Storytelling Revisited

2021

Gender and Health

Núria Camps-Casals, Mireia Canals Botines, Núria Medina Casanovas (Eds.)

Storytelling Revisited

2021

Gender and Health

Núria Camps-Casals, Mireia Canals Botines, Núria Medina Casanovas (Eds.)

Grup de Recerca GETLIHC
Estudis de Gènere:
Traducció, Literatura,
Història i Comunicació
UVIC·UCC

Acknowledgments

First edition: June 2022

Summary

Introduction

Storytelling, the art of explaining stories, has been the mainstream in the International Conference held in Vic since 2018. Storytelling related to many fields but mainly related to people and how it affects the way of living in our societies. This has been the main objective of this continuous dialogue throughout the investigations in this meetings so far. And, as it was precisely appointed in the first edited volume of this collection, no matter how, storytelling finds its way to be expressed, so it remains alive.

This book is the result of the University of Vic- Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC) organising th Fourth International Conference entitled: "Storytelling Revisited: Gender and Health", held in Vic (Barcelona) on 24 November 2021. This Conference provided a forum for teachers, students, researchers and professionals to go deeper into the relationship between gender and Health. It was an interdisciplinary conference organised by the seven research groups GETLIHC, GRELL, TEXLICO, GRAC, TRACTE, EMPREN and GSAMIS which belong to three different faculties at the university, which are he Faculty of Education, Translation, Sport and Psychology, the Faculty of Business and Communication and the Faculty of Medicine. This academic Meeting revolved around storytelling applied to gender and Health. Gender as a socially constructed characteristics of women and men and people's susceptibility to different Health conditions and diseases. Gender in relation to Health and Health in relation to gender. Stories that refer to gender and how has this affected Health. Stories that have determined gender issues in relation to Health, and how storytelling has driven these stories. Storytelling a powerful turning point in life. Also, storytelling in times of COVID-19: Virtual interaction, new formats and story experiences, as transmedia storytelling well addresses, telling a single story or story experience across multiple platforms and using current digital technologies, which characterizes how multimodal narrative constructs, create different consumers and establish a narrative in society.

Storytelling Revisited is a compound of research articles, arisen from the contributions of the authors in this fourth Conference. The following lines offer a brief of their investigations, with the common ground of storytelling.

While there is already evidence for the effect of storytelling on persuasion/action, comprehensibility and memory, the effect on interest is not yet well studied. This study aims to address this research gap and investigates the effect of storytelling on interest in health news messages.(Ameseder and Ettl-Huber, 2021).

Foundations use storytelling to communicate effectively. This article brings together the academic literature on storytelling, foundations, and digital communities. The study analyzes a series of gender campaigns of the Barça Foundation that used storytelling to achieve their goals and at the same time build a digital community. The data collected comes from its main communication tool, which is Twitter. These data are used to quantitatively describe the type of language used (ie, sentiment polarity, sentiment valence, complexity) in each of the different events used in the narrative.(Arimany, Armisent and Uribe, 2021).

"Marc lives with his Mummy and his Mum" is a made up story to work on English language and gender issues. Moreover, it deals with respect towards nature and health habits such as following an appropriate diet and doing physical activities. During three sessions, the pupils will be doing activities related to yoga and relaxation techniques. Hence, they will meet the opportunity to enhance their physical, mental and emotional health. (Bertran and Corominas, 2021).

This research explains how a European project can enhance primary pupils' abilities for creative writing when dealing with care in education to foster inclusion and how storytelling can embrace such experiences among European children. The main purpose of this project WIN is for primary pupils to empathize with the feelings and emotions felt by those kids entering the group for the first time and to open their minds as a way a to create a more inclusive and fair society to all. (Canals-Botines, Medina-Casanovas, Pujol-tubau and Raluy Alonso, 2021).

Being sick is tough. It gets even worst when a child is sick because there are not only their own needs, but also the ones of their family. Even harder is the moment when the young patient and the family have to move to an-

other country or region, because of the rarity and complexity of the disease. Besides the continuity of clinical treatment for the young patient, the continuity in the family's care is also needed. However, everything can be different, if the hospital, together with medical and surgical treatments, invests in family support, considering that the care of the family is as an essential factor for the proper cure along with Clinical and Research units. Celest and Gawronski, 2021).

FAMMI CAPIRE (Let me understand): a project born in 2016 that proposes a reflection on how picture books for 0-18 years, in Italy and in Europe, represent and narrate bodies, genders and sexualities and all that is connected to these themes: desire, pleasure, relationships, curiosities, questions and emotions. From this perspective, illustrated books can be considered as authoritative educational referents capable of promoting individual and collective wellbeing, because they respond to the educational, social and political need to offer plural representations and stories, able of offering opportunities to widen the space of imagination and think about the possibilities of performing one's own gender, building relationships and living one's own sexuality. (Fierli and Santambrogio, 2021).

The use of narrative within the context of health is especially important since it is an indispensable tool to acquire, comprehend, and integrate the different views of participants who have a role in the experience of the illness (the patient, his family, and the healthcare professional) (Fioretti et al., 2016). Storytelling is effective in organizing a clinical sequence to understand, not only the clinical event, but also its full personal, family, and social impact (Zaharias, 2018). (Ghedina and Varela-Vázquez, 2021).

Students' Journeys to the Magical Land of Teaching explores a small group of female student teachers' experiences of learning through a pandemic. Students from the University of Dundee, Scotland and University Roma Tre, Italy participated in the award-winning eTwinning international Hands of the World (HOTW) project which connects schools and universities across the world to undertake a wide range of educational collaborative work to develop their knowledge and understanding of intercultural education. One of the project activities required student teachers to share their experiences of learning to become a teacher in a pandemic, through a multimodal narrative that involved text, images and music. This study, therefore, examined student teachers' narratives with a focus on how different aspects of the pandemic affected their studies alongside their mental well-being and

the strategies students utilised to enable them to be successful. (Leproni and Tonner-Saunders, 2021).

In Paving the way towards gender inclusion in video games , after briefly describing the main features of video games as a storytelling medium, the main gender issues in games will be described, such as the underrepresentation of female characters and their objectification and hypersexualisation. Next, examples of video games with leading female characters will be presented. The paper concludes highlighting the need to promote gender inclusion through video games in order to pave the way towards a fairer and more inclusive society. (Mangiron, 2021).

While this introduction has explained the elaborated on the structure of this volume and the origins, and provided a thumbnail summary of the contents, the conclusion will be drawn on each of its chapters, serving as a proposal for next year's appointment in the fifth edition of the Conference, always searching common ground and looking towards the further deepening and development of storytelling theory in the future.

Mireia Canals-Botines

The Influence of Storytelling on the Interest in Health News Messages

Christian Ameseder
University of Applied Sciences Burgenland, Austria
christian@ameseder.at

Silvia Ettl-Huber
University of Applied Sciences Burgenland, Austria

Introduction

Many textbooks and non-scientific publications written in the past decade deal with the impact of storytelling on public relations and health education. In a scientific publication, we (Ettl-Huber, Ameseder & Pfeiffer, 2019) systematized seven effects of storytelling in a meta-analysis. Research interest focused on the effects of storytelling in terms of persuasion and action (42), learning and knowledge gain (16) and emotionalization and empathy (14). The most substantial effects identified in these publications were comprehensibility, persuasion and action, as well as recall. Comparatively few studies were found that look at the effect of storytelling on interest and these studies report contradictory results: sometimes storytelling texts performed better, sometimes non-storytelling texts surpassed storytelling texts.

Several problems could be identified in these studies' methodology. Often the story in the stimuli did not comply with the common definition of a story (i. e. containing a plot, intentionally acting characters and staging; see e. g. Ettl-Huber, 2014). For the purpose of the present study, it appeared appropriate to survey the influence of storytelling on the interest in health news messages once more, using accurately constructed storytelling and non-storytelling texts and psychophysiological methods.

Theoretical background

According to the *Four-Phase Model of Interest Development* (Hidi, Renninger & Krapp, 2004, p. 97; Hidi & Renninger, 2006), *text-based (situational) interest*, the interest messages evoke in their recipients, can be the starting point for the development of a more intense and permanent *individual interest*. The model divides this development into the following four phases:

1. Persons with *triggered situational interest* start consuming the message.

2. *Maintained situational interest* occurs when the interest lasts longer than a few seconds (e. g., for the duration of an activity), or occurs repeatedly in similar activities.

3. If persons subsequently ask themselves questions about the topic and engage with it repeatedly, it comes to *emerging individual interest*.

4. Finally, if this engagement becomes permanent, it is referred to as a *well-developed individual interest*.

The *situational interest* triggered by a text can thus leads to a new and stable *individual interest* concerning the topic of the text (*topic interest*). Various factors like novelty, surprise, suspense, concreteness, ease of comprehension, or vividness, which are often attributed to stories, have been shown to influence *text-based interest* (e. g. Hidi, 2001; Hidi, Renninger & Krapp, 2004, p. 98). Consequently, this paper aims to investigate if storytelling facilitates the *text-based interest* of health news articles.

Yaros (2006, 2011) directly investigated the influence of storytelling on situational interest: The storytelling text significantly enhanced reader interest compared to non-storytelling news articles. Sumi and Nagata (2013) investigated the influence of animations on interest, comparing animations using storytelling and animations that do not use storytelling. However, the animations they used in their experiment did not yield significant differences between the storytelling and non-storytelling groups.

Some studies examined interest as part of other constructs like curiosity, vividness or the intention to look for more information. In the study conducted by Knobloch, Patzig, Mende, and Hastall (2004), storytelling

articles evoked greater suspense, curiosity and reading enjoyment than articles written in the "inverted pyramid" format, a non-storytelling format commonly used in news articles. Quintiliani and Carbone (2005) included a question asking for the participants' interest when measuring message appeal. Messages with cognitive argument types (information or fact-based) were compared to messages with affective argument types (emotion or story). Participants who preferred non-storytelling (cognitive) messages but were assigned to the storytelling (affective) messages condition rated the messages lowest. Those preferring storytelling messages but reading non-storytelling messages, gave higher scores even than the participants in the matched (storytelling/storytelling and non-storytelling/non-storytelling) conditions.

Similarly, Mancuso et al. (2011) investigated the influence of storytelling on cognitive and affective outcomes in the context of a training intervention for virtual teams. Interest, considered an affective outcome, was significantly higher in the metaphor and analog story conditions than in non-storytelling control condition. Also, the scale in the study of Hauff et al. (2014), which measured emotive response, included an item asking if the message made the participants feel interested (α of the scale was 0.62). A regression analysis showed that storytelling leads to an indirect positive effect on the recipients due to a positive impact on emotive response.

For conceptualizing the effect of storytelling on interest, we were particularly concerned with the well-researched effect on emotionalization. As we have seen in our meta-study, 14 studies investigated emotionalization in terms of excitement. However, for us, the focus lies on the mediation of the effect of storytelling on other outcomes such as interest, credibility, comprehension or persuasion THROUGH emotionalization: An absorbed readership does not yet mean a buying or approving audience. Consistent with this conceptualization, Mancuso et al. (2011) and Hauff et al. (2014) related interest to emotional outcomes.

Although it is unlikely that an emotional interest is completely isolated from a cognitive one, interest, as conceptualized by Hidi & Renninger (2006), involves cognitive and affective components. For example, comprehension also promotes interest (e. g. Harp & Mayer, 1997; Silvia, 2010).

Accordingly, another factor besides emotional interest, or as we put it, emotionalization, emerged in the literature: processing fluency. A more effortless reading experience is associated with positive affective outcome and interest (e.g., Petty et al., 2007; Shulman & Sweitzer, 2018a). Shulman and Sweitzer (2018b) manipulated the difficulty of the language of their stimuli. This manipulation affected subsequent evaluations of the stimuli as well as the participants' perceptions of their knowledge. The stimuli with higher processing fluency were experienced as better accessible.

Consequently, we included emotionalization and processing fluency in our model of influences on interest (see figure 1).

In this model, the writing style is divided into non-narrative and narrative style. Storytelling is expected to lead to higher emotionalization and to more processing fluency, leading to heightened interest. This interest in turn may lead to a higher motivation to engage in actions such as consuming media messages.

Figure 1: *Model of Influencing Factors on Interest in Storytelling Stimuli*
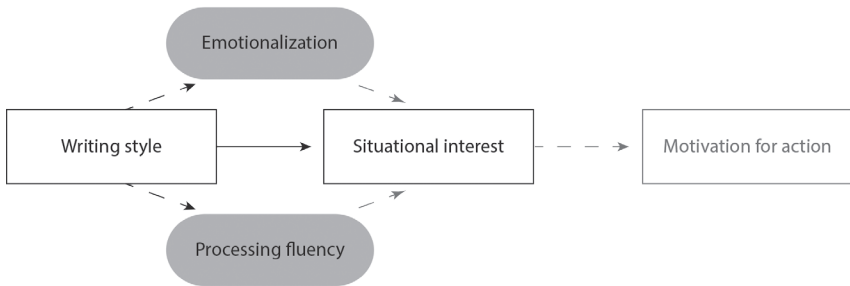
Consequently, the hypotheses for this research are:

H_1: ***Emotionalization*** is significantly higher when reading the storytelling article compared to the non-storytelling article.

H_2: ***Processing fluency*** is significantly higher when reading the storytelling article compared to the non-storytelling article.

H$_3$: ***Situational interest*** is significantly higher when reading the storytelling article compared to the non-storytelling article.

Method

Some studies have been conducted as online experiments, presenting alternative stimuli to test persons and asking them about their interest. We have also tried such settings in previous studies. The main problem seemed related to self-reports and self-assessments (represented in a question like "Which text arouses your interest more?"). This self-assessment seemed to be very much influenced by learned media aesthetic preferences. Therefore, we changed the experimental setting and used a combination of galvanic skin response, eye blink rate, reading time, facial expression recognition and a short survey for the present study.

The following data was collected using equipment from the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland:

1. **Emotional arousal:** Galvanic skin response (GSR) was measured using a Shimmer3 GSR+ unit and analyzed using iMotion 9.1. Changes in skin conductance provide information about the sympathetic part of the autonomic nervous system, which indicates that the organism prepares to act or react (Fahr & Hofer, 2013). According to Dawson, Schell and Filion (2007), galvanic skin response thus indicates activation, attention, information processing, and emotional responses. In this study, the total number of GSR peaks per stimulus condition were compared. Peaks were calculated based on the variations in the phasic component of the GSR signal (phasic filter length: 8000 ms; lowpass filter cut-off frequency: 5 Hz; minimum peak duration: 500 ms). To be able to interpret the GSR results in regard to interferences from information processing, we also included measures on cognitive load:

2. **Cognitive resources allocated to the task:** Eye blink rate and reading time were measured with a Tobii Pro Nano eye tracker. The eye blink rate gives an insight in cognitive workload and task difficulty (Chen & Epps, 2013; Ren et al., 2019). Eye blinks per word were cal-

culated for each stimulus condition and compared among conditions (minimum blink duration: 20 ms; maximal blink duration: 500 ms; minimal duration between two blinks: 70 ms). To analyze the reading time, the total time spent looking within the areas of interest (dwell time) was divided by the word count to account for small differences in the length of the articles. Reading time per word was subsequently compared between conditions. The time participants need to read the articles is a measure for readability and comprehension (Graesser et al., 2020, p. 242) and for engagement (e. g. Fulmer, D'Mello, Strain & Graesser, 2015).

3. **Engagement:** The participants' facial expressions while reading the articles were recorded with the laptop's webcam. Subsequently, the engagement was analyzed using iMotion 9.1 in combination with Affectiva (AFFDEX). The percentage of time the facial expression "engagement" occurred within one stimulus condition was compared between conditions.

4. **Situational interest:** Situational interest was measured with a self-report/questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three 5-point Likert-type items (1 = disagree, 5 = agree). Participants rated their agreement with the statements "I would recommend the article to others" and "The article made me think" (Früh & Frey, 2014, pp. 370-371) as well as "I would like to read/see/listen to another message on this topic" (Appel et al., 2002). The scale was reliable for both the storytelling text (α = .75) and for the non-storytelling text (α = .76).

5. **Processing fluency** (ease of cognitive processing): Also, the processing fluency was measured through self-reporting. The self-report consisted of two 5-point items based on Shulman and Sweitzer (2018a): "Overall, I found the language used in the article to be difficult" and "Much of the information contained in the article was new to me" (reverse coded). However, in our study, the scale was neither reliable for the storytelling text (α = .06) nor the non-storytelling text (α = .05).

Articles on two health-related topics were taken from actual newspapers and served as the non-storytelling stimuli. One of the articles was about smoking, and the other was about healthy eating. Based on the events in these articles, we created a storytelling version for each of them. To minimize intervening variables, we checked for word counts and readability indices (LIX; c. f. Lenhard & Lenhard, 2014-2017). All articles were modified so that they were around one page long (M = 263.0 words, SD = 11.5) and had an intermediate readability index (M = 49.6, SD = 2.3). A comparable language difficulty also reduces the intervening influence of information processing on GSR measurement.

A pretest with six participants was conducted. Based on the findings of the pretest, the experimental setting was optimized. The field phase took place from October to November 2021 at the UAS Burgenland at the Eisenstadt campus. We collected data from 36 participants, who were primarily part-time students in business studies between 20 and 39 years. Twenty-six of the participants were female, ten were male. This imbalance results from the demographics of the students at the Department of Business Studies at UAS Burgenland. Two-thirds of the participants (24 persons) had an education higher than secondary school, thus a bachelor's degree or higher.

The experiment took on average 12 minutes and was conducted in a quiet room at the University. After the participants entered the room, they sat down in front of the laptop. They were informed of the upcoming procedure and asked if they had any questions. Afterwards, the sensors were calibrated and the participants were assigned to one of the experimental groups. Two texts, one at a time, were displayed on the laptop. One was a storytelling text on one topic, the other was a non-storytelling text on the other topic. The order in which storytelling and non-storytelling texts were presented was balanced within each group. A white page was displayed for five seconds after each stimulus to minimize GSR latency (c. f. Caruelle et al., 2019).

The participants' bio-physical data were collected while they were reading. Furthermore, the reading time was measured and the participants' facial expressions were recorded. After they finished reading, the participants were filled in a questionnaire to indicate their self-reported situational interest, processing fluency and their demographics.

Results

Wilkoxon signed-rank tests were performed in all the following analyses, as the requirements for parametric tests (normal distributions) were not met. The alpha level for all results to be significant was set to p < .05. The Bonferroni-Holm correction (Holm, 1979) was applied to the three results of interest (emotional arousal, processing fluency and situational interest; the correction is subsequently indicated by an asterisk) to account for the multiple comparisons problem. The interpretation of the effect size is based on Cohen's (1988) suggestions.

Emotional arousal. In this study, the measure for emotional arousal is GSR peaks. The statistical analysis showed that participants had significantly more GSR peaks when reading the storytelling article compared to the non-storytelling article ($Z = 2.47$, $p = .03^*$). Sixteen participants had more peaks in the storytelling condition, nine had more peaks in the non-storytelling condition and eleven had the same number of peaks in the storytelling and non-storytelling condition. However, nine participants had no peaks at all. The effect size was almost intermediate ($r = .29$).

GSR also indicates information processing; we checked the eye blink rate and reading time to differentiate emotional arousal from information processing. An increase in the eye blink rate indicates that more cognitive resources are allocated to a task (Recarte et al., 2014). The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed significantly more eye blinks per word occurred while reading the storytelling than while reading the non-storytelling articles ($Z = 2.79$, $p < .01$). The median for eye blinks per word for the storytelling articles was .05 and for the non-storytelling articles .04. The effect size was intermediate ($r = .33$). Also, concerning the reading time, the statistical test showed that the participants read the storytelling articles significantly longer than the non-storytelling articles ($Z = 2.07$, $p = .04$). The median for reading time per word was 333.13 ms for the storytelling articles and 315.58 ms for the non-storytelling articles. However, the effect size was small ($r = .24$). Figure 2 shows the descriptive data.

The higher allocation of cognitive resources may indicate higher engagement with the task. However, it could also mean that the storytelling ar-

ticles were more challenging to process. In order to rule out more difficult processing, we checked the self-reported processing fluency (Shulman & Sweitzer, 2018a).

Figure 2: *Descriptive Statistics for GSR Peaks, Eye Blinks per Word and Reading Time per Word; Error Bars: 95% CI*
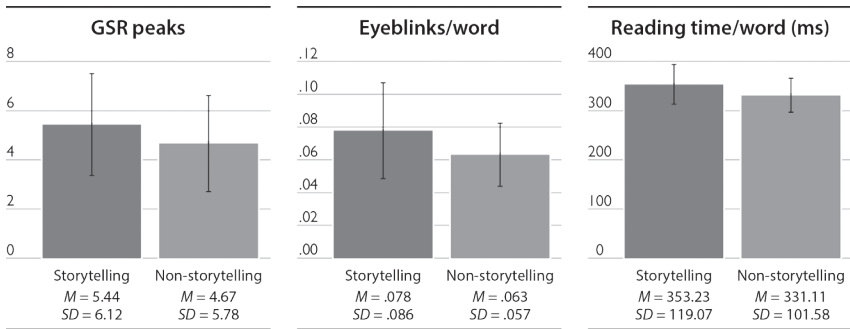
Processing fluency. According to the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, the participants reported a significantly higher processing fluency when reading the storytelling articles compared to the non-storytelling articles ($Z = 3.11$, $p < .01^*$). The median for storytelling articles was 4.50 and for non-storytelling articles 3.50 (see figure 3 for descriptive data). The effect size was intermediate ($r = .37$).

The increased eye blink rate and the longer reading time thus should indicate a higher level of engagement. Consequently, we looked at the results of the facial expression analysis. Though not significant, the results indicate more engagement when reading the storytelling than the non-storytelling article ($Z = 1.63$, $p = .10$). The median for storytelling articles was 1.90 and for non-storytelling articles it was .80. The effect size was small ($r = .19$).

Situational interest. The statistical test showed that the storytelling articles did not elicit a significantly higher situational interest than non-storytelling articles ($Z = .96$, $p = .67^*$). Indeed, median situational interest rating was 4.00 for storytelling and non-storytelling articles and the effect size was very small ($r = .11$). Figure 3 shows the descriptive data.

Figure 3: *Descriptive Statistics for Processing Fluency, Engagement, and Situational Interest; Error Bars: 95% CI*

Processing fluency	
Storytelling	Non-storytelling
$M = 4.16$	$M = 3.60$
$SD = .69$	$SD = .75$

Engagement (%)	
Storytelling	Non-storytelling
$M = 7.25$	$M = 4.06$
$SD = 12.62$	$SD = 6.56$

Situational interest	
Storytelling	Non-storytelling
$M = 3.65$	$M = 3.79$
$SD = 1.01$	$SD = 1.00$
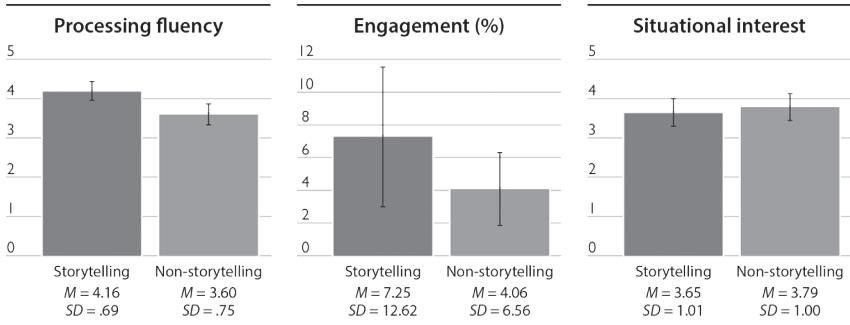
In summary, the results suggest that the storytelling articles elicited more emotionalization. The storytelling articles were perceived to be easier to process than the non-storytelling articles: Self-reported processing fluency was significantly higher for the storytelling texts and the facial expression analysis shows a (non-significant) trend towards higher engagement in the storytelling articles. In support of hypothesis 1, the results indicate that the storytelling articles elicited more emotional arousal than non-storytelling articles. In support of hypothesis 2, a higher processing fluency was found. The limitations regarding the low reliability of the scale are addressed below.

However, there was no significant difference between storytelling and non-storytelling articles for situational interest. Therefore, hypothesis 3 cannot be supported. Furthermore, the results suggest that the higher cognitive effort scores found in this study (as measured with eye blink rate and reading time) indicated higher engagement rather than higher processing difficulty. The facial expression analysis related to engagement showed a tendency towards higher engagement caused by storytelling articles. However, this difference did not reach the significance level and should therefore be investigated in more detail. One reason for this might be that the participants had a rather focused gaze when they read the texts. Reading texts only seemed to have a marginal impact on the emotions transported through changes in facial expressions. Other stimuli

formats like images or videos might lead to a more pronounced effect on facial expression and a larger sample size might reveal the effect more clearly.

As mentioned, the scale for processing fluency was insufficiently reliable. This indicates that the scale needs to be further developed for the current application. Interestingly, storytelling articles were perceived as containing less new information, while there was no difference for the item on the perceived difficulty of the language.

Conclusion and discussion

The influence of storytelling on the interest in health news messages has been researched primarily through the two mediating factors of emotionalization and processing fluency. Studies on interest based on questionnaires showed contradictory and inconclusive results on the influence of storytelling on readers' interest so far (see e. g. Yaros, 2006 and Sumi & Nagata, 2013).

Moreover, in the present study, the simple questioning of participants on their interest showed no difference between the storytelling and non-storytelling stimuli. Considering the median, both were completely equal, considering the mean, the non-storytelling article scored even slightly higher in terms of self-reported situational interest.

However, this picture changes when considering emotionalization and processing fluency as mediators of interest and expanding the method to physiological measures such as galvanic skin response, eye blink rate and facial expression. Storytelling texts lead to a significantly higher emotionalization. Participants also reported a significantly higher processing fluency, and it took them longer to read storytelling articles, which can be interpreted as higher engagement. Higher engagement in turn can indicate higher interest in storytelling texts (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

Overall, storytelling might contribute to greater interest in health news through higher emotionalization and higher processing fluency. Emotionalization and processing fluency can also have other desired effects, such

as improved understanding, memorizing and persuasion. While these effects were not part of the present research, they are still relevant in the context of health news.

Methodically, the combination of psychophysiological methods with the well-known questionnaire method is interesting. Differences between self-reported measures like questionnaires and psychophysiological measures, as it has been found in the investigation at hand, should be considered for further research.

References

Appel, M., Koch, E., Schreier, M., & Groeben, N. (2002). Aspekte des Leseerlebens: Skalenentwicklung. *Zeitschrift für Medienpsychologie, 14*(4), 149-154.

Caruelle, D., Gustafsson, A., Shams, P., & Lervik-Olsen, L. (2019). The use of electrodermal activity (EDA) measurement to understand consumer emotions—A literature review and a call for action. *Journal of Business Research, 104,* 146-160.

Chen, S., & Epps, J. (2013). Automatic classification of eye activity for cognitive load measurement with emotion interference. *Computer Methods and Programs in Biomedicine, 110*(2), 111-124.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd edition). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Dawson, M. E., Schell, A. M., & Filion, D. L. (2007). The electrodermal system. In J. T. Cacioppo, L. G. Tassinary & G. G. Berntson (eds.), *Handbook of psychophysiology* (pp. 200-224). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ettl-Huber, S. (2014). Storypotenziale, Stories und Storytelling in der Organisationskommunikation. In S. Ettl-Huber (ed.), *Storytelling in der Organisationskommunikation. Theoretische und empirische Befunde* (pp. 9-26). Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer.

