

FULL-LENGTH ARTICLES

"Where Do I Go From Here?" in Search of Response: Using Participatory Research Methods in the Development of a Response Community

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We live in a social world, where we continuously interact with others in ways that often require response. In this article, we elucidate the transformative role of response communities when undertaking participatory research methods using narrative inquiry. Specifically, we examine how the features intrinsic to response communities—grounded in narrative inquiry methodology—have shaped our care, research practices and transition to scholarship. As we became a response community we felt a sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves as a way to uphold the touchstones or guideposts of narrative inquiry. We joined a community of scholars who embraced relationality and engaged with participants as they lived, told, re-lived and retold narratives of everyday experience. In this article, we share conversations and memories of our dialogues and reflections as researchers within our response community. We delve into three central features of response communities: playfulness, the multiplicity of tensions, and the capacity to imagine otherwise. We link these features to a sense of care and belonging that were instrumental when using participatory research methods.

When I started the PhD program, I remember a common story that others who had embarked on this academic journey shared, sometimes with laughter, sometimes with pain and sadness, “the PhD is one of the most isolating and lonely experiences”. I remember thinking, how can this be? You will be surrounded by so many people, busy hallways and lecture halls, and hundreds of learners. As the course work ended and time within the program went on, I heard these stories once again, I felt these stories of loneliness and isolation. As I found my way to narrative inquiry, I began searching for a response and connection from others who could walk alongside me throughout the inquiry, who could sustain me. [Field notes, Dianne]

We live in a social world that is relational and participatory. For the majority, we live in spaces and belong to communities where we continuously interact with others in ways that often require response. Caine and Mill (2016) remind us that, “community refers to more than a place of

geographical location, but that it also speaks to a sense of shared experience, relationships, and the reality that communities have a sense of organizing themselves” (p. 15). In this article, we aim to elucidate the transformative role of “response communities” when undertaking narrative inquiry studies, sharing how we came together as a group of doctoral students, choosing one another, and collectively defining what participation and response meant for our community over-time.

Response communities are intentionally created as a critical participatory process where members share their own stories, research projects, and navigate inquirer’s wonders and puzzles throughout the research process (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Response communities also encourage theoretical and methodological development of each member’s narrative inquiry research inquiries through conversations over time. Response communities are themselves, “storied communities” (Caine et al., 2021, p. 123) that are shaped by researchers through a participatory and collaborative process built from mutual support, ethical deliberation, and co-creation of understanding, embodying principles of shared power and relationality inherent in participatory research methods (Blix et al., 2024).

Throughout the article we examine how the features intrinsic to response communities - grounded in narrative inquiry methodology - have shaped our care, research practices and transition to scholarship after graduate school. We share conversations and memories of our dialogues and reflections as researchers within the response community which we have labeled as field notes. Each member of the response community shared their experience within it, and the multiplicity of their own inquiries enriched and layered these experiences in the composition of both the field text and interim texts. While existing literature describes the purpose and principles of response communities, our article offers a unique contribution by showing the participatory process and approach. We offer the opportunity for others to learn alongside us, acknowledging that as Caine, Clandinin and Lessard suggest, “each person within a chosen community is changing, or restorying oneself, but communities themselves are also in the making” (2021, p. 124).

Throughout the article we will share how being a part of a response community has profoundly influenced both our personal and professional identities. We each came to narrative inquiry “in the midst” (Clandinin, 2013) of our different unique lives. The authors came from diverse vantage points and backgrounds (social work, forensic nursing and family health nursing) while completing PhD studies. Dianne came to narrative inquiry as a social worker that had worked alongside children, youth and their families for many years, also identifying as a mother of two young boys, sister, Auntie, and PhD student. Her PhD work was focused on mothering experiences of child weight management (Fierheller, 2022)

Coming from the field of forensic nursing, Morgan began his narrative inquiry after working in a large correctional facility, where he provided primary and emergency care to incarcerated populations. His PhD work

emerged from the relationships he built in this role, focusing on the experiences of transitions into and out of correctional facilities for people living with HIV (Wadams, 2023).

