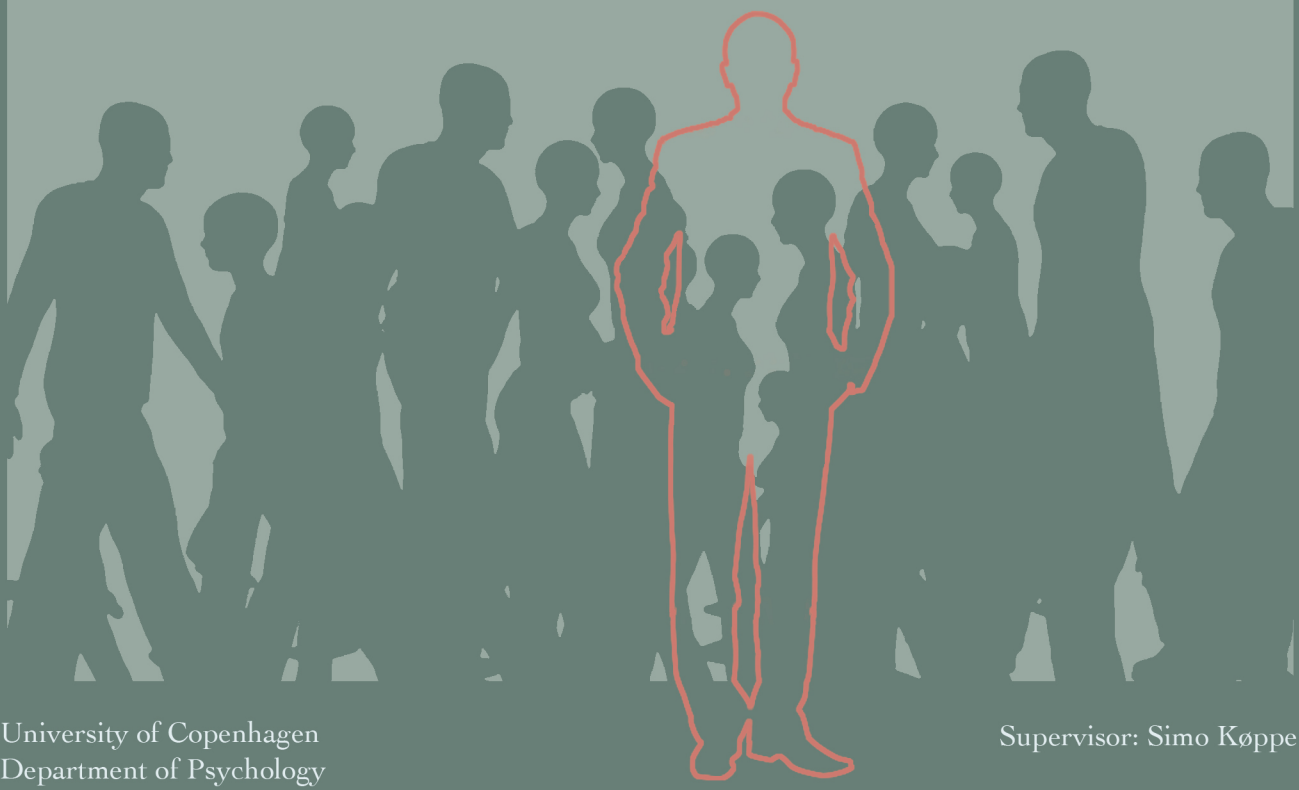
Mikka Lene Højholt Pers

Carolina Martinez Varela Pedersen

Breaking patterns

The stories we have with us - and those we leave behind

An inquiry into the narrative acts
involved in breaking family patterns



University of Copenhagen
Department of Psychology

Supervisor: Simo Køppe

(...) people grow up and walk around with their stories under their skin,
sometimes as weightless pleasures but sometimes painfully tattooed with them (...)

Elizabeth Stone / Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins

April 2013

Characters: 286.566
Standard pages: 119,4

ABSTRACT

(MP, CP)

In this thesis we propose that the individual relates to its life and itself by telling stories. We argue that the study of life stories gives valuable insight into the complex temporality that is at play when the individual seeks to understand its life and who it is as a person. Employing narrative as a functional concept, we investigate what specific narrative configurations 'make present' in the context they are situated in, and what they achieve for the individual.

We first provide a brief historical overview of the field of narrative research, which is populated by a diversity of conceptualisations of narrative. This overview forms a backdrop to the approach we take to our empirical investigation. We conduct interviews with four interviewees for whom it has been important not to repeat what they consider to be dysfunctional patterns of their childhood homes. Through an inquiry into the ways in which these self-identified 'pattern-breakers' make their life present to us, we analyse and discuss the *dynamic* quality of life stories: The individual when framing its life in narrative terms can revisit its past and re-evaluate previously held perspectives on it, rendering visible the direction its life has taken.

Our analysis shows that the individual ascribes meanings to its life through interplays between simultaneously present narrative points of view. Life stories are innately *relational* in that they allow the narrating individual to view its life from different positions that relate to each other in various ways. We observe how the individual can actively develop stances to its life by playing out dialogues between temporally distributed versions of its self that can co-exist in life stories. Furthermore, we identify the manners in which life stories are tied up in the lives led - and stories told - by specific and general others. In our analysis we see that interpersonal encounters can open new perspectives to the individual, and we explore how others can be granted a say in the intra-narrative dynamic that the individual defines its life through.

We conclude that the self that emerges in life stories is in fact a *larger self*, as it contains a plurality of viewpoints that engage in ongoing dialogues. This perspective on narrative composition gives us a better understanding as to how the individual by working on its life stories can become able to envisage ever-new interpretations of its life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[1] Author: Mikka Lene Højholt Pers
[2] Author: Carolina Martinez Varela Pedersen

"(...) it's so important for me to pass it on, I mean if you can somehow make out what it's like to be in there [points to her heart], when you... I mean there must be others besides me who feel this way, this is what I think (...) People like you, who are going to have people in your hands, people who are in trouble – if you can understand what it is, and maybe almost feel it, well that's when you can really make a difference. (...) And this is why I work so hard trying to explain it."

Bettina, interviewee

1

INTRODUCTION

(MP, CP)

1.1 - **Problem focus**

In this thesis we set out to empirically investigate the functions of life stories - the stories the individual tells about its life. A key assumption we make is that it is through stories that the individual relates to the life it leads and forms an understanding of who it is as a person. By framing life in *narrative* terms it is given shape and meaning.

In the view we propose, life stories offer the individual a site where it can develop positions to what is has been through, to its present situation and to what the future has in store. Rather than treating life stories as static frames that the individual perceives life through, we in this study lay emphasis on the agency involved in fashioning these types of accounts. The individual, when drawing a particular formation out of its life history, actively engages in a rather selective process that promotes certain understandings of who it is and how it has come to be like this.

Although stories that can come to have significance for how the individual looks at its life are not exclusively concerned with the past, it is specifically those stories that facilitate a backwards glance we are concerned with. Time is generally known to be irreversible, but that does not mean that past events are untouchable - they do not simply float away, out of reach. Instead, we argue, they grow to be part of the autobiographic context the narrating individual can examine its life through. What we suggest is that the stories the individual generates are inherently *dynamic:* as its life unfolds the individual becomes able to add new perspectives to them and through that can revise the standpoints it takes to who it is and where it comes from. In this sense, the individual has the past with it - not as a fossilised version of what once was, but as a kind of timeless terrain of occurrences it retrospectively can ascribe significance and meaning to. This potential for ongoing re-orientation, we argue, is closely tied to the interpersonal encounters the individual is involved in. Life stories are born out of and eventually themselves play out interactions between the

individual and specific and general others that open up for new points of view and bring the individual to relate to its life in yet new ways. We are particularly interested in exploring this *relational* quality of life stories, and we look into how the individual draws on others when wandering 'back in time', connecting dots in its life to get a grasp on the trajectory that has led it all the way into the here-and-now.

In order to show how a focus on the *dynamic* and *relational* aspects of life stories can provide important insights into how the individual actively engages in interpretations that can help it find orientation in its life, we conduct a qualitative study, based on interviews with four research subjects that identify as *pattern-breakers,* a term we have directly translated from the Danish 'mønsterbryder'. What is common for them is that they have grown up in families that they consider to have been dysfunctional due to 'patterns' that in their perspective were problematic, and it has been important to all of them not to repeat these patterns in their adult life. In their wish not to pass these patterns on to their own children, they have found it necessary to make an effort to 'break' with what they have been shown by their parents and find new ways of organising family life.

In our recruitment of respondents, we do not set up specific criteria for what constitutes a dysfunctional family. What we focus on is that our interviewees themselves characterise their family as such, whatever this may entail for them. As we will show in our presentation of them in Chapter 3, they have all experienced having at least one parent that has had an alcohol abuse, and furthermore sexual and physical abuse and parental neglect are recurring themes in what they tell us.

In our view, looking at the life stories of persons who seek to find a path that can lead them away from the patterns of their childhood home is valuable for reaching an understanding of how the meaning of the past can change and how the individual can engage in acts that can mediate the influence the past has on its life. So what we concentrate on in our analysis is how these four pattern-breakers, by fashioning life stories and doing so in interaction with general and specific others, figure out how the past can stay with them in a way that is constructive for the direction they want their life to take.

The fundamental question that drives this thesis relates to how working on life stories can open one's eyes to new perspectives on life, and our empirical investigation aims at uncovering the relational aspect of this ongoing process.

Stated briefly, the problem focus is:

How can a focus on the dynamic and relational aspect of life stories contribute to an understanding of how the individual relates to its life and itself? And in which ways can life stories play a part in breaking family patterns?

1.2 - **Clarifying the concept 'pattern-breaking'**

In recent years in Denmark there has been an increasing focus on 'pattern-breakers'. What makes these people stand out to the general public and grants them a place in the academic world (Elsborg et al., 1999; Jæger, 2003; Søgaard, 2002) is that they break with expectations to how a life that emanates in specific conditions unfolds. A new wave of interest in pattern-breaking has emerged in the public debate in the wake of the release of a documentary featuring the former president of the National Council for Children, Lisbeth Zornig Andersen. In the film, "A Childhood in Hell" (Min Barndom i Helvede), she gives the viewers a glimpse of a part of Danish society that is not known to many and that is rarely portrayed in the media: a part of society where she grew up and where she lived through violence, sexual abuse and neglect. In the documentary, she invites the viewers to follow her in her conversations with people from her past, and we meet the family she has now. Lisbeth Zornig Andersen is, her daughter explains to a younger brother, a pattern-breaker:

> "[A pattern-breaker] is someone who breaks out of a pattern. Tonny and René and Monki[1] and grandma and Jan[2], they are a pattern – they form part of a pattern. Grandma didn't have a good childhood, and she didn't give Mom a good childhood either, and now Tonny and René and Monki haven't given their children a good childhood either, right? But Mom, she, like, broke out of that pattern. So she is a pattern-breaker."[3]

The daughter here speaks to a general idea that being a pattern-breaker is about 'doing well' in comparison to what would be expected from one's background, and this understanding is often found in research and in the daily use of the term. Inherent in this line of thought, there is an assumption that a childhood in an unfavourable family environment impacts the future possibilities of the individual, including the way it can be as a parent. It is this prospect that Lisbeth Zornig Andersen, and pattern-breakers in general, break.

1.3 - **Delimitations**

Within the field of psychology, the concept of narrative is often linked to the strand of therapeutic practice that follows in the footsteps of namely Michael White and David Epston, who founded what is today known as Narrative Therapy. To avoid any confusion, we find it necessary to make it clear that this is not an approach we elaborate on in this thesis, as our interest lies in discerning the fundamental ways in which the

1 Lisbeth Zornig Andersen's brothers
2 Lisbeth Zornig Andersen's stepfather
3 Korsgaard, Mette (2012). *Min Barndom i Helvede*. Kragefilm. - 0:00:33 (own translation)

individual actively engages in figuring out how to relate to its life, and does so in interaction with others. So we attempt to draw up a framework that applies to the individual in general. Specifically we look at how life stories by virtue of being dynamic and relational provide the individual with the continuous possibility of fathoming its life from new angles that can make a difference to the way it goes about its life.

The reflection that is encouraged by psychotherapy, we propose, is only one example of how the individual can put itself in situations that can bring it to see its life in a new light. There are other kinds of acts and everyday interpersonal encounters that can move the individual, though. And it is the potential that lies in the various steps that the individual itself initiates and considers meaningful that we are interested in.

The findings we present can have implications for psychotherapy, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to propose how they could be applied to this line of work.

1.4 - **Structure of the thesis**

In *Part 1* of this thesis, we offer a broad overview of the way narrative has historically been conceptualised and used to shed light on a wide range of intra- and interpersonal processes. This review of the field will give a better understanding of the various roads research on narrative can take, and lays a foundation for a presentation of our approach and the research traditions it draws on (Chapter 2). After this broad introduction to our empirical investigation, we explicate the theoretical and methodological standpoint we take, by discussing the methodological considerations that guide the preparatory phases of our study, our data collection, and analysis (Chapter 3).

In *Part 2* of the thesis we conduct our analysis and unfold our framework. The development of our framework proceeds through a dialectic between theoretical discussions and analysis of our interview transcripts. So rather than operating with a sharp distinction between theory and analysis, we shift back-and-forth between our empirical exploration and the overall argument we make about how the individual in general relates to its life.

PART 1

2

THE FIELD OF NARRATIVE RESEARCH - AN OVERVIEW

(MP)

Narrative has become a ubiquitous term in academia. It is as if there is a story to be found under every stone you turn, just sitting there, waiting to be sorted according to some more or less predetermined qualitative or quantitative criterion, or simply to be taken as a voice for a e.g. generation, nation, or subculture.

Voices from within the field of narrative research, however, draw attention to the fact that the inquiry into and employment of narrative is far less homogenous than it may seem. The term does not at all "indicate the usage of the same or equal concept of narrative" (Hyvärinen, 2012: 10). Vastly different conceptualisations of narrative exist in the academic world, contributing to an ever widening of the already heterogeneous line of narrative research. By this, many studies with very little common ground technically belong under the same umbrella by virtue of their attention to some sort of narrative, whether it's as a type of research material, topic of study, method of investigation, or is seen as reflection of psychological or social phenomena (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Hyvärinen, 2012; Hyvärinen, 2010; Mishler, 1986; Phoenix, 2008; Schiff, 2012; Sclater, 2003; Squire et al., 2008; Tamboukou, 2010).

In recent years, this has led numerous narrative scholars to pivot and look inwards, exploring the field's status quo in terms of overarching themes, theoretical divisions, and underlying constructs to curb a feared theoretical dilution of the term. In their discussion of the scope of narrative as a concept, prominent narrative theorists Brockmeier and Harré (2001), make the point that narrative has turned into a rather "inflationary" term (Ibid.: 40). Freeman, also a renowned figure in the field, expresses his "worry about narrative become a catch-all term that, by virtue of being everywhere, ends up being nowhere" (Andrews et al., 2012: 14) and recently Schiff (2012) too remarked upon this development, critically stating: "At the current moment, everything is narrative" (Ibid.: 43), labelling the concept of narrative as "stretched and overextended" (Ibid.: 33). To avoid the pitfall of employing a concept which is drained of analytical depth, and in doing so further adding to the inflation we are warned against, we will make a point of constructing a narrative framework, which is firmly rooted in epistemological and methodological deliberations. In what follows, we provide an overview of the development of the colourful landscape of narrative research to introduce central concepts,

theoretical divisions and methodological considerations in the inquiries that currently take place within the field. This will serve as a theoretical backdrop to the approach taken in this thesis.

2.1 - **The narrative turns**

In psychology, 'the narrative turn' is most commonly taken to refer to the theoretical and methodological turn to narrative in social sciences from the 1980s and onwards, when investigators begin to employ narrative as a framework for understanding social and psychological processes (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Hyvärinen, 2012; Hyvärinen, 2010). The concept of narrative, however, is far from new when it enters this part of the research community, sparking the new narrative interest. In fact, it can be traced as far back as to Aristotle, who famously states that narratives are organized around a beginning, a middle, and an end, that are causally related to each other (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Hyvärinen, 2012).