Ettl-Huber, S., Ameseder, C., & Pfeiffer, C. (2019). Wie Geschichten wirken: Zum Stand der Wirkungsforschung über Storytelling. In S. Ettl-Huber (ed.), *Storytelling in Journalismus, Organisations- und Marketingkommunikation* (pp. 19-43). Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer VS.

Fahr, A., & Hofer, M. (2013). Psychophysiologische Messmethoden. In W. Möhring, & D. Schlütz (eds.), *Handbuch standardisierte Erhebungsverfahren in der Kommunikationswissenschaft* (pp. 347-365). Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer.

Früh, W., & Frey, F. (2014). Das Narrative und seine Attraktivitäts- und Wirkungspotenziale. Wirkungen der Definitionskomponenten ›Zielgerich-

tetheit‹ und ›menschlicher Handlungsträger‹ bei der Filmrezeption. In W. Früh & F. Frey (eds.), *Narration und Storytelling. Theorie und empirische Befunde* (pp. 319-371). Cologne, Germany: Herbert von Harlem.

Fulmer, S. M., D'Mello, S. K., Strain, A., & Graesser, A. C. (2015). Interest-based text preference moderates the effect of text difficulty on engagement and learning. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 41*, 98-110.

Graesser, A. C., Olde, B., & Klettke, B. (2002), How does the mind construct and represent stories? In M. C. Green, J.J. Strange & T. C. Brock (eds.), *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations* (pp. 229-262). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Harp, S. F., & Mayer, R. E. (1997). The role of interest in learning from scientific text and illustrations: On the distinction between emotional interest and cognitive interest. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*(1), 92-102.

Hauff, J. C., Carlander, A., Gamble, A., Gärling, T., & Holmen, M. (2014). Storytelling as a means to increase consumers' processing of financial information. *International Journal of Bank Marketing 32*(6), 494-514.

Hidi, S. (2001). Interest, reading, and learning: Theoretical and practical considerations. *Educational Psychology Review*, *13*(3), 191-209.

Hidi, S., & Renninger, K. A. (2006). The four-phase model of interest development. *Educational Psychologist, 41*(2), 111-127.

Hidi, S., Renninger, K. A., & Krapp, A. (2004). Interest, a motivational variable that combines affective and cognitive functioning. In D. Y. Dai & R. Sternberg (eds.), *Motivation, emotion, and cognition. Integrative perspectives on intellectual functioning and development* (pp. 89-115). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Holm, S. (1979). A simple sequentially rejective multiple test procedure. *Scandinavian Journal of Statistics, 6*(2), 65-70.

Knobloch, S., Patzig, G., Mende, A.-M., & Hastall, M. (2004). Affective news. Effects of discourse structure in narratives on suspense, curiosity, and enjoyment while reading news and novels. *Communication Research, 31*(3), 259-287.

Lenhard, W., & Lenhard, A. (2011). *Berechnung des Lesbarkeitsindex LIX nach Björnson.* Retrieved from https://www.psychometrica.de/lix.html. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.1.1512.3447

Mancuso, V., Parr, A., McMillan, E., Tesler, R., McNeese, M., Hamilton, K., & Mohammed, S. (2011). Once upon a time: Behavioral, affective and cognitive effects of metaphorical storytelling as a training intervention. *Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Annual Meeting, 55*(1), 2113-2117.

Petty, R. E., Briñol, P., Tormala, Z. L., & Wegener, D. T. (2007). The role of metacognition in social judgment. In A. W. Kruglanski & E. T. Higgins (eds.), *Social

Psychology: Handbook of basic principles (2nd ed., pp. 254-284). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Quintiliani, L. M., & Carbone, E. T. (2005). Impact of diet-related cancer prevention messages written with cognitive and affective arguments on message characteristics, stage of change, and self-efficacy. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 37*(1), 12-19.

Recarte, M. Á., Pérez, E., Conchillo, Á., & Nunes, L. M. (2008). Mental workload and visual impairment: Differences between pupil, blink, and subjective rating. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology, 11*(2), 374–385.

Ren, P., Ma, X., Lai, W., Zhang, M., Liu, S., Wang, Y., Li, M., Ma, D., Dong, Y., He, Y., & Xu, X. (2019). Comparison of the use of blink rate and blink rate variability for mental state recognition. *IEEE Transactions on Neural Systems and Rehabilitation Engineering, 27*(5), 867-875.

Shulman, H. C., & Sweitzer, M. D. (2018a). Varying metacognition through public opinion questions: How language can affect political engagement. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 37*(2), 224-237.

Shulman, H. C., & Sweitzer, M. D. (2018b). Advancing framing theory: Designing an equivalency frame to improve political information processing. *Human Communication Research, 44*(2), 155-175.

Silvia, P. J. (2010). Confusion and interest: The role of knowledge emotions in aesthetic experience. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 4*(2), 75-80.

Sumi, K., & Nagata, M. (2013). Persuasive Narrative via Digital Storytelling. In S. Yamamoto (ed.), *Human Interface and the Management of Information. Information and Interaction Design. HIMI 2013. Lecture Notes in Computer Science. Vol. 8016* (pp. 276-283). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.

Yaros, R. A. (2006). Is it the medium or the message? Structuring complex news to enhance engagement and situational understanding by nonexperts. *Communication Research, 33*(4), 285-309.

Yaros, R. A. (2011). Effects of text and hypertext structures on user interest and understanding of science and technology. *Science Communication, 33*(3), 275-308.

The use of storytelling by foundations for building a digital community: Gender based differences from the Barça Foundation

Núria Arimany
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
nuria.arimany@uvic.cat

Albert Armisent
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
albert.armisen@uvic.cat

Clara de Uribe
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
clara.uribe@uvic.cat

Introduction

The use of Storytelling by Foundations as a non-profit legal entity, helps significantly to perceive social measures that enhance gender equality and the reduction of inequalities (Vidal, 2019). Specifically, Foundations are often considered paradigms of the exercise of corporate responsibility of the organizations that found them, to develop activities of environmental, social and good governance, since they are non-profit organizations (Silva and Carrillo, 2016). Thus, Foundations as socially responsible organizations should be committed to gender equality and have it present in their boards of trustees, with female presence in the management structures of the Foundations for real gender equity in the organizations.

The presence of women in these organizations should be made visible in all areas (Silva and Carrillo, 2016). In addition, the Foundation must be respectful of gender equality and equal opportunities in the texts it uses, in the images present on its websites, and in the Storytelling of its cam-

paigns in networks (Silva and Carrillo, 2016). It is noteworthy that the traditional practice of word-of-mouth, as a mode of effective advertising without resorting to large investments or hiring in mass media, has been replaced by viral marketing with new technologies and social networks, and is used by organizations to disseminate information (Aguilar and San Martín, 2014) and foundations are no exception.

On the other hand, by addressing the gender issue in foundations and their boards of trustees, a message aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality of the 2030 Agenda is transmitted to the corporations that constitute these foundations. To this end, providing greater transparency and dissemination of parity in the boards of trustees of the Foundations is an example to follow for the stakeholders involved (Silva and Carrillo, 2016).

It should be noted that the digital community facilitates rapid and viral communication of the information transmitted by a Foundation (as in the case of the Barça Foundation, on storytelling in support of vulnerable children and young people through sport and education in values).

This digital communication allows visualizing actions aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities (SDG 10).

Thus, communicating at a digital level the actions of Foundations through social networks to highlight social and community values, through Storytelling, helps to visualize human rights, labour rights, social inclusion, and gender equality.

And the virality of the networks facilitates the contagion of very necessary actions in our society, such as: the prevention of violence; social inclusion; access and reinforcement of education and stop bullying, as in the case of the Barça Foundation, among others.

It should be noted that 54% of adolescents in Catalonia have been involved in cases of bullying directly or indirectly and 30% of primary school children have also been victims of this problem. On the other hand, more than 58% of children who are part of training soccer teams in Catalonia have experienced bullying situations and more than 9% have been victims. In

the case of the Barça Foundation, tackling these challenges is made possible thanks to sport, which allows us to implement tools to curb these problems, as in the case of bullying and cyberbullying.

The objective of our work is to demonstrate that the Storytelling of the Foundations in the networks contributes decisively to making visible actions for sustainable development, such as gender equality and the reduction of inequalities, as in the case of the Barça Foundation. In addition, the study analyzes the different ways of communicating on social networks, focusing especially on gender.

The methodology of the empirical study focuses on analysing a series of Barça Foundation campaigns in the digital community, in order to highlight the actions that promote gender equality and the reduction of inequalities, as the Foundation's philosophy.

The data collected from the campaigns, as communication tools, are obtained from Twitter and, the results obtained are assessed, through the quantitative description of the type of language used (polarity of sentiment, valence of sentiment, complexity) in each event and the detail of its narrative, to reach the results and conclusions of the study. It should be noted that information and communication technologies (ICT) and, media, in particular, play an important role in current narrative (Paxling, 2019).

Literature review

There are different mechanisms to achieve gender equality in science, technology, and other fields and Although advances in access to education in different countries have been relevant, there is still little female presence in recognition and decision-making positions (Jasso et al. 2016).

The State cannot meet all the challenges posed by social development, since it requires the collaboration of companies and organizations to achieve a fairer and more sustainable society, maintaining and improving its competitiveness. Therefore, organizations can act as true social agents, through the execution of social action programs, creating and sponsoring Foundations to respond to public interests (Ríos, 2015). In addition, the

Foundations in a certain way facilitate the management of CSR in certain organizations (Ríos, 2015; Silva and Carrillo, 2016).

Foundations are frequently considered paradigms of the exercise of corporate responsibility by the companies that found them, to develop non-profit social and environmental activities (Silva and Carrillo, 2016). On the other hand, the Foundations as socially responsible organizations are committed to gender equality and have it present in their boards of trustees. Gender diversity, and specifically the presence of women in the management structures of Foundations, poses a challenge for real gender equality in organizations. Thus, women must have a presence and visibility in all areas of the Foundations, with equal opportunities in texts, in web images, and on networks (Silva and Carrillo, 2016). What's more, gender in the Foundations and in their boards of trustees is transmitted to the corporations that constitute these foundations, and transparency and parity in boards of trustees are favored as an example to follow. It should be noted that alliances are essential in Foundations, organizations, and non-profit entities to achieve the desired social changes (Vidal, 2019).

On the other hand, gender equality must be fulfilled in all areas: political, economic, private, public in coherence with the applied policies and the Foundations are not an exception (Barry et al., 2010; Millán et al., 2015). It should be noted that certain Non-Governmental Organizations for Development (NGDOs) and Foundations do not reach the minimum required by the Equality Law (Millán et al. 2015).

In the field of gender and language, postmodern contemporaneity has strengthened this field of research, eliminating diachronic vs. synchronic binomials (Moure, T. 2021). The intersection between language and gender is analyzed from different perspectives (Ayres-Bennett and Sanson, 2021) and in our work it is contemplated in the communication in social networks by the Foundations.

Digital language introduces multimedia convergence (audiovisual, alphanumeric writing, tactile operation), ubiquity in emission/reception and global interconnection; a new complex language that involves the receiver (Crowley & Heyer, 1997; Briggs & Burke, 2002). A key element to consider is how the message is conveyed. It should be noted that according to the

affective states of Scherer's Typology (emotion, mood, interpersonal postures, attitudes, and personality traits), there are different communications and even more so with the emergence of corporate communication in social networks, as multidirectional communication. in which the emotional element is an important part of the message (Fernández-Vallejo, 2020).

For all these reasons, this work focuses on the differences in the ways of communicating and the sender used in storytelling by foundations in social networks in two main areas: gender equality and equal opportunities.

A use case: Barça Foundation

The Barça Foundation states that its *mission* is to support vulnerable children and young people through sport and education in values, with the aim of contributing to a more inclusive and egalitarian society. As for its *vision*, it is that of a sports foundation of reference for its social contribution in the world of children and youth. And its *values* are teamwork, respect, effort, and humility.

In addition, the Barça Foundation carries out certain actions to contribute to achieving the challenges identified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically, it carries out actions identified with 9 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (*figure 1*). Specific, the Barça Foundation's actions are aligned with the end of poverty (SDG 1); health and well-being (SDG 3); quality education (SDG 4); gender equality (SDG 5); decent work and economic growth (SDG 8); reduction of inequalities (SDG 10); sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11); peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16) and partnerships to achieve the SDGs (SDG 17). It should be noted that partnerships are fundamental for Foundations, organizations, and non-profit entities to achieve the desired social changes.

On the other hand, the Barça Foundation, with a desire for transparency, intends to make its rules of action and the ethical principles it follows in decision-making and in the execution of the Foundation's projects visible on the networks. In addition, the Barça Foundation is adhered to the Code of Good Corporate Governance of the *Coordinadora Catalana de Fundacio-*

Figure 1: *Challenges of the SDGs carried out by the Barça Foundation*

nes (CCF). The Catalan Foundation Coordinator (CCF) promotes a code of good practice (*figure 2*). As a guide to facilitate to the foundations the obligations related with transparency and public information established by the Parliament of Catalonia. This Code is a set of ethical rules the main objective to raise the foundations transparency for a common interest.

In addition, following the CCF Code of Ethics based on equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Foundations must promote equality between men and women and ensure equality in their Board of Trustees. In the case of the Barça Foundation its institutional and organizational information through the web allows the composition and governing bodies of the Board of Trustees to be identified, with 12% of women and some governing bodies represented by 71% of women in 2020.

Regarding the Barça Foundation website, its actions are currently focused on the prevention of violence, social inclusion, and access to education with its own programs and methodologies. Gender equality and the reduction of inequalities are present in all its programs. In addition, the Foundation actively works on gender equality and the promotion of equality, through certain methodologies collected in 4 points:

Figure 2: *Code of good governance and good management practices for Foundations*
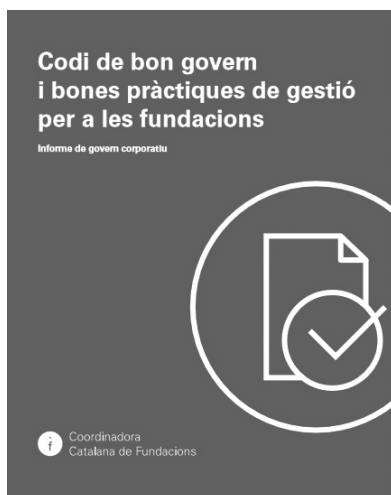
1. The FutbolNet methodology, a social intervention methodology based on the integration of young people from vulnerable contexts through sports, games and physical activity to promote effort, teamwork, humility and cooperation.

2. The Benestar Pediàtric methodology through the experiences of the players themselves with sick children in hospitals such as Sant Joan de Déu.

3. The Bulling Prevention methodology that uses sport as a tool to prevent peer bullying.

4. The Masia Solidària methodology to promote the social sensitivity of the players, awakening the social conscience of the youngest members of the Masia.

In addition, they have three active campaigns:

1. Universal Children's Day, in which players from the first team participate, and together with Unicef, claim the right of all children to play.

2. New rules, supporting different diseases, against bullying and in favor of refugees so that everyone can play.

3. Join the game against bullying, with a short film aimed at young people to raise awareness about the problem of bullying with recognized actors and directors.

As for social networks, the Barça Foundation is present on three social networks, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Platforms that they use to communicate the actions they carry out in order to contribute to a more inclusive society. Regarding Facebook

there are publications dedicated to all the news of the foundation and events in which it participates, with more than 5,000,000 followers. Regarding Instagram, a widely used network, it publishes events, activities, and information of interest, such as new projects or news from the foundation. In this social network they have more than 200,000 followers and more than 465 publications. Finally, Twitter is the network most used by the foundation, as the main channel to communicate and interact with the public and publish news. On Twitter they use a very formal language to claim the different aspects that they consider to be

important and should be highlighted. The main objective of the posts on Twitter is to motivate the young generation with sport and to communicate the values implicit in sport and social life.

Methodology

The methodology of the empirical study focuses on analyzing a series of campaigns of the Barça Foundation in the digital community, to show the actions that promote gender equality and the reduction of inequalities, as a philosophy of the Foundation.

Different aspects of the impact of campaigns on social networks (Twitter) have been analyzed. It is evident that the Barça Foundation is consolidated in social networks, due to its history in using them to spread its efforts. Specifically, nine successful campaigns selected by the person in charge of the Barça Foundation that had relevance and scope.

The collected data was collected using the hashtag for each campaign using the Twitter API. Each tweet potentially consisted of a combination of an image, video, or text. The images and videos used were used by a group of experts to identify the type of campaign (that is, the gender of the main communicator and the focus of the campaign). The textual data was analyzed using natural language processing to extract polarity, number of nouns, verbs, and entities (Vader, 2021). Therefore, each campaign had several quantitative and qualitative measures.

The first qualitative measure is "gender of the main communicator" which was carried out by agreement of three independent experts evaluating the gender of the main communicator. Gender can be feminine, masculine, or neutral depending on the gender of the primary communicator. Neutral was assigned when both men and women were the primary communicators. The second and third measures involved the issue of the campaign. This theme could focus on gender equality or around reducing inequality.

The second set of measures were quantitative. Each campaign generated more community engagement in the form of comments, retweets, quotes, and likes. Some campaigns used an external link, hashtags, and tagged other Twitter accounts. Finally, an analytical tool (Vader, 2011; Spacy, 2021) was used to extract the sentiment of the text, number of nouns, verbs, and entities. The sentiment of the text uses a certain combination of words to infer whether the message is more positive (ie 1) or negative (ie -1). The number of nouns, verbs, and entities is calculated using another machine learning tool that estimates each number.

Results

The following table 1 depicts the measures for each descriptor. The nine campaigns provided diverse information in terms of gender of the main communication, and topic of the campaign. Five campaigns were neutral, while three were done by a female communicator and only one by a male one. The distribution of the topics was reasonable as five of them were about inequality reduction and 3 about gender equality.

Table 1: *Descriptors of each campaign*

Gender of the main communicator	Topic is related to Gender Equality	Topic is related to Inequality Reduction	Number of Comments	Number of Retweets	Number of Likes	Number of Quotes	Uses External Links	Number of Hashtags	Number of entities references	Sentiment used in the Text	Number of Nouns	Number of Verbs	Number of Entities
Neutral	0	0	0	94	483	10	1	1	0	0.53	7	3	1
Neutral	0	1	20	115	1746	2	0	1	1	-0.68	4	4	3
Neutral	0	1	3	127	683	9	0	3	0	-0.24	12	5	2
Neutral	0	0	21	177	2116	12	0	0	2	0.10	5	2	3
Neutral	0	1	19	130	1505	8	0	4	1	0.40	8	4	1
Male	0	0	13	150	797	24	0	1	1	0.05	10	3	5
Female	1	1	13	97	2100	5	0	4	3	0.60	8	4	4
Female	1	1	16	111	1654	5	1	3	1	0.65	8	2	3
Female	1	0	4	88	788	5	0	3	2	0.36	6	1	5

Discussion and Conclusions

The report called Sport and Agenda 2030 indicates that Sport contributes to Human and Environmental Development, according to the agenda created by the UN in 2015.

In our communication work on networks, gender, and equal opportunities by the Barça Foundation, after carrying out the empirical study we concluded that in the case of SDG 5, on gender equality, the main communicator on networks is usually female and uses a positive valence to communicate.

Regarding SDG 10 on reducing inequality, the main communicator presents gender diversity, with a diverse valence at the level of communication.

It should be noted that the valence of the language depends on who is the main communicator of the campaign in question. The neutral valence corresponds to masculine communicators; the positive valence corresponds to women communicators and the diverse valence corresponds to neutral communicators.

As for the images of the Barça Foundation, with greater potential than written language, the following considerations must be taken into account.

– Guarantee real parity in the frequency of appearance of men and women in illustrations and photographs. In the case of the Barça Foundation, parity is guaranteed.

– Avoid the invisibility of women in certain public or private spheres, especially if they have social or media relevance. In the case of the Barça Foundation, non-invisibility is guaranteed.

– Avoid the use of icons with clearly masculine connotations and promote the use of icons that make both genders visible and a symbolic sense of neutrality. In the case of the Barça Foundation, both genders are made visible.

– Equal treatment in the appearances of men and women in the images, graphic parity in networks. In the case of the Barça Foundation, graphic parity is guaranteed on networks.

– Avoid male or female gender stereotypes at the level of emotions, feelings, and exercise practice, among others, with revised and reordered behavior patterns. In the case of the Barça Foundation, stereotypes are avoided.

Therefore, it is concluded that at the level of verbal communication in networks regarding gender equality, the main communicator in networks is usually female and uses a positive valence to communicate. In terms of reducing inequality, the main communicator presents gender diversity,

with a diverse valence at the level of communication. At the level of communication through images on networks, the Barça Foundation guarantees parity, the visibility of both genders, with graphic parity on networks without stereotypes.

Appendices

Home page of the website

Foundation Magazines images

References

Aguilar Arcos, V. E., San Martín Gutiérrez, S., & Payo Hernanz, R. J. (2014). La aplicación empresarial del marketing viral y el efecto boca-oreja electrónico. Opiniones de las empresas. *Cuadernos de Gestión*, 2014, vol. 14, n. 1, pp. 15-31.

Ayres-Bennett, Wendy and Sanson, Helena (2021) Women in the History of Linguistics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barry, F., King, M., y Matthews, A. (2010): "Policy Coherence for Development: Five Challenges", *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 21: 207-223.

Bazán, C. U. (2020). Igualdad de género en las ONG para el desarrollo de Gipuzkoa: mito o realidad. Tendencias Sociales. *Revista de Sociología*, (5), 124-151.

Fernández-Vallejo, A. M. (2020). Comunicar emociones en Facebook: Análisis discursivo en la página corporativa de empresa Dia. *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada/Spanish Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 33(1), 55-83.

Jasso, A. K. S., Gómez, E. R., & Orozco, J. J. V. (2016). Desigualdades de género en ciencia, el caso de las científicas de la UAEMéx. *Cuadernos Inter. ca mbio sobre Centroamérica y el Caribe*, *13*(2), 83-110.

Millán, N., Martínez, P., Martínez, I., Gil, L., Sanabria, A., Ospina, S., y García, H. (2015): A research programme for development analysis for policy coherence. Pla-taforma 2015 y más (ed.).

Moure, T. (2021). Lingüística se escribe con A: la perspectiva de género en las ideas sobre el lenguaje. Los Libros de la Catarata.

Paxling, L. (2019). Women's tech initiatives in Uganda: Doing intersectionality and feminist technoscience. In *Gendered Power and Mobile Technology* (pp. 151-165). Routledge.

Ríos, M. E. N. (2015). Las fundaciones y su concepción y gestión de la responsabilidad social. *Saber, ciencia y libertad*, 10(1), 87-100.

Scherer, K. R. (2005). "What are emotions? And how can they be measured?". Social Science Information., 44 (4), 693–727.

Silva, T. R., & Carrillo, E. F. P. (2016). Responsabilidad social de las fundaciones, y el género en sus patronatos. *Holos*, 2, 414-431.

Vidal, M. J. S. (2019). Herramientas jurídicas para la aplicación de la perspectiva de género a la regulación de las cooperativas y otras entidades de la economía social. *Deusto Estudios Cooperativos*, (12), 13-55.

Writing for inclusion across Europe: Universities and schools working together in times of pandemic (WIN)

Mireia Canals-Botines
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
mireia.canals@uvic.cat

Nuria Medina-Casanovas
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
nuria.medina@uvic.cat

Miquel Pujol- Tubau
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
miquel.pujol@uvic.cat

Angel Raluy Alonso
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
angel.raluy@uvic.cat

Introduction

Social inclusion has been a long-term key priority for the European Union to cater for diversity in Europe and one of its priority areas was to promote inclusiveness in education. In this sense, the European Education Arena initiative launched in 2018 aimed to stress the need for good quality education to achieve sustainable development in Europe. Indeed, all students should develop respect towards diversity and gain acceptance and understanding of others within their primary schooling (Vitalaki et al.,2018) to fight exclusive attitudes. However, the challenge is how to implement strategies and practices that fights against discrimination and segregation at schools. As the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2017) states: "School segregation is one of the worst forms of discrimination, as the children learning opportunities are seriously harmed by

isolation and lack of inclusion in mainstream schools". Even if national governments have adopted important measures to build more inclusive education systems, it is ultimately the schools that need to respond to the diversity of needs of all children through projects and policies.

Storytelling and story writing are known to be not only one of the oldest methods of communication and learning, but also a way to deal with human problems and emotional deadlocks (Bratitsis, 2016). Bratitsis argues that storytelling is an excellent instrument to develop mental sensitivity, compassion, and solidarity, sympathy because stories are excellent aids to integrate children with special needs (Fauver & Alanis, 2012). Storytelling and imagination are intertwined since coming into contact with the characters of the stories helps people to "put themselves in someone else's shoes", identifying themselves with situations experienced by others. Thus, through storytelling, empathy towards other people's experiences and feelings is achieved, preparing the ground for communicative relationships and for learning about and through emotions (Capperucci and Piccioli, 2019).

This research explains how a European project can enhance primary pupils' abilities for creative writing when dealing with care in education to foster inclusion and how storytelling can embrace such experiences among European children. The main purpose of this project WIN is for primary pupils to empathize with the feelings and emotions felt by those kids entering the group for the first time and to open their minds as a way a to create a more inclusive and fair society to all. As Capperucci and Piccioli (2019) point out "a particular type of storytelling, the so-called social stories, can represent tools to promote school and social inclusion of children and young people" (Capperucci and Piccioli, 2019, p.13).

Win Project

The Key Action 2 Erasmus project "Writing for Inclusion" (WIN) aims to raise awareness, change perceptions and provide resources to achieve inclusion through the concept of Care in Education. WIN also endeavours to reinforce the development of key competences, particularly with literacy, digital and technology-based competences and awareness of diversity.

The choice of literacy competences connects with the development of the ability to create texts both orally and in writing that advocate for inclusion and it will be implemented with older learners who are capable of elaborating written stories. As for digital competence, the project seeks to explore the possibilities of new technologies to engage in active citizenship. It plans to provide children with resources to produce and share digital content and simultaneously to give teachers tools to develop a reflective and an open-minded approach to diversity in the classroom. Finally, social awareness is vital to empowering children to face social challenges such as discrimination or intolerance. It also endeavours to help students and teachers to interpret and respond to the needs of others through self-awareness and open communication. In this sense, WIN may be regarded as an opportunity to understand the feelings and emotions of others and to improve our students' ability to actively reduce disparities and discrimination. Thus, inclusion practices such as the integration of children with a disability or an awareness campaign for minority students are valuable because they stem from the concept of "Care". The key point is understanding the framework: we must interpret the special needs and then activate the best educational paths to cater for them. "Care" comes before inclusion, and this project is about building and implementing a methodology that interprets those special needs in four European schools and acts upon them through digital storytelling.

