REVERBERATIONS OF NARRATIVE INQUIRY
How resonant echoes of an inquiry with early school leavers shaped further inquiries

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In this paper we draw on two Canadian narrative inquiries: the first study inquired into the experiences of youth who left school before graduating; the second study inquired into the experiences of Aboriginal youth and families in an urban junior high school. Our scholarly and personal interests intertwine in these two studies as we understand lives narratively, as unfolding, enfolding, nested compositions. The first narrative inquiry raised wonders for us about the experiences of many youth, but particularly Aboriginal youth, in schools. Out of these lingering wonders, we framed a second narrative inquiry into the educational experiences, both in and out of school, of youth and families of Aboriginal heritage. Our research puzzles were framed around collaboratively inquiring into the home/community/school experiences of Aboriginal youth and families and the ways that these experiences are shaped by cultural, social, historical, linguistic, and institutional narratives. Our intent in this methodological paper is not to show the results of either study but to show how inquiry threads from one study shape further narrative inquiries. In order to show the reverberations across the two studies, we pull forward some of study one and outline briefly the design and purposes of study two.

Keywords: narrative inquiry, experiences of youth, inquiry threads

Introduction

In this paper we draw on two studies, one study (Clandinin et al., 2010) that is finished and a second (Caine et al., 2010) that grew out of this first finished project. These two pro-

jects have been undertaken with two different, but overlapping, groups of researchers: the first included Pam Steeves, Yi Li, Joy Ruth Mickelson, George Buck, Marni Pearce, Vera Caine, Sean Lessard, Claire Desrochers, Marion Stewart, Marilyn Huber, and Jean Clandinin; the second included three members of the previous group, Sean Lessard, Vera Caine, and Jean Clandinin and added Simmee Chung, Trudy Cardinal, Shauna Bruno, Florence Glanfield, and Dwayne Donald. The researchers in both studies work within the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development, a research space in which collaborative research is valued. Our purpose in this paper is not to report the results of either study but to show how the work in one study shaped our work in the design and living out of a subsequent project.

Our scholarly and personal interests intertwine in both of these projects as we understand lives narratively, as unfolding, enfolding, nested compositions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2006). Following Dewey's (1938) ideas on education as experience, we work with others to attend to lives in the making, lives in motion. For the most part, Clandinin has come alongside teachers, student teachers, children, parents and others as their lives met in schools and, while she may have spent time with them in places such as homes and other social places, they began their inquiries together in schools. By this we draw attention to how schools were the common ground of meeting and to how they moved in and out of schools, telling, in their words, actions, and bodies, stories of their knowing and of their identities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Caine's studies have been alongside young women as they composed their lives outside of schools (Caine, 2010a), as well as alongside a teacher and students in a classroom (Caine, 2010b).

In the completed study, *A narrative inquiry into the experiences of youth who left school early* (Clandinin et al., 2010), we became intrigued by the life-composing of youth who left school prior to high school completion so we might learn more about their storied experiences, recognizing that their lives in school were only part of their much larger life compositions. We were interested in learning of their lives and, perhaps through learning about their lives, we wanted to learn more about our lives as educators and more about schools. Our overall intentions were, in part, to learn about what we call stories of school and about how we might begin to shift those stories. The research was not an intervention study, but we hoped that what we learned might shift policies and practices around youth who left school prior to graduating.

Our research puzzles were to explore how the experiences of youth shaped their leaving school early and to explore how their experiences of leaving school early shaped their lives. Our puzzle was situated in a concern for understanding youths' life-making in all of the layered complexities of their lives in and out of schools. In this narrative inquiry, we, a group of 11 researchers, came alongside, that is, engaged in a series of conversations with, 19 youth. The

