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Narrative Analysis

Studying the Development
of Individuals in Society

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Creative Uses of Cultural Genres

Colette Daiute

Telling—or writing—a story about an event in your life is telling a social story. Autobiographical narrations are also, to be sure, personal and unique, but the social nature of narrating is often overlooked in research and education. In particular, to appreciate what young people are doing when we ask them to share their personal experiences in public institutions like school, we need a theory to guide our reading of narratives as conversations.

This chapter focuses on how young narrators juggle the demanding yet potentially rewarding activity of narrating in public settings, and it offers insights for research and educational designs sensitive to the tensions children feel between fitting in and expressing some of their personal diversity. I draw on data from a study of 7- through 10-year-old children's autobiographical and fictional narrating in a multiyear study about discrimination conflicts in the context of a violence prevention program (Walker, 1998). Autobiographical and fictional narrating proved to be valuable developmental media for children's analysis of social issues, and children's narrating practices in this context taught me a lot about the nature of narrating as an adaptive and subversive process. The results of the study suggest that as researchers and educators we should redefine narrating to account for issues of power and creativity.

Narrating Social Development

Scholars have argued that, beyond mere reporting, narrating is a medium of identity development, healing, learning, and planning for the future (Bamberg, 1997; Daiute & Griffin, 1993; Lightfoot, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1991; Spence, 1982). Theories of narrative development explain that telling one's story creates one's self-concept—an idea that has evolved over time in psychology.¹ This important insight that narrating a life creates its meaning should not, however, obscure the social nature of that process.

Sociohistorical theory explains, for example, that human development is a social process (Vygotsky, 1978). Sociohistorical theories propose several mechanisms for the socialization of cognitive, affective, and social skills, including internalization (Vygotsky, 1978), procedural facilitation (Rogoff, 1990), activity (Arievitch, & Stetsenko, 2000), and dialogic processes (Bakhtin, 1986). As one sociohistorical theorist explains, personality

originally arises in society . . . and [one] becomes a personality only as a subject of social relations. . . . The method of . . . dialectics requires that we go further and investigate the development as a process of "self-movement," that is, investigate its internal moving relations, contradictions, and mutual transitions. (Leont'ev, 1978, p. 105)

Many scholars have focused on narrating as a site of development because it is an activity of social cohesion entailing interactions among individuals' values and actions, which relate dynamically in culturally heterogeneous societies.

Psychodynamic theories envision narrating as a means for eliciting subconscious or unconscious memories and feelings about interpersonal processes (Freud, 1909). Freud (1909) noted the importance of verbalizing dreams, fantasies, and other psychological events as a talking cure which could offer temporary relief by "sweeping the mind clean" and "bring[ing] about the disappearance of painful symptoms of . . . illness" (p. 8). In this view, language is a vehicle for raising repressed feelings to consciousness. Later psychoanalytic theorists extended the role of the narrative, defining it as an "aptly chosen reconstruction [that] can fill the gap between two apparently unrelated events and, in the process, make sense out of nonsense" (Spence, 1982, p. 21). That explanation posits a more integrative function for narrating in the developmental process. Recently, the narrative therapy movement has acknowledged that change occurs in narrating via processes such as valuation, involving "anything people identify as a

relevant meaning unit when telling their life narrative . . . including . . . a precious memory, a difficult problem, a beloved person, an unreachable goal, an unanticipated death of a significant other, and so forth" (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995, p. 15). "Through the process of self-reflection, in dialogue with oneself or another person, valuations are organized into a single narratively structured system." (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995, p. 15).

This project of "how a human being turns him- or herself into a subject" (Foucault, 1988, p. 3) acknowledges tensions between cultural prescriptions and people's lived experiences: "How had the subject been compelled to decipher himself [or herself] in regard to what was forbidden?" (Foucault, 1988, p. 17). Literary scholars explain life processes with discourse analyses of narrative structure, imagery, and myriad other cultural devices as they embody mores and practices that become perceptions defining human connections like love and distances like racism (Gates, 1992; Gergen & Gergen, 1995; Morrison, 1992). Telling one's story is, also, very much about presenting one's self in ways that conform to cultural ideals (Harré, & van Langenhoeve, 1999). On the other hand, in Western cultures, narrating one's "best self" (Oliviera, 1999) or heroic self (Freeman, 1998) is also a means for identifying personal subjectivities and goals that distinguish one's self from other selves. Narrating is a form of social positioning (Bamberg, this volume; Stanley & Billig, this volume), even in writing (Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, & Prendergast, 1997) where, according to dialogic theory, the audience looms large, although its presense is usually tacit.

Dialogic theory offers insights for defining narrative texts as social interactions. "Any speaker is . . . a respondent . . . not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69). Conceptualizing oral and written discourse as "speech genres," this insight extends to written works: "The work is a link in the chain of speech communication. Like the rejoinder in a dialogue, it is related to other work-utterances: both those to which it responds and those that respond to it" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 75).