Contesting the idea of a single narrative turn, Hyvärinen (2012) proposes a 'travelling metaphor' to illustrate how narrative has moved through time and disciplines to gain new meaning and significance in "several diverse and partly contrasting narrative turns" (Ibid.: 10). The work presented in the 1980s, Hyvärinen argues, had a long tradition in literary theory and linguistics to draw on and part of it was strongly influenced by the humanistic approaches that arose after the Second World War that advocated person-centred research, promoting the use of case studies and biographies. Despite ultimately feeding into to what is now regarded as a united, albeit mixed, field of research, the humanist tradition of research and the work conducted in literary theory are often considered two distinct points of departure, setting in motion two parallel trajectories of fundamentally different notions of narrative. The heritage of this contradictory history is still found viable in contemporary research, manifesting itself in contrasting attitudes to what narrative represents and how it ought to be studied. The diversity of conceptualisations and operationalisations of narrative that we see today can hence be understood as a consequence of narrative travelling not as a theory or method, but as a vehicle for fundamentally different interests (Herman, 2005; Hyvärinen, 2012; Hyvärinen, 2010; Squire et al., 2008).

We now turn to what is often considered to be the first narrative turn, taking place in literary theory (Andrews et al., 2012; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Herman, 2005; Hyvärinen, 2012; Hyvärinen, 2010; Squire et al., 2008).

2.1.1 - **Narrative as structural concept**

The field of narratology emerges in France in the 1960s and offers a structuralist perspective on narrative texts, primarily works of fiction. At the heart of this endeavour is a wish to establish a science of the narrative structure that exceeds its manifestations in concrete stories - the widely held presumption being that a particular story logic can be found under the surface of each story, governing its progression in a systematic and identifiable way. It is proposed, then, that this structure is best studied from a positivist

epistemology: "Narratology promised to provide guidelines to interpretation uncontaminated by the subjectivism of traditional literary criticism" (Fludernik, 2005: 38).

These early developments in narrative theory take place within the heritage of Saussurean linguistics and are built upon research conducted within the scope of Russian Formalism in the 1920s (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Fludernik, 2005; Herman, 2005; Hyvärinen, 2012; Hyvärinen, 2010). The formalists uncouple theory of novels from theory of narrative, through a conceptual separation of the 'fabula' (story) and the 'sjuzet' (plot) of a novel, relating to *what* it is about and *how* it is told, respectively (Andrews et al., 2012; Herman, 2005; Packer, 1991). This divide between story and plot, which remains pivotal in much current research, enables the aspirations of the structuralists to study *emplotment* as a particular structuring device: A logic according to which disparate events are transformed into a story.

In his book "Morphology of the Folktale", translated into English in 1958, formalist Vladimir Propp famously launches a functional analysis of Russian folktales, presenting a systematic understanding of the manner in which these stories are told. Propp shows how the Russian tales can be broken up into functional components - recurrent segments of characters and actions - and he further demonstrates how the relation of components can be proven to follow specific patterns (Ricoeur, 1992; Mishler, 1986). The separation of story and plot and the subsequent exploration of narrative functions pave the way for the structuralist move from the particular to the general, facilitating an abstraction from story to story grammar (Herman, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Hyvärinen, 2012).

The idea that every story can be treated as a variation on a fundamental "deep structure" (Hyvärinen, 2012: 14) is taken up by the narratologists, who become interested in the possibility of the existence of a common underlying model of narrative that accounts for "people's ability to recognize and interpret many diverse productions and types of artefacts as stories" (Herman, 2005:29). In contrast to early formalist approaches, big parts of this new wave of narrative studies entertain a 'universalistic' notion of narrative, viewing it not only as a logic behind certain types of stories - namely works of fiction - but as a structure that is significant in a broad array of cultural spheres. This suggestion is most often associated with Roland Barthes, who argues for narrative as a variety of genres (Hyvärinen, 2012) where the "qualitatively new, almost revolutionary assertion is that the very concept of narrative is both present and relevant across these diverse fields of human life, arts, and communication" (Ibid.: 12). Barthes, however, maintains the use of narrative as a structural concept, encouraging the search for the structure, which works as the foundation for our narrative capacity. Drawing on Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between 'la langue' (language viewed as system) and 'la parole' (concrete utterances based on this system), Barthes joins other structuralists in making the object of inquiry "the system (la langue) from which the infinity of narrative messages (la parole) derives and on the basis of which they can be understood as stories in the first place" (Herman, 2005:29). In this way, efforts are made to transcend the surface structure of the specific narrative performance (la parole)

to approach the structural constituents (la language) that are assumed to act as its condition (Ibid.; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Fludernik, 2005; Herman, 2005; Schiff, 2012).

However, the Barthesian idea about there being a diversity of narrative forms does not find its way into much research at the time, as illustrated by this statement from Hyvärinen (2012): "(…) structuralist narratology seems to disregard the critical test of the Barthesian "prodigious variety of genres," that is, to ask about relevant definitions from the perspective of different genres" (Ibid.: 15). Instead, researchers resort to prototypical understandings of narrative, like the one formulated earlier on by Propp. And so, Hyvärinen continues, narrative is assumed to constitute a kind of universal story syntax, and is studied as "(…) both universal and extremely particular at the same time" (Ibid.: 16).

The pursuit of the prototypical narrative has since surpassed the field of literary theory and has been carried into non-literary disciplines, where narrative is treated as sequence that needs not be associated with written accounts, and may not even depend on language. William Labov - frequently in collaboration with Joshua Waletzky - is often emphasised as a crucial contributor to this development, since he extends narrative analysis to include everyday oral narratives, thereby moving from narrative as textuality towards the act of creating a narrative through *storytelling* (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Fludernik, 2005; Patterson, 2008). Influenced by French structuralist narratology, Labov, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, develops a model of the formal features of oral 'personal experience narratives' to shed light on how recapitulation of past events often follows a narrative structure that is made up of clauses standing in a particular relation to each other (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Mishler, 1986; Patterson, 2008). This work blurs "the seemingly clear-cut borderline between the realm of fictional and nonfictional stories" (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001: 6) and introduces the systematic study of narrative as a method to study phenomena in everyday life.

Labov's formal principles have had and still have a tremendous influence on the way research into narrative as a structure is done. In fact, Labov's prototypical narrative is often juxtaposed to Propp's, as both are framed as *paradigmatic* cases of narrative in the history of narrative research (Hyvärinen, 2012; Patterson, 2008). As will be further elaborated on in the next section, many of the new approaches to narrative that appear in the wake of the narrative turn in social science take a critical stance toward Labov's model, critically assessing the way in which personal experience narratives are analysed as decontextualised texts. To better understand this, we briefly outline how narrative has been integrated into post-structuralist frameworks and how it has figured in post-war humanistic research.

2.1.2 - **Narrative as voice in a humanist and a post-structuralist perspective**

As pointed out above, advances in literary studies cannot alone account for the growing narrative interest in the 1980s' social sciences. Instead, this turn is often understood as a reaction to multiple developments that combine and further these new departures. The importance of Western humanistic approaches is often stressed in this regard, as they are said to have contributed both to the status of the life story as an expression

of an inner self, and to the scientific ideals that characterise much research that is conducted in the narrative-oriented branches in the social sciences from the 1980s and onwards.

Within the perspectives developed as part of the humanistic turn after the Second World War, with an understanding of the subject as undividable and irreducible, the human consciousness takes on particular significance. The turn to humanism also implies a turn to idiographic methodologies where attention is directed toward the subject as the carrier of his or her very own and worthy experience. In this context, case studies are regarded as valid research data and life stories are used as a point of departure for studying human subjectivity. Proposing a hermeneutic rather than a positivist approach to stories, these approaches present an alternative to the nomothetic and rigorously scientific research done within the structuralist episteme. Here the content of stories is privileged over its structure and it is taken as a *voice* with a fundamental right to speak on its own behalf (Hyvärinen, 2012).

These roots are visible in the "critical and political edge" (Andrews et al., 2012: 20) we find in a substantial part of narrative research where voices from within marginalised groups are given a pivotal role, to help spread stories that might otherwise remain untold or silenced (Ibid.; Andrews et al., 2012; Hyvärinen, 2012; McAdams, 2003, Plummer, 2001). It is also in this respect, that offshoots of the humanistic project find some common ground with post-structuralist approaches that are particularly concerned with power relations' influence on what can and cannot be voiced. In this way, "humanist and the post-structuralist traditions of narrative research are brought together by their shared tendency to treat narratives as modes of resistance to existing structures of power" (Squire et al., 2008: 7). They differ from each other, however, in regards to key assumptions about the nature and origin of the 'voice' in question. Humanists believe the voice derives from a singular storyteller, whereas in a post-structuralist perspective the voice is seen as originating from a field of power where the individual has only limited say. Here, the interest in narrative goes hand-in-hand with a general attention to discourse as constructed and constructing and narrative is viewed as an integral part of and deeply embedded in ongoing social interaction. This makes narrative analysis a way to access social and cultural issues rather than (only) psychological or literary ones (Brockmeier & Carbaugh; 2001; Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001; Sermijn et al., 2008). So, instead of examining *one* subject as it is portrayed in *one* story, post-structuralist approaches address the multiplicity of possible subjectivities and explore how these are continuously constructed through narrative: "In this tradition, the storyteller does not tell the story, so much as s/he is told by it" (Squire et al., 2008: 6). In this perspective, then, the subject is ultimately seen as a function of what is said rather than being regarded as an agent that constructs a story about itself.

As opposed to the simplistic way of looking at stories as stable meaningful entities inherent in both humanistic and structuralist modes of thinking, post-structuralist frameworks draw attention to how stories can be interpreted in various ways from different perspectives. Even the same utterance may principally acquire very different meanings across settings. In this way, the idea of narrative as a self-contained unit is challenged and instead the readers or listeners are given a significant role in the process of story construction

as they are assumed to interact with the story (Fludernik, 2005; Packer, 1991). Along these lines, the idea of narrative as a stable quasi-textual item is challenged when we arrive in the 1980s and narrative analysis moves into yet new domains of research.

2.1.3 - **The hermeneutics of narrative**

Even though Labov, as discussed above, takes a remarkable step by detaching the concept of narrative from literary theory, the both *event-* and *text-centred* perspective he maintains, in the 1980s becomes subject to critique by scholars. These scholars suggest both a broader conception of narrative structure and content by referring to the representation of events as only one of many functions that narrative can serve (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Patterson, 2008; Ricoeur, 1991; Riessman, 2002). Most researchers of the narrative turn in social sciences share the idea that narratives contain and convey what is *meaningful* to the individual, and as such are analytically meaningful to the researcher (Andrews et al., 2012; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Bruner, 1994; Hermans et al., 1993; Hydén, 2010; Hyvärinen, 2012; McAdams, 2003; Riessman, 2002; Ricoeur, 1980; Ricoeur, 1991; Sandino, 2010; Schiff, 2012; Sclater, 2003). Narrative thus becomes key to understanding not only our way to structure fictional stories or our accounts of actual events, as previously discussed by the narratologists and Labov, respectively, but to the very core of human *being in the world*. This attitude towards narrative implies a radically new model of how narrative research is conducted. Based on the presupposition that narrative is inevitably bound to the workings of the human mind - both in its composition and unwrapping - the turn to narrative in the 1980s becomes associated with a wide-ranging orientation towards a hermeneutic frame of reference, asking *what* stories mean to whom and *how* they do so. Consequently "a text has an entirely different meaning than the one recognized by structural analysis in its borrowings from linguistics. It is a mediation between man and the world, between man and man, between man and himself" (Ricoeur, 1991: 26-27).

Though 'narrative psychology' is frequently presented as one of the fields that arises as a part of the narrative turn in the social sciences (Brockmeier, 1997; Hermans, 1996; Sclater, 2003), we will refrain from employing the term is this thesis, as it evokes a sense of one cohesive endeavour. In our view, this would bring us in risk of dismissing the diverse and even contradicting ways in which narrative has been incorporated into psychology alone.

A great deal of the work on narrative we see in the in the wake of the narrative turn in the social sciences might be said to take an *experience-centred* approach to narrative. Indeed, it is referred to as the dominant conceptual framework within contemporary narrative research (Squire, 2008). Within this line of thought, the importance of the process of narrative meaning making is foregrounded and considered a central part of a broad range of psychological operations. By means of selection - perhaps most importantly exclusion - and sequencing, narrative is assumed to enable the individual to synthesize diverse aspects of lived life into unified experience (Brockmeier, 1997; Brockmeier, 2001; Bruner, 1994; Bruner, 2003; Georgakopoulou,

2006; Hydén, 2010; Hyvärinen, 2012; McAdams, 2003; Mishler, 1986; Ochs & Capps, 2002; Ricoeur, 1980; Ricoeur, 1991; Riessman, 2002; Sandino, 2010; Schiff, 2012; Sclater, 2003; Squire, 2008). So the view that is adopted here is that narrative plays an important role in the way the individual comes to know the world and its role in it (Bruner, 1994; Bruner, 2003; Brockmeier, 1997; Hermans, 1996; Hermans et al., 1993; Hydén, 2010; Markus & Nurius, 1986; McAdams, 2003; Riessman, 2002; Sandino, 2010; Sclater, 2003).

Instead of assessing narrative in terms of its congruence with a predetermined progression of events, as called upon by the event centred approach, proposed by Labov, experience-centred approaches place emphasis on psychologically and socially meaningful ways of structuring narrative accounts. And the focus is moved from linear chronological time as an organising principle to psychological reasons for and effects of various types of narrative structures.

The association between narrative and experience has led to extensive research into the psychological origins and/or consequences of how stories are told (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Hermans, 1996; Markus & Nurius, 1986; McAdams, 2003; Medved & Brockmeier 2010; Mishler, 1986; Mishler, 2006; Patterson, 2008). Considerable effort has been directed toward the development of an operationalisation of narrative that can serve as measure of the psychological processes or configurations that are imagined to lie behind. Various notions of narrative *coherence* have been suggested as such meassures and they all rely on the existence of a theoretically supported association between specific structural dimensions and corresponding mental capacities (Daniel, 2011; McAdams, 2003; Medved & Brockmeier 2010; Riessman, 1993). Along these lines, narrative structures are in some frameworks thought to constitute the link between narrative and well-being, making narrative a methodological entry point to the study of psychological health and disorder (Fivush et al., 2004; Medved & Brockmeier, 2010).

Ontologically speaking, experience-centred approaches attach different status to narrative and they can have vastly different understandings of how the correlation between narrative and experience works. They occupy a broad range of positions on the continuum between research based on constructivist epistemology and research that operates with a more essentialist view on the nature of narrative. So while some investigators regard stories as a *means* of meaning construction, others take it to be the other way around that stories are determined by and thus are mere *expressions of* possibly pre-discursive existing structures. We now briefly consider the implications of these quite different research positions.

A constructionist approach to narrative

Research on the experiential quality of narrative conducted within a constructionist framework tends to centre on the way the individual is able to derive meaning from events and generate an overarching autobiographic understanding. In some cases, these meanings are regarded as highly fluid and dependent on new experiences that reconfigure past understandings. Conversely, others view these constructions as more stable and idiosyncratic ways of perception. Within this general perspective, however, a central research task

is to investigate how meaning is achieved through narrative and conversely what happens if narrative compositions fail to do so. As to the latter, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the consequences of a breakdown of a narrative-ordered sense of reality, often within a framework of trauma conceptualized as narrative breach (Hydén, 2010; Mishler, 2006; Langellier & Peterson, 2004; Riessman, 2002). The substantial literature on 'illness narratives' also bears testament to this interest in what happens in the wake of events that simply prove impossible to integrate into existing structures of meaning. In these situations, it is often argued, the individual can have difficulties sustaining an overarching storyline that ties together past, present and future and provides the individual with an experience of itself as a continuous being (Hydén, 2010; Langellier & Peterson, 2004; Riessman, 2002). This loss of meaning is thought to put a demand on the individual to re-establish order, it issues a "call for stories" as Riessman (2002: 405) puts it. Here, "the narrator's task is not only to describe the biographical disruption of disease but also to order, interpret, and create meanings that can bind body and meanings together again" (Langellier & Peterson, 2004: 190). The understanding of composing narrative accounts as a fundamentally healing activity is often associated with studies of Pennebaker (1995), whose finding of a correlation between emotional disclosure and psychological well-being, leads him to conclude that the mere recapitulation of past experience can help prevent mental scaring.