In order to mainstream inclusive practices and tackle the effective use of digital storytelling to foster Care in childhood education, a four-country consortium was created. It is composed of four universities: University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC) from Spain, Università di Firenze from Italy (UNIFI), Eötvös-Loránd University (ELTE) from Hungary, and Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogikal University (PNPU) from Ukraine; and four schools: Les Pinediques, from Spain, Istituto Comprensivo Le Cure, from Italy, Erzsébetvárosi Két Tanítási Nyelvű Általános Iskola és Szakgimnázium, from Hungary and Poltava Comprehensive school of I-III degree # 18, from Ukraine.

Target groups

WIN is addressed to school teachers, children and universities. School teachers are key factors to developing inclusive environments (Savic, 2009) and, as O'Gorman & Drudy, (2011) confirm, proper training and adequate classroom resources are essential to ensure that inclusion. Pupils are the main target of the project since they need to be exposed to inclusion at an early age in order to increase their likelihood of accepting disabilities in their environment (Rafferty et al.,2001). Nonetheless, this attitude may wane if not specifically supported by school practices and this is why digital storytelling could be a suitable method to increase the motivation of students towards diversity within their school curriculum. Finally, universities & pre-service teachers also relevant stakeholders. Higher Education institutions should prepare student teachers for diversity and inclusion in regular classrooms and should also develop ongoing professional development for in-service teachers. Slee (2010) has argued that one of the most relevant areas for promoting inclusive practice is pre-service teachers' understanding of its implementation in their classroom practice. Pre-service teachers are involved within the framework of the university modules since two students from the four universities will carry out their practicum in a project partner school to observe the development of the activities.

WIN Results

WIN has elaborated an array of outcomes and from the school perspective the most relevant ones are the following:

- A Moodle open-access learning platform. It gathers practices and transfers experiences among the participating universities and schools in the areas of Inclusion and Care. This platform endeavors to collect information about how diversity in education has been tackled and how digital storytelling may be an instrument to raise children's awareness and to promote integration. The Moodle platform contains the 6 Online modules, which provide theoretical knowledge (core reading resources) and practical resources (useful websites and apps) and they explore the creation processes of writing to promote social, cultural and learning diversity as well.

- Learning-focused animations. They are a bank of digital resources that children can use to develop their stories on inclusion in peer-to-peer scenarios. The kit contains 150 illustrations that were designed by students of Art in the Master Degree Art Program at the University of Poltava as part of their practicum project through the program *Icecream Screen Recorder* (2021).

- A school toolkit. It is developed to aid participants (teachers and students) through all the steps that are to be followed to create a digital story. This online pack covers the technical processes of taking advantage of the animation toolkit, and it gives recommendations on how to implement the materials in the classroom. The kit consists of nine lesson plans which last at least 45 minutes each and can be used independently according to the needs and characteristics of the target pupils.

- A training activity. It combines e-learning modules (20h) that different partners can choose according to their teaching needs, and synchronic face-to-face sessions following a blended methodology (20h). The training activity was planned to be held in Hungary, at the ELTE University premises in July 2021 but the pandemic did not allow the Consortium to travel. Therefore, the coordinating team organized an online session for the primary school partners to solve any inconveniences when dealing with either the narrative structures – for the building of the stories in class- and the digital platform -for the construction of the stories in the second phase of the implementation. Consequently, a discussion on how to implement the photo-voice technique and debate was established among partners. Poltava University solved any issues concerning the digital platform, the University of Vic solved issues referring to the narrative structures and the photo-voice and the primary schools re-scheduled their implementation to begin in September with the new school year.

- An eTwinning Project and Digital tales. The eTwinning project was carried out throughout the first year of the project and it was named *We All Win*". The eTwinning experience had some specific aims, which were: to learn about other countries and cultures and infer their own; to create a better cultural understanding; to create a European identity; to develop oral and written skills in English and to improve students ICT skills. In terms of participation, 30 pupils from Poltava School#18, 50 children from

Les Pinediques, 40 from Erzsébetvárosi Két Tanítási Nyelvű Általános Iskola és Szakgimnázium school, and 40 from Istituto Comprensivo Le Cure took part in the project. Five main teaching/learning activities were carried out: Primary schools started by organizing a logo contest among the pupils that are involved in the implementation process. The winning idea was designed by Leo, a child with a disability from Istituto Comprensivo Le Cure in Florence, Italy, who managed to win 416 votes. A second activity was "Who is who?" in which all the schools and pupils presented themselves in a Padlet platform. The third activity was "Let's celebrate Christmas" in which all school partners sang a common song and recorded it and the recordings were shared in the platform. The fourth activity was "Our schools" which was a guided tour through each of the schools involved in the WIN project. The fifth activity was "Did you know?", an activity with the objective of introducing each country and town and some specific traditions.

- Stories produced by children. The four schools taking part of the project have produced several written stories. After writing the stories about inclusion, they animated them by using a digital program created by the partner at Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogikal University (PNPU) from Ukraine. After creating the animation, they will add a recorded visual version with subtitles in English. The school partner from Erzsébetvárosi Két Tanítási Nyelvű Általános Iskola és Szakgimnázium school created 4 stories, Istituto Comprensivo Le Cure produced 10 stories, Poltava School#18 wrote 4 stories and Les Pinediques created 15 stories.

Discussion and conclusions

The project WIN has been put together by 4 Universities and 4 primary schools from Ukraine, Italy, Hungary and Spain. It aims to raise teachers' and students' awareness on the importance of "care" in education at a European level by providing training on inclusion, care, storytelling and story writing and by offering a discussion arena for teachers to share joint initiatives. In this sense, the project partners have created a Moodle platform in which educators from participating schools may take a number of theoretical modules on care and narrative techniques and they can also

find resources that are meant to be used in their everyday practice. These resources can be divided into two categories: teaching resources in the shape of lesson plans and audio-visual stories on different elements related to diversity and animated resources to illustrate their pupils' stories.

Following Pigorova (2018), who argues that communicative approaches are excellent integrative tools since they heavily rely on cooperation between learners, the first year of this Erasmus+ project has been dedicated to teacher training and to create bounds among the participating schools. All the project activities were thought to enhance pupils and teachers' interaction by gaining knowledge on cultural and geographical aspects of the other primary schools' countries. Indeed, sharing their experiences has helped partners increase their awareness, not only by cherishing their differences but also by reinforcing their common European values.

The eTwinning project involved the primary schools directly both in the teaching/learning activities (logo design, story and tradition sharing, singing recording) and in the overall assessment carried out by students and teachers. Educators asked their pupils to write comments and shared their opinions about the eTwinning experience. The results show that most of the pupils enjoyed participating in the project, particularly the Logo Contest, and they also said that they had enjoyed getting to know more about other schools and countries. The teachers pointed out that both teachers and children had a real opportunity to practice their English while improving their ICT skills and their cultural understanding. In terms of improvement, Primary teachers and children alike concluded that interaction should be prioritized and the activities ought to focus on synchronic and asynchronic contact.

References

Benkő, É. T., Árva, V., Medina-Casanovas, N., & Canals-Botines, M. (2021). English Language Children's Literature as a Springboard for Teacher-Researcher International Collaboration. *Gyermeknevelés Tudományos Folyóirat*, *9*(1), 39-56.

Bratitsis, T. (2016). A digital storytelling approach for fostering empathy towards autistic children: Lessons learned. *Proc. International Conference on Software Development and Technologies for Enhancing Accessibility and Fighting Info-exclusion*. 301–308. http://10.1145/3019943.3019987

Canals-Botines, M. (2020). Teaching Narrative Structures to Students majoring in Pre-School and Primary Education. *Studi sulla Formazione/Open Journal of Education*, *23*(1), 175-186.

Capperucci, D., & Piccioli, M. (2019). Storytelling for inclusion. Dins N. Camps-Casals, M. Canals-Botines, N. Medina-Casanovas (Coords.) *Music, Gender, Language, Cinema* (pp 13-24). UVic-UCC

Faver C, Alanis E. (2012). Fostering empathy through stories: A pilot program for special needs adoptive families. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 660–665.

Icecream Screen Recorder, https://icecreamapps.com/Screen-Recorder/

O'Gorman, E. and Drudy, S. (2011). *Professional Development for Teachers Working in Special Education/Inclusion in Mainstream Schools: The Views of Teachers and Other Stakeholders*. School of Education, University College Dublin.

Pigorova, N. (2018). Implementation of Inclusive Approach to Teaching English as a Foreign Language Nadezhda Pirogova Foreign Language Training Center ITMO University Saint-Petersburg. https://doi.org/10.2991/ictp-pfms-18.2018.17

Rafferty, Yvonne & Boettcher, Caroline & Griffin, Kenneth. (2001). Benefits and Risks of Reverse Inclusion for Preschoolers With and Without Disabilities: Parents' Perspectives. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 24, 266-286. https://doi.org/10.1177/105381510502700305

Savić, V. (2009a). Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Inclusive Settings in Serbia. *Equal Educational Opportunities Resulting from Integration in Education (conference proceedings)*, 3, 19-27.

Slee, J. (2010). A systemic approach to culturally responsive assessment practices and evaluation. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 64(3), 246-260.

Vitalakia, E. Kourkoutasa, E. Hart, A. (2018) Building inclusion and resilience in students with and without SEN through the implementation of narrative speech, role play and creative writing in the mainstream classroom of primary education. International *Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22:12, https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1427150

Storytelling as a therapeutic tool: Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital experience. The Pediatric Intensive Care Unit Diaries' project

Lucia Celesti
Ospedale Pediatrico Bambino Gesù
lucia.celesti@opbg.net

Orsola Gawronski
Ospedale Pediatrico Bambino Gesù
orsola.gawronski@opbg.net

Introduction

Being sick is tough. It gets even worst when a child is sick because there are not only their own needs, but also the ones of their family. Even harder is the moment when the young patient and the family have to move to another country or region, because of the rarity and complexity of the disease. Besides the continuity of clinical treatment for the young patient, the continuity in the family's care is also needed.

Experiencing a disease is indeed bitter and rough, even furthermore when it involves a journey to another country or region because of the rarity or complexity of that disease. Being away from home and losing natural support structures can have a great emotional impact and traumatize patients and their family. This is a strong reason for properly supporting the patient and his relatives during their stay in addition to the normal clinical treatments.

The pillars of care are traditionally considered to be medical and surgical care and research. Since this is undoubtedly true, a fundamental aspect for the completeness of the therapeutic path should not be overlooked: taking

care of the patients and their family from a more comprehensive point of view is fundamental.

Unfortunately, there is no complete application of this principle in hospitals and territorial care. Often, bewilderment can still be the dominant sensation for those who have to face with an admission to a hospital, especially if it is far away from home and even worse if the patient is a child. Even greater bewilderment can arise upon discharge, if the local structures fail to fully guarantee support.

However, everything can be different, if the hospital, together with medical and surgical treatments, invests in family support, considering that the care of the family is as an essential factor for the proper cure along with Clinical and Research units.

Family services: organization model

Over the world, a few hospitals are already organized with structures of Family Services. Family Services are meant to take care of children and their family for all non-clinical aspects of assistance for the real "therapy of care".

Therefore, by considering a constant analysis of family needs, we emphasize the importance of building a Family Service department highly dedicated to softening the traumatic experience on patients and their relatives after their entrance at the hospital. The goal is to recreate inside the hospital an environment as close to home as possible.

A Family Services department should be built to guarantee varieties of offers, divided into branches, to answer all health needs of young patients; this goal should be also pursued by taking care of the families, with the help of dedicated staff members who ensure supporting environments from the first moment of their arrival at the hospital.

In the following pages we describe how this process can be implemented with various services specifically dedicated to families. The patients and their families are constantly at the center of the treatment system, which they are surrounded by, through various services that integrate each other.

Front line

The treatment begins with the Front Line System.

The treatment begins with the Front Line System.

For starters, it is necessary to praise the too often burdened front line service. The "simple" Care and Information desks have a role that is rarely recognized for its importance in the system that sometimes employs lower quality staff.

The philosophy that should animate the front line employees, which should be selected and trained, is to be proactive. Whether the staff is just standing in the hall and available for giving information or orientation, the most important thing is dealing with possible problems. The staff should be easily recognized, not only by their uniform, but also because of their smiles. The schedule should be as broad as possible including weekends and holidays. In addition, at the call-centers the answer should never be "it's not my responsibility", but instead: "I'll deal with this".

Answer expectancies are to be never beyond 24 hours, and the same applies for the email service. Quick and competent replies are directly proportionate to the feeling of protection and help for those who seek it. It's not rare for a customer to react positively to an answer that doesn't coincide with his first expectations, as long as it's prompt, kind and well explained.

A considered reply can increase the customer's faith in the system, and therefore turn him from a potential critic to a sympathetic ally.

Accommodation care

Without a home there's no care. The first, basic problem with accommodation for those who come from far away, is having a roof over their head. Even if one of the two parents can stay for 24 hours with the recovering child, the need for personal space out of the hospital is necessary for the other parent or for a supporting relative, and for the whole family in case of a long stay.

The principal network is the one dedicated to needy families: the hospital should offer them free accommodation in structures linked to the hospital. For access they might follow a path from a triage, made by Social Services on the base of clear criteria such as the disease of the child, the duration of recovery, the family composition and the distance of their residence from the hospital in order to guarantee that those with greater needs may get the most help.

As an example, along with family care accommodation provided by non-profit organizations and a network of hotels, today Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital counts on almost 200 rooms to accommodate families for free. Every year more than 4,500 families are accommodated: about 13,500 people, for more than 100,000 nights per year.

Red carpet

Project "Red Carpet" consists in Family Services contacting the family before they leave home in order to introduce themselves and to verify any potential needs (accommodation, social assistance, etc). From the moment of admission at the Hospital, the family will find a Family Service Tutor waiting for them, who has knowledge about the clinical case thanks to the information collected from clinicians and family. The Tutor will take care of the patient and family, welcoming the child by calling them by their first name.

The family will receive all the information about the hospitals' structures and facilities (summarized in a guide), a small kit/diary for the child and indications about possible available accommodations. The Family Services Tutor will lead the family to the ward and introduce them to the staff.

This project is integrated with the Guardian Angel (Tutor or Navigator) program.

Before reaching the hospital, the family is contacted to make an appointment and subsequently received by a team of "Guardian Angels" from Family Services, who are trained to care for the whole family, for as long as required, until the discharge and even after.

The family is followed by the same person during the entire process, who gives informations and logistical support. They can also offer counseling through staff members specialized in listening and supporting the family members traveling with the patient until they get back home.

Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital hosts about 100 families / year with the "Red Carpet" program. At the same time, the Family Services staff are "Guardian Angels" for about 500 families.

Cultural Mediation Service

An element of further difficulty may be caused by the patient's origin, if not the same as the one where the treatment is provided.

The hospital should ensure a linguistic-cultural interpreting service for the families of young patients who come from abroad through the figure of the cultural mediator, who also favors the approach to Italian customs and habits.

The cultural mediators, in addition to operating for the direct benefit of foreign families, provide support to the hospital as an informative aid to health workers regarding aspects related to cultural habits of the countries from which the families come from. Therefore, as well as collaboration in identifying and in the assessment of needs that these families long for, there must be the course of appropriate actions to satisfy them.

In the Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital cultural mediation is offered in over 100 languages, every day, at any time, through accessible telephone services free of charge (a toll-free number) directly from the hospital wards and from the reception centers. The average waiting time is less than two minutes.

For complex needs, families can request the direct presence of a cultural linguistic mediator at the various locations of the hospital.

During the year, about 9,000 on-site mediations are carried out, for over 15,000 hours and over 700 telephone mediations. The required languages are about 50 regarding the service provided by an on-site cultural mediator and 70 for telephone mediations.

With an open view for creating a service which focuses on the needs of young patients and their families, training courses dedicated to the figure of the cultural mediator should be organized with an aim on transversal issues and psychological support.

Child life services

Playing is really a serious business. The Child Life Specialist/Professional Educator is an expert, qualified to help children facing stress and fear of sickness and hospitalization. Training for Professional Educator is essential to ensure the cure and rehabilitation process.

Nowadays it has been proven that the psychosocial cure of the child and their family is not an optional measure in the treatment of hospitalization, but it's indeed an essential part of the process.

Creative activities and games are means through which it is possible to create a connection with the outside world, to express and communicate feelings, control situations, exchanging roles, express aggressiveness. During hospitalization, the health operators help the child to cope with fears and needs and this also ensures an immense family support.

The service in Bambino Gesù Hospital has two main targets: to offer children and parents care and games for entertainment and relief and, at the same time, a way to express and elaborate fears, doubts, worries and negative emotions linked with hospitalization. For this purpose, a plan of activities is required, diversified in relation to different ages and contents: spontaneous and guided games, laboratory activities such as graphical-pictorial activities, marionettes construction and dramatization, role play, manipulation and construction of clay toys and musical instruments, physical activities with music, stimulation of the imagination, reading and creation of tales and stories about peculiar themes.

Other activities that particularly influence the familiarization with therapeutic procedures and potentially unsettling tools used in the hospital are Art-therapy, thematic laboratories and guided imagination laboratories as well as a video archive, a library and a toy bank for loans or offers.

Individual interventions have to be done at the bedside in Intensive Care Units.

For parents who can entrust their children to a qualified staff member, meetings and shared areas or manual activities that can help them to find emotional support and playful resources must be provided to relate themselves with their child even in the hardest times.

School

Continuity of the scholastic itinerary must be guaranteed, especially to the children who spend long periods at the hospital due to the cure of their serious illness. Both primary and secondary school lessons of every grade must be at disposal.

A school course, in a peculiar environment such as the one of a patient with complex injuries, involves a complete change of mind on a curricular, educational and methodological level.

At the hospital there can't be a physical education class, as long as most of the kids must stay in bed, especially if found in the intensive wards. School is centered around individual or small groups of students, often from different classes, in the rooms of the different wards or, when possible, held around the bed of a patient who can't move. The teacher is therefore always in motion.

In ''normal'' schools the teacher is the main protagonist of training and orientation processes that are the primary bases of instruction. Instead, during school in the hospital, the teacher becomes a cooperator by the side of other experts working all around the child-patient-student.

Volunteers

Volunteers serve as unique channels among the patient, family and health operators and, due to their focused training, offer their assistance with respect, accessibility and professionalism.

They undertake various tasks during the span of the day: they assist with requests by doctors, are in almost all the wards, where they dedicate as-

sistance to children during treatment with leisure.

They assist also families, with particular attention to mothers: helping with the bureaucratic activities necessary for recovery, substituting them when they need some rest, involving them in manual and laboratory activities to get them distracted from their daily life, they inform on how to get around easily at the hospital and are also beside the parents of children undergoing surgery till the end of the procedure.

Parents associations

Parents associations are a precious resource, both because of their direct knowledge of the assistance and psychological problems of the patients, and because of their capability to find empathic and trusted links with customers. The venture is integrated in the project of Family Centered Care, which includes the creation of structured paths to involve the families directly in the family care process. This is of extraordinary importance especially in difficult situations such as the one of patients with complex injuries.

The active associations at the hospitals should have a reserved placement inside the Family Services: at the desk they can both inform and listen to the families of children with specific illnesses and they represent a channel between the family's requests and the hospital's operators.

In particular, they direct and ease the access of patients and their families to Hospital's facilities through agreed paths and help them when it's time to return home by creating a protective net.

It is also very significant to take in account the opinion of patients and families, admitting them in the different committees and in the councils of the hospital composed of both relatives and teenagers.

Participation in Hospital Councils

A very useful experience can be the participation of children in the teenagers committee, whose targets are:

  • Creation of a direct channel to communicate with young patients

- Listen to their point of view in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of care and assistance

- Improve the quality of recovery

Different subjects can be analyzed as: general care, environmental cleanness, facilities, daily organization, food, information received and relationships with the health operators and a feedback about what they've liked most and the least, and about their needs, advice or suggestions.

Social services

Social Services are part of the hospital network dedicated to the protection of children's rights, paying particular attention to child abuse, for prevention and immediate intervention. Specific procedures for premature screening for abuse and mistreatment are required and a close network among the different services and social operators is fundamental in order to provide support to the child and family.

In the last few years, the number of families supported by Social Services has enormously increased: in Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital more than 2,500 families are followed each year.

Social Services have the task of activating structured support processes. The primary goal during recovery is to help families when they most need it, especially in the period of loneliness and desperation for their child's illness and to make them feel loved and respected as a part of a great family. But the most critical moment often comes with the discharge, when the family goes back home from the hospital: the lack of any social facility supporting the family is often a serious problem, especially in the cases, more and more frequent each year, of children with acute or chronic diseases, which makes it difficult to provide an at home management of the illness.

Improvement projects should be favored between the hospitals and territorial social services, to create a protective net around those families who need it.

Counseling

The hospital counselors, specialized in supporting and listening to the family during difficult times, build relationships in which they attentively listen and offer sympathetic understanding, all the while withholding judgment. Conversation is the foundation of this work method: the counseling process helps develop awareness, opinions and abilities that result useful for problem management and for personal growth, thanks to the maturing of self-confidence and personal resources. The objective is to offer guide, support and to encourage the development of relationships and building potential. Counseling activity is strictly confidential. It is not psychotherapy, therefore it can't be used for psychological or psychiatric diseases, as they require a different approach.

The hospital counselors can activate self-help groups which gather periodically and dedicate their time specifically to patients with complex injuries.

The WHO defines mutual self-help as "the combination of measures adopted by non-professional people to promote, maintain and recover health, meant as complete physical, psychological and social wellness of a community". The goal of mutual self-help is to "transform those who ask for help into people who can give help".

The purpose of the group is to exchange experiences, relating and listening through meeting people that are facing the same problems and who have found optimal ways to overcome and manage those problems, giving them hope and optimism.

Participation of parents who have had their children recovered or recently discharged from the wards is voluntary and the number of participants in the group can reach up to around 10 people. If there's a foreign parent participating, a cultural mediator is activated.

Facilities

The hospital's target is to make parents and young patients feel at home. For children and parents so severely tested by life, being able to take

advantage of 'tailor-made' spaces where they can express their creativity, socialize, or simply take a break, is essential.

Quite a lot are examples of specific locations that hospitals should provide for these families:

- The Parents Room, with a relaxing environment where parents can read, use the computer, listen to music, talk with qualified staff or participate in recreational and training activities;

- The Teenagers rooms, where teenagers can enjoy personal spaces;

- The 'Stork's Home', an area inside the hospital with the comforts of a real apartment for mothers that breastfeed their child, who is being recovered in intense care;

- The Emergency room, to receive families that arrive to the hospital in emergency during the night;

- A specific area for mothers/fathers to have gym and yoga lessons while their children play in the playground followed by our professionals;

- The Laundrette, a room with washing machines and dryers, where parents can wash and dry their laundry;

- The "Milk points" in different areas of the hospital where the mother can breastfeed their child;

- Outdoor and indoor playgrounds for children;

- Specific playground for disabled children.

To minimize the traumatic impact that the execution of diagnostic tests could cause, tools as the ''Ludotac'', a toy TC /RMN through which the children are taught to view the TC as a playful adventure rather than a traumatic experience should be provided.

Customer satisfaction

The protective bond between the patient and his family can be concluded only with the analysis and verification of the effectiveness of the system.

Customer satisfaction, not regarding only the hospital in general, but also specific topics linked with the feelings of patients, has to be systematically measured through different tools as satisfaction questionnaires for patients and parents.

Moreover, a proactive approach to the patient experience is recommended. One suggestion is the so called "Speak Up" project: some members of the Family Services staff going, every day, into the wards to understand patient's and parent's feelings, as what really happens.

The goal of this function is to ensure the best customer service by speaking with the families and asking their opinions on various topics including comfort, cleanliness, food, care and medical and nursing assistance. The information received may be used to solve many problems in a fast and steady way, both for management reasons and to improve the quality of the assistance.

The observation and the interventions can include all sectors and activities of the hospital as well as relationships with external contractors and suppliers, for example food.

In Bambino Gesù Hospital, about 3.000 interviews/year are conducted through Speak Up; 20,000 satisfaction questionnaires and 150 complaints are examined each year.

The Pediatric Intensive Care Unit Diaries' project

In the last decade advances in science and technology have significantly reduced the mortality rate following hospitalization in Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). The attention of researchers and clinicians has shifted to the outcomes resulting from hospitalization in PICU which focus on organic and psychological morbidity.

In the adult literature, for years we have been talking about Post Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS) to describe the set of physical and psychological sequelae that hinder the return to the status prior to admission to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Some recent studies describe the morbidity following hospitalization in PICU up to the formulation of "PICS in pediat-

rics" or PICS-p. The population included in this paradigm are the infants, children and adolescents typically cared for in the PICU environment.

The PICS-p framework starts from the assumption that a child's critical illness occurs in developmental age, greatly influencing psycho-physical recovery. This, in turn, can affect the child's quality of life for decades. Responses from family members can, in turn, influence the outcomes of critically ill survivors. In addition, the entire family unit, which includes parents and often siblings, is affected by hospitalization, reporting unexpected psycho-social outcomes.

Numerous studies have evaluated the levels of anxiety, depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disease (PTSD) in children / adolescents upon discharge from hospitalization in PICU and in their parents. The incidence of PTSD in children discharged from TIP is between 12% and 32%. A review conducted by Abela et al. in 2019 suggests that parents of critically ill children seeking PICU admission exhibit a wide range of physical, emotional and psychological responses that may persist for years after discharge from PICU. In parents the incidence of PTSD ranges from 12% to 42%.

In the pediatric field, the PICU diary is mainly used in Anglo-Saxon countries. A survey conducted in the United Kingdom and Ireland reported that 43% of PICUs provide diary to hospitalized children. The diary has been described by caregivers as a useful tool to fill in memory gaps, to provide an explanation of what happened and to involve family members in care. In addition, the PICU diary has been used by families as a means of communicating differently with health professionals who care for their child.

In the literature, only two studies have reported experiences of using this tool in pediatrics, describing its meaning, feasibility and perception. The results that have emerged are encouraging to continue to implement the diary in PICU as it seems to have a positive effect on the entire family unit. After admission, the tool often assumed the function of a "catalyst" allowing the parent to approach the child to explain what happened in PICU.

A pilot study conducted at the Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital implemented the PICU diary in the Emergency Room Intensive Care Unit. The

preliminary results demonstrate its feasibility and usability. Parents report that the diary is a useful tool to express their emotions, to reconstruct the memory in the child and to improve the relationship of trust between the members of the PICU staff and the family.

Parents with a critically ill child can experience countless feelings marked by severe stress and uncertainty. The admission of a child to a PICU is a very challenging experience for parents because of the hospital environment, uncertainty of their child's prognosis, and difficulty with communication and decision-making. Continuous monitoring, numerous devices, and diagnostic and invasive procedures increase the levels of stress in children admitted to the PICU and their parents, increasing the risk of the post-intensive care syndrome in paediatrics. Some of the strategies to decrease psychological distress in those parents aim at improving ongoing psychological monitoring, social support, cognitive and behavioural therapy; building coping and problem-solving skills, and mindfulness exercises; and reducing communication barriers between health care providers and families.