Narrative texts are, thus, intersubjective—belonging to the context as well as to the author. Physical circumstances of life contexts—a salient word, glance, movement, physical arrangement—are embedded in the dialogue among narrator, audiences, and self-subject. Past interactions, such as those in our native cultures, become relatively stable organizational frames (also referred to as "cultural scripts" by Nelson, this volume), such as when children who identify as European American consistently describe conflicts as fights, while children who identify as African American describe conflicts

as mutual problems for participants acting in broader social systems (Daiute & Jones, 2003). Narrators are thus social agents, but even young children transform the social worlds in which they live. On the basis of this dialogic theory of writing, we can redefine narrative genres as they serve important functions in public institutions.

Autobiographical narrating is the genre of choice in research and practice because it is usually assumed to be the quintessential identity medium. Researchers, educators, and clinicians mention the naturalness, authenticity, cultural relevance, and psychosocial richness of personal narration. Qualitative research methods have involved collecting and analyzing narrative discourse in participant observations, ethnographies, and interview studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Psychological research, in particular, has a history of eliciting narratives of different kinds for different purposes. Narratives have, for example, been elicited as projective tools to assess personality (Smith, Feld, & Franz, 1992), health (Baerger & McAdams, 1999), community relations (Mishler, 1986), law, and beliefs about a whole range of phenomena from life choices to diverse ways of interpreting people and events in the world. Narrative writing is also a popular genre in U.S. schools, especially during the elementary years and, increasingly, up through high school (Graves, 1983; Greenwald, Persky, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999).

In contrast, fiction is not typically included as a medium of knowledge or identity development. Although reading fiction is sometimes the basis for literacy instruction in the elementary grades, fiction writing is not a prominent activity in the typical curriculum. In the primary grades, developmentalists and educators value fiction for its role as a medium akin to play and, sometimes, emotional release—but not as a medium of identity development or learning. Fiction writing is not, after all, a first-person medium. Fiction is also presumed to be detached from reality and thus not authentic or related to scientific subject matter. This exclusion of fiction writing from elementary and even secondary school contexts is curious indeed given the recent emphasis on literature in the curriculum. The distinction between reading and writing fiction underscores the place of literature as a domain of others rather than self and of art rather than development.

When defining narrative writing as dialogical, we pose questions about familiar narrative genres. If narrative writing is a conversation, is self-reporting always personal and true? Is fiction always other-worldly? I propose the concept “sociobiographical activity” to blur such distinctions between autobiography and fiction in ways that account for dynamic uses of these genres as developmental media. I will draw on a study of children’s writing to illustrate how autobiographies are social and how fictional accounts are highly subjective. As a theory-based unit of analysis,

sociobiography integrates the forces of social reproduction, which play a major role in children’s self-representations and, at the same time, children’s subjective experiences, which they express by exploiting relatively unclaimed genres, like fiction.

Given the public nature of autobiographical narrating in the face of institutional values and pressures, it would be no surprise if narrators performed personal experiences in ways that conform to the context. Children’s writing, like their oral interactions, responds to the demands of the context, such that autobiographical writing “about conflicts with peers” in a classroom studying conflict might be oriented more to satisfying the audience than to recalling feelings about a personal conflict experience. Even when children are free to generate their own topics out of journal entries, as is common practice in contemporary elementary education, what they are doing is embedded in a web of explicit and implicit rules (e.g., writing a grabber opening and writing about endearing interactions).

Fiction is rooted in play and virtual reality, which allow people to imagine themselves as they would like to be, fear to be, or have repressed. Freed to some extent from the burdens of verisimilitude, individuals spinning fictional narratives engage their interpretive processes, transforming known contexts to suit desires, needs, and goals. A youngster can for a moment establish some distance from the pressures of institutional values and manipulate them with subjective means like imagination and exaggeration. Fiction thus offers qualities especially adapted to psychosocial development—imagining (also discussed by Sarbin, this volume), expressing a best self, idealized circumstances, and creating alternative scenarios, including ones that are taboo.

Sociobiographical Activities

Sociobiographical activities are analytic tools for moving beyond assumptions about the distinctions between autobiography and fiction in terms of truth. The concept of sociobiography situates development in institutional practices, in this case education, but it could also apply to work (Hollway, 1998), clinical contexts (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995), community organizations (Solis, this volume), and law.

The sociobiographical activities “performing self,” “contesting self,” and “centering self” are units of analysis answering this challenge to investigate children’s development as a complex social system of “moving relations, contradictions, and mutual transitions” (Leonte’v, 1978, p. 105).