Narrative as expression of inner configuration

In a different strand of experience-centred work, we find studies that point to the existence of psychological configurations to which narrative gives *expression*. Researchers with this outlook frequently draw up typologies of narrative styles in an attempt to relate them to specific mental structures that, apart from expressing themselves through narrative, may be essentially non-verbal. This implementation of narrative is especially prevalent in approaches that subscribe to traditions within cognitive psychology where narrative is thought of as a kind of structure of thinking and relating to oneself and the world (Abell et al., 2003; Hermans, 1996; Markus & Nurius, 1986). One might also argue that this is the case in certain areas of life story research, where the life story is regarded as a relatively stable cognitive entity (Medved & Brockmeier, 2010; McAdams, 2003). Moreover, this view is put forward in some studies that apply psychoanalytic frameworks, where stories are interpreted as expressions of psychological realities and thus provide the researcher with important information about the idiosyncrasies of the individual (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Hermans, 1996; Hermans et al., 1993; Sclater, 2003). In much of this research, the assumption is that stories allow access to underlying repetitive, and possibly maladaptive, patterns of interpersonal relationships. The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), is for instance scored in terms of this underlying model. Here, a given attachment style is obtained through analysis of the way the respondent accounts for his or her relationships to significant others (Daniel, 2011). In this context, specific types of incoherence serve as a measure for structures that are generally not assumed to be of linguistic nature.

Culturally oriented experience-centred research

Our investigation draws on work conducted within the experience-centred tradition, in which narratives are seen as constituting "windows on inner life" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009: 7). Yet, an important point we make throughout our investigation is that this 'inner life' is never detached from the social world the individual inhabits. This position is also taken by a branch of experience-centred work, that besides relating stories to *intra*personal structures of meaning, is preoccupied with *inter*personal aspects of narration (Abell et al., 2003; Basten, 2012; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Bruner, 2003; Hermans, 1996; Hyvärinen, 2012; Hyvärinen, 2010; McAdams, 2003; Phoenix, 2008; Ricoeur, 1991; Riessman, 2002; Schiff, 2012; Squire, 2008). This interest proceeds from the basic assumption that storytelling never happens in a cultural or social vacuum; a story thus never belongs entirely to the individual. Schiff (2012) expresses it beautifully, saying: "The words and stories that we possess are social, inherited from our predecessors by virtue of our participation in a world rich with sense and meaning. From the very beginning, we find ourselves immersed in this world. We are born, in medias res, in the midst of ongoing conversations that precede our own personal existence" (Ibid.: 40). To fully appreciate the implications of this argument, we first need to attend to the ways in which the basic assertion that narratives depend on culturally shared resources, has been taken up in the culturally oriented line of experience-centred narrative research.

Culturally oriented narrative scholars consider the relation between narrative compositions and both their immediate and broader context to be of central concern. Storytelling is assumed to be a fundamentally *situated* activity*,* in that it not only provides the narrating individual by and for itself with meaning, but it also stands in relation to the particular context in which it is carried out as well as to broader cultural and historical milieus (Abell et al., 2003; Bruner, 1994; Bruner, 2003; Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001; Hydén, 2010; Phoenix, 2008; Schiff, 2012). This understanding enables one to study narrative as a product of the interplay between individual and culture, which has fostered a considerable amount of research on cultural conventions regarding what constitutes a satisfying story: "In this view, then, narrative is the name for a special repertoire of instructions and norms of what is to be done and not to be done in life and how an individual case is to be integrated into a generalized and culturally established canon" (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001: 16). So in a sense, these approaches might be said to operate with an ambition that is rather similar to the one defined by the narratologists, where the structural characteristics of particularly well told stories are condensed and boiled down to descriptive, some might say prescriptive, plot features. However, while many culturally oriented researchers share this interest in the narrative counterpart to 'la langue', they work under the conviction that these patterns are of a highly cultural nature rather than being universally true (Brockmeier & Carbaugh; Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Bruner, 1994; Bruner; 2001; Bruner, 2003; Hyvärinen, 2010; Phoenix, 2008; Ricoeur; 1988; Ricoeur, 1991; Ricoeur, 1992; Squire, 2008). So the

question about *what* is conceived as a well-structured story is supplemented with a specification of *where*, *when* and *for whom* the story is thought to be so.

The individual is assumed to draw upon a common pool of narrative templates to create personal accounts and this interest in the intersection between the experiential quality of narrative and cultural convention, turns narrative into "a central hinge between culture and mind" (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001: 10). This invites issues of the mind into traditionally sociologically oriented frameworks and, vice versa, requests psychological approaches to study affairs that surpass the individual. The second endeavour is most notably linked to the efforts of Jerome Bruner, whose widely cited inquiries into the cultural fabric of the human mind pose an alternative to the mentalistic epistemology found in purely individualistic psychological studies (Bamberg, 2006; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Bruner, 1990, Bruner, 1994; Bruner, 2001; Bruner, 2003; Hyvärinen, 2012). Rather than investigating narrative in terms of only mental or cognitive functioning, Bruner has long been invested in clarifying how the human capacity and individual ability to recognize and produce suitable story forms is developed and brought into play.

The concept of culturally shared narrative conventions has also found its way into studies of autobiographic narration, namely into the so-called *life story approaches*, where retrospective autobiographic accounts are analysed and often seen as acts of self-definition (Bruner, 2001; Bruner; 2003; Patterson, 2008; Sclater, 2003). Researchers within this area emphasise the degree to which life stories are adaptations of essentially similar plot lines, which turns "self-making", to borrow Bruner's (2001) term, into a matter of identification, where identification is understood as both referring to the act of identifying oneself as a person and to the way this is achieved through identification with a group. Paul Ricoeur (1992), of whom we will hear much more later, is interested in the same dialectic and suggests that "Recognizing oneself *in* contributes to recognizing oneself *by*" (Ibid.: 121).

2.1.4 - **Stories in interaction**

In recent years, discourse oriented narrative frameworks have challenged the way in which experience-centred studies have used narrative to gain insight into psychological and social processes (Bamberg, 2006; Georgakopoulou 2006). There seems to be a twofold critique operative. Firstly, the interest in the ability of narrative to construct and convey experience is presumed to have severely limited the scope of what *data* is regarded as relevant for narrative analysis, cultivating a practice of exclusively gathering what is often addressed as 'big stories': personal stories that cover a large time span, often elicited through interviews or other kinds of interrogative practices (Bamberg, 2006; Freeman, 2006; 2010). This restriction is assumed to reinforce the normative conceptions of what constitutes a narrative, acting as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Georgakopoulou 2006; Hyvärinen, 2010; Ochs & Capps, 2002). Secondly, this circular reasoning is believed to preserve the conception of narrative as an abstract retrospective recounting practice at the

expense of comprehending the colourful ways in which narrative plays a part in the individual's ongoing daily life (Bamberg, 2006). Let us briefly consider both of these arguments.

Even though cultural aspects of story formulation have increasingly entered experience-centred research, the 'default narrative' is seen as the product of *one* teller and it is related to accounts that are furthermore expected to exhibit specific forms of temporal and causal order (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Ochs & Capps, 2002). According to Georgakopoulou (2006), conventional narrative studies prefer two types of data, both primarily elicited through interviews. These are retrospectively told life stories, and narratives that centre around certain key events that are considered to be especially significant in a life course perspective, both of which belong to the conceptual category of 'big stories'. Georgakopoulou further asserts that while these prototypical texts may be especially fruitful for research into some dynamics - mainly those having to do with how the individual is thinking and feeling - they render invisible features of narrative that come into sight when other material is analysed. This claim is endorsed by a growing body of researchers who argue that important aspects of subjectivity are lost when alternative relevant research material is counted as *non-narrative* and prevented from invalidating what is found to be lawfully true on the basis of a limited range of stories (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Mishler, 1986; Squire, 2008; Squire et al., 2008; Patterson, 2008).

So lately, narratives that take less conventional shapes have been invited into the area of narrative research that argues in favour of a focus on conversational storytelling, which is assumed to occur through 'small stories', meaning "very mundane stories, not the extraordinary or the ones deemed as worthy by the analysts, but the stories of the often unremarkable everyday life" (Andrews et al., 2012: 21). The central tenet in these studies is that both the internal organisation and meaning of every narrative is strongly coloured by situational circumstances and in their work, they consequently take both the textual and interactional context of narration into account. As opposed to the essentialist ways that are seen as inherent in individualistic oriented approaches that implicitly consider narrative as "self-sufficient wholes, waiting for 'externalisation'" (Hyvärinen, 2010: 76), what is often proposed is a view on narrative as an *interactional achievement* (Ochs & Capps, 2002), where interlocutors practically function as co-authors (Ibid.; Abell et al., 2003; Bamberg, 2006; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Hermans, 1996; Hyvärinen, 2010; Ochs & Capps, 2002; Langellier & Peterson, 2004; Medved & Brockmeier, 2010; Mishler, 1986; Mishler, 2006; Patterson, 2008; Phoenix, 2008; Riessman, 2002; Sclater, 2003; Samijn et al., 2008). Emphasis is thus placed on the ways in which narratives are composed under particular circumstances through some degree and mode of *co-construction*.

This inter-individual quality of narrative is often elaborated on with reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of 'dialogism' and the 'multivoicedness' of mind (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Herman, 2005; Hyvärinen, 2010; Schiff, 2012). In his analysis of Dostoevsky's novelistic style, which he argues has radically redefined the relation between author and protagonists, Bakhtin (1984) draws attention to Dostoevsky's ability to let his characters speak from different positions. Dostoevsky's

'polyphonic novel' is characterised by a plurality of voices. Each character gets its definition from its relation to the characters it is surrounded by and the inner life of each character itself is portrayed as a dialogue between different internal positions (Ibid.; Hermans, 1996; Hermans et al., 1993; Schiff, 2012). Thus according to Bakhtin, dialogic relationships are vital to our understanding of the individual, "they are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life—in general, everything that has meaning and significance" (Bakhtin, 1984: 40). This assumption has, for instance, been hugely implemented in branches of research on selfhood, where storied versions of the self are regarded as ongoing processes of dialogic positioning rather than as continuous and stable entities (Brockmeier, 1997; Hermans, 1996; Hermans et al., 1993; Sclater, 2003; Samijn et al., 2008). In a similar vein, the issue of selfhood is often researched from within a 'performance' perspective, namely inspired by Erving Goffman, where narratives are read as situated performances of a self. As such, the self that arises in narration is regarded as highly susceptible to the context it is told in (Bruner, 1994; Riessman, 2002, Hydén, 2010).

By treating storytelling as an interpersonal practice, whereby the individual is effectively denied sole ownership over its narrative compositions, this line of research disputes the existence of a simple correlation between narrative and experience. Instead, narrative is conceptualised as a 'social act' that can serve various functions out of which expression or construction of experience merely constitutes one (Ibid.; Abell et al., 2003; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Phoenix, 2008; Riessman, 2002; Schiff, 2012; Sclater, 2003). It follows that the structural characteristics that may characterise big stories fall short, when narratives that are generated through co-construction and can serve an array of different purposes, are to be comprehended. Patterson (2008), among others, points this out, saying that "it makes no sense to treat the *complexity* and subtlety of the narration of experience as though it *should* have an orderly, complete structure by reducing it to the one type of text" (Ibid: 28). So rather than looking for tidy accounts, the focus on conversational narratives involves an openness as to which structural configurations can be included under the umbrella term of narrative. So, in methodological terms, a broad range of discourse is welcomed into this line of research, blurring the line between narrative and other types of communication (Ochs and Capps, 2002).

As we have shown, this new development in narrative research differs from work conducted within the experience-centred tradition in several regards. Instead of regarding the findings from these two orientations as mutually exclusive, however, we believe that each of them contributes with important insights into the role that narratives play in our lives. In our investigation, we propose a way to combine these two perspectives by considering the narrative compositions of the individual, as inextricably bound to the social world it inhabits. Our position on this will be further elaborated in the next section and in the chapter after this.

2.2 - **Taking a position in narrative research**

By now, we hope to have successfully conveyed the degree to which narrative inquiry is characterised by internal disputes, both in terms of why and how the concept of narrative is employed. At this juncture, we suggest that the theoretical and methodological divisions we have drawn up in this chapter could be ultimately considered as a matter of interest, where competing notions of narrative are seen as reflecting different levels of abstraction that make them relevant to distinct academic pursuits. This argument leads us to propose a *functionalist* perspective on narrative, where rather than struggling to find an all-purpose concept of narrative, it is treated as a malleable concept that can serve many functions in our lives and hence also in research. We conclude this chapter by sketching out how this perspective translates to the present investigation, where our broad interest in the diverse ways in which our interviewees make use of telling stories refrains us from entertaining a fixed structural concept of narrative.

2.2.1 - **Intersections between content and structure**

Narrative can be studied on several ontological levels and hence be integrated into modes of research that operate with quite distinct epistemological programs. The narrative approaches we have introduced in this chapter, for instance, differ with regard to whether their interest lies in narrative as a specific *content* or they are more concerned with narrative as a type of *structure* that carries content. In other words, while some interpret narratives in terms of *what* is expressed, others turn to the question of *how* this is achieved.

The attempts of the structuralist narratologists to create a formula for the prototypical plot exemplifies a line of thinking where stories have relevance by virtue of their *structure*. In those studies, concrete narrative manifestations are boiled down to synthesised formulations of general patterns believed to correspond to an innate story grammar. Not all approaches that subscribe to the view that narratives can be approached in a more or less consistent pattern, believe this pattern to be reflective of a universally shared human capacity. Narrative can also be used as a structural concept in research on culture specific conventions, as well as for inquiries into idiosyncratic narrative compositions. Thus, it is both possible to attempt to draw up individual-specific and inter-individual typologies of narrative structure.

The *abstraction* that is implied in endeavours where the particular content of narratives is of lesser concern than the underlying structure to which it adheres, is refused in approaches that are particularly invested in *what* is conveyed in narrative accounts. Research that values the *content* of narratives may nevertheless do so for quite different reasons. A common interest in content, for instance, still allows for disagreement regarding the truth-value that is attached to narrative compositions. Do they reveal what is specifically true to the individual, as would be the subjectivist claim, or should we take a positivist outlook and regard them as relatively objective reports of factual events? While some researchers may use stories as a way to approach events as they 'really' took place, others are mainly interested in the heuristic quality of what is said (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001). Even within the branch of research where narrative is appreciated as a voice through which subjective experience is communicated, there exist differences as to where the heuristic

content is believed to originate. While narrative in some frameworks is interpreted as expression of the personal experience of a particular person, in others it is heard as a voice from beyond the individual, where the individual is regarded as representative for a group that shares some common denominator e.g. race, sexuality, gender, and nationality.

However, narrative research in the social sciences rarely pursues the issues of content and structure entirely separate from each other. Rather, attention is frequently given to the *intersection* between these two sides of narrative. Looking at how specific structural characteristics relate to what is being expressed, they ask: "Why was the story told that way?" (Riessman, 2002: 697). This question is posed in parts of research that emphasise the significance of culturally shared frames of meaning, plot structures and the words, metaphors, and sayings that language offers, while maintaining that the use of these are somewhat dependent on the individual's situation and what kind of story it wants to represent. Bruner (1994), for instance, stresses the *pragmatic* function of genres, saying "genres (…) are meant for an occasion; what is said cannot be interpreted without appreciating the generic occasion of its delivery" (Ibid.: 51). So rather than treating the narrative structure as an *ontological type*, much contemporary research takes on an analytic position, where narrative is regarded as a variable structure that offers the individual a range of formats it can express itself through. Differences then exist as to how closely tied to generalized instructions the narrator is understood to be.

All of the types of narrative inquiry we have brought up in this chapter either implicitly or explicitly make assumptions about what narrative basically *is* and *does* that influences their conceptions about relevant research material, the manner in which it is obtained, and how analysis is methodologically approached. While their choices allow them to shed light on some important dynamics at play, they render invisible other aspects of the role narrative plays in our lives. Instead of determining which of these approaches is right and thereby endorse one static either/or definition of narrative, we see a value in treating narrative as a bendable concept that can serve numerous research agendas and can itself be studied at various levels. This is enabled when narrative is viewed from a *functionalist perspective*, where the analytical stance that is taken is determined by the function of narrative one is most interested in.

In addition to seeing the general field of narrative research in this light, a functionalist approach can be taken within research projects that rather than studying narrative in terms of predetermined structural characteristics, make the functions that narrative serve the central concern. In a recent publication, Schiff (2012) proposes such a research strategy, putting forth a conceptualisation of storytelling as an 'expressive act' that can have many purposes that ultimately determine the shape it takes. So in a functionalist perspective, the question of *how* a narrative looks is closely tied to the question of *why* it has been constructed (Ibid.). The narrative framework we develop throughout our analysis is built around such an understanding of narrative, as we assume the functions narratives serve to influence the way material is emplotted and stories are created. Thus, the structural dimension of narrative enters our analysis as a way to

understand how content is configured to accomplish something. In our analysis, then, we look at what specific ways of plotting contribute with, and why these configurations are particularly relevant to the individual.