The diary has been used largely in the adult intensive care unit (ICU), and it has been shown to reduce anxiety and depression in patients and PTSD in families or relatives after the experiences related to critical illness and intensive care. The ICU diary is a shared tool, kept at the patient's bedside. It is written by relatives and health care providers and sometimes includes photographs. The ICU diary is not a clinical report of the patient's illness but a record of the patient's stay in the ICU, which describes the events that led to the admission in the ICU, the patient's daily status, procedures or treatments, and visitors. Its purpose is to help patients to restore their memory by reading the reports that their relatives and health care providers wrote during the acute phases of the patient's illness. Through written entries in the ICU diary, the writers—relatives and ICU staff members—share emotions, and communicate with and support each other. Recently, the diary has also been introduced in PICUs with encouraging prospects, proving to be a feasible tool and perceived as beneficial by the families of critically ill children after PICU discharge. Indeed, the diary written by parents and health care providers in the PICU appears as a promising support tool for the whole family; it helps children to create memories and

is a catalyst for parents to talk about the PICU experience with the child.

The PICU diary we used at our hospital was a 100-page ruled notebook with a hardcover, with no specific headings. A sticker with "The diary of _" was placed on the cover of the diary. Written guidelines for parents were described in an information sheet placed in the diary. The information included the aims of the study and the entry rules. Parents were recommended to provide the date and sign the entries. Providing pictures or reporting family members' messages was encouraged. During the PICU stay, caregivers and health care team members could write events, thoughts, and messages, and attach drawings or pictures for the child. Upon PICU discharge, the original copy was given to the parents or the main caregiver; a photocopy of the diary was taken for research purposes.

For the caregivers, diary writing was a means for expressing their emotions and experiences of their child's stay in the PICU, where as health care providers mainly reported the events related to the children's clinical care and well-being in the PICU. The reporting of significant events during the child's PICU admission by caregivers and health care providers was important to fill the gap in the patient's memory of the PICU admission during the child's sedation or caregiver's separation from their child. Effective communication between caregivers and the health care team was reported as one of the main themes in diary writing, along the importance of social, spiritual support and the expressions of emotions triggered by the PICU admission of their child. Indeed, ICU nurses conveyed that writing diaries for patients played an important role in building a relationship of trust with the family.

PICU diaries have the potential to improve the family members' comprehension of the care received by their child and their relationship with the health care staff.

Conclusions

The keyword for all of these services is the humanization of cures. Healthcare professionals have the duty to try to create a network, an integrated system for the protection of families and little patients. The hospital's

mission is to assist the patient as best as possible without neglecting the family's needs.

A warm welcome is the beginning of the healing process. For a parent being able to focus on the disease and on the healing/ treatment options means that they can guarantee the maximum level of collaboration to the therapeutic team and direct all energies in an appropriate way; for the sick child it means that they can count not only on treatment in this strict sense, but also on the emotional bond with the family.

Family care is a necessary part of treatment. Feeling the sensation of being cared for enables the family to focus on the only thing that matters: their child's health. Currently, we are striving to rediscover these ancient values, fundamental for an ethical institution, in order to create a system composed of pluralities of different services committed to curing children and caring for their families.

As a result of these meaningful values, it is necessary to build a strong identity. Today, Family Services is the third fundamental pillar, the first two being Clinical and Research activities, aspiring to provide excellence in treatment and care.

Hospitals should strive for excellence in health performances both through research activities and avant-garde clinical activities as well as through humanization of care, performed in accordance with ethical values. Not only excellence meant as a continuous struggle to reach the maximum level in every situation, where professionalism, research, technology and behavior shall be oriented by competence and availability, but mainly care and attention to the needs of children and families and importance of the "person" meant as the full recognition and respect of human dignity (of a child, a parent, a relative, a health operator).

References

Albano, F. (2017). 73rd Congress of the Italian Society of Pediatrics. Italian Journal of Pediatrics, 43(2), 110.

Aylott, M. (2010). Caring for children with critical illness. A textbook of children and young people's nursing. 2nd edition. Edinburgh: Elsevier, 691-718.

Buffoli, M., Bellini, E., Bellagarda, A., Di Noia, M., Nickolova, M., & Capolongo, S. (2014). Listening to people to cure people: the LpCp - tool, an instrument to evaluate hospital humanization. Annali di igiene : medicina preventiva e di comunita, 26(5), 447–455. https://doi.org/10.7416/ai.2014.2004

Burrai, F., & Salis, G. (2020). Umanizzazione delle cure: curare con l'arte. Giornale di Clinica Nefrologica e Dialisi, 32(1), 92-95.

Burrai, F., Cabula, S., & Micheluzzi, V. (2020). Sulla morte incurabile. Giornale di Clinica Nefrologica e Dialisi, 32(1), 143-147.

Busch, I. M., Moretti, F., Travaini, G., Wu, A. W., & Rimondini, M. (2019). Humanization of care: key elements identified by patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers. A systematic review. The Patient-Patient-Centered Outcomes Research, 12(5), 461-474.

Carnevale, F. A. (1997). The experience of critically ill children: narratives of unmaking. Intensive and Critical Care Nursing, 13(1), 49-52.

Castro, M. R. D., Zeitoune, R. C. G., Tracera, G. M. P., Moraes, K. G., Batista, K. C., & Nogueira, M. L. F. (2020). Humanization in the work of nursing faculty. Revista brasileira de enfermagem, 73.

Chapman, A., Yang, H., Thomas, S. A., Searle, K., & Browning, C. (2016). Barriers and enablers to the delivery of psychological care in the management of patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus in China: a qualitative study using the theoretical domains framework. BMC health services research, 16(1), 1-10.

Cohen, G. R., Jones, D. J., Heeringa, J., Barrett, K., Furukawa, M. F., Miller, D., ... & Rich, E. (2017). Leveraging diverse data sources to identify and describe US health care delivery systems. eGEMs, 5(3).

Colville, G. (2008). The psychologic impact on children of admission to intensive care. Pediatric Clinics of North America, 55(3), 605-616.

Dow, B., Kenardy, J., Long, D., & Le Brocque, R. (2012). Children's post-traumatic stress and the role of memory following admission to intensive care: A review. Clinical Psychologist, 16(1), 1-14.

Ekim, A. (2020). The post-intensive care syndrome in children. Comprehensive child and adolescent nursing, 43(1), 15-21.

Ewens, B., Chapman, R., Tulloch, A., & Hendricks, J. M. (2014). ICU survivors' utilisation of diaries post discharge: a qualitative descriptive study. Australian Critical Care, 27(1), 28-35.

Galvin, I. M., Leitch, J., Gill, R., Poser, K., & McKeown, S. (2018). Humanization of critical care—psychological effects on healthcare professionals and relatives: a systematic review. Canadian Journal of Anesthesia/Journal canadien d'anesthésie, 65(12), 1348-1371.

Herrup, E. A., Wieczorek, B., & Kudchadkar, S. R. (2019). Feasibility and Perceptions of Pediatric Intensive Care Unit Diaries. Pediatric critical care medicine: a journal of the Society of Critical Care Medicine and the World Federation of Pediatric Intensive and Critical Care Societies, 20(2), e83.

Hovey, R. B., Khayat, V. C., & Feig, E. (2018). Listening to and letting pain speak: poetic reflections. British Journal of Pain, 12(2), 95-103.

Jones, S., Davis, N., & Tyson, S. F. (2018). A scoping review of the needs of children and other family members after a child's traumatic injury. Clinical rehabilitation, 32(4), 501-511.

Manning, J. C., Hemingway, P., & Redsell, S. A. (2014). Long-term psychosocial impact reported by childhood critical illness survivors: A systematic review. Nursing in critical care, 19(3), 145-156.

Manning, J. C., Hemingway, P., & Redsell, S. A. (2017). Stories of survival: Children's narratives of psychosocial well-being following paediatric critical illness or injury. Journal of Child Health Care, 21(3), 236-252.

Manning, J. C., Redsell, S. A., & Latour, J. M. (2016). Should out of sight mean out of mind? Challenging the role of paediatric intensive care in understanding and supporting children and families following childhood critical illness.

Marx, C., Benecke, C., & Gumz, A. (2017). Talking cure models: A framework of analysis. Front Psychol.

McIlroy, P. A., King, R. S., Garrouste-Orgeas, M., Tabah, A., & Ramanan, M. (2019). The effect of ICU diaries on psychological outcomes and quality of life of survivors of critical illness and their relatives: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Critical care medicine, 47(2), 273-279.

Metz, T. (2018, May). Medicine without cure?: A cluster analysis of the nature of medicine. In The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine (Vol. 43, No. 3, pp. 306-312). US: Oxford University Press.

Mikkelsen, G. (2018). The meaning of personal diaries to children and families in the paediatric intensive care unit: A qualitative study. Intensive and Critical Care Nursing, 45, 25-30.

Ong, C., Lee, J. H., Leow, M. K., & Puthucheary, Z. A. (2016). Functional outcomes and physical impairments in pediatric critical care survivors: a scoping review. Pediatric Critical Care Medicine, 17(5), e247-e259.

Rennick, J. E., & Rashotte, J. (2009). Psychological outcomes in children following pediatric intensive care unit hospitalization: a systematic review of the research. Journal of child health care, 13(2), 128-149.

Rennick, J. E., Johnston, C. C., Lambert, S. D., Rashotte, J. M., Schmitz, N., Earle,

R. J., ... & Wood-Dauphinee, S. (2011). Measuring psychological outcomes following pediatric intensive care unit hospitalization: psychometric analysis of the Children's Critical Illness Impact Scale. Pediatric Critical Care Medicine, 12(6), 635-642.

Saxena, A., Trivedi, M., Shroff, Z. C., & Sharma, M. (2022). Improving hospital-based processes for effective implementation of Government funded health insurance schemes: evidence from early implementation of PM-JAY in India. BMC health services research, 22(1), 1-13.

Singh, S., Roy, D., Sinha, K., Parveen, S., Sharma, G., & Joshi, G. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on mental health of children and adolescents: A narrative review with recommendations. Psychiatry research, 293, 113429.

Trilar, J., Zavratnik, V., Čermelj, V., Hrast, B., Kos, A., & Stojmenova Duh, E. (2019). Rethinking family-centred design approach towards creating digital products and services. Sensors, 19(5), 1232.

Tripodi, M., Siano, M. A., Mandato, C., Anseris, D., Elena, A. G., Quitadamo, P., ... & Vajro, P. (2017). Humanization of pediatric care in the world: focus and review of existing models and measurement tools. Italian journal of pediatrics, 43(1), 1-9.

Volakli, E., Sdougka, M., Mantzafleri, P. E., Tsonidis, C., Kontopoulos, E., & Tsikoulas, I. (2015). Functional outcome following pediatric intensive care: Pediatric Cerebral Performance Category (PCPC) and Pediatric Overall Performance Category (POPC) during a prospective two years follow-up period. Greek e J Perioper Med, 13, 2-15.

Marc lives with his Mummy and his Mum

Marta Corminas Salom
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
Marta.corominas@uvic.cat

Paula Bertán
Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya
paula.bertran@uvic.cat

Introduction

"Marc lives with his Mummy and his Mum" is a made up story to work on English language and gender issues. Moreover, it deals with respect towards nature and health habits such as following an appropriate diet and doing physical activities. During three sessions, the pupils will be doing activities related to yoga and relaxation techniques. Hence, they will meet the opportunity to enhance their physical, mental and emotional health. Creativity will also be boosted by making own yoga poses. In terms of intercultural issues, the story aims at developing empathy towards diversity of families and of people coming from different origins; awareness of the diversity of close relationships; understanding of the importance of going into nature; and social responsibility amongst primary pupils. Thus, one of the main non-linguistic objectives is for pupils to understand values such as respect; knowledge, care and love towards our own physical and spiritual bodies; equanimity; acceptance; harmonious coexistence. Moreover, speaking, listening, reading and writing in English about different kinds of situations will imply acquiring new language as well as internalizing vocabulary and structures already practised before. Last but not least, by handling topics related to their own families, the pupils will be allowed to express complex and contradictory feelings such as happiness, pride and contentment at the same time as frustration, anger and shame.

Marc lives with his mummy and his mum (Years 3 and 4)

PRE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES (1 hour)

Relaxation Technique

Ask the pupils to sit down in a circle. Ask them to cross their legs, to put their backs upright, to close their eyes and breathe in and out through their noses slowly.

Tell them you are going to burn some incense and play a Tibetan bowl while they try to relax by closing their eyes, breathing slowly, listening to the music, smelling the incense and by not paying attention to their thoughts for some minutes.

To end the activity you will be playing the relaxing sounds of a Koshi chime.

Drawing their Families

Pupils will draw their families and will describe them in turns and orally by using the sentence: I live with my…

While drawing time you will move around in order to help them with language, you will write the description sentence and the vocabulary needed by the pupils on the board, so that all the pupils can read them and describe their families accurately. Diversity of families will require words like stepmother, aunty, niece, grandfather, etc. as well as fish, rabbit, parakeet, etc.

Referring to family issues, you may have to deal with pupils who do not wish to draw their families or do not want to show their drawings; pupils with divorced parents who are unsure about what family members to include in their drawing. It may be relevant to be aware of psychological aspects such as whom they draw first, whom they draw bigger, whom they decide not to draw, the emotions shown in the different faces, etc.

Introducing the two Families who are part of the Story

To conclude with the first session, you will show the pupils two pictures, one of them is representing Marc's family and it contains the sentence

"Marc lives with his Mummy and his Mum". The other one is representing Shiva's family and it contains the sentence "Shiva lives with his Mum and his Dad". Allow the comments that will come from the pupils and talk about diversity of families and acceptance. Tell the pupils they are going to listen to a story about Marc's and Shiva's families during the following session.

WHILE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES (1 hour)

Relaxation Technique: Breathing and Stretching

Ask the pupils to stand up around the classroom. The activity consists of listening to a mantra while doing some actions. The pupils will move their arms up slowly while inhaling and looking up at their hands at the same time. Next, they will move their arms down slowly while exhaling and embracing the back of their knees. The intention is to reach their knees with their forehead, but tell them to listen to their bodies and move accordingly. They will repeat this action several times. The last time they do it, they will stay with their arms stretched up for some seconds and they will also stay embracing their knees for some seconds more.

Animal Game through Yoga Poses

The pupils will be shown some cards with the pictures and names of the following animals: a tortoise, a starfish, a shark, a cat, a dog, a snake and a crab. You will hold up the cards, say the names of the animals and the pupils will repeat them. Next, you will say the name of the animals and do a yoga pose to represent each of them, the pupils do the poses too. You will go round the classroom to correct the postures if necessary. Later, some pupils will take the role of the teacher.

Recalling Time

Show the pupils the two pictures containing Marc's and Shiva's families.

Tell the story "Marc lives with his Mummy and his Mum" using stick puppets representing Shiva, Shiva's Mum, Shiva's Dad, Marc, Marc's Mummy and Marc's Mum.

Shiva is very happy. A new boy is starting school today.

Shiva: *A new friend!!! I will play with a new friend. Hooray!!!!*

Shiva goes to school and he sees Marc with his Mummy.

Shiva: *Hello Marc.*

Marc: *Hello Shiva.*

Marc and Shiva are very happy. They play together in the playground.

Next morning, Marc and Shiva meet in school again. Marc is with his Mum.

Shiva: *Marc, your Mum looks different today.*

Marc: *Yes, I have two Mums, my Mummy and my Mum.*

Shiva: *Oh you have two Mums, cool!!*

Marc asks Shiva: *Would you like to come home next weekend?*

Shiva: *Yes!!! Great!!!*

Now, it is Saturday afternoon and Shiva is in Marc's house.

They are very happy and they start jumping on the sofa. Marc's Mummy is not happy.

Marc's Mummy: *Stop jumping on the sofa, please! Would you like some strawberries and some orange juice?*

Shiva and Marc: *Yes!!! Yummy!!!*

Marc and Shiva go out and play football.

Mum calls them to supper.

Marc's Mum: *Marc, Shiva, it's super time!!!!*

Shiva and Marc: *Great!!! We are very hungry.*

Supper comes and Marc and Shiva can see potatoes, green beans and carrots.

Shiva and Marc: *Oh no, we don't like veggies.*

Marc's Mum: *We eat healthy food in this house, please eat your veggies. We will do a puzzle after supper.*

Shiva: *Yes, I like puzzles!!!*

Marc: *Yes, I like puzzles!!!*

Marc's Mummy: *Come on boys, it's time to go to bed.*

Shiva and Marc are in Marc's bedroom, they are shouting and laughing. Mummy is not happy.

Marc's Mummy: *Stop shouting and laughing, please. It's time to sleep.*

Marc's Mummy plays some relaxing music and the boys sleep calmly.

Next morning, they get up early. They are going to spend the day in the forest. They take their bikes and they ride to the forest.

In the forest, they build a hut with pieces of wood.

Later, they do a yoga game.

Animal Game through Yoga Poses

Show the pupils the cards with the pictures of the animals again, hold them up, say the names of the animals and ask the pupils to repeat them.

The pupils get into groups of four. Each group has the cards of the seven animals. You will make a yoga pose and the groups will hold up the card containing the corresponding animal and will do the pose, too. You will move around the classroom correcting the postures if necessary. Next, each group will choose one of the poses, represent it in front of the class and the classmates will guess the animal and will do the pose, too. You will correct the postures.

After the activity, the storytelling continues.

The weekend is finished, Marc and Shiva say goodbye.

Shiva is back home again.

Shiva's parents: *How was your weekend in Marc's house?*

Shiva: *Well, Marc's mothers are not so special, they have rules like you: no jumping on the sofa, eat healthy food, no shouting and laughing at bedtime. They are exactly like you!*

Shiva's parents: *Oh, did you have no fun?*

Shiva: *Yes!!! We played football on Saturday, we rode our bikes to the forest on Sunday, we made a hut with pieces of wood, and we did an animal game. It was a great weekend!!!*

POST-LISTENING ACTIVITIES (1 hour)

Relaxation Technique: Listening and Moving

You will play a mantra to help the pupils relax and to open their chakra heart. The pupils will accompany the listening with a simple choreography: ask them to put their hands in the middle of their chest with their palms facing down, stretch their arms while making a step to the right, put their palms back to their chest, stretch their arms while making a step to the left. The pupils will repeat these movements until the end of the mantra.

Diversity of families and diversity of origins

The pupils will be given a copy containing the pictures of different family units and families coming from different origins: a two-mum family, a two-dad family, a mum and dad family, a single mum family, a single dad family, an extended family, divorced parents and tutors. Some of the families will be already described: *Marc lives with his Mummy and his Mum, Shiva lives with his Dad and his Mum, Laia lives with her Mum, her Dad and her sister.* The pupils will be asked to describe the rest of the families. Some cards containing the sentences will be spread on their tables in case they need to read them or to copy them, for instance *Maria lives with her tutors and her friends, Hadija lives with her Mum, her Dad, her brother, her aunty and her cousin*. You will go around the tables to help the pupils write their sentences if needed.

Mix Game

This is a game to practise and recall the names of the animals and the yoga poses. Take the cards in your hands and pass them one after another. Meanwhile the pupils are saying "mix, mix, mix". When they say "stop", you will stop passing the cards and the pupils will guess the card which is in the first position. They can have as many tries as they need since the aim is for them to learn the words on the cards while having fun. Once they have guessed the animal, they will do the corresponding yoga pose and the game will continue. Later, the pupils will take the role of the teacher.

Creating a new Pose

Pupils will get into groups of four. They will think of a new animal and invent its yoga pose. They will show the pose to their classmates who will guess the animal being represented.

Conclusions

During the three sessions, Year 3 and 4 pupils practise old and new language. They acquire new words and expressions such as the sentence *I live with my…*, they learn vocabulary about different types of families, about pets, farm and wild animals, about instructions on how to do the yoga poses. Moreover, they learn the vocabulary which appears in the story and they extend it when talking about food they eat, food they like and dislike, sports they practise, games they enjoy, activities they do with their families, rules they have to follow at home, etc. In terms of grammar, they practise the 3rd person singular –s (lives), the preposition *with*, and the possessive adjectives *his* and *her*. Finally, all these old and new language items come together with profound reflections on gender, diversity of origins and health issues.

Bibliography

Aikman, S., & Unterhalter, E. (Eds.). (2005). *Beyond access: Transforming policy and practice for gender equality in education*. Oxfam.

Barrett, M. D., Huber, J., & Reynolds, C. (2014). *Developing intercultural competence through education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multicultural Matters Ltd.

Carpena, A. (2001). *Educació socioemocional a primària*. Vic: Eumo editorial.

Generalitat de Catalunya *(2015). Competències bàsiques de l'àmbit lingüístic: llengües estrangeres*. Retrieved from *Departament d'Ensenyament website: http:// ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/publicacions/colleccions/ competencies-basiques/primaria/prim-linguistic-estrangeres.pdf*.

Goleman, D. (2006). *Inteligencia social: la nueva ciencia de las relaciones humanas*. Barcelona: Editorial Kairós.

Jain, V., Jain, K., Sharma, S., Chaitanya, S., & Prajna, S. (2017). Yoga-Preksha-Dhyan Practice As A Cost-Effective Preventive Strategy Against Aggressiveness

In Primary School Children. *International Journal of Yoga and Allied Sciences,* 6(2), 106-113.

Keating, N. (2017). Children's spirituality and the practice of meditation in Irish primary schools. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality,* 22(1), 49-71.

Martínez Ortiz, C. (2020). *La meditación como herramienta pedagógica para potenciar la concentración y el bienestar en niños y niñas (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Andrés Bello).*

Subrahmanian, R. (2005). Gender equality in education: Definitions and measurements. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25(4), 395-407.

UNESCO. (2013). *Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework.* Retrieved from UNESCO website: *http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002197/219768e.pdf*

Storytelling in Physiotherapy, for the Understanding and Improvement of the Therapeutic Possibilities

Roberta Ghedina
University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia
roberta.ghedina@uvic.cat

Luz Adriana Varela Vázquez
University of Vic-Central University of Catalonia
luzadriana.varela@uvic.cat

Introduction

In the last decade, there has been a lot of talk about evidence-based medicine, **which** has become an interpretative framework in **which** the patient lives his illness. This type of medicine was established through the analysis of pathological behaviors in patients suffering certain conditions. Because of that, this kind of medicine often doesn't correspond to individual contexts (Lucius -Hoene, 2008).

On the other hand, we find a narrative-based medicine that sheds light on the complex history of a single case, allowing a possible contextualization. Therefore, medicine based on narrative is necessarily focused on the single case (Lucius-Hoene, 2008).

Narrative-based medicine can be considered essential in person-centered care, which is very effective to understand the patient but is not focused on problem-solving. This entails a change in the relationship between the healthcare professional and the patient since the patient feels that the response to his needs and concerns is more efficient (Zaharias, 2018).

The use of narrative within the context of health is especially important since it is an indispensable tool to acquire, comprehend, and integrate the different views of participants who have a role in the experience of the illness (the patient, his family, and the healthcare professional) (Fioretti et al., 2016). Storytelling is effec-

tive in organizing a clinical sequence to understand, not only the clinical event, but also its full personal, family, and social impact (Zaharias, 2018). Even though there's a lack of evidence in recent medicine, storytelling was commonly used in psychiatry: a good example of this use is the book *The teaching tales of Milton H. Erickson* (Erickson, 1986).

Patients tell their story in the medical visit to explain the reason why they are seeking the professional's help; they speak about their symptoms and concerns, their beliefs and context, as well as how the illness impacts their lives. This is a story with infinite variations in content, in the way in which it is told, in the narrator, as well as in the language and register used, reflecting the uniqueness of the case. Therefore, the reports of patients suffering from the same pathology differ in a diversity of factors (Charon, 2006).

The health professional also contributes a narrative in this process. In it, he demonstrates an understanding of the experience of the patient, formulates a diagnosis, and hypothesizes some ideas of the causes of the pathology and its possibilities of management. In this manner, he will be able to communicate all of the above narratively to the patient (J. Launer, 1999). The personality, experiences, and practice of the professional directly influence how this is carried out.

There is evidence in which the importance of the patient's narrative is attested, especially in cases in which the patients hide deep feelings and thoughts. When these are not expressed, or the story of the patient is not allowed to be told, symptoms may develop, or misunderstandings may take place. Likewise, in trauma survivors, it has been brought to light that recognizing the suffering of the narrator, and listening carefully to it, is an important part of the treatment. This shows that narrative and listening are inherently therapeutic acts, which may even relieve pain at the end-of-life stages of a patient in palliative care. All of this is consistent with the relevance narrative health is shown to have (Lucius-Hoene, 2008).

The narrative in the interview

Health students are taught the importance of having good communication skills, focusing on the patient, and the use of the biopsychosocial paradigm, taking into account the need to address the patient's ideas, concerns, and expectations. However, it is not uncommon to find frequent complaints about health personnel, made by patients and their families who feel that they are not listened to, nor shown interest or enough empathy, that they have been interrupted, that

assumptions have been made, and above all that the patient's concerns are not being addressed (Tallis, 2004).

Health professionals complain about difficult patients, pressure per ratio of patients per measure of time. However, from the patient's perspective, health professionals have lost sight of what is truly important (Tallis, 2004).

The factors aforementioned may contribute to an adequate connection between the healthcare personnel and the patient, or, on the contrary, to a disconnection.

Research papers describe four aspects that contribute to the disconnection between healthcare professionals and patients: 1) *Relationship with mortality*: a disease is an unexpected event that arouses many feelings, especially fear of death. The patient's previous experiences generate ideas in him, while the professionals, due to their training, may have a different perspective; 2) *context of the disease*, the patient sees the disease within the framework of his life, while the professional naturally sees the disease as a biological phenomenon that requires intervention; 3) *beliefs about the causes of the illness*: the notions of the patient about the causes of the disease show that the patient does not have medical training, which may lead to conflict between his ideas and those of the professional; 4) *shame, guilt, and fear:* some patients may be embarrassed to reveal intimate aspects about themselves, they may be vulnerable and fearful, and some blame themselves for their everyday behavior. If there are no results or they are not favorable, the patients could blame the health personnel. In the same way, healthcare personnel is sometimes embarrassed to ask personal questions. On the other hand, there is also a tendency to blame the patient for not looking after himself (Charon, 2009).

These experiences from both sides can considerably affect the experience of the disease, and if they are not adequately addressed, they may cause an irrevocable division between the health personnel and the patient (Charon, 2006, 2009).

Launer considers the medical interview a conversation, focused on the use of language and meanings, both implicit and explicit. Thus, Launer (2013) affirms language as fundamental in any conversation. In this interview, a common understanding must be reached by creating a new story shared and understood by all the agents involved (Launer, 2013).

For healthcare professionals, this process is an approach to understanding the reality of the patient, while for the patient this involves discovering what is important for his wellbeing and healthcare. The health professional's communication skills are vital to achieving a good understanding (Launer, 2013).

It is necessary for the professional to allow the patients to express themselves adequately, in their own words, without interrupting them, while making connections, noticing differences and analyzing new possibilities, probing and guiding the conversation in a deliberate way. This facilitates and improves understanding without being controlling or interfering in the narrative. By creating a mutual understanding, managing the treatment plan is something that can be agreed upon, rather than something that is imposed on the patient (Launer, 2013).

How Do We Do It in the First Interview in Rehabilitation?

It is essential to begin the first meeting with broad questions, that make possible the genuine narrative of the patient ("Tell me what happened to you"). How we approach these initial questions or the type of questions used can open the patient to communicate in one way or another.

From our clinical experience, differences can be found between men and women, between what is explained and how it is explained.

In the clinical experience, it has been observed that female patients recount more things, even without having to ask them specific questions, they go further; while men tell simpler stories, without going into many details, having to ask them more contextual questions.

