossed and overlapped, as our lives do in school. As each student explored and shared their understanding of each foundation, they created art pieces based on their own experiences. Some of these stories took place in the near past of the current year in 5th class, while others

drew from their experiences from many years before. Using the timeline metaphor and the physical timelines overhead, students moved forward and backwards in their lives as their experiences emerged in the co-creation and audiencing of their art. Through the medium of art, students conveyed and shared ideas, beliefs, life experiences, and YCDI stories.

Once the participants had finished a piece of art, we engaged in an audiencing activity (Luttrell, 2003). This was a fundamental aspect of both the artistic process but also the narrative analysis. I drew from Luttrell's (2003) work 'Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds: Gender, Race, and the Schooling of Pregnant Teens' as a framework for inquiring into student's artwork.

Individual art audiencing questions using Luttrell (2003)

1. *What do you see? List the people, objects, images and places?*
2. *What is going on in this piece?*
3. *Where are you in this piece?*
4. *What were you thinking of/feeling as you made this piece?*
5. *What's going on with others in this piece?*
6. *What are they thinking or feeling?*
7. *What would you change about this piece if you were to do it again?*

Each fortnight, students took turns to audience their art for the group. Through audiencing, we inquired into the student's artwork by discussing individual thoughts and selfrepresentations. We also engaged in group discussions about each piece. These discussions provided a significant source of information about the participants' experiences of the YCDI foundations. It also became a rich source of information about their lives both on and off the school landscape. Using Luttrell's (2003) questioning framework opened up multiple meanings, readings, and understandings of the art, determined not only by the individual artist but also by the other participants. Once the audiencing was complete, the participants were invited to 'post' their art on their timelines, as people 'post' onto Facebook or Instagram.

Group art audiencing questions using Luttrell (2003)

1. *What do you see in [STUDENT NAME] 's piece?*
2. *What do you think is going on? Mention whatever you see happening, no matter how small.*
3. *What ideas and/or emotions do you think this piece expresses?*
4. *What do you think you learned about the artist who did this piece?* 5. *Does anything you have noticed in this art piece so far remind you of something from your own life?*
5. *What would you have called this piece if you had made it yourself?*
6. *Take a look at all the art pieces–What is similar, and what is different about them?*

Each student picked a position on their timeline that they felt corresponded to when their experience had taken place in their life. As the weeks went by, students created, shared, audienced, and posted their completed pieces of art onto their timelines until they were full of their stories and experiences.

5.5: Creative conversations: Moving from field texts to research texts

Between the end of the workshops in December 2017 and the time we met again a year later during our 1-to-1 creative conversations, I worked on creating interim texts. As a narrative inquirer, I understand that the movement from field-text to interim text to research text is an iterative, interpretive process. This first step toward a final research text comprises many close readings, interpretations, re-readings, and rewritings in a multilayered narrative analysis approach. Moving from layer to layer, creating interim texts as I progressed, deepened my understanding and offered more nuanced, contoured perspectives of the wholeness of the participants' lives, their YCDI experiences, and their stories to live by.

Beginning this task was a daunting one, considering the number of field texts gathered, including transcripts, artefacts, photographs, and field notes, all of which were composed with particular attention to temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013). My research began with students telling stories about their experiences, and so, it was often the

case that students shared short snippets only, with no discernible start, middle or end. This way of sharing experiences is in stark contrast to other narratives where long autobiographical or life stories comprise the body of field texts. The term 'small' and 'big' stories have recently emerged as a "new narrative turn" (Bamberg, 2006: 128) that offers a lens to engage in narrative inquiry and analysis (Bamberg, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011/2012). Small stories can tell us about:

very recent events ("this morning," "last night") or still unfolding events...They can be about small incidents that may (or may not) have actually happened, mentioned to back up or elaborate on an argumentative point occurring in an ongoing conversation. Small stories can even be about – colloquially speaking – "nothing"; and as such indirectly reflect something about the interactional engagement between the interactants, while for outsiders, the interaction is literally "about nothing" (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008 p.5)

Kim (2015) tells us that small stories comprise the everyday social exchanges and happenings that occur in people's lives, while big stories are mainly used in life history or autobiographical narrative research (Georgakopoulou, 2006). Small stories are 'tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to (previous) tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell' (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011/2012: 119). While the primary focus during the workshops was on the five foundations of the YCDI program, other stories and narrative threads emerged. As students shared their YCDI experiences, they quickly turned into shared stories of school or the community, family and friends, or intertextual stories linking story to story (Kim, 2015). The interim texts I created were partial (Bamberg, 2006; Freeman, 2006) and allowed for further interpretation and co-composition alongside the participants. Bringing the interim texts back for more intensive work and negotiation with the participants occurred during the creative conversations a year later, in December 2018. This year-long process allowed me to

reengage with my research puzzle, away from the participants. Through close reading and rereading of transcripts, field notes, personal journal entries, and examining artwork, I began to unpick the diverse range of narrative plotlines, threads, and YCDI discourses that emerged and echoed across multiple lives.

In the first layer of analysis, I focused primarily on YCDI experiences that emerged through the creative creation of artwork. I also paid attention to poignant or particular moments of wonder or tension that resonated strongly with me. These moments were usually mirrored in my fieldnotes or personal journal entries. Each time something drew my attention in a transcript, I would rewrite this experience anew, using the transcript and the corresponding artwork, fieldnote, or journal entry. Using this method of close re-reading, reliving, re-interpreting, and rewriting, my partial interim texts were slowly created. Moving to the second layer of analysis, I used common narrative terms that arose from the first level of analysis to offer shared narrative reverberations across the field texts. Such terms included 'bumping stories', 'stories to live by', 'shifting stories to live by', 'moments of tension', and 'navigating a liminal space'. These narrative terms emerged from an understanding that the school landscape that we all inhabited was a storied landscape. These terms became narrative markers that turned my attention to particular plotlines that weaved and overlapped through stories and experiences shared. Genoway et al (2016: 435) explains that 'narrative threads are a way of looking at experiences as a whole while not fragmenting experiences into themes (Riesman, 2007). These threads are composed around plots or subplots in the stories that make up experience.'

The third layer of analysis was a renewed focus on the participants' lives, emerging from particular plotlines, as mentioned above. Contained within these plotlines were narrative threads, a cacophony of small stories (Bamber, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006; De

Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011/2012), and experiences that echoed and reverberated across student tellings. To develop a language to better discern how student knowledge is held and expressed (Clandinin et al., 2006), I tentatively suggest some student tellings were narrative constructions drawn from while simultaneously adding to their personal learner knowledge (). Such stories arose from their intimate, social and traditional values, beliefs, and experiences (Clandinin et al., 2006) and were made visible through discourse and interactions with others. Many tellings were not concise narrative arcs with a start, middle, and end, so my intention is not to piece them back together again but to be satisfied with 'swirls, confluxions, and inconstant connections; clouds collecting, clouds dispersing' where 'there is no general story to be told, no synoptic picture to be had' (Geertz, 1996: 2). As a narrative inquirer, I acknowledge that 'what we can construct, if we keep notes and survive, are hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced-together patternings, after the fact' (p.2).

In the third layer of analysis, I paid very close attention to the particular details of the participants' stories and exchanges with others. Here, I created interim texts for each participant that moved across all of the workshops. These included stories about school life, family, friends, food, clothing, fashion, hairstyles, celebrity YouTubers, sporting heroes, teachers, music, hobbies, bullying, religion, ethnicity, race, and others. As I created these interim texts, I also made sure to include the transcript page so that students could return to the specific moment in the workshops to see how and where my interim text was composed. Having created a wide array of interim texts, I returned to the school in December 2018 to carry out 1-to-1 creative conversations with the 8 participants

During the creative conversations, I shared the partial narrative interim accounts that I had created for each participant, adding my own wonderings and interpretations that had emerged. The creative conversations took place in a smaller resource room in Scoil Firtéar. I also used questions to maintain my focus on the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. These questions were co-composed with my supervisor and focused on; reconnecting our stories since we last met, retelling and reliving our YCDI experiences, our shared reflections on the workshop experience, and the impact of the YCDI program on their lives both on and off the school landscape. In this way, we negotiated the final narrative accounts and took the opportunity to make any changes to their artwork that they wanted to make. The co-negotiated interim texts, the original transcripts, personal field notes, journal entries, and student artwork became the foundations of my research text.

In this chapter, I described my negotiated entry and methodological approach taken in my arts-based narrative inquiry. Here, I narratively presented the negotiation of entry and relationship with the parents and the principal in my school and described my arts-based workshops and creative conversations. Embedded within this section, I outlined my movement from field texts to research texts. Moving forward to Chapter 6-Coming into relationships with children, I begin by describing my taking of the final narrative turn away from positivistic forms of validity and understanding the multiple ways of knowing and understanding experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Chapter 6: Coming into relationships (Pt 1): YCDI experiences and emerging stories to live

6.0: Four turns - part 3

The final narrative turn towards a broadened acceptance of alternative epistemologies as described by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) and Bruner (1986), entails the multiple ways of understanding and knowing the world. Such a view can cause feelings of unease as we come to understand that there are no secure footholds upon which to assert knowledge and truth. The following section presents my inquiry's epistemological and ontological dimensions. Following this exploration, I make the ultimate educational purpose of my inquiry clear (Biesta, 2019) before describing narrative inquiry's ongoing relational ethics (Noddings 1984, 1992, 1995, 2003; Bergum & Dosseter, 2005; Clandinin et al., 2018) and its continued impact on my research puzzle.

In the following two chapters, I draw on the use of word images (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin et al., 2006; Clandinin and Huber, 2005) created from interim texts, field notes, and personal journal entries to creatively present my coming into relationship with Aabir, Baahir, and Janette over the first two workshops. Our lives did not unfold in neat and ordered ways; they were enmeshed and entwined, and so my use of word-images is an effort to demonstrate the energy and sometimes chaotic nature of the workshops. These word images are inspired by Richardson (2002) and Butler-Kisber's (2001) work on found poetry. Each word image is interspersed with my thoughts and interpretations as participants' stories were constructed through the retelling and reliving of their experiences. By adopting this mode of writing, I hope to honour and present with dignity the voices, experiences, and emerging stories of the students as they unfolded and enfolded together. Such storylines include; YCDI experiences and students' personal learner knowledge

(); YCDI storylines nestled within familial narratives and institutional school stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). This chapter also presents my inquiry's educational purpose (Biesta, 2019) and ongoing relational ethics (Clandinin et al., 2018). Here, I attended with wide-awakeness (Greene, 1977; 1995) to lived experiences with Aabir, attended to word travelling (Lugones, 1987) with Baahir, and finally to the ways that close attention to experiences disrupts power dynamics (Lyotard, 1991; Gergen, 2009) as I think with Janette's story.

6.1: Turn 4: Blurred knowing- questions of validity

Narrative inquiry conceives narrative as both phenomenon and method (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), where stories emerge from the living, telling, retelling, and relieving one's life. Such stories are rich, meaningful, and are rooted in personal and social histories. In tracking my narrative journey and movement across the previous chapters, I presented my taking of 3 narrative turns. Sometimes these turns happened rapidly, while others occurred slowly through in-depth reflection and reading as my inquiry stalled and hit bumps along the way. My taking of this final turn occurred over time; as I navigated through my research puzzle and engaged with other scholars and writings which offered alternative ways of knowing and understanding experience.

Thus far, I have attempted to narratively present my movement towards an experiential way of knowing where my interest and passion lies in working collaboratively with my research participants. Like Etherington (2003), I hoped to inquire into local stories 'that would offer me opportunities to share in the 'lived experiences' of others that I could place alongside my own life experiences in ways that would inform myself and others' (p.10). Within this paradigm of research, findings are contextual, temporal, and situated. Carr (1991: 20) tells us that 'what stories and histories represent and depict is not purely physical events but human experiences, actions and sufferings, including the human activity

of projecting meaning onto or finding meaning in physical and other events.’ This relational view of stories and histories as comprising and constructing life itself are echoed in a social constructionist view where:

The process of world construction is taking place whenever people are in communication, and in every relationship, there are multiple traditions coming into contact creating new formations of expression. There are also conflicts among traditions that continuously threaten their existence (Gergen, 2009: 50).

This process explicates the multiple ways of understanding experience, tension and contrasts sharply to traditional social science research that has been historically grounded in numbers and concerned with proving facts (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

John’s timeline – Wednesday, June 7th 2018: Final cluster meeting (Pt 1)

What’s on your mind?

The meeting room is on the 2nd floor of the new education building. I walk along the clean corridor, and no pictures are hanging on the walls, not yet. The meeting room is bright and airy. There are four of us present; myself, two fellow PhD students, and Grace. We chat briefly and then begin a visualisation exercise led by Grace. I hear her voice...

“Imagine a journey through a forest...

In this forest, there is a clearing...

You meet someone there...

They give you something...

You turn and walk back through the forest again...”

Grace gently ushers us back to the here and now. She points to a box on the table and instructs us to use the collage materials inside to creatively express our visualisation journey. I’m not taken aback this time, unlike my first day as a PhD student. I don’t hesitate. I go for it. I am open to the illuminating power of arts-based activities such as this.

Research approaches that rely on reliable numeric measurements, obtained through controlled environments and settings, restrict us to ways of knowing that are anchored in an objective relationship between the researcher and the researched (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This reliance and fixation on facts and laws (Geertz, 1973), and an understanding of the limits of such knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), quickened the movement of some

researchers away from positivistic and post-positivistic ways of knowing towards narrative inquiry (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) such that:

The acceptance of the relational and interactive nature of human science research, the use of the story, and a focus on a careful accounting of the particular are hallmarks of knowing in narrative inquiry. Narrative inquirers recognise that embracing and executing the methodology of narrative inquiry, rather than an exclusive reliance on the assumptions of a positivistic paradigm, provides authentic and resonant findings (p.22).

*John's timeline – Wednesday, June 7th 2018: Final cluster meeting (Pt 2)
What's on your mind?*

I create a piece of art; we all do, even Grace. We use Wendy Luttrell's 'audiencing technique' to unpack our aesthetic creations. I talk about my artwork and my journey. I share thoughts about my loving relationship with my fiancé. It was peaceful, rich with emotion and meaning. Afterwards, I listen carefully to others as they describe their visualisation stories. Their emotions wash over me as I hear them speak, their stories so open and honest. It's Grace's turn. She audiences her piece and tells her story. I listen carefully and take in her artwork. Yet what she describes, sees, and feels, is at odds with what I see and feel. I know and understand her aesthetic piece as something else entirely. It tells me a different story. I share these thoughts with the group. Mine is a different way of knowing and understanding than Grace. Whose story is the 'truth'? Whose story shall the others choose to listen to? We finish with an embodiment exercise. I struggle with this activity, and I think of Fionn's words again, 'Teacher, I can't do this.'

In my reconstructed memory above, my knowing and interpretation of Grace's artwork was different from hers. Although steeped in her own history and experience, the story she told meant something entirely different to me. In the audiencing of her piece, multiple readings, interpretations, wonderings, and understandings emerged. No one story prevailed; instead, it was in coming alongside each other during the cluster meeting that ushered forth and offered unforeseen and unpredictable stories to be constructed, made anew and emboldened with power and meaning. Knowledge and meaning generated in this way are deeply contextual. It is embedded in the context of other narratives that, in turn, give it substance, nuance, and a relational sense of operating. This blurred way of knowing and

understanding experience became evident throughout the workshops as participants shared stories that emerged from their creatively created artwork, and later during the audiencing (Luttrell, 2003) of their pieces.

Monday, October 23rd, 2017 Workshop 4: Confidence



Image 12: 'Colourful Crash' by Janette

John: *Hi Janette, would you like to tell me a story about Confidence? You don't have to if you don't want to.*

Janette: *I want to.*

John: *Where does your story begin, Janette?*

Janette: *My story begins when I was outside with my friend Molly, she's four, and my other friends Aliyah and Sandra. We were playing Stormily, and there was a car that I don't know if she [Molly] saw it, because she was really short and she was on the road. And when we were playing, the car didn't see her and was about to hit her.*

John: *Oh...*

Janette: *And then I grabbed her, and then I pulled her out of the way. And all my friends ran over and were like, 'Janette!' Like that. And then the car stopped.*

(The room is getting very loud now, and it is very difficult to hear and listen to Janette's story)

John: *And what happened after that?*

Janette: *All my friends were like 'WOW!'*

(I can't hear Janette well)

John: *What could you see and hear when the car was coming?*

Janette: *I heard the car driving, the wheels on the road, going like 'VROOM, VROOM VROOM!' like the engine. And when I was about to save the girl, Molly, I didn't think she knew that the car was even coming because she kept on playing even though the car was coming, and I was like, "Molly, move!"* **John:** *And what did your family think of this?*

Janette: Oh, I didn't tell them.

John: Oh, really?

Janette: No.

John: How come?

Janette: I wasn't bothered.

John: What about your friends or teacher?

Janette: No

John: So, who did you tell the story to?

Janette: Nobody, except for you.

John: Oh, really?

Janette: I don't really like telling everybody, I'm not a blabbermouth.

Janette's 'Colourful Crash' artwork and story emerged as her experience of Confidence. This experience was nestled within her community and within stories of life outside of school. It also spoke of her friendships with others. Throughout the workshops, I was mindful not to encourage the children to produce any particular image to preserve their voice, integrity, and agency. Drawing from Luttrell (2020), I too believe there is merit in 'preserving and understanding whatever meanings children might give to their images if they are listened to carefully and systematically' (p.42). As a narrative inquirer, I acknowledge that we are not privy to a perfect reconstruction of a lived event in retelling experiences. There is no authentic, single, or neutral voice emerging from the teller (Luttrell, 2020) that is elicited through a piece of art, such as Janette's telling above. Rather, as students shared their stories of lived events that took place in specific times, contexts, and places, I seek to understand the distinct voices and stories that children exercise when speaking (Luttrell, 2020). By telling emotive, embodied stories such as these, students construct stories of themselves and others as they were in that moment of sharing.

Creating her artwork enabled the retelling and reliving of this story for Janette, and in doing so, her story as a brave, confident girl continued to emerge. Janette shared numerous exciting stories like this one that often took place outside of school with other friends that were not in Scoil Firtéar. A significant story of Janette was that she was new to the school,

having only joined in September. Throughout the inquiry, she shared multiple stories of being a brave and confident girl and being a new student. In this way, she brought her story to live by alongside school stories while also negotiating a space alongside others during the workshop. This titan balancing act of living a life and the continuous nature of leveraging one's life against other competing and conflicting stories of school (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) is a constant struggle we all face the narrative construction of a story to live by.

Many of Janette's stories threaded and weaved around episodes of her being confident and brave. As the new girl in school, I imagine such stories equipped her well as she negotiated the potentially lonely school landscape, one where she began with no close friendships. These stories may have drawn others to her, making her seem invincible or even impervious to being 'new' to school. Yet, it appeared her story bumped against the story of school and school stories. Janette carefully counterbalances her YCDI *Confidence* experience with her new student story in the above vignette, one where she's not a 'blabbermouth'. Through her story, we get a sense of her knowing and understanding of what is expected of her as a student, of not telling teachers things. Perhaps we gain insight into her personal learner knowledge where her principles as a student, her solidarity with her peers, and her coming into rhythm with life as a student in Scoil Firtéar is made known through words and actions. Later on, during the audiencing activity, Farrah, Dariya, and Aabir share their thoughts and interpretations of Janette's piece in the workshop.

Monday, October 23rd 2017 Workshop 4: Confidence (Continued)



Image 12: 'Colourful Crash' by Janette

John: So, what do you see in artist Janette's piece? (To the audience) Farrah?

Farrah: I see a car. I see a smiley face.

Dariya: I see a pink jellyfish sitting on a purple sofa.

John: Very good (I laugh). I see it actually, now that you say it.

Upon reflection of Janette's artwork, Farrah and Dariya describe the physical look of the piece. Farrah sees a car, and so the connection and coherence of Janette's 'Saving the Girl' story continues in her response (Carr, 1986). Dariya sees a 'pink jellyfish sitting on a purple sofa'. Here, Dariya's effervescent imagination and her story as a creative, expressive, and independent girl continues to emerge. Next, Aabir shares his thoughts...

Monday, October 23rd 2017 Workshop 4: Confidence (Continued)

Aabir: I see a tiny little boy who is very sad and all people around him. And he wants to blend in, but he's so lonely. Like, he's different, and everyone else is the same. So, he's sad that he's not the same like them.

Like my understanding of Grace's artwork in the cluster meeting, Aabir's understanding and interpretation of Janette's piece meant something entirely different to him. It spoke of loneliness, isolation, sameness, and conformity. Later on, during the audiencing activity, he shares this story again but in more detail.

Monday, October 23rd, 2017 Workshop 4: Confidence

John: Does anything in Janette's piece remind you of your own piece or anything in your own life?

Aabir: It reminds me of this boy I saw, and these other people, like, since he was different they were saying mean things to him. And like, other people were being mean, and I saw this from far away. And then when other people came to hear what they were saying, they crowded around him and saying mean things to him just because he was different. And that's what this painting reminds me of.

Aabir shares a meaningful and passionate story that emerged from his interpretation of Janette's artwork. We get a clear sense of the temporal, social, personal, and spatial constitution of experience as he draws us forward and backwards on his life timeline. This embodied story speaks of the challenges and difficulties students and young people face; such as peer pressure and bullying (McMahon et al., 2010; Reulbach, 2013; Reulbach et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2018).

Aabir tells us about a time he witnessed a boy being harassed and picked on by a crowd because he was different. He does not share the specific time or location, but he tells us that it happened far away from him. Although marking the physical distance between himself and the isolated boy, I sensed the incident happened close by, perhaps on or near the school grounds. Aabir describes the actions of others who crowded around the boy but not his own actions. This story of bullying, teasing, peer-pressure, and social conformity is a narrative thread that echoed across the inquiry, not only in sharing experiences like this one but also during interactions and exchanges between participants. I sensed feelings of sadness and regret from Aabir's story. Throughout the workshops, Aabir's story was about a strong, confident, and competitive boy. Yet, in sharing his thoughts about Janette's work, we glimpse his sensitive, empathetic, and reflective self, whose way of being was disrupted by seeing another boy being mistreated. This caring side of Aabir also emerged during the first workshop in the sensitive way he worked with Christopher. During our time together, a

struggle seemed to grip Aabir. His own story to live by as a strong, confident, competitive boy who always had to win came into conflict with his more emotive, compassionate, and caring self. This struggle between his competing stories to live by became more pronounced as he brought these stories alongside school stories and expectations of what it meant to be a student in Scoil Firtéar.

The episode Aabir witnessed happened far away. He distances himself from the scene in telling the story, yet not so far as to be unable to see the wrongdoing unfolding in front of him. In this way, his story to live by bumps against stories of conformity, bullying, and peer pressure, stories that are ever-present on the school landscape. Aabir, like Janette, found himself balancing and negotiating his story to live by on the school landscape, with other stories he brought with him into school. Aabir's story speaks of the embodied helplessness that he felt and the disruptive, damaging way that bullying and peer pressure affects students' lives.

In the vignettes above, I presented the multiple ways of knowing, understanding, and interpreting that emerged through the creation and audiencing of Janette's artwork, the narrative retelling of her own story, and the thoughts shared by Farrah, Dariya, and Aabir. Through this process, Aabir's peer-pressure and bullying story came alongside Janette's YCDI story of Confidence. Both stories share commonalities. They describe poignant and emotive experiences involving young people. In each narrative, Janette and Aabir were witnesses to a meaningful event, yet here both stories diverge. In Janette's story, she sees the unfolding danger and acts without hesitation. In doing so, she saves Molly from the oncoming car. Aabir sees the unfolding wrongdoing as the crowd gathered around the boy, but unlike Janette, he does not act or intervene. He is at a distance. Thinking narratively about these

tellings, I see how Janette's story provides continuity and coherence for her (Carr, 1986) as she continues to construct and create her own story to live by as brave and confident. In contrast, Aabir's telling disrupts his knowing and being as a strong, confident boy, so traces of regret and sadness are sensed. In this way, both Janette and Aabir told stories of what was significant in their past, offer what they value in the present, and potentially reveal new ways of being in the future as others hear and listen to their experiences (Carr, 1986).

By narratively engaging with the shared stories of Janette, Farrah, Dariya, and Aabir, as well as my memory reconstruction from the cluster meeting with Grace, I offer insight into the multiple ways of understanding experience and engaging in meaning-making through individual interpretation of artwork. Rather than insisting on the validity of one's work, or one way of knowing phenomena, this process gives rise to questions about knowledge and reality and moves me towards presenting the ontological and epistemological dimensions of my inquiry. Curiously, it was in coming to understand my ontological and epistemological positioning that the ultimate educational purpose of this thesis (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Biesta, 2015; 2019; 2020) was revealed. This work's ultimate educational purpose is not to be confused with my research aims and objectives outlined earlier. Instead, it is a question of educational research and educational practice, which has everything to do with knowledge, reality, and human action (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

6.2: Epistemological and ontological considerations

In chapter 3, I presented and outlined the philosophical and theoretical dimensions of my inquiry by drawing on the work of John Dewey's theory of experience and the philosophy of Pragmatism. Yet, it is essential to make my ontological and epistemological dimensions clear also. Dewey took his point of departure in interactions between living human organisms and their environments, where he argued that human action is 'the interaction between

elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social' (Dewey, 1922b: 9).

Dewey, in Biesta & Burbules (2003: 17), tells us that 'the interaction— or as he later would call it transaction— of organism and environment is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process in which the organism seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with its everchanging environment.' Dewey's purpose here was to explicate and account for the connection of the human organism to their environment, and so he rejected dualistic philosophies that compartmentalise the thinking mind and the physical world (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Such a reality is not immediately revealed and does so only as a result of interaction.

Working within the philosophy of Pragmatism and a Deweyan sense of experience leads to an understanding of 'the fundamental ontological category from which all inquiry narrative or otherwise – proceeds' (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 39). Rather than solely focusing on the practical and 'what works', this ontological view attends to what it means to undergo an experience and live a life where knowledge is understood as 'experiential, moral, contextual, and embodied (Clandinin et al., 2018: 17). Morgan (2014: 1049) tells us that for Pragmatism:

abstraction is replaced by an emphasis on experience as the continual interaction of beliefs and action...knowledge is not about an abstract relationship between the knower and the known; instead, there is an active process of inquiry that creates a continual back-and-forth movement between beliefs and actions.

This understanding acknowledges the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are embedded and lived out (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). In this way, Dewey's ontology is not transcendental, it is transactional (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Moving to the sphere of narrative inquiry, Dewey's transactional ontology and the knowledge we gain about relationships (Biesta, 2010) is better thought of as a relational approach (Clandinin et al., 2018). The term 'relational', similar to Dewey's use of 'transactional', signifies more than just a relationship between people. Clandinin et al (2018: 18) tells us it is 'the relationship between the knower and what is known, between knowing and action, between how we know and what we know.' This relational ontology calls our attention to the ordinary experiences and lives of those we are in relation with and speaks to the heart of what narrative inquiry is by drawing us close to others, over time, in diverse places, and makes clear the continuous and ongoing nature of relational ethics (Clandinin et al., 2018).

Implied within this relational ontology is a particular understanding of knowledge where we generate new relations between people's lives, their communities, and worlds. As a narrative inquirer, I acknowledge that I, too, am under study. In this way, we turn our gaze upon who we are and who we are becoming as our lives come alongside participants' experiences. In the past, interpretations of narrative were limited to that of a purely representational form (White, 1980), but through story, we come to know, make sense of, and understand the world around us (Somers, 1994). By extension, it is through narratives that we come to know ourselves and construct our identities. A relational ontology and its entailed epistemological and ontological dimensions are also reflected from a social constructionist perspective where the structure of our language and everyday exchange practices are the sources of our constructions of our world (Gergen, 2009). In a sense, we all come to know and be who we are through social collaboration and relationships. Therefore the connection between narrative inquiry and social constructionism is evident. One that 'eventually creates a new kind of experienced objects, not more real than those which

preceded but more significant, and less overwhelming and oppressive' (Dewey, 1981: 175).

As a narrative inquirer grounded in a relational ontology, I continuously engage with and negotiate ways to be ethical. The relational ontology of narrative inquiry is deeply rooted in the philosophy of Pragmatism and a Deweyan sense of experience so, with this relationship between ontology and the relational ethics of narrative inquiry firmly in mind, I move to the next section of this chapter where I closely examine the ultimate educational purpose of my inquiry.

6.3: Educational purpose

There is much disagreement regarding how educational research should play its practical role (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Biesta and Burbules (2003: 10) tell us that 'educational research, one might say, is not so much research 'about' education as it is research 'for' education.' From this site of departure, there is a delineation of views regarding the purpose of educational research. This triad of purposes, or orientations, are; explanation, understanding, and emancipation (Biesta, 2010, 2015a). From an orientation of explanation, research aims to identify the connections between cause and effect so that:

if we are able to generate perfect explanations – we are, in principle, in a position to predict future events based on what is happening currently and, to the extent to which the causes can be manipulated, we are also able to control future events (Biesta, 2015: 5).

Here, the relationship between educational research and its intended product, 'effective' education, is grounded in beliefs about knowledge, reality, and human action. Suppose one accepts that educational research provides us with knowledge about an objective reality and assumes that there is only one reality. In that case, it follows that through rigorous research, we inevitably encounter the one right way of doing something (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

This conception of measurable knowledge is grounded in Platonic forms and Aristotelian

universals (Biesta, 2015), where knowledge is understood as a 'permanent and unchangeable reality 'behind' the empirical world of change, flux, and appearances' (Biesta, 2015: 3). By adopting this belief, the task of educational research, therefore, becomes one of explanation. Specifically, the explanation of causal connections between empirical phenomena (Biesta, 2015). Such a purpose drives the creation and implementation of measurable intervention programs, SEL or otherwise, including YCDI Program Achieve (2007), to put a number value on students' SEL competencies and well-being (Zin et al., 2004; 2007; Durlak & Weissberg, 2005; Dymnicki, 2006;).