Genevieve had been searching for a response community after studying the importance of participating in one within the methodology of narrative inquiry. She is a nurse that collaborates and partners with families and works with sectors to promote family health, engagement and capacity and reduce the impacts of inequities, trauma and other adversities. Within her PhD studies using narrative inquiry, she focused on equity deserving populations such as caregivers and children with complex medical and social needs and engaging families in research (Currie et al., 2024).

As we each drew on narrative inquiry as a methodology to guide our PhD studies, we began to learn about the importance of ensuring we had a “response community” to support our work as it began to unfold over time. As we became a response community for one another we felt a sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves as a way to uphold the touchstones or guideposts of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). The response community required active participation, providing a place to ask questions, to seek guidance about process, and to no longer be alone on the journey of graduate education during the time of a global pandemic. We came to rely on this small group of dedicated scholars and felt transformed in our beliefs that we could contribute to a larger understanding of our participants’ experience and the methodology of narrative inquiry.

By choosing the methodology of narrative inquiry we joined a community of scholars who embraced relationality and engaged with participants as they lived, told, re-lived and retold narratives of everyday experience. We now belonged to a larger group of inquirers who were dedicated and committed to understanding the experience of the everyday world in a different way (Clandinin, 2013). We belonged to something larger than ourselves, and we honored these commitments and guideposts within our response community when we shared our studies and what we were learning about this relational research process. This was transformational to not only how we participate in future research practice but also how we received others into our lives and our research inquiries. Narrative inquiry introduced us to the idea of response communities, and as individual PhD students coming together in our own response communities, we moved from I to we. Throughout the article we will weave in vignettes from our three separate narrative inquiries conducted between 2021 and 2023, focusing on distinct groups within the health and social sciences: mothers caring for children participating in weight management programming, mothers of children living with Prader-Willi syndrome, and men living with HIV who have histories of incarceration. Specifically, we delve into three central features of response communities: playfulness, the multiplicity of tensions, and the capacity to imagine

otherwise. We link these features to a sense of care and belonging that were instrumental. We will demonstrate how response communities can be a valuable contribution to participatory approaches to research.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry serves as both a methodology and a phenomenon for exploring experience (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Narrative inquiry views experience as inherently narrative in nature, rather than merely using stories or narratives as a method of data representation (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). We are in the world through stories; people live and tell stories of their lives, and this is how we understand each other's experience. Stories become compositions of our social worlds and while in a relational inquiry, encompass personal, social, and temporal dimensions (Clandinin, 2013). Stories change with new interactions and influences and in the interactive relationship with the researcher; therefore, the storied experience is a dynamic process as is the interpretation of it within an inquiry (Green, 2013).

Methodologically, narrative inquiry delves into individuals' experiences, encompassing personal and social interactions, temporality, and the role of place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These ideas are found in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, which is a metaphor to open up imaginative possibilities for thinking otherwise (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Ontologically, narrative inquiry aligns with Dewey's (1938) pragmatic philosophy, aiming to explore connections between humans and their environments, communities, or worlds (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The act of telling, retelling, living and reliving stories can yield fresh insights that influence our future interactions with the populations we study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dubnewick et al., 2018). Central to these ideas in narrative inquiry is the idea of entering individual lives 'in the midst' of their ongoing experience (Clandinin, 2013).

Narrative inquiry is participatory by nature and involves engaging with participants by entering into the ongoing flow of their lives, co-constructing meaning as their stories continue to unfold. To enter a relationship *in the midst* means joining individuals during their personal and professional experiences, as well as within broader institutional and social narratives. The researcher becomes present alongside participants lived realities, sharing space within their ongoing stories (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As researchers we come into the lives of others during moments of their ongoing stream of experience - when we leave, those lives continue. These ideas are embedded in our response communities, where we as researchers acknowledge that stories are never complete; instead, they are continuously shaped and reshaped through new experiences, offering endless possibilities for reinterpretation and retelling (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Response

communities are a part of this reflective and reflexive approach to understanding our methodological and ontological commitments (Clandinin & Caine, 2013).

Response

Response communities offer a regular setting for researchers to exchange insights and critiques on topics such as research inquiries, theoretical frameworks, field and interim texts, and ethical obligations (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Beyond this functional aspect, these communities significantly influence the identities and lives of both researchers and participants. Notably, the term 'response' serves as a guiding principle for these relational engagements.