We have a rather broad interest in the ways in which our interviewees *make use* of life stories in their overall process of breaking with family patterns and we believe a functionalist perspective will give us best insight into the various steps they take. A definition of narrative in terms of particular structural characteristics would drastically reduce the scope of what we could find.

2.2.2 - **Narrative as 'making present'**

The general view on narrative that we adopt in this investigation is that the stories we tell and are told by others open a world that we can step into. Narratives, including autobiographical ones, establish a certain reality that the narrating individual can claim for itself and can invite others into. We propose that the constructive act that lies behind these realities can be understood as fundamentally an act of 'making present'. This term draws on phenomenological and hermeneutic lines of thought, as namely formulated by Heidegger and Ricoeur (Ricoeur; 1980; 1988), and lately it has been integrated into some narrative frameworks (Freeman, 2010; Schiff, 2012).

The notion of storytelling as 'making present' provides a useful starting point for exploring how the individual actively engages in creating particular narrative compositions. It *makes* something present. Rather than treating narratives as an expression of a state of mind, attention is directed to the agency involved in choosing and connecting elements that together make up a configuration. Implicitly, this also points to the *selective* aspect of narrative; while something is made present, other aspects remain untouched. Furthermore, the perspective on storytelling as 'making present' highlights the *situated* nature of every act of narration, whereby what is constructed is made *present* at a specific point in time. We explore the implications of this basic premise in the first chapter of our analysis (Chapter 4), in which we, based on among others the works of Ricoeur, propose a view on storytelling as an essentially *temporal* endeavour. Narrative, we argue, allows the individual - from a specific position in time and space - to make its life present in multifaceted ways that can only be grasped when time is not framed in linear terms. As we will show, it is the complex temporality that is active in narrative that accounts for the *dynamic* nature of the stories we tell about our lives. The terminology that we develop in Chapter 4 will serve as the foundation for our exploration of what can be achieved through autobiographic narration.

2.2.3 - **'Making present' to and with others**

It is through the stories we tell about our lives that we develop understandings of it and it is through them that we determine who we are. These are two of the fundamental assumptions that underlie our study. As we have demonstrated in this chapter, the association between narrative and experience is of central concern to experience-centred approaches and the perspective we develop draws on research conducted within this

tradition. Yet studies that have the experiential quality of narrative at the heart of their investigation can come to consider narrative meaning making as a reflective process that the individual carries out alone, one step removed from the interpersonal encounters of its daily life. That is *not* the position we take in this thesis. On the contrary, we stress the deeply *interpersonal* nature of how the individual comprehends its life and itself. To give a clearer picture of how our approach relates to existing experience-centred studies, let us briefly recap the critique that has recently has been put forward against this line of research.

As we mentioned above, experience-centred researchers often find it useful to analyse life stories or stories about key events that are told by one person, in for instance an interview setting. And in recent years the validity of analysing only this type of narratives, referred to as 'big stories', has been questioned by proponents of the study of structurally far less neatly ordered 'small stories'. These critics often operate with the conviction that big stories are abstract formulations that present the researcher with a highly processed and filtered version of immediate experience and portray the individual and its life as far more unified and continuous than it actually is (Bamberg, 2006). Rather than treating the stories the individual constructs about its life as mere reflections of its experience, these discursively oriented approaches direct attention to how narratives are interactionally achieved and serve discursive functions.

In this sense, a distinction is made between viewing storytelling as a process of *reflection* - which is then assumed to be evident in big stories - and considering it as *socially situated activity*, which in turn invites to the study of small stories that are thought to have interpersonal purposes. In this sense, big stories are often believed to be less influenced by situational factors than the stories the individual tells when it engages in interactions with others. Freeman (2006), for instance, argues that the individual only by "stepping out of the flow of concrete, flesh and blood life" (Ibid.: 131) can examine its life as a whole and thus "small stories are closer to the action and enmeshed within the interactive, especially conversational, dynamics of social life while big ones are more removed and tend to efface the social dimension" (Ibid.: 132). This perspective, in our eyes, can put researchers in danger of losing sight of how also big stories - even those told by only one narrator in an interview setting - can be deeply *relational*, relying on interpersonal interactions.

In this investigation, we wish to soften the clear-cut distinction between narrative as a process of meaning making and the socially situated act of telling stories. We suggest a view on the constructive process of fashioning life stories as innately relational, whereby the versions of life that an individual constructs, in what could be considered big stories, can not be disentangled from the social world the it inhabits. We are always 'making present' *to* and *with* others. So while we do mainly focus on the experiential quality of narrative, we find it relevant to incorporate ideas set forth by discursively oriented researchers, as their awareness of the interpersonal quality of narrative gives valuable insights into how the individual narratively represents its life.

In the next chapter, we further explicate the position we take by looking at the methodological considerations upon which we base our empirical investigation.

3

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

(CP,)

The point of departure for this study is that the individual relates to its life and itself through stories. In order to look further into this quality of narrative, we conduct interviews with four women, and through qualitative analysis, we aim to identify how specific narrative configurations play a role in the way they come to see aspects of their life. In this sense, we explore the structural characteristics of narrative in terms of how they let the individual portray its life in a specific light. In our analysis, we explore how our interviewees present their lives and themselves to us – why is this particular version of their life meaningful to them, we ask. This is where our inspiration from the experience-centred tradition of research becomes viable.

As we made clear in the conclusion of the previous chapter, we are also attentive towards the interpersonal aspects of how the individual relates to the world and itself. A basic assumption underlying our study is that the narrating individual draws on the social world it inhabits when fashioning its accounts; the narrative compositions that the individual finds meaningful always stand *in relation* to features of the immediate context of the narration as well as to others who play a part in the life of the individual. Furthermore, we understand the narrating individual to consult the overarching culture it is rooted in, which offers e.g. shared linguistic resources, narrative conventions, and normative conceptions about how a person ought to be and live their life.

We take account of these different kinds of interpersonal influence in the strategy we choose for our analysis. These assumptions about how narrative accounts are constructed also play into the methodological considerations we base our interview guide upon and they have an effect on the stance we take to interviewing. Before we embark upon our analytical exploration, it is necessary to consider how our collection of research data is designed and carried out.

3.1 - **The interview setting as a local interactional context**

In light of the point we made in section 2.2.2 of the last chapter, about storytelling being a *situated* act where what is recounted is *made present* in a specific context, we note that we as researchers in the interview

situation inevitably influence what is presented to us. In our perspective, the interview setting constitutes an interactional context, where interviewers and interviewees engage in interaction that affects the interview data (Rapley, 2004). Furthermore, both interviewers and interviewees have expectations about what the interview will be like that can impact upon the trajectory the interview takes. In our case, for instance, previous to the interviews we let our interviewees know that we are interested in looking into how self identified pattern-breakers see their life. This understanding of the research project they will participate in might inspire them to give thought to topics like social heritage and the concept of pattern-breaking in the days leading up to the interview. Ahead of the interview, our interviewees might apply these notions to their life, eventually presenting us with a picture that they believe is appropriate for the purpose. So when analysing interview data, it is important to bear in mind that interviewees' anticipations can shape their contributions (Bamberg 2006; Bruner 2003; Phoenix, 2008; Rapley, 2004)

Just as we are conscious about what might influence our interviewees, we pay attention to how we as interviewers contribute to what is told, by asking questions and deciding what we want to follow up on, as well as through our silences and quiet encouragements (Rapley, 2004).

Since we consider autobiographical stories to be acts that stand in relation to the context they are carried out in, rather than regarding them as finished productions that can be 'elicited' in an objective manner, we refrain from aspiring to hold a so-called 'neutral' interview position, which might bring us in risk of "silencing the influence we have on the talk that is produced" (Rapley, 2004: 21). Rather than striving to eliminate circumstances that affect the course our interviews take, we find it important to be aware of how we and our interviewees collaborate in the interview setting. Accordingly, in our analysis, we take into consideration how features of the immediate interaction relate to what our interviewees make present.

As we are interested in how our interviewees relate to their life and themselves, we make an effort to adjust our interviews as much as possible to what seems to be most relevant to each interviewee, allowing ourselves to diverge from our interview guide whenever an interviewee goes down a road that we have not planned for. Generally, we formulate follow-up questions to what our interviewees bring up, inviting them to unfold terms or themes that appear to have importance to them. Moreover, we make a point of inviting our interviewees to let us know when one of our questions does not apply to their situation. For these reasons, our interviews take quite different directions. In some cases we go through most of the previously prepared topics and questions in a relatively systematic manner, and in others we touch on far fewer of them.

3.2 - **Ethical reflections**

For us as researchers, the qualitative interview is a means to gathering information, and we find it important to remember that when we ask respondents to share details about themselves with us, for them there is far more at stake – it is their *life* they tell us about. This of course applies to every personal interview, but as we

will show below, the topics our interview guide revolves around are of quite private nature. We ask them to elaborate on areas that can be sensitive, such as their relationships to their parents, partner and children; there is significant self-disclosure offered to us by our interviewees.

Therefore, we are aware of the importance of being empathic and respectful to the delicacy of what we talk about, while still refraining from assuming a therapeutic and too intimate interviewing style. According to Brinkmann (2010), if the researcher is not careful with this, it might become more difficult for the interviewee to set boundaries for what he or she wishes to share in the interview. This is something we are particularly aware of, both having experience working as counsellors. Furthermore, we do our best not to put strain on our interviewees, offering them breaks, and not least making clear the option to object to questions that are too personal. We are aware, however, that in an interview situation this can be difficult to do (Ibid.). On these grounds we send an informal follow-up e-mail, making sure they have a good feeling about how the interview went. Moreover, later, we send our interviewees our transcripts with the sections of our interviews that we consider using directly in the thesis, giving them a chance to let us know if they wanted anything left out. Although this possibility could mean that we miss out on some points in our analysis, we find it crucial to grant our interviewees the option of revoking elements of what they have said that might have seemed pertinent in the interview situation, but on second thought, comes too close to their private life. None of our interviewees, however, take this opportunity.

It is also ethical considerations that lead us to invite our interviewees to determine whether they want to be given anonymity and if so, to what extent. We decide this because two of our interviewees seem to be interested in sharing their stories with the general public. In fact, as will be discussed in our analysis, they are already giving talks and letting themselves be interviewed for the media. According to Brinkmann (2010), even though warranting full anonymity is usually the standard in research, offering those respondents who want to, to be credited by name is also a way of granting them a voice in the research. We find it important for our interviewees to have this possibility.

Two of our interviewees, Ea and Bettina, ask to have their names known. We alter the names of family members and friends mentioned in the interviews, though, and we leave out the names of specific locations. There is one exception to both Ea's and Bettina's interview, however: Lisbeth Zornig Andersen, whom we mentioned in the introduction, comes up in the interviews several times. We keep from anonymising her by the request of Ea and Bettina, and in view that she is a well-known public figure and what is said about her in the interview concerns her public position rather than her personal life.

Our other two interviewees are given full anonymity. All names that appear in our transcriptions are altered, and locations are left out.

Let us now take a closer look at our recruitment of interviewees and the thoughts we have put into the topics we want to them to elaborate on. The choices that the processes of recruitment and developing an interview guide entail, according to Rapley (2004), are in fact "analytic choices about what types of people, what

voices, or identities, are central to research (…) alongside what sort of topics of discussion might be important" (Ibid.: 26, author's emphasis).

3.3 - **Recruitment of respondents**

By now we have established that our principal interest lies in how the individual relates to itself and to its life, in interaction with both specific and general others. Empirically we investigate how self identified *pattern-breakers* relate to what they have been through and where they are now: we look at how they develop perspectives on their life and on who they are that might have been constructive in their process of breaking old and creating new family patterns.

This is neither an inquiry into pattern-breaking as seen from a developmental psychological perspective, from where it would be relevant to concentrate on how growing up under particular conditions affects the development of the individual, nor do we look at societal discourses about pattern-breaking or family life in general. What we are concerned with is the meaning pattern-breaking has to the individual who applies this concept to its life and what it reads into the concept. For this reason, in searching for interviewees we do not specify what type of backgrounds potential respondents should have in order to be suited for this project, as long as they consider themselves to be pattern-breakers.

We begin our recruitment process by getting in contact with a range of health care professionals in Copenhagen, who meet a wide range of families on a daily basis, and ask them to hand out leaflets about our project to potential respondents. After not getting any responses through this channel, we turn to social platforms on the Internet, where we give a brief description of what we are investigating and what kind of help we need. This is how we find our first interviewee. We get in touch with our second interviewee by contacting her through a website for Huset Zornig, a think tank on socially vulnerable people, founded by Lisbeth Zornig Andersen. This interviewee is enlisted as a speaker on matters of child neglect and social heritage, and in her profile, describes herself as a pattern-breaker. She then facilitates contact with our third interviewee, who is also active in the think tank, in the capacity of being a pattern-breaker. The last of our interviewees is found through our private network.

Although our study was not meant to be gender-specific, the only people who volunteered were female; and so, our study is limited to include women only.

Before further explaining the process of preparing the interviews, we will provide a brief presentation of each of our interviewees to give an idea about the general life situation of each. This might be used for reference when their stories are unfolded in our analysis, where we give a far more nuanced picture of what they share with us during our interviews. So, we stress that these short vignettes neither do justice to all aspects of the overall story they tell us nor to the complexities of their experience.

Bettina[1] grew up in a home with a father who was a heavy drinker and who was violent towards her mother. She has lived through several placements in an orphanage, as well as having been sexually abused by her father. Today she is in her 40s, is married, and has two children, who at the time of the interview are 17 and 18 years old. She is the managing director in her own company, and besides from her day job, she also gives talks where she offers professionals and students, among others, insight into what it is like to grow up in an environment characterised by neglect, abuse and alcoholism.

Ea[2] is 30 years old, and has two young children with her husband. As a child, Ea and her two sisters lived with their mother who was an alcoholic and often absent from home. Ea speaks of a childhood characterised by poverty, in what she describes as a family that has been 'dysfunctional' through many generations. Ea and her sisters were placed in an orphanage for two years, after which they were brought into a foster family. Their mother passed away from alcoholism when Ea was 12 years old. Today, Ea gives talks about her past, and she has participated in radio interviews, as well as making contributions to newspapers and books.

Jette[3] is 40 years old and as opposed to the two above, grew up in a well off home in the suburbs. She describes her childhood as 'tumultuous', with a mother who was an alcoholic throughout most of Jette's upbringing. Furthermore, the dysfunctional aspects of her family, according to Jette, also relate to her parents working a lot after starting their own company, when Jette is a young child, leaving her alone with her older brothers. As a mother of two boys of 13 and 16 at the time of the interview, Jette stresses how she hopes to have given them better conditions – at an emotional level – from where they can start their own lives.

Ivy[4] differs from our other interviewees, in that she has no children. Even though we originally had defined being a parent as a criterion for our informants, we decide to add Ivy's perspectives to the investigation, as one of the reasons why she decides not to have children is that she assumes it would demand a lot of her not to pass on patterns from her own childhood family. Ivy participates in a support group for people who have grown up with alcoholic parents or in families that in other ways are, in their own terminology, 'dysfunctional' - her recently deceased father was an alcoholic. Ivy is 31 and originates from southern Europe; she left her country when she received a scholarship to study abroad, first in the US and later in Denmark, where she has lived ever since.

The ways in which the families of these four women have been 'dysfunctional' are diverse. But what is common to them is the importance they attribute to creating a life for themselves free from the patterns that

1 Partly anonymised - interviewees name is kept, others' are altered
2 Partly anonymised - interviewees name is kept, others' are altered
3 Fully anonymised - all names are altered
4 Fully anonymised - all names are altered

they have sought to break. For each of them, the term of 'breaking family patterns' has been meaningful in relation to their own lives.

3.4 - **Conditions of the interview and developing a semi-structured interview guide**

With each of these women, we conduct interviews of approximately one-and-a-half hours in length, where we are guided by some of the general topics that we are curious about (described below). All of our interviews are semi-structured and, as mentioned above, the degree to which we lean on our previously formulated questions varies from interview to interview. To cause our interviewees as little inconvenience as possible, we let it be up to them to decide where they want to meet us, as long as we can find a place where we can be undisturbed. One of our interviews is conducted in a room that is made available to us at our university; the next takes place in one of our homes; we meet our third respondent at her work place, and finally we are invited to conduct our last interview in the home of one of our interviewees. In all cases, because we have experience working together and know each other well, we find it most natural to carry out the interviewing together, having fluid borders between who is speaking. Furthermore, this in our view contributes to make the situation as comfortable as possible for our interviewees.