criteria for inclusion of participants were that the youth had to be between the ages of 18 to 21, have left school before graduating, and had been out of school for more than a year. We invited youth whose life experiences were diverse, that is, they lived in rural, urban, and suburban places, included males and females, youth of diverse heritages, youth of different family groupings, youth of different socio-economic groupings and so on. We did not engage with the youths' previous teachers or meet these youth in schools. We met the youth in the midst of their complex, ongoing lives, lives that had not yet included high school graduation. We engaged with each youth in a series of conversations shaped by our overall research puzzles around how their lives shaped their leaving of school and how leaving school shaped their lives. We met in coffee shops, offices, cafes, diners, libraries – two of the youth also took us back to the junior high schools they had attended. As we thought about our work we played with the term story constellations (Craig, 2007) to think about the diverse set of story constellations that the youth lived within as they engaged with us in the study. While Craig used the idea of story constellations to illustrate the web of stories from which, and within which, we are each composing lives, the term, for us, also directed our attention to the constellation of places within which the youth lived as well as to the places within which they shared their lives with us.

The field texts (or data) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) were, for the most part, transcripts of one-on-one conversations with each youth. We also wrote field notes on our conversations with the youth and on other contacts we had with the youth. Some of the youth engaged in drawing about their experiences and some youth also shared memory box artifacts.

We engaged in two levels of what might be called analysis or interpretation. In the first level of analysis, as we moved from field texts to research texts, each inquirer composed a narrative account of his/her unique experiences with the young person with whom s/he had engaged in conversations. Some inquirers worked with only one youth, others worked with more than one. Following Clandinin and Connelly (2000), we were attentive to the three dimensional narrative inquiry space of sociality, temporality and place. We drafted narrative accounts and negotiated them with each participant until each youth felt we had an account that represented something of who they were and were becoming. The term narrative account, or perhaps narrative accounting, allows us to give an account, an accounting, a representation, of the unfolding of lives, both participants and researchers, at least as they became visible in those times and places where our stories intersected and were shared. Narrative accounts are a way, then, to show the layered relationships between researcher and participant as we make visible how we co-compose. In using the term narrative account, we strive for a sense of being responsible to each other and to our negotiated relationships as

well as to our negotiated texts. We work toward a sense of mutuality and co-composition in what we write.

In the second level of analysis, all 11 members of the research team looked across the 19 individual narrative accounts to inquire into resonant threads or patterns that we could discern. We engaged in this process as a collaborative research team. We did so in order to offer a deeper and broader awareness of the experiences of early school leavers with an overall intention to open up new wonders and questions about early school leaving and, in part, to help us learn more about schools and how to shape them in ways that might be more responsive to the life-composing of all youth. We identified six resonant threads.

Narrative accounts in the first study

In the overall study, the team of 11 researchers composed 19 narrative accounts. We share only fragments from three of the accounts here because of space limitations. These fragments are drawn from much longer narrative accounts. All of the accounts were negotiated with participants. The participants all have pseudonyms. We share from the accounts of two youth with whom Clandinin worked and from one of the accounts of a youth with whom Lessard worked.

1. Andrew (Jean Clandinin)

As I listened to Andrew tell of the place of sports in his life, he said «it has always been about basketball, in junior high too, but, like the teachers in junior high, they seemed more caring and understanding so I kinda like got along with them, like really well». Sports were the central thread in his life and it was being able to play sports, particularly basketball, that kept him involved.

> I'd just go to school and play basketball and I had good times in doing, like, school stuff, so, and in high school, it was a big change from how the teachers were in junior high to high school so then that's like when I was, I just, like, really focused on just wanting to play basketball.

Andrew continued to play sports, mainly basketball, both in and out of school, during his junior high school years. He spoke of the support of his junior high school physical education teacher whose daughter he met while playing «club basketball». By the end of junior high school he had to choose one sport and concentrate on it and he chose basketball. He did,

however, mention that when he was in Grade 11 he played some volleyball on the school team «for fun».

When it came time to choose a high school, Andrew selected a high school because of their interest in having him play basketball. As he said, «'cause I just liked the, I had been talking to the coach since I was in, like Grade 6, so, kinda like had a bond there so I decided to go there». He agreed when I said, «So it's been about basketball for a long time». Andrew's story of himself was composed around being a basketball player.