Response communities are anchored in the theoretical and relational nuances of the term 'response.' As Clandinin and Caine (2013) show, 'response' in narrative inquiry refers to the relational dynamics between researchers and participants (p. 167). Central to this is the concept of relational ethics, which directs our interactions and methodological commitments in relation to participants and communities (Clandinin et al., 2018). The term 'response' not only implies answering or reacting to something said or done but also signifies a relational commitment to our work and the diverse communities involved (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

Response communities are common across various health and social disciplines, including social work, education, nursing, and medicine (Caine et al., 2018). However, our experience reveals that graduate programs, despite emphasizing interprofessional collaboration, can still be isolating. As shared in her earlier field note, Dianne experienced isolation throughout the PhD program, even while surrounded by others. Isolation is a prevalent experience among graduate students, particularly for those in doctoral programs (Brown, 2013) and is even more acute for international students (Baines et al., 2022). Graduate students frequently engage in narrative inquiries that involve individuals and communities grappling with significant vulnerabilities, inequities, and structural marginalization, such as populations living with HIV (Wadams, 2023) and families caring for children with medical complexity and disabilities (Currie et al., 2024; Fierheller, 2022). Response communities can provide a space for connection and serve as a mitigating factor, offering a platform for ethical and relational engagement with others.

Response Community

Response communities are established by narrative inquirers and provide a regular space to share and receive feedback on the research inquiry, theoretical considerations and ethical responsibilities. While some of the features defining response communities have been elaborated in previous literature (Caine et al., 2018; Caine et al., 2022; Kubota, 2019), we wish to visit the moments and ideas that shaped our response community over the course of our studies.

In our response community we were connected via virtual platforms, bridging provincial, temporal, disciplinary, and knowledge-based divides. Dianne, Morgan and Genevieve were at different stages in their research studies, enabling the exchange of methodological advice on topics such as participant recruitment, data analysis, and dissemination. We acknowledge that experiencing meetings with peers or mentors can be commonplace within graduate studies, especially to discuss questions of methodological significance. Yet, our meetings went beyond a ‘check-in’ or session to offer advice, even if those pieces were present. A recurring theme in our discussions was the question of future direction, often encapsulated by the phrase, “Where do I go from here?”

It was my first meeting with Dianne and Morgan as part of my “Response Community.” My supervisor had encouraged me to participate, but I was unsure what the experience would look or feel like. Although I had read about the importance of such communities in literature related to narrative inquiry, I had not yet fully understood what it meant to be part of one. I attended the monthly on-campus discussions where people shared their research experiences and progress, but I often stayed in the background, avoiding active participation. At that point, I was just beginning my data collection, feeling both excitement and anxiety about how the process would unfold. [Field notes, Genevieve]

The response community offered a different forum from our PhD supervisory committees. In our response community we could reach out relationally as we transitioned from narrative inquiry theory to methodology. Genevieve frequently would ask Dianne and Morgan if she was doing narrative inquiry “right” in her research practices and honoring narrative inquiry theory and methodology. Yet our time together went beyond doing narrative inquiry “right.”

Seven features mark response communities in narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2018). Response communities embrace playfulness, uncertainty, and openness to surprise which reflects Lugones’ (1987) concept of “world-traveling,” encouraging a flexible and curious approach to experience¹. We share mutual responsibilities toward community members and participants that require both wakefulness (Greene, 1995) and trust, fostering meaningful relationships. Our actions in response communities are shaped by multiple tensions influenced by dominant social, familial, cultural, and institutional narratives, highlighting the complexity of lived experiences and responding to one another. Telling and retelling our lives, guided by relational ethics, serves

¹ Lugones (1987) describes world-traveling as a playful and loving endeavor that enables us to navigate across different social worlds shaped by shared understandings of identity, such as gender, race, and ethnicity. This traveling involves shifts in our ways of being - not as performance, but through an embodied, relational presence characterized by playfulness and openness to uncertainty and surprise.

both to challenge and enrich personal and professional understanding as we engage in dialogue with one another. Bringing a social imagination into our discussions encourages attentiveness not only to immediate life experiences but also to their broader social contexts. Response communities are also framed by a sense of safety, closely tied to imagination and playfulness, and emphasize the importance of self-acceptance and evolving identity. Finally, a commitment to resonant ideas - whether theoretical concepts, methodological practices, or relational ethics - supports continuous growth as healthcare providers, educators, and academics who engage in response communities. These features serve as implicit roadmaps, assisting us in navigating our research journey.