As professional women, we have witnessed the fact that women open up more with a female professional, however, we do not have experience of the conversation between two men.

In the context of neurological physiotherapy, the story of the patient and his family is essential for the understanding and approach of the treatment. As physiotherapists, we may present a tendency to prioritize certain relevant aspects of rehabilitation, which often do not match the priorities of the patient. An adequate interview is vital in order to reach him and to discover his goals.

An example of this is the perception of the physiotherapist with a post-chronic stroke patient. He focuses on the rehabilitation and improvement of the gait, while the patient finds other options more pertinent, such as managing symptoms of the upper limb to eat, or cook or even perform self-care actions. Sometimes the patient would rather talk than walk or use his hand.

Therefore, to increase the level of treatment adherence and satisfaction, it may be necessary to pay attention to the story told by the patient. However, sometimes

the professional can add other objective aspects that the patient does not consider. In this way, they can work in a mutual understanding and reach better results together.

To achieve these results, we propose a logical order within the initial interview, in which we address different aspects, seeking a common vision.

Firstly, when the patient tells us what has happened to him, we are careful not to interrupt him. (Salas and Torre, 2016; Kari et al., 2019). If the patient touches on an aspect that he doesn't consider important, but we, thanks to our clinical knowledge, know that it is, we can redirect him to tell us a little more about it, always showing interest. Once this report is finished, it is important to understand what the patient knows about his pathology, since many have erroneous beliefs that can trigger behaviors that negatively interfere with their health and rehabilitation. If we find that the patient has inappropriate beliefs, we should try to modify them through a new narrative (Vilarroya, 2021).

Secondly, we need to be considerate of the environment in which we operate, which is of a private nature. It is relevant to understand that, in most cases, patients have already gone through various professionals before coming to our consult, and these experiences have become priming. It is paramount to ask the patient about this, otherwise, we might start with some therapeutic approach that reminds him of something previously done, which would affect negatively his satisfaction and treatment adherence. For this reason, it is important to understand how the patient has been treated previously and how he has felt with these treatments.

Lastly, we ask the patient about his expectations as regards the rehabilitation with us. This allows us to achieve an adequate understanding of the patient and better focus our treatment, while making the patient feel that we take his priorities into account, motivating him to adhere to the rehabilitation treatment.

Working on the patient's goals, if they are realistic, or explaining a different option, including other goals that the patient may not have taken into account, can generate a treatment plan with which the patient feels satisfied. In this way, we avoid the negative influence of the patient's feeling of dissatisfaction.

How do we do it in the rehabilitation treatment?

The treatment we use is within a neurocognitive frame (Ghedina, 2006; Rodríguez-Larrad et al., 2012) in which we consider the patients' body telling (Charon,

2015; Reis, Avrahami, 2009) as well as the objective observation of their behavior during the exercise.

We build exercises in which patients have to recognize objects through their body. For example, in the case of a patient suffering from neck pain, the physiotherapist might offer three different sponges placing them under the patient's neck. The patient has to feel them to perceive the differences between them. What's surprising is that, when the body (in this context the neck) is tight, all the sponges feel equally hard. For this reason, we create a context in which the patients have to recognize something with their body.

This interaction makes it possible to change the body and as a result the perception of the sponges. As the patients start to relax, their bodies become more sensitive to the differences between the sponges. The purpose of this exercise is to modify the body. In such a case, the patients' body telling during the exercise suggests a good verbal guidance by the therapist (Ghedina, 1998, 2005, 2006).

Conclusions

Both medical literature and clinical experience speak about the need to consider, in the interview, observation, clinical reasoning, and plan of rehabilitation, the objective evidence and the narrative of the patient.

The motivation to include the patients' voice is not merely to empathize with them, but to gather key data to improve the medical result (Flichtentrei, 2015, 2019). In neurocognitive rehabilitation we use the body telling of the patient to complete the phenomenological observation. This provides the information needed in the interview and during the exercise to build a more effective treatment plan.

Why does the body telling add new information that we don't find in the objective data collection, such as tests or neuroimaging?

When we talk about body telling we mean all the perceptions of the patients' body experience during the treatment or their daily life. Patients are usually not very aware of their body experience because neurophysiology shows that not all of the sensorial feedback arrives to the cortex while they're moving; a very good way to bring it into consciousness is by asking specific and open questions (Worley, 2015). Specific because we want to know about a part of the body, a structure like a muscle, the skin, a type of sensation such as touch, pressure, temperature

or joint motion. Open questions because we would like to learn about the unique first-person experience of the patients; this kind of questions allow the patients to express themselves freely without the conditioning of the health professionals.

The first-person perspective is a central concept of critical psychology trying to make psychological processes and the subjective dimension of human life understandable. The concept refers to the point of view of the "I" as the way in which a human subject has access to herself/himself and the world and to her/his experiences, emotions, thoughts, and actions. The concept builds on a socio-materially situated understanding of the human being and stands in opposition to mainstream psychologies which conduct their research from an external – third person – perspective (Schraube, 2014). The observation of the patient, the clinical reasoning, and the rehabilitation plan are based on the gathering of information, both objective and subjective. The objective information speaks about the result of studies done on large groups of people (statistics), and the subjective information tells us about the personal context of the patient. Statistics take into account the quantity, while the personal context highlights the quality (Flichtentrei, 2019).

Narrative based medicine and the concept of body telling were born as a critique to evidence based medicine by doctors and patients.

As a matter of fact, modern medicine focuses on specificity forgetting the human aspect in the clinical context. In the end, the specificity leads to an in-depth study of the illness, while on the other hand the personal context directs attention to the patient's humanity.

Rehabilitation research indicates a future meeting between evidence and narrative based medicines with the goal to improve the medical practice (Reis and Avrahami, 2009; Charon 2015; Flichtentrei, 2019).

References

Charon, R. (2006). *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness.* (BMJ books, Ed.), Annals of Internal Medicine (Vol. 146). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Charon, R. (2009). Narrative medicine as witness for the self-telling body. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 37(2), 118–131.*

Charon R. (2015). Embodies Narratives: Living Out Our Lives. *The Journal of Humanities in Rehabilitation. A creative exploration of the human experience of disabil-*

ity and healing. *Embodied Narrative: Living Out Our Lives – Journal of Humanities in Rehabilitation (jhrehab.org)*

Erickson M. H. & Rosen S. (1994). *Mi voz irá contigo.* Cuentos didácticos de Milton Erickson. Paidós Ibérica.

Fioretti, C., Mazzocco, K., Riva, S., Oliveri, S., Masiero, M., & Pravettoni, G. (2016). Research studies on patients' illness experience using the Narrative Medicine approach: A systematic review. *BMJ Open. 14;6(7). doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016- 011220. PMID: 27417197; PMCID: PMC4947803.*

Flichtentrei D. (2015). Un encuentro entre medicina y literatura. *Revista de medicina y cine, Vol. 11, N°. 4, pág. 244*

Flichtentrei D. (2019). *Cerebro clínico. Una mirada crítica sobre la medicina.* Ediciones Intramed.

Ghedina R. (2006)*.* El lenguaje del paciente desde la perspectiva de la teoría neurocognitiva en rehabilitación "física". In B. Gallardo Paúl, V. Moreno Campos, C. Hernández Sacristán (Eds.). *I Congreso nacional de lingüística clínica (pp. 41-59).*

Ghedina R. (2005). Tratamiento de fisioterapia del paciente hemipléjico. In M. R. Serra Gabriel (Ed.), J. Díaz Petit (Ed.) & M. L. De Sande Carril (Ed.). *Fisioterapia en neurología, sistema respiratorio y aparato cardiovascular.* (pp. 59-70). Editorial Masson.

Perfetti C., Ghedina R. & Jiménez Hernández D. (1998). *El ejercicio terapéutico cognoscitivo para la reeducación motora del hemipléjico adulto. Edika-Med.*

Launer, J. (1999). Narrative based medicine: A narrative approach to mental health in general practice*. Bmj, 318(7176), 117–119. https://doi.org/10.1136/ bmj.318.7176.117*

Launer, John. (2013). Training in narrative-based supervision: conversations inviting change. *In Sommers LS, Launer J, editors. Clinical uncertainty in primary care. The challenge of collaborative engagement. New York, NY: Springer New York.*

Lucius-Hoene, C. (2008). Krankheitserzählungen und die Narrative Medizin (Illness Narratives and Narrative Medicine)*. Rehabilitation, 47(2), 90–97.*

Phillips K. A., Ospina N.S. & Montori V.M. (2019). Physicians Interrupting Patients. *J Gen Intra Med. 2019 Oct;34(10):1965. doi: 10.1007/s11606-019-05247-5. PMID: 31388903; PMCID: PMC6816596.*

Tallis, R. (2004). *Hippocratic Oaths: Medicine and its Discontents.* Atlantic Books. London, UK.

Reis S. & Avrahami E. (2009). Narrative Medicine. *The Israel Medical Association journal: IMAJ 11(6):335-8*

Rodríguez-Larrad A., Rizzello C., Perfetti C., Panté F. A. & Zernitz M. (2012). Ejer-

cicio terapéutico cognoscitivo. In R. Cano de la Cuerda & S. Collado Vázquez (Coords.), *Neurorrehabilitación (pp. 307-321)*. Editorial Médica Panamericana.

Salas P. & González Torre L. (2016). El silencio y las interrupciones: narrativas en la consulta médica familiar. *Rev. Conamed // vol. 21 suplemento 2, 2016 // online// issn 2007-932*

Schraube E. (2014). First-Person Perspective. In T. Teo (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5583-7_113*

Varela, F. J., & Shear, J. (1999). First-person methodologies: What, why, how. *Journal of Consciousness studies, 6(2-3), 1-14.*

Vilarroya O. (2021, December 18). Las narraciones de médicos y pacientes son distintas, pero se debe buscar una sintonía. *Intramed.* https://www.intramed.net/contenidover.asp?contenidoid=99801

Worley P. (2015). Open thinking, closed questioning: Two kinds of open and closed question. *Journal of Philosophy in Schools, 2 (2), pp.17-29.*

Zaharias, G. (2018). What is narrative-based medicine? *Can Fam Physician, 64, 176–180.*

Narrating Oneself to Be(Come) Oneself: Narrative Paths to Combat Gender Inequalities

Paola Greganti
Roma Tre University, Department of Educational Sciences
paola.greganti@uniroma3.it

Andreina Orlando
Roma Tre University, Department of Educational Sciences

Barbara De Angelis
Roma Tre University, Department of Educational Sciences
barbara.deangelis@uniroma3.it

> *"I traced the path of my life on a map and studied it for a long time.*
> *I tried to see the pattern that this line created on the face of the*
> *earth, because I thought that if I could see this pattern and under-*
> *stand its shape I would know better how to continue. I would know*
> *how to direct my path. I would see into the future of my life."*

(Cormac McCarthy, *Cities of the Plain*)

Introduction: gender discrimination and "inclusive education"[1]

The fight against gender discrimination, especially in those contexts where it takes the form of real violence and oppression of women, can be analysed and approached, like any other type of discrimination, from the perspective of *inclusive education*, which we can consider the contemporary interpretation of special education.Within this paradigm we can state that discrimination concerns with accessibility, equality and human rights (Nussbaum, 2006), in particularly, with the right to have equal access to a

---

1. This paper is a joint work of the authors. For the identification of the parties, where required, the Introduction and Conclusions are attributed to Barbara De Angelis, Paragraph 1 to Andreina Orlando, Paragraphs 2, 3, 4 to Paola Greganti.

quality of life that we can identify with the construct of *health* as understood in the biopsychosocial paradigm[2] (WHO, 2001).

Therefore, dealing with gender discrimination means to be concerned with the right to equal opportunities, the right to health and the right to well-being. In this perspective we can ask ourselves: do women have equal access to the resources, environments, contexts, processes, skills and competences, to those multiple and interrelated *functions* and *capabilities* (Sen, 1993) that enable well-being? Unfortunately, we know that at the international level the achievement of widespread well-being for all women is still far from being realised, in spite of a progressive awareness of gender studies and in spite of new national and international laws, such as the fifth goal of the 2030 Agenda, which explicitly aims at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. It is about offering those practical possibilities, those conditions (*capability*) that enable the individual to choose the opportunities she needs to attain her well-being (Sen, 1993). The *Capability Approach* is an appreciated perspective in special and inclusive education, which rediscovers the fundamental pedagogical category of the person as an agent who can do and can be, starting from the free choice personal, social and economic resources at his or her disposal. According to Amartya Sen (1993), developing well-being in the broadest sense means allowing the expansion of human possibilities of choice (*agency*), and the deployment of the faculty of choice makes it possible to initiate a process of empowerment in which the subject is activated to transform reality in order to improve the quality of life. This means that the person discovers that "she feels she is able to do, through achieving a sense of mastery and awareness of having adequate capacity to use the opportunities offered by the environment" (Elia, 2010, p. 216). To start a process of empowermet means to work for the active emancipation of women, for their autonomy and self-detemination, for the development of their decision-making and planning skills. Actually we had the opportunity to verify how gender issues require, from the educational point of view, a particular attention to the design of training courses that must be directed specifically to the recognition, awareness and protection of their

---

2. According to the biopsychosocial model, *health* is not simply the absence of disease but a dynamic and global state of physical, mental and social well-being.

rights (De Angelis, Greganti, Orlando, 2015; 2016). The human rights-based approach goes beyond the needs-centred paradigm: the visible need is rather an unfulfilled or possibly denied right; in this perspective, people are not considered victims so much as "subjects of a process of growth and empowerment aimed at making them capable of demanding their rights" (Corsi, 2014, p. 260). Focused training pathways enable the development of women's empowerment, which occurs when they take action to shape their own lives. In other words, in keeping with the perspective of *inclusive education*, they have the power to exercise greater decision-making and influence over strategic life choices and barriers to freedom of *agency* and well-being, and do so in a lasting way (Drydyk, 2008). To this end, it is necessary to create educational contexts where women can be active protagonists, and where life projects, senses for existence, unexpected and alternative aspirations can emerge. We were able to investigate this avenue in an action-research carried out in Bolivia in which the narrative tool was used as a pedagogical methodology useful for the development of women's empowerment in a context of violence and gender discrimination. Therefore storytelling and self-storytelling in particular can be an effective inclusive educational strategy to promote equal opportunities and develop conditions of well-being for women.

The action-research in Bolivia

The action-research was conducted in 2016 in the city of San José de Chiquitos in Bolivia thanks to the collaboration between the Master *Storytelling: Contexts and Techniques of Narratives* of the Roma Tre University and the Bolivian association *Mujeres por la Solidaridad* (transl. "Women for Solidarity"). The project was aimed at women victims of gender-based violence of various types (psychological, physical and sexual violence). Violence against women is a phenomenon that is still deeply rooted in Bolivian society. It is a clear violation of human rights resulting from the patriarchal and masculine culture that sees women as submissive and subordinate (Galindo, 2013). This socio-cultural factor justifies and feeds, along with violence, the whole apparatus of gender inequality, such as the masculinisation of public spaces, the use of sexist language, the imposition of secondary roles assigned by society to women. According to

data provided by the Centro de Información y Desarrollo de la Mujer (CIDEM), La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz are the regions of Bolivia where gender-based violence is most prevalent: from January to October 2014, 169 women were killed throughout the country, of which 128 in the named regions. Regarding the first quarter of 2015, according to data provided by the Fuerza Especial de Lucha Contra la Violencia (FELCV), eight thousand complaints of gender-based violence were filed, of which 70% (5600) were for domestic and family violence. The data regarding gender-based violence in the Santa Cruz region are even alarming: in 2014, complaints of domestic or family violence accepted by the FELCV amounted to 6700. The municipality of San José, where the research was carried out, is located in this socio-cultural context. It is an area with around 20000 inhabitants, where households belonging to the most disadvantaged social classes are mainly single-parent, composed of women with an average of six to eight children. Subsistence is linked to informal activities such as domestic work and other casual jobs, characterised by precariousness and low income. Despite the progress made by the various laws protecting women's and children's rights, a strongly male-dominated culture is still widespread in the area, with major consequences among those who suffer from a lack of job opportunities, and therefore economic emancipation, due to a low level of education. The situation of poverty is further aggravated by domestic violence, the spread of alcohol and prostitution, particularly among young people, and a high rate of early motherhood. In this context, the association *Mujeres por la Solidaridad* found the problem of gender-based violence to be a widespread phenomenon which, in addition to its immediate danger, entails a series of subtle but pervasive consequences, proving to be a factor limiting the personal and social change of the victims and determining their educational and work choices.

A total of forty-five women, aged between nineteen and fifty-seven, participated in the action-research. The level of schooling of the group was basic, obtained by attending the first cycle of studies, while from an economic point of view they belonged to a socially fragile group characterised by economic precariousness with occasional jobs as maids or laundresses in wealthy families, seamstresses, embroiderers, handmade food sellers. The project in San José de Chiquitos began with an initial phase of qua-

litative and quantitative research into the national socio-cultural context, followed by the design and implementation of a workshop-type training course aimed at local women and based on the storytelling approach, particularly biographical and autobiographical. The objectives of the training intervention were to:

– make women aware of the different types of gender-based violence,

– make women recognise situations of violence in everyday life,

– to make them know and implement the tools to break the cycle of violence.

Therefore, the aims were to implement a process of empowerment to reverse the women's situation, giving them tools for reflection and awareness with which to strengthen the constant and conscious growth of their potential, accompanied by a corresponding growth in autonomy.

The workshop was built on the basis of the principles and tools of "narrative pedagogy": considerable space was given to life stories as biographical and autobiographical methods, in a narrative perspective of reflection on the reconstruction of one's own life experiences, make it possible to make explicit and verbalise that knowledge, even tacit knowledge, which although not recognised by a formal title is part of the person's store of knowledge and, hence, can initially become aware and subsequently be exploited within new existential paths. During the meetings, the brainstorming technique on meaning-generating words was used, as well as some cards to guide and facilitate autobiographical storytelling and also reflection on the biographical stories proposed, individual work and work in pairs or small groups to carry out reflection and activities, sharing of results in the larger group and their socialisation in plenary session. Through individual and group activities, a careful analysis of the types of gender-based violence that the women participants may have experienced directly or more often indirectly through the stories, confidences or news they had collected was carried out. Starting from the life stories, an attempt was made to collectively identify the causes to which the women seemed to attribute the manifestations of violence. The analysis of the data showed a tendency to justify these phenomena: for example, the women

considered that they were due to having demanded too much independence and freedom of movement (going out with friends, going to dances, dressing in a flashy way), or to having a poor ability to organise domestic life according to custom (meals not prepared at the agreed time or the house not properly tidy). Other reasons for violent behaviour were attributed to the partner's tiredness or stress, alcohol abuse, or an aggressive instinct that was considered to be innately male. After this initial work of storytelling and reflection, the question emerged as to whether what had been found was not instead the result of a cultural construct that has traditionally attributed greater capacity for self-determination and greater decision-making power to men than to women. The workshop participants, using biographical and autobiographical storytelling, questioned themselves on the origin and validity of this discrimination, on the possibility of women's self-determination, on the truth of violence inherent in men, which cannot be contained and must be tolerated, especially at times of low self-control. Through an in-depth investigation of the socio-cultural causes underlying the manifestations of violence and discrimination, it was possible to begin to deconstruct what we might call the perceived causes of abuse. The work carried out in San José de Chiquitos can be summarised in the fundamental objectives achieved: learning to know and recognise the different forms in which male violence against women manifests itself and acquiring the tools to fight it.

Evaluation of the action-research by the participants

The activities described above were discussed and evaluated in two different places: in the community, with the women who participated in the workshops, and with the operators within the association *Mujeres por la Solidaridad* as regards the process in its entirety and complexity.

The participating women agreed in underlining the importance and usefulness of the storytelling method which, through the reading and solicitation of life stories, enabled them to get to know their own thoughts, moods and emotions in greater depth. It was therefore verified that "life stories are precious moments of encounter between people who, precisely through listening to each other, strengthen not only a sense of self but also

respect for others" (De Angelis, 2012b, p. 45). Participants also recognised that they felt more ready to recognise violent behaviour, to seek and give help, to know their rights and where to turn in case of need. They learned to consider that what is a common experience, such as violence within the couple, is not normal and inevitable and that it is possible to break the cycle of violence, that it is necessary to intervene when hearing or witnessing words, scenes or images that directly humiliate them or that humiliate other women, and that it is necessary to avoid discrimination and stereotypes in the upbringing of boys and girls. Similarly, they agreed on the need to implement as soon as possible a step-by-step process that would provide even more in-depth training and would accompany and support them in organising themselves into a horizontal mutual aid network, i.e. made up of trained women who, in every neighbourhood and rural area, would be able to pay attention to and intervene on behalf of other women, but which also acts as a stimulus, both to demand that institutions comply with the provisions of the laws protecting women's rights, and to ask local associations for an approach on the part of operators that is more familiar with and closer to their daily lives, so that professionalism is not synonymous with distance, but rather with empathy, involvement and a desire to tackle the problems for which they are called upon.

Educational processes promoted by storytelling

Narrative practices make it possible to give voice to those subjects who remain unheard or even silenced in some socio-cultural contexts, they make it possible to bring out the history of the invisible to make it visible and accord it equal dignity with respect to the dominant narrations. As Nicoletta Polla Mattiot (2019) reminds us, women in history have been part of those invisibles without a voice, so much so that silence has been a female attribute imposed and endured for centuries and in the most diverse cultures, indeed, it is even mockingly considered a virtue for women (proverbs say, in all languages, that "silence is a woman's best ornament"). In some ways, women have been victims of that *culture of silence* (Freire, 1970) in the name of which the dominant culture has forced them to be oppressed and has deprived them of the expressive means to respond critically to prevarication. Existences that have been reduced to silence must instead

return to speak, to say and to tell themselves, in order to be able to self-determine. In the process of narration and critical reflection carried out in the action-research in Bolivia, the women became aware of having unconsciously introjected a stereotyped gender identity, which is the result of the cultural education of the context in which they are embedded. This new awareness was achieved through the dialogical exchanges promoted by narrative and reflexive practices that allow tacit knowledge to emerge (Mortari, 2011). Explicating the implicit allows women to become aware and to be able to choose more autonomously how to self-determine with respect to dominant cultural patterns. In this sense, storytelling makes it possible to promote autonomy and overcome gender stereotypes in an integrated and inclusive perspective that deconstructs dominant narratives by questioning the obviousness of widespread stereotypes and thus making them less hegemonic and normalised. It is precisely the cultural stereotypes, the learned, non-biological habits and customs that support male violence against women in *patriarchal cultures* (Lerner, 1986) and are concrete barriers to the accessibility and development of key competences such as autonomy, self-determination, self-esteem and emotional competence, which are considered crucial factors in well-being. While in the dominant culture gender identities remain stereotyped and sclerotized, the pedagogical paradigm of narration accompanies the abandonment forever of a univocal idea of identity (Demetrio & Favaro, 1992). The women who took part in the workshop used first-person narratives to free themselves from the dominant, silencing narratives and undertook a process of self-determination that enabled them to define themselves, to talk about themselves from their own point of view without being dependent on the judgement of others. The women discovered self-determination, i.e. the right to freely choose their own way of living, thinking, acting, giving themselves an identity, becoming the protagonists of their own lives and actions. The process of self-determination is reinforced through the development of *agency*, in the perspective of the *Capability Approach*, that is the ability to select the opportunities, in oneself and in others, that are more in harmony with one's own profile, one's own interests, and one's own objectives for individual and social well-being (Edwards, 2005). We can affirm that the process carried out in Bolivia was a path of *sisterhood*, an intense journey of knowledge and awareness of one's rights obtained

through speaking out and thanks to narration and self-narration of daily life. This has made it possible to promote a real educational path of self-determination. In the workshops carried out the self narrating of one's own experience and imagination was stimulated through the proposal of specially prepared materials, in which, with questions, with situations presented through cartoons, with stimulating questioning thoughts, with newspaper articles, as well as through life stories, guidelines for reflection and narration were provided, in order to "promote processes of self-empowerment, construction and maturation of identity, exploration and knowledge aimed at self-direction" (De Angelis, 2012a).

Through a narration that is sometimes spontaneous, at other times prompted, and through the search for conscious meaning and the possibility of relocating oneself in the world, a temporal circularity between past, present and future has been built, capable of leading subjects to the awareness of finally having the right to be actors in their own lives and to manage them as such (Greganti, 2007). Reflection on one's own experience, on one's own educational pathways, on listening to others, on the empathy shown in communicating, becomes awareness and recognition of one's own shortcomings, of the potential that has not emerged, of the need for change (De Angelis, 2012a). The narrative view, therefore, allows us to know ourselves better and to read our existential situation in a deeper way. But this does not mean stopping at one's past or present condition: telling one's story allows one to project oneself towards the future. Actually, by becoming aware of one's own history and skills, one marks the point from which to start again in order to imagine possible horizons, one learns to know oneself well enough (weaknesses, strengths, needs, desires) to understand what goals one wants to achieve and how to do it. Therefore, it is possible to plan actions according to one's own strengths and resources with the possibility of choosing clear and explicit short, medium and long-term goals. People become able to plan their own path of growth and choose consciously. Being able to tell one's own story therefore becomes a rediscovery and construction of one's own life project, a real experience of resonance and transformative appropriation (*Anverwandlung*) (Rosa, 2016), a formative, experiential and capacitating path that allows *capability* and responsibility, decisions and choices to emerge in collective

contexts that are favourable to the development of new functions. The *acting* subject thus develops his or her own power to produce actions and intentional changes aimed at improving his or her own and others' well-being and quality of life.

The collective nature of storytelling

In the Bolivian action-research, the thoughts and knowledge that gradually emerged were analysed, discussed, at other times deconstructed and refounded, in a collective manner, in the knowledge that the group-community would have amplified the educational opportunities. The narration, in fact, becomes reflection in a relationship of exchange, of search for meaning, in an intersubjective dimension and in a dialogic relationship (Mortari, 2003). In order to allow personal growth, reflective processes must have a social community space, that is to say, they must take place in interaction with others (Dewey, 1916), "in this way we establish a place inhabited by words invented or found to describe the world and describe ourselves, in the hope of being then re-described by those who have listened to or read our speeches. In this way we construct what elsewhere we have called a reassuring, avalutative, restructuring autobiographical space" (Demetrio, 1996, p. 24) in which it is possible to reconstruct one's own wounded, offended, lost identity (Smorti, 1997) also starting from the narratives of others. Thanks to the cooperative process, it was possible to learn the dynamic capacities of giving and receiving, speaking and listening, acting and being acted upon, and above all to be able to take a position and identify one's own role in the collective transformation of reality. In fact, it is in the individual-community dynamic that one can learn to know oneself, to become a subject to the extent that one becomes responsible for one's own emotions and actions, one can understand the centrality of self-esteem, take the reins of one's own life and free oneself from dependencies and constraints (Esclarin, 2004). In addition, in the workshop, a process of collective awareness of reality was undertaken, which became more and more critical, and from this it was possible to promote participation in the search for solutions to the problems encountered. It is the community that allows mobilisation for the redemption of one's rights because in the group common objectives are compared and the resources for

collective action are found, implementing that process of empowerment that allows one to become an actor in one's own life because already "speaking authentically, which is work, which is praxis, means transforming the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 106).

