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The Youth Climate Strikers and Me: Revisiting Stories in a Process of Becoming Through Narrative Inquiry

by

Lauren Hennessy

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accordance with the requirements of the degree of
Master of Science by advanced study in Educational
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Abstract

As a methodological piece of work, this dissertation explores how meaning is made in the narrative inquiry process. This work operates on two levels, presenting a piece of narrative research followed by a meta reflection on the researcher's own process of becoming through narrative inquiry. The study first revisits young climate activists and their stories to offer new perspectives as a follow-up to a 2020 study. It then takes the researcher's own journey as an object of the inquiry, utilising reflective journal entries as data to examine the research process explicitly. Playing with temporality, new and old data is woven together to present a series of 'conversations', firstly between participants and then the researcher's past and present voice. These 'conversations' are presented as a layered text with the analytic voice of the researcher interwoven throughout. The production of this text is considered as both the process and the product of the analysis. Labovian narrative analysis is drawn on to identify evaluative statements within the structure of the narratives which offer insight into the narrators' own meaning-making process. In the stories of the young activists, I find themes of power, powerlessness and agency. I draw on critical theory in my reflections. In the exploration of my own research journey, I consider notions of researcher subjectivity, meaning-making, uncertainty and truth. The work is presented here in a poststructuralist style which seeks to offer an opening up rather than a closing down. Rather than proposing conclusions, this piece will point to questions to ask and potential new openings for moving forwards. At all times, the reader is invited to question the authority of the author, starting now.

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Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, this work is my own. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others, is indicated as such. I have identified all material in this dissertation which is not my own work through appropriate referencing and acknowledgement. Where I have quoted or otherwise incorporated material which is the work of others, I have included the source in the references. Any views expressed in the dissertation, other than referenced material, are those of the author.

Signed: Lauren J. Hennessy

Date: 31/08/23

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1 Beginnings

In this narrative inquiry, I revisit and extend a study which I conducted three years ago. I gather new data to present alongside old data, in the form of 'conversations'. The 'conversations' represent both the product and the process of analysis, as will be explored later.

The next page presents a preview of an initial snippet of those 'conversations', with the rest of the findings presented later. The narrators are Bobby, Dayo and Amari. In 2020, at the time of the first interviews, they were all in some way involved with the Youth Strike 4 Climate movement in Bristol, either organising or participating in regular school strikes to protest the inaction of world leaders in the face of the climate and ecological emergency.

At this stage, the reader is invited to form their own questions about the text they are about to read. How do you intend to engage with this text? What do you want to do with it/ as a result of it?

2020 Beginnings

I've been to a few marches when I was younger. But it didn't feel like they really achieved anything. And when this youth strike happened with Greta Thunberg, it was suddenly a massive thing that the media was reporting on. And it felt like I was part of something that could actually make a difference.

Amari

I would say the first one was quite uncoordinated. It was only like two people, one girl and her dad, running the whole thing, but it was just, like, such an inspiring thing. Then, I didn't, I didn't go back to the next one, um, I think the next one I was busy. But then I did actually come back. And I think it was something that really inspired me. So when someone said, "Do you want to get involved?", I was like, "Yeah, sure". So I started going to meetings. And it just felt like... a cause I really cared about. And there was actually some way I could actually help

Bobby

I went to the first one in February, which was actually organised by a girl that's completely separate from our, like, group now. But she, and I was, I was amazed by kind of it, and by how many people actually turned up and then when they had the second one still people were turning up because, obviously, it was like you were missing school for the first one so it's like, you know, that's kind of a novelty, but then when the novelty didn't wear off I kind of was very interested in getting more involved, so I can actively like make it a bigger thing

Dayo

2023

When I was actually at the strike, that was amazing, I'd never seen that many people in Bristol. Yeah, there was such a good community feeling and everything. So, I think when I said that, I was being very optimistic about how much it would actually achieve.

Amari

I remember from my secondary school at the time, I would have been in Year 9, yeah... And yeah, come the day, there was... hundreds of people from my school ended up going. And it was just like... that new, kind of electric feeling of a bunch of people... the whole thing was rather chaotic ...it was sort of young people run around town and block traffic for two hours afterwards, which, yeah, was just a completely different experience to anything I'd done before, and I think for most people there

Bobby

We just didn't expect this many people to kind of care and keep coming... the fact we were getting hundreds to thousands of people every time, like, even when it was raining, yeah, I think it just really instilled in us that people do care and I remember being... I mean, it was... there'd never been anything like this before. ... It's not like the youth strike for climate movement had happened and then we'd tagged along or copied it later on, it was all happening at the same time ...yeah, we could not have expected... it was overwhelming but in the best of ways.

Dayo

Figure 1: Preview of 'conversations', to be presented in full in chapters 5 and 6.

1.2 Background and Context

The Youth Strike 4 Climate (YS4C) movement was born in 2018 when lone activist Greta Thunberg began staging weekly school strikes outside the Swedish parliament (We Don't Have Time, 2018). This became a global movement. In March 2019, an estimated 1.5million young people took to the streets in a coordinated day of action (Carrington, 2019). The covid-19 pandemic put a stop to the strikes while whole countries locked down. The school strikes have returned in some countries following the end of the pandemic, with an estimated 18,000 people on the streets in Berlin on 3rd March 2023 (Anderson, 2023). However, in the UK, the schools strikes have not returned following the pandemic.

This project re-visits participants of a previous study, conducted in 2020 for my Education MSc dissertation (see Hennessy, 2020). At the time of the original study in 2020, all participants considered themselves involved in the local Bristol branch of the Youth Strike 4 Climate (YS4C) movement, through attending or organising school strikes. That research was carried out during the first covid-19 lockdown and took place entirely online, through Skype interviews. In that work, in order to explore the stories of five young activists from the local Bristol branch of YS4C, I used the metanarrative surrounding the YS4C movement as a conceptual tool (see Hennessy, 2020). I termed it the 'Stolen Future' metanarrative, as it draws on the idea often cited in Greta Thunberg's speeches that the older generations of people in power have stolen the future from young people by failing to take action on the climate and ecological crisis (see Thunberg, cited in NBC News 2019). My work showed that attending to the storied experiences of individual activists painted a far more nuanced picture, which focussed more on joy and collectivity and less on blame and anger.

The present study further develops the original narrative inquiry methodology and adapts it for this follow-up inquiry, which takes as its focus the *process* by which meaning is made from the stories of the young people as well as my own research journey. My work is inspired by a critical feminist poststructuralist perspective. I write in the first person as an acknowledgement of the subjectivity I bring as an inquirer positioned within the field that I study, as will be explored in depth later. The reader is encouraged to question my authority at all times.

1.1 Rationale and Aims

As an environmental activist myself, I personally find this topic worthy of study as I am deeply concerned about the impacts of the climate and ecological emergency and what it means for the future of all life on this planet. Bendell (2018) in a review of studies on climate change concluded that societal collapse in the near term is inevitable and suggested scholars have both an opportunity and an obligation to consider the relevance of our work within wider society in this moment. As an

education practitioner and researcher, I feel a duty to the young people I teach and work with to seek to shift educational systems in a direction which feels more fitting to the state of the world as it is. This will necessarily involve small localized shifts in practice. Inspired by O'Brien (2021), I seek in my work to find small, localized changes I can make to my practice, which if many of us make them may create ripple effects capable of shifting cultures and systems. I do not seek to prescribe what others should do.

In the academic literature, there is a growing body of work on young people's climate activism from the disciplines of political studies, media studies, youth studies and related fields (see Bowman, 2019; Bowman, 2020; Han and Ahn, 2020; Mayes and Hartup, 2022; Pickard, 2022; Pickard et al., 2020; Walker, 2017). Internationally, there are multiple studies with an educational focus, for example the 2022 special issue of the Australian Journal of Environmental Education, entitled *School Strike for Climate* (see Verlie and Flynn, 2022). In the UK context, there is a lack of educational research theorising how educational systems might respond if they were to attend to the youth strikers. As a critical pedagogue inspired by Freire (1970), I see the youth strike movement as an example of critical pedagogy in action. My doctoral research will extend the current work to explore methods for co-creating new approaches to climate change education (CCE) centring young people in the process.

The present study serves as grounding work for my own future research. The study conducted with the youth climate activists will be reported on through various articles and conference presentations. This dissertation takes as its main focus the methodological approach and my own journey into narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) claim that enhancing personal and social growth is one of the purposes of narrative inquiry (p. 85). In this work, I seek to grow as an inquirer and an educator, as well as a person.

1.1.1 Research Questions

The research questions for the project are as follows:

RQ1: How is meaning constructed through revisiting former youth strikers' stories about their experiences?

RQ2: Through reflecting on my research process, what is revealed about my process of becoming a narrative inquirer?

To clarify the questions above, I offer a few comments. Firstly, I refer to 'former' youth strikers because in 2023 the youth strikes no longer take place in Bristol. At the time of gathering the original data in 2020, the participants were active youth strikers. 'Revisiting stories' refers to both my

process of returning to the old data and also the process of re-interviewing the original participants and returning to some of their earlier comment with them, as will be explained in more detail in the next two chapters.

This piece of work operates on two levels. A snippet of my research with young climate activists is presented to address RQ1, while RQ2 is answered through a meta-level process of reflection on my own research process. The idea of RQ2 is an exploration of *process*, hence the use of the term 'becoming'. This term has Deleuzian connotations, which will not be elaborated in depth in this work, I use it in the gerund form to keep the focus on the process, or the '-ing'. I do not seek a definition of what it means to me to *be* a narrative inquirer, rather I hope to end with some principles to attend to and to inform my continued journey going forwards. The attendance to the '-ing' helps keep in mind that this is a journey without a final destination.

2 Narrative as Phenomenon and Method

This chapter explores the methodological inspiration for this research project, beginning with my journey towards narrative methods.

2.1 My Own Narrative Beginnings

One aim of this particular project is to explore my own research journey into and through narrative inquiry, as stated in RQ2. This feels like an important part of the process of cultivating my identity as a researcher. I consider this dissertation process as grounding work for my future doctoral research. I will use excerpts from my reflective journal to facilitate this exploration. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) suggest writing down one's own narrative beginnings. In my 2020 dissertation, I used this process of reflection to position myself in relation to my topic. Now I am more interested in positioning myself in relation to my methods and to narrative itself, in other words, in my journey into narrative inquiry. I dabbled in narrative inquiry in my original study three years ago, and clearly there is something that draws me back. So why as I wrote my proposal for my PhD did I not pinpoint narrative inquiry as my methodology? This is explored in the following excerpt from my reflective journal:

Why don't I fully commit myself to narrative inquiry and embrace this as my methodological approach for my entire PhD? ... Am I worried about pinning my colours to a methodological mast? Slightly. But surely the point is to develop my own approach to the methodology? Yes, I would like to challenge assumptions (including my own) about what narrative inquiry can do! NI as something active not passive and as something critical, transformative. Disrupting, deconstructing. Can it also construct? Can NI have world-building potential? (LH, Reflective Journal, 17/02/23).