Our identities and professional trajectories have been shaped by our methodological commitment to narrative inquiry, both as a phenomenon and a methodology (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In narrative inquiry, researchers and participants engage in a process of telling, retelling, living and reliving their experiences and stories; by inquiring into stories lived and told, we come to new understandings and realizations about the experiences and relationships that have shaped, and continue to shape, our lives and identities. This process changes how we come to interact in and with our worlds, creating new relations with ideas, people, and things while adhering to the relational ontological commitment of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Implicit in this understanding is that as we engage with others, how we make sense of our life is changed. An integral component of conducting narrative inquiry involves participating in response communities. The features of a response community also inform our understanding of how engaging with others changes and informs our sense of self. In the following sections, we intersperse autobiographical stories and field notes to contextualize our experiences within the processes and three defining features of response communities: playfulness, the multiplicity of tensions, and the capacity to imagine otherwise (Caine et al., 2018).

Process of Response Community

We had met each other many times over the course of our narrative inquiries within our response community. As we entered the Zoom space and opened our cameras there were smiles and warm greetings to each other from across Canada. It was a welcome space to enter with colleagues who understood about the particularities and nuances of narrative inquiry and honored these processes. It was also a place to connect with other researchers who were juggling PhD studies with work and busy home lives. We shared stories of our research journeys and wondered aloud if we were on the right track and inquiring in the right way: "Where do I go from here?" was a frequent question. [Field note, Genevieve]

Our response group met monthly from 2021 through 2023 via an online meeting platform. One by one, our faces would fill the screen, with our home offices or kitchens serving as our backdrops. Our discussions lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to over an hour, with no formal agenda or set discussion points. Each session began with one of us opening the conversation - welcoming one another and asking about our current lives: the well-being of our children and parents, the progress of our grant applications, and our hopes for the future. This created a sense of continuity, as if we were simply picking up where we had last left off.

Our discussions were always marked by informality, respect, and enthusiasm; we were genuinely curious about one another's evolving lives. We took turns posing questions to the group, often finishing a thought only for another member to excitedly offer a new perspective - or perhaps introduce a related issue that extended the conversation further. Discussions flowed, one gradually giving way to the next while remaining connected to what had come before.

As each meeting drew to a close, one of our greatest challenges was scheduling our next conversation at a time that suited everyone. Sometimes, we could meet again in two weeks; other times, a month might pass. Yet, no matter the scheduling difficulties, we always knew we would find a time that worked for us.

Playfulness

As I think back to our response community, I remember a time when Genevieve was looking for answers as she described that she was feeling lost and was hoping for a map or an outline to write her narrative accounts. I felt tension within me as I thought about this approach, yet I too remembered feeling lost, before I allowed myself to let go and be swept into the depths of the waves of writing my narrative accounts. I remember sharing in response that I felt the same way when I began, but as I read and re-read the stories of my time with participants, the stories began to flow from me in playful song and dancing poetry. I shared some of my poetry with Morgan and Genevieve that illustrated my playfulness, something that is central to my being. [Field note, Dianne]

Vulnerability allowed me to share through play:

Waves

I have always felt

At home

In the water

Swimming

Floating

Drowning

Splashing

Diving

It is where I belong

And it is always calling me back

Some days the waves are calm

Low rolling tides

Tossing

Turning

Laughing

Playful

Other days

The waves come

Crashing down on me

Pounding and thrusting

My body under water

Screaming

Painful

Exhausted

Drowning

I can barely breathe

On these days

I rage

I scream

I fight to stay alive

To stay in the moment

To breathe
There are other days
When the waves go silent
The water is calm
And I can see my reflection
Like a mirror
I float with ease
Mesmerized by the beauty
By the patience
The waves are always changing
Over hours
Days
Years
I change with them
We are connected
We always will be

As I think back now, an exact road map would have been restrictive and silenced the creativity and play that came alive through my words, representing the playfulness I shared with the mothers I was working alongside. A space to have “free-play” with no set rules or expectations. A place where we could let go of the institutional expectations and learn together. [Field notes, Dianne]

