

Local dimension of children's migrations and its impact on EU integration policy

December 2020

Narratives of othering and belonging: Critical incidents in diverse classrooms

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Narrative ethnography

In narrative theory, it is claimed that a narrative structuring of our lives and experiences with the world is fundamental for human understanding and interaction with others (Bruner J.S., 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Gubrium & Holstein, 2008).

'There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. [...] It (the narrative mode, author) deals in human or human-like intension and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course [...] and to locate the experience in time and place.' (Bruner, 1986:11ff)

'..of procedure and analysis aimed at close scrutiny of social situations, their actors, and actions in relation to narratives. This involves direct, intensive observation of the field of study—in this case, the multifaceted field of narrative practice. (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008: 250)

The schools

Maple school: a small school with solely two reception classes for migrant adolescents age 14-18.

- One class is for newly arrived and one class for lower secondary exam-preparation.
- In each class there are about 12-15 students.

Oaktree school: Ordinary lower primary and secondary school with around 500 students, including the reception class with 15 students age 13-17.

Fieldwork for about seven month.

Generally sensitive and competent teachers in both schools!

Two critical Incidents

Maple school: 'Ultra News – news for children and adolescents'

- Watching the news as daily routine.
- The critical incidents day: news about 'The Childrens Rights Day in Denmark': : *'Some of you might have been hit in schools from where you come from. Who have experiences of being hit in schools back home?'*

Oaktre school: 'Palestine doesn't exist'

- Longterm teacher, knowing the class well.
- The task: PP presentation in history.
- Student: *'It's about my country Palestine'* — teacher: *'Palestine doesn't exist as a country'*

Critical incident

Critical incident as encapsulating social relations and cultural understanding

- As 'extreme instance' and as a 'condensed narrative'.

'(T)he ethnographer identifies key events or incidents [...] Describe these events [...], places the events in relation to other events or to wider social contexts [...] so that others may see what members of a social group, need to know, produce, understand, interpret and produce to participate in appropriate ways[...] In this way, the ethnographer can identify what counts as education, who has access to education, what factors support and constrain participation among other issues.' (Green & Blume, 1997:186)

Critical incidents of what?

Critical incidents: Constrains in the classroom, and at teachers engaging in cultural normativity and inappropriate assumptions.

1. *Ultra News – hitting in school*: Cultural essentialism; implicit 'othering'. Bakhtins understanding of 'aesthetic empathizing' - recognizing the 'other' and contributing to an expansion or new comprehension of our own experiences without 'othering' (Bakhtin, 1993)
2. The intention is to create 'belonging' to the Rights, but generates the opposite: Othering.

'... a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persist inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identity.' (Powell & Menendian, 2016:17)

Critical incidents of what?

'Palestine doesn't exist as a country'

1. Obviously poor pedagogical, didactical and human conduct – rejecting the students processes of belonging.
2. Excluding the students experiences, refusing important identifications.
3. Critical incident as a narrative ethnography of inclusion and exclusion as part of an ethnocentric normative view.

Concluding remarks:

- Narrative ethnography can supply research with systematic and profound insights into classroom practices.
- Schools and institutions mediate and control narrative production and narrative normativity, even in situation where the intentions are to broaden and include different experiences.
- The critical incidents encapsulate a more implicit storyline or narrative script about cultural understanding, belonging and othering.
- The concept of 'othering' seems to embrace structural dynamics, identifications and exclusions of both individuals and groups in school.
- Critical incidents show cracks and disparities in the edifying narratives pointing at inequality and ethnocentric normativity, questioning the assumption that education is **the** most important equalizing agent.

Thank you!