Although a text may be written by an individual child, a narrative, according to this theory, is a conversation embodying social context. Each

narrative text represents an intersection of dialogues or “moving relations,” and sociobiographical activities capture tensions among cultural imperatives and responses to those imperatives. Autobiographical and fictional narrative tasks are thus cultural forms carrying a range of previous and potential experiences with which a child must contend. By comparing two similar genres that differ primarily in the nature and stakes of self-exposure, we begin an inquiry into the sociopolitical nature of genres. Information about the context sets the scene for discussing this analysis.

Writing About Social Conflict in a Violence Prevention Program

A curriculum invokes institutional values that children as young as 7 years old can read, as they read their teacher’s likes and dislikes of the official rules and their own need to present a self-image in the educational context. To the extent that the classroom provides opportunities for self-expression, participants have the chance to be complex subjects rather than rigid performances in relation to the institutional demands they perceive and practice. For this discussion of narrative genres as developmental media, I draw on data from an ethics and violence prevention curriculum involving narrative writing about social conflict as a means for socializing conflict resolution strategies (Walker, 1998).

The violence prevention curriculum involved teachers and students in the analysis of social conflicts of ethnic discrimination and strategies for dealing with such conflicts in peaceful ways (Walker, 1998). Curriculum activities toward these ends involved reading and discussing high quality children’s literature about peer conflicts. Literature with a range of culturally embedded examples of discrimination conflicts provided a context for discussing conflicts and individuals’ roles in these conflicts. The selection for third grade classes was *Angel Child, Dragon Child* (Surat, 1983), a story about a recently immigrated Vietnamese girl named Hoa who was the object of discriminatory teasing, and for fifth grade classes the selection was *Mayfield Crossing* (Nelson, 1993), a story about a group of African American children in the South in the 1960s, and the White children in the neighboring town where Black children must attend school after theirs closes. A teacher’s guide for working with each literary selection suggested discussion questions, activities for analyzing and role-playing conflict negotiation strategies, and a variety of writing activities.

Narrative writing activities were designed as opportunities for children to analyze social problems raised in the literary selections, to consider how

such problems had occurred in their own lives, and to imagine effective and healthy ways of dealing with such conflicts. The writing activities included autobiography and fiction, to provide young narrators with different types of exposure to implicit and explicit audiences, including the institution represented in the curriculum and the teacher’s implementation of the curriculum, as well as the children’s peers and parents—in the background but audiences nonetheless. The research rationale for analyzing autobiographical and fictional narratives was that autobiography is a highly public and judgmental forum in which to report conflict experiences, while fiction could provide a more private space.

The following two narratives written by 7-year-old Eudora, in the fall of third grade when she began participating in the curriculum, illustrate how young people narrate personal and fictional accounts of social conflicts.² When asked to write about “a conflict or argument you or someone you know had,” Eudora, who identified as African American, wrote:

Me and Lerissa

Me and Lerissa (my friend) had a disagreement because I wanted to do dolls and some thing else but she wanted to play on her computer but I said “why can’t we just do dolls and she said” no. Fine I will do the computer.

Compare that narrative to one Eudora wrote around the same time, responding to a prompt for a fictional narrative potentially about conflict.³

One day when Jama saw Max and Pat jama felt very sad because she was alone. When it was getting late Jama was going home then when she was eating dinner she was thinking about her friends so after dinner she went to bed when she was going to bed she had a dream about her friend. On the next day she saw Pat and Max again

The dialogic theory of writing is a resource for reading Eudora’s narratives as they speak to the context where she wrote them, as well as for reading

how Eudora represents herself and others as subjects. Eudora is the narrator of "Me and Lerissa," and she is also the subject, "me." Lerissa and the objects and events involved in the conflict are also explicit subjects in the narrative. Implicitly, the various audiences in the classroom context (the curriculum, the teacher, peers) and beyond the classroom (those with whom Eudora interacts outside of school) are also present.

The entire narrative "Me and Lerissa" is a response to an invitation to write about a time when she or someone she knew had a conflict or disagreement, and each phase echoes interactions in the classroom about analyzing how conflicts get started, progress, and must be resolved. "Fine I will do the computer" conforms, for example, to the teacher's emphasis on resolving conflicts.

In the fictional account about Jama, Max, and Pat, the dialogic interactions also occur among the narrator, characters, and audiences, but, in this story, Eudora is not explicitly the subject and thus, as narrator, she can be a ventriloquist voicing her point of view through her characters. And so she does. Like many children in the nine classes whose narrative writing my colleagues and I have studied, Eudora represented conflict differently in her autobiographical and fictional narratives (Daiute, Buteau, & Rawlins, 2001).