By the time he was in high school, Andrew was not particularly interested in any subject area. As he said,

> I was interested just 'cause I know I needed that to go somewhere else with basketball, but it wasn't really something, like, I'd just make sure I'd get, like, a high percentage, I'd just make sure I'd get, like, the passing grade just so I could keep playing. So I wasn't really putting all my hard work into it [school work].

Andrew left high school in his final term of Grade 12.

2. Skye songmaker (Sean Lessard)

«I didn't always understand my work and I am too shy to ask for help, I felt dumb.» She told me often during our conversations that she struggled with the schoolwork and it was different than what she had learned on the reserve; the pace was too fast. She told me: «Do you know that I am actually smart, Lessard? I was the class valedictorian in my grade nine class at the reserve». I replied by simply saying, «I know you are».

She told me about her feelings coming to a new place and how she often felt low as a student. She told of one of her first days in class. The class went to a driving range to play golf. She was excited because golf was her favourite sport. However, she missed the school bus because she was not familiar with public transportation in this new city. She arrived late to the driving range having walked there alone. The teacher stopped class and told everybody to «look at who is late». He asked where she was. She replied, «I am not a city person, I got lost». He laughed and said, «Are you sure about that? Are you sure you didn't get lost at the mall?». With everyone looking at her, they laughed. Skye did not remember many stories from high school but this story stayed with her long after. She said, «I felt like quitting right there and going home. But then he would have been right about me». That day at the driving range, «I felt like he thought I was just another dumb Indian».

The girls (Skye and her sisters who had unexpectedly joined Sean and Skye in the conversation) recalled times in the past when their mom and dad taught them sports, dancing, and

culture. (In this work with Skye, Sean used the term culture to draw attention to cultural teachings and traditions.) They laughed when they told stories and corrected each other along the way. As they told stories, they moved backwards in time to intergenerational connections they shared with their cultural roots. They told me they had been practicing and learning about culture and traditional dancing since they were babies. I know by walking alongside them that their cultural roots come from a place. The passing down of knowledge through participation is a thread that weaves throughout their lives. The cultural stories and knowledge started before them, before their parents, as they told stories about their grandfather, a gifted man, a song maker and singer. He was a very spiritual person with special gifts. The girls spoke proudly of their grandmothers and grandfathers and how culture had always existed in their family.

Skye left high school before graduating.

3. Truong (Jean Clandinin)

Truong became a father to a daughter two and a half years ago. His daughter lives with her mother, but Truong and his mother have access to the child on the weekends. He describes his daughter as putting «joy in my life».

> When I see her laughing and playing around it's just like the greatest thing. So when she, like, you know, she gives me like kisses and hugs and stuff, it's like it's a good thing to me right because I'm not used to it, like, I've never kissed my mom in my life that I can remember. I've never, I've maybe hugged her once my whole life so I mean this kind of stuff is different to me. But she is my daughter and I do love her. And she is, she is the joy in my life.

I wonder if his daughter has, in some ways, interrupted the stories he was living and telling. Did her arrival and his knowing he was a father shift the trajectory of his forward looking story?

As we talked, Truong spoke of his experiences of leaving school. He had played on the volleyball team in Grades 10 and 11 and had experienced a great deal of success. But Grade 12 was different.

> And then Grade 12 came around and there was no more volleyball (…) and so I was, like, whatever, I don't really feel like going to school anymore. I got kicked out second semester of Grade 12. Like, I did go to my classes and stuff but I was more of, oh I'm late, forget it, I don't want to go anymore or you know, stuff like that and I just didn't have motivation to go anywhere.

In Grades 10 and 11, he said

If I was late I'd still go to school, if I didn't have a ride to school I would bus to school but in Grade 12 if I didn't have a ride I was, ah, I'm staying home today. If it's cold or, like, I bussed to school in Grade 10 a couple of times during the winter and stuff, right, and like, you know, but that's 'cause I had a game or practice or something after school so I wanted to be there.

As he looked back over this time in high school, he said, «the only things I really cared about in high school were basically my friends and volleyball».