This final comment above links to the words of Bowman (2019), "Climate action is more than protest: it is also a world-building project, and creative methodologies can aid researchers and young climate activists as we imagine, together, worlds of the future." (p.296). Furthermore, Bowman suggests "a more open, more participatory approach" (p. 302). Those words have stayed with me and guided my thinking ever since I read them. They remain a provocation to this day. How can I develop my methodological approach, to be more participatory and youth-centred? I believe narrative methods have the potential to centre youth experience, but this requires careful methodological considerations.

In the process of exploring the literature around narrative inquiry, I had a realisation as to how I had been formed into a narrative inquirer through my teacher education, by working with my then mentor, and now supervisor, Tracy.

Thinking about my own relationship to narrative – that [teacher education] activity of bringing ‘moments’ is a form of narrative inquiry for professional development, as discussed by Gidron et al. (2011) in Trahar (2011). Working with Tracy has encouraged me to think narratively. (LH, Reflective Journal, 21/03/23)

I realised that my journey into narrative methods began before I had ever heard the term ‘narrative inquiry’. This felt revelatory in many ways. It also presented me with a conundrum. I saw the transformative potential of narrative methods in action research, whereby education practitioners used narratives as self-reflection tools of inquiry to change elements of their practice. This made me wonder whether my current project which is not a piece of practitioner-led action research would be less useful. Whose practice am I trying to change? After some pondering, it became apparent to me that while I am seeking to cultivate my own researcher identity, I am engaged in a similar self-reflection process as described in the above quote. The difference is that my field of practice here is research rather than teaching. This feels like a powerful way to frame my exploration of RQ2.

2.2 My Epistemological Positioning

My own epistemological positioning in relation to narrative research is inspired by critical theory, feminist scholarship and poststructuralism, among other influences. Drawing on feminist theory, which has “debunked the myth of value-free scientific inquiry” (Ellis and Berger, 2003, p. 4), I embrace my values within the research process and take a reflexive approach to acknowledging my positionality. Black feminist scholar, bell hooks, inspires me to consider how systems of oppression intersect and bring a critical frame to my work (hooks, 1972). I use the term ‘critical’ to refer to “the detecting and unmasking of beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, justice and democracy” (Usher, 1996, p. 22). Hence, to be a critical narrative inquirer, it is necessary to engage in a process of deconstruction of assumptions about knowledge, power and reflexivity (Hickson, 2016). In engaging with a process of deconstruction, this implies a poststructuralist approach. Here, I have taken much inspiration from the later works of Patti Lather (see for example Lather, 2007), where she has journeyed from her earlier roots within the critical theory paradigm, having been inspired by the likes of Derrida and Foucault, among others. I created a mindmap of words and phrases that emerged from my reading of Lather’s various works and that resonated with my epistemological approach (see Appendix A).

2.3 Methodological Inspiration: Narrative Inquiry

This study is inspired by narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) frame the *narrative* aspect of narrative inquiry as referring to both the *phenomenon* under study and the *method* used to carry out the research. This chapter will lay out the theoretical framing of the methodological approach.

The subsequent chapter will address the specific details of the choice of research methods for this study.

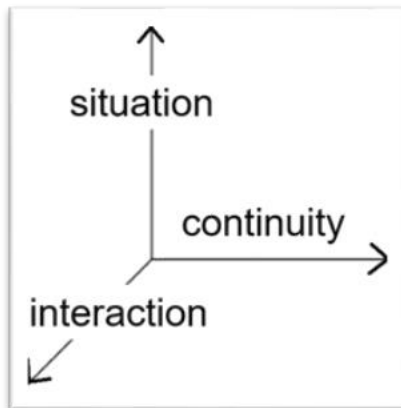


Figure 2: Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, from Clandinin and Connelly (2000)

For narrative methods to make sense, researchers need to adopt an ontological position regarding the nature of experience. Clandinin et al. (2009) write “We cannot study experience narratively, that is, through narrative inquiry, without understanding experience as a storied phenomenon.” (p.82). Clandinin and Connelly root their conceptualisation of experience in John Dewey’s (1938) pragmatic philosophy, which sees experience as having the following two dimensions: interaction and continuity. Interaction is understood to be the social factor, while continuity is a temporal aspect. Clandinin and Connelly

suggest a third dimension of place, or situation, hence they theorise narrative inquiry as operating within a three-dimensional space (see Figure 2).

The stories told by narrators are distinct from the experiences themselves, in the sense that they are a representation of them. As Hannula (2003) writes, “each person's subjective experience is inaccessible to others” and “[t]he chasm between the inner worlds of two persons needs to be bridged” (p. 31). Riessman (1993) proposed a five-level model of representation in the research process, as shown in Figure 2. The first level involves ‘attending’ to experience, followed by the ‘telling’ stage. In the case of narrative research, this second stage occurs as a conversation between participants and researcher. Riessman then outlines the following three further stages of representation: transcribing, analysing and reading. Decisions are made at each level. This decision-making process may occur consciously or sub-consciously and it involves various actors, including the participants in their choices about how to tell that original experience and the researcher in their choices of how to analyse and record that narrative and finally the reader in their own choice of how to interpret the final research text. In some projects there may be more choices and more actors involved. Indeed, in this particular project, there is an additional level of representation in the revisiting of old narratives, as will be explained in depth later.

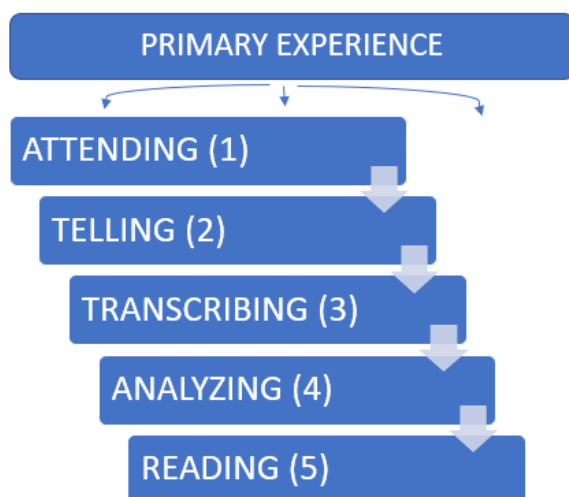


Figure 3: Levels of Representation in Research Project, re-produced from Riessman (1993)

The epistemological assumption of narrative inquiry is that meaning-making can occur in the process of collecting and analysing narrative data, in other words, that there is something that can be known.

Narrative inquiry rests on the epistemological assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition of story structures. That is, we select those elements of experience to which we will attend, and we pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect the stories available to us. (Bell, 2002, p. 207)

This quote suggests that organising experience into narrative structures is a meaning-making process on the part of the narrator themselves. Similarly, Riessman (1993), suggests that narrativization tells us not only about past actions but how individuals understand those actions, in other words, the meaning they make. All of this suggests that rather than seeking some objective truth about reality through the stories they analyse, the narrative inquirer seeks to understand something of the meaning that is conveyed through the act of telling the stories. This interpretation fits with a poststructuralist rejection of absolute truth. Hence, I adopt the stance that this study of narrative is less interested in the experiences themselves and more interested in the meaning-making process involved in narrating those experiences. This in part resolves the issue of the many layers of representation, as the object of the study is not the primary experience at level one, rather it is the layers of meaning making which have occurred in the process to produce the stories the participants tell, the reflections they and I make and eventually this final report and the many readings it will elicit.

2.4 Playing with Time in Narrative Research: Revisiting Old Stories

By revisiting old stories, this study plays with the notion of temporality, which is one of the three dimensions laid out by Clandinin and Connelly in their approach to narrative inquiry (2000). This section explores the notion of revisiting stories, using research which exemplifies such ideas to draw out key considerations, in an attempt to answer some of my own questions in the following entry from my reflective journal.

Why do I want to return to those same participants? Why revisit their narratives? There was something so powerful and so captivating for me in having that opportunity to engage in dialogue with those young activists getting beyond the metanarrative, and hearing the personal thoughts and experiences of those individuals felt important. So why return? What can be gained? (LH, Reflective Journal, 21/03/2023)

Andrews (2008) writes, “[a]utobiographical narratives are always, and can only ever be, recounted from the present perspective, a position which is characterized by, among other things, its incompleteness” (p. 215). This felt like an interesting provocation. What would happen if the same participants were asked about the same phenomenon from a different temporal perspective? Of course, this is simply another distinct timepoint and does not provide a neat end to the story. Indeed, Andrews goes on to write, “There is never a final analysis, only points along the way” (p. 216). Mishler (2004) suggests that additional perspectives provide greater illumination. By describing a film in which the main character tells a different version of the same story in two separate takes, he presents a challenge to the idea of one unifying identity represented in a singular storyline. Mishler observes that “we story our lives differently depending on the occasion, audience, and reason for the telling.” (p. 103). Mishler claims that this does not mean that there are a false self and a true self; rather, each person has multiple perspectives on the same event, and the one that comes into play depends on variations in context, audience, and intentions, that is, “on how one positions one’s self within that set of circumstances.” (p. 117). Mishler suggests that researchers could learn something from filmmakers and their use of multiple-take procedures. He suggests it could enrich our research if we were to consider asking two or three different versions of a question about the “same” event or experience. Revisiting the earlier quote from Bell (2002) that we select and order narrative components according to “the stories available to us” (p. 207), I would add that it depends on the stories available to us *at the time* of the story-telling. Over time, different stories may become available to us, and we may make sense of our experiences differently. I considered how revisiting stories with the original narrators at different points in time could offer new narrative components available and further enrich research.

Riessman (2004) discusses revisiting the data of one particular participant. In analysing the same story at three points in time, Riessman shows how the investigator's interpretation of narrative data can change over the time, suggesting "meanings, by nature, are shaped by their historical position" (p. 320). Hence, as a researcher revisiting stories with new perspectives gained from methodological and theoretical advances can lead to an entirely new reading. Riessman makes visible her role in the meaning-making process, both in the past as a figure in the narrative and "in the present as a voice asking new questions" (p. 321). In a similar vein, Andrews (2008) writes about visiting her set of transcripts from research with socialist activists multiple times and finding new meaning. Firstly, ten years after conducting the original research, and after having two children, she revisited the data and was absorbed by the accounts of her participants' relationships with their parents. Hence, she came to write an article focusing on maternal narratives (Andrews, 2004). Later, she re-visited the narratives as she approached her fortieth birthday and found a focus on age (Andrews, 2003). Andrews (2008) speaks of "the otherness of ourselves to ourselves" (p. 211), to mean that "analysis of data is always carried out by someone other than the 'me-in-the-moment' who conducted the interview" (p. 211). She is very clear that the reasons for focusing on particular aspects of the narratives were closely tied up with her own personal life experiences at the time, or the context within which she found herself. I have observed a similar phenomenon in myself:

certainly when reflecting on my own diary entries, I did not seem to be the same me at all times. (LH, Reflective Journal, 27/03/23)

From Andrews (2008) and Riessman (2004), we see how implicated the researcher is in the meaning-making process. Andrews' explicitness in linking personal experience to research decisions shows the importance of maintaining reflexivity and awareness of researcher subjectivity in the process of analysing and writing up. Riessman recognises that the research text was produced through her dialogue with Burt and would have been different had a different researcher conducted the interview. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) suggest that "all interviews are interpretively active, implicating meaning-making practices on the part of both interviewers and respondents" and hence interviews cannot be stripped of "interactional ingredients" (1995, p. 4). Hence, there is a sense that in narrative research, participants and researchers co-produce new knowledge through dialogue.