From an orientation of understanding, educational research opens up new ways of knowing, interpreting, and understanding educational realities (Biesta, 2010). From this perspective, practitioners use knowledge to try and make sense of the educational situations they find themselves in (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Such a view of education shifts from a representational epistemology (Biesta, 2010) that views knowledge as an accurate picture of the world, what Dewey (1929) referred to as the 'spectator view, to a transactional epistemology, where the concept of transactional knowing emerges (Biesta & Burbles, 2003; Biesta, 2010). Dewey's Pragmatism tells us that we are all active participants in the world and engage with it and with others through interaction and transaction. Putnam (1981: xi) describes how 'the mind and world jointly make up the mind and the world'. As a narrative inquirer, I understand knowledge as a socially constructed phenomenon, manifested through language and the interactions and living one's life in relation with others. Shotter (1991: 70) tells us that 'the basic function of language is not the representation of things in the world...it works to create, sustain, and transform various patterns of social relations.' In this way, new possibilities and understandings have already emerged while writing this thesis. The idea that knowledge is grounded in the empirical, and with the rise of

hermeneutics and interpretivism in the 19th century (Biesta, 2015) opens up new avenues and pathways, ways of knowing and understanding. Now, we move from a purpose of explanation to understanding (Biesta, 2015).

Considering that social and educational research should generate new understandings also raises questions regarding the influence and operation of social power structures and institutions from within such new insights emerge (Biesta, 2015). In my quest to inquire into participants' experiences, artwork, and the interpretive creation of word images, I offer insight into how social, institutional, and cultural narratives can be made visible and disrupted. Thinking closely with experiences and attending to relational ethics (Bergum & Dossetor 2005; Clandinin et al., 2018), such power structures can become exposed as potentially controlling or limiting us in unknown and unseen ways. This requires a different orientation 'not one where the researcher simply clarifies and systematises what actors already know about their own situation, but where the researcher makes visible to the actors how their interpretations have been determined by underlying power structures' (Biesta, 2015: 6). This leads to the third purpose of educational research; research as a tool for emancipation (Biesta, 2015), where we liberate and make known to research participants the influences on emerging understandings in educational settings (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

As a narrative inquirer, I do not make any absolute claims to knowledge independent from the knower. Instead, the purpose of my research is to generate a new relation between those engaged in the inquiry to deepen our understanding of individual and collective experiences, in particular to inquire into participants' experiences of the five foundations of the YCDI program, to explore the impact the program has had on their lives on and off the school landscape, to narratively present their stories to live by, to understand narrative tensions as moments of inquiry, and finally to understand how beginning teacher

researchers can better face such uncertainties as they engage in their own arts-based narrative inquiry research. These ways of understanding are opposed to an educational purpose of explanation. I also suggest, there is a 'soft' emancipatory purpose to my research (Biesta, 2015). By 'soft' emancipation, I refer to social and educational research that provides social and educational actors with new and better opportunities for action and freedom (Säfström, 2019), based on a wider breadth of understanding (Biesta, 2015). Ultimately, this pragmatic view of knowledge, experience and reality, makes things 'less overwhelming and oppressive' (Dewey, 1981: 175) by offering new ways of knowing and being that were previously in the dark to us. Having clarified the ultimate purposes of my research, I am conferred with a clearer understanding as to which paradigm of education my research fits, or perhaps where it fits between.

6.4: Education as cultivation or as subjectification

A paradigm of cultivation seeks to explain how each of us becomes who we are today (Biesta, 2019, 2020). It is a paradigm focused on growth and development. It is interested in the 'internal' and 'external' factors and influences at play and how we interact with our milieus to become individuals in society (Biesta, 2019). While the paradigm of cultivation tends to explain how individuals become who they are, it is also an educational orientation where 'the task of education is making sure that individuals can engage with the widest possible range of culture...to allow them to develop the largest number of capacities and possibilities in the fullest way possible' (Biesta, 2019: 5). From this orientation, there is a sense that educational research should equip educators with pedagogical tools for them to become more effective educators (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). In this context, educators become the purveyors of pedagogical 'truths' discovered elsewhere yet remain suitable and applicable no matter the educational institution or context (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Here,

such knowledge is generalisable. This concept of educational evidence, or 'truth', relies on a representational epistemology (Biesta, 2010) where that which is evident and 'true' supposedly offers an accurate representation of what the world really is. And so then we can say that when X happens, Y will result. Such knowledge is attained through RCTs that are far removed from the living, feeling-context of educational settings. Such evidence 'contributes to the case for holding a particular belief as true and in this regard, its meaning is slightly different from that of the word 'knowledge'.' (Biesta 2010: 493) This paradigm can be better understood through the works of Dewey.

Dewey (1988) understood education as a process of cultivation where individuals 'connect' with cultural and social resources. Using Dewey's terms, individuals emerge as 'accultured organisms' (Dewey, 1988: 5); that is, they become 'encultured' through a process of interacting, engaging, and acquiring 'culture' (Biesta, 2019). Dewey's work provides us with an explanation of how human organisms become cultivated through transaction with the world. Biesta and Burbules (2003: 17) tell us that 'the interaction— or as he later would call it transaction— of organism and environment is an active, adaptive, and adjustive process in which the organism seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with its everchanging environment.' This understanding of human interaction leads to an ontology that is not transcendental; it is transactional (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). This learning process through transaction and learning through reflection is a fully embodied experience (Biesta, 2019). Thus far, we can say that Dewey's work provides us with an explanation of how human organisms can adjust reflectively and intelligently to scenarios they find themselves in (Biesta, 2019). Yet, it gives us no account for the potentiality of human organisms to say 'No'.

The paradigm of education as subjectification focuses on the humane perspective of education. Biesta (2019: 8) tells us it is 'the paradigm of the 'I', where the 'I' is not an organism that becomes cultivated but a human individual who exists and stands for the challenge to lead his or her own life.' This paradigm is fundamentally different from that of cultivation in so far as the 'I' is not the outcome of internal and external influences and factors. It cannot be produced and reduced to an educational outcome as 'the 'I' has to be its own 'I' (Biesta, 2019: 8). It is a call to the self to be a self (Biesta, 2020). It is a response to the question, 'Hey, you there, where are you?' (Biesta, 2019: 9) We may respond by saying, 'Here I am, and I say No!' This disruption, or interruption, lies at the heart of this paradigm. Like a subtle knife, it cuts through the fabric of the education as cultivation paradigm and 'It interrupts the being-with-oneself, it interrupts identity, it interrupts flourishing, it interrupts growth, it even interrupts learning' (Biesta, 2019:11). Here, we get a sense of education being about the freedom of the other (Säfström, 2019) and the hopeful embrace of freedom for the individual as well as the community in which they live (Biesta & Säfström 2011). Nobody can respond to this call but ourselves; therefore, our subject-ness is at stake (Biesta, 2019). Equipped with new insights into both paradigms, I am curious about where my research is located.

6.5: The educational purpose of my inquiry

Having outlined my research aims and considering new insights gained, it seems my inquiry lies primarily in the education as cultivation paradigm. I am interested in student experiences, identity formation, tensions as spaces for inquiry, and the challenges faced by teacher-researchers engaged in arts-based inquiries in their schools. Put another way, I am interested in 'the way in which human beings become and continue to become who they are through their engagement with 'culture' in the broadest sense of the word'(Biesta 2019: 5).

A further illustration that my research is located within this paradigm is derived from Dewey's influence, and work, which Biesta (2019: 7) argues is a 'paradigm case' of the paradigm of cultivation. I draw on Dewey's philosophy of Pragmatism and his theory of experience to inform my understanding and ontological and epistemological standpoint. For Dewey (1958: 38), 'all human experience is ultimately social, it involves contact and communication.' It is a result of a 'transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment' (:44). Dewey's work offers a philosophy and theory with which to begin to understand experience and identity formation. It also gives 'a sophisticated and detailed account of the ways in which human beings can adjust reflectively and intelligently to the situations they find themselves in' (Biesta 2019: 8).

Having outlined the educational purpose and paradigm of my inquiry, I move to the next section where I consider the ethical considerations, negotiations, challenges, and obligations I faced throughout my research puzzle. In the following sections of this chapter and chapter 7, I detail my coming into relationships with my participants as a continuous and ongoing negotiation of relationships, relational ethics, and positioning and power. As I narratively present the unfolding and enfolding lives of the participants through word images (Clandinin & Huber, 2006), I also demonstrate how relational ethics challenged me to work in ways that protected and honoured those involved. Here, I draw on the five dimensions of relational ethics as described by Caine et al (2020) and Clandinin et al (2018); (1) the relational ethics of attending with wide awakeness; (2) of moving slowly; (3) of engaging with imagination and world travelling; (4) of engaging with a sense of uncertainty and not knowing, (5) and being still and attending with silence and contemplation.

6.6: Relational ethics – The review board and the ongoing negotiation

Owing to my research's nature, it was necessary to comply and attain approval from the university's ethical review board. To do this, several strict criteria needed to be satisfied and adhered to for me to carry out my research with young children. The purpose of these criteria was to protect the interests of both the participants and the researcher. As described in the previous chapter, the first step taken was to hold a parental information meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to allow parents and students to ask questions about the research. It also informed them of the option to exit the session or research process at any stage. This was for the benefit of prospective students to ensure that they were comfortable with the research and understood what it entailed before they committed to it. Next, I sent out informed consent and assent forms to all children and parents of children in 5th class. This letter also included plain language statements for both the parents and children that outlined the workshops' structure and purpose and the inquiry's aim. To protect the children's identity, all names were anonymised and the names of all staff members and the school. In this thesis's writing, all efforts have been made to protect and honour the identities of those lives presented throughout this work. All research conversations were recorded using a Dictaphone, then transferred to the university's secure and password protected cloud storage space. All student transcript documents were also password protected. The recordings were transcribed by the researcher and by a transcription company hired by the researcher. The recording device, laptop, and copies of transcripts were stored in a locked cabinet when not used by the researcher. All artwork was also held in a secure locked cabinet when not in use, and in December 2018, all artwork was returned to the students after the creative conversations had taken place.

Having attained ethical approval from the university in May 2017, I was still very aware that my ethical obligations did not simply end at this point. My theoretical understanding of experience drew my attention to the interwoven complexities of my participants' lives over time, place, and the personal and the social (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The complexity of engaging in a narrative inquiry mirrors and calls forth the uncertainty enmeshed in relational ethics. Relational ethics offers a way to understand what and how we know by attending to the relationship between knowledge and the knower, which are both profoundly contextual and nestled within one another (Clandinin et al., 2018). This also speaks to a relational ontology that compels us to address more significant questions of who we are in relation to the broader world and our relationships with participants.

Attending to the ongoingness of relational ethics made visible the many complex ways that the participants and I presented our stories while at the same time showing the importance of being wakeful to the inquiry (Greene, 1977). Relational ethics posed many challenges personally and practically as my position as a teacher, and a teacher-researcher came alongside my participants' lives. Using word images, I thread and weave the ongoing nature of relational ethics by constantly returning to the things that matter most; the lives and experiences of participants. The knowing and understanding that emerges in the following chapters also add weight to my study's practical and social justifications. In the following chapters, I present new wonderings that emerged as I inquired into children's experiences of the YCDI foundations and the YCDI program. I aim to deepen our understanding of the YCDI program and its impact on students' lives on and off the school landscape. I also attempt to shed light on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives that shape children's stories and stories of children in Scoil Firtéar.

6.7: Word images

In the movement from field texts to my final research text, I encountered the curious challenge of presenting the participants' experiences in my final thesis. I knew it would be impossible to include all of the stories shared during the workshops, and to do so would have been impractical and unwieldy. Adopting writing as inquiry as a research mode and a way of presenting experience, I hear Richardson (1994) tell us, 'I write because I want to find out something. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it' (p. 517). I sensed that presenting narratives in traditional ways would fail to capture the workshops' energy and essence and limit the research's impact. Bateson (2001) suggests how best to present the stories of others that honour their uniqueness. She tells us that 'stories of individuals and their relationships through time offer another way of looking, but we need ways to tell these stories that are interwoven and recursive, that escape from the linearity of print to incite new metaphors' (p.247). I wanted to honour and present all eight participants' lives so that readers would gain a familiar sense of each child. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005: 1143) tell us that 'understanding language as competing discourses—competing ways of giving meaning and of organising the world—makes language a site of exploration and struggle' (1413), and so I turned to the composition of word-images (Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Clandinin et al., 2006; Huber, 2008) to solve my conundrum.

I completed my 1-to-1 conversations with the participants in December 2018. During each conversation, participants had an opportunity to review their artwork, read my partial interim research texts, and make any changes to either the art or the interim texts they wished. With my co-created interim texts, field notes, and personal journal entries, I began piecing together story fragments to create word images for each participant over the first two workshops using my words. I acknowledge this process is highly interpretive and

perhaps presents 'a unidimensional account of...[a person's] unfolding stories over time' (Clandinin et al., 2006: 99) but that such writing 'unlike quantitative work that can carry its meaning in its tables and summaries' (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005: 1141) the word images themselves carry meaning in their entirety (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

In my attempt to create word images, I stitched together story fragments that drew together narrative threads that reverberated across student stories. Such narrative threads consisted of YCDI foundation experiences, the impact of the program on students' lives on and off the landscape, the bumping of lives and emerging tensions, relational ethics, disrupting power relations and positioning, stories to live by, and negotiating relationships and new ways of being in a liminal space. In this process, new meanings and new realities were created. Etherington (2003: 19) tells us 'As you read these stories, you will no doubt create further meanings that are influenced by the stories which you yourself bring to the reading, your personal and cultural stories and stories others have told you that have become part of your own.' This mode of writing as inquiry ushers forth a sense of writing as being 'dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements' where 'we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable' (Lyotard, 1991, xxiv). These interpretive presentations plot the lives of the participants as I came to know them. Writing in this way highlights the ongoing nature and continuity of experience. I present word images down the center of the page, in italicised font encased by a black border. I also intersperse and include my thoughts, wonderings, and further interpretations within each word image. I do not separate or distinguish my thoughts and interpretations from the main body, and so perhaps, like Gale and Wyatt (2016), questions of ownership arise where modes of writing seem to 'deterritorialise' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) more academic styles emerge. I chose to

structure the word images to present the energy, interconnectedness, embodied reactions, tension, and enmeshed nature of the research space.

6.8: Coming into relationships and emerging stories to live by

Using the narrative analytical tools of broadening, burrowing, and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), I begin the process of storying and restorying shared experiences and poignant moments that occurred during the workshops. This process follows the broadening (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and the situating of my research within wider international discourses of social-emotional/well-being intervention programs, SPHE in Ireland, and important aspects of the lives of children as presented in the Growing Up in Ireland longitudinal study (2006) as detailed in chapter 4. Moving from field texts to interim texts focused my inquiry on more specific details of the data. This burrowing (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) into participants' stories pays attention to experiences as lived and felt from their perspective (Kim, 2015) where feelings, understandings, new ways of knowing and being, and dilemmas emerged.

Throughout the inquiry, I continued to puzzle about my position within the cocreated workshop space and how my imagined coming into relationships with my participants might unfold. I imagined a space informed by my 'life-timeline' metaphor, lived out in a relationally ethical, three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, where we each entered into caring relationships with the other. This imagined space 'heralds a recognition that people construct their lives and identities socially and culturally, through language, discourse and communication' (Speedy 2008:15). Drawing from Speedy (2008), my arts based workshops encompassed both reflexive knowledge the relational knowledge about how meanings have come to be articulated and understood and liminal spaces; imaginative sites in which to extend, provoke and create knowledge in new ways. Speedy (2008: 28) describes reflexivity

as ‘the space between writers, participants in the texts and readers.’ Liminality can be described as the space between the artist and the artefact (Speedy, 2008) and thus represents the threshold relationship between the artist and the audience.

Upon entering the first workshop, the participants and I were thrust into a space between what was known; the familiar sights and sounds of the school computer/boardroom, and that which was unknown; the arts-based workshops, and our negotiated relationships. In this out-of-classroom place on the school landscape, everyday school rules did not apply. Crossing the threshold into this space, the participants and I immediately entered into power relations, which, according to Speedy (2008: 28), is ‘highly political, personal, imaginative and social.’ Through the use of creative modes of writing as inquiry, I shift between the positions of teacher, teacher-researcher, and scholar while taking care so as not to commit to any particular one fully. I attempt to foreground and puncture institutional, historical, and cultural power relations while highlighting the ethical dimensions around the necessity of attending to the multifaceted ongoingness of experience. Greene (1995) calls this attention both wakefulness and wide-awakeness.

6.9: Aabir’s word image

Aabir word image
Workshop 1: Organisation
Monday, October 2nd, 2017

Aabir
first to enter
he shouts
‘BOO!’
I turn around
startled

athletic looking
close haircut
broad smile
knowing look

*he shows
no hesitation
or fear
he speaks freely
and openly*

*he is
very aware
of what the workshop
is about
he read
the student letter
and information sheet
he is
naturally curious*

*he asked me
was I
in Maynooth
he knew I wanted
to do an 'experiment'
a questioning
curious
story to live by*

*he talks
with Dariya and Janette
about how long
boys' hair
can be
boys CAN
have long hair*

*during the art activity
I noticed
how he acted
toward Christopher
he was
kind and attentive*

*his **Organisation** experience is*



*happening
right now
using other materials
to create his artwork
what he wanted
wasn't available
he adapted
to his environment*

*he argued
with Janette and Dariya
over glitter
and glue
WHO HAS IT?
WHOSE TURN IS IT?*

*tension
with Dariya
going back
to junior infants
they insult each other
about how they smell*

Monday, October 9th 2017
Workshop 2: Organisation

*Dariya
takes the seat
beside Aabir
he says*

*the seat's reserved
even though
it's not
Dariya
moves away*

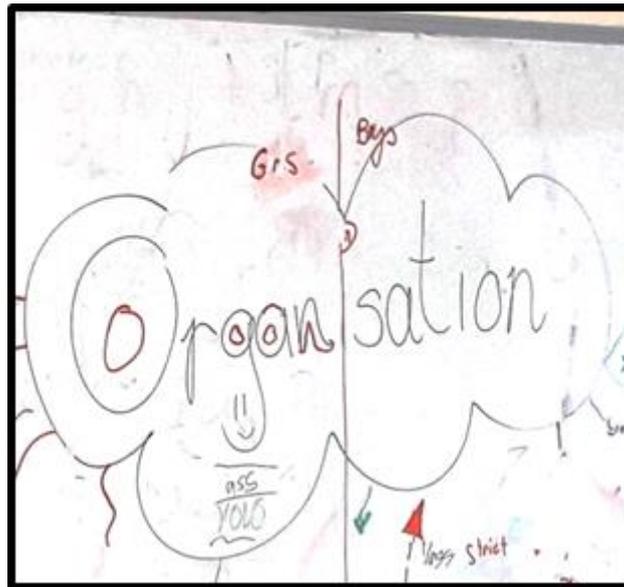
*he shares a story
about his soccer team
winning a match
he provided
Two assists*

*he has the most
ClassDojo points
they're easy
to win
just be Organised
and win
a homework pass
a competitive
story to live by*

*teachers in Scoil Firtéar
are strict
he mentions
teacher names
he makes
fun of them
he becomes worried
about what he said
he jokingly threatens me
"If you tell, I will kill you."
he's curious about me
about my teachers
and my story*

"Did you have any strict teachers, John?"

*during the whiteboard activity
he draws a line
down the center
of the board
and writes
'Girl's side' and 'Boy's side'*



*unkind words
are written
about girls
about boys
then rubbed out
tension emerges*

*he connects
the timelines above
to **Organisation**
moving forward
changing paths
one to success
one to failure*

***Organisation**
will help
in the future
to find out things
you don't have
the answer to*

***Organisation** is
things that you haven't
accomplished yet
that you want to do
one of your goals*

*he learned chess
from his uncle
from the UK
he plays a match
against Dariya*

he beats her

*he responded to
Amanda's audienced artwork*



*he saw
faceless faces
in the crowd
we don't know
how they are feeling
they look like
gravestones*

*he audiences
his own piece
called 'Boys rule'
the green hair
is for Ireland
he is present
in the eyes*

*Dariya laughs loudly
at his work
he gets upsets
he tells us
Dariya is
the stinky toes
it finishes with tension*

6.10: YCDI experiences and personal learner knowledge

Coming into relationship with Aabir was sudden and loud. His entrance into the workshop startled me. It also gave me an immediate sense of his way of knowing and being, which was relaxed and comfortable. There was no fear or hesitation on his part, and we quickly settled into a rhythm that was familiar to us both, a rhythm that seemed to lie outside the typical student-teacher relationship. As our relationship unfolded across the workshops, we spoke about sport, school, chess, and other areas of interest to us both. His curious nature emerged through his keen interest in the inquiry. His comment about me wanting to do an 'experiment' disrupted my ways of knowing and being where my feelings of vulnerability and individual uniqueness were revealed in my desire to have my own story told (Cavarero, 2000), a story of being a good teacher-researcher (Forrest et al., 2010). At this moment, Aabir's construction of me as a 'scientist' who wanted to do an experiment caused me to question and wonder about my own positioning within the research space, as well as how participants imagined me to be. Coming into relationship with Aabir and creating his word image, I attempt to make visible how I saw him in new and more complex ways and how he continued to construct me in puzzling and often tension-filled ways.

I was curious about his YCDI experience of Organisation. In his shared story, Aabir did not move across his life timeline to another time and place. Instead, he described the immediacy of the experience as happening in the moment of creating his artwork. He did not have the materials at hand as the other participants were using them. Earlier, he had demanded the glue and glitter, but they were unavailable. Instead of waiting and sharing, he chose to complete his artwork with what he had in front of him. Based on his experience of Organisation, his artwork seemed to speak to and draw from his personal learner knowledge () as a student on the school landscape. This knowledge is personal, experiential,

and reflects 'the individual's prior experience and acknowledges the contextual nature...of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by situations' (Clandinin, 1989: 122). Aabir connected his experience of Organisation to working in the moment of creating his artwork and so storied himself as resourceful, flexible, and adaptable. He also describes the potential impact of Organisation as helping him in the future to find things out. His YCDI experience speaks to his attitudes and perceptions (Bernard & Walton, 2011) while also highlighting his self-management and responsible decision making SEL competencies (CASEL, 2003; 2012). Here, there is continuity and coherence (Carr, 1986) between his Organisation experiences as helping him be resourceful, adaptable and able to find things out when he is older. Later, he also describes Organisation as leading to success or failure and accomplishing something and setting goals (Program Achieve, 2005). Such skills speak closely to the YCDI Program Achieve (2007) discourse of Organisation while also demonstrating cognitive skills such as means-end thinking, consequential thinking, and casual thinking (Bernard, 2012).

By creating his artwork and sharing his story, we see how Aabir's Organisation experience helped him construct a story as being adaptable, resourceful, and flexible. Through Aabir's shared stories, we find resonances that connect his Organisation experience to YCDI discourse and the program. I tentatively suggest we also glimpse how his YCDI experience constructs and adds anew to his personal learner knowledge. Perhaps we see how his understanding of the YCDI foundation of Organisation extends to skills outside of those prescribed in the program, so not just helping accomplish things and set goals in the future (Program Achieve, 2007), but now to include a story as being flexible, adaptable, and resourceful. In this way, we see how Aabir adds social, cultural, and personal knowing, meaning, and value to the YCDI foundation in significant ways. Through his telling,

Aabir continues to curate his narratively constructed story, a narrative that equipped him well in the present and may so in the future.

6.11: Attending to wakefulness and wide-awakeness

As narrated by the participants, a story to live by clarifies how knowledge, context, and identity are interconnected (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Throughout the workshops, many different stories emerged for Aabir. Such storylines included being sporty and competitive, being naturally curious, flexible, adaptable, and resourceful, and living in tension with the girls. By practicing wide awakeness and wakefulness (Greene, 1977; 1995), I became more attuned to other conflicting stories. Greene (1995) uses the term wide awakeness to describe and highlight that ‘without the ability to think about yourself, to reflect on your life, there’s really no awareness, no consciousness. Consciousness doesn’t come automatically; it comes through being alive, awake, curious, and often furious’ (p. 35). By being wakeful (Greene, 1977) to the ongoingness of experience, I became more aware of Aabir’s storyline of being attentive and caring towards others and being vulnerable and sensitive about his artwork. During the first workshop, I saw the attentive and caring way Aabir was with Christopher. He lent support and offered encouragement as Christopher struggled with his artwork. Previously, we also saw how his experience of witnessing a boy being surrounded and harassed by others disrupted his way of knowing and being as a sporty, confident boy. This close way of attending to Aabir and the participants’ stories speaks to relational ethics and what it means to come alongside others in a narrative inquiry. Using wakefulness as a methodological lens (Clandinin et al., 2018), I am drawn to the ways that ‘wide awakeness calls us to be active, to be engaged, to be attentive to what we and participants are experiencing’ (p. 60). This attention also draws us close to relational ethics and ‘an awareness of what it means to be in the world’ (Greene, 1995: 35). By being

wakeful, I began to see Aabir in more nuanced and entangled ways as our relationship unfolded through ‘being alive, awake, curious and often furious’ (p. 35). This leads me to question whether Aabir’s stories of being attentive and caring towards others and being vulnerable about his artwork were overlooked by other students and teachers and so silencing acts of kindness that he was prone to show. By thinking with Aabir’s story, I see how practicing wide awakesness and wakefulness (Greene, 1977, 1995) offers further insight and ways to know and come alongside students in meaningful and relationally ethical ways.

By using the word image above, I wish to draw forward some of the multiple storylines that weaved across Aabir’s shared experiences; storylines of YCDI and his personal learner knowledge; storylines of being flexible, adaptable, and resourceful; storylines of being curious and questioning things; storylines of living in tension with girls; storylines of being sporty and competitive; storylines of being sensitive and empathetic; storylines of being thoughtful and reflexive about other participants’ artwork; and storylines of school and of teachers being strict. Many of these storylines emerged in Aabir’s sharing of children’s stories and stories of children (Clandinin et al., 2006) that were embedded in the Scoil Firtéar landscape, and together they offered insight into his ongoing narratively constructed personal learner knowledge () and stories to live by.

6.12: Baahir’s word image

Baahir word image
Monday, October 2nd, 2017^a
Organisation Workshop 1

Baahir
walks in
and takes
his seat
he is
softly spoken

*large brown eyes
framed behind
black-rimmed glasses*

*he joined in
with group discussions
he didn't speak
directly to others*

*he worked enthusiastically
on his art
he shared materials
and shared his thoughts
with others
he works well
in groups*

*during arguments
over glitter
and glue
he stood up
for himself*

*his **Organisation** experience was*



*with his family
on the train to Greystones
climbing
the Sugarloaf mountain
getting to the top
feeling good
hearing the water
in the sea below
his sister didn't like it*

*it was
too hard*

***Monday, October 9th 2017
Organisation, Workshop 2***

*He shared a story
about his dad
returning from England
he was
very happy*

*in class
he is eager to win
ClassDojo points
and rewards
from teacher*

***Organisation is
neat work
preparing stuff
it feels good
in life
get organised
for work***

*this foundation
didn't really
affect him much
he was organised
before YCDI*

*he sat
with Aabir and Dariya
while they
played chess
he umpired
he gave tips
and advice
he was the expert
he fostered
a safe space
between them
with no arguing
or tension*

*he shared a story
about his chessboard*

*it's made of wood
it is
very precious
to him
it has
no scratches
or scrapes*

6.13: YCDI experiences of 'already being' as competing or conflicting stories

Baahir entered the room, took his seat, and waited for the others to arrive. We exchanged polite introductions as I made my final preparations for the afternoon's workshop. In coming into relationship with Baahir, he shared his experience of Organisation with me. This experience centred on a family trip to the Sugarloaf Mountain. He spoke about the journey on the train and about the challenge of climbing the mountain. He shared how he felt once he had ascended to the top, of feeling happy and satisfied and hearing the sounds of the ocean in the distance. He also told us that his sister didn't like the climb as it was too difficult. Later on, he described Organisation as being neat and prepared for school and work, both of which speak to YCDI discourses of Organisation (Program Achieve, 2007). In sharing both stories, he also connects to his embodied experiences of feeling happy and satisfied and the embodied feeling of Organisation as 'feeling good' too.

In sharing his story, I sensed traces of personal achievement and overcoming the challenge of climbing the mountain. I felt resonances and connections to YCDI discourses of Organisation that spoke of achieving goals, targets, and success (Program Achieve, 2007) and the CASEL SEL competencies of self-management and relationship skills (CASEL, 2003; 2012). Baahir's experience of Organisation took place outside of the school landscape, and so we get a strong sense of the place dimensions of his experience. In his telling, perhaps he also offers insight into the impact of the YCDI program beyond the school limits as stated as

one of the goals in the YCDI Program Achieve (2007) mission statement, and in wider SEL programs (CASEL, 2012) where links with home and the community are seen as vital. This story is also deeply embedded within a familial narrative of togetherness and care, and so the personal and social dimensions of his experience are also present. Later in the workshop, Baahir shared how he felt that the foundation of Organisation had not affected him much and how he felt he was already organised before YCDI. I was curious why he chose to create this artwork and share this particular Organisation experience with us.

By sharing this story, and the powerful image of him standing atop of the mountain, I came to see how Baahir constructed a story to live by as 'already being' Organised, as already having conquered the skills of the YCDI foundation of Organisation in school, just as he had conquered the mountain. This storyline of 'already being' Organised before YCDI was also shared by Christopher, and so both Bahir and Christopher's storylines converged in agreement and unity. The storyline of 'already being' before YCDI became a common narrative thread also shared by Dariya in later workshops on her feelings about the foundations of Getting Along. Thinking narratively about these storylines of 'already being', they may be seen as both a competing story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) that lived in dynamic tension with the dominant school story of YCDI and also as a conflicting story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) that collided with dominant YCDI stories of Scoil Firtéar. A strong YCDI school story was that each student had to choose a foundation that they wanted to develop and improve over the school year in September. Each child would choose one YCDI foundation as their target, which emerged through conversation and discussion with their peers, parents, and teachers. In our creative conversations a year later, Baahir told me that it was the foundation of Persistence that had had the most impact on him, as it helped him be persistent in situations on and off the school landscape.