He had a «distinctive hair style» and was described as «the Asian guy with the bangs 'cause I had, like, spiky hair with two long strands coming down the sides». He spoke of his teachers in high school in the following way:

Like a lot of teachers, I don't know if they liked me (…) but a lot of coaches and teachers and stuff knew who I was. They knew me for, like, the person that I was and stuff but the principal or the student counsellor or whatever didn't really care, didn't, like, I've known a lot of kids that got so many chances, like they, they fought or whatever, they got kicked out of school and then they would come back and everything's good and stuff, right, but with me it was like OK, come to the office, you're expelled because you skipped too much. And I'm like OK well, what am I going to do, I'm not going to cry about it right?

As Truong told me these stories about not being given second chances as others had been, I sensed he had learned to accept such treatment and to not fight back. He described that he «was like my own person with my own friends». Truong has tried to complete high school. He tried to register «when I was about 18 or 19» in order to «finish up». He attributes his desire to complete high school to the birth of his daughter. He became a father at 19. «That's why I kind of wanted to go back to school and finish up too 'cause she was my motivation for it.»

Truong has spent his life taking care of others with whom he has relationships. He worked from when he was about 15, at first with «under the table pay» when he «washed dishes and stuff for the restaurant» where his mom was the cook. The money he earned then was to «just kind of take care of myself and my mom didn't have to worry about me too much right, like, I'd have lunch money or whatever». He learned early to help out with the finances at home, to take care of himself to save his mother from even more financial worry.

Truong has been a watchful big brother to his two younger siblings. «I built the rep of people being scared of me and stuff like that so my little brother and my little sister can go through school peacefully.» He learned to live and tell stories of himself as a tough guy, someone to be scared of, in order to provide his siblings with protection from harm. As he said, «I kinda lived the life that I lived basically for them to go through school and I've tried, I did everything that I can for them to graduate and stuff right, to go through school peacefully».

Truong left high school before graduating.

These fragments of three narrative accounts offer some sense of the lives of the youth, particularly something of how their lives shaped their leaving of school and how leaving school early shaped their lives.

Resonances across the narrative accounts

In the second level analysis as a collaborative group, we looked across the narrative accounts and identified what we called resonant threads, threads that echoed and reverberated across the accounts. In what follows we provide brief explanations of each thread.

Thread 1: conversational spaces

The importance of conversational spaces for telling and retelling life stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) became evident in the research conversations. We wondered if such conversation spaces along the way might have helped some of the youth feel less alone in composing their lives within complex institutional, social, cultural, linguistic and familial narratives (Clandinin et al., 2006).

Thread 2: relationships

The importance of relationships to the youths was multidimensional and became visible throughout our research. The participants' relationships with family, peers, programs of study, and teachers, as well as the interruption of relationships through disruptions and transitions, exemplified the significance of relationship – connection and association – when we thought about early school leaving.

Thread 3: identities

The youths were composing their identities on elementary, junior high, and senior high school landscapes as well as on complex home and community landscapes. While they saw themselves composing who they were and were becoming, they did not tell their stories as dropouts. A number of them actively resisted the label of dropout, telling their stories around plotlines of «not in school, for now». Their forward looking stories included school.

Thread 4: complexities across time

Looking across multiple narrative accounts, we were struck by the complexity of stories lived when whole lives were considered. When early school leaving was seen as a complex set of storied events composed over time, the notion of a discrete decisions or factors in dropping out of school became problematic. Complexity in composing lives over time became evident in the lives of the youths who left school early.

Thread 5: responsibilities

Relational responsibility threads were evident in many of the narrative accounts. Many of the youths were composing lives in which they struggled to balance conflicting responsibilities on home, school, and community landscapes. At times it seemed as though they were trying to compose lives that allowed them to shift between, and across, multiple responsibilities. The institutional, familial, and cultural narratives (Clandinin et al., 2006) in which they were embedded shaped their experiences.