It is not only the participants and the researcher who play a role in the meaning-making process in narrative research; Riessman views her thrice-told tale as "an example of the complicated ways researcher and reader are implicated in the production of knowledge about lives and culture" (p. 322). Furthermore, she describes the interview text as occupying a liminal space, writing that "the constitutive activity of the reader supplies what is not in the text, bringing together text and

imagination” (p. 319). She does not suggest that one reading is ‘truer’ than another; they are simply different. To return to the notion of ‘layers of representation’, the representation which occurs in the mind of the reader as they engage with the final research text is this fifth and final level as shown in Figure 3.

To conclude this section, I have shown through the work of others that revisiting old stories can be a fruitful endeavour. I have identified the following considerations to bear in mind in such an approach: additional perspectives offered by asking similar questions in different variations (or at different times); the researchers’ role in co-production of knowledge, both at the time through active interviewing and later through their interpretation of the data; the readers’ role in the final meaning-making process.

2.5 Re-visiting Participants: Making Narrative Research (More) Participatory

If one views the interview process as active, as described above, co-production of knowledge seems a logical outcome. However, it could also be suggested that narrative research is an extractive process, involving the extraction of narrative data from participant communities. Often the research will be written up without the participants and in ways that is inaccessible, both in terms of institutional access and jargon. There is a danger of the data being colonised by the researcher’s own interests. Some of these critiques may have led to my own hesitation in fully embracing narrative inquiry as a methodology. One response to such potential problems comes from Kurtz’s (2014) conceptualisation of participatory narrative inquiry (PNI). This is a participatory research method which positions the narrators as researchers and engages them in the process of analysis alongside the lead researcher. In contrast to Kurtz (2014), I do not intend for the analysis of narratives to occur through a group activity. Rather, the original narrator in dialogue with myself as co-researcher will make sense of the words. Hence, each participant will reflect only on their own stories, not those of the wider community. The precise details of the interview protocol will be introduced in the next section.

The astute reader may have noticed that most of the examples in the previous section discussed ideas of re-analysing old data, but not actually re-visiting the participants themselves. Longitudinal research projects involve multiple interviews over time, with changes to certain phenomena measured over time. This is not the way this research was conceived of, hence I do not claim this is a longitudinal study. While time is a crucial element in the design of the follow-up phase of this research, it is not in relation to a particular phenomenon. It is more of a methodological point of interest, exploring the idea developed by Mishler (2004) of multiple perspectives.

Acknowledging the fact that stories are told differently at different times, Mishler (2004) refers to Hermans's (1992) "self-confrontation" procedure. This is a process whereby individuals were interviewed a second time about important events in their lives some time after the first interview, are given back their responses and asked whether they agree or disagree with them and how they would now respond. In this research, the second interviews are about creating a multi-dimensional story, and not acting as a checking exercise. However, the notion of participants being confronted with their own earlier words felt useful and I decided to use it. It also has the function of bringing the participants back in to the research process, making it more participatory. The ideas from PNI, as described above, combined with the notion of 'self-confrontation' has shaped the plan for the data collection in the present study. The next chapter will outline the specific details of the research design.

3 Ethics, Reflexivity and Subjectivity

This research project has received ethical approval from the School of Education ethics committee (see Appendix D). Many issues were considered, including the following: data storage and protection, participant anonymity, reporting of research outcomes. Beyond this tick-box exercise of gaining ethical approval from a board, I have engaged with ethical considerations at each stage of the process. I take the stance developed by Macfarlane (2009) that ethical research is research that is conducted with integrity. In other words, an ethical approach to research is about the values embodied by the researcher. I am guided in this work by the values of equity, justice and respect. The research experience should feel mutually useful to avoid an extractive practice which sees participants as sources of data alone. At the same time, I do not claim my research is fully participatory. Kara (2018) points out that research is not truly participatory unless participants have been involved from the very start of the design process, which cannot happen as ethical approval must be sought before work commences. Furthermore, in this work, I am writing up the report, it is not a co-authored piece. Where data constitutes my own research journal entries, I have carefully selected entries which I felt comfortable enough to share here and I believe do not have the potential to harm myself or others.

The ethical considerations for this work are so intertwined with the reflexive research approach that I could not separate them. Reflexivity is understood here as “an ongoing self-reflection during the research process” (Pino Gavidia and Adu, 2022). I believe it is important to be clear about my own positionality and my experiences, which influence how I perceive the world and the things I do not see and I openly acknowledge them in line with feminist standpoint theory (Lather, 1991). I write from the position of a cisgender woman scholar in the Global North, living in a hyper-consumptive society built on imperialism and slavery. I am racialised as White (capitalised in accordance with Ewing, 2020) and economically and culturally middle-class. I am currently undertaking a PhD in Education, which is in itself a privileged pursuit. My position as a researcher within the academy creates a power imbalance in the researcher-participant relationship (Tilley, 2019). To work with young people in a non-exploitative way, power relations will need to be carefully managed (Ozer, 2016). Additionally, my own positioning within the landscape of environmental activism may mean that there is some commonality between the goals of the participants in their activism and my own goals in all of my work. All of this requires careful navigation to ensure participants do not feel pressurised into participating.

Inspired by Lather (1991), in this work I seek to “diffuse the power of the author, and thus improve the ‘democracy’ of the findings” (p. 92). From de Freitas (2007), I recognise that the reader never has

direct access to the author (or the researcher) themselves, no matter how much the author writes of their personal thoughts and feelings and splashes around the 'I' pronoun. De Freitas suggests that "I" narratives draw on the reader's desire for communion and resonance with the author" (p. 338). To avoid a false sense of proximity between reader and author, I seek to employ the 'unreliable narrator' technique at times, to disrupt the flow and to call into doubt my own authority. I will do this by explicitly expressing my uncertainty and posing questions rather than offering conclusions.

4 Methods

This section outlines the precise methods for data collection and analysis of the youth strikers' narratives as well as my own. In the subsequent section, the 'conversations' will be presented.

4.1 Participants

The participants are Bobby, Dayo and Amari. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms have been used. They are the same as those in the original study and are intentionally gender-neutral as gender is not a construct under inquiry. In 2020, at the time of the first interviews, all participants were involved with YS4C Bristol, either organising or participating in regular school strikes. The original method for selecting the sample was first purposive, drawing on pre-existing contacts, and then snowball (Matthews and Ross, 2010). The sample in this project is necessarily the same participants as my 2020 study, given the nature of this work.

4.2 Data Collection

4.2.1 Interviews

The data for this new study was collected through a one-to-one interview with each of the three participants. These were conducted online, using Zoom. Online interviewing was found to be an accessible method for all participants during the 2020 study, hence seemed appropriate here. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. An interview protocol was created (see Appendix B), showing the three distinct parts of the interview.

Part 1 was the narration stage, in which participants are invited to tell their stories. This part is made of four phases, as inspired by Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000), which was also the basis for the 2020 interviews. In this part of the interview, I was silent as long as the participants chose to narrate for. I found there was a great deal of variation between how long participants spent narrating their stories. Dayo and Bobby each talked uninterruptedly for around fifteen minutes, whereas Amari only offered a few sentences. This was exactly what had been pre-empted and I had a number of prompts ready to encourage further narration.

Part 2 involved a deeper look at some of the participants' earlier comments, in line with the ideas from PNI (Kurtz, 2014). The table in Appendix C shows some of the quotes that I selected to revisit for the three participants. In total I chose 5-7 quotes per person, which felt particularly pertinent to the narrators' original accounts. In this part, my interview style was active, drawing on Holstein and Gubrium (1995). For some participants each quote generated a lot of reflection and resulting dialogue, which meant that only some of the quotes were used due to the time constraints of the interview situation. At times during this part, the interviews became much more dialogic in form,

with participants revealing unexpected aspects of themselves or their perspectives. There were some points where I noticed that I myself was seeking to divert the conversation in unforeseen directions. A particular moment I recall straying from the structure and becoming a bit lost was when Bobby was speaking about their other friends outside of activism, which seemed to reveal a different side to themselves. In reviewing the data, I noticed myself trying to pursue an unplanned line of questioning but struggling to frame my questions meaningfully.

Part 3 of the interview gathered specific data on the participants' views of the education system – this data will not be analysed for this particular report, but is intended for use in a journal article. It is the data gathered in Parts 1 and 2 which is the focus of this report.

4.2.2 Research Journal

To address RQ2, I gathered data in the form of reflective journal entries from my own personal research journal. This is a Word document which I began in 2020 as I worked on my original MSc dissertation as a space to organise my thoughts and keep track of ideas. I began a separate document at the start of the 2022-23 academic year as a way to maintain a practice of self-reflection. At a certain point along the way, this became data.

4.3 Data Analysis

I began the analysis process by familiarising myself with the entire corpus of data. I experimented with using narrative structural analysis to study the content and structure of the initial part of the individuals' narratives (Riessman, 1993). Specifically, I used an approach based on Labov's (1972) model to analyse the narrative components, as shown in Figure 4. Labov's model provides a clear structure to find the 'core narratives'. The narrative blocks within each transcript are identified and stripped back to the core thread, which contains each of the six elements as follows (see Appendix E for further clarification of each of these steps):



Figure 4: Steps of Labov's (1972) model

I had not originally intended to compare narratives directly across the timepoints. However, I was particularly struck by how similar the accounts in these initial sections of the narratives were from 2020 compared to 2023, hence I chose to portray them side by side to allow for a comparison. I noticed that in the narratives I gathered, the evaluation was often woven throughout, whereas the other aspects tended to follow the order as laid out in Labov's model. To represent this, I displayed the excerpts of narratives in tables according to the five steps of Labov's model excluding evaluation. Instead, I underline statements I deemed evaluative wherever they occur in the narrative structure. See Appendix F for these tables of core narratives.

Reflections on Labovian narrative analysis

The process of analysing the initial narratives for the core narratives allowed me to see what was useful or not useful about Labovian structural analysis for the purposes of this particular study and its aims. While laying out the narratives as blocks of core text representing the different steps of the Labovian model allowed for a comparison of narrative form, I realised that a focus on structure itself was not particularly insightful for my aims. Patterson (2008) presents a critique of Labovian structural analysis based on its reliance on an event-centric notion of narration, rather than centring experience. In my research, I am less interested in how participants structure their accounts of particular events, and more in how the narrators themselves construct meaning in relation to an accumulation of experience. I realised through my experimentation that the evaluative statements within the narratives held the most interest for me. Johnstone (2016) suggests that evaluative

clauses have to do with “why the narrator is telling the story and why the audience should listen to it.” (p. 543). Riessman refers to these evaluation clauses as the “soul of the narrative” (p. 20) and suggests that it is in these clauses that narrators express how they want to be understood. Attanucci’s (1991) writes that “evaluation infuses the account with values and meaning”. As described above, the object of narrative inquiry is not about discovering some truth about what happened, rather it is about exploring how those whose experiences are under study make meaning from them.