Listening to Baahir's story and other 'already being' stories, I imagine him sharing this story of already being Organised with his teacher at the beginning of the year and the potential tension that might arise. The school story of YCDI would have dictated that Bahir, and others like him, would have to engage in the YCDI Organisation lessons, even if they felt there was no new learning to be gained. It also dictated that the teacher must engage with all of the lessons with all of the students. This story of 'already being' may have sustained itself as a competing story, where students engaged in the lessons, although making it clear they felt this to be unnecessary. This situation may have been tolerated over time because Baahir, and others like him, were eager, polite, and compliant students who would have engaged with the lessons regardless. Yet, I wonder about other students, who may be less compliant, who may decide not to engage in these YCDI lessons, therefore shifting this narrative to a conflicting story that bumped and collided with the dominant YCDI school story. Biesta (2015a) tells us that 'what may be effective for one individual or group may not necessarily be effective for another individual or group', and so Bogtoch et al (2007) ask us to consider two critical questions regarding educational effectiveness, 'Effective for what?' and 'Effective for whom?' The potential of such conflicting stories in school may give rise to a student to say 'No!' to what is being taught during YCDI lessons and also across other areas of the curriculum. This potential moment of refusal, where a student's 'I' or their subject-ness (Biesta, 2019) may step forward and say 'No!' is a moment filled with educational possibility (Biesta, 2019). As previously explored, Dewey's theory cannot account for such a moment, as he gives us no account for the potentiality of human organisms to say 'No'. This summoning of the self to be a self, where an individual's 'I' steps forward to take control, disrupt and interrupt learning, growth, identity formation, and enculturation, is what Biesta (2019) identifies as a deficit in the work of John Dewey.

By sharing his story, Bahir connects his Organisation experience to a familial narrative of overcoming, accomplishment, care, and togetherness. This story also resonates with the SEL competence of self-awareness (CASEL, 2003;2012) and Baahir's capacity to understand his own emotions, thoughts, values, and their impact across his life on and off the school landscape (CASEL, 2012). He also constructed a story to live by as already being Organised. In sharing his stories, Baahir offers personal insight into ways the YCDI foundation impacted his way of knowing and 'already being' in school and ways of being with his family, perhaps in unsuspecting ways. Like Aahir, Baahir constructs a story imbued with personal knowing, understanding, and meaning of Organisation that extends beyond the YCDI program's parameters. In his telling, we see traces of the interconnected, embedded ways that YCDI experiences are nestled within larger narratives of family and school and how they may impact students' lives on the school landscape in curious ways.

6.14: Awakening to arrogant perception and world travelling

In coming into relationship with Bahir, I had a sense of a quiet, polite, shy boy who at first seemed hesitant to speak with the other participants and with me. When group discussions about the YCDI foundation began, he participated fully, and so my immediate sense of Baahir surprised me. He spoke openly and confidently. He shared his thoughts and feelings without hesitation. He was co-operative and worked harmoniously with the group. His story as a team player, as co-operative and thoughtful, began to emerge. Thinking with my initial sense of Bahir, I wonder now why I had perceived him as quiet, polite, and shy? Had I seen Baahir in an arrogant (Frye, 1983) way? Frye (1983) describes a tendency of those in power to see others in ways that serve their interests. Such ways of seeing that operate invisibly and behind the scenes (Flakne, 2013) causes harm and damage to others. Thinking with

Baahir, I see how, in the beginning, I perceived him arrogantly as someone else in a different world to my own. Lugones (1987: 4) tells us that:

the extent that we learn to perceive others arrogantly or come to see them only as products of arrogant perception and continue to perceive them that way, we fail to identify with them-fail to love them-in this particularly deep way.

I was constructing Baahir in a different world (Lugones, 1987), in a world of school and classroom, where children who don't speak up are considered quiet, shy, aloof, or lacking in confidence. I had failed to realise that we had all world travelled by crossing the threshold into the workshops. By 'world', I draw on Lugones (1987) description:

A "world" in my sense may be an actual society given its dominant culture's description and construction of life...But a "world" can also be such a society given a non-dominant construction, or it can be such a society or a society given an idiosyncratic construction...A "world" need not be a construction of a whole society. It may be a construction of a tiny portion of a particular society. It may be inhabited by just a few people. Some "worlds" are bigger than others (p.10).

In coming into relationships with the participants, we all inhabited a new out-of-classroom world, a small world populated by only a few others. This world was at once familiar, yet unfamiliar, known, yet unknown. This porous way of being and the plurality that it speaks to (Todd, 2011) resonates with the ability of one to travel between worlds, and also to inhabit more than one world at the same time so that 'it seems to me that inhabiting more than one "world" at the same time and "travelling" between "worlds" is part and parcel of our experience and our situation Lugones' (1987: 11). By sharing his experience of Organisation and other stories and by thinking with Lugones (1987), Baahir offered me an opening into his world. This was a world filled with caring familial relations, overcoming the mountain climb, having the self-confidence of living a competing/conflicting story as 'already being', being a team player, and being good at chess. By allowing me entry into his world, I see

how he was a victim of arrogant perception in mine while simultaneously being the living, breathing, resisting, courageous, caring, and loving subject in his own.

Thinking with my coming into relationship with the participants, I wonder how students are continuously storied by a host of other teacher stories of children (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) that construct them in ways that cause damage to them but are of benefit to teachers and schools. Drawing on the work of Lugones (1987), I acknowledge the ability of others to world travel while also recognising my ethical responsibility as a narrative inquirer to attend to my construction of others in different worlds, as well as to my own. Baahir world travelled into the workshops, as did the rest of the participants. He spoke openly and easily with others and so constructed a story not as quiet and shy, but of cooperative and thoughtful. I wonder how arrogant perceptions of 'quiet' students serve the interests of teachers and schools? Do arrogant perceptions permit 'quiet' children to simply slip by teachers and school leaders? They cause no upset or disruption and so live at the edge of teachers' perceptions (Bateson, 1994). Such ways of seeing may marginalise those who do not appear on our professional radars. Does perceiving 'quiet' children in this way create more time for difficult and challenging children, therefore depriving others of crucial and precious teacher time? By thinking with Baahir's word image and Aabir's before this, I draw on Lugone's (1987) concept of world travelling and coalesce her thinking with Greene's (1977; 1995) use of wide-awakeness and wakefulness as Clandinin et al (2018) have done. I acknowledge that the participants and I are world travellers, as we moved from in-classroom places to out of classroom places. Lugones (1987: 8) tells us that 'those of us who are 'world'-travelers have the distinct experience of being different in different 'worlds' and of having the capacity to remember other 'worlds' and ourselves in them.'

In sharing his stories, Baahir narratively constructs his story as a co-operative, quietly confident team player who was already Organised before YCDI. This story bumped against and disrupted my initial sense of Baahir, and through wakefulness to his experiences and acknowledging us all as world travellers. I began to see Baahir's story in more intricate ways. By creating the word image above, I drew forward some of the multiple storylines that echoed across Baahir's shared stories; storylines of YCDI as competing and conflicting stories; a storyline of already being Organised; a storyline of being thoughtful and cooperative in the face of tension; a storyline of being quietly confident; a storyline of strong familial relationships and values; a storyline of being an eager student; and a story of teamwork and sharing.

6.15: Janette's word image

Janette word image
Monday, October 2nd 2017
Organisation Workshop 1
She calls me
'John'
like we've known
each other
for years

her long
black
braided hair
falls loosely
around her
shoulders

she spoke with
Aabir and Dariya
about the
appropriate length
of boys' hair
not too long

she argued with
Dariya and Aabir

*over the glitter
over the glue*

her Organisation experience was...



*winning first prize
at a
gymnastics competition
she was disciplined
and confident
she practiced
her dance routines*

Monday, October 9th 2017
Workshop 2: Organisation

*She shared her thoughts
about the timelines
life can go
from good to bad
she is
curious about them*

*she loves
her long nails
she would
never cut them*

*she's clued in
to beauty tips
to pop culture
to celebrity*

*she shares stories
of how girls should look
pretty
not ugly
she shares stories of
how boys should look
handsome*

*she performed
as if
she had her own
YouTube channel
'The Jannette Show'
she spoke with
an American accent
she has
50 followers
she's famous*

*Scoil Firtéar is:
ORGANISATION!
GIVE ME 5!
GIVE ME 5!
GET POINTS
FOR YOUR GROUP!
in her
old school
nobody cared*

***Organisation** is
knowing where
your stuff is
not losing
your stationary
winning YCDI
student of the week
by being organised
get positive attention*

from teacher

*next year
in 6th class*

Organisation

*will be better
right now
sometimes she cares
sometimes she doesn't*

in conversation

with Dariya

*about superpowers
she says she would
love the power
to teleport anywhere
she thinks*

*Dariya's superpower
of time travel
is silly
why would
anyone want
to go backwards
in life?*

she asks me

if I like

the colour pink

I say 'yes'

*she's taken aback
by my answer*

she calls me

a SPY

because of

the Dictaphone

she is unsure

of what

*I'm trying to do
with my research*

she responded to

Amanda's audienced artwork



*she says
not all the crowd
are happy
because their daughters
didn't win
some would cheer
but not really mean it*

*she responded to
Aabir's audience artwork*



*she says
you shouldn't judge people
by their clothes
even though
people do
who does she judge?
who judges her?*

6.16: YCDI school stories coming alongside a new student story

Soon after meeting Janette, I learned she was new to the school. She had only just begun to engage with the YCDI program since the beginning of the school year, in contrast to the others who had engaged with the program over the past three years. As part of the whole school implementation of YCDI, the foundation of Organisation is covered over the first six weeks of each school year, beginning in September, followed by Confidence. In sharing her Organisation experience, Janette tells a story of taking part in a gymnastics competition where she won a trophy.

In her story, she connects her experience of Organisation with practicing her gymnastics moves and the discipline required in the execution of her routine. Here, we find traces and resonances of YCDI discourse in her preparedness and readiness to perform. In sharing her experience, Janette constructs a story of being confident and comfortable performing in front of others. Like Baahir, Janette's artwork and experience bring us to a time and place off the school landscape. She transports us to the buzz and excitement of a gymnastics competition. In doing so, I imagine Janette getting ready, full of exuberant excitement and giddiness as she prepared to perform and full of self-confidence in her ability to compete. From her telling, we get a sense of the personal and social dimensions of her experience where her embodied feelings of competing shine through her words and how the significance of such social events and competitions play a meaningful role in her emerging story to live by. Yet, it was another facet of her story that sparked my interest. I was curious about how Janette's experience of Organisation, her new student story, and the strong school story of YCDI came alongside each other in unforeseen ways.

From her brief time in Scoil Firtéar, Janette would have already chosen a YCDI foundation to develop and seen YCDI posters and artwork dotted around the school. Every day, she would have walked past the large display board outside the principal's office where the proud faces of YCDI students of the week were on show, and weekly, she would have attended YCDI assemblies. In class, she would have experienced YCDI lessons for the first time and understood the integration and significance of the YCDI foundations with the school's positive reinforcement reward system. This was organised and displayed brightly on the interactive whiteboards in every class in the school, managed through the online ClassDojo website and points system.

Through her telling, we get a sense of the sudden coming together of her story and YCDI. YCDI discourse was abundantly clear from the beginning of her time as a student, evident through the language of the teachers, posters, and artwork, '*ORGANISATION!*, *ORGANISATION!*', as well as through the language and discourse of her peers, '*GET POINTS FOR YOUR GROUP!*' Through her animated telling, we get a sense of her anxiety, as she encountered such a new and unfamiliar story. This sudden, overwhelming, and anxious coming together of Janette's life and the school story of YCDI leads me to wonder how other new students feel upon entering Scoil Firtéar. Do they feel anxious and overwhelmed too? Like Baahir, we sense Janette's new student story and the YCDI story of school as either competing or conflicting stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

Janette's previous school experience where nobody cared about YCDI, Organisation, or getting team points initially seemed to come into conflict with this strong school story. While this was a new story for Janette, she quickly came alongside it and began to shift her own story as she later shared her thoughts about the importance of winning points by being

Organised in class and thus garnering positive attention from the teacher. Here, perhaps we glimpse a subtle shifting of her story to live by so as not to come into conflict with YCDI but rather to live in dynamic tension with it. We also see how the discontinuities (Carr, 1986) felt in her initial new student story shifted to provide continuity and coherence (Carr, 1986) with the strong school story.

Janette's experience also offers insight into the interwoven and complex relationship of YCDI, the school's positive reinforcement strategy of winning team points, and student behaviour. Here, we see the potential pitfalls and dangers of intervention programs becoming subsumed by larger institutional school stories and obscuring their intended purpose. The school story of YCDI as an SEL program is evident and displayed clearly for all to see and hear, but it also operates to assert control and power over students and, by extension, its staff. The YCDI program may be seen to shift from the purposes of a purely positive development of SEL and academic achievement towards a way to endorse, normalise, and regulate behaviours and experiences of children (Woods 2018a; Woods 2018b) to the benefit of others. By thinking with Janette's story, the potential of YCDI to become something other than an SEL program, to become a mechanism for power and control, can be seen and disrupted, and so returning the program to its original purpose; to the social-emotional well-being of children and teachers. Perhaps too, we can think of new ways of welcoming students to Scoil Firtéar that lessens the sudden, jolting impact that coming alongside such a strong school story can cause.

6.17: Disrupting power relations

We began the first workshop by negotiating a co-created set of workshop rules. Drawing from my knowledge and experience of Scoil Firtéar school stories, and my personal practical

knowledge where class teachers often create classroom rules at the beginning of each year, I felt that co-creating a set of rules would be a familiar and comfortable way for the group to negotiate our coming into relationships together.

Dialogue vignette – Workshop 1: Organisation, Monday, October 2nd

Amanda: Respect others' opinions?

John: Yes, good. Listening to each other? Maybe? And respect other's opinions...Could we think of maybe one more? And if you can't, I don't mind because that looks great to me. Any ideas? Aabir?

Aabir: Emmm...we should call you 'John' instead of 'Mr. Meegan'?

(John laughs aloud)

John: Yeah, call me, John, please! You can use my name. I'd love it if you used my name. I'd love it.

Emerging from the set of co-created rules was the opportunity for participants to call me by my first name. Most wrestled with this idea throughout the workshops and often shifted between 'John', 'Mr. Meegan' and 'teacher'; resting least easily on 'John'. I wonder now about each title's historical, social, and cultural weight and what it meant to each participant. How was I positioned and constructed by each name? When 'John', was I the beginning-researcher, 'Mr. Meegan' the rule-maker/enforcer, or 'teacher' the nurturing educator? I noticed in coming into relationship with Janette, no hesitation or fear calling me 'John'. In fact, she seemed to relish the idea. By using my first name so effortlessly, I felt a rupture in our newly negotiated relationship's power relations. I also had a sense of Janette constructing herself as something other than a student.

Power can be seen as the ability to influence the opinion, behaviour, or values of those who are less dominant (Vlčková, Mareš, & Ježek, 2016). This notion of power speaks closely to the heart of many educational relationships where teachers occupy positions of power and influence, which renders one individual as powerful and the other as powerless (Nelson, 2017). Waller (1967) described the fundamental relationship between students

and adults in school as being power based, where young people are subordinate to the institution, mirroring their lessened social status (Lynch, 1998). By Aabir suggesting that the participants might call me 'John', I felt this might, in fact, ease and help to balance the power relations between us. My joy at this suggestion jumps from the transcript above, yet this joy was short-lived as throughout the workshops, I continually wondered and worried about the impact that I would have on the inquiry.

Workshop 3: Confidence, Monday, October 23rd, Fieldnote

I felt that yesterday's workshop was chaotic, and I felt uneasy throughout the session. I think the students felt my unease. Maybe my emotions leaked out into the room. Did I have much impact on the session? Yes and no. I have been struggling with my position as a teacher-researcher versus a teacher so far and yesterday was a challenge also.

Power relationships within schools (Lynch, 1989; Lodge & Lynch, 2002/2004) can be described as a transactional process (Sellman, 2009), where teachers and schools control the content, topics, curriculum, and pedagogy. In this way, students become the oppressed receivers of school policies and content, where their voices and freedoms are limited and regulated (Taylor & Robinson, 2009; Robinson & Taylor, 2013; Nelson, 2017). As students move through educational systems, the act of repetition creates what Usher (2005:15) in Freire (2005) calls 'a culture of silence'. As a beginning teacher-researcher, I yearned for newness and appealed to all of the participants to call me 'John'. I attempted to shed my teacher story that I inhabited and which I brought with me into the workshops, but I quickly discovered the discomfort and vulnerability that this entailed.

Workshop 3: Confidence, Monday, October 23rd, Fieldnote Continued

I tried my best to not impact the session by letting things go that ordinarily, as a teacher, I would not have. I feel that the students are trying to push and create new boundaries for our workshop space. They are testing the limits. It reminded me of the scene from Jurassic Park where the velociraptors were testing the perimeter of

their cage to see where, or if, there were any weaknesses in the defences. This is the image that comes to me as I think about the session. I tried to let things emerge, and there were moments of real beauty and rich stories to be heard, but I was getting very annoyed because others were not giving respect to others, which I felt that they deserved. It is a vulnerable place when you are sharing with a group, and I feel that any participant who shares deserves the chance to be listened to. That is why we speak, to be listened to. Apart from this, I think my impact was less felt; maybe I shouldn't say impact because, after all, I'm supposed to be here as we are co-creating/co-constructing our experiences together.

Coming into relationship with Janette, I felt a disruption (Lyotard, 1991), resistance, and subversion (Gergen, 2009) of my teacher self and grand school narratives of student-teacher relationships. As lived and felt in the fieldnote above, I now see this embodied vulnerability as a necessary aspect of addressing power inequalities in schools and wider human science research in schools. This dis-ease must become the norm if we want to hear students' honest and open voices instead of the regurgitated sameness that stems from cultures of repetition and oppression. By voicing my first name, space was created for Janette to speak honestly and openly, and it seemed this way of knowing and being continued throughout the workshops. Throughout the workshops, she asked many open and curious questions that I felt she would not have if we inhabited a typical student-teacher relationship. She asked me whether I like the colour pink and is taken aback by my positive response, she described me as a spy and how she doesn't trust me, and later she asked me if I had my eyebrows done to the astonishment of the others. In this way, a new kind of relationship was created between us, where student voice, agency, and opinion emerged instinctively, rather than just saying what teachers think they want to hear (Robinson & Taylor, 2013).

By creating Janette's word image, I wish to draw forward the emerging storylines that weaved across her shared stories; storylines of strong YCDI school stories; storylines of being a confident girl; storylines of being a performer; storylines of beauty and ugliness;

storylines of gender; storylines of popularity and acceptance; storylines of being a new student and fitting in; storylines of friendships on and off the school landscape; storylines of being a famous YouTuber; storylines of tension between girls and boys; and storylines of being competitive. Next, I move to the next chapter, where I continue to present my coming into relationships with Amanda, Christopher, Dariya, Farrah, and Katie.

Chapter 7: Coming into relationships: YCDI experiences and emerging stories to live by

(Pt2)

7.0: Coming into relationships continued

In this chapter, I present Amanda, Christopher, Dariya, Farrah, and Katie's word images. Adopting such poetic ways of presenting student experience 'allows for the inclusion of many voices and stories in a non-hierarchical manner, making the author's influence explicit without it being dominant' (Byrne, 2015: 36). This way of writing 'conveys more than it intends; and it is never totalising' where 'the "excess" meaning conveyed...creates a supplement that makes multiple and resistant readings possible' (Phelan, 1996/1993: 2). Alternative forms of research representation offer new possibilities for meaning-making in education and educational research. The implication is that we open up new ways in which meaning is made while also offering alternative meanings that can be made (Byrne, 2015). Like Guttorm (2012) suggests, conventional representations are often reductive, leading to a paring down of the multifaceted and complex composition of research subjects and their experiences. For Guttorm (2012), poetic forms of representation allow us to 'cross boundaries and dichotomous concepts, and to refrain from sureness and producing freezing metaphors' (p.600).

This thesis is a profoundly reflective and reflexive endeavour. Greater reflexivity about how one interprets and reads into stories is needed to highlight the learning and significance of such interpretation for narrative inquiry. Schon (1986) tells us that reflective practitioners allow themselves to 'experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion' (p.68) during moments of uncertainty. Throughout my inquiry, I drew from what Schon (1983) describes as 'reflection-in-action' where, as a practitioner, I examined my experiences and

responses as they occurred, and 'reflection-on-action' where I reviewed and described the time spent with the participants to gain insight to improve future practice (Schon, 1983). This was made possible through note-taking during the workshops. Afterwards, by bringing artwork, transcripts, field notes, and personal journal entries alongside a plethora of theoretical voices, I drew from Fook's (2006) description of critical reflection that enabled an understanding of how socially dominant discourses may restrict others. By highlighting such power relations, critical reflection enables social change beginning with the individual as they become aware of grand narratives enmeshed in social, cultural, historical, and institutional contexts. White, Fook and Gardner (2008: 53) contend that:

Part of the power of critical reflection in opening up new perspectives and choices about practice may only be realised if the connections between individual thinking and identity, and dominant social beliefs are articulated and realised.

Reflexive practitioners engage in critical self-reflection by 'reflecting critically on the impact of their own background, assumptions, positioning, feelings, behaviour while also attending to the impact of the wider organisational, discursive, ideological and political context' (Finlay, 2008: 6). Through the practice of introspection (Finlay, 2002; 2003) to probe personal meanings and emotions, and intersubjection (Finlay, 2002; 2003), to attend to the emerging, negotiated, and relational nature of shared experiences during the inquiry, I had the tools necessary to present my stories and those of the participants. From such critical and reflexive practices, the participants' word images and my interpretation and reading of their experiences emerged

7.1: Amanda's word image

Amanda word image
Monday, October 2nd 2018
Workshop 1 Organisation

*Tall
long brown hair
held back
with a thin hairband*

*she chats with Katie
she listens
she shares
she gives thoughtful responses
to me
and to others*

*her **Organisation** experience was*



*at an Irish dancing
competition
with her mom
and friends
all the dancers
getting ready
their hair
and makeup
dresses and shoes
her name
was called out
she walked
onto the stage
she was
excited and nervous
2 step jigs
and reels
she won a trophy*

*she speaks about
her friends
and family
a Skype call
from proud grandparents
living abroad*

***Monday, October 9th, 2017
Workshop 2 Organisation***

*She shares
stories of sleepovers
of spending time
with friends
and family
her mom
and two brothers
going to Ikea*

*she notices
the shapes and spaces
between the timelines
changing and moving
like our lives
they change
every second*

Organisation is
*a girl
sitting up straight
in class
ready to listen
ready to clean up
it feels easier
when you have
everything in order
it's easier
for homework
instead of
rummaging around
in a messy folder
wasting your time
and teachers*

*Audienceing her artwork
she describes
the dance competition*

*and winning a trophy
she felt happy
others felt happy
for her too
she would like
to change the glitter
it didn't turn out
very well*

7.2: YCDI experiences of continuity and coherence

I imagine Amanda walking onto the stage during her dance competition in a similar way as she entered the first workshop with poise and grace. She took her seat at the far end of the room beside Katie. Placing her bag and coat carefully beside her chair, she sat up straight and tall, a dancer's posture. Both girls struck up a friendly conversation with a familiarity that spoke of friendship outside of the workshop. As the session progressed, she shared her story of Organisation, and like Janette's, Amanda's story also spoke of her participation in a competition.

Amanda began the story by telling us her mother and friends were in attendance to watch her perform. Here, her caring, loving relationship with her mother and friends and her compassion for those she was in direct competition with emerged. In telling her story, we see her experience as being grounded in familial narratives of support, encouragement, and care (Noddings, 1984; 1993) and highlighting the cognitive skill of sensitivity and perspective-taking (Bernard, 2012). She described how each of her fellow dancers styled their hair, dressed up in Irish dancing outfits, and laced their shoes. Her story, like her experience at the competition, attended carefully to every detail. She described warming up with the others, and her embodied feelings of excitement and anxiousness as her name was called out to perform. Like Baahir, Amanda also describes her embodied sensuous feelings of being Organised. She tells us that it feels '*easier*', so there is an echo and connection between the participants' positive experiences of YCDI. Later, Amanda describes

Organisation as being '*ready to listen,*' '*ready to clean up,*' and having '*everything in order*' to not waste her time or teachers. Here, we get a sense of an eager, enthusiastic student, of one who engages in class and one who is wary of not wasting time. Amanda constructs a story of her being ready, having everything in order, and so YCDI discourse can be vividly felt. YCDI Program Achieve (2006) describes the foundation of Organisation as:

Setting a goal to do your best in your schoolwork, listening carefully to your teacher's instructions, planning your time so that you are not rushed, having your supplies ready, and keeping track of your assignments' due dates (p.17).

We also sense traces and resonances of the YCDI foundation in her dance story as she described her preparedness on the day, of being ready with her dance routine, her hair, shoes, and dress. I felt a coherence and connection across both stories, a sense of narrative unity (Carr, 1986; Rudd, 2007). Rudd (2007: 543) tells us that:

To think of who I am in narrative terms is to think of myself as a temporal being and so as a being with a past; but also, to understand my current situation as the result of my past history, not just causally, but in the sense that my past history has established the meaning of my present situation. Moreover, it involves thinking of myself as an agent (rather than a mere passive spectator of life) and therefore as someone who is partly responsible for the shape his life has taken.'

By sharing her dance competition experiences and later in her description of Organisation, we glimpse resonances and connections with YCDI discourses as being prepared, organised, and ready, both as a dancer and as a student. Here, we get a sense of narrative unity, continuity, and coherence (Carr, 1986) as Amanda brings her Organisation experience smoothly alongside her story both on and off the school landscape. Carr (1986) tells us that the actions and events that compose our lives offer coherence, in so far as they are already embedded in the stories we tell and help us anticipate other stories that they may belong to in the future. He tells us that:

Narrative coherence is what we find or effect in much of our experience and action, and to the extent that we do not, we aim for it, try to produce it, and try to restore it when it goes missing for whatever reason (p.90).

Like Bahir and Janette, Amanda's experience also occurs off the school landscape, with her family and friends close to her. Her story also tells of overcoming and achieving. Bahir constructed a story to live by as 'already being' Organised, and therefore not in need of YCDI skills of Organisation in school, while Janette's story to live by as a new student bumped against dominant school stories of YCDI. In each narrative account, we see discontinuity and incoherence, and so sites for tension and inquiry emerge from both Baahir and Janette's tellings. Carr (1986) speaks of narrative discontinuities as a struggle for narrative coherence as 'a struggle with two aspects . . . one to live out or live up to a plan or narrative . . . the other to construct or choose that narrative' (p. 96). Curiously, Amanda tells a story that highlights continuity and narrative coherence. So while other narrative inquiries have carefully attended to the discontinuities and incoherence (Huber, 2008) as sites of tension to forge new understandings, it is also vital that we attend to narratives of coherence to do the same. In Amanda's telling, we see a caring and careful coming together of her Organisation experience and her stories to live by as both student and dancer. Such narrative unity seemed to instil in Amanda a quiet confidence, a sense of contentment, as well as a sense of calm and harmony with her narrative self where, as Carr (1986: 96) tells us that 'what is at stake on the plane of 'life' is my own coherence as a self, the unity and integrity of my personal identity.'

Amanda shared a story of her experience of Organisation that offered coherence with YCDI discourses in school and with her story to live by as being ready and being prepared, both as an Irish dancer and as a student. Through her acknowledgement of her

rival competitors and their feelings, I sensed connections to the SEL competence of social awareness (CASEL, 2020) that is defined as the ability to ‘understand the perspectives of and empathise with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts’ (p.2). Perhaps we also see how her engagement with YCDI positively impacted her SEL competence of relationship skills (CASEL, 2012; 2020), her cognitive skills (Bernard, 2012) as well as her attitudes and perceptions (Bernard & Walton, 2011) of school and open competition. SEL competencies are intended to equip students with the skills needed to flourish and develop positively both on and off the school landscape (Payton et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Corcoran et al., 2018), and from a narrative inquiry perspective, we may also glimpse ways in which YCDI offered Amanda a sense of narrative unity (Carr, 1986; Rudd, 2007) between stories both as a student and as a dancer.

7.3: Beginning from an ethics of care

During the workshop, Amanda participated in group discussions by listening and offering thoughtful responses. In coming into relationship with her, I sensed a caring, careful, and purposeful person. Like the Irish dancer who patiently practices and thinks about each step, Amanda too was patient as she listened to others before making thoughtful, reflexive responses. By listening and responding in this way, she seemed to care deeply about the other participants’ stories. Amanda won a trophy for Irish dancing through her hard work and preparedness, yet the story centres not on her winning, but the sense of shared joy and happiness she felt with her family, friends, and during a Skype call with her grandparents who lived abroad.

Retelling and relieving the story in this way, Amanda finished as she began by offering insight into caring, loving relationships with others. Her Organisation experience seemed to provide further insight into an emerging story as a caring person who had strong

familial and intergenerational bonds with her grandparents. Thinking with Amanda's story drew my attention to Nodding's (1984; 1992; 1995) ethics of care and the coming alongside and movement toward relational ethics (Clandinin et al., 2018) of being and belonging with others (Caine et al., 2020). Central to Nodding's (1984) work is an ethical ideal that presents 'our best picture of ourselves caring and being cared for' (p.80), and that 'a caring relation is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings' (p.15). This process entails engaging in care, understanding how care is given and returned, and understanding the relationship between the carer and cared for (Caine et al., 2020).

I noticed how Amanda listened attentively to me and others. In contrast, I also witnessed the dismissive, hurtful ways that participants sometimes engaged and spoke with one another. In such moments, I was unsure and vulnerable as my teacher, and teacher researcher positioning within the inquiry pulled me in different directions. Through Amanda's story, I sensed a commitment to her dancing and others she was in relation with. The caring way she described her mother and siblings, how her face lit up when describing the Skype phone call made to her grandparents abroad, and the empathy and respect she shared for her fellow competitors. Amanda's caring and considerate story contrasted sharply with Janette, whose performance of competitiveness left little space for her to consider others she competed with during her gymnastics competition.

Noddings describes listening with care, not as a means to gather information, but as a device to fully attend to the wholeness of the living other who speaks to us (Noddings, 1993). Pelias (2011) can also teach us to listen with care and so adds to Noddings work. Pelias (2011) describes 'leaning in' to others where, as researchers, we become:

an attentive, listening presence, trying my best to become attuned with another person. I want to gather, pull in, understand. I want that person to know that I am

present, ready to engage, ready for what might be shared, ready for whatever sorrows or joys might come our way (p.9).