Thread 6: cultural, social, and institutional narratives

All stories are embedded within social, cultural, institutional, and familial narratives that shape, and are shaped by, individual's stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). As we attended to the cultural, social, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which the youth composed their lives, we noted competing plotlines that shaped their stories to live by. The youths' stories spoke of, and to, contradictions between cultural narratives, familial narratives, and stories of school. Caught sometimes in these contradictions, youth were humiliated or embarrassed in front of other students and teachers. Within the institutional landscape, composing an identity seemed to be more challenging than passively accepting one. We understood in deeper ways that there were stories that lived in schools about individuals who were seen only within those institutional, cultural, and social narratives. We understood how difficult it was for the youth to negotiate stories to live by outside the plotlines of those institutional, cultural, and social narratives. Institutional stories such as the «Aboriginal story», the «athlete story», and the «gender» story shaped institutional narratives, that is, stories of school, and sometimes became, in Carr's (1986) terms, a story to live out or to live up to. Being shaped by those institutional plotlines shaped many tensions for youth.

These six resonant threads spoke to the complexities of the lives the youth were compo-sing. Their lives awakened us to what might be possible if we engaged with their stories as a way to open up or disrupt current stories of schools to allow for the reimagining of schools.

Lingering wonders shape another study

As we ended the first study, we wrote our report (Clandinin et al., 2010) for the funding agency and had further conversations with those youth who indicated they wanted to be in touch. What we learned lingered with the three authors of this paper. The youth influenced us a great deal and the reverberations in our stories were intense. School seemed different for each of us now that we saw the ways that these particular youths' lives had been shaped by their leaving of school and by their lives as lived both in and out of schools. Some wonders stayed with us in quite profound ways.

We realized that the early school-leaving rate was particularly high for youth of Aboriginal heritage as well as for some immigrant and refugee youth. We also knew that the move from junior high school to senior high school was a difficult time for many youth and, for some, the transition was just too difficult. They could not negotiate the liminal space of the transition from junior high school to high school (Clandinin, 2011). We only met youth who attended high school in our first study. However, we learned from the participants about the difficulties they had experienced as they moved from junior high schools to high schools.

Current study: coming alongside Aboriginal youth and families

We began to imagine a second study (Caine et al., 2010), one that grew out of those linge-ring wonders. We proposed a new narrative inquiry into the educational experiences, both in and out of school, of youth and families of Aboriginal heritage. The research puzzles that sha-ped our second study were around the educational experiences of youth and their families. Our research puzzles were framed around collaboratively inquiring into the «educational (home/community/school) experiences of Aboriginal youth and families and the ways that these experiences are shaped by cultural, social, historical, linguistic, and institutional narrati-ves» and to «explore, through narrative inquiry, the possibilities for Aboriginal youth and fami-lies to restory their school experiences in a way that will enable educators and educational policy makers to create more educative spaces in school».

This time we wanted to come alongside youth who were between 12 and 15 years old, that is, while they were still attending junior high school. We had come to realize from the first study and from our experiences with youth that junior high was a significant time and place in youths' lives. We wanted to come to know them and to hear their stories of education and schooling and we wanted them to metaphorically and literally «take us home» so we might hear their families' stories of education and schooling. We knew there were intergenerational reverberations from the stories of residential schools that shaped many Aboriginal people's stories of school (Young, 2005).

We spent a long time in the design of the narrative inquiry considering how we would come to meet the youth and to spend time with them. In part, our care with the design of the second study was a reverberation from our experiences with the youth in the first study. We realized we needed a space, that is, a physical place and time, to connect with the youth. We wanted to be outside of the hours of the regular school day so we would neither be in a teacher's classroom nor need to be accountable to the mandated curriculum. We gained permission to work in a junior high school with a fairly high population of urban Aboriginal youth (40% of youth self-identified as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis), but was also a school where Aboriginal youth from a nearby reserve attended school. In our original proposal to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, one of our funding agencies, we appeared to have conveyed an almost utilitarian sense of the space, that is, it would be a space where we could meet junior high students and form relationships with them.

We negotiated, with the permission of the school principal, to meet in a mostly unused classroom in an after school time, a time when school clubs happen, that is, during the time between the 2:37 p.m. afternoon dismissal and 4:00 p.m. We knew the space needed to be invitational and we also wanted it to be purposeful. As we talked about what would happen in that afterschool, in-school, space, we linked it back to our wonders about a resonant thread from our earlier study, the one about conversational spaces.

