

Coming to Understand Experience Dewey's Theory of Experience and Narrative Inquiry

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Introduction

For me, it seems strange to begin a discussion of a Deweyan theory of experience devoid of...well, experience. Consequently, I begin this discussion of my understanding of Dewey's theory of experience as it has emerged from my own narrative as a teacher and scholar. In this discussion, I will address Dewey's theory of experience directly, and then turn to the Deweyan ontological and epistemological assumptions about experience which undergird and manifest within my own story and in narrative inquiry, the research approach I employ, conceptualized as both phenomenon and methodology (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; etc.).

Beginning with Experience

Having just returned from lunch, I instructed my students to work on their innovation day proposals. Innovation day was a school-wide project which allowed each student the opportunity to develop a research plan to explore any subject of their choosing for an entire day of school. With only one month left of the school year, I felt like I had come to know Lee¹ fairly well. I was surprised and excited to see Lee eagerly working on his project.

Lee had struggled with his schoolwork throughout the year. This seemed consistent with his previous teachers' reports. Rather than focus on his work, much of his time at school had been spent teasing, being

teased, or arguing with his peers. It seemed to me that Lee had very little self-confidence in his learning and thinking abilities. Rather than focus on school academics, Lee often chose to distract himself with social concerns, but that strategy didn't seem to work well for him. Lee did not generally relate well with his peers. He would often antagonize other students by making disparaging remarks or distracting them during work time. When his classmates would respond negatively, Lee tended to escalate his efforts.

There were other tensions that emerged for Lee that school year. At the time, I just viewed them as distractions from learning. Only a month prior, I noticed that Lee looked a bit different than how he had normally presented himself. There were protrusions from his chest area and he continually seemed to be adjusting straps on his shoulders. I was unsure, but I suspected that Lee was wearing a bra. I did not address the issue with him for many reasons. Primarily, I did not want to make assumptions about the situation. Secondly, if this were the case, I did not want to embarrass Lee. Finally, I was not sure that it was any of my concern. However, later that day, my suspicions were confirmed when another student announced to me during recess that Lee had indeed worn his mother's bra to school. For me, at this time, Lee's life had become a distraction from the carefully planned lessons I had prepared. I hadn't yet come to understand or value the ways Lee was making meaning for himself, learning about the world and who he might be in it.

This event had begun to fade in my mind as I tried to re-focus Lee's and my attention on the learning I had planned. I was pleased to see Lee's interest in his innovation day proposal, perhaps because I felt like he was finally getting down to the business of school. I believed that if Lee could find something that interested him, he would be motivated to put forth the effort needed for him to engage in the required school work. I failed to see the ways my beliefs and actions made Lee irrelevant in the learning process. Lee, like every other student in my mind, needed to learn what I considered to be important. I based my instruction, in this case, on what those who created standards considered important. These were people, I was sure, who were well learned. I realized, though, that they knew nothing of Lee, his life, or his needs.

As I sat at the worktable in the front of the classroom, I invited students to share the ideas they were developing in their proposals. I could tell that Lee was working intently. When I called him over to the table to discuss his project, he eagerly accepted my invitation. Lee quickly rose from his seat and made his way to me, flashing a large grin. When he reached the table, I asked him about his project. He held out his work for me, and announced that he wanted to research "beauty shops." Previ-

ously, the class had worked on business proposals as we studied economic concepts. My first inclination was to assume that Lee wanted to research starting a beauty shop business. He quickly corrected me, stating that he did not want to research a business, but rather, he wanted to learn to “do hair.” Before I could formulate a verbal response (maybe I had already responded with my body), Lee continued, “Some people think it’s weird for a boy to do hair.” I didn’t respond to Lee’s suggestion, but told him that I was interested to see his finished project proposal. I sent Lee back to his seat to continue working. (Memory Reconstruction², Spring 2014)

Thinking about Experience

My memory of these few moments in a fifth grade classroom has continually resonated within my thinking. As tensions emerged within me around this experience, I replayed the conversation with Lee over in my head in hopes of making sense of it. I wondered why I hadn’t responded differently (or at all) to Lee’s suggestion that some might consider his desire to do hair to be weird. Although I didn’t see Lee’s interests as strange, I wondered if my initial assumptions about his interests or my eventual lack of response reinforced dominant stories of gender and sexuality in his experience. I wondered if I, as an educator, had mistaken what I had come to see as the business of schooling for education.