Now, let us give an overview of the process of developing an interview guide. Before conducting the interviews, we carry out four pilot interviews – all with psychology students who themselves have children – in order to try out some of the interview questions we have started up with and further develop them. Our foci of interest in these interviews are of a general character, and concern the ways individuals experience how their childhood plays a role in their own way of being a parent.

This process gives us insight into the value of our initial questions, and allows us to test some of the preconceived ideas behind our study. Furthermore, several of our interviewees introduce topics that we have not thought of before, but that have come to be central elements in our further study.

Our final interview guide is based on four main topics that reflect our interest in the dynamic and relational aspect of life stories:

The first theme concerns how our interviewees regard their childhood and their families: Asides from asking all to describe this part of their life, we are interested in discerning whether – and how – their understandings of their childhood have changed through time, and if so, what they believe has contributed to giving them new perspectives. These questions are based on the assumptions that the individual holds a view on its past that is important to how it relates to its life, and that by asking this type of questions we can consider in which ways life stories are dynamic.

In continuation of the first topic, we are interested in also looking into what ideas our interviewees have about their own parents' past and childhood. This topic arises from one of our pilot interviews, where our interviewee asks us why we have not asked about her mother's childhood. Considering that our topic of inquiry regards family patterns, this question is of particular relevance as it expands the concept from concerning the individual's own life course (the first main topic above) to taking into consideration the aspects of life story which extend beyond the individual through the relational aspects of its being.

The third topic of interest regards to what extent and in which manners our interviewees have shared their views on their childhood homes with others. This topic, we hope, can give us insight into the ways life stories are relational in two senses: what it means to the individual that others have insight into its life stories, and how others contribute to the understandings that the individual holds.

Finally, we are interested in the considerations our interviewees have had in regard to establishing a family themselves, in particular to having children. Our thoughts behind this topic relate to our initial idea that an individual who wants to be a parent in a significantly different manner from its own parents might intentionally look for inspiration on good parenting from sources outside its own family. In this sense, we look into how ideals about parenting and about family life have emerged for our interviewees, and how these relate to their own childhood and families.

As seen in our interview topics above, our interviews are guided by our assumptions and the preliminary hypotheses we develop during our preparations for the interviews. However, as our study progresses, and we gain new insights and perspectives through first our interviews and later the ongoing analysis, our working questions are also altered, bringing us to analyse our transcripts in terms of ideas that we could not perceive of when we initially conducted our interviews. In the beginning, we had a general idea that these four areas could be relevant to our study, but in the course of our analysis we let our findings open up for broader understandings of the way they are associated with our field of interest. In this sense, our investigation of breaking family patterns is a rather dynamic one as it progresses through a dialectic between a deductive and an inductive approach.

From the beginning of our investigation, we consciously strive to make use of the advantage of being two researchers rather than one. We can continuously discuss and thus clarify with each other, as well as challenge, our own assumptions behind our investigation and the diverse aspects of our interviews - interview settings, methods of enquire and personal styles - that impact on how our study develops. Furthermore, through this process we are able to discuss our ideas and different perspectives on our research material.

3.5 - **Analytical points of interest**

As we made clear at the onset of this chapter, our basic interest lies in the ways in which narrative provides a form that life can be represented and understood through. We have pointed to how the narrative productions of the individual are embedded in interpersonal relations, and in this chapter we have established that we in our analysis will look for instances where we might have introduced something to the interview setting that has been particularly influential on the accounts our interviewees give us. Furthermore, we have shown that in our interviews, we are curious about how our interviewees' perspectives on their lives are dynamic and develop through interactions with others. This includes both sharing personal stories with others and taking in their points of view. These are areas we will further explore in our analysis, as we believe that they can give us valuable insight into how the individual relates to its life.

So far, we have only briefly mentioned that we in this investigation also assume each narrative account to be embedded in the culture the narrating individual lives and makes meaning in. In our analysis we look at how our interviewees draw on cultural resources and, in general, we acknowledge that discourses in society about the topics we discuss, make up an overall context that our "interview-talk *speaks to* and *emerges from*" (Rapley, 2004: 16, author's emphasis).

Viewing interview responses as narratives that tell us something about the individual's *experience* requires methodological considerations that extend beyond the "traditional" notions of reliability and validity (Riessman, 1993; Mishler, 1986). The aim of this type of narrative analysis is not to reveal one truth, or objective features of lived life. Rather, it attends to stories as *interpretations* that the individual engages in – and what these understandings can tell us about the social life that they derive from (Riessman, 1993), and are directed to (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). So when analysing the life stories of respondents, we as researchers are also providing *our* interpretations of the stories we are given, at once expanding and reducing our material (Riessman, 1993): our analytical foci encourage us to add our interpretations and ascribe significance to some aspects of the material, while at the same time we close off other elements of the interviews that could have led us down different roads. These are the basic – sometimes painful – terms of research that takes an interpretative approach. While the validity of our analysis cannot be assessed in terms of predetermined measures, what we can do to give our claims a certain legitimacy, is to be transparent about the perspectives we employ in our interpretations of the interpretations that our interviewees make present to us. In every chapter of our analysis, we will hence be explicit about the theoretical assumptions that provide us with general terms for how we look into our interview transcripts.

3.6 - **A reader's guide to our analysis**

In the second part of this thesis, that we are about to enter now, we begin to analyse our interviews. Since the interviews were conducted in Danish, we have translated the excerpts that we use in our analysis into English. Each of these excerpts is provided with a code that makes it possible for Danish-speaking readers to

look up the wording in its original language in the appendix. Furthermore, we have included the larger discursive context that the excerpts emerge from.

Transcription symbols

- **M**, Mikka Lene Højholt Pers
- **C**, Carolina Martinez Varela Pedersen
- / signals interruption
- **…** signals a brief pause
- **(Brackets)** let us describe gestures or expressive sounds *and* are used to bring original Danish terms if they are ambiguous
- **(?)** transcriber is unsure of exact word spoken
- **[Square brackets]** contain references to institutions and locations that are anonymised
- ***Italics*** signal emphasis in speech
- **(…)** signals that an excerpt begins in immediate continuation of another sentence

PART 2

4

UNDERSTANDING LIFE IN NARRATIVE TERMS

(MP)

Time is not an illusion. Nor is it the only reality. It is one possible, widespread form for encounters between the mind and the surrounding world.

Peter Høeg / Borderliners

In the present chapter, we seek to understand the ways in which our interviewees, occasioned by our interview, *make present* their lives to themselves and to us - and through that take stances towards the life they lead. Analytically, we focus attention here on those instances where the narrative structure functions as a site for reflection and allows the individual to draw some sort of experiential conclusion. The key argument we attempt to steadily develop throughout this thesis is that the individual, when framing its life in narrative terms, does so *in relation to* others - real or imagined - as well as to earlier versions of its self. So when telling life stories the individual positions itself in various ways and as the next chapters will show, we suggest that these acts of positioning can assist the individual in its efforts to prevent the patterns of its childhood from repeating. In order to fully grasp the nature and significance of these acts, we find it necessary to draw up the structural characteristics of narrative that function as premises for them. In this chapter, we examine the concept of *temporality* and we argue that it is only when time is not framed in linear chronological terms, but understood as operating through multiple non-linear orders, that we can fully grasp what can be achieved through narrative examinations of one's life.

Most of us employ the temporal terms of past, present and future as self-evident categories when navigating life. Add to that hypothetical pasts, presents and futures and still we move through all of these conjured spheres without giving them much thought. As Ricoeur (1980) aptly argues, time is something we take for granted, we "reckon with" it, especially in telling stories. We now explore the narrative capacities that this *reckoning with* time might be argued to be closely related to and look at how our interviewees use them in constructive ways when working toward a disruption of potentially repetitive family patterns.

4.1 - **From 'life history' to 'life story'**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the association between narrative and human meaning making has been and is currently studied in a substantial part of narrative research. The central assumption is often that narrative, through its innate structuring quality, offers guidance to how narrators, by causally tying their accounts together, can turn otherwise disparate episodes into elements of a sequence (Brockmeier, 2001; Bruner, 1994; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Hydén, 2010; Hyvärinen, 2012; Mishler, 1986; Ochs & Capps, 2002; Ricoeur, 1980; Ricoeur, 1991; Ricoeur, 1992; Riessman, 2002; Sandino, 2010; Schiff, 2012; Squire, 2008). Frequently, a hermeneutic principle is inherent in this line of thought, where narrative succession is regarded as a function of the dialectic between single episodes that act as constitutive elements of the plot, and the plot itself, which forms the interpretive frame that imbues each of its building blocks with significance. This notion implicitly differentiates between the resources that are available and what through the *creative* labour of the plot is created out of them; again we tap into the classic concept of sjuzet (plot) as "a particular narrative composition of the fabula" (Brockmeier, 2001: 271) (story). What this means is that the configuration that is established in narrative creates a unit that did not exist beforehand. In the case of autobiographic narration, this translates to the distinction that is often made between *life history* and *life story*. The former refers to the hypothetical series of consecutive sensuous present moments of one's lived life, and the latter to the product of a conversion of these moments into a story. We adopt this distinction to differentiate between life as lived and the narrative representation of it, which apart from being quite selective confers a new order and meaning onto the events that are included. Henceforth we will employ the terms life story, personal narrative, and autobiographic narrative/narration interchangeably.

Ricoeur (1980; 1991) has a particular interest in the ways narrative establishes sequence by aligning episodes through *succession* and *configuration,* and he points to temporality as a fundamental driving force on both of these modes of sequence. The general idea that temporal progression constitutes *the*, or at least *a*, hallmark of narrative is common among narrative researchers (Andrews et al., 2003; Hermans, 1996; Medved & Brockmeier, 2010; Mishler, 2006; Ochs & Capps, 2002; Riessman, 2002; Tamboukou, 2010). Arguments in favour of this position often lean on the view pioneered by Aristotle, that a narrative demarcates a period of time, the space between the beginning and the end (*telos*), in which events that are necessitated by the distance between beginning and end unfold. Even though temporality does not necessarily imply linearity, it is often taken to do so, in and beyond the field of narrative research: "The ''uncriticized temporal framework'' where time is represented as a ''linear succession of instants'' is omnipresent, usually as a tacit assumption, in psychology and the other human sciences" (Mishler, 2006: 35). This conception of time as "marching forward" (Riessman, 2002: 698) that is reflected in the extensively used metaphor of 'the arrow of time', can easily lead to similar temporal standards when addressing narrative, especially in frameworks that stress the referential quality of narrative: As life itself is believed to proceed as a movement through linear time, our recapitulation of it too often is assumed to exhibit linear cause and effect relationships

(Brockmeier, 2001; Mishler, 2006; Ochs & Capps, 2002; Ricoeur, 1980; Ricoeur, 1991; Riessman, 2002; Samijn et al., 2008; Tamboukou, 2010). Whereas the principle of linear time may be applied to our physical trajectories and generally "the world of *things"* (Freeman, 2010: 174) it is Ricoeur's argument that the human mind, through narrative, carries out far more complex temporal operations. In his perspective, the 'episodic dimension' of narrative that is argued to characterise the order of events that is *referenced* in the narrative, is habitually understood to transpire in accordance with the chronologically laid out time that we take for granted. Whereas this subsumed progression mimics "the so-called natural order of time" (Ricoeur, 1980: 180), the 'configural dimension' of narrative is driven by phenomenological standards: the configuring act adheres to a principle of 'intelligibility': what is created needs to be comprehensible and make sense to those who engage with it (Ricoeur, 1991). Ricoeur, in this regard, stresses the significance of the endings of narrative compositions, as in his perspective "(…) the story's conclusion is the pole of attraction of the entire development" (Ibid.: 174). It is the ending of the story that influences what overall meaning is extracted from it, and this meaning in turn sets the scene for its retrospective emplotment (Ibid.; Kaplan, 2003). What happens in the configural dimension of narrative is thus an inversion of the arrow of time. Here we read "the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end" (Ricoeur, 1980: 180) and, by implication, the narrative plot is driven by a retroactively established causality rather than by a prospective one (ibid.; Brockmeier, 2001; Kaplan, 2003; Ricoeur, 1992). Ricoeur (1992) speaks in this regard of a "retrograde necessity" which results from the totality of the narrative configuration that "transforms physical contingency (…) into narrative contingency, implied in narrative necessity." (Ibid.: 142). Brockmeier (1997; 2001) embraces the same temporal dialectic, as he too understands 'narrated events' *s*uch as life stories in terms of two temporal axes: "One axis is linked to a coordinate directed from the present to the past, the other one links to a coordinate from the past to the present" (Brockmeier, 2001: 272). When we apply this line of thought to life stories, this means that we expect the protagonist to undergo a development that gradually leads him or her from the past to the present: first comes birth, then childhood etc. This *episodic timeline,* however, can be inferred through a *configural timeline* in which we follow the protagonist through life stages that are not directly connected by linear chronological time. For instance, we might get introduced to the protagonist as a youngster, shortly return to an episode in his or her earlier childhood, before we jump ahead and witness elements of his or her life as a grown up. As long as these temporally distributed episodes bring the protagonist to the conclusion of his life story in a plausible way, neither narrators nor listeners have any trouble accepting such temporal jumps (Brockmeier, 2001; Freeman, 2010; Mishler, 2006; Ricoeur, 1980). So the intelligibility of a story is retrospectively determined, "Looking back from the conclusion to the episodes leading up to it, we have to be able to say that this ending required these sorts of events and this chain of actions" (Ricoeur, 1980: 174). What we find interesting in terms of life stories, then, is the question of how the routes that let the protagonist arrive at the ending of its story are to be structured in order to be deemed intelligible. If it is not linear order that determines story progression, according to what principle are

episodes then connected? Ricoeur answers this question by pointing to the importance of culturally available symbolic resources and patterns of meaning that the individual inevitably borrows from, when giving its life shape and meaning (Kaplan, 2003; Ricoeur; 1980; 1991, 1992). We make a similar point in Chapter 6, where we look at the association between life stories and the broader social contexts in which they arise.

4.2 - **Ever-widening contexts**

In the previous section, we saw that narrative can be approached in terms of two dimensions, each operating with its own mode of temporality. On top of that, both Ricoeur and Brockmeier stress a third temporal order, constituted by the very temporal embedded nature of every act of narration; every 'narrative event' happens at a specific point in time (Brockmeier, 2001; Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001; Kaplan, 2003; Ricoeur; 1980; 1988). The phrase, point in time, may however be somewhat misleading in this context, for the view that is proposed is that the present moment, in fact, can not be reduced to a point between past and future. This outlook again would suggest a linear conception of time. Rather, elaborating on Heidegger's concept of within-time-ness - his first temporal structure - which characterises the time *in* which events take place (Ricoeur; 1980: 170), Ricoeur points to the fact that the present is more than an abstract instant defined through its relation to the instants enclosing it. Instead, it is a moment of 'preoccupation' with the things that surround us in the world we are 'thrown' into. So the present itself is an act of *making present* events that exceed this moment and extend to include past incidents and those expected to come (Ricoeur; 1980; 1988). The narrative journey through time - be it on the episodic or the configural dimension - is always set in motion by a narrator, who from a temporally situated platform directs attention to what through his or her look is made present.

Yet the narrator of life stories is not as firmly situated as authors to lets say novels or other fixed pieces of work. Whereas set narratives earn credibility in terms of their arrangement of episodes between a well-defined offset of a given development and its conclusion, life is open-ended. As the individual moves through life, it continuously reaches new endings to life so far and hence can "come to understand what happened in terms of ever-widening contexts of what happened later (…)" (Mishler, 2006: 41). What this suggests is that the starting point of the life story - the present moment from which the individual projects itself through time - is in a perpetual state of flux, providing potentially changing inroads to the narrative representation of its life. One important implication of this argument is that the past is not set in stone. Rather, our narratively established picture of the past demands continuous work, as it can be framed and reframed in the light of the 'ever-widening' context provided by our ongoing life (Brockmeier, 1997; Brockmeier, 2001; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Freeman 2010; Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001; Mishler, 2006; Ricoeur, 1988; Ricoeur, 1992; Sandino, 2010).