Dianne’s reflections and shared poetry, illustrate how the concept of “playfulness” is threaded throughout the theory, methodology and philosophical roots of narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2021; Caine & Steeves, 2009). Caine, Clandinin and Lessard (2021) explain that “play is often seen in opposition to work” (p. 173) but explain that play is far more complex and our relationship with play evolves over time. They argue that “play is critical. Life is impossible for us without play” (p. 174). Dianne drew on the metaphor of waves to help capture her own experiences of mothering during a world-wide pandemic. The art of poetry allowed her to access the intense, painful and overwhelming emotions that were deep-inside her mind, body, and spirit, bringing them to life on the page for the mothers in her study and her response community to come alongside her. As Dianne continued

to write her narrative accounts, she continued to use poetry to share the deep emotional and complex experiences the mothers were sharing, filled with pain, sorrow and humour. Poetry offered Dianne a way to be vulnerable and share these deep feelings and complex experiences, by playing with words.

Dianne recalls as a social worker for many years in paediatric healthcare, play became part of sustaining herself, other staff that she worked alongside and the children, mothers, caregivers and families as they navigated critical care.

As these words linger and connect with my heart, I know that play has always been critical in my life. As a child, teenager, friend, sister, mother, Auntie. [Field note, Dianne]

Reflection within the response community further showed how play became central to sustaining Dianne's research practices while transitioning and navigating this new academic landscape of doctoral work, and now early-career community-based scientist.

Writing on the philosophical roots of narrative inquiry, Caine, Clandinin and Lessard draw on Lugones (1987) ideas of "world-travelling, Paley (1990), and Arendt (1958) to understand playfulness within a research context. Their work asks us to reflect on the moments when we are told 'you can't play' and personal moments and experiences where we "resist playfulness" (Caine et al., 2021, p. 176). Becoming narrative inquirers together in the response community, in a safe place, we allowed ourselves to play-and to open possibilities within our work that we may never have imagined alone. We began to understand Lugones (1987) interpretations, that "playfulness is, in part 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 a source of wisdom and delight" (p. 16-17). We embraced play and let ourselves imagine possibilities together.

Understanding Multiplicity of Tensions

As Morgan transitioned into his new academic role post-doctoral-life, he found himself gravitating back toward one of his research participants and his relational commitments. This ongoing relationship prompted reflection, which he brought to his response community.

As our virtual meeting progressed into the afternoon, the furnace vent beneath my desk warmed the room, countering the chill of the encroaching winter months. With two of us recently having defended our PhDs, the conversation was largely celebratory and forward-looking. However, I took the opportunity to share my reflections about one of my study participants - an older man with HIV and a history of incarceration, who had been grappling with housing instability.

I had last seen him at a community Christmas gathering organized by the non-profit where I volunteer. He seemed to have found a stable living situation, a development that left me relieved given the months he had spent living outside and amongst various forested areas during our inquiry. I confided to the group that, while I was pleased to see him doing well, an invitation from him for coffee filled me with hesitation. [Field notes, Morgan]

Morgan's engagement with a response community served as a reflective space for unpacking these tensions. Morgan was a volunteer with a local AIDS Service Organization that the participant frequently accessed; he had also worked with the participant during his year and a half long narrative inquiry. As he transitioned to his new academic role outside of his doctoral work, he felt a set of tensions in his responsibility towards participants, dominant narratives of research relationships, as well as revisiting a relationship that has continued to evolve. Response communities facilitate shifts in our articulation and understanding of our positioning within relational and ethical landscapes. In doing so, it provides a nuanced framework for navigating the complexities that arise when scholarly, ethical, and human interests intersect and sometimes conflict.

His invitation initially filled me with hesitation because during our time together in the inquiry, he had experienced housing instability. My inquiry alongside him had concluded with a "happy ending," and following up with another visit risked challenging that narrative. He could have invited a friend to his new home, who, in turn, brought another friend whose actions might have led to his eviction. What would I do then when I met up with him? When he shared that he is living again outside? What responsibilities would be called forth? While I asked these questions to Dianne and Genevieve, we knew that I should be guided by my responsibilities to this man and the stories we shared. [Field notes, Morgan]

The response community acted as both a sounding board and a transformative space, helping Morgan to more deeply comprehend the dynamics and tensions of our relationships with participants in a manner congruent with a relational ethics framework (Caine et al., 2018). Morgan was reminded to embrace his responsibilities and the uncertainty associated with living life in an ethical way from a narrative understanding of experience (Clandinin et al., 2018).