Dominant education stories of increased standardization and achievement testing in the American public school context reverberated through my own stories of school (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 1996). I had come to teaching only a few years earlier through an alternative route to teacher certification. The program with which I had been affiliated recruited and trained recent college graduates to teach in under-served schools. In this program, I was taught that good teaching was regimented. With student achievement on standardized assessments as my goal, I learned to plan methodically and execute lessons that would lead students to master the content outlined by state educational standards. I was told that everything in the classroom must drive towards the classroom achievement goals, passing the state assessments. In this paradigm, classroom management, student and familial relationships, and teacher planning and models of instruction were tools to be used in pursuit of student achievement on standardized assessments. These stories of teaching and of school shaped the stories I lived by³ as a teacher. I lived out my story of teaching as a manager, carefully executing objective aligned lessons and assessments and ordering classroom behavior so that students could most effectively meet mandated learning objectives.

Other stories I lived by around gender and sexuality surely shaped the

way I perceived and responded to Lee. My elementary school colleagues and students, I can assume, knew that I identified as gay. Although I never talked about it directly with students or families, the notable absence of a wife or girlfriend, which seemed to me to be the norm for male teachers, signaled something was different. In my first year of teaching, students had started a rumor that I was gay—presumably because of the aforementioned clues. My response was to question them about the appropriateness of such questions for the classroom environment; we were here, after all, to learn. My stories of school didn't allow for, what I saw to be, Lee's or my lives. I interpreted Lee's words and practices through the lenses of my own experience. I wondered about the ways Lee was positioning himself around gender and sexuality at school, but attempted to avoid the stories I understood Lee to be composing because I saw them as distractions from the pursuit of student achievement goals. As Lee's and my own stories emerged in the classroom setting, they interrupted the dominant narratives for identity in our community and made it difficult for me to maintain a narrative with singular focus on student achievement on assessments. Undoubtedly, the stories I told and lived around school and teaching shaped my response or lack thereof to Lee. I understood my own sexuality as a distraction from learning at school. My fears of being seen as different, as the gay teacher, led me to silence that story of identity from my work as a teacher and to ignore the stories Lee was attempting to compose around gender and sexuality.

Lee disturbed what Aoki (1993) called "the landscape that privileges the curriculum-as-plan" for me (p. 257). "Curriculum-as-plan," Aoki suggested, is work "imbued with the planners' orientation to the world, which inevitably include their own interests and assumptions about ways of knowing and about how teachers and students are to be understood" (Aoki, 1993, p. 258). The goals, methods, resources, and assessments detailed in these plans are meant "for faceless people, students shorn of their uniqueness or for all teachers, who become generalized entities often defined in terms of generalized performance roles" (p. 258). The lived curriculum, on the contrary, emerges from the "multiplicity" of particular student personalities and experiences—a uniqueness known "from having lived daily life with" students (Aoki, 1993, p. 258). I wondered why I, by attending to curriculum-as-plan, had chosen to see Lee from a detached perspective that stripped him of his particularities and uniqueness. Had I perpetuated dominant narratives of schooling and helped write Lee's story as one of disruption to the important matters of school?

A Theory of Experience

While I had not explicitly taught gender expectations as a part of the formal school curriculum, it seems clear that Lee learned about gender. Dewey's theory of experience might be helpful for me to think about the shaping experiences from which Lee and I have learned.

Dewey (1938/1997) built his explanation of his theory of experience on the idea that education and experience are intrinsically linked. He wrote, "I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference; namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience" (p. 25). Dewey's assertion is situated in an educational context that separated experience and education under the guise that "education consists of bodies of information and of skills that have been worked out in the past; therefore, the chief business of the school is to transmit them to the new generation" (p. 17). Dewey asserted that this position leads to a view of "what is taught...as essentially static" (p.19).