Drawing on the work of Noddings (1984, 1992; 1995), Clandinin et al (2018), and Pelias (2008, 2011, 2018, 2019), I attempt to honour and uphold each participants' innate integrity and think about listening, love, and care as crucial aspects of a co-composed research relationship. I also acknowledge that I failed to listen carefully at times. At times, I leaned away from the participants (Pelias, 2011), perhaps being too consumed with running the workshops well or being overwhelmed by my lack of experience and Confidence as a researcher in a liminal space. By coming into relationships with Amanda, questions also emerged about relational ethics. While it is necessary to begin from an ethics of care, Caine et al (2020) tell us that an ethics of care alone is not sufficient to sustain a narrative inquiry. So as I journey through my inquiry and plot my coming into relationships with my participants, I attempt to show a:

shift from our orientation to compose caring relations guided by an ethics of care to include an orientation to inquire narratively into the lived and told stories of people's lives, our ethical stance begins to encompass a relational ethics for narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2020: 274).

Bergum and Dossetor (2005) describe how ethics must move beyond a principles-based approach where we acknowledge the contextual nature of people's lives and see ethical decision-making as a relational approach. They assert that 'the focus of relational ethics is on people (whole persons) and the quality of the commitment between them. These commitments are experienced in a relational or ethical space' (p.8-9). While Noddings (1984) shifted her gaze toward the person cared for rather than the carer and so focused on the experience of care, Bergum and Dosseter (2005) contend that our ethical knowledge and actions are embedded within and guided by relationships. Clandinin et al (2018), writing about Bergum and Dossetor's (2005) approach, tell us that:

In these moments ethical commitments become paramount and entail important elements such as respect, engagement, embodied knowledge, and attention to the environment. This understanding of ethics, as one embedded in relationships and commitment, resonated for us' (p.425).

Thinking with Amanda's caring story brings the matter of care (Noddings, 1984; 1992;1995) and relational ethics (Bergum and Dossetor's, 2005; Caine et al., 2020; Clandinin et al., 2018; Clandinin et al., 2016) to the forefront of my encounters with my participants and with their stories. By attending with care, as Amanda did, we are called to action as we see the potential for change emerge from our understanding of responsibility whereby 'responsibility entails recognition of the importance of belonging, as well as the importance of community' (Clandinin et al., 2018: 23). By creating Amanda's word image, I wish to draw forward some of the multiple storylines that weaved across her shared stories; storylines of YCDI experiences of continuity and coherence; storylines of loving relationships with family and friends; storylines of listening with care to others; storylines of being prepared and ready; storylines of being passionate about Irish dancing; storylines of trying her best and being proud of her achievements; and storylines of performing on stage both on and off the school landscape.

7.4: Christopher's word image

Christopher word image
Monday, October 2nd 2017
Workshop 1: Organisation

He has
a pale complexion
and a shy way
with the others

he found the art
very challenging
he was uncertain
of his work
he needed support

*in searching
for his creativity*

*we made our way
over to the pile
of materials
he was
hesitant to speak
long silences
after questions
what do
his silences say?*

*he played hurling
with the school
in 4th class
in 5th class
he didn't make the team*

*his **Organisation** experience was*



*playing hurling
for the school team
scoring a goal
though they mostly lost*

Monday, October 9th 2017
Workshop 2: Organisation

*He spoke more
with Aabir and Baahir
his shyness fading*

he shared stories

*about his family
his dad and brothers
ordered pizza
and watched a movie*

*he worked
on his artwork
about scoring a goal
during a match
later on
he became frustrated
with his art
but bounced back*

*winning ClassDojo points
in class
they are
hard to get*

***Organisation** is
being neat
lining your copy
with a date
and title*

*this foundation
had no effect
on him
he was
organised
before YCDI*

7.5: YCDI experiences of discontinuity and incoherence

In coming alongside and at the same time coming into relationship with Christopher, he shared his Organisation experience of playing sport for the school. As described in Chapter 2, this shared moment with Christopher allowed me to self-face (Cavarero, 2000, Clandinin et al., 2010) and present the auto-biographical (Freeman, 2007) strand of my narrative inquiry. It also revealed my arts-based workshops were sites of narrative relations

(Cavarero, 2000), where my burning desire to have my story told emerged. Returning to this moment during the creation of his word image offered further insight and potential for meaning-making (Byrne, 2015).

In this memory, traces of happiness, regret, and sadness were felt as he spoke about playing on the school team in 4th class and not being picked in 5th class. Research indicates that children's involvement in structured activities outside school such as art, music classes, or school clubs are found to enhance their educational performance (Marsh, 1992; McNeal, 1995; Broh, 2002) while being active and engaging in physical activity also promotes student well-being (GUI, 2018b). Engaging in such activities also creates space for children to spend time with friends outside of classroom places. Research tells us that schools with higher rates of student involvement in extracurricular activities in the Irish context were found to have higher educational attainment and student retention rates (Smyth, 1999). Also, children in Ireland overwhelmingly choose sport as their most frequent hobby or activity (GUI, 2009a; 2018b) and spending time with their friends (GUI, 2009a). In particular, for boys, sporting activities and fitness are the most popular ways to spend time outside of school (GUI, 2009a). During his telling, I imagined Christopher in 4th class preparing and getting ready for an energetic training session during lunch break or a match against a rival school. I also imagined the disappointment he felt when he didn't get picked in 5th class. I wonder now about the other ways that not being picked impacted his educational attainment, his physical activity levels, as well as his social-emotional well-being as the findings on the impact of out-of-school activities on children's academic performance are clear (McCoy et al., 2012). Not all students can make the team; rules and team sizes dictate this outcome. Still, by thinking with Christopher's story, it may again highlight the need for

alternative ways to promote and engage children in after school activities, sporting or otherwise, in an attempt to improve the achievement of students and also help to foster a more general sense of ownership over school life (McCoy et al., 2012).

Unlike Aabir, Baahir, and Amanda, traces of YCDI discourses were not immediately sensed through his experience. Christopher offered little in the way of details. Later, during the whiteboard activity on the foundation of Organisation, traces of YCDI discourse on preparedness could be felt as he described Organisation as being neat, lining your copy, and writing in the date and title. Like Baahir, Christopher also shared with us that this foundation had had no impact on him. He was Organised before YCDI. In this way, Christopher also constructs a story as 'already being', therefore not requiring the YCDI skills of Organisation. As with Baahir, such storylines of 'already being' may be seen as both a competing or a conflicting story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) that collided with dominant YCDI stories of Scoil Firtéar. This storyline of 'already being' echoed across multiple narrative accounts. Again, questions emerge about those students who may decide not to engage in YCDI lessons, as they deem them unnecessary. In this way, schools may become aware and have the power to act before competing narratives shift to become conflicting narratives that bump and collide with dominant school stories.

In sharing his narrative accounts, I sensed discontinuities (Carr, 1986) between his experiences of playing sport for the school, a story with traces of sadness and regret, his understanding of the YCDI foundation as being neat and lining your copy, and his story to live by as already being Organised. The narrative coherence of one's life is not a given (Carr, 1986). Instead, it is an ongoing process we all engage in. Carr (1986: 97) calls this search for narrative coherence a struggle and tells us that:

Coherence seems to be a need imposed on us whether we seek it or not. Things need to make sense. We feel the lack of sense when it goes missing. The unity of self, not as an underlying identity but as a life that hangs together, is not a pre-given condition but an achievement. Some of us succeed, it seems, better than others. None of us succeed totally. We keep at it. What we are doing is telling and retelling, to ourselves and to others, the story of what we are about and what we are.

During the first two workshops, I sensed discontinuities and incoherence in Christopher's experiences. I felt uneasy and discomfort as I tried to smooth out the discontinuities and the tensions that arose from them. This attention to the discontinuities in Christopher's stories also drew me back to the discontinuities in my own life as I came alongside students for the first time. I attempted to live out a good-teacher story that neglected those who didn't fit within my ideal student image. Bateson (2004) tells us that 'there is a great temptation to edit out the discontinuities, to reshape our histories so that they look more coherent than they are' (p. 73). In those early moments with Christopher, I attempted to impose and seek coherence by smoothing out tensions. When Christopher was unsure what to create for his art, I reverted to something I felt boys in 5th class were comfortable with, that I was comfortable with; sport. While research tells us that sport is the most popular activity for boys in Ireland to participate in (GUI, 2009a; 2018b), my questioning unearthed Christopher's hurtful memory. My response was to both physically and metaphorically lean away from him (Pelias, 2011). I took solace in this distance as it smoothed out my own sense of unworthiness and vulnerability as a researcher. Later, as I wrote my fieldnotes and personal journal entries, I recognised my actions that day as 'smoothing', and in presenting this thesis, it is incumbent on me not to do so again. By thinking with Christopher's story, I come to see how my discomfort emerged through my own need to impose and seek narrative coherence, a coherence which only presented itself slowly, over time, and across the inquiry as I came alongside Christopher. Thinking with Christopher's story may offer

insight and help to other teachers and teacher-researchers to recognise their discomfort and unease, as emerging from a need to impose narrative coherence and unity on our own lives and lives of students who may not fit an imagined ideal. By attending to incoherence and discontinuities, we may open up new ways of being with students that allow for listening and living in a relationally ethical way.

7.6: Moving slowly to attend to silences

In chapter 2, I began my narrative inquiry by self-facing my autobiographical beginnings, where I slowly and methodically inquired into who I was and am becoming. This slow-moving self-inquiry emerged as I came alongside participants in a liminal space and spoke to the relational ethics of engaging in narrative inquiry in ways that allow for listening and living (Clandinin et al., 2018). The act of self-facing also awakened me to the coherence or incoherence of one's life story (Carr, 1986), the search for narrative unity (Carr, 1986; Cavarero, 2000; Rudd, 2007), and the desire to have one's story told (Forrest et al., 2010; Cavarero, 2000).

In coming into relationship with Christopher, I had unearthed a painful memory for him. This poignant shared moment unravelled memories of my own 'good' student story where pressures to attain good results in school and positive affirmation from teachers served me in my younger years, yet bumped against school stories of being 'hard' and 'tough' as I moved from primary to post-primary school. In the slowness of returning to my lived stories (Clandinin et al., 2018) as a young child learner and moving forward to my time as a newly qualified teacher, I self-faced, making visible who I was in the inquiry; a teacher whose story expected students to be hardworking and diligent, as I had been. By knowing and being in this way, I failed to see 'big' (Greene, 1995) those outside this narrow story of

others, those on the edges of my vision (Bateson, 1994). Thinking with Christopher and the other participants' stories drew me into the complexity of lives composed in diverse places and at different times. Using my life-timeline metaphor permitted me to move forward and backwards, inward and outward, to make visible the interwoven concepts of temporarily, sociality, and place that comprises lived experience (Clandinin, 2000; Dewey, 1938/1997).

During the first two workshops and by creating his word image, I sensed a shy, uncertain boy who needed support when carrying out his artwork. While the other students worked easily in groups or individually on their artwork, I noticed Christopher sitting still, looking down with an uncertain gaze at the page in front of him. Often, long silences seemed to permeate the spaces between our conversations during the early stages of our relationship.

Dialogue vignette – Workshop 1, Organisation: Monday, October 2nd 2017

John: Yes, absolutely, it's really easy to become addicted to gadgets. Very good. What do you think, Christopher?

Christopher:...(silence)

John: That's ok. If you can't think of anything, that's ok.

Later on, further silences lived between us...

Workshop 1, Organisation: Monday, October 2nd 2017 Transcript

John: It's ok, Christopher, there are no instructions to creating the art. When you did your visualisation activity, when you were thinking about something that you have achieved, was there something that came to your mind?

Christopher: Not really

John: Not really. Can you think of anything that you achieved in your life? Or about a time when you got ready for something? Can you think of anything?

Christopher: ...(silence)

John: It could be something as simple as getting ready for school. It doesn't have to be difficult. It could be getting ready for a game. Do you do any after-school activities? Do you play any sports? Do a bit of running or anything Christopher:

...

John: Maybe you can't think of anything now, can you?

Christopher: No

Listening to the pauses between conversations of what has happened and what is happening is the pause of relational ethics (Clandinin et al., 2018). Lipari (2014) tells us that 'listening is the inevitable and inaudible enactment of the ethical relation itself; upon it, everything depends' (p.69). Thinking with my narrative beginnings and my coming into relationship with Christopher, I see the silences between us as spaces where the slow attentiveness into Christopher's world and my own story to live by was made possible. While engaging in the sometimes-chaotic workshops and finely balancing my roles as 'John', 'Mr. Meegan' and 'Teacher', and later on, as I was being constructed as 'Scientist' by Aabir and 'Spy' by Janette and Dariya, I failed to recognise these spaces and pauses as sights for inquiry. I was too focused on the running of the workshop, of being the ideal teacher researcher (Forrest et al., 2010). Yet now, as I return to these lived moments and texts as a reflexive narrative inquirer, I am awake to the skill of listening where:

I seek a productive reflexivity that allows me to locate my limitations, to contemplate change, to become a better person. I want to be the attentive listener, the person who tries to hear what others are saying, who can take others' perspectives, who is quick to turn to the empathic gesture. (Pelias, 2011: 61)

Though I have left the research space to engage in the narrative analysis and writing up of this thesis, I am guided by the relational ethics of moving slowly in ways that allow for listening to the text. It was only through the slow process of returning to my narrative beginnings; a process enabled as I came alongside Christopher and others, that was I able to make visible to myself the experiences that have shaped my life. By making visible the process of engaging slowly in ways that allow for listening, I hope to offer insight to others as they engage in similar arts-based inquiries with children. I still see the faces and hear my research participants' voices and stories as they reach out through the words in my fieldnotes, interim texts, and word images. They draw me back to times spent in relation

together. I sit now with their faces, voices, and stories in a slow, attentive way for ‘without slowing down and listening to lives, our own and the lives of other people, and all living things, we cannot engage ethically’ (Clandinin et al., 2018: 92).

By creating Christopher’s word image, I wish to draw forward some of the storylines that emerged across his shared experiences; YCDI experiences of discontinuity and incoherence; storylines of ‘already being’ Organised; storylines of silences between us; storylines of his lack of confidence in his art; storylines of shyness; storylines of showing kindness to others; storylines of searching for his creativity; and storylines of slowly seeing continuities and coherences.

7.7: Dariya’s word image

Dariya word image
Monday, October 2nd, 2017
Workshop 1 Organisation

Dariya
entered the workshop
wearing
a pink outfit
and a pink beret

lean face
black braided hair
pulled back tight
into
a ponytail

she loves
to read
she always imagines
stories and characters
in her head

she disagreed
with Janette
about the
appropriate length

*of some boys'
hair*

her Organisation experience was



*learning to draw unicorns
when she was 5
in junior infants
they're magical*

*she prepared beforehand
she used lots of colours
especially
around eyes
she learned to draw
by herself*

*she tells a story
about Aabir
being mean
since junior infants
they both make fun
of each other
over how
they smell*

*she argued
with Janette
and Aabir
over glue
and glitter*

Monday, October 9th, 2017

Workshop 2 Organisation

*She goes to church
every weekend
with mum and dad*

*she shared her thoughts
about the timelines
different people
do different things
have different paths
so have
different futures*

*during
the whiteboard activity
she wrote
'boys are poopy'
then rubbed it out*

*emerging resistance
and tension
to me
to Aabir
to the workshops?*

***Organisation** is
a tidy bedroom
drawn in detail
very neat
she didn't know
what Organisation was
before YCDI*

*she played chess
against Aabir
Bahir looks on
she loses
I'm never playing again
she asks me
to play chess
I'm too busy
a missed opportunity
between us*

*she speaks
with Janette
about superpowers*

*she looks up
at the timelines
and wishes for
the power to time travel
to go back
and ask for more powers
a mischievous
clever
trickster*

*she performs
being a parent
and tells Janette to
'eat your lunch
or I will
slap your face'*

*she responded to
Amanda's audienced artwork*



*it reminds her
of when she did ballet*

*she responded to
Aabir's audienced artwork*



she laughed

*out loud
it reminded her
of her
hyper brother*

7.8: YCDI connections to the past and meaning-making in the present

From the moment Dariya entered the workshop wearing a pink jumper, pink leggings, and sporting a pink beret, I sensed a bubbly, effervescent girl who lived a life that beat and drummed to its own rhythm. I was drawn to her sense of style and energy. I was excited about what it would be like to get to know her. During the initial parental information meeting, I had stressed how those who were interested in taking part in the research did not need to be skilled at art. I wanted to create a space for those who may have felt they were not 'good' at art, as well as for those who had a passion for it. ABR attends to the multiple ways of knowing and seeing the world and disrupts the 'hegemony and linearity in written texts' (Butler-Kisber, 20008: 268). I adopted an ABR approach to engage in a more child-centric, child-sensitive way (Prosser & Burke, 2008). By sporting a pink beret and pink outfit, I felt Dariya intended to impact the new space we found ourselves inhabiting and perhaps to construct a story as being playful, artistic, and imaginative. Narratively constructing a story, similar to narrative performativity, 'fosters meaning making and social change' (Pelias, 2011: 2) and removes us from an essentialist frame of thinking about identity while resisting falling into habitual ways of speaking.

Dariya shared stories that spoke of creativity and imagination. She shared her love of reading and how she always imagined stories and characters playing out in her mind. Her story of Organisation was one where she taught herself how to draw from a young age. In sharing her story, Dariya brought us back to a time when she was five years old. She described getting ready to draw and how she always used lots of colours and so traces of YCDI discourse of Organisation could be felt in her preparation. I imagined her collecting the

materials and colours, selecting a crisp, clean sheet of paper, and finding a comfortable space in which to work. She told us that she loved to use lots of colours, and the most important part of the unicorn was not the mystical horn but their telling eyes.

Dariya connected the YCDI foundation of Organisation to how she prepared to draw unicorns when she was a young child. By drawing from a time so long ago, I sensed Dariya sharing strands of her own autobiographical story (Freeman, 2007) that highlighted the three-dimensional aspects of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Here, she seemed to offer a glimpse into how her present narrative-self came to be. Her story spoke of creativity, imagination, independence, and self-reliance as her 5-year-old self-taught herself to draw. Freeman (2007) tells us that by sharing autobiographical stands with others, we attempt to understand not how things happen, and so destined always to occur but to understand how things happened so 'we can tell a cogent, believable, perhaps even true story of how the present came to be by looking backwards and situating the movement of events within a more or less coherent narrative form' (p.4). Later, Dariya described how she did not know what Organisation was before the YCDI program. On many other occasions throughout the inquiry, as we moved from foundation to foundation, Dariya often shared stories of how she did not know what a foundation was before YCDI. This story of 'not knowing' stood in stark contrast to both Bahir and Christopher's story of 'already being' before YCDI.

In sharing her story, we get a sense of Dariya moving backwards on her life-timeline to connect with the YCDI program in the present. In the retelling and relieving, Dariya restoried her five-year-old self as being Organised in ways that were unknown to her at the time, ways that only came to light through engagement with the program. Here, she seemed to bestow past experiences with current knowing and meaning where 'language does not "reflect" social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality'

(Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005: 1413). This experience occurred long before introducing the YCDI program, so Dariya connects her engagement with the program and skills to this long-ago memory fragment. By creating her artwork, Dariya uses the YCDI program as a lens to narratively make this experience anew. Here, she highlights the three-dimensional aspect of experience, as she draws us back over time to a specific place to share her feelings and emotions of learning to draw. At the same time, she engages in meaning-making by connecting her knowing and understanding of the YCDI program in the present to her past.

7.9: Engaging with a sense of uncertainty and not knowing

Dariya often created other drawings as she worked on her YCDI artwork. She often shared stories of her work and her interpretation of the other participants' pieces that were magical and descriptive. From those early moments, I sensed Dariya as one who was fiercely independent, self-reliant, and aware of her own sense of self.

In coming into relationship with Dariya, I began with hopeful and excited imaginings of forming a co-created relationship based on her sense of creativity and imagination. I, too, shared a sense of imagination and creativity and hoped to share this part of my own story with her. Yet unexpectedly, a sense of uncertainty and unknowing seemed to shroud our relationship as moments of tension emerged. Such tensions arose between Dariya and the other participants, especially Janette and Aabir, but also with me. I sensed a story of resistance emerging. This uncertainty and unknowing caused embodied feelings of vulnerability and anxiety within me, and I was unsure of how best to proceed.

Fieldnote: Monday, October 9th 2017, Workshop 2: Organisation

Dariya is a big personality, and yet I think she finds it challenging to stay on task. She is very outgoing. I could say giddy. She is kind and creative but also very energetic. She vies for Janette's attention during the workshops, and the two girls are forming a friendship in this space. There are tensions between herself and Aabir

and even between herself and Janette. She is very much on the girls' side' of the 'girls versus boys' argument. While the other participants seem to think about the questions we discuss and spend time thinking about the YCDI foundations, Dariya does not. I don't know if she is taking time to reflect on the ideas and points she hears as much as the others are. For Dariya, I must keep referring to the workshop rules. I hope she will get into the spirit of the workshop a bit more...

In the opening workshop, Dariya disagreed with Janette about the appropriate length of some boys' hair. Throughout the workshops, she seemed to resist children's restrictive stories (Clandinin, 2006) told by the participants about her and girls. This moment offered a prelude to much of Dariya's story, a story that bumped against grand narratives of culture, society, and institutional narratives of school that constructed and storied girls and boys in particular ways. While Janette shared many stories of girls and prettiness, proliferating broader social narratives about girls and the pressures to look a certain way, Dariya seemed to resist stories of girls as just pretty or ugly. This resistance was a narrative thread that weaved across many of Dariya's stories and exchanges and drew me back to the work of Lugones (2003), who suggests the act of world travelling is an act of resistance itself and as 'an intentional interfering with, refusal of, or resistance to the reductive and unitary logic of the hegemonic common sense' (Moya, 2006: 199). Through her stories of being independent and resistant, I also sensed traces of the SEL competence of self-awareness (CASEL, 2020) and her ability to understand her thoughts, emotions, and values.

Lugones (1987; 2003) uses the metaphor of 'world travelling' to describe the process of understanding and learning about difference (Dewart et al., 2019). We can be present in multiple 'worlds' with the ability to travel between them being dependent on context, setting, shared history, shared language, and an understanding of social norms (Dewart et al., 2019). While Dariya shared many of these dimensions with the other participants and was at ease (Lugones 1987) in our workshops, she resisted social norms

that seemed to limit her own story as creative, imaginative, and independent. Lugones (2003: 24) tells us that ‘if we think of people who are oppressed as not consumed or exhausted by oppression, but also as resisting or sabotaging a system aimed at molding, reducing, violating, or erasing them.’ I wonder, as Dariya came alongside the inquiry space, did she feel oppressed by my inquiries into her personal experiences or by the workshop space? How did her ‘world’ of spending time in the computer room as a student, now the arts-based workshops space, differ from mine and the others? Was it a place she felt she could be her creative, imaginative self? Perhaps it was still a place where she felt the need to resist stories told by others that were ever-present in her life on the school landscape. I also question how her knowing and understanding of doing art in her ‘world’ differed from the expectations of doing art in mine as a teacher-researcher. I was open to all forms of creative expression from the participants; at least I attempted to. I wonder did Dariya fail to see this, instead constructing me as the teacher who limits her artistic, creative, and imaginative urges.

Like Baahir, who I initially perceived arrogantly (Frye, 1983; Lugones, 1987) as quiet, shy, aloof, and lacking in Confidence, I wonder how Dariya perceived me and the others. Playfulness for Lugones speaks to the vulnerability, and wide openness one needs to world travel. This “loving playfulness” (Lugones, 1987) can be described as ‘an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges as a source of wisdom and delight’ (p. 17). While Dariya seemed at ease in the workshops, I wonder if she perhaps had a sense of being constructed as un-playful (Lugones, 2003) and so inhibiting her potential to disrupt power and oppressive narratives. Moya (2006: 3) writing of Lugones (2003) tells us that the ability to ‘recognise resistant intentionality (in oneself and in others)

as central to any political project that wishes to alter the hegemonic organisation of power' where 'resistant emancipatory intentionality is that which people struggling together must learn to make social in their efforts to create coalitions that might succeed against multiple oppressions' (p.3). From early on in the workshops, Dariya's story as a creative and independent girl began to emerge alongside her story of resistance. Like both Aabir and Janette, her story emerged alongside moments of tension and the bumping of lives. As with Christopher, in the act of self-facing my own auto story, I come to see tensions as moments and places of inquiry.

During the first two workshops, I felt a resistance in Dariya's story, a resistance against stories of girls that constructed her in ways that bumped against her own creative, independent story, resistance to stories of boys as shared and lived out by Aabir, and also resistance to me and the workshops. There were moments of silence between us. It seemed that Dariya's independent story emerged in her choice to resist and sometimes to hold back. On occasions, a half-finished sentence that abruptly ended would pique my interest and cause me to wonder as to why she had stopped sharing. This continued to puzzle me right until the end of my time shared with her.

Fieldnote: Tuesday, December 18th, 2018 Creative Conversation

It was lovely to see Dariya again. She was a little quiet, I suppose. Maybe not quite, but she thinks about things a lot, and I think she could express herself more and say more. I saw the cogs turning in her mind as I asked her some questions today, but then she answered with, "I don't know." I get a sense that there is something there, but she'd rather not say it, that she's happy enough to keep her peace. She always had that independent streak.

This contrasts with the silences between Christopher and me, where he seemed uncertain and unknowing. In Dariya, I sensed a purposeful, controlled understanding of herself being

the narrator of her own story, narrating, sharing, and resisting at will. I carried this sense of uncertainty and not knowing of my relationship with Dariya right throughout my inquiry. Early on, I turned down an invitation to play a chess match with her. I was too busy being a researcher, so I didn't have an opportunity to play. This missed opportunity and potential to unite our stories over a game of chess stayed with me. I wonder did it stay with Dariya?

My embodied sense of discomfort draws me to relational ethics that acknowledge moments of tension, where we bump against others' stories and experiences. I did not know where to turn, what choice of words to speak, or actions to take in such moments. These feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, and not knowing never left me and caused me much discomfort and upset during my inquiry. As I began to engage with the literature, it was only afterwards that I came to see moments of tension as filled with possibility and potential, to be seen and heard through my thesis. This way of coming alongside tension speaks to the relational ethics of engaging with a sense of uncertainty and not knowing.

Clandinin & Murphy et al (2010: 89) reminds us that:

The negotiation of research texts is tension filled, and ethical understandings of relationship obligations to children, teachers, and families shaped a way for us to make representations in ways that attend to tension...It is this new attentiveness to tensions in narrative inquiry that offer possibilities as we, and other narrative inquirers, continue our work.

By creating Dariya's word image, I wish to draw forward some of the multiple storylines that weaved across her shared experiences; storylines of YCDI experiences as ways of connecting to the past and meaning-making in the present; storylines of being creative; storylines of imagination; storylines of being independent; storylines of gender; storylines of ethnicity and her Nigerian heritage; storylines of resistance; storylines of being a caring friend; and storylines of tension with boys and girls.

7.10: Farrah's word image

Farrah word image
Monday, October 23rd, 2017
Workshop 3, Confidence

*Farrah joined
the workshops today
she sat
and chatted
with Dariya*

*engaging eyes
a slender face
framed and shrouded
by a black hijab*

*she talked
about girls
who love themselves
they don't listen
to other people
or think about others
they listen
to their own voices*

*she talked
about girls
who love themselves too much
they are
too pretty
or too ugly*

*her **Confidence** experience was*



winning

*the YCDI
student of the week
for **Getting Along**
she felt proud
she felt like
she had improved
it made her feel
confident
Mom and Dad said
very good*

*she showed togetherness
with Dariya
over tension
with Aabir
his words
are always wrong
there's something wrong
with him*

*she used
violent language
toward Janette
grab
push
suffocate
she told Janette
she had a huge mouth*

*she is sensitive/insensitive
love yourself/love yourself too much
too ugly/too pretty
kind to others/unkind to others*

***Tuesday, October 24th, 2017
Workshop 4 Confidence 2***

*Farrah and Dariya
sat together
they have become
very close*

*together
they share
a story
of 'girls are great'
of tension
with the boys*

and the other girls

*she disagrees
with Aabir
about being
a school cleaner
it's an important job
you can
earn money
you can
buy things*

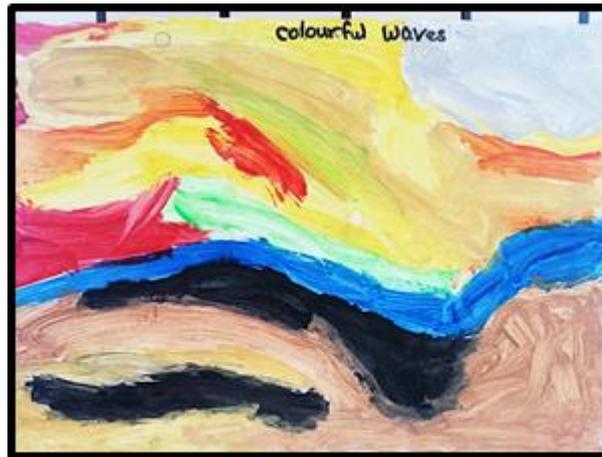
***Confidence** is
a girl
bullying
another girl
over the way
she looks
she is ugly
you have to be confident
in the way you are
this girl
isn't confident
confidence means
being happy*

*I wonder
how Farrah feels
does she worry
about her looks?*

*Aabir makes a comment
about her teeth
tension continues*

*she talks and whispers
during the audiencing
of other's artwork*

*she responded
to the colors
in Baahir's painting*



*colours mean emotion
red is angry
blue is sad
green is gross
silver is proud
yellow is happy
brown is lonely
black is scary*

7.11: YCDI experiences as extrinsically motivating reinforcements

Farrah joined the inquiry during the 3rd workshop, as we moved from the YCDI foundation of Organisation to Confidence. She entered silently, moving to the far end of the table to take a seat beside Dariya. I think about my coming into relationship with Farrah and how her story came alongside the other participants that day. I think about how daunting it must have been for her to enter the workshop two weeks after they had begun. As a group, we had made the tentative first steps of negotiating relationships with each other, and I wondered how Farrah felt. Did she feel as if she was outside of this co-constructed space? I felt a sense of relief and delight when she immediately struck up a conversation with Dariya that seemed to lessen any apprehension she might have had.