The group educational pathway also makes it possible to support and develop sociality, which we know is an important indicator of well-being. Building empathic and constructive bonds of affection makes it possible to feel fully involved in social life and able to make one's own contribution. The workshop held in San José de Chiquitos was a journey made by women towards the knowledge of their rights and the awareness of being the subjects of these rights, women no longer willing to wait their turn to be granted universally inalienable freedoms and guarantees as gifts or privileges. Through the shared experiences and narratives, the women involved began to build a collective consciousness that represents the possibility of a new widespread narrative of gender identity; a new vision that can spread throughout society and allow us to overcome the discriminating culture in favour of the spread of an inclusive culture that sees the role of active participation, both individual and collective, even for those subjects, such as women, historically kept on the margins. In this sense, we can say that the narrated experience of women and their empowerment process can be valued as resources that enrich the entire community. A path still under construction every day, step by step, to make concrete and effective those freedoms that allow today the self-determination and participation of women in civil life and that arise from a long journey of struggle and resistance traveled by Bolivian women between the XlX and XX centuries, which saw them as protagonists in the battles for civil rights and in the construction of a citizenship finally inclusive of differences (Novillo, 2011). This intense and significant path of awareness and redemption obtained through speaking out, took place thanks to the enhancement of narration and self-narration of everyday life and allowed to move forward a few steps in the development of self-determination and *sisterhood* for the women participants and for the whole community.

Conclusions: women's empowerment and emancipation from gender discrimination

The project described in this paper demonstrates how it is possible to combat gender inequalities in everyday life through educational interventions that use the storytelling approach and aim to empower women. In line with Paulo Freire's definition (1970), empowerment is not a passive condition in which the fragile subject receives power by concession of the strong subject, but rather concerns the conquest by an active subject of the awareness of his own condition, the explication of the desired changes and the practical action on the context and thanks to the context to build the right conditions to pursue the chosen goals. The empowerment achieved through biographical and autobiographical paths, is for women a conquest of freedom to delineate their own identity, to make decisions, to carry out actions, to collaborate, expressing themselves at their best in the collective and relational dimension (Barnes & Bowl 2003). Women can fully experience the dimension of people who have the power to do something with someone, in a perspective of *relational agency* (Edwards, 2005) that allows them to actively influence to improve their own and others' well-being. Therefore, the Bolivian action-research project has brought out the value of the narrative model not only as an investigative tool, but also as a device for change, to be used in the construction of training courses aimed at empowering women to give them equal opportunities and to combat discrimination and gender-based violence. Emphasising storytelling and autobiographical life stories activates a training process that can be the basis for producing intentional actions and changes, for learning to recognise one's rights and to become subjects of those rights. This perspective values the role of women as agents of change, and is in agreement with UN Resolution 1325 *Women, Peace and Security*, which indicates that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential, at international and national levels, for the prevention of all forms of discrimination against women.

References

Barnes M. & Bowl R. (2003). *Empowerment e salute mentale*. Erickson.

Corsi M. (2014). *La ricerca pedagogica in Italia: Tra innovazione e internazionalizzazione*. Pensa MultiMedia.

De Angelis B. (2012a). Educazione e Narratività. in G. Martini e D. Iannotta (Eds.). *Le strade del narrare: La costruzione dell'identità*. Effatà.

De Angelis B. (2012b). Narratività, storie di vita e narrazion. In B. De Angelis (Ed.). *Progettualità educativa e qualità pedagogica.* Anicia.

De Angelis B., Greganti P., Orlando A. (2015). *Conoscere il nemico*: *I percorsi dello Storytelling. Teorie tecniche e contesti delle narrazioni.* Anicia.

De Angelis B., Greganti P., Orlando A. (2016). *Conoscere e agire: Percorsi partecipati per rompere il circolo della violenza di genere.* Anicia.

Demetrio D. & Favaro G. (1992). *Immigrazione e pedagogia interculturale*. La Nuova Italia.

Demetrio D. (1996). *Raccontarsi: L'autobiografia come cura di sé*. Cortina.

Dewey J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. The Macmillan Company.

Drydyk J. (2008). *Durable empowerment*. Journal of Global Ethics, 4:3, pp. 231-245.

Edwards A. (2005). *Relational agency: Learning to be a resourceful practitioner*. International

Journal of Educational Research, 43(3), pp.168-182.

Elia G. (2010). Lavoro e fasce deboli. In L. Fabbri, B. Rossi (Eds.). *Pratiche lavorative: Studi pedagogici per la formazione.* Guerini.

Esclarin A.P. (2004), *Educar para humanizar*, Abe Books.

Freire P. (1970). *Pedagogia do oprimido*. Herder & Herder.

Galindo M. (2013). *No se puede descolonizar sin despatriarcalizar*. Mujeres Creando.

Greganti P. (2007). Zygmunt Bauman: L'eternità è in pericolo. Sfide pedagogiche nella modernità liquida. In A. Porcheddu (Ed.). *La crisi del soggetto nella modernità liquida*. Unicopoli.

Lerner G. (1986). *The creation of patriarchy: The origins of women's subordination*. OUP.

Mortari L. (2003). *Apprendere dall'esperienza: Il pensare riflessivo nella formazione*. Carocci.

Mortari L. (2011). *Ricercare e riflettere: La formazione del docente professionista*. Carocci.

Novillo M. (2011). *Paso a paso asì lo hicimos: Avance y desafíos en la participación política de las mujeres*. CM-Idea.

Nussbaum M. (2006). *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, nationality, species membership*. Belknap.

WHO (2001). *ICF. International classification of functioning, disability and health*. Author.

Rosa H. (2016). *Eine soziologie der weltbeziehung*. Suhrkamp Verlag.

Sen A.K. (1993). Capability and Well-being. In M.C. Nussbaum, A.K. Sen (Eds.). *The quality of life*. Clarendon Press.

Smorti A. (1997). *Il sé come testo: Costruzione delle storie e sviluppo della persona*. Giunti.

Paving the way towards gender inclusion in video games

Carme Mangiron
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
carme.mangiron@uab.cat

Introduction

Since its origins in the 1970s, the video game industry has grown to become a multibillion-dollar industry, which generated $180.3 billion dollars in 2021 (Newzoo, 2022). Video games have become one of the preferred leisure options in today's digital society. The video game industry has especially thrived during the COVID-19 pandemic (The Washington Post, 2021), when people in lockdown played games to pass the time, enjoy themselves and have social contact with others when playing online. The reasons why video games have become so popular are numerous and varied: they provide us with entertainment, they allow us to experience new things and to become the protagonists of stories set in different worlds, the outcome of which will change depending on our actions and decisions. Thus, interactivity is key and one of the main features of video games, which distinguishes them from other story-telling media. However, despite the power video games have to tell stories and immerse players in them, there issue of gender inclusion remains unsolved in the game industry:.

In this paper, after briefly describing the main features of video games as a storytelling medium, the main gender issues in games will be described, such as the underrepresentation of female characters and their objectification and hypersexualisation. Next, examples of video games with leading female characters will be presented. The paper concludes highlighting the need to promote gender inclusion through video games in order to pave the way towards a fairer and more inclusive society.

Video Games as Storytelling

Video games are a storytelling medium which reshape "the spectrum of narrative expression, not by replacing the novel or the movie but by continuing their timeless bardic work within another framework" (Murray 1997, p. 10). Due to their interactive nature, players are in charge of the unfolding of the story, and their decisions have an impact on the development of the narrative. According to Jansz & Martis (2007), interactivity has two main consequences for the reception of game content. First, players are drawn into the represented world and have a stronger sense of presence, which may "intensify the gamer's reception of game content in order to construct personal meaning" (Jansz & Martis, 2007, p. 142). Second, interactivity allows players to identify themselves with the characters represented in the game. Players control a character's actions, "which is fundamentally different from passively witnessing the actions of a hero on a movie or television screen" (Jansz & Martis, 2007, p. 142).

Thus, the issue of representation becomes crucial in video games, as players identify themselves with the characters they are playing. As Shaw (2015) states: "People do not want to feel alone and unseen. Representation is important because it is an external acknowledgement of one's existence. (…) people want to see themselves in media texts because they want people like them to be seen" (p. 192). However, character representation in video games has been traditionally dominated by White, male characters (Jansz & Martis, 2007). There is an underrepresentation of playable female characters, non-binary and LGTBIQ+ characters (Di Biase, Morales, Panero & Terceros, 2021), as described in the next sections.

Gender Issues in Video Games

In addition to the issue of representation, which will be explored in more detail in the next section due to its importance, there are other gender issues in the video game industry, which traditionally has been a male-dominated and male-oriented industry, addressed to a heterosexual male audience. There is a predominance of male roles in the industry, and partly due to the underrepresentation of women in game development, the game industry has largely failed to provide game content that

is relevant, relatable and not offensive to female players (Kowert, Breuer & Quandt, 2017).

However, it should be highlighted that the gap between male and female players is closing, as 47% of European video game players are women and women represent 53% of all mobile and tablet video game players (ISFE, 2021). In addition, in early 2021 the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE) and the European Games Developers Federation (EGFD) established a Diversity Working Group "with the goal of committing to advancing gender equality and diversity within the industry; promoting best practices of our members, and serving as a resource for information on diversity-related policy and legislative issues" (ISFE, 2021).

Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go before true equality is achieved in the video game industry, as according to the ISFE (2021), only 20,38% of estimated employees are women. In addition, women who play online video games are often verbally harassed and often have to play without revealing their gender(Fox and Tang, 2014).

Women's Representation in Video Games

There have been numerous studies about the portrayal of gender in video games, which concluded that most titles were dominated by male characters, while female characters appeared in submissive roles (Jansz & Martis, 2007). According to Díez at al. (2004, p. 4), traditionally women have been represented in video games following three main stereotypes:

a) Masochist: They are passive and submissive women, who need to be rescued by men, damsels in distress, like Princess Peach in the *Super Mario Bross* games (1986 to present).

b) Sadistic: These are women who reproduce masculine arquetypes, behave like men but have hypersexualised designs, such as Lara Croft and Ivy Valentine from *Soulcalibur IV* (2018).

c) Barbie: These are superficial women, who are mainly concerned about their looks. This stereotype reproduces the more traditional role of women and is included in games that are designed to attract a female

audience to video games, although in reality most female players do not find such games appealing.

Jansz & Martis (2007) refer to the second type of female representation as the "Lara phenomenon", that is, the depiction of powerful, female characters with leading roles in games, even if they are still hypersexualised. It should be noted, however, that Lara Croft's portrayal has changed through the years, from a more hypersexualised, exuberant character, to a more petite and ordinary looking girl, but still strong and capable. Such change in representation has taken place both in the video games and the movies, where Lara Craft was originally played by Angelina Jolie and by Alicia Vikander in the latest movie, with the objective of portraying a more realistic and relatable character.

Jansz and Martis (2007, p. 144) also analysed twelve successful games which had a strong narrative component and included a diverse cast of characters in terms of gender and race, in order to determine the role and position of the characters. Their analysis confirmed the trend observed in previous studies: games are dominated by white characters, although the number of female characters in recent games is far larger than in earlier games (Jansz and Martis, 2007). Also, they observed that most male characters were depicted with extreme musculature, while female characters were hypersexualised.

More recently, authors such as Lynch et al. (2016) and Gardner and Tanenbaum (2018 have studied the representation of women in video games extensively and have come to similar conclusions. Lynch et al. (2016) analysed 571 games released between 1973 and 2014. They concluded that in the early years of the video game industry gender disparity was indeed an issue. However, in those early days, corresponding to the period from 1983 to 1990, female characters were less sexualised because of simple graphics. The period from the 1990s to the 2000s was the period with more sexualised graphics. From 2006 to the present, Lynch et al. (2016) have observed a decrease in sexualisation, such as the previously mentioned example of Lara Croft in the latest games. These authors also found out that although the number of female characters has increased over the years, the number of primary female characters has not increased significantly.

Lynch et al. (2016) also argue that there has been a positive cultural shift in the portrayal of female characters over the years, with an increase of strong, capable, and attractive female characters who are not overtly objectified. The authors believe that such portrayal may be an important factor for encouraging women to become interested in gaming. In turn, the growing interest of girls and women in gaming seems to be influencing game content in positive ways and may also contribute toward achieving gender parity in the industry (Lynch et al., 2016).

As regards Gardner and Tabenbaum's study (2018), they analysed 200 games, including both indie and AAA games, the blockbusters of the game industry, with high development costs and high revenue. They found out that 72% of the playable characters were male, 13.33% were female and 15.67% were "undeterminable", which means that their gender was not specified and was left to the players to interpret. Although this data still shows a clear underrepresentation of female characters in games, the trend seems to be improving, with more female characters populating games.

More recently, Shell (2021) did a survey of gamers in the UK concerning character representation in video games. Although the main object of the survey was to research the representation of disability in games, the issue of gender was also included. He obtained 76 answers from gamers, who felt in general that there has been little change in character representation in games, although there has been an increase in the representation of women. However, the increase in the portrayal of women in video games was not always perceived as positive, as participants felt that it was a more sexualised representation, which seems to contradict the results from Lynch et al.'s study (2016). It seems that although in recent years there have been substantial advances, there is still a long way to go as regards a more inclusive and non-sexualised portrayal of women in video games.

Leading Female Characters in Video Games: Some Examples

In this section several examples of video games which portray females in leading roles in a non-sexualised way are presented. One of the first

games to offer the possibility to play with a female leading character was Bioware's *Mass Effect 3* (2012). Players could choose a male or a female leading character. However, according to data from Bioware, 82% of players preferred to play with the male protagonist, Commander Shepard (Makuch, 2013).

The popular football game *FIFA* (Electronic Arts,2007-to date) added the possibility of playing with women's national teams for the first time in 2016. Female players had requested this for many years, but Electronic Arts had not implemented female teams because of the technical complexity, as they needed tools and technology to differentiate between men and women (Wilson, 2015). However, not many players use this option. For example, only 2,5% of players of *FIFA 20* have played a women's football match (Jackson, 2019).

Another popular video game series that incorporated playable female roles is *Assassin's Creed* (Ubisoft, 2007-to present). The first playable female protagonist was Aveline de Grandpré in the spin-off game *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* (2012), originally released for the PlayStation Vita. For the games of the main saga *Syndicate* (2015), *Origins* (2017), *Odyssey* (2018) and *Valhalla* (2020), developers wanted a female protagonist, but executives did not let them because they thought "games with female protagonists don't sell well" (Pérez, 2020). *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* (2015) was the first game to have a playable female protagonist, Evie Frye. 50% of the game can be played as her and the other 50% of the game can be played as her twin, Jacob. *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (2018) was the first game of the main saga to include a female protagonist. The game can be fully played as Kassandra or Alexios, who are siblings. However, similarly to what happened with *Mass Effect 3*, most players (66%) preferred to play as Alexios, the male protagonist. Unfortunately, such data reinforce the preconceived idea of Ubisoft executives that games with female leads do not sell well.

Another example of female playable characters can be found in the first-person shooter video game series *Call of Duty* (Activision, 2003 - to present). In 2013 *Call of Duty: Ghosts* introduced the first playable female characters in a multiplayer campaign because there were many female players who wanted to play as female characters (Robertson, 2013). The first play-

able female lead appeared in *Call of Duty Black Ops 3* in 2015, and other female protagonists have appeared in subsequent games, such as *Call of Duty Modern Warfare* (2019) and *Call of Duty: Vanguard* (2021). As war games are usually male-oriented and populated by male characters this is another step in the right direction for a more inclusive gender representation in video games.

As a final example, *The Last of Us* series (Naughty Dog 2013 - to present) deserves a special mention because of its portrayal of strong and capable women, who are fighters and survivors (Phillips Kennedy, 2021). In the first game, one of the protagonists is Ellie, a 14-year-old girl. In the *The Last of Us II* (2021) the two main characters are female: an older Ellie and her romantic interest, Dina. Ellie is lesbian and Dina is bisexual, which also departs from more traditional representations of sexual identities in video games. The game became popular and sold four million copies within three days of its release, which contradicts the common misconception in the game industry that if you have women leading characters the game will sell less (Phillips Kennedy, 2021).

Conclusions

Video games are a powerful storytelling medium due to their interactivity. However, the video game industry has traditionally been a male-dominated and male-oriented industry. Most video games have been populated by white, male characters, with little representation of female, LGTB+, non-white and disabled characters. As regards the portrayal of women in video games, the focus of this paper, they have usually been represented in a stereotyped and hypersexualised way, often playing a secondary role and being dependent on the male protagonists.

However, since the early 2010s, gender equality has started to gain traction in the video game industry, with more women represented in games and a slight increase of lead female characters. *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft (Eidos Interactive and Square Enix, 1996 to present) provides a good example of how women's portrayal in video games is shifting from a more sexualized and stereotyped representation to a more realistic one, portraying females as strong, capable and independent individuals.

As stated by Lynch et al. (2016), such a portrayal may be an important factor for encouraging women to become more interested in gaming, which in turn can influence game content in positive ways and contribute to achieving gender parity in the video industry. It is important, however, that gamers support this change and start playing with female lead characters as much as they play with their male counterparts. More interesting developments can be expected in the future, as video games strive to portray stories that represent all kinds of persons, paving the way for a more diverse and inclusive society.

Acknowledgements

References

Di Biase, Carla; Morales, Tamara; Panero, Carolina & Y. Terceros, Yesica. (2021). Neutralidad de género en localización de videojuegos. *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios de Diseño y Comunicación*, 120, 97-114.

Díez, Enrique Javier, Fontal, Olaia, & Blanco, Dayamí. (2004). Los videojuegos desde la perspectiva de género: roles y estereotipos. In *Tecnología, educación y diversidad: retos y realidades de la inclusión digital: Actas del III Congreso Nacional de Tecnología, Educación y Diversidad* (TECNONEET 2004) (pp. 203-207). Murcia, Servicio de Ordenación Administrativa y Publicaciones.

Fox, Jesse, & Tang, Wai Yen. (2014). Sexism in online video games: The role of conformity to masculine norms and social dominance orientation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 314-320.

Gardner, Daniel L., & Tanenbaum, Theresa Jean. (2018). Dynamic demographics: lessons from a large-scale census of performative possibilities in games. In *Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 1-12). https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3173574.3173667, last accessed 20/01/2022.

ISFE. (2021). 2021 Key Facts about the European video games sector. https://www.isfe.eu/data-key-facts/key-facts-about-europe-s-video-games-sector/, last accessed 20/01/2022.

Jackson, Lara. (2019). Only 2.5% Of FIFA 20 Gamers Have Played A Women's Football Match. *Gamebyte*. November 15, 2019. https://www.gamebyte.

com/only-2-5-of-fifa-20-   gamers-have-played-a-womens-football-match/, last accessed 25/01/2022.

Jansz, Jeroen, & Martis, Raynel G. (2007). The Lara phenomenon: Powerful female characters in video games. *Sex roles*, 56(3-4), 141-148. DOI 10.1007/s11199-006-9158-0

Kowert, Rachel, Breuer, Johannes, & Quandt, Thorsten. (2017). Women are from FarmVille, men are from ViceCity: The cycle of exclusion and sexism in video game content and culture. In Rachel Kowert, & Thorsten Quandt (Eds.). *New perspectives on the social aspects of digital gaming* (pp. 136-150). New York, Routledge.

Lynch, Teresa, Tompkins, Jessica E., Van Driel, Irene I., & Fritz, Niki. (2016). Sexy, strong, and secondary: A content analysis of female characters in video games across 31 years. *Journal of Communication*, 66(4), 564-584.

Makuch, Eddie. (2013). Mass Effect 3 players prefer male Shepard. Gamespot, March 23, 2012. https://www.gamespot.com/articles/mass-effect-3-players- prefer-male-   shepard/1100-6405842/, last accessed 25/01/2022.

Murray, Janet. (1997). *Hamlet on the holodeck: The future of narrative in cyberspace*. New York, The Free Press.

Newzoo. (2021). *Global Games Market Report*, last accessed 25/01/2022. https://newzoo.com/products/reports/global-games-market-report/

Pérez, Cristina. (2020). Assassin's Creed Valhalla. *Vanda*l. October 13, 2020. https://vandal.elespanol.com/noticia/1350736756/en-assassins-creed-valhalla-querian-una-protagonista-exclusivamente-femenina/, last accessed 25/01/2022.

Phillips Kennedy, Victoria. (2021). How The Last Of Us Elevates Women In Gaming. *Screenrant*, March 12, 2021. https://screenrant.com/last-us-ellie-abby-tlou2-female- main-characters, last accessed 01/02/2022.

Robertson, Adi. (2013). Why were women finally added to 'Call of Duty: Ghosts' multiplayer? *The Verge*, August 15, 2013, last accessed 01/02/2022. https://www.theverge.com/2013/8/15/4624570/call-of-duty-ghosts-multiplayer-finally-adds-female-characters, last accessed 01/02/2022.

Shaw, Adrienne. (2015) *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis London.

Shell, Jethro. (2021). What Do We See: An Investigation Into the Representation of Disability in Video Games. arXiv preprint arXiv:2103.17100, last accessed 20/01/2022.

The Washington Post. The giants of the video game industry have thrived in the pan-demic. Can the success continue? May 12, 2020. https://www.wash-

ingtonpost.com/video-games/2020/05/12/video-game-industry-coronavi-rus/, last accessed 01/02/2022.

Wilson, Ben. (2015). Fifa 16 to add women's teams for the first time. *The Guardian*, May 28th 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/may/28/fifa-16-to-include-womens-football-for-the-first-time, last accessed 1/02/2022.

Growing and knowing: a critical analysis of narratives of bodies and sexualities. The experience of the FAMMI CAPIRE project

Alessia Santambrogio
University of Enna "Kore"
alessia.santambrogio@unikorestudent.it

Elena Fierli
Universitat Rovira i Virgili
elena.fierli@estudiants.urv.cat

Introduction. The Fammi Capire project experience

Fammi Capire[1] is a project to monitor and analyse Italian and foreign illustrated books narrating bodies, gender identities and sexualities, which has led to the creation of a travelling bibliographical exhibition and which, like any action of observation and detection, is neither defined nor concluded. On the contrary, we believe that the strength of this project is that it is open to continuous additions and new contributions, also due to changes in the editorial offer which, in the five years of life of Fammi Capire, has been greatly transformed and enriched. As well as the subjective nature of the selection of titles.

In fact, Fammi Capire cannot be considered an objective project, complete in itself and bearer of a single truth. It presupposes, first of all, the confrontation of a group of people and the bringing into play of a series of different and consolidated critical and scientific skills. Secondly, the project requires a clear position with regard to a series of questions that we believe to be crucial when it comes to conducting a scientific investigation

---

1. 'Fammi capire' can be translated into English as 'Let me understand'. In this paper we will use the original name of the project.

and, at the same time, to creating an exhibition proposal on bodies, gender identities and sexualities.

The questioning of the norms that govern and determine the construction of gender identities, the "compulsory" heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) and the overcoming of gender binarism constitute the foundations of Fammi Capire. In addition, there is the criticism of motherhood as a unique destiny, the repronormativity that takes it for granted that everyone, especially women, want to have children, and the stereotyping of roles in people's relationships.

We consider these elements to be necessary for the construction of critical thinking and an imaginary world that is free and open to the most varied possibilities, the only way to broaden horizons and provide children and adolescents with the tools to deconstruct normative cages and give a serene reading of reality and their own lives[2].

Analysing the variegated representations of identities, bodies and sexualities in illustrated books therefore meant assuming a series of parameters to be used as codes for reading the texts and, above all, the images, which would make it possible to choose those books that met the above-mentioned requirements.

In order to make the bibliography and the exhibition as accessible as possible, we have created eight sections that intersect with each other, collecting books with certain common characteristics and changing according to the evolution of the project: Bodies, Identity, Transfeminisms, Reproduction, Manuals, Historians, Relationships.

Methodology. Critical Content Analisys from a queer and feminist theoretical perspective

To critically explore what representations of bodies and sexuality are contained in illustrated books in the Fammi Capire bibliography, we have

---

2. For more on the idea of illustrated books and representations as tools for constructing free imaginaries and identities, see also Butler, 2019; Chabrol Gagne, 2011; Fierli et al., 2015; Fierli, Marini, 2021; Neary, Cross, 2018; Paechter, 2017.

conducted a Critical Content Analysis (Utt, Short, 2018) of some 'controversial' books contained in the project. 'Controversial' books are those texts which on one hand show a high quality in pictures and/or graphic structure, but on the other hand contain gender stereotypes and cis-heteronormative massages. Because of this peculiarity, the "controversial" books are not included in the bibliography of the project, but are only displayed in the exhibition, as their dual character requires them to be 'explained' to the public.

It is because of this dual aspect that 'controversial' books lend themselves to being an interesting object of analysis and reflection: the coexistence of both plural narratives and homologating contents asks those who read and analyse them not to take their own cultural, personal and theoretical background for granted.

Indeed, reflecting on the role that 0-18 years old literature has in conveying gender stereotypes or, conversely, plural stories and scenarios, first and foremost calls for the adoption of an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which recognises the interconnections between society, culture, groups and individuals. If, as Bernardi (2014) argues, each society maintains itself by controlling the systems of production and/or reproduction of imaginaries through art forms, such as children's literature, what role do adult people, their choices and values, have on the entire publishing process aimed at children and adolescents? Are they aware of the often implicit, but no less pervasive stereotypes about gender, bodies and sexuality in books for children and adolescents?

In accordance with the reflections proposed by Zanfabro (2017), we recognise how the gaze of adults affects the entire process of writing, producing, distributing, choosing and reading books for children and teenagers. Thus, it becomes fundamental, for the purposes of analysis as well as the proposal of stories and images of bodies, genders and sexuality, to start from ourselves.

Recognising the lenses through which we approach texts and images thus becomes an exercise in unavoidable self-reflexivity, in which our positioning, the partiality of our points of view and their non-neutrality, have allowed not to assume an objective and neutral position (Ferguson, 2013;

Finlay, 2002; Hydén 2008), but, on the contrary, a situated and contextual one (Haraway, 1988, 2018).

To carry out the Critical Content Analysis we have first identified the following selection criteria: the age range to which the book are addressed (from 11 to 18 years old); the subjects dealt with, as indicated in books presentation sheets provided by publishers and concerning one or more of the following themes: sexuality, pleasure and desire, gender identity, affectivity, growth, puberty, and body; the availability of the texts in the Italian context (no out-of-catalogue books were taken into consideration).

At the end of the selection four books have been identified: *Come tu mi vuoi, come io mi voglio* (AA.VV., 2018), *TRANSito* (Bermudez, 2020), *D'amore e altre tempeste* (Herzog, 2018) and *Il libro delle ragazze. Crescere, cambiare, aprirsi al mondo* (Lee, 2019).

We focused on Young Adult (YA) literature because adolescence is an important transitional period, in which biological, psychological and social processes influence the ways in which one's sexuality and gender identity is constructed, interrogated and perceived (Clemans et al., 2010). At this stage, conformity and challenges to binarism and gender stereotypical expectations coexist (Bragg et al., 2018) and a decisive role is played by social contexts and cultural objects, such as YA literature, that define interests and behaviours suitable for one or the other gender (Clemans et al., 2010) or, on the contrary, offer possible alternatives (Crawley, 2017).

Using a socio-constructivist approach, we have considered and analyzed books as "culturally situated discursive practices" (Zanfabro, 2017, p. 3), one of the forms through which society not only constructs and reinforces norms about bodies, genders and sexuality, but also the very image of childhood and adolescence.