Eudora's fictional narrative provides a foil for reading "Me and Lerissa." Notably different in the fictional narrative is the emotional orientation to the task, which reveals a personal perspective by reporting the psychological states of Jama, who emerges as the protagonist. There is a whisper of curriculum values expressed in Jama's individual reflection, yet more prominent is the alternative to curriculum values with the lack of resolution. The emotional expression embodies a subjective voice that is silent in Eudora's more explicitly autobiographical piece.

Reading these narratives in the light of the curriculum context makes clear just how much public scrutiny the children felt when writing about personal experiences and how salient fiction had become in the classroom. A violence prevention program, like any curriculum, conveys a particular version of social relations. The literary selection, the discussion questions, the conflict negotiation skills taught, and feedback to students' talk and writing all convey values about social relationships, what can go wrong in them, and what can be done to address social relational problems. In particular, the emphasis on analyzing conflict as the escalation of interpersonal tensions and on writing peaceful resolutions influenced how children narrated their personal experiences (Daiute, & Jones, 2003; Daiute, Stern, & Lelutiu-Weinberger, 2003).

To examine the nature and extent of this impact, I analyzed autobiographical and fictional narrating by four children whose writing we collected as part of a larger study of the violence prevention curriculum from third through fifth grades. The four children completed eight individually written narratives

(among other texts) in classrooms where we had recorded and analyzed teacher-led discussions for all lessons related to the curriculum (Daiute, Stern, & Lelutiu-Weinberger, 2003). This group includes two girls and two boys, two identifying as African American and two as Latino (the two major identifications among children in the school). Referring to the children with pseudonyms (similar to their names), I will describe how Eudora and Jackson (who identify as African American), Caterina (who identifies as Dominican), and John (who identifies as Puerto Rican) used narrative genres.

Redefining Narrative Genres

Performing, contesting, and centering self are all social interactions, yet they differ in their dialogic emphasis. In performing self activities, the social context is the predominant influence—with narrators reproducing context values. Contesting self activities, in contrast, express ambivalence in the narrator's stance toward social pressures, acknowledging them in a self-interested way by justifying, defending, or aggrandizing a personal perspective that seems at odds with the context values. Centering self activities express a more subjective point of view.

When *performing self*, an author orients to the social context, expressing the values and expectations of the audience. In this case, performance-dominated narrating expresses curriculum values, in particular those emphasizing conflict escalation, de-escalation, conflict negotiation strategies, and resolution, especially peaceful resolution. Performing activities thus highlight specific sociocultural aspects of the narrator's self-presentation. Performing is a predominant activity in the following narrative by Caterina:

A Fight with my Friend

One day me and my friend named: Mary were fighting by mouth. We tesesing each others. She called me a pig and I called her a stup girl So we satring beieng Friends because it's bad.

In addition to performing conflict escalation as it had been examined in class, "She called me a pig and I called her a stup girl," Caterina made it clear that she had been involved in verbal conflict, "[we] were fighting by mouth," the form of conflict that had been presented in class as more tolerable than physical conflict. Caterina also wrote that her conflict with Mary was resolved,

albeit abruptly, "So we satring beiong Friends," and she offered an evaluative coda demonstrating her understanding that "it's bad" to have conflicts.

As we saw in the narrative "Me and Lerissa" above, Eudora also performed an abrupt and somewhat grudging resolution, "Fine I will do the computer," to the conflict she described over a disagreement about play activities. Eudora's appeal to Lerissa, "why can't we just do dolls," mirrors the conflict negotiation strategy of "talking it out" when there's a disagreement, which her teacher had emphasized in curriculum activities.

John, who identified as Puerto Rican, also performed a conflict escalating from calumny to physical fighting, followed by a common resolution of antagonists becoming friends.

When Angel was talking about me. I a talk about him. And we start fighting and hiting each other. We started punching each other every where we went when we were fight we started getting other people to fight then we became friends.

In the following narrative, Jackson also resolved a conflict in which he tried to satisfy two friends.

Friends Fight

one day in music I was working with Alex. Tyrone got Mad a[t] Me Because I did not work with him. But then we came Friends. So I worked with Tyrone. But then Alex got mad at me. But then I with both of them. We all became friends.

"But then I with both of them" expresses the highly valued strategy of compromise (Daiute, Stern, & Lelutiu-Weinberger, 2003).

The following narrative by Jackson performs curriculum values by modeling them in a narration of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s peaceful resistance to conflict (e.g., "turned his cheek," boy cotted the buses"). In some ways, this was an unusual approach because the narrative does not play out the conflict, but it does conform to the predominant value—peace. This was also an unusual response to the autobiographical prompt, as it presented another person as the main character—strategy consistent, I believe, with the idea that the autobiographical narrative had become a genre for performing curriculum values.

M.L.K. J.R.