Viewing knowledge as static or fixed is antithetical to recognizing and attending to issues emerging in the present and future contexts. The issue Dewey raised concerning these ideas is that even if we deny that knowledge is static or fixed, but our methods for teaching remain entrenched in pedagogical methods, which educate passivity implicitly, we have essentially accomplished the same. Dewey (1938/1997) wrote, "we may reject knowledge of the past as the end of education and thereby only emphasize its importance as a means" (p.23). Dewey (1900/1990) placed these differences in stark contrast when he positioned workers as complex thinkers engaged in scientific exploration rather than "mere devices of hand and eye" (p. 23). He questioned, "How many of the employed are today mere appendages to the machines which they operate" (Dewey, 1900/1990, p. 24)?

What then, we might wonder with Dewey, are the consequences for a democratic society for those that rely on static knowledge and traditional modes of transmitting such knowledge? By divorcing experience and education, we narrowly define knowledge to that which can be simplified and transmitted easily—"static" (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 19). Without citizens who might engage in and think critically about the world, it may seem that our very ideals of democracy are at risk.

Criteria of Experience

Dewey (1938/1997) put forth "principles that are most significant in framing this theory" (p.33). Through the principles of continuity and interaction, Dewey described a framework for understanding the value and significance of experience as education.

Continuity

The first criterion of experience, according to Dewey, is the principle of continuity or “the experiential continuum” (p.33). Dewey’s discussion of continuity brought forth the idea that experience cannot be isolated from other experiences. Looking backward, as complex beings in complex contexts, we can see how previous experience has shaped current experiences. Looking forward, we can examine the directions that our experience might lead. Dewey differentiated experience as educative or mis-educative in relationship to the subsequent experiences toward which our current experience moves. Dewey (1938/1997) wrote,

Growth, or growing as developing, not only physically but intellectually and morally, is one exemplification of the principle of continuity. The objection made is that growth might take many different directions; a man, for example, who starts out on a career of burglary may grow in that direction, and by practice may grow into a highly expert burglar. Hence it is argued that ‘growth’ is not enough; we must also specify the direction in which growth takes place, the end towards which it tends. (p. 36)

Dewey contended that educative experiences “create conditions for further growth,” rather than hinder opportunities for or direction towards other opportunities for growth (p. 36). Dewey provided the example of learning to read as an experience that “opens up a new environment” and leads to further growth, curiosity, and desires (p.37).

Interaction

The second criterion of experience Dewey described is the interaction between objective or external conditions and internal conditions. Dewey (1938/1997) posited, “...any normal experience is an interplay of these two sets of conditions. Taken together, or in their interaction, they form what we call a situation” (p. 42). Dewey’s description of a situation is a thought to which I shall return subsequent to the unpacking of interaction. To understand the nuances of an interaction in Dewey’s epistemology, it would be helpful for me to more deeply explore the two aspects of interaction on which educative experience is predicated.

Dewey’s (1938/1997) understanding of interaction is signified in the idea that “all human experience is ultimately social, that it involves contact and communication” (p. 38). Concerning objective conditions, Dewey wrote,

...experience does not occur in a vacuum. There are sources outside an individual which give rise to experience. (p. 40)

The people, objects, and community in which the learner might be situated constitute these external conditions, or environment. Dewey suggested

that educators must learn how to “utilize the surroundings, physical, and social, that exist so as to extract from them all they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worth while” (p.40).

Dewey (1938/1997) used the term interaction to signify “interplay” of the aforementioned environmental factors with the internal conditions of the learner (p.42). These internal conditions could be described as the feelings, dispositions, attitudes, desires, or needs of an individual. Dewey drew my attention to the challenge of the teacher attending to internal conditions. He wrote:

In this direction, he must, if he is an educator, be able to judge what attitudes are actually conducive to continued growth and what are detrimental. He must, in addition, have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as learners which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning. It is, among other things, the need for these abilities on the part of the parent and teacher which makes a system of education based upon living experience a more difficult affair to conduct successfully than it is to follow the patterns of traditional education. (p. 39)

He critiqued traditional education because “it paid so little attention to the internal factors which also decide what kind of experience is had. It violated the principle of interaction from one side” (p. 42). This critique does not mean that objective conditions should be ignored, rather for educative experience, objective conditions must be “ordered so that a particular kind of interaction with these immediate internal states may be brought about” (p. 42). Dewey gave the example of a baby’s needs to eat, sleep, and play (internal conditions); the “wise mother” (p. 41) attends to the needs of the baby, but in keeping with regulating a schedule for the baby, her own past experiences or that of experts (objective conditions), rather than feeding the baby each time it cries (p. 41-42).