Creating conversational spaces?

We spent a great deal of time wondering and talking about what conversational spaces might look like. We did not see them as the kinds of spaces that are sometimes created in schools around what is seen as a deficit or problem that one youth or a group of youth are experiencing. Too often those kinds of spaces create a kind of deficit lens from which to view youth. Through such a lens, the youth are seen as less than, rather than in their life complexities. In part, our attentiveness to the kind of space we were designing was another reverbera-

tion from the first study. We wondered how to create spaces where we might learn to attend more to the voices of youth in attempts to change the stories of school. In the first study, as we listened to the youths' stories, we saw schools as narrowly defined places for students to gain prescribed knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In their stories, we heard them speak of leaving their multiplicity, the wholeness of who they are and the stories they are in the midst of living, at the door of the school.

Now with the opportunity for this new study, could the space we created in the school for a small group of youth working together with us over two years and while they were still attending school be a conversation space where we could hear youths' stories of their whole lives, a space in which they could tell of their multiplicity, the wholeness of who they are, and the stories they are in the midst of living? We knew that conversational spaces are not spaces to exchange and confirm already familiar understandings, but, rather, are characterized by emergent occasions for exploring other possible stories. They are relational spaces characterized by mutuality and possibility, where embodied, lived tensions become resources or triggers for telling and retelling stories. Because we also wanted the youth to take us to their families in order that we might learn more of their outside of school, familial curriculum making worlds (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011), we also wanted to create a space where families would want their children to become engaged, knowing that it was a space in the school but outside the mandated school hours. This was a complex undertaking that required a great deal of imagination as we had not yet met the youth and we did not know much about the families. Lessard, as someone familiar with the particular school district in which we planned to work, had some insight into the school but we were, in many ways, trying to imagine up a space (Greene, 1995) that might work for the youth and their families, as well as for us, without knowing the youth and their families.

We decided to fill it with arts activities such as painting, drawing, beading, mask making, drum and rattle making, photography, collage making and so on. We saw art-making as one way to come alongside, to begin to build relationships with the youth. We also considered sports and other physical activities but decided on art-making so the youth could develop arts skills to represent their storied experiences. The invitations to join the space were open to all youth in the school, although we described it as a space for Aboriginal youth. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth came to the afterschool space if they chose to. Their families signed consent forms for them to participate.

As we worked with the youth in the first year of the project, they also helped us shape the space with activities about which they wanted to learn more. In this paper we do not represent the results of our analysis of what was a shifting space as we moved from a focus on relationship building with the youth and engaging in arts activities in order to learn new

art skills to a space where inquiring into the youths' and our lived and told stories began to dominate the space. That shift happened both because some of us (Cardinal, 2011; Chung, 2010) had begun one-on-one inquiries with individual youth and their families but, more importantly, we intentionally shifted what we were doing to an inquiry focus. In our second year, we engaged in conversations with the participating youth about how to begin to use art-making as a way to tell their stories, to inquire into their stories, and to represent the telling and retelling of their stories. As in our first study, the field texts (data) included transcripts of one-on-one conversations with youth, field notes on the activities in the club space, and artifacts that the youth created. The youth have taken up this work in thoughtful and engaged ways. In this paper, we focus our theorizing of this shifting conversational space as a space at the intersection of what we are now calling familial and school curriculum making (Huber et al., 2011).

Worlds of curriculum making and conversational spaces: interweaving concepts

Huber et al. (2011) developed an understanding of two worlds of curriculum making: familial curriculum making, and school curriculum making worlds. For many years now, Clandinin (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) has understood curriculum as a life-making process working from the idea of curriculum as a course of life. As Clandinin and her colleagues continued to focus on identities as stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), and on curriculum as a life-making process (Clandinin et al., 2006), they imagined «how curriculum could be seen as a curriculum of lives» (Huber & Clandinin, 2005: 318). Their understanding of the negotiation of a curriculum of lives as children's and teachers' lives met in classrooms was grounded in the idea that «the composition of life identities, "stories to live by"… [are] central in the process of curriculum making» (2005: 318).