Hes not a real in-person friend or my age but we celibrate his birth day he is a crist beliver a strong black man and will always be a man to his word Martin Luther King Jr. was a man for our rights, a man that turned his cheek to get hit, who boy cotted the buses to help us, who made this world a better lace, I can't say thank you enough. Thank you so much Maybe God put me in this world to be a man like you were. If I'm the first black president and if I am I'll think of you. Thank you.

Differing from performing activities that orient to social norms, contesting self is a sociobiographical activity that distinguishes, often subtly, a personal stance from a cultural norm. Contesting involves presenting a best self by explaining, justifying, defending, and/or aggrandizing self-representations that ignore or implicitly critique norms. This form of contesting reveals, through narrative organization and inflection, responses about cultural norms not performed. Like performing self, contesting self is socially oriented, but it opens a realm to explain identity and conflict processes that are less-than-ideal, less-than-complete, especially worthy of praise given the difficulty of the situation, or apparently unique in some other way. This analysis is not, however, explicitly marked with reference to the curriculum, or the need to save face, and depends on the background information.

Just as the performed narrative is conformity and normality, contesting self is a claim and justification for uniqueness. An implicit subtext of contesting self is "What else could I do?!"—an appeal recognizing that a personal act might not have been desirable, but that there were justifying circumstances (which may only be alluded to in the narrative). Such explicit (the exclamation point and question mark) and implicit (the evaluative emphasis in "what else") moral illocutionary acts suggest the author's perception of a need to explain his or her actions. Contesting moves also include heroic descriptions implying "I saved the day!" The contesting self might also hide things "We just won't mention *that*!" Self-contesting might also be expressed in shifting the focus to nonself characters, especially to attribute blame for moral infractions. Caterina uses several techniques to complicate her image in this story about a conflict.

In afterschool me and my friend and I had a disagreement, her name is Chantell. One day went to after school together We seat down then she said to me "just because you won the contest of the singing the Monica song, dosen't mean you look like her." I asked her what's borthering you girl said "Nothiing!" In a mean vioce. How come you didn't congrats? Me, In a sweet voice. "Because I was busy you know" She asked me If she look like Monica I said "NO" Boy I knew she was mad because her face got red. I said to her I look like Monica she said "No you don't I said "what" "What has gotten into you." Ever since you I mean I win the contest you got mad. "Caterina" "OK." . . .

Caterina characterizes her side of the interaction as reasonable by reaching out with questions that characterize Chantell as rigid (e.g., "what's bothering you girl," "What has gotten in to you"). Caterina also uses the colloquial "girl," implying solidarity, and contrasts Chantell's "mean voice" with her own "sweet voice." Caterina uses these and other techniques to place responsibility for the conflict with Chantell and the reasonable stance with herself.

Contesting self activities also occurred in the fictional narratives, as in Eudora's text below. In this story, Eudora characterized Jama as a flexible and creative victim of rejection—with Jama explaining why she was sad, then trying several approaches to Max and Pat doing something together and other persistent moves that transform conflict resolution into something more heroic.

When Jama saw Max and Pat laughing she turn back around. She was mad that Max and pat were together. The next day jama did not bother with Max and Pat She knew that they were happy with out her. So instead of Jama staying home she went to the park. After 15 minutes Jama wanted an Ice cream so she walked in the Ice Cream shop. She saw Max and Pat together. Max said" hi to Jama Jama said" Hi back. Max asked Jama were was you the other Day. So she lied to Max and said" I was not feeling well. Pat ask her If she was feeling ok. Jama said" Yes. So max invented Jama to the movies to go see

(Continued)

(Continued)

Monster. Jama said"ok. Jama ask what time Max said" 7:00. Pat and Max said" see you there. Jama said" Bye. At 7:00 Jama met Pat Max and went in the movie theater and Brought Popcorn, soda, and candy. They was a Little Late one minute Later. 2 hours Past the movie was over. And Jama yelled to Max Jama said" Sorry. Max said" why because I lied. I was julious of you and Pat. Jama said" I was your best friend. Max said" we all are friends Jama said" OK. They were all friends later.

Still social, *centering self* emphasizes subjective experience via sensual representations such as expressing emotions, cognitions, and interpretations. Centering activities occur in descriptions of psychological states, multiple author perspectives stated as narrator and as character, and literary devices that enhance the reflectiveness of the presentation. The following fictional narrative by Jackson packs in a range of emotions and senses: "jealous," "so sad," "cried," "saw Max and Pat," "ready to tell," "took a deep breath."

Jama was jealous of Max and Pat. She was so sad she cried on the way home She went out sade again. She saw Max and Pat she was ready to tell Max the news. Ran up to them he took a deep breath.

The character Jama, offered in the fictional narrative prompt, was consistently cast by the young authors as the focal character, indicated by Jama's being mentioned most often, being mentioned first, expressing the central point of view monitoring and evaluating story events, and merging most frequently with the narrator voice; Jama was occasionally represented as "I."