In these contexts, response communities serve as forums for contesting dominant institutional paradigms and for critically interrogating what it means to engage relationally. Our experiences within these communities reinforced our commitment to broader communities - those formed both

during and after our doctoral endeavors. They urged a shift in focus from individual to collective ethics and responsibilities. This communal orientation did not end upon the submission of a final thesis or the commencement of a new professional chapter; rather, it persists, continuously calling us back to the ethical and relational commitments that underscore our research, teaching, and care practices. This perspective is better informed by the concept of reciprocity that underpins narrative inquiry’s relational ontology. Relational ontology considers the ethical implications of coming alongside our participants and the concept of reciprocity (Blix et al., 2024). Through reciprocity we are forever changed as a result of our continuous interactions with our participants, response community and the larger world around us (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Dewey, 1938)

Blix et al. (2024) posed the question: “How are we, both researchers and participants, changed through the reciprocal relationships we compose in narrative inquiry studies?” (p. 275). As well as “What does it mean to work and live within a relational ontology[?]” (p. 276). These same questions guided our response community as we spoke about my interaction with the participants and what Morgan should do to continue his relationship. Blix et al. (2024) challenges the traditional ideas of reciprocity as framed in a transactional nature between a researcher and participant. Instead, they situate reciprocity as “always in the midst of stories” (p. 279); our stories, those of participants, and the stories we compose with our response communities. Reciprocity is called forward when we face perplexing situations, when we are unsettled, and it is invited through the creation of spaces for reciprocity (Blix et al., 2024).

Dianne and Genevieve shared that I needed to take him up on his invitation. This invited our conversation with one another to expand to the responsibilities we hold to participants, as well as ourselves, as we transition through our lives and navigate our multiple identities as researchers, friends, and family members. After our conversation, I attempted to reach out to the man to arrange going for a coffee: his phone had been disconnected and no longer in use. [Field notes, Morgan]

This experience was not uncommon in Morgan’s inquiry. The participants often lived in precarious housing situations or were at risk for re-incarceration, so maintaining consistent contact - through phone calls, text messages, emails, or through support workers - was often interrupted.

I sat at my desk, listening to the pre-programmed voice: “The customer you have dialed is not available. Please try again later.” Click. Letting out a sigh, I closed my eyes and wondered where he was and what he was doing. My mind wandered: is he hurt? is he back in a facility? did he lose his phone? did he get a new number? I do not know... I hope he is OK. [Field notes, Morgan]*

This instability highlighted the fragility of these relationships and the importance of approaching them from a stance of reciprocity. Intentionally creating spaces for reciprocity is a part of the relational ontology of narrative inquiry (Blix et al., 2024). By participating in the response community, Morgan was reminded of the relational nature of narrative inquiry, and that reciprocity involves the recognition of the other and co-creating spaces that are sustained over time (Blix et al., 2024). The nature of these interactions we hold with others involves an openness to becoming otherwise (Greene, 1995). Becoming otherwise for Morgan was navigating the tensions he felt in his world, of the neatness of a researcher-participant relationship and how their time together ended in a certain way, with the world that the participant dwelled within. There was tension in recognizing that this man was a friend who he spent a significant period of time with, a person who he shared his life story with. In a way, the participant continued to invite Morgan to join him in world-travelling and leave Morgan's world of structured findings that are associated with academia (Lugones, 1987). By encouraging the man to join him in a space for reciprocity, he was recognizing Morgan in their relationship and creating a space in which both of them could become otherwise. Just as Dianne, Morgan, and Genevieve established trust and a sense of understanding over their response community together, the same was for Morgan with the participant. The response community encouraged Morgan to center reciprocity and to attend to the relational commitments of narrative inquiry; he was invited to be changed (Blix et al., 2024). Their responses were more than intellectual or methodological - they were compassionate. Dianne and Genevieve reminded Morgan that the invitation to coffee - albeit resulting in a disconnected phone line - was also an invitation into ongoing relational responsibility, even amidst uncertainty. Morgan was eventually able to reconnect with the man through a community agency, and they scheduled a coffee to catch up. These types of stories from Morgan's experience remind us that relationships in narrative inquiry are complex, nuanced, and they change not only those involved but the people close to them (Blix et al., 2024).