In coming into relationship with Farrah, she shared her experience of Confidence when she won the YCDI student of the week award for the foundation of Getting Along. She described how proud she felt when she won. She described sitting in class as the announcement was called out over the intercom, and her sense of disbelief that she had

won. Like Amanda, Janette, and Bahir, Farrah also spoke of the embodied experience of YCDI and winning the YCDI student of the week award, telling us that it made her 'feel confident', perhaps sensing her development and improvement in this foundation. YCDI Student of the week awards, presented and received each week during school assemblies, was a strong school story. This reward-based system was a strategy detailed in the YCDI Program Achieve curriculum (Bernard, 2007) to promote YCDI in the school and recognise achievement in the program. YCDI research indicates the program's impact and effectiveness in the area of students' SEL and well-being (Bernard 2006a; 2006b, 2006c; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Bernard & Walton, 2011) and attitudes and perceptions (Bernard & Walton, 2011). The program's theoretical underpinnings cover three distinct areas that together elucidate the types of SEL competencies that impact positive student development (Bernard, 2012). These areas align closely with the five interrelated sets of cognitive affective and behavioural competencies outlined by CASEL (Elias et al., 1997; CASEL, 2003, 2012, 2020) that are fundamental for positive social-emotional well-being.

By sharing her experience, we get a sense of the positive impact felt by Farrah, as she won the YCDI student of the week prize for the foundation of Getting Along, but also how this experience ultimately impacted her experience of Confidence too. Later, during the Getting Along workshops, she did not return to her experience of winning the YCDI award. So in telling this story in this particular time and place, she explicitly connects her Confidence experience to the YCDI foundation of Getting Along. Here, Farrah offers insight for us to see the foundations as interconnected, as fluid and flowing over each other where they work on students in ways that connect their experiences. In the YCDI program's literature (Bernard, 2007), the image and language of the 'foundation' is used to describe Organisation, Confidence, Getting Along, Resilience and Persistence. A foundation can be

described as something rigidly poured and reinforced. It is designed to support a structure, or it is an idea or a fact that something is based on and grows from. By sharing her story, Farrah offers the potential to reimagine or reconceptualise the YCDI foundations, not as solid structures but as porous, fluid spaces where students can more easily make connections between their experiences, as Farrah had done. By thinking with Farrah's story, I was also drawn to moments shared with other students who had not won YCDI awards. What had they felt? This led me to consider how the YCDI reward system operates in Scoil Firtéar.

The efficacy of extrinsic reinforcement on the intrinsic motivation of students (Cameron, Banko & Pierce, 2001; Cameron, 2016; Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001, 2016) is a highly contested area, and yet many schools and teachers continue to use class and school-based rewards (Hoffmann et al., 2009; Skip & Hopwood, 2017). Several cognitive studies in the 1970s and early 1980s indicate the negative impact of external rewards on students' intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1971, 1975; Greene & Nisbit, 1973; Lepper & Greene, 1978, Lepper, 1983). Such studies examined the impact of external rewards on students, but in today's diverse and increasingly digitally integrated classroom environments, teachers ask students to engage in a far broader range of activities that may not be intrinsically motivating for all (Hoffmann et al., 2009). Several meta-analyses conducted by Cameron and Pierce (1994) and Cameron, Banko, and Pierce (2001) found that regardless of whether or not a task is intrinsically motivating, reinforcement does not decrease an individual's intrinsic motivation (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). They also found no adverse effects on certain types of external rewards. These included unexpected rewards, verbal praise, or rewards based upon performance criteria (Cameron, Banko & Pierce, 2001). Other research studies were critical of Cameron and Pierce (1994) (Lepper, Keavney, & Drake, 1996) and

later research conducted by Deci, Koestner, & Ryan (2001) once again indicated the detrimental impact of external reinforcements on intrinsic motivation.

While the debate about the efficacy of external reinforcement rewards continues, how rewards operate in class, as controlled by the teacher, may offer more clarity on their effective use. Studies by Elliot & McGregor (2001) and Schunk, Pintrich & Meece (2012) focus on learning goals, which are goals based on self-defined standards, rather than performance goals, which are focused on normative standards. It is important here that teachers may place more or less emphasis on either a learning or performance goal orientation, which can impact students' goal orientations and motivation (Ames, 1992; Midgley, Anderman & Hicks, 1995). Research indicates that the use of rewards to encourage performance-based goals may lead to maladaptive behaviour, while learning approach orientations have been found to lead to primarily positive and adaptive motivation and achievement outcomes for students (Ames & Archer, 1988; Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Meece, 1994; Wolters, Yu, & Pintrich, 1996; Pajares, Britner, & Valiante, 2000;). Thinking about how YCDI rewards operate in Scoil Firtéar is key to their future success or failure. By orientating the rewards toward a learning goal approach, the teachers and the school may see improved engagement, motivation, and SEL outcomes for students.

7.12: Places where we attend to, and with, silence and contemplation

Thinking about how Farrah and Dariya came alongside each other, I see how the friendship formed between the two girls in that moment of vulnerability and uncertainty for Farrah, as she entered a new space, came to impact and shape their ways of knowing and being with each other, myself, and the other participants in surprising, unexpected ways. Coming into relationship with Farrah, I sensed a certain duality and tension in the stories she shared.

During conversations, she shared stories of girls that spoke of empowerment and self-confidence while also sharing stories of girls who were self-centred, vain, and ‘*who love themselves too much*’. Stories of girls being too pretty or too ugly emerged beside stories of girls who were self-confident, who didn’t listen to others’ opinions. In this way, Farrah’s dual narratives of girls as confident and empowered came neatly alongside Dariya’s stories of girls as independent, while her narrative of girls as ugly or pretty came alongside Janette’s stories of girls as having to look a certain way. I sensed a tension between cultural, societal, institutional, and religious narratives bearing down on Farrah as a young Muslim girl in sharing stories such as these. I sensed an attempt to live out a balancing act, a shifting story to live by where both narrative discontinuities and continuities could be felt (Carr, 1986). Attending with silence and contemplation (Clandinin et al., 2018) with Farrah’s stories, I wonder how her story came alongside other stories of girls in school. Which story did she live by? Was she a confident girl who didn’t listen to other’s opinions of her as she got on with her studies and time in school? Or did she tell stories about girls who were too in love with themselves or who were too pretty or too ugly? I wonder how these stories came alongside her familial story as a young Muslim girl as she ‘world’ travelled (Lugones, 1987) between home and school and between ‘worlds’ in school as she spent time with different friends.

In coming alongside Farrah, memories of her brother Akeem stirred in me. Even though Akeem is absent from the word image above, his memory accompanied me at all times with Farrah. I knew Akeem, as I had taught him four years previously in 2013. I knew he had stopped attending Scoil Firtéar for reasons I did not know, and Farrah did not share. Farrah never spoke about Akeem during the workshops, only speaking about her two younger sisters and her parents. I often wondered about Akeem about how he was and

how he was doing. I was afraid to ask questions about him without Farrah first bringing him into our conversations. I had learned from my experience with Christopher to be careful with my questioning. Coming into relationship with Farrah awakened me to how we were all bound to the school landscape of Scoil Firtéar in interwoven and temporal ways. This speaks more than to the workshop's physical connectedness and the classrooms we inhabited during the day. I am drawn to the sense of collective history, to the understanding of the ongoing lives and experiences in motion, to the still felt resonances of those students and teachers who have left us, like Akeem, but whose voices reawaken in shared memories, emotions, and moments with others. Those who have left the school can still be found in the spaces between each of us who occupy the landscape, even more so, they can still teach us things, and we can still learn from them. Sensing and acknowledging this connection by coming into relationship with Farrah speaks to relational ethics of recognising:

how difficult it is to attend to every footstep, every breath we exhale and inhale. In living with this sense of attentiveness, we need to find new rhythms that not only attend to who we are, but also who others are (Clandinin et al., 2018: 165).

Thinking about Farrah and Akeem clarifies the historical ties we have to the school and the memories we carry forward from those who have left the landscape for other places, many hundreds or even thousands of miles away. This way of thinking offers the possibility of attending in new ways and finding new rhythms as we come into relationship with ourselves and others.

By creating Farrah's word image, I wish to draw forward some of the multiple storylines that began to emerge across her shared experiences; storylines of YCDI and extrinsically motivating reinforcements, storylines of the interconnectedness of each foundation; storylines of girls being too ugly or too pretty; storylines of being a confident

girl; storylines of not having much; storylines of bullying; storylines of friendship and comradery with Dariya; storylines of tension with boys and girls; storylines of being kind to strangers; storylines of fitting in; storylines of being judged; and storylines of her silent brother.

7.13: Katie's word image

Katie word image
Monday, October 2nd, 2017
Workshop 1 Organisation

Tall
long black
braided hair
broad smile

she chatted
with Amanda
with a quiet voice

she shared a story
about her family
her mom
looks after
herself and her sisters
while her dad is away
in Nigeria
he is
a lawyer

her Organisation experience was



winning

*the 'Write-a-Book' competition
in 2nd class
she wrote
a story about spies
the planning
the preparation
the drafting
and redrafting
she won 1st prize
picked by her peers
a round of applause
she was
delighted
excited
her parents encourage her
to write*

***Monday, October 9th, 2017
Workshop 2 Organisation***

*She has
a close friendship
with Amanda
they work well
together
they talk, listen
and share
she gives thoughtful responses
to others
and to me*

*she shares a story
of spending time
outside playing
with friends
of doing word searches
with her sister*

*tension with Aabir
this year
she's happy she moved
to a different class
than him*

***Organisation is
your bedroom
would be a mess
it feels better***

*to have all your stuff
ready for school
no disruption
when taking down
your homework*

*she responded to
Amanda's audienced artwork*



*she disagreed
with Janette
just because
you don't win
you can
still be happy
for others*

7.14: YCDI experiences nestled with school stories and familial narratives

Katie entered the workshop and took a seat beside Amanda. Her long-braided hair hung loosely around her shoulders, and like Amanda, she too wore a neat hairband. I was instantly drawn to her warm, friendly smile, which was at once open yet shy. In coming alongside Katie, I was reminded of my knowing of her older sister, Jane, who had left the school two years previously in 2015. Jane had been a part of the first cohort of students to graduate from the school, and so as a group, they were remembered fondly by the staff. My past knowing of Jane was that she was an intelligent and hardworking student. I also remember her as being softly spoken. Before Katie entered the workshop that day, I imagined her story as being similar in ways to her sister, yet I was equally curious and interested as to how they might differ. I wondered what new stories Katie might share of

Jane as she was progressing through secondary school. Like my memory of Farrah's brother, Akeem, who had left the school, my memories of Jane shaped my imagined relationship with Katie. Thinking with Katie and Jane, and Farrah and Akeem led me to consider how stories are passed down from sibling to sibling as they move through a school. I also wonder how teacher stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) of children impact their ways of imagining students even before they enter the school. Like my own story as one of five siblings, I too had teachers who storied me in certain ways before we met. These imaginings emerged from my two brothers and my sister's experiences, who went before me in primary school. Such stories can work in ways that spark curiosity and interest as with my interest in Katie and Jane or may work in ways that create silence and distance, like the silence of Akeem in Farrah's stories. Wakefulness is needed to the power and reach of such storying. Narratives have the potential to offer insight and openings to new understandings and questions, but they can also cause harm by storying others in ways that limit or restrict them.

In coming into relationship with Katie, she shared her Organisation experience of the time she won the 'Write-a-Book' competition in 2nd class, and like Farrah, Amanda, and Janette, Katie too won an award. This story was nestled within school narratives and speaks to her personal learner knowledge () as a student in Scoil Firtéar. In this story, she connects her Organisation experience to the YCDI foundation in the ways she planned, prepared, drafted, and redrafted her story. YCDI discourse and the skills of Organisation and the CASLE SEL competence of self-management (CASEL, 2020) can be sensed from her experience. I imagined Katie working fastidiously and eagerly on her book as she conjured images of her story's setting, characters, and plot. Her story was about spies, and so I sensed a tale full of mystery and intrigue. She described how her peers chose her book as the winner and the joy, happiness, and sense of achievement she felt. Her memory

reconstruction spoke of her embodied feelings of delight and excitement and the rapturous applause she received from her classmates and teacher. She finished her story by connecting her experience to a familial narrative of how her parents encouraged her to continue writing and nurturing her talent. In sharing her Organisation story, she makes connections with the YCDI foundation, her story as a student in Scoil Firtéar of winning the 'Write-a-Book' competition, and a familial narrative of nurturing and care.

Katie also shared other familial stories of caring and togetherness. She described how her mother took care of her and her sisters while their father was away working in Nigeria. A story of caring maternal relationships echoed across both Janette and Dariya's stories and their shared Nigerian heritage. According to Bornstein & Lansford (2010), parents are the primary individuals entrusted with the raising and socialising of their children to become full members of society. Children in Ireland reported having strong relationships with their parents, especially their mothers. Studies also indicate that girls tend to report higher levels of closeness than boys, as assessed using the Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) (GUI, 2017), and so were less likely to have problems with socioemotional development, social skills, or in the mother-child relationship (Nixon, 2012; GUI, 2017). Mothers in families with higher income or with higher maternal education were less likely to report relatively higher conflict in the parent-child relationship, and adversely, mothers in families with lower income or with lower maternal education were more likely to report high levels of conflict with their 9-year-olds (GUI, 2018).

Katie told us that her father was working in Nigeria and that he had been away for some time. This story of her father emerged on many occasions and seemed to hold value and meaning to Katie. I sensed traces of a story as being a proud member of a caring family,

yet there was also a sense of incompleteness, of a longing to be reunited with her father. Janette also shared stories of a close maternal relationship at home while never mentioning a paternal figure. Nixon (2012) tells us that relationships with non-resident fathers were reported as strained for children who experienced parental separation. Social standing and family structure also impacts children's social-emotional development. Children in single parent households presented with more difficulties, as did children from lower-income earning families. Overall, the findings suggest that the parent-child relationship's quality is more critical for social-emotional development than family structure and income level (Nixon, 2012).

Later, Katie describes Organisation as having a tidy bedroom and as having her things ready for school. Like Amanda, this story of preparedness prevents time-wasting and disruption in class for her and her teacher. As a creative, diligent, and hardworking student, her story emerged through her Organisation experience and echoed across much of her shared stories in other workshops. In sharing her story, Katie nestles her experience in both school and familial narratives. This is mirrored in her description of the YCDI foundation as she described Organisation as having a tidy bedroom and not disrupting school time. In sharing her story, Katie connects her experience and her description of the YCDI foundation with her ways of knowing and being both on and off the school landscape. Like Amanda, we get a sense of connection, coherence, and continuity (Carr, 1986) across her story to live by as a student and her nurturing familial narrative.

7.15: Sensing a shifting story to live by

Katie's story emerged through her Organisation experience and her ways of sharing stories and being with others during the workshops. She struck up a close relationship with

Amanda, and it seemed that their stories came alongside each other in kind and caring ways. Later, Katie shared another story of caring and familial togetherness as she described spending time doing word searches with her sisters. By sharing her experiences, we get a sense of her story as a creative, diligent, and hardworking student. We also get a sense of her caring, loving relationship with her family and her longing to be reunited with her father. These narrative threads echoed across many of Katie's shared experiences. Still, I also began to notice a shift in her story as moments of tension arose between her and other participants.

Attending to teacher's personal practical knowledge drew Clandinin and Connelly (1999) to consider questions of teacher identity which they understood as 'a unique embodiment of his/her stories to live by – stories shaped by the landscapes past and present in which s/he lives and works' (Clandinin et al., 2006: 113). Throughout this thesis, I have re-orientated myself toward a student-centric understanding of their narratively constructed knowledge, how this knowledge is held, and how it manifests in relation with others. I describe the term personal learner knowledge () as comprising of students' sensuous embodied stories that are shaped and continue to be shaped by the landscapes past and present they inhabit. I do this to further develop narrative inquiry language necessary to understand how student knowledge is constructed, shared, and expressed on and off the school landscape. This considers a non-unitary identity and speaks to Geertz's (1996) parade metaphor that evolves and shifts. Adopting writing as inquiry methods and using narrative analysis techniques, I attempt to present the emerging narratives of children's stories and stories of children coming alongside school stories and stories of school (Clandinin et al., 2006). I suggest such tellings offer insight into participant's personal learner knowledge as it emerged alongside my personal practical knowledge as I shared

teacher stories and stories of teachers. By thinking with Geertz's parade metaphor, I was drawn to Katie's shifting story and the tensions that emerged during the workshops.

During the first workshop, a moment of tension emerged between Aabir and Katie, as she described being happy that she had been moved out of Aabir's class this year. While neither of them disclosed more details about this shared experience, I sensed a historical tension between them. Amanda stopped attending the workshops after two sessions, due to a clash with her dance lessons, and so Farrah joined. From his time on, Katie and Janette became very close, so I sensed their relationship mirroring Dariya and Farrah's close friendship. During the 2nd workshop, a moment of tension emerged when Janette and Katie likened Dariya to a witch. At this moment, Katie and Janette came alongside each other and offered a glimpse of their future relationship. This relationship bumped and seemed to be sustained by moments of tension between Dariya and Farrah. Katie's story as a kind, creative, diligent, and hardworking student bumped against Aabir, Dariya, and Farrah as her and Janette's relationship strengthened. I came to see how Katie's story shifted to support Janette during moments of tension with others. I began to see how Katie's caring and empathy story became more marginalised as she lived out a new story of being Janette's friend and comrade during the workshops. This story sometimes contained threads of being unkind and of living in tension with others.

By creating Katie's word image, I wish to draw forward some of the multiple storylines that began to emerge across her shared experiences; storylines of YCDI experiences nestled with school stories and familial narratives; storylines of being a creative, diligent, and hardworking student; storylines of caring, loving relationships with her family and friends; storylines of missing her father; storylines of friendship Janette;

storylines of living in tension with others; and storylines of becoming more outgoing and confident.

7.16: Experiences of Organisation composed within narratives of the positive habit of mind of 'Planning My Time'

In chapters 6 and 7, I used word images (Clandinin and Huber, 2005; Clandinin et al., 2006; Clandinin, 2013;) to present my coming into relationships with the participants creatively. In this process, they constructed emerging stories of who they were in the moment of sharing through children's stories and stories of children. In some instances, such stories drew from and added to their personal learner knowledge () and offered insight into their experiences of the YCDI foundations, the YCDI program, and multiple narrative threads. In coming alongside others, my own story moved and shifted as I was continuously constructed anew by those around me. This shifting narrative impacted my ways of knowing and my sense of self by disrupting historical, cultural, social, and institutional narratives that our lives were enmeshed and embedded within.

YCDI Program Achieve (2006: 17) describes Organisation as:
Setting a goal to do your best in your school work, listening carefully to your teacher's instructions, planning your time so that you are not rushed, having your supplies ready and keeping track of your assignments' due dates

YCDI (2006) also outlines two positive habits of mind to develop organisational skills;

'Setting Goals' and 'Planning my Time. Through the sharing of their experiences of

Organisation, I sensed many of their stories as being composed with narratives of 'Planning My Time' and preparedness, such as Janette and Amanda's preparations before their dance competitions, Dariya preparing herself and her art tools to draw unicorns, and Katie's diligence and preparations as she engaged in the writing process as part of the Write-a-Book competition. From these experiences, we gain a sense of the impact of the YCDI

program on the participants knowing and understanding of the foundation of Organisation as being prepared as students on the school landscape and as young people off the school landscape. In their tellings, I also sensed connections to the CASEL competence of self-management, where students learn the skills of setting personal and collective goals and using planning and organisational skills (CASEL, 2020). Moving to the next chapter, I am guided by narrative threads that began to emerge in our coming into relationships and so continue to present stories and experiences of the YCDI program composed within narratives of the positive habits of mind (Program Achieve, 2007) across the remaining foundations of *Confidence*, *Getting Along*, *Resilience* and *Persistence*. By adopting creative modes of representation, I hope to offer further insights into how students experienced the foundations and program and how it may have impacted their ways of knowing and being on and off the school landscape.

Chapter 8: YCDI Program Achieve foundations and experiences

8.0: Leaving the field

*John's timeline – Monday, December 18th 2018: Creative Conversation
What's on your mind?*

I pull into the Scoil Firtéar car park and switch off the engine. It's a cold December morning. I zip up my winter coat and sit still for a minute. It's quiet. All but a few parents have left the grounds. The children and staff are inside, settling in for the day. I feel the familiar knot in my stomach rise. I almost welcome it. Throughout my inquiry, it has been a constant companion, signaling my movements across thresholds to spaces of potential and uncertainty. I think about why I am here. I am about to complete my fieldwork, to present all of the work that I have completed since last year to my participants. I hope my partial interim texts are accurate and that they sense themselves and their experiences within my/their words. I have reason to feel anxious but also to be thankful to be back again. I am excited to see all of the participants and to re-connect with them. I am excited to see all my colleagues too. Yet I return to the school landscape this morning, not only as a teacher-researcher but as a school advisor, having taken up a new seconded post with the professional development service for teachers since the beginning of the academic year. My development as an educational professional has shifted from being a teacher on the school landscape to an adult educator on the national landscape. I am reminded of the myth of linear teacher development (Britzman, 2007), where teachers move from immaturity to maturity. Instead, teacher development is said to be rocky and uneven. There is 'no such thing as teacher education without us creating the conditions to tolerate and value the uncertainty of development' (Britzman, 2007: 23). I wonder, is this why I feel this weight in my stomach? Am I wrestling with the uncertainty and conflict of my becoming an advisor? Is this the beginning of my leaving teaching story? (Schafer, Downey & Clandinin, 2014) Or is it because I return to the school in a new way, in a position that may reshape my colleagues' ways of seeing me? Or how I see them? Will it also re-shape how the participants see me? I must be open with them and share details of my new role.

A key tenant of narrative inquiry research is presenting experiences in ways that highlight temporality, sociality, and place where data, analysis, and representation are all narrative in form (Conle 2000). As a methodological approach, it is remarkably congruent with

educational research purposes (Byrne, 2017). In this chapter, I weave and piece together participants' experiences of the remaining four foundations of the YCDI program; *Confidence, Getting Along, Persistence, and Resilience*. Weave is a telling action as I move forward and backwards, inward and outward across each participant's life-timeline, curating stories that speak to their intimate understanding and experiences of the YCDI foundations and of the program itself while making connections with the CASEL (2012, 2020) SEL competencies as well as to wider literature on SEL programs in schools.

8.1: Creative conversations

I located this chapter during the 1-to-1 creative conversations to allow the participants to direct my line of inquiry and share and reflect on poignant moments and experiences they felt through re-engaging with their artwork. Working in this way removed 'unequal power relations born out of interdependency, relationality, and oppression rather than deficiency' (Luttrell: 24) that can exist in child-adult relationships. I wanted to restrain my inclination as a researcher to move the inquiry in ways that did not wholly serve the participants and uphold my research spirit. Adopting a student-centric approach circumvents adult-ways of seeing and carrying out research with children (Luttrell, 2020) by attending more closely to moments that hold meaning and value to them.

Writing this chapter's complex work began at the end of my time spent in relation with the participants, where we engaged in 1-to-1 creative conversations together. These conversations were held one year after the arts-based workshops in December 2018. During our discussions, I shared all artwork and partial narrative interim accounts with each participant while also sharing my wonderings and interpretations that had emerged. I used questions to maintain my focus on the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. These

questions, co-composed with my supervisor, focused on; reconnecting our stories since we last met; retelling, reliving, and restorying our YCDI experiences through the art-work; reflections on their workshop experiences, and finally on the impact of the YCDI Program Achieve (2007) on their lives.

In this reflexive space, we negotiated final interim texts to present accounts of experiences shared (Savin-Baden 2004; Polkinghorne; 2007; Butler-Kisber 2010) while also acknowledging that final texts are never neutral nor complete. While narrative inquiry is widely used in education, there are critiques of the discipline, particularly around issues of voice and representation (Mulkay 1985; Lather, 1991; Sparkes 1995; Byrne, 2017; Denzin 1996; St. Pierre 1997; Percer 2002; Piirto 2002a, 2002b; Jevic & Springgay 2008; Leavy 2009, 2010; Saavedra 2011; Guttorm 2012) and so relational ethics (Bergum & Dossetor 2005; Clandinin et al., 2018) became central to presenting student voice and experiences in ways that upheld the integrity of all those involved. Intertwined with this way of working is a moral obligation to make any changes requested by students and to remove anything they sensed as uncomfortable (Byrne, 2017). During our conversations, I made clear they could change or remove anything they wished. I also allowed students to refer back to the fully transcribed workshops. We took the opportunity to reflect on their artwork, to make any changes that they wanted, and so in some instances, a reimagining and restorying of the artwork ensued. The act of imaginatively engaging with visual art added to the narrative process whereby participants holistically, critically, and practically connected their work to their own lived experiences (Leitch, 2008; O'Grady, 2014c). This process speaks to the synergy between lived experience manifested through the art, and the participants' continued narrativization of their lives in motion (Leitch, 2008). To facilitate this process, I ensured I had a selection of art materials at hand, such as paint, colouring pencils, craft

material, etc., that students could use.

All of the participants were happy with my partial texts. Few made any changes at all apart from names or places I had gotten wrong or misspelled. At the time, I was content that my texts were satisfactory to the participants, that I had satisfied my obligations as a narrative inquirer working in relationally ethical ways.

Adapted fieldnote: Monday, December 17th, 2018 Creative Conversation with Janette

Janette was really interested in the transcripts; all of the students were. She read the stories that I presented to her. She read each page word for word very carefully. She didn't have any major changes to make, but she was surprised. She said it was strange, reading back on what she had said. Janette spoke about how looking back at how she spoke about her friends during the workshops, that she has grown up since then, that she feels she's less judgmental.

I reflected on this process, and I sensed my positioning might have impacted the participants, perhaps manifesting in their reluctance to make any changes to my partial texts (Byrne, 2017). For Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Bergum and Dossetor (2005), narrative inquiry is an ongoing negotiation between the researcher's ethical relationship and researched. This relationship begins in the field and continues long after this space has been vacated. Adams (2008) suggests narrative inquirers need to be aware of the power dynamics within such relations and to be wakeful to our power to tell other's stories. The participants' reluctance to make any changes may have been caused by the perceived power I held as a teacher-researcher. During the arts-based workshops, I struggled with unequal power relations and my positioning as a teacher, a teacher-researcher, and a scholar. This power balance/imbalance was felt as participants struggled to name me 'John', 'Mr. Meegan' or 'Teacher'.

*Dialogue vignette with John, Farrah, and Katie: Resilience Workshop 2, Monday 27th
of November, 2017*

John: It's hard to call me John, isn't it?

Janette: Yeah

Farrah: I don't know how to call you 'John', cause you're a teacher.

John: I know

Farrah: And I don't know how to do it, you know?

John: Why is it so hard, do you think?

Katie: Because we're used to calling you 'Mr. Meegan'

Farrah: Yeah

Janette: I've only known you for two months, and I still call you 'Mr. Meegan'.

Katie: I've known you since I've been in the school.

Janette: It sounds disrespectful

Katie: How long have you worked here?

John: 6 years. Do you think it sounds disrespectful?

Farrah: Yeah

Throughout this thesis, I have presented the tensions I have faced at all stages, not in the hope of resolving them, but to offer insight so others may understand the spaces from which such tensions emerge. Here, I openly accept and make clear my continued impact on this inquiry. No matter what steps I took to balance power inequalities or work in relationally ethical ways, I still left my mark (Byrne, 2017).

To weave together experiences across the remaining four foundations, I engaged in further narrative analysis, such as that outlined in chapter 5. I returned to each creative conversation account separately while holding the others in my mind. By bringing these accounts metaphorically alongside one another, I allowed them to work on me (Morris, 2001) to discern plotlines that reverberated across each telling. I discerned four narrative threads through careful analysis based on the authenticated partial texts agreed upon during the creative conversations. These threads now provide a tentative coherence of the participants' experiences and a connection to YCDI Program Achieve's (2007) skills and discourse. These include Experiences of Confidence composed within narratives of risktaking by Amanda, Katie, and Dariya; Experiences of Getting Along composed within

narratives of social responsibility by Farrah, Katie, and Dariya; Experiences of Resilience nestled within stories of bouncing back and emotional regulation by Baahir, Katie, and Farrah; and Experiences of Persistence composed within narratives of giving effort and working tough by Aabir and Christopher.

8.2: Experiences of Confidence composed within narratives of taking risks and being independent by Amanda, Katie, and Dariya

During the creative conversations, the participants reflected on their pieces of artwork. I was eager to hear their impressions and retellings of their foundation experiences. I was also anxious to see if my partial texts reflected their memory reconstructions. Part of the challenge I faced as a researcher was selecting the stories and experiences to share in the final research text. I returned to the spirit of narrative inquiry as one where ‘stories describe human knowledge regarding experience and action’ (Bruce, 2008: 323) where we share intimate details about our lives and construct narrative identities in storied ways, a view held by many (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Lawlor & Mary, 2000; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk 2007). We can learn much about each other by attending to these moments, and so I leaned in (Pelias, 2011) and listened carefully to the participants (Bateson, 1994; Greene, 1997, 1995) by focusing on the stories they chose to retell and on the impact of individual foundations on their lives. Through close listening, I moved backwards on each participant’s life time-line to curate and select the stories and experiences that would comprise the final text.

During conversations with Amanda, Katie, and Dariya, each spoke about the foundation of Confidence. Katie shared her experience of how Confidence helped her to overcome her story of being shy and quiet.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Katie, Tuesday, December 18th, 2018

John: Which of the foundations has had the most impact on you?

Katie: I think Confidence. Before, I was very quiet, but now I'm not. I'm a lot more confident.

John: Do you think that's changed since we last met?

Katie: Yes.

John: In what ways?