There may be other sociobiographical activities, but performing, contesting, and centering accounted for the self-representational moves appearing in this data set.

What's Going On With Autobiographical and Fictional Writing About Conflict?

Analyses of performing, contesting, and centering activities in the narratives by Eudora, Caterina, Jackson, and John demonstrate the dynamic nature of self-representation. Table 2.2.1 summarizes the patterning of these activities across 16 autobiographical and 16 fictional narratives. After an activity is identified for each meaning unit (defined as a clause with all its dependent clauses), the combination of assignments is the basis for determining the dominant orientation in a text. As shown in Table 2.2.1, some texts are characterized predominantly by one sociobiographical activity but may also include some of another. A few narratives balanced three sociobiographical activities.

Analyses revealed interesting patterns across context and time, illustrating the dialogic nature of self-representations in the narratives as the children used the public face of autobiography and the mask of fiction to perform, critique, defend against, or personalize the values promoted in the curriculum.

Autobiography as Performance

As shown in Table 2.2.1, many of the autobiographical narratives were predominantly involved with performing curriculum values, while a few balanced performing with centering and to a lesser extent with contesting. Especially interesting, considering that autobiography is supposed to be an explicitly self-representational medium, is that centering was never the predominant activity in the autobiographical narratives. The children described very few character psychological states across the autobiographical narratives, depicting mostly "wanting" and "need" as the basis of conflicts in the third grade and eventually "knowledge" and belief in the fifth grade.

The relatively limited range of performing activities in the autobiographical narratives also indicates context sensitivity. While the specific conflict issues across the 16 autobiographical texts included conflicts over play activities, relationships, identity issues (respect, status, etc.), possessions, and others issues, several common conflict values predominated—conflict escalation, conflict negotiation, and resolution. In short, the ways of representing conflicts were limited to the curriculum strategies.

Given differences across African American and Latino cultures, there might have been a broader range of conflict values expressed. African American

Table 2.2.1 Patterning of Sociobiographical Activities Across Narrative Genres in Four Cases

Child	Autobiographical Narrating			Fictional Narrating		
	Performing	Contesting	Centering	Performing	Contesting	Centering
Eudora						
3rd grade, Fall	Predom.	—	—	—	—	Predom.
3rd grade, Spring	Predom.	Some	Some	—	Some	Predom.
5th grade, Fall	Predom.	—	Some	Some	Some	Predom.
5th grade, Spring	Predom.	—	Some	Some	—	Predom.
Caterina						
3rd grade, Fall	Predom.	—	—	Some	—	Predom.
3rd grade, Spring	Predom.	—	—	Some	—	Predom.
5th grade, Fall	Some	Predom.	Some	—	Some	Predom.
5th grade, Spring	Some	Predom.	Some	Some	Predom.	Some
Jackson						
3rd grade, Fall	Some	Some	Some	Some	Some	Some
3rd grade, Spring	Some	Some	Some	Some	—	Predom.
5th grade, Fall	Predom.	—	—	Some	Some	Predom.
5th grade, Spring	Predom.	—	—	Some	Some	Predom.
John						
3rd grade, Fall	Predom.	—	—	—	—	Predom.
3rd grade, Spring	Predom.	—	—	—	—	Some
5th grade, Fall	Predom.	Some	Some	Some	—	Predom.
5th grade, Spring	Predom.	—	—	Some	—	Predom.

Note: "Predom." = the predominant strategy used across the sentences in the text; "Some" = the strategy used some of the time, usually in one or two sentences in the text; "—" = no occurrence of the strategy in the text.

culture is often expressed in explicitly social ways, such as embedding interpersonal interactions in broader social systems and referring to broader powers (like God in Jackson's narrative "M.L.K.J.R.") (Daiute & Jones, 2003; Gates, 1992; Lee, Rosenfeld, Mendenhall, Rivers, & Tynes, this volume; Morrison, 1992). Latino culture often appeals to spirituality, family, and nature (Fine, Roberts, & Weis, 2000; Hurtado, in press).

The performance of these conflict values in the autobiographical narratives could, of course, be interpreted as an internalization of the values and thus as the success of the conflict resolution program. The relative lack of subjectivity around conflict processes in autobiographical narratives, however, and the children's reliance on fictional narratives, as discussed below, suggests a much more complicated situation.

Fiction as Subjectivity

As shown in Table 2.2.1, the children used the fictional narrating context predominantly to express subjectivity in the form of centering. Often behind the veil of Jama, the children expressed emotions, other subjective states, dramatic relationships, and values counter to the curriculum, such as violence.