Situation

At this point, I return to Dewey’s conception of situation mentioned previously. In my understanding, Dewey construed the interaction of internal and external conditions taken as a whole to be a situation. He wrote,

The conceptions of situation and interaction are inseparable from each other. An experience is always what it is because of transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment... The environment, in other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had. (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 43-44)

Dewey conceived of living in a world to mean that they “live in a series of situations” (p. 43). In other words, as individuals, we continuously interact with other people and objects and we learn from these situations. The principles of continuity and interaction help us to better understand the value of the experience in terms of the ends towards which experience might lead (continuity: educative and mis-educative) and the significance of the experience (interaction: educative and non-educative).

While Dewey’s discussion of continuity and interaction are most clearly defined in the classroom setting as a reaction to traditional forms of education, his epistemological argument built the framework for understanding the intrinsic connection between experience (broadly defined) and education. Through this paradigm, we might come to better attend to the ways we educate through experiences across a life (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) rather than confining education to a classroom. Although I haven’t inquired about Lee’s internal conditions or the environment(s) with which Lee has interacted, I continue to wonder how he came to learn to see himself as different based on his conception and expression of his own gender? I wonder about the external conditions I created for Lee in the classroom and how his feelings and inclinations interacted with my reactions to his project proposal? What have I, his parents, his school, and his community taught him about the world and about himself through the external conditions we have created for him? What will we continue to teach him?

Coming to Understand Experience from a Deweyan Perspective

If, like Dewey, we suppose that experience and education are intrinsically connected, it follows that we might conceptualize lived experience as curriculum—“a course of life” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). I seek paths toward coming to understanding education in Lee’s experience, and the experiences of others. Grounded in a Deweyan ontological and epistemological framework Clandinin and Connelly (2000) presented narrative inquiry as a way of seeing the world narratively and exploring experiences through narrative. As Clandinin (2013) argued, “narrative inquiry is a way of studying people’s experiences, nothing more and nothing less” (p. 38). In the conception she described, narrative is not seen merely as a tool or representation, “experience itself is an embodied narrative life composition...Thinking narratively about a phenomenon—that is, about people’s experiences—is key to undertaking narrative inquiries” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 38). This ontological assertion leads us to see narrative as a way of understanding the world and experience. Clandinin

and Rosiek (2007) situated narrative inquiry ontologically as a method when they wrote,

Narrative inquirers study an individual's experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others. Viewed in this way, we can see that not only is pragmatic ontology of experience a well-suited framework for narrative inquiries, narrative inquiry is an approach to research that enacts many if not all of the principles of a Deweyan theory of inquiry. In fact, we offer that narrative inquiry as we describe it is a quintessentially pragmatic methodology. What genealogy is to post-structuralist Foucauldian sociology, what critical ethnography is to critical theory, what experiments are to positivism, narrative inquiry is to Deweyan pragmatism. (p. 42)

I understand narrative inquiry as that path towards coming to understand Lee's and my own education through experience.