As we used these ideas to reflect on the study with the youth who left school early, we heard many instances where the composing of stories to live by, like Andrew's stories to live by as a basketball player, and Skye's stories to live by as a strong student and a golf player, were integrally interwoven with their curriculum making in schools. When their stories to live by bumped against the mandated curriculum making, their stories to live by were interrupted and disrupted (Clandinin et al., 2006).

In the early work on curriculum making (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Clandinin et al., 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), curriculum making was seen as only occurring in schools. As we began the work with the early school leavers, we worked from this assumption and understood that, while youth came to school embodying and living out their experiences

from out of school, curriculum making occurred in in-school places. However, Huber et al. (2011) argued there was another place of curriculum making. In their research they showed that families co-compose with their children and youth a kind of curriculum outside of school. They described various features of these places of familial curriculum making: features that attended to the multiplicity and diversity of people who engage in each child's familial curriculum making, the intergenerational features of the curriculum making, the place of response in familial curriculum making, and a view of life in the making. They found children and youth experienced many tensions as they moved between their familial and school curriculum-making places. Children embodied these tensions as they lived in these two curriculum-making places. In their work they showed ways in which attention to children's embodied tensions makes visible the gaps and silences children experienced as they lived in, and between, these two curriculum-making places.

The conceptualization of two curriculum-making places was useful as we revisited our first study with the youth who left school early. Many gaps and silences became visible as we attended to their lives in these two curriculum making places. We saw, for example, that Truong's responsibilities to care for others in his family did not fit in his school curriculum making. Thinking about Truong's two places of curriculum making, we became more attentive to the conflicting plotlines that Truong lived within.

Huber et al. (2011) also argued that these two places of curriculum making comprised two worlds in Lugones' (1987) understandings of «worlds» and «"world"-travelling». Lugones wrote that a «world» need not be a construction of a whole society. Lugones wrote from her experience as an «outsider to the mainstream», as a woman «of color in the US» (1987: 3) to develop her concept of world travelling. Drawing on her work, Huber et al. (2011) wrote that Lugones «saw herself as needing to "travel" to different worlds, worlds in which she constructs herself and her worlds in which she is "stereotypically" or "arrogantly" perceived or constructed by others» (2011: 108). Further they wrote that

> we see that not only are children's and youths' worlds of familial and school curriculum making shaped by differing physical places but also by differing ways of being and interacting and, therefore, of knowing and knowledge. In our exploration of the tensions children experienced in school curriculum making entered onto familial landscapes, we saw the emergence of conflicting stories. (p. 108)

As we revisited the work with the early school leavers using these ideas, we again saw many instances of the emergence of conflicting stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), stories where the youth experienced stories where the plotlines in their stories to live by conflicted one with another. For example, in Skye's stories we heard her stories in which she was a top student, a strong golf player and a dancer. Her stories to live by were carefully nurtured in

her familial curriculum making world. When she arrived in the urban school world, the world of school curriculum making, she learned she was constructed as an «Indian» who did not attend school regularly but spent her time at the mall. She carried this tension in her body as she moved between her familial world of curriculum making and the school world of curriculum making.

In Lugones' (1987) description of «worlds» and «"world"-travelling», she described that «those of us who are "world"-travellers have the distinct experience of being different in different "worlds" and of having the capacity to remember other "worlds" and ourselves in them» (p. 11).

As Huber et al. (2011) showed, children engage in this «world»-travelling over days, weeks, months and years as they move back and forth between home and school and, in this movement, experience multiple tensions in both worlds. Lugones described this «shift from being one person to being a different person» as «travel» (1987: 11). Travel is being constructed, and constructing oneself differently, in different worlds. For example, Skye, in composing and living out two different stories of who she is and who she is becoming in her school curriculum making world and familial curriculum making world, seemed to understand that she needed to animate both constructions of herself depending upon which curriculum making world she was inhabiting in any particular moment.