Katie: I think, in a better way. I think it's better to be confident because...last week, on Thursday in the secondary school's sports hall we were at this...it was a Christmas recital of their musical and SO many people were performing on stage. Then when I got home, my mom told me when I go to secondary school next year, she would like me to take part in the musical. I told her I would like to, but I don't think I'll be able, I think I'm too shy to do it. I've gotten more confident, but I think I still need to work on it.

John: You've grown in confidence from last year, but you feel like you have a little bit more to go? Katie: Yes.

Amanda described how the foundation of Confidence affected her life both on and off the school landscape as a student and as a performer.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Amanda, Monday, December 17th, 2018

John: I suppose, just in terms of the YCDI program itself, which of the foundations do you think have had the most impact on you?

Amanda: I think, Confidence. It really boosted up my confidence. I used to be very nervous about things, especially going on stage. I think I've improved a lot on that. I still do get nervous when I go on stage or when I talk to different new people, but I think I am much better today.

Dariya spoke of the impact of Confidence on her life as a student on the school landscape.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Dariya, Tuesday, December 18th, 2018

John: If I was to ask you, for Dariya, which of the foundations do you think has had the most impact on you?

Dariya: Confidence.

John: Confidence. Could you tell me why?

Dariya: Because most of the time, in school, if they say, "Raise your hand if you know this and that," I wouldn't raise my hand because I would get it wrong most of the time.

One of the social and practical (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) aims of my research is to inquire into students' experiences of each YCDI foundation and explore the impact the

program has had on their lives on and off the school landscape. While there is ample research into the efficacy of SEL programs on student development (Payton et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Corcoran et al., 2018), as well as studies on the positive impact of YCDI (Bernard 2006a; 2006b, 2006c; Bernard & Pires 2006; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Bernard & Walton, 2011; Dayan, 2016; Yamamoto, Matsumoto, & Bernard, 2017), such studies use quantitative methods of before and after surveys to present measurable finds. In seeking to inquire into students' experiences of each foundation narratively, I hoped to unpick YCDI discourse and to demonstrate each students' intimate knowing and understanding of the foundations. By inquiring in this way, I attempted to access and record a space not easily knowable. In her narrative inquiry study of students' development as independent learners, Byrne (2017: 37) noted, 'this is not a process that takes place neatly within the confines of the classroom. I needed access to the students' thoughts, shared experience, and discussions.' Trahar (2011) describes how narrative inquirers move from inside to the outside of the inquiry space, and as a methodology, much of the research takes place in the spaces between being on and off the field. The purpose of this inquiry is to occupy a space between SEL and YCDI empirical studies in the not so easily knowable realms, where I offer a sense of the intimate, embodied, co-created narrative tellings and experiences of YCDI that do not exist elsewhere. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) describe narrative analysis as a process where researchers identify the elements of 'time, place, plot and scene' (p.332) that can be absent from original tellings. In this process, the inquirer 'adds detail' and makes 'casual links' and identifies 'themes' to provide a more coherent narrative (Ollerenshaw & Creswell 2002: 332). Byrne (2017) tells us that 'this narrative view of experience and of research activity permeates all levels of the process and is at once a unifying force and a challenge to maintain throughout' (p.38). As I listened carefully to

Katie, Amanda, and Dariya share stories of the impact of Confidence in their lives, I was drawn back to the Confidence workshops and the stories they shared the previous year.

During the Confidence workshops, Katie shared an intimate story about a time she spent with a close friend at home, a friend whose name she never disclosed. Both girls shared a love of singing and would often spend time together, searching for songs to sing along to. On this particular day, Katie's friend asked her to sing for her by herself. At first, Katie was very nervous, but she soon found the courage to sing. Afterwards, while basking in the momentary glow and giddy excitement of it all, she felt thrilled and exhilarated. Yet, these feelings quickly faded. She suddenly felt embarrassed as she sensed her story of being shy and quiet return to her.



Figure 13: Katie's Confidence artwork

In her telling, we see how Katie's story momentarily shifted to become something else, only to return to a familiar narrative. While she felt the pang of embarrassment after having just sung for her friend, we also glimpse the transformative ability of shifting stories emerge through interactions and engagement with others. In Katie's own shifting story (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009), we get a sense of Dewey (1937/1997) and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion of experience as being grounded in temporality, sociality, and

place. Katie connected this experience with her artwork in the choice of colours that she used. Katie described how pink connected to feelings of happiness, like how she felt immediately after she sang for her friend. Blue represented nerves and anxiety, similar to how she felt before singing, and the copper colour was for when she felt embarrassed afterwards. Amanda's experience of Confidence centred on her time spent in the after-school club 'Jazz Hands'. This after-school club was for students interested in speech and drama and music and performance. It catered for children from 1st class (7/8 years old) to 6th class (11/12 years old).



Figure 14: Amanda's Confidence artwork

Each year, the group performed for the school at assembly. Lareau (2003) explored the micro-level construction of social and cultural capital in her study of after-school activities. This work drew from Bourdieu's (1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) socio-cultural reproduction theory, which indicates that after school activities such as drama, dance, music or sport, enhance and develop positive dispositions and attitudes, which in turn help students succeed in school (Vincent & Ball, 2007). Children's involvement in after-school activities is also found to enhance their educational performance (Broh, 2002; McNeal, 1995; Marsh, 1992) and lends itself to positive SEL development.

Amanda spoke of her time preparing for the 'Jazz Hands' performance. In this creative space, she had further opportunities to sing, dance, act, and engage in more emotive and artistically expressive ways. Amanda's story as one who loved to sing, dance, and perform emerged again and echoed her previous Organisation story of winning a trophy at an Irish dancing competition. Amanda spoke of her embodied sense of being on stage during the yearly performance and feeling excited and anxious. Pelias (2011) tells us that the performer's body 'listens to what the body is saying' (p.3) and so 'the body's telling also comes forward affectively, giving the performer emotional knowledge, offering a sense of the attitudes, sentiments, and passions of what is being performed' (p.3). Amanda described feeling a sense of accomplishment and contentment after finishing her performance, safe in the knowledge that she had done her best. She spoke of feeling proud of herself and how she had been confident throughout. Like her Organisation experience, I sensed a strong familial narrative of care and support as she spoke about how proud and happy her parents were.

Dariya's Confidence experience centered around her time spent in ballet class, a story she also shared during the Organisation workshops. Dariya described how she used to attend ballet class with a group of mixed-ability dancers.



Figure 15: Dariya's Confidence piece

The class lasted for an hour. In her telling, she described how wonderful she felt while dancing. From coming into relationships with one another, I already had a sense of Dariya as an imaginative, creative and independent girl. She had a slim but muscular frame that seemed ideally suited to ballet. I imagined her elegantly moving and dancing with her group, yet in the next moment, she told me that she didn't do ballet now, that she didn't feel like doing it anymore. Like many of the moments between us, Dariya shared little more about this experience, and I was perplexed as to why. During the next Confidence workshop, Dariya was asked to write or draw something that represented her knowing and understanding of the YCDI foundation. She drew a picture of a solitary ballet dancer on a stage, and so I sensed a narrative unity between her intimate experiences of Confidence and also her knowing of the YCDI foundation and program.



Figure 16: Dariya's ballet dancer

Dariya didn't/couldn't tell me who was on stage. When I asked was it her, she said, "No". The other participants wrote and drew images and words that more explicitly related to the YCDI foundation of Confidence, yet Dariya drew the ballet dancer. It seemed that the story held value and meaning for her, even if she was hesitant to share why. Again, I was left

feeling perplexed by Dariya's responses and anxious about how our stories were coming alongside each other. I continued to feel resistance in the stories she shared with me.

During creative conversations and the workshops, Katie, Amanda, and Dariya shared stories and experiences about the YCDI foundation of Confidence and its impact on their lives. All three described how the foundation helped them in different ways. For Katie, perhaps Confidence gave her the courage to sing for her friend and that now, even though she still feels shy, that she still has a way to go before feeling fully confident, there was a sense of hope and potential for the future. Next year, in secondary school, she might find the confidence to walk up to the notice board and write her name down for the school musical auditions in a way that she may not have previously imagined. For Amanda, Confidence seemed to have lessened her feelings of anxiety before dancing and performing during the 'Jazz Hands' recitals and developing her ability to talk and speak with new people in 6th class. For Dariya, her Confidence experience connected to her attendance at ballet classes, if only for a short time. Confidence seems to have improved her class engagement, as she raises her hand even if she doesn't have the correct answer.

As I brought their experiences of Confidence and the impact of the YCDI program alongside each other, I sensed their stories of Confidence being composed within narratives of taking risks - Katie's story of singing for her friend and Amanda's story of performing with the 'Jazz Hands' group; and 'Being independent' - Dariya's story of attending ballet class and raising her hand even if she had the wrong answer. In each story, connections to the YCDI foundation of Confidence emerged. YCDI Program Achieve (2007) describes Confidence as

‘knowing that you will likely be successful and that people will like you. It means not being afraid to make mistakes or to try something new. It means looking and sounding confident’ (p. 17). YCDI also offers examples of Confident behaviour, such as:

Raising your hand in class to answer a hard question, doing hard work without asking for help, sharing a new idea with a teacher or the class, starting a new conversation with a new classmate and standing up straight and speaking with a firm voice (p.17).

In Katie and Amanda’s stories, narratives of risk-taking (YCDI, 2007) emerged as the participants described times of vulnerability and overcoming adversity, while traces of Dariya’s story of being independent (YCDI, 2007) could also be felt. YCDI (2007) describes positive habits of mind to help develop young people’s Confidence and include; ‘I can do it’ - thinking you are more likely to be successful than you are to fail; ‘Accepting Myself’ - not thinking badly about yourself when you make a mistake; ‘Taking risks’ – thinking it’s good to try something new even though you might not be able to do it and ‘Being independent’ - to try new activities and to speak up in class even if classmates think you’re silly or stupid. Like YCDI, SEL programs intend to develop five core competencies in students (CASEL, 2003, 2012, 2020); *self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making*. Embedded within these categories is the ability to recognize the impact and influence of emotions on one’s behaviour, to self-regulate emotions and thoughts, to empathize with others, conflict management, as well as making positive choices about behaviours and social interactions (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; CASEL 2003; McKown et al., 2009). Similarities can be traced between the YCDI skills of Confidence and the SEL competence of self-awareness and self-management (CASEL, 2020). Through close attention to Katie, Amanda, and Dariya’s Confidence experiences, the impact of YCDI on their stories both on and off the landscape can be felt and traced. This impact emerged not

through statistical analysis but through shared stories composed within narratives of taking risks and being independent. Here I tentatively highlight traces and connections between the YCDI foundation of Confidence and the competencies outlined by CASEL (2012), particularly self-awareness.

8.3: Experiences of Getting Along nestled within narratives of social responsibility by

Farrah, Dariya, and Katie

During creative conversations with all of the participants, there was a conspicuous absence of Getting Along discourse. One of the dominant threads that weaved its way across the inquiry was tension, so the absence of Getting Along discourse intrigued me. On many occasions, it seemed that Getting Along skills would have benefitted the group and the workshops' running. YCDI Program Achieve (2006) defines Getting Along as:

Working well with teachers and classmates, resolving disagreements peacefully, following the rules of the classroom and making positive contributions to school, home and the community including protecting the rights of others and looking after the environment (p.17).

During creative conversations with Farrah, Dariya, and Katie, each shared experiences of Getting Along. Farrah retold her story when she won the YCDI Getting Along student of the week award by focusing on her 'Persistence' artwork. In particular, she described the impact of Getting Along on her ways of making friends and of supporting others long after she had won the award.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Farrah, Tuesday, December 18th, 2018.

John: Your portrait of Persistence shows Farrah being Persistent at Getting Along and winning the Getting Along Award.

Farrah: Yes. When I got the Getting Along award, I didn't really stop being getting along. Most of my friends told me that you're always making new friends every day and stuff like that. I remember the time we were doing this Irish activity. It was like a word hunt. Then when everyone got the word, like I was still working really hard. My team didn't win. These other girls won, but then I just went over and hugged all

of them, and I said, "Well done." Then one of my friends came over and said, "How can you be happy? They won, obviously." I just thought differently, they're my friends too, and I ought to congratulate them.

Winning the YCDI student of the week award was significant for Farrah. It was a story she retold time and time again, sharing slightly different versions across different workshops and again during our creative conversation. Each retelling presented a shift in her story as being either Confident, Persistent, or showing Getting Along skills.



Figure 17: Farrah's Persistence self-portrait

This story highlights the fluid nature of the YCDI foundations and skills and how they shaped and added to Farrah's personal learner knowledge in Scoil Firtéar. I sensed many instances of Farrah shifting her story, perhaps to fit in. Like Christopher, there was also a sense of incoherence and discontinuity (Carr, 1986) in her tellings. Farrah shared several stories that positioned her on the edges of school life, and again, I sensed conflict and tension.

During my creative conversation with Katie, she retold her experience of Getting Along from when she was in 4th class. She spoke of how Getting Along helped her form and establish new relationships with those she did not first count as friends.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Katie, Tuesday, December 18th, 2018

John: Do you remember what the experiences were?

Katie: This one was when I was in 4th class when I sat beside a boy in my class. We weren't that close. Then when we saw each other, we started to get along, and now we're friends.

Dariya shared stories of 'already being/having' Getting Along skills before YCDI and so echoed stories of 'already being' as shared by Baahir and Christopher during the first two workshops.

Transcript: Tuesday, December 18th, 2018 Creative Conversation with Dariya

John: Which foundation didn't have as much impact on you?

Dariya: Getting Along, because I usually get along with my friends.

By attending to their stories, I was drawn back to their experiences of Getting Along as shared during the workshops.

During the Getting Along workshops, Farrah shared a story about a young girl who had no money to buy treats in a local shop. The girl met a boy on the way to the shop, and in an act of kindness, in an act of Getting Along, the boy gave the girl a packet of crisps. Later, Farrah audienced her artwork (Luttrell, 2003) for the group, and as she retold the story, some key points changed.

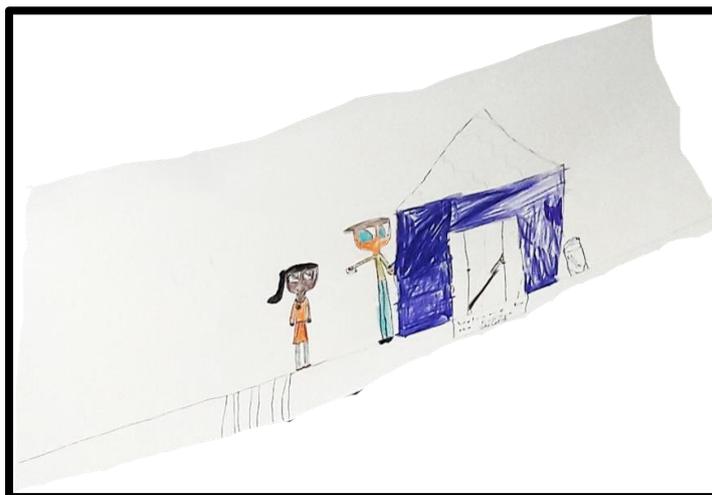


Figure 18: Farrah's Getting Along artwork

Instead of going to the shop, the location changed to the coffee shop, located on the school campus. Secondly, the 'boy' changed to a 'man' and instead of giving the girl crisps, he gave her money. When I asked was she in this story, Farrah said, "No". She said that the people came from her imagination. She connected the YCDI foundation of Getting Along with her artwork through the act of sharing, as she told us that 'sharing' was on her mind that day. Farrah's story leads me to consider storylines of not having much and how, like the girl in her story, many students in Scoil Firtéar also told similar stories.

Adapted Fieldnote, Getting Along, Mon 13th 2017

The narrative that Farrah alludes to is all around her and all around me because in this school, many of the children have so little, and a lot of the time, the teachers are not even aware of it. So many of our students are in temporary accommodation, and we don't even know it. I asked Farrah was she in the drawing, she said "No". In all of the other drawings, the students drew a personal experience that they were a part of. I wonder now, had Farrah experienced something like this before, maybe even witnessed it.

A story of not having much was a strong school story known by the staff and teachers of Scoil Firtéar. At times, stories of homelessness and families living in temporary accommodation were also known by the school. Much international research, drawn from studies from North America, indicates the severe consequences of childhood poverty and deprivation on the lives of children, especially in areas of academic achievement, health, and socio-emotional development (Duncan et al., 1994; Bolger et al., 1995; McLeod & Shanahan, 1996; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Department for Work and Pensions, 2007; Duncan, Ludwig & Magnusson, 2007; Holzer, Duncan & Ludwig, 2007; Duncan et al., 2012) Research from the 28 European Union countries (Eurostat, 2014) indicates that children are the population age group with the highest risk of poverty. European research also indicates that those who experience poverty growing up are less likely to complete post-primary school and so, as a consequence, will have consistently lower incomes in the future (Bellani

& Bia, 2019). Research from Ireland indicates that persistent economic vulnerability negatively impacts social-emotional development in children and that there is a strong association between economic vulnerability and high SDQ scores (Watson et al., 2014). Thinking about Farrah's story also led me to consider families experiencing homelessness in Scoil Firtéar. The homeless crisis has steadily increased in Ireland from 2014 (Scanlon & McKenna, 2018), and national research indicates the negative impact on academic performance and well-being of those living in temporary accommodation (Whitty & Youdell, 1999; Keogh, Halpenny & Gilligan 2006; Children's Rights Alliance 2017). International and national research also indicates the challenges faced by children who experience homelessness (Scanlon & McKenna, 2018), such as, but not limited to, access to schools, their inability to complete homework, experiencing difficulties in their continuity in learning, sustaining relationships with teachers and peers and experiencing high levels of anxiety and poor mental health (Masten et al. 1997; Keogh, Halpenny & Gilligan, 2006; Buckner, 2008; Moore & McArthur, 2011; Children's Rights Alliance, 2017).

Dariya 's experience brought us back six years to 2011 when she was in junior infants. This story echoed her Organisation experience as she returned to a moment long before the school introduced the YCDI program. Again, I sensed Dariya connecting her past experiences with her current knowing and understanding of the YCDI foundation of Getting Along. Re-storying her experience using YCDI as a lens, we see how a single experience can be constructed anew and imbued with new understanding and meaning. Dariya drew us back over her life-timeline to retell and relieve a story, thus engaging in meaning-making in the present.

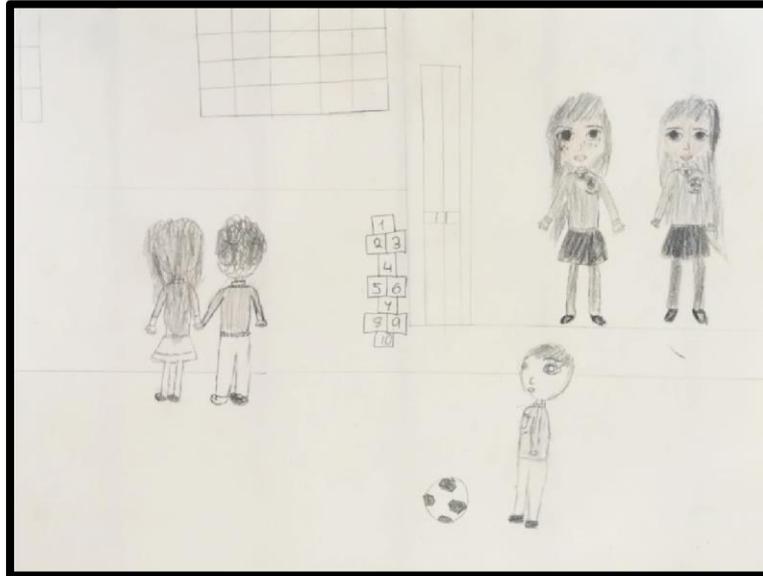


Figure 19: Dariya's Getting Along artwork

Dariya shared a story of a time she was playing in the yard during break time. While playing with her friends, she noticed a girl standing by herself, playing with no one. Dariya stopped playing and approached the lonely girl. She introduced herself and asked the girl would she like to play. This moment of empathy, kindness, and courage from Dariya lead to a relationship that blossomed and flourished between both girls. Even from a very young age, Dariya's story to live by as an independent, strong-willed student could be felt. In her telling, we sense connections to the CASEL SEL competence of relationship skills that is defined as the ability to 'establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups' (CASEL, 2020: p.2). Dariya and Moesha-Lilly became very close friends and continued to be so until Moesha-Lilly moved to Canada a few years later. I noticed that Dariya's story, like her Organisation experience, had occurred many years before YCDI, and so I inquired further into her experience of the program and its impact.

Transcript: Getting Along Workshop 6, Monday 20th of November, 2017

John: Do you feel YCDI has helped you in any way with Getting Along?

Dariya: No, I've always been getting along with my friends.

John: So you've always had that ability to care for others and look after people.

Dariya: Yes

Her story of 'already having' Getting Along skills continued during our creative conversation a year later. While Dariya stressed she maintained full relationships with those she counted as friends, I wondered about those outside of this social sphere, perhaps the other participants in the workshops. Dariya was very close to Farrah, and the two girls became inseparable during the workshops, but there was much tension between Dariya and Aabir, Janette, and Katie. I often wondered about Dariya's Getting Along skills with those she didn't count as close friends and whether these skills extended to those people also.

During the Getting Along workshops, Katie shared her understanding of the YCDI foundation as she engaged in the whiteboard activity. Katie jotted and sketched down some key ideas and images such as 'Say no to bullying', 'Share things', 'Be kind to others', 'Don't say you don't like someone because they're not who you want them to be' and 'help others'. She also sketched a pair of hands clasped together in friendship.

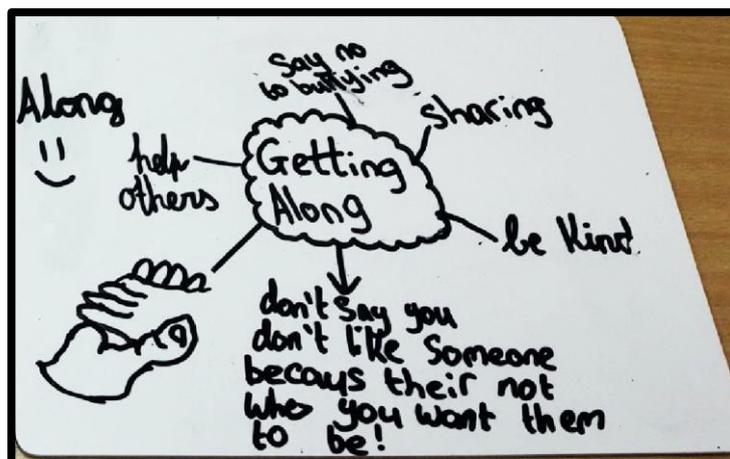


Figure 20: Katie's Getting Along whiteboard activity

As Katie described her whiteboard to me, strong connections to YCDI discourse and the CASEL SEL competence of relationship skills (CASEL, 2020) were felt. Following this description, she dovetailed into her personal Getting Along experience in 2016, when she was in 4th class.

Katie's story took place in school, where one day, her teacher asked her to change seats to sit beside a boy she didn't like. Katie spoke of a tense relationship with the boy, describing him as annoying. Katie described how her teacher wanted to put her beside him so that he'd 'get along' with someone. In her telling, I imagine Katie's 4th class teacher storying Katie in similar ways as I had done, where her story as being gentle and kind was evident. I wondered, did Katie's teacher have memories of her older sister, Jane, and perhaps she too storied Katie in ways that may have been uncomfortable for her, such as asking her to sit next to someone who she did not feel close to. Katie took a seat next to the boy and started to talk to him, even though she still felt the boy wasn't going to be nice to her. In her first telling of this story, Katie described the tense relationship she felt with the boy, yet during our creative conversation, she described a change in this relationship. Katie explained how as time passed, she got to know the boy more as life on the school landscape moved shifted to arrive at a point where they got along, and now they are friends.

By attending closely to Farrah, Dariya, and Katie during creative conversations and returning to their shared stories of Getting Along as told during the workshops, I sensed their stories of Getting Along as being composed within narratives of social responsibility (YCDI, 2007). This sense of social responsibility could be felt in Farrah's story of receiving help from a stranger in a time of need; in Dariya's story of her empathetic gesture to a

lonely girl on the playground; and in Katie's story of offering friendship to one who she did not have a good relationship with. YCDI Program Achieve (2007) describes the positive habits of mind that help students develop Getting Along behaviour and include; '*Being tolerant of Others*' – accepting others and not making judgements based on differences or behaviour; '*Thinking first*' – when someone mistreats you, to think of different ways to react, the consequences of each and the impact of your actions on others; '*Playing by the rules*'-by following important rules at home and in school, you will live in a world where everyone's rights are protected; and '*Social responsibility*' – thinking that it's important to be caring, to try to do your best, to be fair to others, to make sure you can feel and say what you think without fear, to act responsibly and make good choices and to be understanding and include other who are different. The foundation of Getting Along links closely to the competence of 'Relationship skills' as outlined by CASEL (2020).

A CASEL (2018) study on young people's SEL perspectives indicates that those attending strong SEL schools reported a more positive social climate and learning environment and improved academic achievement. The study also found that strong SEL schools are more appealing to diverse populations of students and that more vulnerable students cited fewer social and emotional problems as barriers to learning and fulfilling their potential (CASEL, 2018). SEL competencies comprise of specific skills to develop relationship building in students, and those in strong SEL schools report strong relationships between peers (Blad, 2017; CASEL, 2018), teachers (Dayan, 2016) as well as the ability to sustain positive relationships (Catalano et al., 2002; Zins et al., 2007; Elbertson et al., 2010; Dayan, 2016; Blad, 2017). Through sharing their YCDI experiences of Getting Along, Farrah, Dariya, and Katie constructed stories nestled within narratives of social responsibility. In their stories, we get a sense of their caring natures and their awareness of others they feel are in

need. In this way, we sense stories where each one acts in caring, thoughtful, and empathetic ways where connections between the YCDI foundation of Getting Along and the CASEL (2012) competence of relationship skills are lived out on and off the school landscape.

8.4: Experiences of Resilience composed within narratives of trauma, over-coming and bouncing back by Baahir, Katie, and Farrah

Research on resilience in the behavioural sciences began in the 1970s, focusing on understanding and preventing psychopathology development in children (Masten, 1989, 2001, 2007; Shean, 2015). Early research highlighted the evident variability in outcomes for young people at risk of developing psychopathology due to exposure to risk factors such as parental psychopathology, poverty, trauma, or disaster (Garmezy & Nuechterlein, 1972; Anthony & Koupernik, 1974; Rutter, 1979, 1985; Werner & Smith, 1982; Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; Garmezy, 1982). This research shifted the concept of resilience from mental illness toward mental well-being (Shean, 2015).

Within this research field, many definitions and theories of resilience have emerged, with significant contributions from six key scholars; Rutter (1979, 2006, 2013), Garmezy (1982, 1991), Werner (1982, 1989), Luthar (1991, 2000), Masten (1989, 2001, 2007, 2011, 2014), and Ungar (2005, 2008, 2013). While each theorist offers their own definition of the term, there are two commonalities shared across all descriptions, one-that individuals have experienced serious risk, and two- that individuals have demonstrated positive adaptation (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Currently, the *Well-being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES, 2020) in Irish schools adopt Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development (1979). This model:

acknowledges the importance of the individual and his/her immediate relationships in their social context and in their wider community. This model demonstrates that to be human is to be relational and that wellbeing is always realised in a community (DES, 2020: 10).

Ungar (2007, 2008) also applies an ecological model to his conception of resilience, where he defines it as:

both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of wellbeing, and a condition of the individual's family, community, and culture to provide these health resources and experience in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008: 225).

The use of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model connects the concept of well-being as outlined in the Well-Being framework (DES, 2020) and Ungar's (2007, 2008) ecological conception of resilience. With this shared theoretical foundation, perhaps we see an opening where future resilience interventions may be mapped to, and integrated with, the current Well-Being framework when designing resilience intervention programs in schools, an area that is currently lacking, as Shean (2015) points out:

Despite the agreement over the need for interventions, there is little evidence of resilience interventions by any of the theorists. This is problematic, as it indicates that much of the resilience theory remains untested and is simply correlational data (p. 31).

During creative conversations with Baahir, Katie, and Farrah, each shared their Resilience experiences and how they overcame moments of hardship or adversity. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) website, trauma is 'an emotional response to a terrible event' (APA, 2020). Trauma can also be described as a response to events found to be physically or emotionally threatening or harmful (Leonard, 2020). There are several types of trauma: acute trauma, which results from a single stressful or dangerous event,

and chronic trauma, resulting from repeated and prolonged exposure to highly stressful events, such as bullying (Leonard, 2020).

Through re-engagement with his Resilience artwork, Baahir relived a story when he was physically hurt while in school.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Baahir Monday, December 18th, 2018



Image 21: Baahir Resilient piece

Baahir: I remember that story now, the story of the mask.

John: Tell me what happened?

Baahir: I remember the day. I'm pretty sure it was in your class. We were going out to the yard, and Joseph was really happy. He jumped up and hit my face with his head, and then my eye started bleeding. Then, in the next yard, I fell, and I think there was some boy from your class that helped me. I was being resilient because it really hurt, but I wasn't crying a lot or shouting or being mad. I was being calm.

Baahir locates his Resilience experience on the school landscape and refers to incidents where he sustained physical injury. I noticed that many stories shared about Resilience centred around moments of physical trauma and students' capacity to 'bounce back' (YCDI, 2007) from these experiences. According to YCDI Program Achieve (2007), emotional Resilience is:

knowing how to stay calm and being able to stop yourself from getting extremely angry, down, or worried when something "bad" happens. It means being able to

calm down and feel better when you get upset. It also means being able to control your behaviour when you are very upset so that you bounce back from difficulty and return to work or play (p.18).

As I further inquired into his experience, Baahir elaborated on his own understanding of the foundation.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Baahir, Monday, December 18th, 2018
Baahir: Resilience is to calm down. If you feel really high emotions, take like three deep breaths and then calm down...Resilience is also if you feel sad that you didn't win something, you won't just get all frustrated about it, but you think, "Oh, I can do this next time."

As Baahir continued to share his understanding of the foundation, YCDI discourse emerged and coping strategies to deal with adversity as outlined in the program, “*take three deep breaths*”. Here, Baahir’s understanding of the foundation broadened to incorporate the skill of ‘bouncing back’ and the competence of emotional regulation. This skill ties closely to the CASEL SEL competence of self-management and positive adaptation in the face of risk factors (Ungar, 2008). CASEL (2020) define self-management as:

The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation & agency to accomplish personal/collective goals (p.2).