There is something particularly interesting in the sections of the 2023 data where the participants make evaluative statements with the added perspective of hindsight. I call these **‘hindsight statements’**. These provide an **extra layer of evaluation**. This concept resonated with Mishler (2004)’s idea of multiple takes in a film, as well as Richardson and St Pierre’s (2005) idea of ‘crystallization’. Hence, I realized that a full Labovian analysis of structure and form was not necessary for my research aims. Instead, what felt most useful was an analysis of particular excerpts in which key ideas are explored and re-explored by participants with a high density of evaluative statements and hindsight statements. This led to the idea of creating ‘conversations’, as will be explored in the next section.

4.3.1 Creation of ‘conversations’

In the next two chapters, the ‘conversations’ will be presented. In chapter 5, the conversations are between the three participants: Amari, Bobby and Dayo. In chapter 6, they are my own reflective journal entries. The construction of the ‘conversations’ represents both a stage in the analysis, and also the creation of the ‘find-ings’ section of this thesis. I do not consider these to be something static and final, they are all part of a research process. Hence, I prefer to think of them as ‘find-ings’, to refer to the active process rather than the product of the research (see Brown, 2015). For the purposes of this dissertation, a selective process was necessary, to present a set of data which would provide a snapshot of my methodological approach to facilitate the meta reflection on that process. Hence, only a small chunk of the full data set with the young climate activists is presented here; the additional data will be analysed and reported on in other work. Each section is titled in a way that I felt represented its essence.

The ‘conversations’ are presented as a layered text (see Lather and Smithies, 1997; Rambo Ronai, 1995; Rath, 2012). There is an element of fictionalising (as justified by Ebbelind and Helliwell, 2022 and Hannula, 2003) in displaying the quotes from participants in a dialogic format, as those conversations did not take place, but their words are real. My analytic voice is interwoven, following each page of dialogue. As a critical theorist (at least in part), I take some inspiration from critical

narrative analysis (CNA) (see Souto-Manning, 2014), which combines narrative analysis with the Foucauldian method of critical discourse analysis (CDA), based on the notion that power relations in society are maintained through discourse at the macro and institutional level (Foucault, 1978). Through a critical narrativist approach (Hickson, 2006; Pino Gavidia and Adu, 2022), I seek to deconstruct the young people's narratives for references to power and agency. I draw on literature and theory to give context to the meaning I make from the data.

As the author of this text, I do not seek to remove myself from it – on the contrary, I fully embrace the subjectivity of my authorial voice. I do not claim authority or any final 'truth'. I make the comments I make because they are the things I thought at the time of writing, based on the person I was at that time. I will not be the same person tomorrow and neither will you, the reader. As Richardson and St Pierre (2005) write, poststructuralism "frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone" (p. 962). The reader is invited to question my authority in the comments I make here. Indeed, I will often question it myself. Given that the process of meaning-making is a phenomenon under study here, I will seek to be explicit about my own meaning-making process, including my uncertainties.

As a note on how to read the 'conversations', the quotes are presented in speech bubbles. As the conversations occur across points in time, they are presented in two columns. The speech bubbles are presented in a way that can be read left to right across the page and then continuing down the page, but the reader may prefer to read them in a different way. Underlined text represents statements that express some form of evaluation on the part of the narrator. **Bold, underlined statements represent those hindsight statements from the 2023 data where an additional layer of evaluation is added based on the present perspective of the narrator, looking back with hindsight.**

Reader, before proceeding I invite you to consider, what do you want to do with your reading of the text?

5 'Conversations' Across Time: Youth Strikers

2020

Beginnings

2023

I've been to a few marches when I was younger. But it didn't feel like they really achieved anything. And when this youth strike happened with Greta Thunberg, it was suddenly a massive thing that the media was reporting on. And it felt like I was part of something that could actually make a difference.

Amari

When I was actually at the strike, that was amazing, I'd never seen that many people in Bristol. Yeah, there was such a good community feeling and everything. **So, I think when I said that, I was being very optimistic about how much it would actually achieve.**

Amari

I would say the first one was quite uncoordinated. It was only like two people, one girl and her dad, running the whole thing, but it was just, like, such an inspiring thing. Then, I didn't, I didn't go back to the next one, um, I think the next one I was busy. But then I did actually come back. And I think it was something that really inspired me. So when someone said, "Do you want to get involved?", I was like, "Yeah, sure". So I started going to meetings. And it just felt like... a cause I really cared about. And there was actually some way I could actually help

Bobby

I remember from my secondary school at the time, I would have been in Year 9, yeah... And yeah, come the day, there was... hundreds of people from my school ended up going. And it was just like... that new, kind of electric feeling of a bunch of people... the whole thing was rather chaotic... it was sort of young people run around town and block traffic for two hours afterwards, which, yeah, was just a completely different experience to anything I'd done before, and I think for most people there

Bobby

I went to the first one in February, which was actually organised by a girl that's completely separate from our, like, group now. But she, and I was, I was amazed by kind of it, and by how many people actually turned up and then when they had the second one still people were turning up because, obviously, it was like you were missing school for the first one so it's like, you know, that's kind of a novelty, but then when the novelty didn't wear off I kind of was very interested in getting more involved, so I can actively like make it a bigger thing

Dayo

We just didn't expect this many people to kind of care and keep coming... the fact we were getting hundreds to thousands of people every time, like, even when it was raining, yeah, I think it just really instilled in us that people do care and I remember being... I mean, it was... there'd never been anything like this before. ... It's not like the youth strike for climate movement had happened and then we'd tagged along or copied it later on, it was all happening at the same time ...yeah, we could not have expected... it was overwhelming but in the best of ways.

Dayo

There is a certain nostalgia in reading the words of the young people as they reflect on their early involvement in the youth strikes, in the conversation entitled “beginnings”. I felt them taking themselves back to that specific time and place as they described their first experiences of a school strike rally on College Green. However, there is also a nostalgia for me as a researcher, in returning to stories which I studied intensively three years ago. In those initial narratives from 2020, I was struck by the sense of hope and inspiration that came across in the narrators’ accounts. There was a sense of awe at what young people had achieved through those early actions. While it is tempting to focus on the optimism and indeed the hope that comes through in these early reflections, Amari closes their initial narrative with a hindsight statement hinting at the scepticism that permeates their 2023 accounts. This comment from Amari in the opening passages reminds me to look for the nuance in the accounts.

There was an element of surprise the narrators seemed to express that young people could pull off such an action and that so many other young people would come and support it. It felt like the young activists were awakening to their own potential power. Holmberg and Alvinus (2020) claim that a Western view of children as lacking in political agency has meant that “the power of children has therefore been overlooked” (p.81). Bowman (2019) writes, “society tends to perceive young people as subjects of political engagement more than agents of change” (p.299). By organising themselves and one another in mass strike actions, young people dismantled that framing and made themselves the actors in the story, rather than the subjects to be acted on.

In some of their initial comments, the joy of the strike rallies and the sense of collectivity takes centre stage, and the topic of climate change feels almost secondary. The young people could almost be describing a pop concert or other mass gathering; it is more about young people coming together to make something happen, rather than the particular cause. The initial narratives are so laden with optimism that it is easy to forget that the reason for the event is one which fuels so much worry, as is explored on the next page of quotes. It feels as if the young people are experiencing something powerful as individuals which is almost as much about them and their own identities as it is about the collective action. For Dayo, there is a sense of them claiming their own place in the history of the movement by telling their tale from the perspective of one of the main organisers. Perhaps by writing themselves into the stories as protagonists they secure their place in that story, so that even now when the strikes no longer happen, they look back and feel themselves at the centre of it. Even as I write this, I am unsure whether it is what I believe. Perhaps my views have been influenced by conversations with my supervisor and their reading of the stories.

2020

Eco-Anxiety

2023

I was just frustrated, like I obviously when I started, I couldn't vote, and ... the government wasn't really doing anything, and they still aren't. And so that was very much kind of a way to like channel my frustration into something that was productive and kind of channel my like, almost upset, like I guess kind of it's terrifying as well and that was, that was I've gone through waves throughout the year of being absolutely terrified and like anxious about the future and then this is kind of like, it's like a way to manage I guess the way to manage my emotions and like cos I feel like I'm actually doing something.

Dayo

I think it's that there's such a difference between being in school and being out of school. I still very much have a hopelessness, still very much feel very angry a lot of the time about what's going on... but I think when you're that age ... when you're 17 there's such a lack of... you're so lost at who you are as an individual... I think this was just compounded by the fact that there's impending doom and you're kind of just taught about it and then you have to move on because that's how the curriculum works ... I feel like I could have been able to kind of regulate how I feel a lot more now and kind of rationalise and I feel like I have a bit more... even though I'm technically doing less activism wise, I feel like I have a bit more power and a bit more kind of control over my life which I guess is because I have control over my personal life... I don't know. It must be because I've left school now and stuff, but there's such a difference, ... school is such an odd reality ... I don't know, just makes all the emotions feel so much bigger, I think, and everything feels a lot bigger and just feels like such a small part in such a big system that I think when thinking about the climate that translates into feeling quite hopeless and quite helpless, yeah.

Dayo

There's definitely a lot of worry and anxiety about our futures. Given that we don't really know what's going to happen. And what the world will be like, and especially with other crises going on, like the economic crisis, and stuff like Brexit and things. And now, coronavirus. I think a lot of us are pretty worried about our futures. And also, I mean, there's grief, about the destruction of the natural world, and for people who are experiencing even worse, effects.

Amari

I think it's not really changed that much. All of these things are still happening. I think at the moment I'm just not very involved with climate activism in general because I'm in Year 13 and I'm busy, so I just don't think about it much because I'm just doing other things. But I think the general feeling within activist groups, like when I go to meetings or something, it's a very positive vibe, but we also talk about these types of things, and you can tell people aren't that hopeful.

Amari

This exchange between past and present Dayo and Amari regarding eco-anxiety was extremely illuminating to me. Dayo's passage from 2020 spoke of the intense anxiety which is commonly referred to in the literature on eco-emotions (Hickman et al., 2021; Ojala, 2023; Pihkala, 2022). While the 2023 quote echoes those ideas of 'powerlessness' and 'hopelessness', it also offers a new explanation for the intensity of such emotions. Dayo uses their new perspective as someone who is no longer within the school system to reflect on the particularities of the feelings that a young person has within it. This reminded me of the words of Pickard and Bessant (2019) in relation to young people's hope for a decent future, they write "for too many young people, the reality of their (everyday) lives differs quite radically from that expectation of a decent future." (p.2). Perhaps Dayo experienced this sensation within the school system. However, in 2023, as a university student living independently in a different city, they now reflect on how much more power they have over their own life. In some ways, these hindsight statements from Dayo downplay the actual level of anxiety caused by the climate crisis, and explain those feelings as being context-specific. Does this suggest that eco-anxiety is in fact less of an issue than it may be believed? I am unsure.