> In a «world» some of the inhabitants may not understand or hold the particular construction of them that constructs them in that «world». So, there may be «worlds» that construct me in ways that I do not even understand. Or it may be that I understand the construction, but do not hold it of myself. I may not accept it as an account of myself, a construction of myself. And yet, I may be *animating* such a construction. (Lugones, 1987: 10, italics in original)

Skye gave us a sense that she knew this as she stayed on the golf course rather than leave in the face of her teacher's racist remark. She knew that she was Aboriginal and her physical appearance, the skin she wore, animated the teacher's construction of her. She stayed but recognized her resistance to the stereotypical story of her that was called up by the teacher's remark.

We now are hearing similar stories from the youth in our current study, stories that construct them as Indian, Native, and often as less than. We also are hearing stories of their lives as dancers, grandchildren, siblings, and those who attend to, or are cared for by, others. In the art club, we struggled to create a space located in the physical place of school but within an afterschool time, a space we were attempting to construct as a space between multiple curriculum making worlds. In our struggle to shift the space by working alongside the youth and each other, we learned to travel to other worlds, both their other worlds and our other worlds,

to be and interact in different ways. As we moved into the second year of the current study, we, too, noticed that the youth, and we, intentionally travelled with attentiveness to the living, telling, and retelling of their lives, our lives and our shared experiences. As we did this, conversational spaces began to open. In these moments of travel, we were reminded of our study with the youth who left school early. As we attended to who we were alongside the youth in school, memories of the older youth who had left school early were often in our minds.

We learned that as children and youth animate multiple constructions of themselves, that is, as they live by some stories in school and other stories at home, they seem to feel that when they are at school they need to hold silent the stories they live in their familial curriculum making worlds and their embodied tensions. As Skye stands on the golf course, she holds silent the stories of her familial curriculum making world, noting that if she left or spoke out, she could not be certain of the consequences. We came to know there were stories the youth tell of themselves but also stories they leave behind because there is no safe place to tell them, share them or celebrate them. As we work with them and with each other in the art club we see ourselves as composing a space for narrative inquiry through living, telling and retelling stories as well as a safe space to explore, improvise, and try out other possible tellings of who they might be and become.

What Huber et al. (2011) illustrated was two worlds of curriculum making, worlds in Lugones' (1987) sense that are filled with multiple and often conflicting constructions of children and youth. These ideas of worlds and world travelling borrowed from Lugones as a way to understand the worlds of curriculum making are helpful as we try to understand the conversational spaces we are co-creating with the youth and families of Aboriginal heritage. Being attentive to intentional conversational spaces makes visible the tensions between the worlds of curriculum making. Living within conversational spaces with youth such as in the art club space draws attention to the ways that attending to living in multiple worlds deeply shape the relationships, the stories to live by, and the responsibilities of youth, as well as of ourselves as researchers.

We wonder, as we work alongside each other and the youth, how the absence of conversational spaces leads us, sometimes, to turning inward and to silencing the stories that we live and tell. When youth awaken to stories of who they are, and are becoming, as Aboriginal youth in the institutional story of school, it shapes their lives. Once awakened to the plotline of who they are within the story of school, they begin to silence their lived and told stories. We saw that happening in Skye's stories and we see it happening with the youth in our art club. Sometimes this silencing makes it even more difficult to enter into conversational spaces, that is, to understanding the possibility of conversational spaces. The silence has become part of the youth's stories to live by. Disrupting or interrupting the silences is more difficult when it is a way of knowing who you are and are becoming.

Recursive reverberations

Now as we are in the midst of working with the youth and their families, we stand, look backward and inward, and see that each project recursively elaborates the ones that came before. The reverberations of previously lived stories alongside participants from earlier studies come into our current life living, telling and retelling. The stories of the youth who left school early shaped our stories at the time but also continue to shape our stories as we live our retold stories into the future. Our retold stories shape our reliving as we imagine and live out our current study. The stories of the youth who left school early mingle with ours and allow us to newly imagine this «becoming» conversational space in light of the echoes left behind by those who came before. The reverberations stretch across, and through, lives.

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