As we see in Table 2.2.1, sociobiographical activities are more likely to co-occur in the narratives the children wrote in fifth grade than in those they wrote in third grade, suggesting that young people eventually learn to use genres like autobiography and fiction in expected ways, an observation supported in another study, which included writing by college students (Daiute & Stern, 2003).

Performing for Different Audiences

Guided by dialogic theory and previous analyses of institutional values promoted in the curriculum, we have read narrative texts as social interactions and observed how the children responded to different demands in autobiographical and fictional narratives. A brief comparison of the values the children performed in autobiographical narrating across classes illustrates their sensitivity to specific values.

Mrs. Smith, a third grade teacher who identified herself as White, emphasized a different subset of the curriculum values than did Mrs. Morales, a third grade teacher who identified as Puerto Rican. Analyses of teacher-led class discussions devoted to the violence prevention curriculum units in the

fall and spring in nine third and fifth grade classes identified the percentage of teacher and student talk turns expressing the 21 curriculum values (Daiute, Stern, & Lelutiu-Weinberger, 2003). This analysis offered information about different teachers' implementations of the curriculum, which we then related to their students' narrative representations of social conflict across the year. Although Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Morales focused on pedagogical issues in similar ways, they differed in their emphasis on many other values. The differences between Mrs. Smith's and Mrs. Morales's implementations are relevant here because these differences add detail to the notion of performing in narrative writing. This comparison also highlights how teachers interact differently with institutions—as they do with the mainstream educational values in a curriculum.

Mrs. Smith emphasized the values of self-determination (such as the need for all the participants in conflicts to take responsibility for resolving them), understanding the causes of conflict escalation, and the importance and feasibility of resolving conflicts. For example, guiding her students to understand individuals' responsibilities in conflicts, Mrs. Smith said "What could Hoa [the little girl from Vietnam in the novel *Angel Child, Dragon Child*] have done so things wouldn't have gotten so intense? What could the teacher have done so things between Raymond [the red-haired boy who teased Hoa because she wore "pajamas" and talked funny] and Hoa shouldn't have gotten so intense? What should Raymond have done so things wouldn't get so intense?"

Another excerpt of the class discussion several weeks later shows how Mrs. Smith applied this emphasis on conflict resolution to the children's collaboratively written endings to *Angel Child, Dragon Child*. "What we're gonna do is, in the group, if you would like to [you may] share your ending with us, and hopefully many people will. John, the rest of us are going to figure out what they did to solve the conflict. Okay? And I'm going to keep notes. Tomorrow, I'll get this on chart paper. . . . Toni, will you talk about what ways you used to solve the conflict?"

Several excerpts from transcripts of Mrs. Morales's class discussions about *Angel Child, Dragon Child* highlight her very different emphases when guiding class discussion about the same novel. Mrs. Morales emphasized interdependence in conflicts (compared to self-determination), focused on the strategy of appealing to adults to assist in children's conflicts with peers, and qualified conflict resolution, in particular by addressing issues of justice, such as determining responsibility for resolution initiatives based on who was in the wrong. Mrs. Morales also devoted considerable time to discussing how interpersonal conflicts relate to broader problems like

discrimination and to helping children understand that conflicts aren't always resolved easily or at all.

In the following excerpt, Mrs. Morales engages one of her students, Kenny, in analyzing Raymond's part in the conflict with Hoa and over time, this teacher points to an injustice.

Mrs. Morales: Why does Raymond tease Hoa? Why do you think that happens, Kenny? Your opinion, you, your thinking. . . .

Kenny: Raymond, he thought it was not right for them to come into the country and spoil the country with their closing.

Mrs. Morales: Spoil the country with their clothing?

Kenny: I don't know.

Mrs. Morales: That's a strong statement. You think that people that dress differently spoil?

Kenny: Wasn't right for the country.

Mrs. Morales: Why wasn't it right?

Kenny: 'Cause it wasn't what they wanted.

On another day, Mrs. Morales encouraged another student to think critically about conflict resolution. The excerpt begins with Jessie summarizing a narrative her classmate Christine had written.

Jessie: Christine went to the boys' and girls' club . . . where there's like a hockey field, and Christine is waiting on line and the girl said that her friend was first, so the girl's cousin went in and he said to her, she got kicked out.

Mrs. Morales: How did you feel about that, Christine?

Christine: I felt bad 'cause I had next and she said that her friend had next when he was at the end of the line, waiting.

Mrs. Morales: How did you think this made the girl feel? How do you think she was feeling at her end?

Christine: I thought she had felt mad and sad because she got kicked out.

Mrs. Morales: Why do you think she felt mad?

Christine: 'Cause her friend didn't get his way, I got my way.

Mrs. Morales: Would you have done anything differently?

Christine: I would have apologized.

Mrs. Morales: You would have apologized to the girl? Why would you apologize to her?

Christine: I would have said sorry.