During my creative conversation with Katie, her story of Resilience also told of a time she experienced physical trauma in school. In this story, Katie described how she twisted her arm in the yard and had to be taken to hospital. Like Baahir, traces of YCDI discourse that focused on resilience competencies, and the ability to adapt after physical trauma continued to be felt. According to YCDI (2007), Resilience abilities include; not getting too angry when treated unfairly or disrespectfully; not getting down and withdrawing when you make mistakes; not getting overly worried when you have an important test or activity to

complete; being able to meet someone new without becoming stressed; and being able to stand up for yourself and say “no” when pressured to do things you know to be wrong (YCDI, 2007). During my conversation with Farrah, she chose her Resilience artwork as her favourite. As she reflected on her artwork, the story shifted from her original telling. In this way, I felt the ongoing narrativization of Farrah’s life in motion (Leitch, 2008).

Transcript: Tuesday, December 18th, 2018 Creative Conversation with Farrah



Image 22: Farrah’s Resilience piece

Farrah: Yes, the Resilience one. I did it wrong, okay. This was supposed to be yellow, but then this is supposed to be blue, but anyways it worked out in the end. Then this was when I felt like when someone said something mean to me, I still felt happy, but I felt marked when they said that to me.

John: Why would it have been the other way around? Why should it have been all gold with a blue streak rather than all blue with the gold streak? What's the difference?

Farrah: It's like whenever I watch cartoons or something like that, I always see Yellow and green for like good, and then red, black, blue, stuff like that for sad and angry. I always thought gold was good.

John: What does the blue represent on this mask then?

Farrah: The blue represents good

John: What does the gold streak down in the middle represent?

Farrah: That's like when you're sad. You're scarred with the sadness.

John: It's supposed to be gold and all happy, but that you get scarred by the sadness, which is supposed to be blue?

Farrah: Yes. I hide it in, the sadness, but you're not supposed to hide in. You're supposed to tell somebody about it, but then sometimes I just feel that way, and I'm like, "Oh, I'm okay. They didn't really hurt me that much," but I'm still scarred inside.

Unlike Baahir and Katie’s experiences that brought us back to a specific time and place where they overcame a physical trauma, Farrah’s story did not. Instead, Farrah spoke of the embodied harm and psychological violence that occurs when others are unkind to her. In her description, she describes the lasting, scarring effect that such moments have on her and her choice to hide such feelings from others. This trauma speaks to a chronic definition of trauma, such as those that experience bullying (Leonard, 2020). By attending with care (Noddings, 1984; 1986; 1992) and wide awakesness (Greene, 1977) to their stories, I was drawn over their Resilience experiences shared during the arts-based workshops.

During the workshops, Baahir shared his experience of Resilience as he audienced his art for the group. In his story, Baahir described how in 4th class, as he was taking part in the school’s safe cycling program, another student collided with him. Baahir fell off his bike and hurt himself, yet he picked himself back up and continued participating in the activity. Baahir also described how he tried to complete the entire leg of the cycle, even though there was an option to take a shorter route back to school. While audiencing his Resilience mask, Baahir connected his artwork to this experience through the colours he used, telling us that the orange and black and the silver and blue he used on the inside of his mask all reminded him of his Resilience story.



Image 23: Baahir’s Resilience mask (Inside)

Later on, during the whiteboard activity, Baahir further explored his own understanding of Resilience's YCDI foundation by drawing a scene where two boys bumped into each other. One boy offered an apology which the other rejected. In the final scene, a teacher, who was observing the interaction, rewards the boy who apologized with a Resilience ClassDojo point.

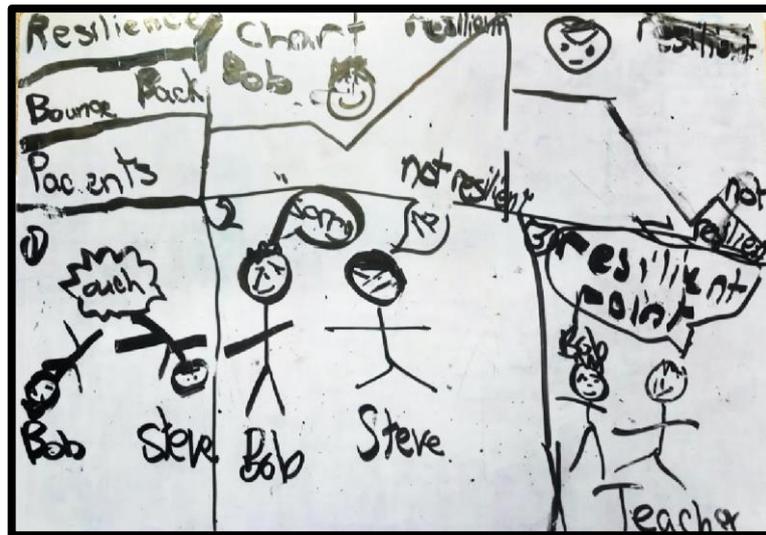


Image 24: Baahir's Resilience white-board

Here, I sensed a narrative coherence between Baahir's Resilience experiences and his understanding of the YCDI foundation, where both stories centred around overcoming physical trauma sustained in school. Moving back over Baahir's shared stories during the workshops and bringing these tellings alongside our creative conversation, I noticed he had added more detail to Resilience experience. In his first telling and during the audiencing activity, Baahir failed to mention the classroom experience where he had been hit in the eye, causing him to bleed. I had a sense that as Baahir took up his mask and re-engaged with his artwork, new and perhaps even more meaningful narratives of Resilience emerged. In this way, he continued to narratively construct a story as one who has and can overcome adversity and trauma in school.

Katie's knowing and understanding of the YCDI foundation of Resilience emerged during the whiteboard activity.

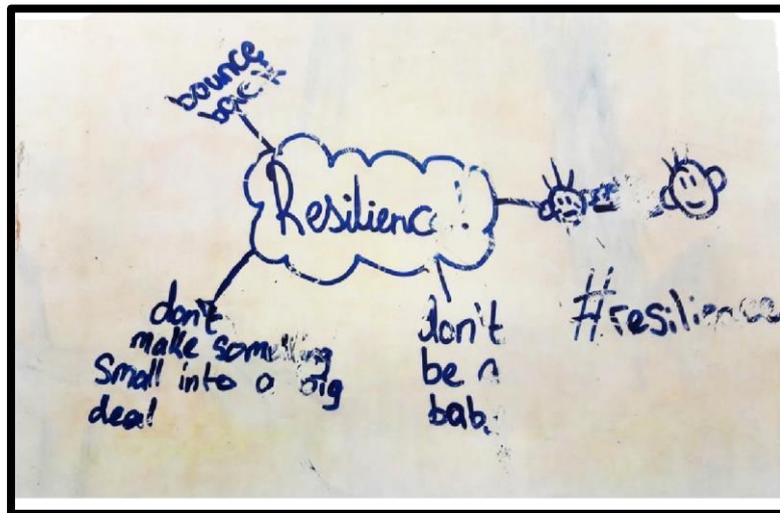


Image 25: Katie's Resilience whiteboard

Katie wrote down some key terms to do with the foundation that included specific YCDI discourse and strategies such as 'Bounce Back'. Luthar (2000) identified two conditions that must be met to be resilient: exposure to significant threat or severe adversity and the achievement of positive adaptation. Luthar (2000) defines resilience not as a personal trait but as a product of the environment and the interaction between the child and the surrounding milieu (Shean, 2000). Other scholars also share this ecological concept of resilience (Ungar, 2011; Masten, 2014;). Katie also drew a scene depicting two people who had hurt themselves and were crying. She described how the right thing to do is to bounce back when you get hurt. I sensed Katie drawing from her personal learner knowledge (). This knowledge spoke of how students accuse each other of being childlike and helpless if they become upset, and so perhaps we see how maladaptive behaviours that emerge from YCDI discourse operate in ways that negatively impact students' lives.

Transcript: Resilience Workshop 2, Monday 27th of November, 2016

John: So, Katie, what did you put down?

Katie: I had nothing to write, so I put down 'Resilience' and 'Bounce Back'. I drew a person that's crying because they've hurt themselves, but the right thing to do is to bounce back from it and to not be a baby, just like crying and making a big deal, even though it's something small.

John: And is that what Resilience means to you? Katie: Yeah.

During the Resilience workshops, Katie also audienced her mask for the group. She painted her mask pink and blue with a star and a heart. Blue represented times she was sad, and pink represented her resilience to people who say mean things to her. The heart and star made Katie think about when she was resilient.



Image 26: Katie's Resilience artwork

Katie, like Baahir, shared a story of a time she overcame physical trauma sustained in school. In her story, Katie described how one day, while out in the yard playing a chasing game with her friends, she fell over and landed awkwardly and heavily. She fell so hard that at first, she thought she had broken her arm. Even though her arm pained her for the rest of the day, she didn't ask her teacher to call home or leave school early. That evening the pain hadn't subsided, so her mother brought her to the doctor. During this examination, the doctor tried to move Katie's arm, but it was too painful, and so she decided to send Katie to

the children's hospital. Katie, her mother, and her two sisters had to wait 7 hours to be seen. She described how she didn't like the hospital and how even though she had been there many times before, she still felt uncomfortable.

Katie described her embodied feelings while painting her mask as it brought her back to this time when she injured her arm. While waiting in the hospital, she felt upset at the thought of having a broken arm and how it would impact her life both on and off the school landscape. She shared the impact this experience had on her mother, who was also frightened as their cousin had broken her arm the week before. This memory was still fresh in all their minds. Katie connected her experience to the YCDI foundation of Resilience by telling us that she didn't get upset all the while. She didn't cry or lose control. She also described her resilient mindset by telling herself that injuring her arm wasn't a big deal.

Farrah described how her mask is of a person who doesn't have much resilience, and so she painted the mask primarily in blue to represent this. Next, she described why she added a strip of yellow that ran down through the center of the face. This mark was striking and caught my attention as I took in her mask. The mark signified that the person had a streak of resilience, but not much. Later, Farrah's understanding and knowing of the YCDI foundation of Resilience emerged during the whiteboard activity when she drew a tall girl's image. In this image, another girl approached her and said, "You look like a giraffe". Similar to her Getting Along story, where a strange man offered money to an unknown girl to buy treats in the coffee-shop, Farrah tells us that this is an imagined story. This story took place in the schoolyard, and so I am reminded of Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2008) description of small stories as ones that 'may (or may not) have actually happened' (p.5)

and are told to support or elaborate on a given topic. Later, Farrah added to her drawn image.

Transcript: Resilience Workshop 2, Monday 27th of November, 2017

John: Farrah, have you added to your image, or is it the same?

Farrah: It's the same picture, but it's later on.

John: And what happened later on?

Farrah: Ah, she becomes resilient, and she doesn't care. John: Is it the tall girl that doesn't care?

Farrah: Yes

John: And is that what 'Resilience' means to you? If you were to share with me, what 'Resilience' means, what would you say?

Farrah: Like, bouncing back and self-esteem?

John: What do you mean by self-esteem?

Farrah: When like, you should be happy with yourself before you're happy with other people.

John: And is this a story of self-esteem that your drawing?

Farrah: Yes

As I inquired further, Farrah shared her thoughts on resilience and connected it to self-esteem, which research has identified as being one of the primary characteristics in defining resilience (Rutter, 1985). Self-esteem is also a positive student outcome achieved through improved SEL competencies and connections to school, better classroom behaviour, reduced conduct problems, reduced emotional distress, and improved academic performance (CASEL, 2012).

As I listened to Baahir, Katie, and Farrah share their resilience experiences during our creative conversations, I was drawn back over their life timelines to shared stories during our workshops. By narratively engaging in this way, a coherence began to emerge across their tellings. I had a sense of their resilience experiences and their knowing and understanding of the YCDI foundation as composed of narratives of trauma, over-coming, and bouncing back. Baahir over-coming the trauma he experienced while engaging in the school safe cycle program; Katie bouncing back from the trauma of nearly breaking her arm

while playing chase on the schoolyard; and finally, to Farrah's story of overcoming the psychological damage done through name-calling. The impact of early life experiences on child and adolescent development are well documented (Twum-Antwi, Jefferies & Ungar, 2019). Exposure to nurturing and supportive social environments such as effective parenting, strong teacher-child and peer relationships, and experiencing school connectedness, have been shown to promote health and well-being from childhood to adulthood (Gomez & Ang, 2007; Fox, Levitt, & Nelson, 2010; Boden et al., 2016; Narayan et al., 2018). In each participant's resilience experiences, traces of nurturing parents and strong teacher-child and peer relationships could be felt.

Conversely, adverse experiences such as abuse and neglect, growing up in nonsupportive family environments, experiencing poor quality education, and other environmental challenges have all been linked to decreases in physical, psychological, and social health in adulthood (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Beiser et al., 2002; Knutson et al., 2005; Anda et al., 2006). The YCDI foundation of Resilience relates closely to the CASEL (2012) SEL competence of self-management, the ability to effectively regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in adverse conditions. Masten & Coatsworth (1998) define self regulation as gaining control over attention, emotions, and behaviour. This speaks to a child's ability to govern their emotions and behaviour, self-soothe, or calm themselves (Alvord & Grados, 2005). Research indicates that such competencies, attitudes, and dispositions are likely to elicit and foster healthy social relationships with others (Rubin et al., 1995) as well providing protective factors in resilience (Buckner, Mezzacappa, & Beardslee, 2003; Eisenberg et al., 1997, 2003; Werner, 1993). By narratively engaging with Baahir, Katie, and Farrah's resilience experiences, we sense the effect of the YCDI

foundation of Resilience on their lives both on and off the school landscape. Perhaps we see their ability to discuss traumatic experiences using age-appropriate language and to apply YCDI strategies to help them overcome and triumph in the face of adversity.

8.5: Experiences of Persistence composed within narratives of giving effort and working tough by Aabir and Christopher

During creative conversations with Aabir and Christopher, both shared experiences of the impact of the YCDI foundation of Persistence. Aabir began by sharing an 'already being' story.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Aabir, Monday, December 18th, 2018

John: Have you had any new experiences in any of the YCDI foundations that you'd like to talk about? That you'd like to share?

Aabir: Well, like, an experience with YCDI...it hasn't really affected me. Like when I'm doing stuff, and you think of 'Persistence', you kind of know it already. You have to use it, but you already know it, and you have to use it. Like you have to keep going with stuff, or you have to keep going with this and that.

John: Yes.

Aabir: So, like, YCDI, it doesn't really make me a better person or a worse person, in my opinion.

Like Baahir, Christopher, and Dariya before him, Aabir constructed a story as 'already being' Persistent before YCDI. As I inquired into his experiences of the program and the foundation, its impact on his life off the school landscape began to emerge.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Aabir, Monday, December 18th, 2018

John: Do you think that YCDI has had any impact on you since you started studying it? Like three or four years ago, you started learning about YCDI. Do you think it has had an impact on you?

Aabir: Emm...like, I think the only foundation which I think had an impact on me was "Persistence". From what I can remember before, I used to do stuff like start a diet, then two weeks later I would give up, and then two seconds later I'd start a running program, then two weeks later I give up.

John: Ok

Aabir: I didn't really use to stick to what I was doing or anything.

John: OK. And do you think YCDI has helped you to be more persistent?

Aabir: Well, like yeah. It kind of like reminded me that if I stick with something, then I get better.

In conversation with Christopher, he picked his Persistence artwork as his favourite piece and shared why he felt this way.

Transcript: Tuesday, December 18th, 2018 Creative Conversation with Christopher



Image 27: Christopher's Persistence piece

John: If you were to choose, which is your favourite piece of art?

Christopher: Probably that one over there.

John: Your portrait. Your 'Persistence' portrait. Why is this your favourite piece? What is it that attracts you to it?

Christopher: First of all, it's the best one. It's cool because it's about me.

John: What else do you like about it?

Christopher: I like the way it's drawn, the face.

John: Very good. Excellent. Do you remember your Persistence story?

Christopher: Yes.

John: Can you retell it for me?

Christopher: I won the persistence, and I won the medal.

Engagement with his artwork set in motion a retelling of his Persistence experience and the impact of YCDI in his life and the lives of others.

Transcript: Creative Conversation with Christopher, Tuesday, December 18th, 2018

John: Just about the You Can Do It program itself, which of the foundations do you think has had the most impact on you?

Christopher: I think that it was Persistence.

John: Persistence. What impact has it had on Christopher?

Christopher: I was really persistent in third, fourth, and fifth. I also won the Organization prize

John: Well done.

Christopher: I am organized.

John: Very good. You must be if you won the award. What has persistence helped you to do?

Christopher: It helped me to keep on going on everything in life, helped me at school probably.

John: Very good. Has You Can Do It had any impact on your brother? Do you think in any way? Which foundation do you think would be for them?

Christopher: For my brother, Organisation.

John: Organisation has helped him.

Christopher: Yes.

John: Very good. Excellent. Overall, taken that the You Can Do It program, it's been in the school now for about five or six years, what's your opinion on it? What do you think about it?

Christopher: It's a great thing. It makes people improve on their foundations, like on Organization. It gives out rewards for people doing the right thing. Children like that, they try their best to do that, and they get rewards.

YCDI Program Achieve (2006 DI) describes Persistence as 'trying hard to do your best and not giving up when something feels like it's too difficult or boring' (p.17). According to YCDI Program Achieve (2007), the positive habits of mind that help a young person's Persistence include; *I Can Do It* – thinking you are more likely to succeed than to fail; *Giving Effort* – thinking the harder you try, the more successful you'll be and knowing that success is not caused by external factors but by internal factors; and *Working Tough* – thinking that to be

successful, you sometimes have to do things that are not easy or fun. By attending to Aabir and Christopher’s stories during our conversations, I moved back over their life-timelines to their resilience stories shared during the workshops.

Aabir’s ‘Persistence’ portrait centred around playing Gaelic football with the school team. During his telling, his story as being competitive and sporty continued to emerge. Aabir described how just a few weeks ago, they had to face a team in the quarter-finals of a football competition.

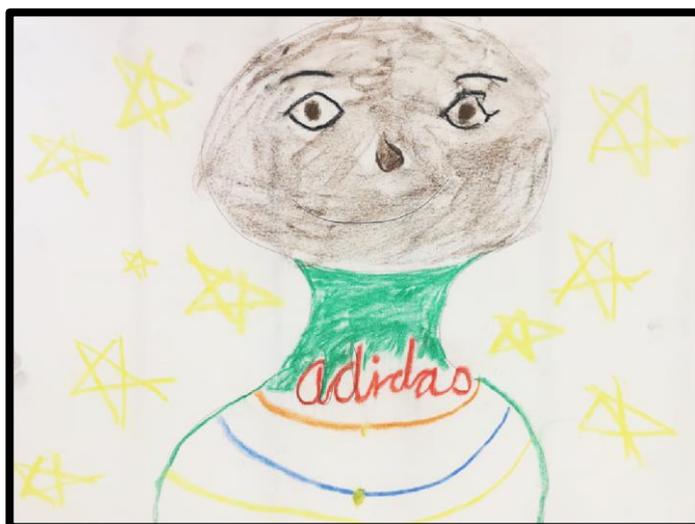


Image 28: Aabir’s Persistent artwork

During the match, he was marking another boy who was physically bigger and stronger than him. While both boys were competing for the ball, the bigger boy pushed Aabir over, and he scraped his knee. One of the Scoil Firtéar teachers approached him and was about to take him off. Before doing so, the teacher asked would he be ok to keep playing. Aabir said he would stay on. In the end, they won the game. Aabir also told us that the other team was unsporting when they lost, saying he overheard them saying, “How did we lose to such a shit team?” The team continued to the semi-finals, where they faced a more physically dominant side. The pitch was hard and much bigger than what they were used to. The other

team was also very skillful, using lots of handpasses to move the ball quickly around the field. Aabir described his passion for playing with the school and the sheer joy he got from winning. He loved returning to the school as winners to celebrate. Aabir connected this story with the foundation of 'Persistence' by describing the effort the whole team had to put in. School training times were at 8 am before school, so he had to get up extra early and prepare his breakfast. He described this as hard and that he sometimes felt like skipping training, but he never did.

During the workshops, Christopher's story of 'Persistence' emerged as he created his self-portrait. His experience centred on a time he won the YCDI Persistence student of the week award in 3rd class. Christopher described how one day, while in the middle of a PE lesson in the sports hall, an announcement came over the intercom about the student of the week. When he heard his name, he was shocked and delighted. As he reflected on this moment, he couldn't recall exactly what he had been persistent with, but that perhaps it had to do with a writing task. He remembered having to complete a writing activity, but he wasn't sure what to do. His memory was of being persistent and never giving up. He kept going with the writing task. In his telling, I sensed traces of my vulnerability coming alongside Christopher and how his story of being unsure emerged in his struggle to engage with the art activities. Bring my coming into relationship experience alongside Christopher's workshop experiences and our creative conversation, this sense of unsureness was felt by us both, as Christopher eluded to during our creative conversation.

Transcript: Tuesday, December 18th, 2018 Creative Conversation with Christopher (continued)

John: Did you learn anything about yourself?

Christopher: Yes. I went over my memories or my stories when I did persistence.

John: What was it like to be able to have the time to think about the experiences and stories, and then make a piece of art, and then talk about them?

Christopher: It was nice. I wasn't really good at speaking. I couldn't speak that much, so I couldn't describe things. I got stuck on things.

John: Was that because you weren't sure what to say or you didn't have the language, do you think?

Christopher: I wasn't sure what to say. I wasn't sure what to do. Some of the questions, I didn't really know what to say.

John: Maybe I wasn't clear enough. Maybe that's something for me to improve on.

By attending to Aabir and Christopher's Persistence experiences during our conversations and bringing them alongside their stories shared during the workshops, I sensed their Persistence experiences as being composed within narratives of giving effort and working tough. Aabir's experience and passion for playing with the school team and the commitment to getting up early to train with his teammates even when he didn't want to; and Christopher's effort and commitment to completing his writing task to the best of his ability. YCDI (2007) describes examples of Persistent behaviour as 'continuing to try even when schoolwork is hard, not being distracted by others, and checking work when it's finished to make sure it's correct' (p.17). The above competencies speak of the skills students need to succeed academically, and we see traces of these in Christopher's story. We also see how persistence can impact children's social and physical development and the indirect effect this may have on the maintaining and strengthening of relationships, as sensed in Aabir's commitment to his teammates. CASEL (2012) describes the skills of possessing a well-grounded sense of optimism in the SEL competence of self-awareness; self-motivation and working toward achieving personal and academic goals in the SEL competence of self-management; making constructive decisions based on the realistic

consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others in the SEL competence of responsible decision making. By attending to Aabir and Christopher's persistence experiences, we gain a sense of their understanding and knowing of the foundation as being composed within narratives of giving effort and working tough (YCDI) and the multiple connections to the CASEL SEL competencies (2012;2020).

8.6 Moving forward

In the last three chapters, I narratively curated and presented the participants' stories and experiences of the five foundations of the YCDI Program Achieve; *Organisation, Confidence, Getting Along, Resilience, and Persistence*, as well as the impact of YCDI on their lives both on and off the school landscape. I began by using word images in chapters 6 and 7 to present my coming into relationship with each participant, a touchstone of any narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). In both chapters, I used creative modes of writing as inquiry to meticulously focus on their intimate experiences, knowing, and understandings of the foundation of Organisation. In chapter 8, I weaved together their remaining stories and experiences across the foundations of Confidence, Getting Along, Resilience, and Persistence by bringing creative conversations, workshop stories, and art-work alongside each other and my teacher-researcher story. In this process, a tentative coherence emerged as I sensed YCDI experiences and stories being composed within YCDI discourse itself, specifically the positive habits of mind as described in the program literature (YCDI, 2007) while also connecting to the 5 CASEL SEL competencies (CASEL, 2012, 2020). From the outset, my research's primary aim was to narratively inquire into students' experiences of the five foundations of the YCDI program and explore the impact the program has had on their lives on and off the school landscape. So the purpose of the previous three chapters emerges. This arts-based inquiry fits into the space between empirical studies that have

already shown the positive impact SEL interventions and the YCDI program have had on student development. I hope to add to this body of research to support empirical findings and extend the possibilities of that which cannot be measured, only felt and sensed. Of arts-based research methods, Eisner (2012) tells us that;

Experiencing a situation in a form that allows you to walk in the shoes of another is one way to know one aspect of it...In that sense, the arts in research promote a form of understanding that is derived or evoked through empathic experience (p.5)

Moving to the final chapter, I present my learnings and wonderings as I prepare to tentatively close this venture.

Chapter 9: New understandings of YCDI and narrative as methodology and phenomena

9.0: Drawing to a close

This thesis began with my narrative beginnings, where my inquiry unfolded as my life, and the lives of the participants met and intertwined on the school landscape. As I draw my research to a tentative close, I wish to present how my work has added to current SEL and YCDI research and how my work has added to the understanding of narrative inquiry as both methodology and phenomena under study. Using an arts-based/informed approach, I aimed to narratively inquire into students' experiences of the five foundations of socialemotional and academic learning program 'You Can Do It (YCDI) Program Achieve' (2007), to explore the impact of the program on their lives on and off the school landscape, and to inquire into the ways eight primary school children composed their stories to live by. Throughout my inquiry, moments of tension became a central tenet of my work, and so inquiring into such moments as spaces for new knowing and understanding also emerged. I posed several questions to support my aims above, such as - What might I learn by inquiring into these experiences, where children's stories of the YCDI foundations bump against school stories and other stories we live in (Morris, 2002)? How might inquiring into emerging tensions and the children's experience of the foundations deepen understanding of cultural, institutional, and social narratives shaping students' lives and stories? How might my inquiry expand knowledge about the YCDI program's impact on the students' lives in Scoil Firtéar? In this chapter, I encapsulate my knowing and understandings that emerged throughout this inquiry to address the questions and aims above.

9.1: Conclusion checklist

*John's timeline – Friday, February 26th, 2021 – Drawing to a close (Pt 1)
What's on your mind?*

My research is drawing to a close, at least on paper. I sit here with all of the participants' stories, artwork, and my own wonderings and interpretations laid out like a tapestry, and I question the significance of my work. Doubt creeps in. Did I achieve what I set out to do? Grace, and my co-supervisor, Bernie, have written warm, encouraging emails to me of late as I try to navigate this final piece of my research puzzle. As always, I listen to their words and heed their advice as I have done so many times throughout my/our journey together. Their thoughts, suggestions, and voices are as much a part of this work as my own. Grace's words stay with me now as I begin to shape and compose my conclusion.

Saturday, February 13th, 2021: Email from Grace to John

John, a checklist for the final chapter:

This is what I set out to do...

Did I achieve what I set out to do?

Did it change along the way?

Was I surprised by anything?

What new knowledge do I have about YCDI?

What new knowledge do I have about student learning?

How did the methodology I use enable this? What did it close down on, perhaps?

What new knowledge do I have about the methodology?

Wonderings about the staff and students as I entered and exited their storied lives in the midst...?

How has the journey impacted me? What is the story I am living and telling as I prepare to close this venture?

Relational ethics...to the end.

Bon courage!

Grace.

As narrative inquirers, it is important to attend to the personal justifications for engaging in such work. My stories of being a good student and a good teacher emerged as I came alongside my participants. These stories shaped and continue to shape who I am and who I am becoming. I kept these stories close to me. I lived by them, yet they were silent. My stories were not easy to share, and I did not put words to paper so easily. Dewey

(1933/1998) was among the first to consider reflective practice as a specialized form of thinking (Finlay, 2008) that flowed from moments of 'doubt, hesitation or perplexity related to a directly experienced situation (p. 3). Keeping the three common places of narrative inquiry close at hand, I engaged in the reflexive practice of introspection (Finlay, 2002; 2003) to probe personal meanings and emotions, coupled with the reflexive practice of intersubjection (Finlay, 2002; 2003), where I focused on the emerging, negotiated, and relational nature of encounters during the inquiry, to present my stories and the stories of the participants

In retelling my student story, I felt sad and ashamed that I did not fully commit to my post-primary school studies as I had done in primary school. Instead, I played being 'cool', and so my work suffered. I felt anger and resentment toward my parents and the pressure I felt they put me under to attain good grades, seemingly to the detriment of everything else. Paradoxically, I still mourn for the opportunities and possibilities that such a story denied me while also being genuinely grateful for the life I live. Moving to my good teacher story, I felt embarrassed that I could not see the wonder and delight of working with young children. Instead, I expected them to be hard-working and diligent like I had been in primary school and how I was at the time as a teacher. By critically reflecting on my experiences, I came to attend to how I understood myself in relation to my participants and stories of myself in school as a student, a teacher, and a teacher-researcher. The reconstruction of my auto thread enabled me to see children 'big' (Greene, 1995) and not just as 'mere objects or chess pieces' (p. 10) but to view them 'in their integrity and particularity instead' (p.10). I traced how my own story shifted over time as I moved across different times and landscapes, and so I also became attuned to the participants' shifting stories as we came alongside one another.

Retelling my story enabled me to understand my personal journey of belonging and becoming as I moved from becoming a student to a teacher-researcher. Through this process, I became wakeful (Bateson, 1994) to my participants' journeys of becoming and belonging, where relational ethics guided my work. Thinking with the participants' experiences, I learned to work in relational ways, such as attending to wakefulness and wide-awakeness (Bateson, 1994) with Aabir, awakening to arrogant perception (Frye, 1983) and world travelling (Lugones, 1987) with Baahir, disrupting power relations (Lyotard, 1984; Sellman, 2009; Flakne, 2013; Nelson, 2017) with Janette, beginning from an ethics of care (Noddings, 1984; 1992; 1995) with Amanda, moving slowly to attend to silences (Lipari, 2014; Clandinin et al., 2018) with Christopher, engaging with a sense of uncertainty and not knowing (Lugones, 1987; 2003) with Dariya, and attending to, and with, silence and contemplation (Clandinin et al., 2018) with Farrah.