Indeed

> if children's literature teaches children how to be child-like, where to be child-like simply means to adhere to what a given culture considers to be "natural" for childhood, then, gender norms are inevitably part of the education children's literature provides for its readers. [...] Children's literature is one of the ways by which adults construct the categories of

age and gender, and they do it performatively. Gender is performatively constructed both within books for children (in characters, in language, in dialogues, in stories) and outside these books (in book covers, in the hints for the readers). (Zanfabro, 2017, p. 5)

To carry out the Critical Content Analysis we also adopted gender as a critical perspective in relating to texts and images (Brugeilles et al., 2002), a reflexive and self-reflective approach and a queer and feminist theoretical background.

We agree with Zanfabro (2017) in seeing in feminist theories a helpful tool to not to take anything for granted, to explore what and how is represented in children and YA literature and what, instead, normativity excludes.

Moreover, recognising gender as a performatively constructed socio-cultural category (Butler, 1990) allows for a dialogue between feminist and queer theories, defining a composite conceptual framework, but particularly useful for exploring gender, body and sexuality representations in 0-18 years old literature.

Queer theories offer theoretical and practical tools to "to deconstruct the sex/gender divide, to frame gender performance as fluid and unfixed, to subvert notions of normality, and to analyze textual artifacts" (Crawley, 2017, p. 30), which rigidifies plurality within only two alternatives (for example male/female, heterosexual/homosexual) placed in a hierarchical relationship. In this process, those who emerge from binarism are marginalised (Torras, 2007), as in the case of trans and non-binary subjectivities.

The culturally defined overlap between sex and gender also has an impact on the different orders of social living (Foresman, 2016) and establishes narratives granted and not granted (Zanfabro, 2017) that reinforce the notion of "gender binary, the view that there are only two genders, because there are only two sexes, male and female" (Foresman, 2016, p. 5).

Normality thus acts as a conceptual order and a mode to producing and signifying reality, based on the construction of Otherness as an external element, a condition of existence of normality itself (Britzman, 1995).

Therefore, the selected texts were analysed using a queer lens to capture the socially constructed character of normativity and of identity categories

(Butler, 1990; Hermann-Wilmarth, Ryan, 2016), such as gender, bodies, relationships and sexuality.

The dialogue with queer and feminist theories has allowed us to conduct an analysis of 'controversial' books by adopting the method of the Critical Content Analysis proposed by Utt and Short (2018), a tool that supported us in investigating norms and meanings embedded in texts through the exploration of written and visual narratives (Crawley, 2017).

The analytical process was supported by an analysis grid divided into conceptually relevant themes and sub-themes (Appendix 1), which made it possible to focus on some salient issues for the purpose of identifying potential and criticality of representations on gender, bodies and sexuality.

Each selected book has been read three times, in order to have a general idea of the plot and representations proposed, refined during the second reading and tested with the third, carried out in parallel with the compilation of the analysis grid.

Because of its flexibility, Critical Content Analysis can be adopted with different types of texts and theoretical frames (Utt, Short, 2018). By asking the researcher to be aware of their own positioning it proved to be a methodological tool consistent with practices of self-reflexivity and queer positioning, creating a context that facilitated our exploration of representations and narratives of bodies, genders and sexualities.

Preliminary remarks

From the Critical Content Analysis some preliminary results have emerged. Even if this is a preparatory work which does not aim to be exhaustive, the themes identified during the analysis offer interesting insights into how gender, bodies and sexuality are constructed, represented and narrated, in texts claiming to be attentive to gender oppressions and/or to be LGBT inclusive.

The theoretical perspective we endorse consider gender as

> a multifaceted and performative notion [....], one which is not limited to the binary opposition between boys and girls and men and women,

but is focused on how gender and gender identities are performatively constructed and produced within culture in its broader sense. (Zanfabro, 2017, pp. 1-2)

Starting from this theoretical perspective, during the analysis we recognized the cultural implications on gender, bodies and sexuality contained in books, and we divided them into three thematic macro-areas.

Cis-heteronormative messages and essentialised representations

The first thematic aread' concerns the presence of subtle but persistent cis-heteronormative messages and essentialised representations of bodies, identities and genders. Indeed, the relationships portrayed are almost exclusively heterosexual. In *D'amore e altre tempeste* the heterosexual story between Storm and Viola follows traditional sexual and gender scripts, in which manipulation and jealousy are presented as winning emotional and relational glues. In fact, Viola is invited by her best friend to dance with a boy for whom she feels no attraction with the express purpose of making Storm jealous, because "Alcuni capiscono cosa provano solo vedendo cosa rischiano di perdere"[3] (Herzog, 2018, p. 38).

Moreover, heterosexuality is shown as the successful completion of one's life, even in books that thematise trans and queer existences such as *TRANSito*, where most of the couples depicted are formed by trans people who maintain and reinforce the herosexual matrix (Butler, 1990).

Finally, in *Il libro delle ragazze*, there are no examples of sexual orientation other than heterosexuality, which is the background to the growth paths, as well as to the sexual encounters described, which are designed solely as a male-female penetrative action, through wich "lo sperma di un uomo viene eiaculato dagli organi genitali maschili all'interno della vagina durante un atto sessuale"[4] (Lee, 2019, p. 132).

Moreover, in this book the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty in people born with vulvas are read as confirmation of the

---

3. "Some guys only understand how they feel by seeing what they stand to lose", translated by the authors from the Italian version.
4. "A man's semen is ejaculated from the male genital organs inside the vagina during a sexual act", translated by the authors from the Italian version.

transition from girl to woman, in fact we read: "quando diventi una donna è all'interno del tuo corpo che avvengono i cambiamenti più grandi"[5] (Lee, 2019, p. 126).

So, the restriction of sexual practices solely to a penetrative penis-vagina sexual act is linked to an essentialist conception of sexes, genders and sexual orientations, through which a strong overlap between sex and gender assigned at birth is normalized, confirming and reinforcing the presumed naturalness of cis-heteronormativity and invisibilising the experiences of trans and non-binary people (Hermann-Wilmarth, Ryan, 2016). In not subjecting to criticism the centrality that the Western social and cultural system attributes to heterosexuality and cisgenderism, some of the texts analysed, such as *Il libro delle ragazze* and *Come tu mi vuoi, come io mi voglio,* thus confirm cisgender and heterosexual normativity.

Biological approach to bodies, puberty and sexuality

The second thematic macro-area concerns the presence in books, especially in *Il libro delle ragazze,* of a biological approach to bodies, puberty and sexuality. The use of scientific language to talk about bodies and growth is not always correct, for example, hormones are referred to as 'parts of the brain' (*D'amore e altre tempeste*) or clearly distinguished between male and female hormones (*Il libro delle ragazze*). Furthermore, despite the attention given to scientific vocabulary, some experiences involving sexed bodies, such as intersexuality, are not mentioned.

Moreover, the development of secondary characteristics, such as breasts, and sexuality itself are presented as solely intended for procreation; for example, in *Il libro delle ragazze* di author writes: "Ti senti agitata al pensiero del seno che cresce? Non devi! Il seno è la prova che il tuo corpo è pronto ad accogliere la vita"[6] (Lee, 2019, pp. 75-76) and in *D'amore e altre tempeste* it is stated "Quando arriva la primavera, o la pubertà (ma è vero,

---

5. "When you become a woman, it is inside your body that the biggest changes happen", translated by the authors from the Italian version.
6. "Do you feel nervous at the thought of growing breasts? You mustn't! Breasts are proof that your body is ready to welcome life", translated by the authors from the Italian version.

succede anche in altre stagioni e a tutte le età) gli ormoni sono in subbuglio: è tempo di accoppiarsi"[7] (Herzog, 2018, pp. 48-49).

In this way desire and pleasure disappear, hidden by a biologisaton of bodies and sexuality and by an over-valorisation of the rhetoric of maternity.

Gender stereotypes

The last thematic macro-area contains gender stereotypes in text and illustrations. In the book *D'amore e altre tempeste* the traditional division of 'female' emotional and 'male' doing sphere can be detected: in fact, Viola is focused on probing her emotional and affective dimension, while Storm is more focused on acting. In fact, his actions related to sexuality (such as masturbation and erections) and to doing are shown: he is the one who kisses, who starts and closes a story, who plays the drums and who sanctions the end of the book.

From the point of view of illustrations, however, in *TRANSito* the bodies of cisgirls are visually represented with hyper-sexualising features: prosperous breasts, wasp waists and generous hips follow the usual canons of objectification and sexualisation of the female body.

A final remark concerns the language, and directly address the translation process; in fact, all the books except one (*Come tu mi vuoi, come io mi voglio)* have been translated into Italian from Spanish (*TRANSito*), English (*Il libro delle ragazze*) and Danish (*D'amore e altre tempeste*). In the Italian version any gendered language that declines into masculine and feminine nouns, adjectives, articles and past participles - or that tries to find creative solutions capable of dismantling the binary setting of the Italian language[8] - has been adopted. The analysed books use, on the contrary,

---

7. "When spring or puberty arrives (but it's true, it also happens in other seasons and at all ages) the hormones are in turmoil: it's time to mate", translated by the authors from the Italian version.

8. Attempts of a non-binary approach to language in the Italian-speaking context are the use of the asterisk or the schwa. Some examples of the scientific debate on this issue can be found in Danet (1998); Ansara, Hegarty (2014); Balocchi, Botteghi (2014); Marotta, Monaco (2016); Fontanella (2019); Gheno (2019); Fluida Wolf (2020).

the over-extended masculine (Gheno, 2019), re-proposing to the reader the presumed universality and neutrality of the masculine subject (Robustelli, 2013; Sabatini, 1987).

The focus on language further highlights how the process of translation, just like that of writing and illustration, is not a neutral action (Fontanella, 2019), but, on the contrary, is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural contexts in which all the subjectivities active in the field of literature 0-18 years are immersed (Zanfabro, 2017), with different levels of awareness of the role that these contexts play in directing editorial, stylistic and translation choices. The analysis conducted shows how, in conclusion, even texts that are sensitive to gender and LGBTQ+ issues are not automatically exempt, by virtue of their sensitivity to these issues, from proposing binary norms and cis-heteronormative implicit.

Conclusions: what does this have to do with the health and well-being of children and teenagers?

To conclude this reflection on the powerful and inescapable link between picturebooks' images and the construction of free and conscious identities, we want to start again from Zanfabro's idea that "children's literature teaches children how to be child-like" (Zanfabro, 2017, p. 5). This statement can be linked to Adela Turin's reflections (now 'old' but not for this reason outdated) who, in identifying those elements that make a picturebook a book with or without stereotypes, argues that:

> È attraverso le immagini che gli albi illustrati trasmettono una visione sessista della famiglia e della società. Se al momento del loro ingresso nella scuola materna, verso i tre, quattro anni, i bambini e le bambine si sono già identificati nel loro ruolo sessuale e conoscono il comportamento appropriato a ciascun sesso, i libri illustrati, supporto essenziale nelle classi della scuola materna, perfezionano questa identificazione.[9] (Turin, 2003, p. 3)

9. "It is through images that picturebooks convey a sexist view of the family and society. If, by the time they enter kindergarten, at around three or four years of age, boys and girls have already identified themselves in their sexual roles and know the appropriate behaviour for each sex, picturebooks, an essential support in kindergarten classes, refine this identification". Translated by the authors.

We start, therefore, from here. From the fact that an imaginary constructed by seeing and 'storing' stereotyped and binary representations, caged in social and relational norms, heteronormative, hierarchical, exclusive and excluding, will lead to the growth of people who reflect and re-propose it.

Proposing images from illustrated books, graphic novels, comics, works of art to people who are growing up means giving them the opportunity to acquire plural and varied models and then apply them to their daily life choices.

Providing codes and tools to look at reality from different points of view and in many different ways means giving people a solid alphabet with which they can read and narrate the reality around them.

For this reason, if on the one hand focusing the attention of our research on 'controversial' books means defining the parameters that we consider unavoidable for a good education on bodies and sexualities, on the other hand it also means focusing on the contradictions that this type of educational approach entails and makes its own.

Thanks to its flexibility, the analysis carried out thus makes it possible to identify those cultural implications which, with more or less force, and with more or less awareness, intervene in the process of conceiving, writing, illustrating, selecting, reading, interpreting and analysing a book.

It is therefore essential, in our view, to adopt a theoretical, methodological and educational approach which establishes a recursive work of reflection and self-reflexivity, between the messages contained in books, the contexts in which they were written and published and the subjectivity of those who read and select them.

This recursive process allows us to recognise the regulatory implication and contradictions contained in books, such as the 'controversial' ones, a fundamental step to critically reflect on the value of narration and storytelling as a tool that can break down cis-etheronormativity in order to promote individual and social well-being.

Children and adolescents have the right to "question the world" (Bernardi, 2014, p. 128) and to receive complex answers able to respect their intel-

ligence and curiosity. Books and storytelling can provide such answers, telling stories that offer mirrors and windows to recognise and acknowledge themselves, the others (Crawley, 2017) and the world.

By offering plural representations and stories, illustrated books can impact on individual and social well-being by promoting aesthetic and visual literacy (Campagnaro, 2019), dialoguing with children's growth and subjectification processes, supporting their imagination, critical thinking, questioning skills and conscious choice (Fierli et al., 2015, 2020; Ghigi, 2019; Turin, 2003).

Moreover, images in picturebooks can be an agent of possible democratisation because they can overcome cultural, language and skills barriers.

By doing so, illustrated books respond to the educational, social and political need to offer an archive of alternatives (Halberstam, 2008) able to widen the space of imagination and thought about the possibilities of performing one's own gender, building relationships and living one's own sexuality.

All this contributes to decreasing gender-based violence and homo-lesbo-bi-transphobia levels among the young population, with a positive impact on individual and social well-being. For all of these reasons, we do believe illustrated books can be agents of education, democracy and freedom, for children and teenagers, and for society as well.

References

AA.VV. (2018). *Come tu mi vuoi, come io mi voglio.* Roma: Else Edizioni.

Ansara, Y. G., Hegarty, P. (2014). Methodologies of misgendering: Recommendations for reducing cisgenderism in psychological research. *Feminism & Psychology,* 24(2), 259-270.

Balocchi, M., Botteghi, E. (2014). Dignità delle persone e autodeterminazione. *DWF*, 2014(103-104), 49-60.

Bermudez, I., Cantero, D. (2020). *TRANSito*. Roma: Momo Edizioni.

Bernardi, M. (2014). Letteratura per l'infanzia tra Utopia e Controllo. Poetica, autenticità, temi difficili VS sistemi di addomesticamento. *Impossibilia*, 8, 122-137.

Bragg, S., Renold, E., Ringrose, J., Jackson, C. (2018). 'More than boy, girl, male,

female: exploring young people's views on gender diversity within and beyond school contexts. *Sex Education*, 18(40), 420-434.

Britzman, D. (1995). Is there a queer pedagogy? Or, stop reading straight. *Educational Theory*, 45(2), 151-165.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *Ecologia dello sviluppo umano*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Brugeilles, C., Cromer, I., Cromer, S. (2002). Les représentations du masculin et du féminin dans les albums illustrés ou comment la littérature enfantine contribue à élaborer le genre. *Populations*, 57(2), 261-292. https://www.cairn.info/revue-population-2002-2-page-261.htm

Butler, C. (2020). The Portrayal of Trans People in Books for Children and Young Adults. *Journal of Literary Education*, 3, 10-24. https://ojs.uv.es/index.php/JLE/article/view/15992

Butler, J. (2017). *Questione di genere. Il femminismo e la sovversione dell'identità.* Roma/Bari: Laterza [1990].

Campagnaro, M. (2019). La pluridimensionalità della visual literacy. Albi illustrati e itinerari educativi. In Barsotti, S., Cantatore, L. (a cura di). *Letteratura per l'infanzia. Forme, temi e simboli del contemporaneo* (pp. 123-143). Roma: Carocci.

Chabrol Gagne, N. (2011). *Filles d'album: Les représentations du féminin dans l'album.* Le Puy en Velay: L'atelier du poisson soluble.

Clemans, K. H., DeRose, L. M., Graber, J. A., Brooks-Gunn, J. (2010). Gender in Adolescence: Applying a Person-in-Context Approach to Gender Identity and Roles. In Chrisler. J. C., McCreary, D. R. (eds). *Handbook of Gender Research in Psychology. Vol. 1* (pp. 527-558). New York: Springer.

Crawley, S. A. (2017). Be Who You Are: Exploring Representations of Transgender Children in Picturebooks. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 43(2), 28-41.

Danet, B. (1998). Text as mask: gender, play and performance. *Cybersociety*, 2, 129-158.

Ferguson, J. M. (2013). Queering Methodologies: Challenging Scientific Constraint in the Appreciation of Queer and Trans Subjects. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(13), 1-13. http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol18/iss13/1

Fierli, E., Franchi, G., Lancia, G., Marini, S. (2015). *Leggere senza stereotipi. Percorsi educativi 0-6 anni per figurarsi il futuro.* Cagli: Settenove edizioni.

Fierli, E., Marini, S. (2021). Cis-eteronormatività. La impariamo da piccolǝ anche attraverso le immagini degli albi illustrati. *Divercity*, IV(10), 24-25. https://divercitymag.it/2021/03/08/cis-eteronormativita-la-impariamo-da-piccol%C9%99-anche-attraverso-le-immagini-degli-albi-illustrati/

Finlay, L. (2002). ''Outing'' the Researcher: The Provenance, Process, and Practice of Reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12, 531-545.

Fluida Wolf, V.a. (2020). *Postporno. Corpi liberi di sperimentare per sovvertire gli immaginari sessuali*. Torino: Eris.

Fontanella, L. (2019). *Il corpo del testo. Elementi di traduzione transfemminista queer*. Milano: Asterisco.

Foresman, D. B. (2016). *Representations and Impacts of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Ideals in Children's Literature for Young Children* (Publication no. 119) [Honors Undergraduate Thesis, University of Central Florida]. Showcase of Text, Archives, Research & Scholarship.

Gheno, V. (2019). *Femminili singolari. Il femminismo è nelle parole*. Firenze: Effequ.

Halberstam, J. (2008). The anti-social turn in queer studies. *Graduate Journal of Social Science*, 5(2), 140–156.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599.

Haraway, D. (2018). *Manifesto cyborg. Donne, tecnologie e biopolitiche del corpo*. Milano: Feltrinelli [1991].

Hermann-Wilmarth, J. M., Ryan, C. L. (2016). Queering chapter books with LGBT characters for young readers: recognizing and complicating representations of homonormativity. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(6), 846-866.

Herzog, A., Clante, K., Bregnhøi, R. (2018). *D'amore e altre tempeste*. Roma: Sinnos.

Hydén, M. (2008). Narrating sensitive topics. In Andrews, M., Squire, C., Tamboukou, M. (eds.). *Doing Narrative Research* (pp. 121-136). London: Sage Publications.

Kyungsun, L. (2019). *Il libro delle ragazze. Crescere, cambiare, aprirsi al mondo*. Milano: Editrice Il Castoro.

Marotta, I., Monaco, S. (2016). Un linguaggio più inclusivo? Rischi e asterischi nella lingua italiana. *gender/sexuality/italy*, 3, 44-57.

Neary, A., Cross, C. (2018). *Exploring gender identity and gender norms in primary schools: the perspectives of educators and parents of transgender and gender variant children*. Limerick: University of Limerick and the Transgender Equality Network of Ireland.

Paechter, C. (2017). Young children, gender and the heterosexual matrix. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 38(2), 277-291.

Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. *Signs*, 5(4), 631-660. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173834

Robustelli, C., (2013). *Infermiera sì, ingegnera no?*. Firenze: Accademia della Crusca.

Sabatini, A. (1987). *Il sessismo nella lingua italiana, Commissione Nazionale per la realizzazione della parità tra uomo e donna*. Roma: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri.

Torras, M. (2007). El delito del cuerpo. In Torras, M. (eds.). *Cuerpo e identidad 1* (pp. 11-36). Barcelona: Edicions UAB.

Utt, J., Short, K. (2018). Critical Content Analysis: A Flexible Method for Thinking with Theory. *Special Issue: Critical Content Analysis of Race, Racism, & Whiteness*, 8(2), 1-7.

Zanfabro, G. (2017). Gender Matters: What Is at Stake in Dealing with Children's Literature?. *TRANS-Revue de littérature générale et comparée*, 21, 1-24.

Appendix 1

ANALYSIS GRID

IDENTITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

Book's Title	How it is represented? Conceptual cores	pag.	Quote	Notes and additional remarks
gender identity				
subjectivities represented				
main characters self-definition				
main characters hetero-definition				
agency				

SEXUALITY

Book's Title	How it is represented? Conceptual cores	pag.	Quote	Notes and additional remarks
genitals and assigned sex at birth				
menstruations				
bodies' representation				

RELATIONSHIPS

Book's Title	How it is represented? Conceptual cores	pag.	Quote	Notes and additional remarks
heteronormativity				
homonormativity				
LGBTQI+ relationships				
sexual intercourses				
family relationships				
idea of adolescence (reader) in the book				
relational perspective				
violence				

Students' Journeys to the Magical Land of Teaching

Sharon Tonner-Saunders
University of Dundee
s.a.tonnersaunder@dundee.ac.uk

Raffaella Leproni
Università Roma Tre
raffaella.leproni@uniroma3.it

This paper explores a small group of female student teachers' experiences of learning through a pandemic. Students from the University of Dundee, Scotland and University Roma Tre, Italy participated in the award-winning eTwinning international *Hands of the World* (HOTW) project, which connects schools and universities across the world to undertake a wide range of educational collaborative work to develop their knowledge and understanding of intercultural education. One of the project activities required student teachers to share their experiences of learning to become a teacher in a pandemic, through a multimodal narrative that involved text, images and music. This study, therefore, examined student teachers' narratives with a focus on how different aspects of the pandemic affected their studies alongside their mental well-being and the strategies students utilised to enable them to be successful. An explanatory design analysed students' reflective narratives, which were publicly available on the project's Padlet™ page. Data were analysed thematically with the themes, Transitions, Mental Wellbeing and Coping Strategies explored through the messages conveyed in the text, images and music. Our analysis enabled us to identify that at different stages of the pandemic, students experienced similar feelings and anxieties, and that a range of strategies were used that demonstrated resilience and determination to succeed. This paper provides a small insight into the impact a pandemic has on student-teachers' learning and well-being through a narrative storyline.

Chapter1: When life was 'normal'

'You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any direction you choose' (Dr Seuss, 2016, p.2).

Once upon a time, in two lands separated by a mighty sea, lived six female student teachers who were travelling different journeys to the same destination: The Magical Land of Teaching. Life was rather normal for all, doing normal everyday things to help them survive this Magical Place, like going to University, placement schools and libraries. When not studying, doing general chores and dealing with family commitments, they enjoyed spending time with their families and friends, dining out and having an aperitif, traveling to different destinations, listening to live bands and African music and chilling out. One normal survival tool that they had, during this normal time, was people. People whom they met with to get advice, share stories, laugh and cry with and give a big, huge, squishy, squashy hug.
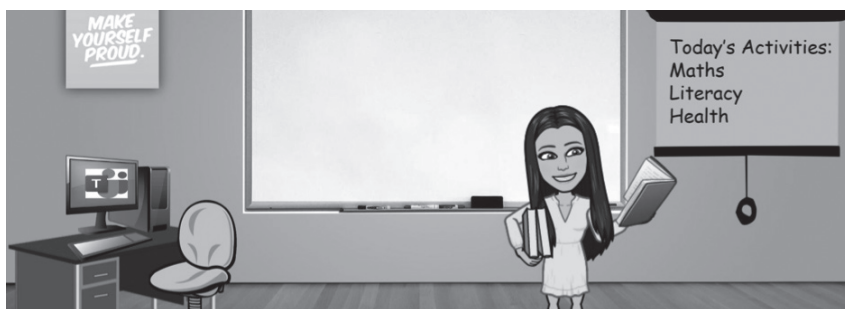
On one of the lands, with hills that touched the stars with water flowing down them to sea or lochs where a mysterious monster called Nessie lurked, lived three women, or wifies as they are known in Scotland. Two of these young wifies were Jocelyn and Emily who were on the final stage of their four-year journey to the Magical Land of Primary Teaching. Although they were enjoying working with their final placement class, Jocelyn, who lived with her student flatmates, found the thought of arriving

at the destination '*daunting yet very exciting*', whereas Emily, who was a rather busy wifie, was nervous as this was her final placement before she reached the Magical Land, however, she was '*up for the challenge*'. Nikki, or the Focussed Lady as she liked to be known, was a mature wifie who had two sproglets, or children as non-Scottish people call them. Her journey to the Magical Land was a race against time due to only having ten months to get there. She therefore spent many hours in the '*peaceful*' library preparing for her final placement, whilst family looked after her sproglets.

On the other land, where the Roman gods had turned to stone, olives grew on trees and a mythical winged water dragon called Thyrus roamed, lived three young women, or donne as the Italians would say, who were attending university and their final placement. One of the donne, Elliy who was in her thirties, classed herself as a happy, social, nice person who carried a red life book to reflect on her five year '*long and tiring journey*'. The other two donne: Costanza, who enjoyed life to the full when not studying, and Eleonora, who liked to be known as a bee called Beewo, who was curious, kind and lively, '*enjoyed being useful to family and working with Bee-mates everyday*'.

The women on one land had never met the others due to not being brave enough to travel across the mighty sea where the sea-monsters lived. They were, however, connected through something magical and special called *Hands of the World* (HOTW), which was introduced to them by their little Scottish lecturer, known as the Wee One. She explained that HOTW was an intercultural project that united thousands of children together from schools in Magical Land of Teaching where they worked '*collaboratively to develop an understanding and appreciation of identities, cultures and languages*' (Tonner-Saunders, 2020) using music, Makaton signing and digital technologies. Her tall, Italian colleague from the Land of Gods, known as the Grande One, persuaded her to navigate the perilous sea to share the project with her students to develop their understanding of the importance of a person's first language being part of their social identity (Gumperz, 1982) and how to develop young people's awareness of linguistic diversity. The six women were captivated by HOTW, and whilst at University they participated in some of the activities and were excited about involving their placement schools in the project. Life was all going at pace and was just fine and dandy. Life was just as Dr Seuss predicted:

> *'You'll be on your way up!*
> *You'll be seeing great sights! (2016, p.12).*

The land of the dreams was in sight and they were just about there; however, something was creeping over their magical land that began to obscure it. The women on both lands wondered what was this mysterious thing that was making people get concerned and make changes to their safe, normal life. The first sign that something was happening to their magical land was on 12th February 2020, when China ordered all schools to close due to something mysterious spreading across their land and making their people very ill (Schliecher, 2020). In the land of olives, whilst the sun shone brightly, the donne knew something was wrong but were naïve to how severe it was. Elliy continued her journey; however, she was now becoming so afraid that she needed reassurance and support from others. Beewo and her friends start realising that '*It wasn't just a steely grey sky or the usual thunderstorm. The sky was dark and menacing,*' but they could only stand and watch the storm approaching.