Freeman (2010) takes this idea as a premise for his exploration of 'hindsight', asking what the individual can come to see through temporal distance. In Freeman's perspective, we humans are essentially "temporal beings" (Ibid.; 83) who, like in the view we presented above, "interpret the past from the standpoint of the present, seeking to determine how it might have contributed to this very moment" (Ibid.: 175). This process of interpretation, in Freeman's eyes, is inevitably bound to narrative that offers a lens through which determination of past events is retrospectively discerned and each event is infused with meaning and significance. This is why Freeman attributes a fundamental 'lateness' to the human condition, the individual is constantly awaiting possible implications of events to appear that retroactively activate the potential for meaning of these events, "We are beings-in-waiting" (Freeman, 2010: 85). And as time goes on and new implications can be made out, the meaning of events can be transfigured time and time again. According to Freeman, this capacity for delayed insight holds both a potential for productive re-evaluations of one's life and for dreadful realisations of, for instance, one's own wrongdoings. As will be shown in the course of our analysis, our interviewees on multiple occasions make a passing reference to how, from the interview situation, they are able to understand events in terms of a frame that has emerged *late*. On other occasions our interviewees do not articulate it, but we analytically take note of this kind of deferred attribution of meaning.

4.3 - **Narrative points of view**

Above we hinted to how the structural premises of the life story can be utilized by the individual to revisit past events and form new understandings of them later in life. Before we fully turn to the functional aspects of life stories, we propose one last principle we apply in our analysis: the principle of *simultaneity*.

We have suggested an outlook on the transformation of *life history* to *life story* as a process of configuration that generates a believable development towards the end of the life story - constituted by the time of the narrative event - which at the same time marks its beginning: "It is the here and now of the narrative speech act (…) that is the point of departure of every story. Yet in the chronological order of most life narratives, this is, at the same time, the end — if only temporarily — of a process, namely, the course of one's life that started sometime in the past" (Brockmeier, 2001: 251). This in turn has led us to argue that the meaning ascribed to recollected events is fundamentally malleable. However, this reasoning *can* come to foster conclusions about the constructive abilities of the individual, that grant the individual much more far-reaching power then we can agree to here. From a purely constructionist perspective, the implication of our arguments - especially the notion of *lateness* - could be that the meaning of life stories is regarded as a mere function of the lens of the present moment. In this perspective then, the individual in the capacity of being the narrator of its own life story, in principal could construct very different accounts of its life that would all be equally true, as long as they are true to the experience of the individual. This is, however, *not* the stance we take in regard to the scope of what can be generated through narrative, as we believe this view to fall

short when it comes to explaining why life stories not just change with the wind and people mostly can not simply think themselves out of understandings they have established even long time ago (Markus & Nurius, 1986). By that we mean what Schiff (2012) refers to as the 'longevity' of particular stories; that is the way in which central elements of life stories can be relatively negligent to the context of the telling. So rather than considering the emergence of a new understanding as a process, which involves a fundamental reconstruction of the entire life story, we propose a view in which quite different understandings can manifest themselves in the same life story as distinct points of view, held by 'younger' versions of the narrating individual. The basis of this argument is the idea that it is only in the very conclusion of the autobiographic story (the time of the narrative event) that the narrator and the protagonist merge and become one and the same (Brockmeier, 2001; Bruner, 2001; Ricoeur, 1980; Sclater, 2003), "achieving an apparently unified subjectivity" (Sclater, 2003: 325). At earlier points in the journey that is laid out in the life story, the protagonist implicitly differs from the narrator, as the narrator by virtue of his or her location at the very end of the portrayed development, has knowledge about events that the protagonist has not yet been through and thus is in a position to revise the understandings that he or she held at earlier stages. Along these lines, then, it might be argued that we in a life story meet versions of the protagonist that are situated at separate positions along the *episodic* trajectory referenced in it, and as we move through the linear time laid out in this dimension, we expect the protagonist to develop increasing degrees of resemblance to the narrator:

> "What after all is an autobiography? It consists of the following. A narrator, in the here and now, takes upon himself or herself the task of describing the progress of a protagonist in the there and then, one who happens to share his name. He must by convention bring that protagonist from the past into the present in such a way that the protagonist and the narrator eventually fuse and become one person with a shared consciousness" (Bruner, 2001: 27).

Brockmeier elsewhere (2001) makes a point that is quite similar to that of Bruner. According to Brockmeier, these protagonists, who are situated in each their moment in the overall depicted development, contribute with different points of view to the life story and form "different psychological points of reference and temporal frameworks" (Brockmeier, 2001: 248). This idea is echoed by Hydén (2010) according to whom the imaginary versions of the narrator can contribute with knowledge, outlooks, and moral values that conflict with that of the narrator. So it can be argued that the narrating individual in its life story juggles an array of subjectivities that play some role in the path that turns the narrator into who he is today. What interests us here is the idea that all of these variations of the same 'I' are made present and co-exist in the same moment in time - the present of the narrative event. So what we suggest is that narrative structurally invites the individual to lay out scenarios in pluri-temporal ways, whereby the individual can *simultaneousl*y present multiple layers of meaning. In what follows, we analytically explore how our interviewees might be

argued to make use of this capacity, to carry out discursive acts that would go unnoticed by frameworks that draw on a purely linear conception of time.

4.4 - **Juggling simultaneous meanings**

In Bettina's account of her childhood, the year she is 10 gets particular emphasis. On multiple occasions we return to this eventful year, where her first brother is born, she is sexually assaulted by a stranger on her way home from school, and her mother "leaves home" in what is characterised as a "relatively dramatic" incident. This last event initiates a long path of temporary placements at orphanages, periods where she is back at her mother's place, and at one time she lives with her father and his new girlfriend. Later we will hear more about each of these phases in Bettina's life, but first we take a look at the account (B.1) she gives us of the day her mother "leaves home", after an exceptionally violent fight with Bettina's father.

Bettina: (…) if we go half a step back now, right? ... then it is, or what happens is that my mom "leaves home", as I call it ... it can be characterised as something relatively dramatic, because I'm ten years old, and at that age you start – at least I start – being aware of – or thinking about – how other people see me, and I start to understand that I am part of *something*, and that something is looking at me and appraising me, in relation to, well, society, right? At least I understand that I can, look like others, or not look like others, or, like that. And I feel the same as I think most others feel, I don't want to stick out, right? I mean, I don't want to, like, stick out and be different – I think this is the case for most children. Uhm, so my mom, she takes my baby brother [between six and eight weeks old], who's screaming his head off – he's on the table, in the carrycot – she takes the carrycot, *just like that,* and takes me by the arm, *bang, just like that,* and *pulls* us out the door. And then she just starts walking, I mean, it's a completely absurd image, just imagine it! She walks up this small street, all the way through [street name], up through the pedestrian street and down to the local town council (kommunen), and I'm, I don't have, I'm wearing socks! I mean, I'm wearing socks, for heaven's sake! And my brother is screaming and he's blue in the face and my mom looks like hell – she got a licking, like, a genuine licking and the tears are spurting out of, out of her eyes and she looks like a small troll with her hair going every which way. It was... it sounds absurd, with all the things I've experienced, but it's one of the most *embarrassing* things I've experienced in my life, I mean, for me it still represents... I can't even stand thinking about it, I mean, it... well, I can, but, shit, it was embarrassing. And apparently these are the ideas you have when you are right around ten years old, this thing about, how you look compared to others, what are the others thinking. Down the pedestrian street, right? I though it was just... fuck… And it really didn't help, when we arrived at the local town council and they might have been nice and all but that doesn't change that they just let me and my brother sit there all on our own in the waiting room and I sat there trying to comfort my brother at least a bit and then they took my mother to, they took my mother to a social worker and a lot of time passed, I can't - it could have been ten minutes, right, but it sure felt like a couple of hours. And during that time *nobody* comes over to say "do you need some help with your baby brother?" or "would you like to sit in a bit more private area" or "would you like something to drink or a Donald Duck magazine or some raisins" or anything like that, those damn adults, they did absolutely nothing, so you just sit there on public display in a waiting room and it was just… *completely* hopeless and that's why I go and see social work students to teach them (claps her hands) that they just can't do that… because it's really no fun to be in a situation like that. Well, so my mother comes back and, and wipes off her tears and stuff like that and then the yellow bus arrives. Everyone in town knows the yellow bus because that's the bus they send from the orphanage. And the yellow bus comes and picks us up. And that… I really didn't think that was any fun at all. (…)

(B.1)

Here we become acquainted with three versions of Bettina: 10-year-old-Bettina, Bettina-the-teacher, and finally Bettina-the-narrator, who occasions this narrative event. On the *episodic* dimension, we are audience to a trajectory, which is set off when the 10-year-old is put in a "*completely* hopeless" situation by the adults around her. It ends with Bettina becoming a teacher who tells the social work students "they just can't do that". Bettina-the-teacher has come to exist earlier than the present of the narrative event, but still Bettina-the-narrator identifies with this version of herself [I go and see social work students] so they seem to share the general present. Hence this little autobiographic narrative fulfils the full circle drawn out above, where protagonist and narrator merge when the episodic development comes to an end.

On the *configural* level, however, we witness a far less stringent temporal motion that we will take a further look at now. The description of the departure from what until then has been their home and the walk all the way through town, stands out as quite vivid. This effect is achieved through the rather detailed account of the scenery, through intonation [*just like that / pulls* us out the door] as well as through the exclamation of a sound [*bang*] to demonstrate the abruptness of the mother's movements. Also the recurrent reference to the sound of her brother's desperate screams [who's screaming his head off / my brother is screaming and he's blue in the face / I sat there trying to comfort my brother] seems to contribute to the rather graphic illustration of the episode. We get a clear impression of seeing the world through the eyes of a 10-year-old and it is this same girl who is embarrassed by the whole scenery and in the midst of it all notices that she has no shoes on.

During the account of events as seen from the perspective of the child, we become aware of another narrative perspective lurking through - a voice that comments on the understanding of the child [because I'm ten years old, and at that age you start / I think this is the case for most children / it sounds absurd, with all the things I've experienced / these are the ideas you have when you are right around ten years old / it could have been ten minutes, right, but it sure felt like a couple of hours]. We interpret this perspective as belonging to Bettina-the-narrator, who assesses the episode from the position of the narrative event, where it has a meaning that differs from that held by the child. Implicitly, this Bettina applies a theory-of-10-year-olds to the younger version of herself, explaining her embarrassment. It is also from the perspective of the narrative event that Bettina can view the depicted incident as a case involving professionals [those damn adults] who treat children wrong [it was just… *completely* hopeless], a view that also manifests in the shift from "I" to the more general "you" [you just sit there on public display]. The suggestions for what the professionals could have asked the girl who sat there with her screaming brother seem to come from this position as well; today, with an understanding of 10-year-olds she can see what could have been done but wasn't. It is right after this generalisation that we jump ahead to Bettina-the-teacher, who works for preventing other kids from being exposed to a similar situation. After this, we return to the waiting room to observe the mother come back and the yellow bus arrive.

Thus on the *configural* level, we take several leaps back and forth between the point of view of the child and the narrator. Both of these views are simultaneously contained in the Bettina we sit face-to-face with in the interview situation, and who in that moment not only acts in relation to her past life but also in relation to us, *showing* us a part of her life, as becomes clear in the introductory "if we go half a step back now, right?".

So what happens in this excerpt that makes it so relevant to the current investigation? What we find particularly interesting is how the narrating Bettina seems to tell multiple stories and hence communicate different meanings in this passage. Hence she illustrates how life stories do often not lead to *one* meaning - one conclusion. Instead, the narrative structure allows for complexity and invites the individual to simultaneously advocate different understandings, leaving room for *ambivalence* about what stories are really about.

As mentioned before, Bettina-the-narrator, from a temporal distance, seems to view the referenced episode as a case of professional misconduct. Simultaneously, however, the event as seen through the child's eyes is mainly about *embarrassment*. From the point of view of the young girl, we note that the she has bare feet as she is forced to walk down the presumably most crowded street of town with a screaming baby and an openly crying mother, who is described as being utterly out of control [my mom looks like hell / and the tears are spurting out of, out of her eyes and she looks like a small troll with her hair going every which way]. This story seems not at all to be about professional misconduct; rather it seems to revolve around dignity and the embarrassment that comes when it is offended. Contrary to the storyline about the little family that flees home and receives help - signified by the yellow bus - or the one about professional conduct that ends with Bettina teaching social work students, this storyline is not resolved; nobody restores the dignity of the child. And though Bettina-the-narrator explicitly disputes the validity of this understanding [it sounds absurd] and emphasises the childishness of this view, she still seems to get overwhelmed with an acute feeling of *embarrassment* talking about it [I can't even stand thinking about it, I mean, it... well, I can, but, shit, it was embarrassing].

So in the view we have suggested, this excerpt could be understood as containing different storylines that subsist simultaneously. Through this, Bettina is able to express the way this episode stands out to her in terms of several layers of meaning. Maybe this complexity could be seen as a result of it being made present and reflected on on several occasions, from different vantage points, adding new perspectives to it along the way. The complexity could also be a function of a wish to thoroughly give us, the psychologists and the professionals that will read this thesis, an idea about how to best help a 10-year-old. Along these lines, Bettina's account could be read as an appeal to not only take the obvious needs of children into consideration (by sending the yellow bus) but to furthermore bear the dignity of children in mind when doing so. In this way, the point of view of the child could be seen as serving an important interpersonal function, showing us that children think differently than adults, that other things are important to them [I don't want to stick out,

right? I mean, I don't want to, like, stick out and be different – I think this is the case for most children] and therefore they can be violated in ways adults might be blind to.

4.5 - **Narratives of development: Positioning oneself to oneself**

Later in our interview with Bettina, we observe another interesting interplay between the views held by different versions of her self. This time, the dialogue that is established between them seems to have the function of rendering visible the way she has developed through time.

The passage we look at now (B.2) is part of Bettina's response to when we ask her to tell us about how it was to first become a mother. Bettina tells us about the feelings of love that arise in the wake of the birth of the first of her two children, and this leads to an account of how she also is a quite worried mother. In our analysis of this excerpt, we especially note the way Bettina-the-narrator evaluates the point of view of her younger self.

> Bettina: (…) so, as I said in the beginning, I've worried a whole lot ... so my kids used to send me texts even when they were 19 and 20 years old, as I said before, for my sake. And that's because I'm a person that protects other people a lot and I've *always* been that way and I remember a situation, a specific situation where - it was in the summer, my son was born in May, May 15th, in 1992 by the way, the year we won the European Cup, that's an important fact to remember in a football family! Uh, he was six weeks old when that happened: Bam! Well, so, uh, we lived in an apartment at that time and it was nice out and I remember I of course had read all the books you can, obviously, and spoken to my healthcare worker and generally spoken to everyone I could 'cause I fucking had to be a good mother and then that day it was nice out and on the one hand, should I make him wear a beanie? For if I did make him wear a beanie I would prevent him from getting cold ears, which was *one* of those things you have to be careful about - a very theoretical approach. But the other thing was if he was too hot he could get a heat rash! So, uh, I can, just when I'm talking about it, I mean it's just ridiculous (laughs) but that's how I *felt*! I felt like the world was collapsing! Because I just couldn't, aaaaargh, and I knew he was supposed to be out on the balcony cause it would be *good* for him with the fresh air and all, but should he wear a beanie? You know, I called the healthcare worker *many times*, I would say. And she said to me "Bettina, would you like me to come by?", "yes, I would really appreciate that!" and then she came and that's when I for the first time as a grown up told anybody about what had happened to me in my childhood. Uh… I told her the *whole* shebang. I even told her about something we haven't talked about yet, you know, my father was reported to the police. I told my grandmother what had happened. And my grandmother took me to the police to report it (…)

(B.2)

The progression we are presented with in excerpt B.2 on the *episodic* dimension launches sometime before the birth of Bettina's son. This is when she reads all she can and speaks to everyone in order to become "a good mother". Then we hear about Bettina who is faced with a dilemma about how to comply with this objective, that one particular summer day, either shortly before or after Denmark wins the championship. Finally, we hop up to when Bettina's kids are 19 and 20 years old, which is in the very year of this narrative event, so again we encounter a version of the protagonist that shares the general present with the narrator.

On the *configural* level, like in the preceding excerpt, we witness far more complex shifts in time and perspectives. Again we are provided with a rather dramatic description of the distress that the version of Bettina in that "specific situation" finds herself in. We have been told that this young Bettina has worked hard to be the best mother she can, and now suddenly she finds herself in a dilemma between two equally important responsibilities of "a good mother", which puts her in a seemingly irresolvable situation [I felt like the world was collapsing! Because I just couldn't, aaaaargh]. It seems to us that Bettina-the-narrator quite effortlessly reverts back to the position of this past self from where she gives expression to the frustration experienced by this Bettina. This is especially indicated by the breakdown of words articulated through the seemingly deep felt "aaaaargh", and by the shifting back-and-forth between each of the two possibilities for action this past version of her envisions [should I make him wear a beanie? / if he was too hot he could get a heat rash! / but should he wear a beanie?]. At the same time, however, Bettina-the-narrator positions herself to this past dilemma [a very theoretical approach / just when I'm talking about it, I mean it's just ridiculous (laughs)] and mockingly comments on how the youngest protagonist does what she can to prepare herself for her role as a mother [I of course had read all the books you can, obviously]. It is also from this 'future' position that the soccer championship has significance, because back in 1992 she could not know that her newly born and his little sister would become semi-professional soccer players and the family would someday identify as a "soccer family".