Amari is a less expressive narrator and tends not to frame themselves as the central character in their stories, and fittingly their initial comments about the worry and anxiety experienced by young people were stated in more generally terms, using a collective 'our futures' rather than speaking personally of the emotions as an individual. This use of the plural first person suggested that Amari did feel and own that worry and concern, but the linguistic tool of talking about a shared future made it less about the person and more about the notion of the future of 'young people' more broadly. In Amari's later comments, they entirely distance themselves from the worries of youth climate activists about the future. There is a vagueness which to me felt initially like a lack of personal engagement with the issues. Alternatively, it could be understood as Amari feeling that they do not have the authority to speak for all young people. In their earlier words, they seemed more willing to speak in terms of 'we'. Where they say in 2023, "you can tell people aren't that hopeful", this feels like they have entirely removed themselves from the equation by making 'people' the subject, in a linguistic move which seems to fully disassociate themselves. This distancing is explained by their comments about being too busy in their final year of school to think about it.

It is interesting to see the move away from emotive language from these two young people who three years ago expressed the 'worry' and 'uncertainty' they felt about their futures. It seems that such a degree of negative emotion cannot be sustained. For Dayo, there has been a material change in their life that has led to a change in feelings, in that they have left home and feel more control over their own life. For Amari, other things such as final exams have taken precedence. Certainly, neither participant expresses a belief that there is no longer anything to worry about.

2020

The End?

2023

I think, yeah, I think it [YS4C] still has a long way to go. I'm not sure how long striking will be, like, the best option. I think that could be slightly worrying for my, my group because that's what sets us apart from other groups like Extinction Rebellion. But I think, it does, yeah, it's going to always be the alternative from XR for people who just want to be doing marches, and I think the schools strike with Greta Thunberg and the way that she speaks, I think ...has really rallied a lot of people, and I think that is going to continue. And I think for a while now, we are going to be still going.

Bobby

Yeah, I think I was feeling then that, yeah, quite optimistic in that regard of how things were going to go back to normal, including in our movement, which turned out not to be the case because now Bristol Youth Strike for Climate doesn't really exist. ... So yeah, I think it's very much changed from what I said there... we kind of came back for a little bit ... and then that kind of just didn't really work, so it fizzled out...

I think it's very much the Covid that's changed, and also I think at that point I hadn't kind of realised that there was only, like, so much momentum that we'd [brought] behind that particular movement, with like, the novelty of doing climate strikes, which has now changed because it's the case of climate striking, "oh that was like the thing that happened, yeah, a bunch of people went to that, oh no, I'm not going to bother going to that anymore", which is why you need new movements to try and carry that energy forward and rebuild it.

Bobby

I title this section as a question because it seems that the end of Bristol YS4C actions represents more of a 'fizzling out' (an expression used by both Bobby and Amari), rather than a final decision to end the actions, which seems to leave open the possibility of this being a less-than-final ending. It may feel somewhat abrupt to be arriving at the 'end' already, it certainly does to me. I must reiterate that this is only a snapshot of the narrative data from the young people and there is much which could not fit in this particular report, such as stories of the biggest rally of all, which saw the youth strikers pull together a strike rally event with eight days' notice, which was attended by some 30,000 people and headed up by Greta Thunberg.

The young people talked about 'the end' in many different ways. Due to limited space, I could only pick one participants' comments to end with. I picked Bobby as their voice has been heard the least and they offered some rich comments here. In their 2020 comments, Bobby expresses a belief that the youth strike movement will keep going for a while, owing to Greta Thunberg and 'the way she speaks'. Bobby's comment that YS4C offers an alternative from XR for people who "just want to be doing marches" seems to entirely overlook the civil disobedience element of skipping school. While Bobby may here be expressing an awareness that XR poses a particular barrier to young people who do not want to risk arrest due to various structural reasons, they overlook the fact that skipping school to attend a strike rally is a form of civil disobedience in its own right, as conceptualised by Mattheis (2022).

In their 2023 comments, Bobby reflects back on their earlier optimism of the lasting power of the YS4C movement and concludes that the reality now is very different from what they had earlier predicted. Interestingly, they do not reference the fact that YS4C as a global movement has not fizzled out. Indeed in other countries, such as Germany, the movement continues to take regular coordinated action (Anderson, 2023). Bobby's final comments express the realisation that the tactic of school striking could only go so far. There was a novelty to that particular form of action which could not be sustained. Indeed, Dayo's earlier comments showed surprise that the novelty lasted as long as it did, they had feared that it would be a one-time thing. Bobby leaves us with the notion that new movements are needed to carry the energy and rebuild it. This leaves us with an opening, a space to ponder on what those new movements might look like. At this point, as a researcher I feel a real conflict. It is so tempting to try to find hope, in what feel like very bleak times. This final comment from Bobby fills me with hope and feels like a place I want to finish. However, I am aware of the danger in this desire. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to the "Hollywood plot", i.e., the plot in which everything works out well in the end, which they describe as plots in which there is "thorough and unbending censure" (p. 181). Ultimately, I feel it is not fair to seek our hope entirely in the actions of the next generation. For educators and researchers, there is more work to do here.

6 'Conversations' Across Time: My Research Journey

2020

Passion (for) Narrative

2023

After a 6-week hiatus (in which I struggled to adjust to new ways of living and working at the start of the covid-19 lockdown) I have rediscovered my motivation and enthusiasm for my topic.

This has come through the decision to change tack and focus on a deeper look at the experiences of a handful of young activists, rather than trying to gain a broad look at the experiences of many in relation to their specific school's response. Upon learning about the methodological approach of narrative inquiry, I reformulated my ideas into something which resonates much more with me as a researcher in this particular moment.

LH, Reflective Journal, 10/05/2020

I sense a shift in my use of this diary.

This has become a place of field notes as of now.

There is an audience and I am that audience.

LH, Reflective Journal, 29/07/2020

Wow! I have just re-read my research journal from my [2020] masters dissertation. I cannot believe what a moving experience it was to re-read those words. It took me right back to that time. Which let's face it, was a rollercoaster!

... It has really re-ignited a passion deep within me for the work that I am undertaking. ... I think I can succeed in re-immersing myself and finding that drive that I found three whole years ago. Interestingly, the dissertation diary began on 19/02/20, so only 3 days off exactly 3 years from today!

LH, Reflective Journal, 16/02/2023

Thought: could I do a study looking at my own journey to becoming a narrative inquirer, and use that diary [from 2020] as field notes, to be analysed? As well as collecting new data on the theme. Would that be trying to do too many things? Perhaps the new data on the theme could be collected and written up for the BERJ article? And the reflections on that process could be what analyse for my dissertation? But to what extent is that useful? Do I want to be a narrative inquirer? What does that matter!?! Who says I have to stick with narrative inquiry?? I can look at developing my own research style and positioning! This dissertation can be entirely an exercise in understanding who I am as a researcher and where I stand. Does that make sense? Let's bring it as an idea to the 'Philosophy and Research Design' unit, which begins tomorrow!

LH, Reflective Journal, 16/02/2023

These journal entries show my initial choice to develop my methodology based on narrative inquiry, as well as the moment in 2020 when I realised that my reflective journal had become a place of field notes. The entries from 2023 show how powerful a tool for self-reflection my own earlier journal entries have been, as I seek to develop my approach to research. This was true both in terms of finding the excitement and enthusiasm for my research, but also for honing my approach and learning from my own learning process. Although in 2020 I felt the shift in my use of the reflective journal, I did not treat the notes as formal field notes in the final thesis that year. I did not present excerpts from them or systematically analyse their content. By rediscovering those notes three years later and bringing them to light, the purpose I had hoped for my reflections to serve has been honoured. This feels important ethically, as at the moment when I chose as a researcher to treat my reflective journal as a place of field notes, the entries became data, therefore I feel some ethical imperative to do something with that data.

In the entry from 16/02/2023, there is also a sense of grappling with the uncertainty of what I intended to do (and what I ultimately have done). There seems to be a resistance to how inward-looking such a self-reflective piece could be, in particular to a researcher who comes from the background of being an activist and seeking to effect change in the world. The idea of a research piece which takes the researcher's own journey as one of the main foci seems to be a little difficult to commit to. This grappling with uncertainty demonstrates a perception that all research should be useful to potential readers, showing an acute sense of the importance of the contribution of any piece of research. However, the final comment about bringing my ideas to the cohort of new doctoral students on one of our research training units acts as a reminder that this research has been undertaken in the context of a training programme. Hence the final outcomes and write-up of this research are as much about learning to be a researcher as they are about the substantive content of the research itself. Hence, there is an awareness that this style of self-reflective piece has its place within certain contexts only and would be less appropriate outside of the research training situation. For example, I intend to present my findings from this research project at this year's BERA conference, as well as writing up one or two journal articles for special issues on activism. In those contexts, the focus will be on the substance of the narrative data from the participants' accounts and not on my own processes and methodological choices.

2020

Searching for Meaning

2023

I am genuinely excited to return to the data. After a weekend off, I am looking forward to re-engaging with the data and rediscovering what the participants said.

I maintain the feeling of privilege to have this opportunity to gain such a deep insight into the stories of these individuals. I also feel a huge sense of responsibility in portraying the data appropriately. Hence every decision I make regarding data analysis and the selection and presentation of findings weighs on me.

LH, Reflective Journal, 03/08/2020

Two weeks on from conducting my interviews with three of the research participants, I am reflecting back on the experience. In the intervening two weeks I have been ill and then on holiday, so I have not yet looked over the data. The sense I am left with from speaking to the three of them, was the surprise as to how closely most of their retellings stuck to the original versions of their stories from three years ago. In some cases even particular phrases were the same. The structure of the stories was certainly similar in most cases. Given that three years have passed, I would have expected the stories to have been more different. It makes me wonder how much the stories have been rehearsed and retold in different settings. ... I cannot help but feel that my role was less a co-constructor and more that of an audience member. Or perhaps I am getting it all back to front. Perhaps it is precisely because I am the same person that I elicited such similar stories.

LH, Reflective Journal, 19/04/2023

Today I just felt I'd lost my purpose. But then I took a break and had a shower and some fresh perspective came to me. I felt like I'd been focussing too much yesterday on the responses to the first two questions – i.e., the journey to becoming a school striker and the description of the first ever experience of a strike. I felt like these were not useful for my research purposes as I am not particularly interested in motivations. However, I have come to realise how crucial this part is from the Narrative Inquiry perspective. I need to understand how each individual conceives of themselves within the movement – what are their stories to live by – where do they place themselves within the wider social context – how does the specific place feature – what about time? I need to go back to their beginnings as a school striker to frame their present experiences.

LH, Reflective Journal, 04/08/2020

It is so interesting to read back over my findings from my 2020 dissertation. Some of my interpretations of the data seem totally off to me now. I simply don't see some of the comments in the same way. Is that because I have now re-interviewed each of the participants and begun analysing the new data? Or is it because I am a different me to who I was then? Or is the changed context? It is hard to say. But I do feel that some of it comes from a new understanding of my participants, through working with them again more recently and coming to have more of a sense of how they structure and conceive of things.

LH, Reflective Journal, 20/05/2023

There is a lot contained within the four entries on the previous page. There is the sense of privilege that comes from undertaking research with inspiring young people whose time and stories I place great value on. Then there is the associated responsibility that comes along with that. At the time in 2020, as a masters student and secondary school teacher, I did not have as much experience of the academic world as I do now, and I did not fully appreciate the additional privilege and power that comes from association with an institution such as the University of Bristol (Tilley, 2019). The entry from 04/08/2020 shows the convoluted path to sense-making that occurs through the narrative inquiry process. At times, the meaning simply does not come and the entire purpose of the endeavour becomes lost. Indeed, the way I view it now, narrative inquiry is not about arriving at one final point of meaning – there is no final destination, rather multiple “points along the way” (Andrews, 2008, p. 216). In this entry, there is evidence of attending to all three dimensions of the narrative inquiry space as conceptualised by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), through the questions I ask of myself to prompt my own meaning-making process.