The complexities and tensions that come with fulfilling multiple roles - as a volunteer, researcher, and early-career academic - underscore the importance of response communities as spaces where the relational commitments of narrative inquiry are lived out. We inhabit different worlds (Lugones, 1987), but by centering the ideas of reciprocity in our response communities we can navigate the multiplicity of tensions we face as we continue to experience transitions in our professional practices and across our lives.

Imagination

The feature of imagination is guided by Lugones' (1987) concept of improvisation, creativity, and playfulness while traveling to another's world through their experiences. These concepts encourage the inquirer to be open to change, transition, uncertainty, and unexpected events that shape the relational space and the inquiry. Genevieve's response community encouraged

her to embrace the concept of imagination as a way to listen for the often silenced or incoherent stories because they might provide an opportunity to “to think of things as if they could be otherwise” (Greene, 1988, p. 1). Reflecting on mother’s voices from her study, Genevieve wrote:

to see your struggle
to care for the incoherence in the lives you are living
to care for the pain
creating an expanded understanding of ordinariness
to re-imagine and re-story amidst unrelenting complexity
there is not one story

As Genevieve reflected on her learnings from the participants, and her response community on the concept of imagination, she had become “dispositioned” or untethered from her understandings (Clandinin, 2013, p. 77) of preconceived knowledge about participant experiences of caring for a child with a disability. The response community helped her to see beyond one story and to listen to the unusual or not well heard stories from her participants (Crites, 1971). Mothers told her about their unrecognized and misunderstood struggles with being hypervigilant and relentless caregivers for their child’s medical and social needs and the toll this took on them personally. Mothers shared expectations from society and systems that they needed to be advocates and warriors in trying to access services for their children, but this came with great personal cost. The members of the response community encouraged Genevieve to consider why these storied responses were not the more dominant narratives of disability? What else might lie behind these stories and experiences? What did she hear that she may not have previously heard from this community of parents? How had her understanding of mothering and care shifted with narrative inquiry with its emphasis on longitudinal engagement and coming alongside mothers?

As a result of our inquiries, Genevieve was “hovering on the threshold” (Heilbrun, 1999, p. 90) with new understandings of taken for granted assumptions about how we engage others in research and respect the reciprocity and dynamic interaction in the sharing of experience between participants and the researcher. Places of tension (Clarke & Hutchinson, 2019) have occurred when a focus on alternative and incoherent stories were discussed as significant within our response community and yet these ways of thinking bumped up against dominant narratives from the collective community about what we focus on within our inquiries. Through a focus on imagination, playfulness, and letting go of certainty, there is realization there is not one way, one approach, nor one answer to inquiring into experience but instead openness to emergent, flexible, and ongoing revision of our understandings (Caine et al., 2018). Narrative inquiry and inquiring

into experience is a transactional process that is dynamic, open-ended, and responsive to emergent understandings of our participant experiences and their larger worlds (Dewey, 1938) and became more apparent within the response community and the interactions and reflections on our research practices with each other.

Belonging

I was the last member to join our response community as I had been searching for a community. I eagerly anticipated this opportunity having read about the importance of response communities but had some trepidation about what it would be like to be a part of a response community. I pondered these reflexive questions as I considered entering the space of the response community. Would I feel comfortable sharing my questions and dilemmas from my own inquiry? Would I feel vulnerable when I shared pieces of my conversations with participants and my processes of inquiry? What did I know anyway as a novice researcher about the process of narrative inquiry, and would I show my uncertainty and non-competence in this space? [Field notes, Genevieve]

Belonging is an integral aspect of any community and particularly a response community. We would likely not have continued to invest in this community and been open to sharing our vulnerabilities about practicing narrative inquiry, if we had not had a sense of belonging. Belonging is a basic human need for connecting and relating with others. Maslow (1962) included belonging within his hierarchy of needs as an important essential element of human interactions and a guide towards reaching our self-potential. Other scholars have described belonging as being intertwined with an individual's perception of their value and acceptance within the group, speaking to the importance of interpersonal interactions and commitment to something larger than the group (Hagerty et al., 1996; McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

In our response community over months and now years, we have traveled to many worlds together (Lugones, 1987). We have pushed ourselves to self-reflect and ask, who am I? and who am I becoming? We continued to care for one another and felt a belonging in this space. We came together as novice narrative inquirers whose identities were shaped not only by traveling to different worlds through our inquiries but also travelling to each other's worlds when sharing our respective studies in our response community. We felt a sense of belonging when we came alongside each other and shared our storied experience. We challenged one another to think about how we could take these learnings into our professional spaces and continue to be playful world travelers.