Again, it seems rather evident that we witness a narrator *doing* a whole lot while telling: Bettina-the-narrator makes present and connects past events - establishes meanings that she calls into question right away - and on top of that she remarks on her role as a narrator in relation to us, comparing what she told the healthcare worker back then to what she has said in the interview with us [I even told her about something we haven't talked about yet].

The description of this "specific situation" is given an explicit meaning. Bettina-the-narrator states that she has always "worried a whole lot" and then she "remembers this one specific situation" that validates her claim. Although Bettina explicitly stresses the continuity of this "worrying" [I've *always* been that way] there seems to be more at play than constancy. Rather, we see an indication *development* emerge in the way the event is laid out. Specifically, this development is implied by the stances Bettina takes in relation to the protagonist conflicted about how to be a good mother. When Bettina-the-narrator critically assesses the approach to being a mother that this protagonist holds [a very theoretical approach] she implicitly establishes a temporal distance to this approach, telling us that she has found a new way of being a mother. And from this position the insecurity of the earlier Bettina seems "ridiculous" [just when I'm talking about it, I mean it's just ridiculous (laughs)]. According to Freeman (1991; 2010), the capacity of looking back on "previous understanding of things and of the self whose understandings they were" (Freeman, 2010: 186) and relating them to who one is now, bears the potential of picturing oneself as an evolved person - one that has undergone a development. He argues for a conception of development as essentially retrospectively

determined; it is through the backward glance at earlier "modes of knowing" (Freeman, 2010) and by rendering them deficient that one can become aware of and communicate development: "We are no longer there; we are elsewhere; and the place at which we have arrived can arguably be judged to be a better one, if only for the time being" (Freeman, 1991: 96). Along these lines, then, what Bettina-the-narrator could be argued to gain from taking a critical stance toward the mother she used to be, is a sense of development. Once the portrayed dilemma made her "world collapse", today she can laugh about it. What we find important to note here is that the comparison that is implied in her judgements necessarily involves a double sense of both continuity *and* change: The difference between the points of view carried by variations of the protagonist can only signify development, because these voices implicitly are taken to belong to the same person. So the overall story that is built around Bettina in this excerpt relies on the interplay between the protagonists who are placed at different points in her life, but are essentially the same. In other words, it is because Bettina-the-narrator can recognize earlier versions of herself as essentially *herself* that she is able to perceive a transformation in her approach to motherhood.

What this suggests is that the points of view that simultaneously exist in life stories can be bound up with each other in ways that foster an inextricably linked sense of continuity and change, that makes the individual able to define its life and itself in terms of development. We henceforth term this type of interplay between co-existing narrative viewpoints *narratives of development*.

In what follows, we look further into the forms and functions of occasions where narrative points of view are juxtaposed to indicate development.

4.6 - **Moral positioning and meaning in progress**

Above we explored how comparison between temporally distributed 'modes of knowing' that manifest as narrative points of view can give rise to a sense of development. This type of positioning is, however, not the only one we find in our interviews. In this section, we point to situations where our interviewees seem to *morally position* themselves to what was done to them. This brings us to propose that passing a moral judgement too can denote a sense of having undergone a development, this time in a direction away from the patterns of ones childhood.

Asked to describe her past, Jette tells us about what she elsewhere refers to as a "tumultuous childhood" (see appendix page 109 for context) as the youngest of three children, the other two both being boys. Jette's mother is a heavy drinker, and when she opens a business with her husband, Jette's father, she spirals into alcoholism. It is after this that their life takes a turn for the worse, and Jette is extensively left to herself. After telling us about this, Jette brings up her father's family in Jutland, particularly his mother and one of his sisters, Dorte, who took care of her weeks at a time and showed her a kind of care she was in desperate need of. This brings her to say that her father too did possess a fundamental tenderness, which is what she elaborates on in excerpt J.1.

Jette: (…) It was just that whole culture of the family in Jutland, you know, at my grandmother's too. And my father also, there's no doubt about that, he had, they where five siblings, you know and he was the oldest one and had to take care of his siblings, you know and when he came home, uh, at night he came home around one or half past twelve, so it was often he who, I used to bite my nails, you know there where many signs that I was being neglected, in fact I was hospitalised at [hospital] when I was five or so - today having children myself I think that was just insane, you know. Yeah, I wet my bed and sometimes I even made number two in my pants, today that would never, yeah, but I was admitted at [hospital], there just was this "aber dabei" that my parents didn't come, I was hospitalised all by myself at only five years old and then, then after a week they told me I could come home to my mother and father - but then I shouldn't when my mother showed up to get me: I was to stay another week. That would never happen today, would it?

C: No.

Jette: But, and because of this I remember, and my dad really cared about it, that thing about wetting the bed and I actually remember very well, that he would come get me at night when he got home around one then he would get me up on the toilet and pee and at the same time – do you know that "god negl" [nail polish to prevent nail-biting]

M: Yes.

C: Yes.

Jette: He would put that on my nails, eh, and I remember this cold feeling, right? And my point is just, that, that he *did* care for me a lot, but he didn't have unlimited strength, he worked and worked so much, right, but he had this tenderness, he had dad-tenderness, I mean he gave the care that parents do, right, and I don't remember my mom ever touching me or stroking me or anything. And I remember this, because I used to go, I went to see a psychologist when I was very young and I've met psychologists during my time in treatment and I remember that when I spoke to a psychologist once, and she, she said it was very interesting that it was my dad I would go tuck in with at night – when I wanted to cuddle. And I can actually see that now, and it just *is*, but it wasn't at the time and actually it still isn't now when I talk about it, so I think, it's logical that I would tuck in with my dad, because I want to, I mean, so... but she never... she doesn't do it now either (…)

(J.1)

In excerpt J.1, the *episodic* timeline of the narrated event stretches all the way back to the childhood of Jette's father, where he is portrayed as a caring big brother. Subsequently we meet the father along with a young version of Jette, during a period of Jette's childhood, where he counteracts the signs of neglect she exhibits (bedwetting/making number two in her pants/biting nails). Either before or after this, 5-year-old-Jette is left alone in hospital. After this, we come across Jette again when she is "very young" and consults a psychologist and then we hear about an indefinite period in which Jette receives treatment and meets some more psychologists.

Much like in the excerpts we analysed above, however, we observe a non-linear progression on the *configural* dimension of what is said, where we again alternate between several narrative points of views, advocating different meanings. Before we attend to the *moral positioning* we detect in this narrative, we would like to point out an interesting interplay between the view of the narrator on the one side and the child versions of Bettina on the other. In the beginning of the excerpt, these viewpoints are explicitly separated. Every time the narrator evaluates what happens to the younger versions of herself she makes it clear that these are new understandings - they are valid from the position of "today" [today having children myself I think that was just insane, you know / today that would never / That would never happen today, would it?]. Concurrently earlier modes of knowing are attributed to these young protagonists through the frequent use of

"I remember" [e.g. I actually remember very well, that he would come / I remember this cold feeling], which we take to signify a move back in time. However towards the end of the narrative it is as though Jette-the-narrator, while narrating, becomes aware that she still to some degree identifies with the point of view of the child and thus suddenly embraces two, rather contradictory, meanings. On the one hand, Jette-the-narrator agrees with her former psychologist that it is "very interesting" that it was her father and not her mother she wanted to "tuck in with at night". Simultaneously, however, Jette-the-narrator argues for the opposite opinion, which she at first attributes to the child [but it wasn't at the time] and then, interestingly enough, takes on herself [and actually it still isn't now when I talk about it, so I think, it's logical that I would tuck in with my dad, because I want to]. So in this excerpt the narrator holds simultaneous meanings that are not as firmly separated as in the two excerpts we analysed above, where they manifested as definite points of view, belonging to *either* a protagonist *or* the narrator. It seems like Jette is able to apply the frame of meaning presented by the psychologist to her life, yet does not fully embrace it, so she ends up entertaining both her old understanding and the meaning this has in the eye of the psychologist. So what is it that we witness here? An answer to this question could be that the ambiguity that characterises Jette's account is reflective of an uncertainty about how to integrate the words of the psychologist into her life story and whether she agrees with them or not. So what we observe could in fact be Jette putting this perspective to the test and not being able to completely grasp how it relates to what she still feels is most natural to her. What this suggests is that sometimes the meanings we hold are in ongoing dialogue, rather than agreeing on one finished and polished evaluation.

Now let us look at the way Jette-the-narrator morally positions herself to the situation she was in as a child. What we take notice of here is how we, in the course of the episodic trajectory, on multiple occasions, are catapulted forward in time, as we listen to judgements we believe to belong to the point of view of the narrator. Implicitly, the past is compared to "today" and two kinds of changes are demonstrated. Firstly, what is made visible is a change in Jette's position towards these events in the past [today having children myself I think that was just insane] and secondly, Jette in her account identifies a more general societal change [today that would never / That would never happen today]. What we want to draw attention to is what manifests as a negation in this evaluation: By saying that how she was treated was "insane", Jette indirectly points out that she has some knowledge about how to treat children that makes her able to do this evaluation. Similarly, by emphasising that anything like that "would never happen today", Jette attributes a progress to society as a whole. So in a roundabout way Jette establishes a criterion of 'goodness' - by identifying what is 'wrong' she introduces a 'right'. It might thus appear as though Jette uses this passage to set up a moral worldview for herself and inscribes her life in relation to it.

The relation between moral and narrative is taken up in much narrative research (Freeman; 1991; 2010; Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001; Hydén, 2010; Phoenix, 2008; Ricoeur, 1988; Ricoeur, 1992; Sclater, 2003). In Chapter 6, we make the point that the form a narrated version of a life takes depends on a specific cultural

system that conditions the valuations that underlie what the individual composes. What interests us most now, however, is how the act of framing life in narrative terms provides the individual with an opportunity to develop stances that *further* moral development (Freeman: 1991; 2010; Ricoeur, 1992).

Freeman (1991; 2010) is interested in the moral dimension of narrative, with moral broadly understood as those "fundamental questions about how to live" (Freeman, 2010: 5). He makes the case that the individual, through narrative reflection, can recognise the "not-good" it has encountered in life and come nearer to a formulation of the opposite: "this seeing - this very identification of the *not*-good - can only issue from some sense however indefinite and ill-formed, of the very goodness my life has failed to be" (Freeman, 2010: 189). In this sense, life stories offer us a site for trying out moral judgements that help us identify what 'a good life' might entail for us. This idea is also set forth by Ricoeur (1992), who claims that it is when looking at one's life in a gathered together form that we can set up moral ideals and measure our life up against them. Therefore "narrative is destined to serve as a basis for the aim of a "good" life (…)" (Ibid.: 158).

In what follows we revisit Bettina, who, like Jette in the above analysed passage, from the position of the narrative event morally distances herself from a situation she was put in as a child. Excerpt B.3 is embedded in a larger account of how she, when she is 13-years-old, moves in with her father and his then-girlfriend and is molested by him three times before she reports him to the police. The passage we analyse provides a picture of just how horrible the domestic conditions are at her father's place.

Bettina: (…) Well it was such a b… well it was such a bizarre household, so… oh my god, you really had to, you know I often found myself just sitting and trying not to breath, you know, like… (gasps loudly and holds her breath)
M: Yes.
C: Yes.
Bettina: I could hold my breath for an absurd amount of time, and why, you might ask? Because, every time you breathe there is this little sound in your head… a tiny little one… it's barely there. But it was enough to, I couldn't, I just couldn't have that sound because all of my senses had to be alert, you know! That's just sick! But yeah, that's how it was. You know I could sit - many times a day I sat, no matter where I sat and was just completely quiet. Without breathing, you know, so I could sense and be aware: where were they and what was going on and who did what and how. Also if someone arrived I had to: was it dad who was walking in the gravel outside, or was it… who or what - I could distinguish that just by listening, so… Uhm, but as I said, it [the incest] was done to me three times (…)

(B.3)

What we would like to point out is how Bettina, like Jette above, from the position of the narrative event forms judgements of her past surroundings [it was such a bizarre household / That's just sick!] and thus takes a moral position in relation to it. Although we have to do with a passage that is short compared to the other ones we have looked at, and only consists of the point of view of the child protagonist and the narrator, we implicitly are told a story of moral development. We witness a girl whose whole existence is tuned into what

the violent adults around her are doing - holding her breath to be able to hear the slightest sign of somebody coming closer - develop into a grown woman who can condemn the persons who once hurt her.

Along these lines both Jette, above, and Bettina, here, could be argued to use their personal narratives to make moral points: helpless children that fall prey to the flawed adults around them become grownups that are fundamentally different from the ones that treated them badly. They live their life according to principles of 'right' and 'wrong', which the adults back then did not. So what we have here are not narratives of any kind of development, but narratives of development *away* from family patterns that they refuse to pass on. What we are suggesting is that taking up a moral position in relation to the mould the individual seeks to break might help establish a self-understanding as somebody who has come a long way. It may even contribute to the identification of oneself as a *pattern-breaker* and thus allow for identification with a category that, as we mentioned in the introductory chapter, is defined by a development that is implicitly expected to lead the individual in a normative direction, *away* from something - a pattern - and towards a new organization that is believed to constitute an improvement. This identification, we suggest, might in turn let the individual distinguish its trajectory as a progression towards a better life and encourage it to keep walking this path.

We further suggest that the individual by inscribing itself in relation to a moral dimension might become able to envision certain possibilities for acting, that are in accordance with what is deemed 'right'. This, in turn might help it formulate a clearer vision of the acts that could constitute steps in a desired direction.

4.7 - **Seeing through the eyes of the other**

Above we have considered how our interviewees, in presenting a younger version of themselves and taking a *moral* position in relation to the situation they were put in, can claim a moral growth for them self. Now we look at another kind of positioning that can be facilitated by narrative, as we explore scenarios that involve not only younger versions of our interviewees but also people they know, who play a part in acts of intra-narrative *interpersonal* positioning.

Thus far, we have only considered the viewpoint of the narrator and the one's held by earlier versions of him or her that figure as protagonists in the life story. But, we observe that other people that our interviewees share their life with seem to play important roles in what our interviewees tell us. A key proposition of ours is that the individual draws on others to work out understandings of itself and of what its life is like. We assume the individual to rely on a fundamental *interrelatedness* when trying to reach an understanding of its life. This argument is fleshed out in the next chapter, where we, amongst other things, explore how our interviewees include stories they have been told by relatives in their own autobiographic compositions and thus embed their life in a larger *narratives of family development*.

Now we examine the ways in which our interviewees are implicitly in dialogue with persons they know who now figure as narrative points of view in their accounts. In this capacity, they seem to serve as sources of orientation and give directions to the lives of our interviewees.

In the introductory remarks to excerpt J.1, we briefly mentioned Jette's family in Jutland that took Jette in for weeks at a time when she was a child. After having brought this up, we ask Jette to contemplate when she became aware of the effect that this part of her family has had on her. In excerpt J.2 Jette provides an answer to this question.

Jette: I just thought about something, and that is that this Dorte, the one we lived with, that was, when everyone else had gone to bed, Dorte was someone who stayed up till late, she had all kinds of stuff to do - they had a farm, you know - then I could stay up to and Dorte and I - then we could talk. Uhm, so, so it was like - I really enjoyed that, 'cause then Dorte had enough time on her hands to talk with me, you know. I guess it's more like a feeling I've had in my heart and I believe one has to… I've had to grow older to really appreciate it and think… I believe, it really shows in relation to my nephews and nieces and of course most of all in relation to my own kids, that's where I think "holy moly, that really meant a lot" - and now its something *I* pass on. I guess it's mostly in relation to my nieces… I have nieces on two sides and one nephew, they are all children of divorced parents and they have their fights, I'm sure of that, 'cause there are some conflicts between my brothers and their wives and that's why they come and stay with me and it's like I have become an aunt Dorte - only I'm aunt Jette, you know - and I think *my* aunt Dorte, she must have thought - it was her brother [Jettes father] who was married to an alcoholic [Jettes mother] - she must have thought: "(sighs), that's just gre…" she must have thought: "I feel so sorry for my brother and that he didn't manage to find a wife who supported him". So she just sits there with her niece, just there, who is so miserable, you know? Actually I just understand it *right* now while I'm telling you this. I am in a situation right now where the children of my oldest brother have some disagreements with his new girlfriend. And when they had left I just thought, I thought, "oh it hurts that…" Yeah, well…

M: It's okay just keep… just…

Jette: Well, it's just when those kids tell me that Jon now is seeing his mother less because of this new girlfriend of my brothers who I really like, she has said some things that have hurt Jon and so he would ra… and I'm just so sad, I so hope Bjørn can hold on to this girlfriend and that they can work it all out and it makes me so sad that the kids are, well, but I fulfil the role, I listen and try to be as impartial as possible, you know and now I think that this is exactly what Dorte did way back, she just listened to me, you know.