Mrs. Morales: But who was in the wrong? Who was doing something that they shouldn't have been?

Students across these classes performed curriculum values in their autobiographical writings, as discussed above, but the specific values performed across classes conformed to ones their teachers had emphasized. Analyses of changes in students' values expressed in their autobiographical narratives at the beginning and end of the school year indicate, for example, that students in Mrs. Smith's class tended to increase conflict resolution in their autobiographical narratives across the school year, while students in Mrs. Morales's class tended to increase the number of resolution strategies but *not* resolutions in their narratives over the school year. This brief description provides some breadth to the idea of performing self-representations.

Significance for Research

Researchers who invite participants to share their understandings, feelings, and opinions by narrating personal experiences are tapping into a rich mode of human discourse, but I have argued here that it is important to acknowledge the intensely social nature of narrating when designing research. I have focused on autobiographical and fictional narrating in an educational context not because narrating in school is uniquely subjected to social forces but for several other reasons. First, failing to recognize that narrators perform often means equating narrative texts with the persons who wrote them. What I suggest here instead is that we read young authors' autobiographical narratives as responses to what they perceive to be requests or imperatives. Reading them as mostly personal or cultural may involve falsely judging students or their cultural backgrounds rather than judging the situation where the narrative was produced. In short, I am arguing that there is no individually authentic narrative. The implication of this

argument is, moreover, that research designs could provide ways of exposing the dialogue within and around narrative data. Employing dialogic theory is one way to do this, and making the audience explicit in the narrative task or interview is another.

Second, narratives are everywhere (as Freeman points out elsewhere in this volume) and are ripe for analysis. The prevalence of narratives in human discourse is certainly another reason why narrative inquiry is so important, but narratives must also be considered as merged with the contexts where they are produced, which may mean acknowledging specific aspects of the context or using theory to guide observation and analysis of the context. I have argued here, for example, that reading autobiographical and fictional narratives with their contexts provides a fuller and more accurate picture of how young people perceive the world around them than about their personal thoughts and beliefs. Any narrative text points elsewhere, so we researchers can gain insights from identifying those distributed points and including them in our analyses.

Finally, personhood is complex, so in studying the development of persons, we must cast broadly across cultural symbols. Sharing personal experience is an important life skill, as well as a research activity, but we have seen here how children find clever—even subversive—ways of expressing their experiences. Examples from children's autobiographical and fictional writing suggest that the imaginative activities required by the latter may be the more important process for personality development up through adolescence and beyond, as other scholars have also argued (Lightfoot, 1997; this volume; Sarbin, this volume). As demonstrated here, fiction in particular, with its anonymity, can hold psychosocial secrets, experiments, and desires, while the public quality of autobiography ensnares the narrator in psychosocial obligations, and those patterns can be further complicated by shifting the proscenium. Understanding how fiction, in particular, can elicit intersubjective themes connected to historical issues that may be censored in public spaces is essential for those of us who work with young people from a range of ethnic and social class backgrounds. School-aged children's creative manipulation of genres designed as autobiographical and fictional suggests that they have the right to a range of different curriculum activities in a range of modes.

Complexity and variation also emerge as important in this study. Coherence is often noted as characteristic of healthy development, but patterns of sociobiographical activities suggest that variability is an indicator of health because it reflects social orientation. If healthy development means, at least in part, orienting to one's environment, then identifying variability or even incoherence spawned of context sensitivity is a measure of health worth

further inquiry. Being able to make flexible use of educational media, as did the children who distributed personal expression to fiction, is also a skill. Issues of power related to these skills are, moreover, appropriate for classroom discussion, and this study suggests children are ready for that.

The potential of the public school context to socialize young people is enormous, so it's important to provide media allowing them diverse representations of self and knowledge. The significance of the idea that the discursive circumstances of everyday life become people, their problems, and their possibilities is that many children grow up involved in activities that limit their physical, symbolic, and emotional lives. A range of approaches is needed to provide children with equitable opportunities, and understanding the developmental power of narrating is central to identifying resources for children in public schools.

Notes

1. Across the recent history of inquiry into narrating, the way of referring to persons and personality has likewise evolved from "personality," to "identity," "self," and "subject position."
2. Although children's punctuation, grammatical constructions, and spelling are not consistently in standard written English, previous research has shown that beginning writers can use writing for complex sociocognitive functions (Dyson, 1989; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Written forms are inventions (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1979; Graves, 1982) based on native speech dialects such as Black English. Thus, children's writings are presented here in their original form.
3. The task was as follows: Imagine this scene in a story called "Three." Jama and Max were best friends. Pat moved in next to Max, and they began to spend lots of time together. One day, Jama saw Max and Pat walking together and laughing. What happened next? Continue this story about how the friends got along. What happened? How did they all think and feel about the events? How did it all turn out?

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