The Scottish wifies watched the news in disbelief as the virus, that had been given a very scientific name called 'Coronavirus' by a very important looking man on the television (Who, 2020), managed to get past the mighty dragon Thyrus and was rampaging through the land of the olives making Elliy's journey to the Magical Land more difficult and no one knew how to help her. Finally, the Italian donne's journeys stopped when their government closed all educational establishments for two weeks, due to people becoming seriously ill and many sadly dying (Giuffrida & Beaumont, 2020). Shortly afterwards, the nasty virus, or now to be known as The Sly One, due to not being seen, heard of felt, had conquered the Land of the Gods. The donne were now living in the first European country to go into a full national COVID-19 lockdown on 9th March 2020 (Testa, 2020).

Costanza, Elliy and Beewo were dismayed; at first, it was 'a *continued whirl of emotions'*. Costanza was *'confused, sad and hopeless,'* but had to quickly learn how to cope with a new routine: online lessons, and remote placements. Beewo, a mother and a queen in her hive, though disheartened, focused on '*saving, helping and reducing waste*' in order to share with others, so that '*no one would be left without supplies or help*'. And what would

become of their classroom experience? Costanza was so concerned that she postponed her final teaching placement, and though this enabled her to focus on her study, she was sad and nostalgic as she 'm*issed staying in school and practising what [she] was studyin*g' but what she missed the most was '*to enter in the class and answer to the thousands of questions from the children*'.

Jocelyn watched and thought '*it didn't really feel real*' and that it would not happen in the land where Nessie roamed; therefore, she continued to dine out with friends for her birthday where they joked about this mysterious virus. However, she was becoming more concerned so that she started calling her '*family at home who shared their worries of the changes that could happen over the next few months*'. Emily also did not want to believe that the virus would come to her land of hills, as she did not want schools to close due to wanting to complete '*placement without any drama and continue to go about my life as it was*'. The Focussed Lady also had things to complete that the virus could not get in her way. She reassured herself that all would be hunky-dory and the most important thing right now was to send her children to a family member for a holiday so that she could '*get her assignment neatly finished just in time for her final placement*'.

As much as the Scottish wifies thought that their land was safe, their journeys to the Magical Land was becoming more difficult and different. Emily was constantly washing her hands and Jocelyn found placement stressful due to '*staff in the school were under immense pressure to make sure that pupils were washing their hands frequently and staying off school if they were displaying any symptoms*'. Suddenly, their journey to the Magical Land halted. Whilst sitting on a bus travelling home from her placement school, Jocelyn received a text message from very important people to say her placement had been terminated. Alone one the bus, the music that played through Jocelyn's headphones changed to reflect how she felt, where there was a great sadness because she '*had really been enjoying my time on placement, and I was surrounded by great students and the most supportive staff – I felt like I owed it to them to give them a proper thank you and goodbye*'. Emily was also devastated, that she had to leave her '*fantastic placement class on such short notice*'.

Fear turned to panic for the Focused Lady when it was announced that the University was closing. *'How would she manage without her lovely peaceful library with the giant monitors and the cakes in the café and the other lads and ladies to share her great plans with?'* Even worse, it was announced her sproglets school may close! The music that blasted out her car speakers suddenly turned menacing as she thought *'Ok, this wasn't part of the plan, how would she get her Assignment finished with sproglets to feed and amuse? But wait … no... what?!?! … if her sproglets school was closing did that mean all the schools were closing?!!!! Oh no no no.'* Not only would she have an assignment to complete, but she would also need to homeschool her sproglets. The focused lady could not compute! Her main focus was she needed to survive and began frantically shopping for Curry Super Noodles, because her sproglets would be able to make them, and toilet rolls, because that is what you buy when the world goes into a panic! Her focus, however, slowly disappeared as her husband was sent home from work which was worry, *'maybe wouldn't get any money for a while'*. Then her focus completely halted and she '*had lots of grown up drinks ate lots and lots of cakes and curry super noodles'*. The Focused Lady did manage to regain her focus for a short time by enjoying outdoor learning with her sproglets and studying whilst her sproglets were in bed.

Not long after this, normal life also came to a halt on the land of the hills. The Sly One had conquered their land and they were also in in lockdown. Life had abruptly changed and a very important leading Scottish wifie warned that '*life should not feel normal for you right now'* (Sturgeon, 2020). The Focussed Lady was distraught, '*Her future was falling apart. What would happen to her final placement?'*

Chapter 2: The Waiting Place

> *The Waiting Place…*
> *… for people just waiting.*
> *Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come,*
> *or a plane to go or the mail to come'* (Dr Seuss, 2016, p.24).

The Waiting Place was a quieter place. There was an eerie silence whilst all waited to for The Sly One to be defeated. In the middle of this silence na-

ture could be heard and as the days turned to weeks then months, stories were being shared in the Online Land of how the Locked-down people were surviving The Waiting Place. Little and big clever people, who spend their lives always asking questions, now were able to be very enquiring to find out what it was like for the Magical Land's educators, pupils and their carers in this Waiting Place. Their voices were the main voices heard with stories published about headteachers, teachers and newly qualified teachers' experiences in the land of the empty hills (Ferguson *et. al.* 2021; Colville *et. at.* 2021; Carver and Shanks, 2021), and on teachers of English in Lands of Olives, Oranges and Dracula (Canals-Botines, *et. al.*, 2021). But what about the voices of the wifies and donne who were trying to reach the Magical Land? Had they become the lost voices of The Sly One similar to those who have lived through a global crisis in the past, where their collective memories have been lost (Eril, 2020)? Are their voices similar to the missing voices of underrepresented females in history that Professor Suzanne Lipscone spoke about in a recent radio programme (BBC, 2021)?

Well, thankfully, all is not doom and gloom for our main characters of this story, as Wee One and Grande One (the two nice lecturer ladies), made sure that their wifies and donne could let their voices be heard. They both understood the importance of documentary heritage as a means of preserving the past and informing the future (Banda, 2020b; UNESCO, 2020), where they both resonated with Kosciejew (2021) notion that '*remembering is an obligation to the present to continue informing and supporting efforts tackling the pandemic's complex challenges. Remembering is an obligation to the future to preserve knowledge of the pandemic*' (page X). More importantly, Wee One and Grande One knew that the Waiting Place was not a place for their wifies and donne. This certainly was not the place for Emily, who was no longer her busy self, instead she struggled to know what to do and initially '*sat about*'. She felt that '*there was no end in* sight' and that everyone was as '*clueless as each* other' about what to do. The Waiting Place did give time away from their journey to their destination, where Jocelyn and friends kept busy by running and '*learning all the countries in the world*' and Emily learnt sign language and began '*annoying everyone in her house*'. The Focused Lady was just relieved that even although she could not do her final placement, she would still be a teacher, therefore, became her sproglets' new teacher, which they hated as did she.

Across the mighty sea, The Waiting Place was not a nice one to be for our lovely donne, that Elliy could no longer contemplate reaching her dream destination as it was no longer in sight and she no longer had the energy to find it. She was now all alone - not even her precious red book could give her comfort. As the sound of soulful piano music floated across the silence a large crash was heard. Elly had thrown her hopes and dreams away due to being '*full of anger and despair*'. Her little red book was now no longer part of her life. Beewo was also unhappy as she could no longer be with her friends and family.

It was clear, the wifies and donne needed guidance and support to the Magical Land of Teaching. A cunning plan had to be made to make sure that:

> '*Somehow you'll escape all that waiting and staying.*
> *You'll find the bright places where Boom Bands are playing*' (Dr Seuss, 2016, p.26).

And the place where the Boom Bands still played was in the HOTW project. Wee One created collaborative activities which asked pupils, teachers and student teachers to document their lived experiences of the Waiting Place using text, images and music. This multimodal method of storytelling was chosen to enable all to share their experiences through different communication channels, with the music element adding an additional layer to their stories due to the music conveying their emotions and strengthening the storyline (Hargreaves *et. al.,* 2005). Wee One wanted their stories to be like watching a movie, where all the different media penetrated the viewers sense and emotions. She also used music due to its potential '*to overcome linguistic, physical, mental and cognitive barriers to understanding with others*" (Wigram and Elefant, 2009, p.442).

The voices of Wee One and Grande One's wifies and donne, were no longer lost and forgotten. They were now part of history and culture by having a special public place on the HOTW's project Padlet™ for others to hear their voices: https://en-gb.padlet.com/sharon_tonner2/8x4em6giktszo6nx. This allowed Wee One and Grande One to do the things that researchers do where they explored the wifies and donne's stories using a very technical term which Creswell & Creswell (20018) call an interpretivist,

exploratory approach. The shared and different lived experiences of the voices of their wifies and donne of their journeys from the Waiting Place to the Magical Land of Teaching could now be told.

Chapter 3: Surviving The Sly One

'Out there things can happen and frequently do' (Dr Seuss, 2016, p.8).

Whilst The Sly One prowled the hills and olive fields, it looked like the world had been paused by his gigantic remote control and all the little human-beings had gone into hiding. As he swept through the empty Roman streets, he saw the same young woman behind a small window talk to herself every day. Unknown to The Sly One, this was Elliy chatting to her peer who was also finding it difficult and needed support. Elliy no longer felt alone and that she was the only one having thoughts of giving up. Further up the street, her friend Beewo was also keeping in contact with her friends. The Sly One noticed that the donne were becoming stronger and more determined each day due to having the support of others.
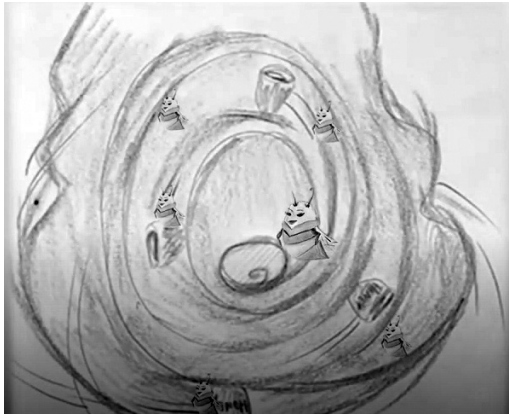
He had watched from afar the two young wifies say tearful goodbyes to their flatmates and return home to their parents. He peeked in Jocelyn's parents' window and saw that she looked bereft. When The Sly One returned a few days later, from his travels around the world, there was a change to the stillness behind the curtains, where the wifies were now

calmer and purposeful. Jocelyn was now relaxed due to running, making unusual shapes with her body which she called yoga and reaching out to friends and family to help her survive. The Focused Lady was much more relaxed now. Her unhealthy eating and drinking binge had gone and she had stopped listening to an important man who spoke each day on the TV. Her trying to be a teacher had now been replaced with learning to be a teacher, much to her sproglets' delight.

When The Sly One first peeked in Emily's window, a little screen lit up her content face whilst she made lots of gestures with her hands and typed away furiously. The Sly One thought she was learning a secret language, but little did he know she was using her time to get ready for the Magical Land by learning online and making things that she could take to this land. But one day when he looked in, the little screen was dark, the music coming from her speakers was now quiet, lethargic and empty. For a whole month, Emily did nothing and looked down. The Sly One had managed to attack her close family and sadly one had not survived and now The Sly One had struck Emily who felt that '*it seemed these was no end in sight to the bad news'.* As Emily found out, survival is difficult when a dangerous monster tramples on you…sometimes time is needed to heal.

Chapter 4: The Magical Land is in Sight

The tide was beginning to turn and nasty Sly One was becoming weaker due to good old Nessie and Thyrus frightening The Sly One with their fearsome roars. The dark shape that had obscured the Magical Land of Teaching, began to disappear and to the wifies and donne's surprise, they were suddenly at their destinations. As they listened to the radio blast out an energetic, lively tune, that would make you want to jump up on the dance floor and celebrate, there was something holding them back… the unknown! Questions ran through their heads about what the Magical Land of Teaching would now be. Jocelyn was wondering '*how classrooms will be setup, what resources I will be able to use, how schools will be managing social-distancing'.* At this moment in time she felt '*completely in the dark'.* Whilst Emily pondered in her busy head, '*will we see a second lockdown? Will the world ever be the same as I once knew?'.* The Focused Lady was just relieved to be at her destination and that she and her sproglets had sur-

vived The Sly One. She no longer worried that she could not complete a final placement to prepare her for this land, as in her mind, *'probably she wouldn't ever feel 'ready' to be a REAL teacher anyway'*.

Some destinations are difficult to reach and those that survive the journey, develop new skills, strengths or find out things about themselves. As the wifies and donne gazed at the Magical Land, Jocelyn spoke out stating that due to The Sly One invading her land, she now appreciated '*that this experience will be beneficial for me to consider new and innovative ways of teaching and learning'* to which Beewo smiled and agreed saying it was about finding new ways to live rather than try and live like the past. Jocelyn then turned to the others and said that what she learnt about herself was that she was adaptable and flexible to which the Focused Lady nodded her head as she also was thinking the same thing about herself, and about shouted out the fancy word 'growth mindset' that teachers use, due to reading so many teacher books. Elliy looked in her little red book and wrote down the three words '*tenacity, wilfulness and determination'* to sum up what she found out about herself in the past few months. Emily smiled and reflected on her experience and after all that she had been through she now felt strong enough and ready *'to take on the future and see what the next chapter in life holds'*.

Chapter 5: Lesson Time

At one side of the mighty sea, sat Wee One all wrapped up in big cosy jacket and wooly hat drinking a pipping hot cup of tea and knitting a blanket whilst Grande One lounged in the sun at the other side sipping a warm cappuccino and munching on a rather tasty croissant. Both ladies had just watched their wifies and donne graduate virtually to the Magical Land of Teaching and were now having a good old natter like two old fish wives sitting beside the seashore. The Sly One and their six women were the focus of their conversation where they talked endlessly about the valuable lessons the women had learned that will help them survive whatever is thrown at them on the Magical Land.

Grande One smiled as Wee One spoke about one of these valuable lessons where it is alright to be in a slump as long as you can get unslumped as

Dr Seuss (2016) would say. When in a slump the wifies and donne felt sad, frightened, unmotivated and resorted to behaviours that were out of character. And rightly so, the Sly One had taken away their prized goal. Emily's slump, due to experiencing loss, was a very dark place where grief overshadows any lightness that is about. When Elly was in a slump and had disconnected from others, this was a good thing, according to research, as this was her body and mind going into survival mode to enable her to have some solitude to feel sad and process her emotions (Lomas, 2018), Whereas for Emily, who was always on a mission, the slump was a place to rebuild her inner world (Freud, 1949). As for Nikki, where she survived on noodles and drinks, she was not alone, as behind closed doors, many people sought comfort from binge or emotional eating (Robinson *et.al.* 2020; Scarmozzino & Visioli, 2020). This emotional type of eating is natural as it is one of the ways that people deal with stressful events that arouse feelings of anger, fear and anxiety (Van Strien, 1986). The important part of the lesson is that these behaviours do not become permanent, therefore, strategies to 'unslump' are required, among which resilience and relationships.

Little Elliy, who had become a recluse and could no longer contemplate reaching the Magical Land, found strength from speaking to her peers where a shared understanding was found. She was no longer alone with her worries, and through the power of a good old natter, she found the strength to start visualising her dream land once more. Beewo also found strength from her classmates to push The Sly One aside to enable them to get closer to the Magical Land. Whereas Jessica and Emily found support from their friends and family to help build the resilience they needed to arrive at their destinations. Although many could not meet face-to-face, virtual social interactions can still impact positively on a person's mental health and wellbeing, due to taking the loneliness element away (Sahi *et. al.*, 2021). Resilience, relationships and being able to talk are key to survival on the Magical Land, not just for the wifies and donne, but also for their pupils, who will need taught these survival skills.

Grande One agreed with Wee One and added the transferable skills such as flexibility and adaptability are precious items to carry in the teacher's survival bag and share with pupils (Leproni, 2016), especially if plans or

goals do not go in the right direction or are halted. Along with other competences, such as the ability to communicate and negotiate, they allowed both wifies and donne to get a work/life balance, enabling them to reconsider their own priorities and refocus on the time they needed to spend on things other than their life in the Magical Land of Teaching. Moreover, the brave girls exploited the power of stories along the path. The "technique of teaching that has stood the test of time" (Chambers, 1970) helped them share cultural and personal information, as well as improving their linguistic competences both in their native and in a foreign language (Hendrickson, 1992). Their capacity to tell their own story, and to listen to their peers who fiercely fought along with them, though at distance, helped them out the snares of The Sly One, unexpectedly making them aware of their professional strengths, and enabling them to make a real change and be more effective in the profession they chose, to understand their pupils and their own learning and processing style (Kolb, 1984). It taught them that the goal may transform, the final destination may be different from what expected according to unforeseen events, but when motivation is strong enough, the journey itself matters, and it is worth to make it lifelong (Leproni, Canals Botines & Tonner-Saunders, 2021).

Wee One gave that knowing smile as she spoke about her wifie Nikki and the valuable lesson she learnt playing the role of a teacher with her sproglets. The problem was that her role at home was a mummy not a teacher and that when in the Magical Land of Teaching, this land becomes her stage to be a teacher. When she leaves the stage and returns home, she has a different audience and needs to now be a different character. Wee One thought, Nikki should read more classic literature as she would find the great words of Shakespeare would help her know that she has multiple characters to play in this life but needs to know when to start and stop playing them:

> *'All the world's a stage,*
> *And all the men and women merely players;*
> *They have their exits and their entrances;*
> *And one man in his time plays many parts'* (Shakespeare, *As you Like it* Act 2, Scene 7)

From Nikki's lesson, she and others should always be mindful of their teacher role and to not let this role impact on their relationships with other at home.

One thing The Sly One forced all to do, was use digital technology more, resulting in becoming more digital literate. On the Land of Magical Teaching, it is a requirement that all teachers are digitally literate according to the European Framework DigCompEdu (Punie and Redecker, 2017) and the Scottish Standards for Provisional Registration to become a teacher (GTCS, 2021). Through having to use digital technology to survive The Sly One, participating in the HOTW intercultural project and developing digital storytelling skills, the wifies and donne's digital literacy competence, confidence and skills increased greatly (Tonner-Saunders & Shimi, 2021; Canals-Botines, Crisan, Leproni *et al*. 2021). Jessica noted digital literacy and innovation as part of her learning whilst hiding from The Sly One. Hopefully, she and others will take this valuable learning with them to the Magical Land and use it rather than wait for The Sly One to return…as he will due to only being in hiding!

Lesson come from life stories, and thankfully little Elliy did not throw her life story away. Her Little Red book may have been put aside when it felt like life was not worth documenting, however, like all life stories, there are still chapters to be lived, recorded and shared in a Little Red book or through other mediums, with digital storytelling being one of them. The wifies and donne all agreed that reflecting on their journeys and sharing these using images, music and text was therapeutic and rewarding. They also found it extremely powerful and emotional to view other stories due to the music that accompanied each slide providing additional information about '*characters, about major turning-points in the story, about the deep subtext beneath a scene*' (Banes, 2021, n.p.). In the Land of Magical Learning, our teachers and their pupils should take time to document the chapters in their lives because:

> '*Everybody is a story. When I was a child, people sat around kitchen tables and told their stories. We don't do that so much anymore. Sitting around the table telling stories is not just a way of passing time. It is the way the wisdom gets passed along. The stuff that helps us to live a life worth remembering*' (Remen, 2006, p. xxxvii).

STORMS CANNOT LAST FOREVER

References

BBC (2021). *The big Scottish book club: Silence in the archives: Professor Suzannah Lipscombe o the stories missing from history.* Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0b36tmh (Accessed 17 Nov 2021).

Brand N. (2021). *The power of music for film.* Available at: https://music.britishcouncil.org/news-and-features/2021-02-25/film-scores-neil-brand-the-power-of-music. Accessed on: 12th February 2022.

Canals-Botines M., Crişan M.-M., Leproni R., Medina-Casanovas N., Pujol Tubau M., & Raluy Alonso A. (2021). The Challenge of Distant Teaching for Primary School Teachers of English during the Covid-19: the Cases of Spain, Italy and Romania. *Lea* 10: pp. 393-404. https://doi.org/10.13128/LEA-1824-484x-12798. (Accessed 22 Jan. 2022).

Carver M & Shanks. R. (2021). New teachers' responses to COVID-19 in Scotland: doing surprisingly well? *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 47:1, 118-120, DOI: 10.1080/02607476.2021.1874821

Chambers, D. W. (1970). *Storytelling and creative drama*. Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown.

Colville T, Hulme S, Kerr C, Mercieca D., & Mercieca D.P. (2021). Teaching and Learning in COVID-19 Lockdown in Scotland: Teachers' Engaged Pedagogy. *Front. Psychol*. 12:733633. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.733633

Dr. Seuss (2016) *Oh, the places you'll go*. London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

Erll, A. (2020). Will COVID-19 become part of collective memory? In: R, Rittgerodt (ed.) *13 perspectives on the pandemic: Thinking in a state of exception*. Berlin: De

Gruyter, 46–50. Available at: https://blog.degruyter.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/DG_13perspectives_humanities.pdf (Accessed 15 Nov. 2021).

Freud. S. (1949). Mourning and Melancholia. In E. Jones (Ed.) *Sigmond Freud MD LLD Collected papers* (Vol 4) London Hogarth press (original work published 1917).

GTCS (2021). *The Standards for Provisional Registration.* Available at: https://www.gtcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/standard-for-provisional-registration.pdf (Accessed 12 Feb. 2022).

Hargreaves D., MacDonald R., & Miell D. (2005). *How do people communicate using music?* Available at: http://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198529361.001.0001/acprof-9780198529361-chapter-1 (Accessed 22 Jan. 2022).

Ferguson P., McKenzie M., Merceica D., Merceica D. P. & Sutherland L. (2021). *Primary head teachers' construction and re-negotiation of care in COVID-19 lockdown in Scotland.* Available at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2021.617869/full (Accessed 24 Jan. 2022).

Giuffrida A. & Beaumont P. (2020). Italy orders closure of all schools and universities due to coronavirus. *The Guardian.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/04/italy-orders-closure-of-schools-and-universities-due-to-coronavirus (Accessed 15 Nov 2021).

Kolb D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (Vol. 1). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kosciejew M. (2021). 'Remembering COVID-19; or, a duty to document the coronavirus pandemic', *IFLA Journal*. doi: 10.1177/03400352211023786. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/03400352211023786 (Accessed 15 Nov 2021).

Leproni R. (2016). Transferable And Negotiation Communicative Skills in English for Human Resources – CLIL Activities in a Life-Long Learning Perspective, in Marius-Mircea Crişan, Roxana-Andreea Toma (eds.), *Beliefs and Behaviours in Education and Culture: Cultural determinants and education*, Pro Universitaria, Bucureşti, ISBN 978-606-26-0625-1, pp. 245-254.

Leproni R., Canals-Botines M. and Tonner-Saunders S. (2021). Web-Building Connections: A Best-Practice Example of Using International Resources in Online Intercultural Didactics for Teachers. *Textus*, 2 (2021), pp. 121-138, DOI: 10.7370/101904.

Lomas, T. (2018). The quiet virtues of sadness: A selective theoretical and interpretative appreciation of its potential contribution to wellbeing. *New Ideas in Psychology*. 49. 18-26. 10.1016/j.newideapsych.2018.01.002.

Punie Y., Redecker C., (eds.) (2017). *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators: DigCompEdu*, EUR 28775 EN, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, ISBN 978-92-79-73718-3 (print),978-92-79-73494-6 (pdf), doi:10.2760/178382 (print),10.2760/159770 (online), JRC107466.

Remen R. N. (2006). *Kitchen table wisdom: Stories that heal*. New York: Penguin.

Robinson E., Boyland E., Chisholm A., Harrold J., Maloney N.G., Marty L., Mead B.R., Noonan R. & Hardman C.A. (2021). Obesity, eating behavior and physical activity during COVID-19 lockdown: A study of UK adults. *Appetite*. 2021 Jan 1;156:104853. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2020.104853. Epub 2020 Oct 7.

Sahi R.S., Schwyck M.E., Parkinson, C. & Einsberger. E. I. (2021). Having more virtual interaction partners during COVID-19 physical distancing measures may benefit mental health. *Sci Rep*. Available at: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-97421-1 (Accessed 15 Nov 2021).

Scarmozzino F. & Visioli F. (2020). Covid-19 and the Subsequent Lockdown Modified Dietary Habits of Almost Half the Population in an Italian Sample. *Foods* 9 675 Online: http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/foods9050675

Shakespeare, W. *As You Like It*, in P. Alexander (ed.) (1951), William Shakespeare. The Complete Works. London and Glasgow: Collins, pp.254-283.

Sturgeon N. (2020). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) update: First Minister's speech 23 March 2020.* Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/first-minister-covid-19-update-1/ (Accessed 15 Nov 2021).

Testa T. (2020). Coronavirus, negozi e locali chiusi in tutta Italia fino al 25 marzo. Garantiti servizi essenziali, alimentari e farmacie. Possibili riduzioni trasporti. Conte: "Torneremo ad abbracciarci" *La Repubblica.* Available at: https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2020/03/11/news/coronavirus_conte_italia_governo_misure-250988471/?ref=RHPPTP-BL-I250988111-C12-P1-S1.12-T1 (Accessed 15 Nov 2021).

Tonner-Saunders S. A. (2020). *Hands of the World: Can You See What I Say*. https://twinspace.etwinning.net/94991/pages/page/741929, (Accessed 17 Feb. 2022).

Tonner-Saunders, S. A. & Shimi. J. (2021). Hands of the world intercultural project: Developing student teachers' digital competences through contextualised learning in *Pixel-Bit, Revista de Medios y Educacion.* 61, p.7-35

UNESCO (2020). *Turning the threat of COVID-19 into an opportunity for greater support to documentary heritage.* Available at: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/dhe-covid-19-unesco_statement_en.pdf (Accessed 15 Nov. 2021).

Van Strien T., Frijters J.E., Bergers G.P. & Defares, P.B., (1986). The Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire (DEBQ) for assessment of restrained, emotional, and external eating behavior. *International journal of eating disorders*, *5*(2), pp.295-315.

Wigram T., & Elefant C. (2009). Therapeutic dialogues in music: Nurturing musicality of communication in children with autistic spectrum disorder and Rett syndrome. In S. Malloch & C. Trevarthen (Eds.), *Communicative musicality: exploring the basis of human companionship* (pp. 423-445). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

World Health Organisation. (2020). *WHO Director-General;s opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 – 11 March 2020.* Available at: Available at: https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020 (accessed 15 Nov 2021).

As to the writing of this story, Sharon Tonner Saunders (the Wee one) sketched the main features of the text and decribed the wifies cases and the context of Scotland, while all parts concerning the Italian donne and the Italian context have been written by Raffaella Leproni (the Grande one). Conclusions have been drawn in the spirit of the journey, the writing being a collaborative experience. of sharing and building together.

This book is the result of the Universitat de Vic – Universitat Central de Catalunya (UVic-UCC) organising the Fourth International Conference entitled: "Storytelling Revisited: Gender and Health", held in Vic (Barcelona), on 24 November 2021. This Conference provided a forum for teachers, students and researchers to go deeper into the relationship between gender and health. It was an interdisciplinary conference organised by the three research groups EMPREN, GRAC, GRELL, GETLIHC, GSAMIS, TRACTE and TEXLICO at the Faculty of Education, Translation, Sport and Psychology and the Faculty of Business and Communication. This academic meeting revolved around the study of gender and health in relation to storytelling. Our overarching goal was to stimulate discussion and to highlight the importance of establishing criteria regarding the choice of gender, health and storytelling.