The 2023 quotes on this page both speak to the temporal aspect of this follow-up study. In the entry from 19/04/2023, there is surprise at how similar the 2023 data feels at first glance (or first listen) to the 2020 data. As researcher, I was then thrown into doubt as to how much those stories that I elicited in the interview were really a product of that particular research instance, or were stories that those young people had told time and time again to the point of becoming almost scripted. If the latter were true, would it imply that the young people were less engaged in an active act of sense-making and more in performing a story that they had rehearsed? Would this detract from the meaning-making potential? Patterson (2008) indicates that many identity theorists now conceptualise personal identity as the accumulation of stories we tell about ourselves (p. 29). Indeed, Bruner (1992) writes that “self-making is a narrative act”(p. 64). Linked to these ideas of self and identity, I was reminded of the idea of ‘stories to live by’, which Clandinin (2006) attributed to the Nigerian storyteller Ben Okri, as cited in King (2003). I considered whether the young people had made their activist stories somewhat of a story to live by, or perhaps in this case a story to live *through* retrospectively.

In the entry from 20/05/23, Andrews’ (2008) notion of “the otherness of ourselves from ourselves” (p. 211) is exemplified. Through my own ‘self-confrontation’ process (see Hermans, 1992, as referenced in Mishler, 2004), I realised how the passing of time had changed my own meaning-making. By re-reading my 2020 report, I noticed where my past and present interpretations rubbed up against one another. At this point, I considered formalising my own self-confrontation process (in fact I began doing so, see Appendix G), but I soon realised that such a direct comparison of meaning-making then and now was not in the spirit of this work.

2020

Relief in Writing

2023

What an incredible relief. Returning to chapter 9 of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) everything resonates with me again. Sentences that had no meaning previously suddenly feel like a parachute catching me on my fall. The sense of uncertainty that has been overwhelming me since yesterday no longer feels like a burden. It is completely normal and to be expected. In fact, something would be wrong if I was not feeling that way.

Having gone into the research with ideas about what I was looking for, I am emerging from the 'field work' into the writing of research texts stage without any certainty at all. I have spent the past few days agonising over methods of analysis. But now it is absolutely clear to me. The process of translating my field texts into research texts is the analysis itself.

LH, Reflective Journal, 04/08/2020

The idea of writing as process rather than product feels very freeing to me today. I do not claim that what I write is a finished piece which contains some ultimate and objective 'truth'. Through writing I come to understand more deeply what it is that matters to me. I do not try to remove myself as researcher from what I write. The reader is encouraged to form their own interpretations, which can be continually revised, much like my own are.

LH, Reflective Journal, 03/08/2023

In these final two quotes, my relief in the realisation that writing is a part of the process is captured. The 2020 quote speaks of ideas from Clandinin and Connelly (2000) feeling like a 'parachute catching me', which allows me to embrace uncertainty and welcome it a necessary part of the process. I speak about the profound realisation that the writing up of the research text constitutes analysis in itself. Interestingly, this is a concept which I discover once again three years later through working closely with my supervisor on a project in which we decided to write a layered text as our final output (see Helliwell, Hennessy and Bushnell, 2023). In the journal entry above I speak of such an approach to writing as feeling 'freeing', linking to ideas proposed by Richardson and St Pierre (2018), such as a turn away from the search for 'truth' and objectivity. The subjectivity of the researcher is embraced in the poststructural paradigm, as long as it is made explicit. This seemed like the perfect place to end this particular part of the process, as it is where my reflective journal entries make explicit reference to my analytic voice which has been doing the 'writing as process'. This is where this section ends. I will now move on to addressing my original questions before outlining my means of assessment of quality of this research.

7 Answering Questions?

I title this chapter as a question itself, as I am unsure if I will answer the research questions, or even if that is the appropriate intention. On the hope of finding clear answers to research questions, Pryor (2010) writes,

for a poststructuralist finding an answer in this way would be seen as closing down a problem, when their intention is to 'open up' (p. 165)

In the spirit of opening up, I will offer some reflections to each question in turn.

RQ1: How is meaning constructed through revisiting former youth strikers' stories about their experiences?

In the same way that Riessman's (1993) model offered multiple layers of representation, there are numerous layers of meaning-making occurring in this research process, including but not limited to the following: the original living of the experiences, the telling of the stories, the re-telling, the choice of quotes to re-visit in the reflective interview process, the creation of 'conversations' and the analytic comments I offer. Focussing on the evaluative statements in the participants' narratives, and particularly those hindsight statements in the 2023 narratives, led to a process of analysis involving multiple perspective, resembling the ideas of filmmakers' takes (Mishler, 2004) or crystallisation (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005).

From Richardson and St Pierre (2005), I came to understand that the process of writing in response to the 'conversations' presented here was part of my own process of analysis. Meaning emerged for me from the research through the act of writing. As I read back over my analytic reflections, I notice how much I draw on critical approaches to make sense of the narratives of the young activists, paying attention to discourse about power, agency and the place of young people in society. Given that one of the goals of critical pedagogy is to encourage active citizenship and participation in democratic processes (Giroux, 2010), I believe understanding youth power and agency is important. What I read in the young people's stories was both a tale of powerlessness and a story of young people realising their power and agency. There was also a sense of young people writing themselves into the story as the protagonists, which feels the same as claiming agency in many ways. This then becomes a story to live by and through, which seems to help overcome feelings of powerlessness. The distancing from negative emotions shown by Dayo and Amari leads me to questions about how sustainable it is to build a movement around the negative emotions of worry and fear, which the wider rhetoric of the YS4C messaging relies on. I wonder whether more positive messaging is needed to engage young people in climate action in a sustainable way. I wonder if it is time for a message

which focuses less on intergenerational injustice, and more on the positive changes that can be made through collective action and collaboration.

Overall, through this process, I have come to understand that 'meaning' for me does not represent a static end to a finished process. However, to end with nothing to say would feel like a cop-out. This work is not *meaningless*. For me it is the understanding of my process that represents the meaning, as articulated in my interpretation of Brown's (2015) concept of *find-ings*.

RQ2: By reflecting on my research process, how am I becoming a narrative inquirer?

I have come to understand through this research journey that the process of attending to my research practice and asking myself questions is the process of *becoming* a narrative inquirer. I do not mean to suggest that I will ever complete that journey. Those questions offer an opening up that will continue to serve me, and possibly others on similar journeys. I sought to organise some of my key questions under the three subheadings below.

Epistemological / Paradigmatic

Do I claim some objective truth in my work? How can I be more critical in my analysis? Where is the space to disrupt? Do I avoid the trap of binary framings? How can I engage with post-qualitative theory going forwards? What about posthumanism?

Ethical

What is my positioning in relation to the landscape of my study? Whose stories am I portraying? Do I fully acknowledge the power and privilege of my role? How do I navigate the responsibility of the task? To what extent are the participants co-producers of knowledge? Can they be involved more meaningfully? How can I make my approach more participatory? How can I invite the reader to question my authority?

Meaning-making

Where do the three dimensions of situation, continuity and interaction come into play? Is one interpretation more 'true' than another? How subjective is too subjective? How explicit is too explicit? How can I stay in the uncertainty? Why does any of it matter?

8 Assessing Quality: Strengths, Limitations and Opportunities

To assess the quality of this research, I reviewed criteria as suggested by numerous researchers. The increasing diversity of approaches in qualitative research makes it difficult to evaluate all research in the same way. Indeed, Freeman et al. (2007) suggest "it is neither desirable nor possible to reach consensus about or prescribe standards of evidence in this diverse field" (p. 25). Bochner (2000) argues against traditional empiricist criteria, referring to them as "downright silly" (p. 268). Many critiques of criteriology have led to creations of new sets of criteria (Tracy, 2010), for example, Lather (1993) in playing with the question of "What do you do with validity once you've met poststructuralism?" (p. 674) arrives at a new set of criteria specific to the poststructuralist paradigm. In the field of narrative inquiry specifically, Clandinin and Connelly (2006) speak of the lack of accepted criteria on what passes for high-quality research (p. 478). For the critical narrative inquiry approach, Pino Gavidia and Adu (2022) suggest the following criteria: rigour; trustworthiness; sensitivity. I will consider how my research can be assessed according to these three categories. I do not mean to suggest that these criteria are appropriate for all such research, but in this case, I find them relevant enough to be useful. As ever, the reader may disagree.

8.3 Rigour

A strength of this study is its rigorous and innovative design. Gathering new narratives as well as revisiting old stories with original participants provides a rich set of qualitative data. Returning to previous narratives with the original research participants is not something I have found many examples of within the literature. While researchers themselves often return to old data to look for new meaning (see for example Andrews, 2008; Mishler, 2004; Riessman, 2004) it is uncommon for the original participants to be part of this process. However, the added conceptual complexity also presents a challenge in this study. As outlined in the methodology section, narrative inquiry as conceptualised by Riessman (1993) involves a minimum of five stages of representation. In my design, the addition of a retrospective review of previous narratives adds multiple additional layers to that model, from my own choices of which sections of the earlier narratives to return to, to the participants' additional representations of their experiences, to my own analysis and reporting, there are many more decisions to be made to arrive at the final representation. To attend to all of these processes would lead to a convoluted final report, hence some of the rigour is lost in the detail. A robust framework through which to explore notions of temporality would have added to the conceptual rigour of this study. Similarly, this work would have benefited from additional conceptual clarity around the idea of a 'process of becoming', drawing perhaps on the theorisation offered by Deleuze. However, this was deemed beyond the scope of this masters dissertation.

8.4 Trustworthiness

Riessman (1993) describes the issue of the truth of what a teller says as “excruciatingly complex” (p. 21). Following the levels of representation (Figure 2), it is clear that the narrative itself does not give us direct access to the reality of the lived experiences. Rather than search for one objective truth to validate, I have taken inspiration from the process that Richardson and St Pierre (2005) call ‘crystallisation’ (p. 963), which they propose as a postmodernist alternative to the concept of triangulation. They call the triangle a “rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object”, while they claim crystals “grow, change and are altered”, offering a way to view the world from multiple perspectives. This is what I have sought to do by bringing in the perspectives of the participants and myself at different points in time, following the call from Mishler (2004) to take inspiration from filmmakers’ multiple takes.

This dissertation is constrained by word count, which means in selecting certain elements over others, I have privileged certain parts of the stories. This can lead to what has been termed “narrative smoothing” (Spence 1986, as cited in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), whereby inquirers seek to present clean plots in their final reports. I have attempted to be explicit about my reasons for choosing certain aspects of the narratives to present. Nevertheless, there is far more data that I did not report on here, which leaves the text incomplete and leaves the reader to wonder about the stories which have not been told. This is a balancing act, and I hope to have been sufficiently explicit to afford the reader trust in my in my process.