In a discussion of the terms, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained that narrative is a way of thinking about experience "beyond the notion of experience being irreducible so that one cannot peer into it" (p. 50). Clandinin and Connelly echoed and extended Dewey's perspective that continuity and interaction "intercept and unite. They are, so to speak, the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience" (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 44). They frame exploration of experience through narrative inquiry by imagining "a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along the second dimension, and place along a third dimension" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

More specifically, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the temporality dimension (past, present, and future) represents the principle of continuity in Dewey's conception of experience. Taken together, the social and personal dimensions of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space reflect Dewey's principle of interaction: the personal dimension reflects the internal conditions of interaction and the social dimension reflects the external conditions of interaction. Finally, the third dimension of the narrative inquiry space is place, or what Dewey construes as the situation. Clandinin and Connelly expanded their understanding of experience by suggesting that we move in different directions in inquiry: inward, outward, backward, and forward. They wrote,

By inward, we mean toward the internal conditions such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to the temporality—past, present, and future...to do research into an experience—is to experience it simultaneously in

these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50)

Three Commonplaces of Narrative Inquiry

Schwab (1969) used the term commonplace to frame the complexity of curriculum. He conceptualized the interwoven nature of the four commonplaces of curriculum (teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu) as they manifest in learning experience. Similarly, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) used the term commonplace to frame the complex ways Dewey's principles of experience manifest themselves within narrative. In their writing, Connelly and Clandinin identified three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, temporality, sociality, and place. They wrote, "the study of any one or combination of these commonplaces might well take place in some other form of qualitative inquiry. What makes a narrative inquiry is the simultaneous exploration of all three" (p. 479). Clandinin, Pushor, and Murray Orr (2007) understood the commonplaces of narrative inquiry as a way of understanding experience as complex and then extend the story of complexity to narrative inquiry as a method.

Temporality

In the summer of 2013, I had the opportunity to participate in a narrative inquiry class at the University of Alberta with Dr. Clandinin. In class, we shared stories of experience; our words were often met with a kind and simple reply from Dr. Clandinin, "For now..." (D. J. Clandinin, personal communication, July, 2013). These words stick with me as I try to understand my life and Lee's life in transition. Our experiences, while grounded in our prior experiences (situations) are always moving us. Using Geertz's (1995) parade metaphor, Clandinin and Connelly suggest, "Geertz reminded us that it was impossible to look at one event or one time without seeing the event or time nested within the wholeness of his metaphorical parade" (2000, p. 16). This perspective allows us to acknowledge as researchers, we enter into participants' lives "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" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 63-64). As I think back to Dr. Clandinin's reply, I am reminded of Dewey's (1938/1997) understanding of continuity of experience and that my life is continually in the midst.

I am also reminded that Lee's life is in transition; my entry into his life at the beginning of fifth grade did not signal the beginning of his experience and my exit at the end of fifth grade did not signal the end of his story. Situating myself as a teacher and a researcher in the midst

of that experience leads me to wonder about Lee's past experiences that led him to my classroom and shaped the way he interacted with his classmates, learning, and me. Entering into the midst leads me to see Lee, not as the one distracting the class from more important issues of learning as I did previously, but as one who is trying to make sense of a life in the midst. I also wonder what the future holds for Lee. It is tempting to take my stories of Lee and draw conclusions about where his experiences may lead. My initial thoughts about Lee led me to wonder about his sexuality or gender identity, but to draw conclusions about Lee is to limit his experience to the categories and perceptions I have of him. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2012) reminded me of the inconclusivity of narrative, as experiencing stories, even our own past stories, leads us to more stories. Pinnegar (2006) addressed inconclusivity as an aspect of temporality. She wrote,

The researcher holds the reader in a narrative space of inconclusivity. Though stories are told in the research study, the researchers artfully hold open both the beginnings and endings...plotlines of the research extend backwards and forward in time...In this way, time is never stable, characters and milieus are dynamic rather than static and the reader often stops reading to consider how a particular future would lead to a reinterpretation of this past or how this present moment supports many futures. (p. 179)

My job as a narrative inquirer is not to predict or determine what experiences may follow; Lee may very well define himself as gay, transgender—one or multiple categories we can create. My work is to hold the narrative open, realizing that, for now, there are many different futures supported in this moment.

Sociality

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) suggested that narrative inquirers are concerned with personal conditions and social conditions "at the same time," which helps "narrative inquirers to distinguish their studies from studies that focus mostly on social conditions that may treat the individual as a hegemonic expression of social structure and social process" (p. 480). For Connelly and Clandinin, personal conditions refer to the "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (p.480). Social conditions, according to Clandinin (2013), refers to the "milieu, the conditions under which people's experiences and events are unfolding. These social conditions are understood, in part, in terms of cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives" (p. 40).