Thinking narratively acted as a tool (Pinnegar, 2006) whereby I came to understand Scoil Firtéar as a storied landscape. My personal justifications also came to light during my memory reconstruction of Fionn, where I presented how I came to be intrigued by the YCDI program in Scoil Firtéar, well-being, health education, and the lives of children in Ireland. My memory of Fionn and his ways of knowing and being in school, and the many others like him, inspired me to carry out my research. Curiously, one of the most surprising and unforeseen elements of my research was the struggle and tension felt throughout the inquiry. I wrestled with my positioning and the power relations between myself and the participants and the emerging tension between the participants themselves. Having presented my personal justifications, I move to the practical justifications of my inquiry, where I focus on two key areas; YCDI and shifting/changing practice and navigating tensions as a teacher-researcher.

9.2: YCDI and shifting/changing practice

Wednesday, February 24th, 2021: Email from Bernie to John (Pt 1)

Hi John,

I'm just emailing to check in with you. I was talking to Grace yesterday, and she said you had extended your submission date. Hopefully, this will give you a chance to breathe more deeply now and be able to enjoy the final polishing stage before submitting.

I know it's very difficult to appreciate the significance of your work when you are still in the middle of it. Now that time is on your side again, my suggestion is that you take a complete rest away from this for a week or two. Just potter, get out and about, go for walks...all of the more embodied, active, rhythmic things you enjoy to refresh yourself. Then come back to your thesis, and you will find this final stage of writing and polishing much more easy

Hope this helps and that you get to breathe much more slowly with this final stage and enjoy it!

Regards Bernie

John's timeline – Friday, February 26th, 2021 – Drawing to a close (Pt 2)

What's on your mind?

Bernie's email has come at a time of need. It's been a furious few weeks. My submission date has been extended, so I have an opportunity to make some space in my life for other things; my family and the great outdoors. The weather is improving. Spring is in the air. This morning, as I hold my 15month-old daughter in my arms, I look out over a thread bare back garden. The half-painted fence calls out for a second coat, and the empty flower bed requires attention. Yet Bernie's words call out to me also. They need attention too. What is the significance of my work? I wonder about this. While you're in the midst of an inquiry, is it possible to see the wood for the trees? I brought the participants' YCDI stories alongside each other to present their knowing and understandings of the program and its impact on their lives on and off the school landscape. They shared intimate experiences that were personally meaningful and poignant. I have learned much about YCDI from their experiences, and through my research, I hope others will too. The program's impact could be sensed through their experiences and offered the absolute local (Todd, 2010) and contextual nature of their learning, knowing, and understanding. This is what I set out to do. Yet, other curious questions emerged. These questions I ask but leave open for others to pursue further.

Practical justifications attend to the possibilities of shifting or changing practice (Clandinin,

2013). To this end, my research aimed to make visible the participants' experiences of the YCDI foundations and the impact the program has had on their lives. Such understandings were deeply personal, contextual, temporal and emerged through the creative creation of their artwork. Through this process, the participants also engaged in and made visible their identity-making by telling stories that took place on and off the school landscape. Through such tellings, my research tentatively opened up new ways that teachers and schools might re-orientate themselves to better attend to students while also highlighting ways the YCDI program and YCDI school stories work on children in unsuspecting and perhaps challenging ways.

Aabir's Organisation experience storied him as being adaptable, resourceful, and flexible, so I gained insight into how his understanding of the foundation equipped him with skills that extended outside of those prescribed in the program. I also saw how he added social, cultural, and personal knowing, meaning, and value to the foundation in significant ways to him and unknown to others. In this telling, like many others, I tentatively adopted the term personal learner knowledge () to describe how student knowledge is created narratively, held, fostered, maintained, and how it manifests itself through children's stories and stories of children (Clandinin et al., 2006). By sharing a story unheard of before this inquiry, Aabir offered a glimpse of his personal knowing and learning about the foundation that equipped him with new skills and competencies. By presenting his story, it may give teachers pause to attend more closely to the intimate ways students conceptualize and make personally meaningful the YCDI foundation and its skills in ways that add to their personal learner knowledge, rather than storying them in the same prescribed ways as outlined in the YCDI curriculum. Aabir's experience also raises a broader series of questions worthy of further consideration about how prescribed ways of storying that a curriculum

like YCDI, or any curriculum, tends to set in course. The prescription of knowledge as recognized, approved, or shaped in curriculum tends to frame or story children in particular ways. Perhaps a question for future research is how do we honour each unique individual and keep an openness to pause and attend more closely and in different ways to how students learn and tell their stories?

Baahir, Christopher, and Dariya constructed stories of 'already being' before YCDI, and so their storylines converged in agreement and unity. These storylines were a common thread and could be narratively understood as both competing and conflicting stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Stories of 'already being' may sustain themselves as competing stories, where students engage in lessons, although feeling this to be unnecessary. This situation may be tolerated over time by compliant students who engage with lessons regardless of how they feel. Yet other less compliant students may decide not to engage, and therefore such stories may shift to become conflicting stories that bump against dominant YCDI school stories. The potential of such conflicting stories in schools may give rise to students to say 'No!' to what is being taught during YCDI lessons and also across other areas of the curriculum. This potential moment of refusal, where a student's 'I' or their own subject-ness (Biesta, 2019) may step forward and say 'No!' is a moment filled with educational possibility and perhaps shifts education from a paradigm of cultivation to one of subjectification (Biesta, 2019). My inquiry opened up ways for teachers and schools to recognize spaces where competing and conflicting stories meet, to acknowledge tensions that may arise from them, and in doing so, create space for new educational possibilities across the curriculum where freedom (Säfström, 2019) and soft-emancipation (Biesta, 2019) becomes central to the educational process.

Through Janette's new student story, I sensed her anxiety as she encountered YCDI for the first time. This sudden, jarring, and anxious coming together led me to wonder how other new students felt upon entering Scoil Firtéar. Janette's previous school experiences seemed to bump against this strong school story, yet she quickly came alongside it and began to shift her story to one that sustained her as a student in Scoil Firtéar. In her tellings, I also sensed her drawing from her personal learner knowledge of what was expected of students and how they were supposed to act by not being a 'blabber mouth' and telling teachers things. By thinking with Janette's story, the potential of YCDI to become something other than an SEL program, to become a mechanism for power and control where everyone must be 'Organised' was felt. Janette's experience speaks to broader research on power and schooling (Waller, 1967; Foucault, 1976; Lynch, 1989; Lodge & Lynch, 2002/2004), hidden curricula (Lynch, 1998), and attending to the integrity of student voice to disrupt power relations in schools (Sellman, 2009; Taylor & Robinson, 2009; Robinson & Taylor, 2013). In presenting her story, my research opened avenues for such power relations to be made visible, disrupted, and for the program to return its original purpose, the positive development of SEL skills and academic achievement. Perhaps we may also consider alternative ways of welcoming new students to the school that lessens the sudden, jolting impact that coming alongside strong YCDI school stories can cause.

Janette, Aabir, Baahir, Christopher, and Farrah's experiences also offered insight into the complex relationship between YCDI, the school's positive reinforcement strategy of winning team points, and student behaviour. Here, we saw the potential pitfalls and dangers of intervention programs being used for purposes other than those initially intended for, in this case, as a behaviour incentive rather than purely for the positive development of SEL skills. By attending to the power dynamics between the school's

positive reinforcement strategy of winning YCDI team points, and student behaviour, we were offer a sense of how initiatives like YCDI bump against and come alongside the school as a system of regulation and control over behaviour and self-control (Waller, 1967; Foucault, 1976). This power dynamic between student experience, a school's positive reinforcement strategy, student behaviour, and intervention initiative presents an area worthy of further research.

Thinking with Janette, Aabir, Baahir, Christopher, and Farrah's stories of winning YCDI points and student of the week awards led me to consider how the YCDI reward system operates in Scoil Firtéar. Research indicates that the use of rewards to encourage performance-based goals may lead to maladaptive behaviour while learning approach orientations have been found to lead to mostly positive and adaptive motivation and achievement outcomes for students (Ames & Archer, 1988; Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Meece, 1994; Wolters, Yu, & Pintrich, 1996; Pajares, Britner, & Valiante, 2000;). Thinking about how YCDI rewards operate is key to its future success or failure. My research suggests that perhaps orientating school rewards toward a learning goal approach rather than performance-based goals may improve engagement, motivation, and SEL outcomes for students.

9.3: Making visible moments of tension

Throughout this inquiry, I attempted to make visible the tension, uncertainty, and vulnerability myself and the participants felt as we came alongside each other. I was drawn to the centrality of relational narrative ethics (Clandinin et al., 2010) and was intrigued by tensions as they arose time and time again. Using narrative inquiry theory, I understood tensions as the bumping of lives that occurred between students and myself and between

the students themselves. The disjunction between my personal practical knowledge as a teacher bumped against my positioning as a teacher-researcher with research participants. I sensed tension as the participants, equipped with their personal learner knowledge (), continued to negotiate this new space too. From a narrative inquiry perspective, tensions are understood relationally and are not thought to have a negative weight. Instead, they offer opportunities and ways of creating a space between lives and experiences that can exist in educative ways (Clandinin et al., 2010). What I have learned and hope to impart to others is not to try and smooth over and resolve such tensions. Instead, I call upon researchers and teachers to acknowledge such tensions and their own vulnerability of not-knowing (Vinz, 1997) what to do next. The learning here is not to avoid and solve/resolve such dilemmas, but to learn from a position of un-knowing (Vinz, 1997) where we give up current understandings to 'make gaps and spaces through which to (re)member ourselves as we examine the principals behind our practices' (p. 139). Perhaps by recognising everyday tensions that emerged from the participants' narratives such as 'girls versus boys', 'pretty versus ugly', 'poor versus rich', 'my class versus your class', we may help students and teachers to story themselves and others in ways that bring them closer together, where they acknowledge each other in their individual, plural, uniqueness, and integrity (Todd, 2010). By making such moments visible, I addressed the social justifications of this inquiry where we may also assuage teachers whose first instincts are to solve/resolve and move one rather than pause and attend more closely to such moments.

In my exploration of tension, the work of Adriano Cavarero in 'Relating Narratives Storytelling and Selfhood' (2000) also offered a different reading of my own, and my participants shared experiences and the tensions that arose. In my research, I suggested my arts-based workshops were sites of narrative relations (Cavarero, 2000), where one's

uniqueness was revealed in one's desire to have one's story told. In my case, the story of a beginning teacher-researcher (Forrest et al., 2010). I suggested my arts-based workshops were political sites (Arendt, 1958/1998; Cavarero, 2000) where 'who' I was, was partially revealed in my desire to have my story of a beginning teacher-researcher told. The term 'Political' drew from an Arendtian understanding where 'human beings appear to one another not as physical objects, but as men' (Arendt, 1958/1998: 179-80). Through action and discourse, we reveal to each other our unique identities in a plural and political space and so confirm to identity its 'exhibitive, relational, and contextual nature.' (Cavarero, 200: 22). I understood this act as 'eminently political' (Todd, 2010: 102). Forrest et al (2010) focused on understanding narratives in teacher education in the hope of 'understanding the irresolvable tension of desire to have one's story told' (Forrest et al., 2010: 2), and so I redrew the boundaries of their contention by using my research to foreground the tension between my beginning teacher-researchers story and my life-story. I aimed to emphasize the importance for future practitioners whereby when one enters into the midst of a narrative inquiry and assumes that there is a tangible 'right way' to act for each possible situation, is to misinterpret the nature of practical judgement (Forrest et al., 2010). Believing such a re-enactment is possible, by trying to live an ideal story, is to exacerbate the illusion of this unity, the resolution of one's story and hence one's disappointment (Forrest et al., 2010). In recognizing the inescapability of the desire to know one's life story in its completeness, future teacher-researchers may come to understand that the disjunction between the stories they tell about their practice as teacher-researchers and the life they live is not irreconcilable with their ideals (Forrest et al., 2010). In the previous sections, I outlined the personal, practical, and social justifications of my inquiry, and so I move to the final section, where I outline the theoretical justifications.

9.4: Students' experiences and the impact of YCDI on their lives

There is ample research into the efficacy of SEL programs on student development (Payton et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Corcoran et al., 2018), as well as studies on the positive impact of YCDI (Bernard 2006a; 2006b, 2006c; Bernard & Pires 2006; Ashdown & Bernard, 2011; Bernard & Walton, 2011; Dayan, 2016; Yamamoto, Matsumoto, & Bernard, 2017). My research adds to this body of literature in a new way by presenting local, contextual, and particular knowledge about students' understanding and experiences of the YCDI program, making connections to the CASEL SEL competencies, while also posing challenging questions regarding its operation in schools. In seeking to narratively inquire into students' experiences of each foundation, I leaned in (Pelias, 2011). I listened carefully to their stories in an attempt to access and record a space not easily knowable (Byrne, 2017). Through careful attention to their experiences, through the use of artwork, word images, dialogue vignettes, field notes, and personal journal entries, I sensed their stories being composed within narratives of the YCDI positive habits of mind as outlined in the YCDI Program Achieve curriculum (2006) as well as tracing connections to the five CASEL SEL competencies (CASEL, 2020).

From Janette, Amanda, Dariya, and Katie's experiences of Organisation, I sensed the impact, as well as their knowing and understanding of the foundation being composed within narratives of the YCDI positive habit of mind of 'Planning my Time' (YCDI, 2006) and readiness, both as students and young people on and off the school landscape. Amanda and Janette described their preparations before their dance competitions. Dariya offered a sense of her readiness as she taught herself how to draw unicorns and Katie's preparation and engagement in the process of writing her prize-winning story about spies. Through

their tellings, I sensed the impact of the YCDI foundation of Organisation in their lives through their stories of preparedness while also tracing connections to the CASEL competence of self-management where students learn the skills of setting personal and collective goals, as well as planning and organizational skills (CASEL, 2020). Their intimate experiences highlighted their personal understanding and their living out of the foundation on and off the school landscape. In Dariya's story, we also saw how YCDI can be used as a lens to engage in meaning-making in the present by drawing from experiences in the past.

For Katie, Amanda, and Dariya, I sensed their stories of Confidence and its impact being composed within narratives of the YCDI positive habits of mind of 'Taking Risks' (YCDI, 2006) - Katie's story of singing for her friend, Amanda's story of performing with the 'Jazz Hands' group; and 'Being independent' (YCDI, 2006) - Dariya's story of attending ballet class and raising her hand even if she had the wrong answer. Through their tellings, I sensed the impact of the YCDI foundation of Confidence in their lives as they took risks and engaged in independent behaviour while also tracing connections to the SEL competence of self-awareness and self-management (CASEL, 2020).

Through Farrah, Dariya, and Katie's stories of Getting Along, I sensed their experiences being composed within narratives of the YCDI positive habit of mind of 'Social Responsibility' (YCDI, 2006). Stories of social responsibility were felt in Farrah's story of a girl receiving help from a stranger in a time of need; in Dariya's story of her gesture of friendship to the lonely girl on the playground; and in Katie's story of an emerging friendship with a boy who she did not have a good relationship with it. The Getting Along foundation links closely to the SEL competence of 'Relationship skills' as outlined by CASEL (2020).

Through sharing their experiences, I sensed the impact of the YCDI foundations of Getting Along. They constructed stories nestled within narratives of social responsibility where they lived out caring, thoughtful, and empathetic lives in relation with others on and off the school landscape.

John's timeline – Friday, February 26th, 2021 – Drawing to a close (Pt 3)

What's on your mind?

While I sensed stories being composed and lived out within particular narratives of the YCDI positive habits of mind, I wondered why those habits and not the others. Why were some YCDI narratives and stories lived out by the participants over others? In their experiences of Confidence, I sensed stories composed and lived out within the positive habits of mind of 'Taking Risks' and 'Being Independent' but few within narratives of 'Accepting Myself' – the ability to not think badly of yourself when you make a mistake (Program Achieve, 2006). In experiences of Getting Along, I sensed stories composed and lived out within narratives of the positive habit of mind of 'Social Responsibility' yet not in 'Being Tolerant of Others' – accepting that everyone acts unfairly from time to time but that we shouldn't judge people's characters based on these occurrences, or 'Thinking First' – when someone mistreats us, we need to think of alternative ways we can react and consider the consequences of those actions (Program Achieve, 2006).

YCDI Program Achieve (2006) describes several negative habits of mind that lead to poor emotional resilience such as 'Self-Downing', 'Needing To Be Perfect', 'Needing Approval', 'I Can't do It', 'I Can't Be Bothered', and 'Being Intolerant of Others'. They also offer alternative positive habits of mind, which are needed to counteract such ways of thinking. Such ways of thinking are drawn from other foundations such as 'Accepting Myself' (Confidence), 'Taking Risks' (Confidence), 'Being Independent' (Confidence), 'I Can Do It' (Persistence), 'Working Tough' (Persistence) and 'Being Tolerant of Others' (Getting Along). Baahir, Katie, and Farrah shared Resilience experiences and how they overcame moments of hardship, adversity, and trauma. From their tellings, I sensed their knowing and understanding of Resilience being composed within narratives of over-coming and bouncing

back. Baahir over-came the trauma he experienced while engaging in the school safe cycle program; Katie bounced back from the trauma of nearly breaking her arm while playing chase on the schoolyard; and Farrah's story of overcoming psychological damage done by others through name-calling. The YCDI foundation of Resilience relates closely to the CASEL (2012) SEL competence of self-management and the ability to effectively regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in adverse conditions. Such self-regulation can be described as gaining control over attention, emotions, and behaviour (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998) and speaks to a child's ability to govern their emotions and behaviour and self-soothe or calm themselves (Alvord & Grados, 2005). Research indicates that such competencies, attitudes, and dispositions are likely to elicit and foster healthy social relationships with others (Rubin et al., 1995) as well providing protective factors in resilience (Buckner, Mezzacappa, & Beardslee, 2003; Eisenberg et al., 1997, 2003; Werner, 1993). By inquiring into Baahir, Katie, and Farrah's experiences, I sensed the effect of the YCDI foundation of Resilience in their lives both on and off the school landscape through their ability to discuss traumatic experiences using age-appropriate language and to apply YCDI strategies to help them overcome and triumph in the face of adversity.

By attending to Aabir and Christopher's Persistence stories, I sensed their experiences being composed within narratives of the YCDI positive habits of mind of 'Giving Effort' and 'Working Tough' (YCDI, 2006). Aabir described his passion for playing with the school team and his commitment to getting up early to train even when he didn't want to. Christopher described his effort and dedication when completing a writing task to the best of his ability. This effort led to him winning the YCDI student of the week award for Persistence. Their experiences speak of the skills students need to succeed academically, and I sensed traces of these in both their stories (Ashdown & Bernard, 2011). I also saw

how Persistence might impact the social and physical development of children and the indirect effect it may have on maintaining and strengthening relationships, as sensed in Aabir's commitment to training with his teammates. CASEL (2012) describes the skills of possessing a well-grounded sense of optimism in the SEL competence of 'self-awareness'; self-motivation and working toward achieving personal and academic goals in the SEL competence of 'self-management'; making constructive decisions based on the realistic consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others in the SEL competence of 'responsible decision making'. By attending to Aabir and Christopher's stories, we gained a sense of the impact of the YCDI foundation of Persistence in their lives as they composed narratives of 'Giving Effort' and 'Working Tough' (YCDI, 2006), where such skills can also be traced across multiple CASEL SEL competencies (2012, 2020).

*John's timeline – Friday, February 26th, 2021 – Drawing to a close (Pt 4)
What's on your mind?*

It seemed the participants' knowing, living, and understanding of the foundations were composed within particular narratives of the positive habits of mind while not others. This emerging understanding might open up conversations about teachers' fidelity when teaching the program and to what is being taught and why. Research tells us that many schools use intervention programs with poor fidelity (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Ringwalt et al., 2009) and that there is a wide gap between research and practice in school based prevention and promotion (Durlak et al., 2011). What learning and YCDI stories/positive habits of mind are seen as necessary by the teachers and perhaps the school? Which are seen as less important? Are there dominant YCDI stories that come alongside and support school stories more easily, like the code of behaviour, the anti-bullying policy, the school ethos, or 'Goodness Me, Goodness You' the multi-belief and values program? Perhaps such stories lend themselves to the smooth running of the school and classrooms, and so over time, these stories become more dominant and leave other aspects of the YCDI program in their wake. These are curious questions that emerged throughout my inquiry that I hope will challenge others to engage in further research to deepen our understanding of how such programs operate in ways that speak to narratives of marginalization, power, and control (Wood, 2018a; 2018b).

9.5: New understandings of narrative as methodology and phenomena

John's timeline – Friday, February 26th, 2021 – Drawing to a close (Pt 4)

What's on your mind?

As I read Grace's email, many questions race through my mind. Why did I choose an arts-based narrative inquiry? Why did I adopt writing as inquiry as a mode of research and presentation? What did I learn about the methodology and phenomena as a result? I remember, as I started, I had the idea of researching the YCDI program in my school. From the literature, there was already robust quantitative research that indicated the positive impact of SEL programs in schools and the positive impact of YCDI. So what did I want to achieve that would add to this body of literature? From the outset, I was passionate about my school and the lives of the children. What I felt was glaringly absent from many studies on SEL intervention programs, and YCDI were children's intimate, contextual, and personally meaningful experiences of the foundations and the program. First and foremost, my research puzzle was framed around gaining insight into these experiences. This exploration led to new understandings about YCDI experiences, tensions, identity formation, and how YCDI stories worked on students in unknown ways. Using a narrative inquiry methodology, I was equipped with the theoretical tools and insight to bring these experiences and stories, these phenomena, to life. By adopting an arts-based approach, my work brought to light how this group of students experienced the YCDI foundations and the program's impact in creative and curious ways. It opened up avenues and spaces to share marginalized, sometimes controversial, and disruptive perspectives (Estrella & Forinash, 2007) and attending to the participants' multiple ways of knowing and seeing the world (Butler-Kisber, 2008). I remember Aabir's interpretation of Janette's 'Colourful Crash' artwork and how it led to him storying himself as a sensitive, empathetic, and reflective boy whose way of being was disrupted by seeing another boy being mistreated. Using writing as inquiry, I wished to understand myself and my participants reflexively, and so I wrote from particular positions at particular times (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005), which freed me from 'trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone' (p.1414).

Part of the challenge of engaging in narrative inquiry is to advance methodological and disciplinary knowledge. My methodological approach highlighted the value of engaging in ABR and outlining the practical steps I undertook. I shared the steps involved and how my

approach was both arts-based (Mello, 2007) and arts-informed (Duarte, 1996; Bach, 1998), and so my work offers insight to others who wish to engage in similar research.

During the exploration of my epistemological and ontological dimension, I also came alongside the work of Gert Biesta. His work offered helpful insights about education and educational research and opened up new ways of knowing and understanding in the context of my inquiry. His theoretical understanding, along with Dewey's, highlighted understanding as the ultimate education purpose of my inquiry, rooted within a paradigm of education as cultivation. Curiously, through Baahir's, Christopher's and Dariya's 'already being' stories, perhaps we also sensed ways this paradigm may shift to that of subjectification, where one's 'I' steps forward and stands for the challenge to lead their own life (Biesta, 2019).

Throughout this inquiry, I have used many theoretical tools to express my understanding of narrative as both method and phenomena. I used the term 'stories to live by' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999) to express how students constructed their identities. I used the term 'bumping stories' (Clandinin et al., 2006) to describe emerging tensions that arose. I conceptualized Scoil Firtéar as a 'storied professional knowledge landscape' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 1996) filled with students and staff members' lives. By adopting a child centric approach, I extended the concept of teacher's personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). I tentatively introduced a new term, students 'personal learner knowledge' (), in the hope of offering new language and ways of knowing and understanding the folding and unfolding of student lives.

During my inquiry, I inhabited a space with students where a multiplicity of positions seemed to coexist. I was at once a teacher and a teacher-researcher, and they the students and research participants. I sensed my personal practical knowledge being unpicked and

disrupted as my story came alongside theirs. Yet, I wished to attend more carefully to students, so I wondered about their knowledge as school learners. From this beginning, I reorientated the idea of personal practical knowledge to introduce personal learner knowledge as a means of knowing students as ‘knowledgeable and knowable’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988: 25) and to ‘take children seriously as witnesses to their experiences no matter where they “fit” into child development discourses’ (Luttrell, 2020: 24). This new term explicates students’ knowledge as personal, experiential, and shaped by their beliefs and values. It is also practical, and so it is curated and constructed by their intimate knowing of being learners on the school landscape, where they live out stories of being and becoming that unfold alongside their peers, teachers, school management, and others who step onto the school landscape. Through sharing children’s stories and stories of children (Clandinin et al., 2006), I gained insight into their personal learner knowledge. This knowledge is not static, and so while I gained a sense of this knowledge from their shared experiences, I suggested that in the moment of sharing, it is at the same time being made, remade, and constructed anew in relation with others. My aim in introducing this term is to develop a language to better discern how student knowledge is held and expressed (Clandinin et al., 2006). I tentatively suggest that many student tellings were narrative constructions drawn from, while simultaneously adding to, their personal learner knowledge () and that such stories arose from their intimate, social, and traditional values, beliefs, and experiences (Clandinin et al., 2006) that were made visible and manifested themselves through discourse and interactions with others.

*John’s timeline – Friday, February 26th, 2021 – Drawing to a close (Pt 5)
What’s on your mind?*

I remember Grace’s advice to keep the readers reading and make my thesis a page-turner. Deleuze (1993/1997: 1) described writing ‘as a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes

beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience.’ These words inspired me to think of the writing process as something more than just words on a page. I wanted to capture the energy and essence of the workshops and honour and present all eight participants’ lives so that readers would gain a familiar sense of each child. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) tell us that ‘language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where one’s sense of self—one’s subjectivity—is constructed’ (p.1413). and so I turned to word-images (Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Clandinin et al., 2006; Huber, 2008) to achieve my goal. Using co-created interim texts, my field notes, and personal journal entries, I began the process of piecing together story fragments to create word images for each participant. I acknowledged this process as highly interpretive and that such writing was always ‘partial, local, and situational and that our selves are always present no matter how hard we try to suppress them’ (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005: 1415). I stitched together story fragments that drew together narrative threads that reverberated across student stories. In this process, new meanings and new realities were created that direct us to ‘understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times...it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone’ (p.1414)

9.6: Wonderings

*John’s timeline – Friday, February 26th, 2021 – Drawing to a close (Pt 5)
What’s on your mind?*

I wonder about the lives of the participants. Where are they now? How are they doing in school? I have sat with their stories and experiences for the past four years, moving betwixt and between them. I have rewritten and restoried their experiences alongside mine with the hope of learning and understanding something new. They’ve taught me so much, more than I could ever have imagined. I hope readers of this work will learn from them too. I think of the story I told as I started. I was delighted to have been accepted into a PhD program without fully knowing where the journey would take me. I learned to live with my sense of unease. I had to. I had no choice. No narrative inquiry is clear cut from the beginning. I learned to be persistent and to work through dilemmas I faced. I think about the story I lived as I came alongside the participants. When I entered their lives, they were in the midst of the bustling school landscape of Scoil Firtéar. Since then, they have moved on to post-primary school, and I wonder what their memories of the workshops are. How do they remember me? What stories would they tell about me now? I entered the workshops as a beginning teacher-researcher, so unsure of myself. Now, what of me? The school landscape has shifted and changed much since I last entered it. Close colleagues and friends have

moved to different schools to be replaced by younger faces with new stories to tell. Nothing stays the same. Nothing is ever truly finished. The school principal has taken up a new role and has left the school also. So many changes. I wonder and worry about what my relationship with the new principal will be like. I still work as a school advisor, and I haven't been a teacher in Scoil Firtéar in 3 years. What will it be like when I return? Will I recognize the place? What will I be like? Will my colleagues recognize me? What new school stories will I encounter? The story I live and tell now is forever in flux. The stories the students lived and told are also changed. I cannot say what I have become because I now understand that I am always in the process of becoming. I cannot write succinctly or comprehensively enough about what I've learned because I've learned so much. I return to poetic forms of presentation as my final thoughts and wonderings coalesce and take shape.

Wonderings poem

*I think about
our time together
What did you learn?
What did you teach me?
I think about
your stories to live by*

*Christopher's stories
of uncertainty
and not knowing what to do
of 'already being'
winning YCDI awards
and caring for his brothers
of the silences between us
all taught me
to move slowly
and attend to silences
his stories
of care
of living on the edges
composed within
familial
and school narratives*

*Aabir's stories
of being strong
confident
and competitive*

*yet sensitive
empathetic
and reflective
taught me
about wide awakesness
and wakefulness
his stories
of competition
and tension
composed within
familial
community
and school narratives*

*Baahir's stories
of being co-operative
thoughtful
and quietly confident
of 'already being'
taught me
to awaken
to world travelling
he was a victim
of my arrogant perception
his stories
of over-coming
composed within
familial
and school narratives*

*Janette's stories
of bravery
and confidence
of being
a new student
encountering YCDI
she called me 'John'
and so made visible
positioning and power relations
her stories
of competition
and tension
composed within
community
school
and friendship narratives*

Amanda's stories

*of caring
compassion
commitment
and performing
taught me to move
toward an ethics of care
and relational ethics
of being and belonging
her stories
of care
and togetherness
composed within
familial
community
and school narratives*

*Dariya's stories
of creativity
imagination
and resistance
of independence
self-reliance
and self-awareness
taught me
to attend with
a sense of uncertainty
and not knowing
her stories
of friendship and resistance
composed within
familial
and school narratives*

*Farrah's story
of fitting in,
of not having much,
of winning YCDI awards
and her silent stories
of Akeem
taught me
to attend to
and with
silence and contemplation
her stories
of making an effort,
tension,
and fitting in
composed within*

*familial, school,
and friendship narratives*

*Katie's stories
of being creative
diligent
and hardworking
of her new story of
friendship with Janette
Taught me
to attend
to shifting stories
her stories
of diligence, hard work
and tension
composed within
familial,
friendship
and school narratives*

*My stories
of being a good student
a good teacher
and becoming a teacher-researcher
taught me
to think narratively
about lives in school
and YCDI
school stories
to acknowledge
tensions
and dilemmas
the bumping of lives
and my burning desire
to have
my story told
I was vulnerable
uncertain
and hesitant
I still am
and knowing this
sets me free
and opens up
the world...*

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