I would suggest the trustworthiness in this inquiry is not about how closely the narratives relate to reality, rather the extent to which the reader trusts the process of the inquiry. I have sought to use the technique of unreliable narrator, as explored by De Freitas (2007), to encourage the reader to question my authority as the one making claims in this report. I have reiterated at multiple points that the conclusions I draw are those that are useful to me as a researcher and educator and that they are not more true than the conclusions another reader may draw.

While postpositivist research would assert that personal involvement in the area under investigation (i.e. environmental activism) may constitute bias, critical feminist scholars reject this idea. Oakley (1981) writes that “personal involvement is more than dangerous bias – it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives” (p. 58). In the tradition of narrative inquiry, being a part of the landscape does not undermine the validity of the research. Clandinin 2006 writes of inquirers that “They too live on the landscape and are complicit in the world they study.” As Hutchinson (2015) writes, “the places I inhabit also inhabit me”. In this sense, it is through being part of the landscape of environmental activism that I connect to my participants. It

must be acknowledged that this also alters the way I perceive things and ascribe significance; I am emotionally invested in climate activism and have a personal belief in the need for such action.

In researching my own reflections on my practice as researcher, I have sought to maintain a critical analytic voice in my comments which is distinct from my reflective voice in the journal entries which I analyse. At the same time, I do not hide from the fact that it is all me. The subjectivity of this work is not a weakness, rather its strength. It is only through being so explicitly self-reflexive that the necessary degree of self-reflection can occur. This does feel like a navel-gazing activity at times, and may come across as pretentious or self-indulgent. That is not lost on me as the author, and I believe it is important to demonstrate that self-awareness. Hence, in my aims I make clear that this process is an exercise in my own development, rather than claiming to offer a broader contribution to the field.

8.5 Sensitivity

Pino Gavidia and Adu (2022) suggest sensitivity to research paradigm as a final criterion. In this case, as a piece of critical research, human liberation must be the ultimate goal (Usher, 1996). In reality, this research does not make such grand claims, nor answer the question of 'liberation for whom?'. While this research has sought to share power by bringing the young people back into the process of making meaning from their experiencing by re-interviewing them to provide another perspective and a chance for them to participate in a part of the analysis of their own words, realistically a truly democratic approach would involve much greater participation in the research design and implementation. Multiple iterative steps and a form of collaborative writing would be required to develop a truly participatory approach.

A limitation of this research comes also from one of its main strengths – by becoming a self-reflective process focussing on my own researcher journey, it shifts some focus from the participants and their stories. Hence, perhaps this research seeks to do too much for a single piece of work. In order to focus on my journey to becoming, I needed to conduct a piece of substantive research to have a journey to focus on, but the self-reflection element detracted from the participatory narrative inquiry process.

8.6 Opportunities

There is an opportunity for future research, to build on the ideas presented here about involving young people as meaning-makers of their own storied experiences by bringing their perspectives in at various timepoints and with a chance to offer additional evaluation of their own, as well as hindsight statements. By making the research process more participatory, young people could be given more power and agency within the process. This would lead to a piece of work which was

more true to the critical theory tradition and offered real transformative potential. By making young people the researchers of their own experiences, they can be the ones make the conclusions about what changes are needed to transform the systems that they live within.

9 End-ings / New Open-ings

The findings of this study are about new 'open-ings', rather than conclusions. Given the scope of this work to offer a grounding for my future doctoral research, my concluding words are about setting a direction for future travel, rather than stating an endpoint. Through engaging with the stories of the young people, I found that the process of the research and my own journey as researcher were deeply linked. Where I had initially envisaged a clear separation between the two levels of the study, I found that the meta-level thinking about the research process were a necessary part of conducting the study itself. The questions I grappled with along the way around my own subjectivity, the meaning-making process and the uncertainties I faced were as much a part of the findings as the stories of the young people themselves. To summarise, the 'meaning' I made from the young people's stories are not my conclusions. Those meanings are only of use to me. What matters is what is done with the meaning made. That involves what I do next and also what you, the reader, decide to do with the sense you have made of the stories reported here, whether that be the stories of the young people and their activism, or the story of my grappling with the big questions about my research process. Reader, I invite you to consider your own openings. As for me, I see my task now as working with educators and young people to explore how pedagogical approaches can best meet the needs of young people in addressing issues of climate justice in such uncertain times. As a critical educator, I believe in cultivating the criticality required for young people to embrace their own agency in the face of the climate crisis. Seeking hope in new youth movements emerging is not enough. In my role as an education researcher, I see the need for a positive story of collective hope through collaborative action to motivate positive change in a way which will be sustainable going forwards.

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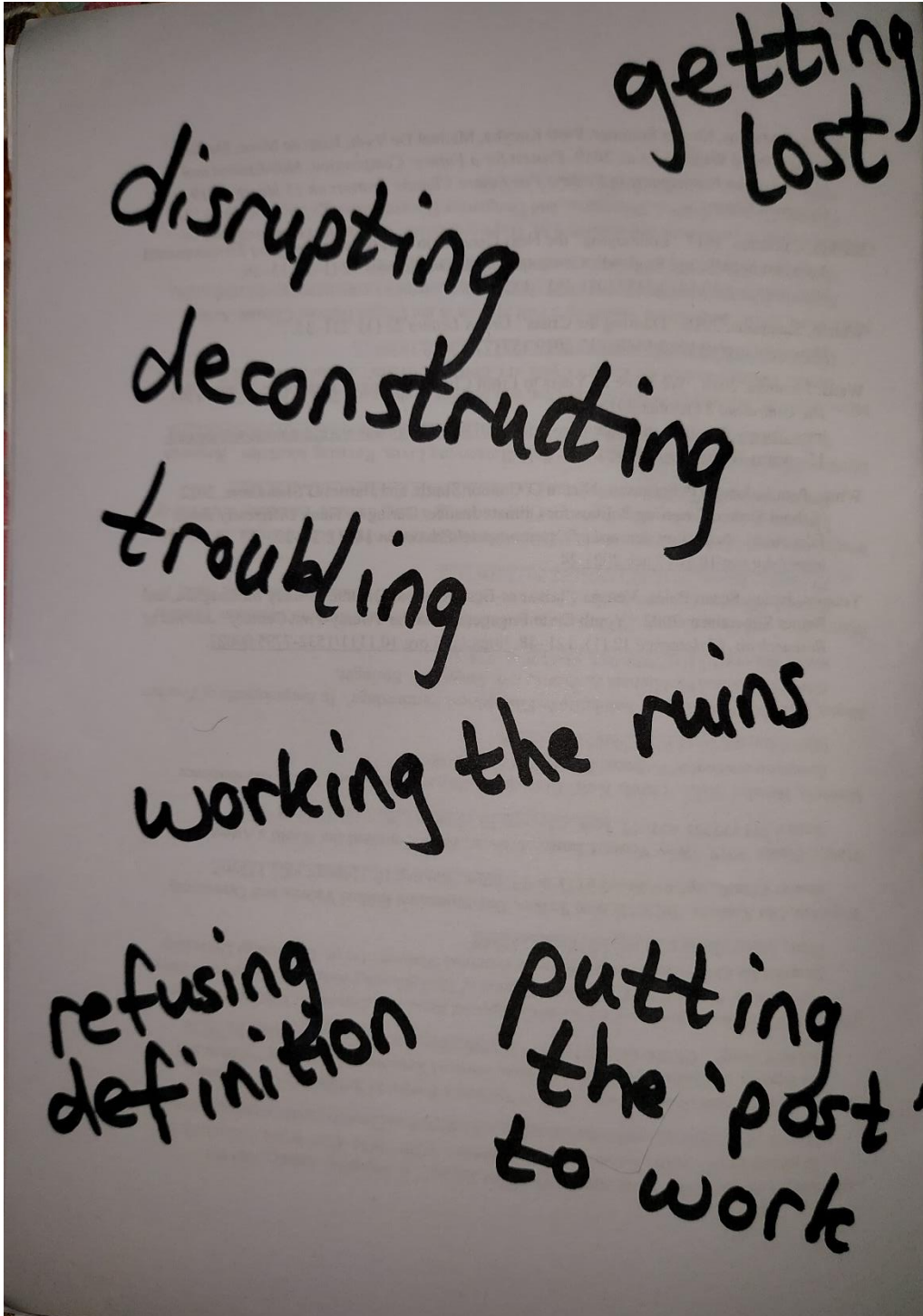
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Appendices

Appendix A: Epistemological Inspiration



Words/phrases that resonated with my epistemological approach in my reading of the works of Patti Lather

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

The intended format involves two parts to the interview, but in practice there may be more fluidity.

Interview part 1: new narratives – MAX 20 mins

Phase	Prompts/Notes	Notes
Initiation	In this interview, I will ask you to talk about certain themes or ideas. There are no particular answers I am looking for. Whatever you choose to tell me is valid.	
Main narration	“Tell me your story of being a school striker”. “The story starts where you choose and ends where you choose”. This may be now or in the past. It is up to the narrators. Extra prompts to elicit narratives: How did that come about? What happened before? Describe the scene. Can you tell me more about that part of the story? Tell me about a moment... TAKE YOUR TIME	
Questioning phase	This section seeks to draw expand on ideas. If only past stories are told in the main narration, here I will ask some questions to determine their current positioning.	
Concluding talk	Sense-checking, reflecting ideas back to participants.	

This interview framework is based on that proposed by Bauer and Jovchelovitch (2000).

Interview part 2: revisiting old stories – MAX 30 mins

Quotes	In this section, participants will be presented with around six quotes from their own 2020 interview with me for my original dissertation study.
Concluding Talk	This will be the final opportunity for participants to feed into the collaborative meaning-making process. I will reflect initial interpretations back to participants as part of checking process

This part of the interview is inspired by PNI (Kurtz, 2014)

FINAL QUESTIONS: How does this relate to education? – MAX 10 mins

Was your experience educational? To yourself and/or others?

What can the education system learn from the youth strike movement?