Where do we go from here?

When I completed my PhD studies and defended my thesis, I felt lost. I was guided by my study and inquiry with participants for 5 years. With the following reflections I approached my response community: How did I make sense of what I learned and what participants shared with me? How did I use this knowledge effectively to try and change practice? How could I continue to honor the process of the relational inquiry within narrative inquiry and the stories that were shared with me? I reached out to my response community as I searched for answers and my place in the new landscape of researcher and scholar. Where do we go from here? [Field notes, Dianne]

We continue to come together as a response community, caring for one another, as we attend to the tensions and transitions brought forward from our PhD work and now in our daily lives and work. Reflecting on these tensions we have come to realize that narrative inquiry as a methodology has been transformational and given us ways to care for others narratively. We were guided by relational aspects of caring in an inquiry, with privilege and humbleness, when our participants shared their day-to-day experiences. We prioritized the other in our work and learnt from each other. We reflected on our ways of being with others and the importance of narrative care (Blix et al., 2020). We asked questions of ourselves and our intent to do these inquiries with respect for those lives we were engaging with and coming alongside on their journeys. Through all these experiences we came together and shared these learnings, searching for response within our community of scholars. In engaging with our response communities, we - as individuals and a community - continued the process of becoming, rather than being, as called forth in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

We have made a commitment to one another, as a way to continue our learning alongside one another as we branch into new spaces and fields. We are now asking new questions together, such as how might we imagine new possibilities for creating response communities in spaces associated with delivering or preparing those to participate in health services?

As a registered nurse who worked in a large correctional facility, Morgan played a dual role as both a primary and emergency care provider. He integrated the principles of a response community into his clinical practice, collaborating with an interdisciplinary team that includes pharmacists, social workers, psychologists, correctional officers, and other nurses in the care of incarcerated populations. In this endeavor, Morgan applied a world-traveling approach and narrative care in his interactions, understanding the patient's experiences through the lens of various disciplines and fostering an interdisciplinary method to service provision that aims to make sense of diverse lives and stories. By promoting mutual understanding and a sense of

response among different disciplines and communities, Morgan continually strives to enhance the sense of belonging and connection in his clinical practice.

Genevieve has continued in a faculty role providing undergraduate education to nursing students. In her teaching and learning perspectives, she brings her understanding of engaging with families and communities in different ways, by coming alongside them and hearing their voices and stories. She brings practical examples to students of being in relation with others and sharing their power in perspectives, decision making, and partnership relationships in clinical practice and research practices. She endeavors to have students consider the day-to-day experience of their patients and families in all aspects of nursing and to appreciate the privileged intimacy they have when working with others at vulnerable moments in their lives.

Dianne has transitioned into the role of a Scientist at a hospital-based research institute where she is co-leading a community-based participatory research program focused on child and family health. Within this role Dianne continues to think and act in narrative ways, looking for opportunities to continue practicing narrative care within existing regional community response networks alongside community partners, researchers, policy makers and government (familyandchildhealth.ca).

Our question “where do we go from here?” continues to emerge within these community spaces and conversations, guiding collective response to support the health and well-being of families and communities. While existing literature acknowledges the importance and key features of response communities, we offered a layered perspective through the lens of PhD students and candidates, as we negotiated and made sense of who we were - and who we were becoming - alongside our participants and each other. Our shared collective journeys within a narrative inquiry response community have made a unique contribution to the field of community-based and participatory methods, by showing how our relationships with one another helped shape our own research projects and how our work unfolded together over time. Forming response communities reminds us to embrace the necessity of uncertainty, vulnerability, and openness to co-construction. It reminds us that we can ponder, wonder, and puzzle both individually, and collectively to consider, “where do we go from here?”

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