In my reflection on my experience with Lee, I was struck by the

interest and excitement he showed in regards to studying how to do hair. His experience was shaped by his personal stories of himself, his interests and desires to learn about cosmetology; at the same time, I wonder how Lee's familial, institutional, social, and cultural stories about gender and sexuality shaped his experience, leading him to suggest that his personal desires were weird for a boy. I mentioned familial, institutional, social and cultural stories together, which may connote for some that these social stories are congruent. An inquiry into Lee's experience would attempt to attend to each of these stories—sometimes congruent, sometimes conflicting, sometimes silent (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995)—as they have emerged in Lee's experience. These understandings reflect the complexities of and the ways narrative inquiry attends to experience as multi-threaded.

Place

The narrative commonplace of space refers to “the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, pp. 408-481). As Clandinin (2013) suggested, “people, place, and stories are inextricably linked” (p. 41). Basso (1996) thought about “place-making” as a way of conceptualizing the connection of experience, narrative, and place. He wrote,

In modern landscapes everywhere, people persist in asking, “What happened here?” The answers they supply... should not be taken lightly, for what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of a society and inhabitants of the earth... If place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of doing human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions, and, in the process, personal and social identities. We are, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine. (p. 7)

The stories of our experiences, therefore, fill places. We construct meaning around stories of experience, which exist in a place, amid the many other stories that continually shape the stories we compose.

Palmer (2005) reminded us of the ways European colonists denied “the importance, and knowledge, of place for First Nations in British Columbia by the people who came afterward” (p. 162). Europeans colonists, who only valued the places of First Nations people for the resources to be gained, silenced the many personal, communal, and social stories that made that land a place for First Nations people. A place is a place because of the stories that fill it. The stories, nested within a place, help construct meaning around a place, experience, and people. Separating experience from place is an act of silencing the lives and stories that exist within that place. Palmer further argued that seeing people in terms

of their relationship to their place(s) is “a starting point for developing an understanding of members of other cultures” (p. 163). The places I inhabit also inhabit me. I make meaning and ascribe significance to my experience in and through the landscapes in which I live.

What stories of that place shaped who we were and were becoming? My thoughts drifted to the many landscapes that shaped the stories I composed and continue to compose around sexuality and gender beyond the school context. What stories existed on Lee’s home landscapes, at home and in the community, which shaped the ways Lee composed his stories about himself and others? I began to think about my own home and community landscapes beyond our shared school contexts and the ways those experiences shaped the stories I composed around gender and sexuality.

Through her conceptualization of a “world” and “world’ travelling,” Lugones (1987, p. 3) reminded me of the ways our stories are shaped by the commonplaces of narrative inquiry in complex ways. Thinking about a world requires us to recognize the contexts (place), relationships (sociality), and series of events (temporality), which construct such a world; I cannot think about place without thinking about the personal, social, cultural relationships and the past, present, and future, which construct that world. In the same way, I cannot think about the relationships within a world without attending to the contexts and continuum of events, which shape those relationships. Finally, I cannot think about the past, present, and future of a world without attending to the contexts and relationships, which are embedded in the temporality of a world.

Conclusion

Dewey’s theory of experience has tremendous ramifications for conceptualizing the implicit connection between experience and education as well as a framework for coming to understand experience through narrative inquiry. Coming to understand the principles of continuity, interaction, and situation have led me to a deeper understanding of the aspects of experience, which shape the value and significance of education. Moreover, understanding Dewey’s theory of experience has pushed me to reflect on experience as knowledge worth knowing.

Notes

¹Throughout this text, pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of people and places.

² For me, the term *memory reconstruction* is used to signify a field text reconstructed, from memory, of an earlier event or situation.

³ Connelly and Clandinin (1999) used the narrative term *stories to live by* as a way to understand the connection between knowledge, context, and identity. In their conception, identity “is given meaning by the narrative understanding of knowledge and context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p.4).

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