Appendix C: Table of Quotes (first page only)

Dayo	Amari	Bobby
<p>On first impressions: I was amazed by kind of it, and by how many people actually turned up and then when they had the second one still people were turning up because, obviously, it was like you were missing school for the first one so it's like, you know, that's kind of a novelty, but then when the novelty didn't wear off I kind of was very interested in getting more involved, so I can actively like make it a bigger thing</p>	<p>On joining the strikes: I've been to a few marches when I was younger. But it didn't feel like they really achieved anything. And when this youth strike happened with Greta Thunberg. It was suddenly a massive thing that the media was reporting on. And it felt like I was part of something that could actually make a difference.</p>	<p>On first impressions: I would say the first one was quite uncoordinated. It was only like two people. One girl and her dad, running the whole thing. But it was just, like, such an inspiring thing. Then, I didn't, I didn't go back to the next one. Um, I think the next one I was busy. But then I did actually come back. And I think it was something that really inspired me. So when someone said, "Do you want to get involved?", I was like, "Yeah, sure". So I started going to meetings. And it just felt like... a cause I really cared about. And there was actually some way I could actually help.</p>
<p>Describe the scene at a BYS4C rally: I guess I've always had this... it's kind of more of a feeling... and it's like, because, um we would be at the front, a lot of the time, so we weren't actually in it, but it's, like, the feeling when you're at the front, like, leading, kind of guiding people to where to go. And it's, like, the kind of sense of, there's such a sense of hope and I think that's why a lot of people are so into it, like, so, kind of willing to turn up</p>	<p>On the emotional reactions to the crisis: There's definitely a lot of worry and anxiety about our futures. Given that we don't really know what's going to happen. And what the world will be like, and especially with other crises going on, like the economic crisis, and stuff like Brexit and things. And now, coronavirus. I think a lot of us are pretty worried about our futures. And also, I mean, there's grief, about the destruction of the natural world. And for people who are experiencing. Even worse, effects.</p>	<p>On the people: there's a real sense of community. I would say, and there's a lot of very nice people involved. And I think, yeah, that's what's really built the movement is how yeah,... how people, at least in the Bristol group. The National Youth Strike Group is this whole other thing, but we, we decided to leave in the end, due to toxicity, and other issues. So there have been some problems, especially with the national team. But I think, in Bristol it's, it's really a nice group of people, and I think. Yeah. I have made friendships through it. And there's a lot of people that I trust quite a lot in the movement.</p>
<p>On school striking: actually most of us care very deeply about education which is why we do it like we're actually very very passionate about education, and that's why we want to kind of do this to educate more people about the issues and yeah like so I was just frustrated, like I obviously when I started, I couldn't vote, and I couldn't. Like, and there's just the government wasn't really doing anything and they still aren't.</p>	<p>On crossover between movements: I think everyone who's an activist in the environmental movement will also support. Black Lives Matter and go to protests like that. But also, I think there is an issue of of racism and less representation of vme, people in the climate movement. Because, like for example. Climate activists in the global south, have been directly on the front line, and have been directly</p>	<p>On responses from adults: I think the teachers are quite supportive. And I think most adults I've spoken to in other places. Most of them, are, they also actually understand what we're doing. It definitely helps in Bristol. We're quite a left-wing city, but yeah. There have been cases of people that just don't understand at all why we're there, and think we should go back to school. It can be quite hard to try and convince them that we are actually doing something that needs to be done. But I think, on the</p>

Appendix D: Ethical Approval from School of Education Ethics Committee



27/03/2023

Dear Ms Lauren Hennessy

Ref: 14622

Title: Re-visiting former youth climate strikers and their stories

Thank you for submitting your ethics application for the above-named study. The School of Education Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your ethics application and we can confirm that your ethics application has received a favourable ethical opinion.

Please note that the School of Education Research Ethics Committee expects to be notified of any changes or deviations in the study.

If you have any queries regarding your research ethics review please contact research-ethics@bristol.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

Dr Ioanna Bakopoulou

School of Education Research Ethics Committee

Appendix E: Elaboration of Steps in Labov's Model of Narrative Analysis

Step in Labov's Model	Clarifying questions as suggested by Patterson (2003)
Abstract	What is the story about?
Orientation	Who, when, where?
Complicating Action	Then what happened?
Evaluation	So what?
Result	What finally happened?
Coda	Rather than asking a question it puts off a question.

Appendix F: Example of Labovian Narrative Analysis (3 pages of tables)

Amari 2020	Amari 2023
<p>1. Abstract</p> <p>Um, I've kind of always been concerned about the environment and interested in environmental activism.</p>	<p>1. Abstract</p> <p>Yeah, so it started because</p>
<p>2. Orientation</p> <p>And I've been to a few marches when I was younger. <u>But it didn't feel like they really achieved anything.</u></p>	<p>2. Orientation</p> <p>I went along to the first Youth Strike, <u>which I had a good time and I felt it was a good thing for me to be doing,</u> so I just kept going to the rest of them basically</p>
<p>3. Complicating Action</p> <p>And when this youth strike happened with Greta Thunberg, <u>it was suddenly a massive thing that the media was reporting on, and it felt like I was part of something that could actually make a difference.</u></p>	<p>3. Complicating Action</p> <p>From that, I got involved in XR Youth. So, I've not been involved in organising Youth Strikes, but I'm involved in XR Youth, so organising other sorts of activism and protests and stuff.</p>
<p>4. Resolution</p> <p>So I've been to almost all of the youth strikes, and I've joined the local Extinction Rebellion youth group.</p>	<p>4. Resolution</p> <p>So, I went to basically every Youth Strike before COVID, so when I was in Year 9 and 10 in school, then obviously they stopped for a bit, then after lockdown, in Bristol, they didn't really start up again, <u>because I think a lot of people who were involved in organising them started getting involved with other groups like XR or they went to uni and moved somewhere else</u></p>
<p>5. Coda</p>	<p>5. Coda</p> <p>So, there were a few more Youth Strikes after that, but not as regular as they had been. I don't know what else to mention.</p>

Bobby 2020	Bobby 2023
<p>1. Abstract</p> <p>Well, I think my family, um, and their interest in politics has always helped. ... climate change has always been something that's been quite important to them, and being an environmentalist.</p>	<p>1. Abstract</p> <p>Yeah, so I guess I was always raised to think about the environment by my parents... that's kind of just like stayed in my mind... climate change is a key issue, but it wasn't until 2019 when the Climate Strike movement shot up in the UK that I did anything else.</p>
<p>2. Orientation</p> <p>And I was actually first told about the climate strikes when I was sitting in a cafe with a few of my friends.</p>	<p>2. Orientation</p> <p>Because back in 2019 Greta Thunberg started doing climate strikes every Friday outside the Swedish Parliament, but then, in February 2019, there was like a push to get a bunch of different cities and towns across the UK, including Bristol and London, to do Climate Strikes themselves.</p>
<p>3. Complicating Action</p> <p>So we saw the Facebook event, and I talked to my parents and they were okay with me going. So that was the Sunday before.</p>	<p>3. Complicating Action</p> <p>And I remember just sitting in Boston Tea Party on Gloucester Road with a few of my friends when I first heard about it,...and then it was sort of a, "yeah, we could actually do this". I remember talking to my parents about it who seemed to think it was a good idea which, yeah, <u>trying to convince them that I should get a day off school was an interesting... interesting process</u> but, yeah, nevertheless was successful.</p>
<p>4. Resolution</p> <p>And we just kind of went down on, um, Friday. <u>And, yeah, it was, um, it was, I mean I would say the first one was quite uncoordinated.</u> It was only like two people. One girl and her dad, running the whole thing. <u>But it was just, like, such an inspiring thing.</u></p>	<p>4. Resolution</p> <p>And yeah, come the day, there was... hundreds of people from my school ended up going. <u>And it was just like... I've never been to [inaudible] that new, kind of electric feeling of a bunch of people, they're... the whole thing was rather chaotic</u></p>
<p>5. Coda</p> <p>So when someone said, Do you want to get involved, I was like, "Yeah, sure". So I started going to meetings. <u>And it just felt like... a cause I really cared about and there was actually some way I could actually help.</u></p>	<p>5. Coda</p> <p>Nothing like how much it's ended up being, with coordination, stewards and a banner, but it was just... it was a sort of young people run around town and block traffic for two hours afterwards, which, <u>yeah, was just a completely different experience to anything I'd done before, and I think for most people there.</u></p>

Dayo 2020	Dayo 2023
<p>1. Abstract</p> <p>Yeah, I guess like, like, kind of the way that I was brought up it was always like you if you want to like see something change you have to be like actively involved in it, for my parents it was very much emphasis on, like, voting and things like that but then also like, um, I did attend protests, like, I definitely attended protests when I was younger.</p>	<p>1. Abstract</p> <p>Okay, God, I actually can't remember exactly when this...</p>
<p>2. Orientation</p> <p>And then I went to the first one in February, which was actually organised by a girl that's completely separate from our, like, group now</p>	<p>2. Orientation</p> <p>it must have been 2019. Yeah, so it was like around spring time of 2019. There had been the first ever Bristol School strike which took place in February 2019 which was organised by just a single girl and her dad</p>
<p>3. Complicating Action</p> <p><u>I was amazed by kind of it,</u> and by how many people actually turned up and then when they had the second one still people were turning up because, obviously, it was like you were missing school for the first one so it's like, <u>you know, that's kind of a novelty,</u></p>	<p>3. Complicating Action</p> <p>and then a group of students had kind of taken... been like, "okay, we want to continue this, like, that was great but like it was a one time thing".</p>
<p>4. Resolution</p> <p><u>but then when the novelty didn't wear off I kind of was very interested in getting more involved,</u> so I can actively like make it a bigger thing</p>	<p>4. Resolution</p> <p>Yeah, so I was really... kind of got increasingly involved as it increasingly grew and then we had our famous strike in February of 2020, which was we were... Greta reached out to one of the members of the group and asked if we could organise a strike and so in eight days we organised a strike that 30,000 people attended. <u>Yeah, it was a once in a lifetime opportunity and it was kind of insane and doesn't really feel real.</u></p>
<p>5. Coda</p> <p>and because now we're trying to kind of expand what we do as well so it's no longer just strikes because obviously we recognise, obviously we can't strike now.</p>	<p>5. Coda</p> <p>and at that point had decided I was going on to study environmental science. So I was very interested, obviously, in the environment and <u>it really felt... I think, you know, it felt like we were really doing something and really having an impact, even just locally.</u></p>

Appendix G: Self-Confrontation Process

2020	NOW
<p>“It seems that to Amari the version of the ‘stolen future’ narrative which casts youth as the protagonists is particularly powerful.” → because they commented that they had only ever been in adult activist spaces before</p>	<p>This is not how I read this now.</p>
<p>“the mention of the media attention around Thunberg is evidence of the way Amari has been particularly captivated by the story surrounding Thunberg.”</p>	<p>I don't read it like that at all anymore. I think it is purely about achieving results, and the media attention is just the strategy. Greta is a tool.</p>
<p>, there is the notion of the perceived impact of the action – that it's a ‘massive thing’ which could ‘make a difference’. This idea of impact comes up again when Amari refers to the successful campaign to prevent the Bristol Airport expansion. Here the perceived impact of the strikes is specifically relevant to the Bristol context. This acknowledgment of positive steps contrasts with the ‘stolen future’ theme of total inaction.</p>	<p>I don't read it like that at all anymore. I think it is purely about achieving results, and the media attention is just the strategy. Great is a tool.</p>
<p>“when this youth strike happened with Greta Thunberg, it was suddenly a massive thing that the media was reporting on. And it felt like I was part of something that could actually make a difference.” (Amari) There is a lot to unpack in this quote from Amari. Firstly, the idea of being ‘part of something’ suggests the importance of collective identity to Amari (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). It also speaks to the need to have a place within the movement which for me is akin to determining one's stories to live by.</p>	<p>Now I read this less as Amari feeling the need to be part of something, and more as Amari wanted to see a change. i.e. less about needing to be a part of that change, more about needing the change to happen!</p>
<p>Bobby recognises the effectiveness of the YS4C narrative and Greta's way of speaking: “I think the school strikes with Greta Thunberg and the way she speaks, I think has really rallied a lot of people. And I think that is going to continue” (Bobby) This comment implies the sense of hope that the success of the ‘stolen future’ narrative in mobilising youth activists will endure</p>	<p>does Bobby's later narrative make a similar point? again, like Amari's quote above, I see this as more strategic now, than about Greta as a 'leader' Bobby does talk later about the excitement of being retweeted by Greta</p>