(J.2)

What we have in excerpt J.2, in terms of episodic succession of events, is a story about Jette, who as a child enjoys late night talks with her aunt, Dorte, and eventually turns into a mother and an aunt herself. At some point along the way, Jette has come to appreciate what Dorte gave her in her childhood [I've had to grow older to really appreciate it]. Apart from this relatively straightforward storyline, we observe another story, one that rather than being linear is about *repetition*: two aunts who decades apart from each other take care of two generations of nieces. It is the second of these storylines we concentrate on here.

In the first part of the passage we hear about how Dorte a long time ago showed Jette affection, that Jette now can "pass on" to her own children as well as to her nephew and nieces ["holy moly, that really meant a lot" - and now its something *I* pass on]. Jette-the-narrator explicitly remarks on the *similarity* between the role she now plays in the lives of the children of her two brothers and the role Dorte once played in her life [it's like I have become an aunt Dorte - only I'm aunt Jette]. What especially interests us is what happens

next: We are pulled into Dorte's point of view as she looks at *her* niece, Jette. And the aunt that is portrayed through this is someone who feels sad for the adults that are unable to sufficiently care for their own children [she must have thought: "(sighs), that's just gre…" she must have thought: "I feel so sorry for my brother and that he didn't manage to find a wife who supported him"]. This momentary look through the eyes of Dorte seems to present Jette with an understanding of yet another sort of similarity between her and her aunt [Actually I just understand it *right* now while I'm telling you this]. Whereas the similarity we are shown in the beginning is about two aunts that care for nieces and *give* them something, this second similarity involves two aunts that are themselves emotionally impacted by the conflicts between their brothers and the partners these brothers have. And after having looked at her own parents from her aunt's perspective, and having considered the pain this must have given her, Jette-the-narrator turns her gaze toward her own sadness regarding the predicaments the adults around her are in [oh it hurts / I'm just so sad / I'm just so sad / it makes me so sad].

So what we suggest happens in this little passage is that Jette juxtaposes her aunt to the aunt she has now become, and in doing so realises similarity in *two* senses. It seems to us that Jette in the beginning of the excerpt draws on her aunt to establish an understanding of aunts as *people that matter*: In this respect the comparison between the help her own aunt offered and the help Jette now passes on might help Jette develop an understanding of herself as somebody who can make a difference in the lives of her nieces. Whereas this first similarity is concerned with the *role* aunts can fulfil, we regard the second recognition of similarity to relate to the *experience* of being such an aunt. This similarity is created through juxtapositioning of the points of view of Jette-the-narrator and of Dorte, who has been given her very own narrative voice. We believe that the effect of this identification could be that Dorte can come to function as a rolemodel for Jette, for how to best deal with the difficult situations her brothers put her in. We especially base this interpretation on what happens in the very end of the narrative, where Jette, after having expressed her sadness regarding the situation she is in, states that all she can do now is to do what Dorte once did [I fulfil the role, I listen and try to be as impartial as possible, you know and now I think that this is exactly what Dorte did way back, she just listened to me, you know].

Jette is not the only of our interviewees to draw a parallel between her own life and a person who somehow influence how they organise family life. Bettina, on multiple occasions, emphasises the similarity between the mother she has become and her grandmother, the one who makes Bettina report her father to the police when she is 13. Similarly, Ea, whose life we have yet to unfold in more detail, repeatedly brings up the influence of a woman who worked at an orphanage she lived in before she was taken into foster care. It was this woman who, by taking Ea home with her on multiple occasions and treating her like she was part of her own family, introduced Ea to a "normal family life" that was radically different from everything she had known up to that point, making her realise that family life could be much better than she had thought (see appendix page 126 for context).

In the course of our interviews, we get a clear impression of the significance that these figures have had in the lives of our interviewees. Their effect seems not merely to be a function of the specific acts of care they have provided, but also to have resulted from the fact that they offer a continuous source of identification. Above, in section 4.6, we discussed how our interviewees through moral positioning can define their life *in opposition* to the family members they do not want to use as role models. It looks as though our interviewees, along with this rejection, can come to see themselves as *continuations* of other persons - aunt, grandmother and orphanage worker - who have shown our interviewees new ways of being in a family. So what we suggest, based on this analysis, is that it is possible to understand one's life as an extension of somebody else, who functions as a role model when the people who normally are regarded as such are deemed not good enough.

Whereas we have just discussed cases in which our interviewees might be understood to establish continuity with other people's lives in their personal stories, Bettina in the excerpt we look at now seems to make use of her father as a narrative point of view for entirely different reasons.

In the excerpt we analyse now we hear about how Bettina, when she is 14, goes to visit her father in prison. Above we witnessed how Bettina, along with her mother and brother "leaves home", when she is 10-years-old (B.1). We mentioned how she, when aged 13, goes to live with her father, who molests her three times (B.3) an we have fleetingly brought up that Bettina eventually reports him to the police. What awaits Bettina after this is a rather dark chapter of her life: The case goes to court and everybody Bettina knows, including her own father, refuses to recognise the truth of the charges. Even Bettina's mother on their way out of the courtroom hisses, "how can you lie like that about you dad?" (see appendix page 134 for context). While Bettina is protected from her father after this - he is sentenced to one year in prison - she has to endure the hatred of a lot of people in her home town, who have immense respect for her father and will stop at nothing to make her feel badly about what she has done. After several suicide attempts, determined to somehow bring an end to the psychological and even physical attacks, 14-year-old Bettina one day skips school and spends all the money she has saved up to go and visit her father in prison. This is where excerpt B.4 begins.

> Bettina: (…) and I met my dad… And my dad had aged 20 years in that half a year that had passed. Uhm, yeah… and I t, we talk for a bit and then in his very own brusque way he says "how's it going? Are you keeping up with school work?" you know? And then somehow I manage to - you know, I'm still afraid of him - I manage to tell him - you have to keep in mind, this is the first time I see him, since the court and, and all that, it's really, actually I have no idea how I even had the courage, I have no idea how I managed to do that. But, but I did. Uhm, then I tell him "you know, now that you're asking, it's pretty difficult to keep up with school work, 'cause your friends are doing this and this". And I tell him how it is for me - and I'm, I've never been one to tell on others, well… uhm, well it just wasn't an option. You didn't do that, there's just no respect of stuff like that in those circles. Uhm, then I looked at my dad, I remember, and then I said to him "dad, why did you plea not guilty?" Uhm… and I believe, you know, that actually broke him in a way. 'Cause there was his daughter, who h… loved him unconditionally, and that he had hurt so very badly, and that he's proud of really, and she looks at him, and knows that dad always taught me not to lie, and "I have lived by all of your rules dad, and I've done everything, and why are you doing this?"? I believe that broke him. Uhm, back then I didn't know that of course. (…)

> Bettina: (…) Uhm, and then he just looked down, uhm, and just sat there for a bit, you know. And then he looked up at me again, and then he said, ”you know, it’s only you and me, Bettina, who know what really happened”. And that is all we ever said about that. We didn’t say anything else.

(B.4)

What particularly catches out attention is the role Bettina’s father is given in this account - or more accurately the *roles* he is given, for we observe him playing a twofold part: On the one hand he is incorporated as a kind of supporting character, who behaves in certain ways during the visit [he just looked down / just sat there / then he looked up] and even is given a few lines [how’s it going? Are you keeping up with school work? / you know, it’s only you and me, Bettina, who know what really happened]. But furthermore, we at one point seem to perceive the confrontation through his eyes, looking at his daughter [there was his daughter, who h… loved him unconditionally, and that he had hurt so very badly, and that he's proud of really, and she looks at him, and knows that dad always taught me not to lie, and ”I have lived by all of your rules dad, and I’ve done everything, and why are you doing this?”]. In the terminology we have developed in this chapter, the father here seems to participate in the story as a narrative point of view, brought into play by Bettina in the narrative event. The turn to his point of view is marked by a shift from referring to the child protagonist as ‘I’ to adopting a third person perspective [his daughter / she looks at him].

What is it that the appearance of Bettina’s father brings to this account? Well, it seems to us that Bettina presents us with two scenarios. In one, we hear the dialogue between a father and his daughter the way it seems to have actually transpired in Bettina’s recollection: the daughter tells the father about her situation and asks: ”dad, why did you plea not guilty?”, to which he replies: ”you know, it’s only you and me, Bettina, who know what really happened”. Simultaneously, however, this brief exchange of words is made out to carry a meaning that by far exceeds this concrete wording, showing us that an interpersonal interaction in life stories can come to be expanded by aspects that are added to it in retrospect. In Bettina’s case, an imagined exchange is read into the rather sparse dialogue between her father and her. This is achieved by giving him a point of view in which he understands the betrayal of trust that he has inflicted on his daughter who loves him “unconditionally” and through this narrative voice he acknowledges that he hurt her “so very badly”.

We propose that the value of this imaginary addition to the conversation lies in the fact that it enables Bettina to conclude that the episode “broke him” [I believe, you know, that actually broke him in a way]. This meaning, is not one that can be derived from the actual narrated exchange of words, rather it is possible due to what Bettina has become able to read into them - and she herself remarks on the *lateness* of this insight [I believe that broke him. Uhm, back then I didn’t know that of course].

Common between Jette’s account about her relation to her aunt and Bettina’s description of the encounter with her father, is that both of our interviewees present interactions that they claim to have taken place in real life and furthermore compose imaginative dialogues that supplement what is said. What they seem to take

from this operation is different for the two of them, but for them both the referenced episodes have gained an additional layer of meaning which sheds new light on their life. Jette finds affirmation that being an aunt is a difficult but important task, and Bettina gets a concession from her father, acknowledging the extent to which he let her down.

4.8 - **A garden of forking paths**

We live in time. One day follows the next, spring precedes summer, and after entering this world, we steadily grow taller until one day we reach a point after which, little by little, we become smaller again. Each one of us finds a way to bridge the time that stretches between the incidents that mark the beginning and end of our life on earth. The argument developed in this chapter is that not only life itself unfolds in time, but also our *understanding* of it relies on temporal moves, which, we have argued, are facilitated by narrative. It is the *structuring* quality imminent in narrative that we have stressed here and we have looked at how the narrating individual draws a configuration out of its life by conducting a *diachronic* integration through which heterogeneous elements of life are transformed into one unit - a story. So what emerges through the prism of the plot, that casts life in a particular form, is a specific *reality*: a "narrative reality" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009), a "taleworld" (Schiff, 2012), a "storyworld" (Hydén, 2010), a "narratively constructed reality" (Bruner, 1994). There is no shortage of poetic propositions as to what to call the world that is summoned through narrative. What all of these terms address is the fact that a certain *constructive* power can be attributed to narrative, which acts as interpretive context for its single constituents and simultaneously unfolds a unified reality that the narrating individual itself can enter and also can invite other people into. By the same token, life stories can be seen as a claim to a reality about the *subject* whose life is laid out in a temporally organized whole - the journey that is presented calls a certain person to life (Albright, 1994; Bruner, 1994; Freeman & Brockmeier; Hydén, 2010; Kaplan, 2003; McAdams, 2003; Neisser, 1994; Ricoeur, 1988; Sandino, 2010; Sclater, 2003). To be able to understand ourselves and to give others the possibility to do the same, we tell a story, we draw up a historicity of our self, organized in a narrative. Albright (1994) summarizes it beautifully: "Our lives would be intolerable without some predicate, some ballast of identity, to provide a context for the wisps of thought and action that constitute our instantaneous selves" (Ibid.: 21).

We find it important to keep the constructive character of narrative in mind when dealing with the "narrative unity of a life" (Ricoeur, 1992) and the person that emerges herein. Although our life history provides us with autobiographical resources for the stories we can tell, our productions go well beyond these facts, as we select and organize them into a meaningful whole and along the way fill the significant gaps our memory leaves us with (Albright, 1994; Neisser, 1994), add a bit here and there to contribute to the overall meaning of what is being told (Bruner, 1994) and consult the stories we are surrounded by - told by people we know, conveyed to us in fiction (Albright, 1994; Ricoeur, 1992), and culturally shared conceptions about what life a

looks like (Bruner, 1994; Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001; McAdams, 2003; Mishler, 2006; Ricoeur, 1988: 247) - to construct accounts of our life. In Chapters 5 and 6, we take a closer look at the ways in which the individual seeks help from both immediate social relations and broader cultural conventions to reach narrative understandings of its life.

So in our perspective, the seamlessly continuous life that is postulated in life stories results from far more complex processes than 'remembering', understood as a relatively straightforward retrieval of autobiographic information. Instead we regard this continuity as shaped by a certain imaginative creativity that, so to say, smoothes over the period that is 'documented', covers up whichever discontinuities there might be, and adjusts the overall narrative to meet the requirements of the worlds of meaning the individual takes part in. Hence, we agree with those scholars who believe life stories to follow *poetic* principles and instead of assessing them only in terms of reality congruence (Bruner, 1994; Hermans, 1996; Kaplan, 2003; McAdams, 2003; Mishler, 2006; Ricoeur, 1991; Ricoeur, 1992; Freeman, 2010). In our eyes, it is exactly the imaginative ability of the individual - the capacity to make present worlds that are more than pure reflections of an outside reality - that opens up for what might be considered 'narrative acts' that can assist the individual in its pursuit of new family patterns.

A key theoretical point we have made in this chapter is that the temporality active in narrative is not to be framed in linear terms alone. Instead, we have proposed a view on autobiographic narration as proceeding in a spiral-like fashion, where the narrator shifts back and forth between temporally distributed points of view.

Talk about narratively organised sense of self can have connotations of relatively free self-definition, which in turn makes the storied version of a life a clear reflection of the subject behind it. By analysing narratives in terms of simultaneous meanings, in the manner we have done thus far, we, however, distance ourselves from this line of thought. Rather than inferring one clear subject, we have suggested that there can come to exist several subjects in the worlds the individual opens. So instead of providing a solid answer as to who the person is, whose life we peek in on, we are presented with a world populated by several "imaginary variations" of the narrators "ego", to use Ricoeur's (1991: 33) terminology, that engage with each other in various ways. Let us borrow an analogy from Albright (1994) to frame this in another way: "The remembered self, then, is not linear, but a matrix ramifying backward in all directions, a garden of forking paths that converge in the present" (Albright, 1994: 31). It is exactly within this matrix, we argue, that the narratively constructed person emerges.

To make our position on this clearer, we find it helpful to take a brief look at the dynamic between identity understood as 'sameness' and 'selfhood' that Ricouer proposes to be contained in the identity that is created through narrative (Hydén, 2010; Kaplan, 2003; Ricoeur, 1992; Sandino, 2010). According to Ricouer (1992), personal identity is normally studied either in accordance with the Latin concept of 'idem', denoting sameness over time *or* as a self-reflexive structure, which gives rise to a certain self-relatedness. The latter use of the identity concept is often discussed with reference to the Latin notion of 'ipseity', and has

especially been taken up in phenomenological frameworks. What Ricouer suggests, then, is to look at how a sense of self is founded by an interplay between identity understood in these two senses: The individual relates to itself by looking at its life in narrative terms, sketching the unique spatio-temporal trajectory that makes up its life. So one's self-understanding, the way one 'designates' oneself as a specific person, derives from an illustration of *change* through time. This process, however, relies on the ability of the individual to recognize itself in the "diversity, variability, discontinuity, and instability" (Ibid.: 140) that characterises the person and the life that unfolds in autobiographic narratives. It is here that the 'idem'-aspect of identity comes into play: The individual reckons with a fundamental self-constancy that is assumed to underlay all the changes it undergoes as it moves through time, both in lived life and in the narrative representation of it. What Ricoeur proposes, in other words, is that identity is unfolded through narrative - we get to know our self through our history, by looking at what we have endured and how we have changed over time - when we ask 'who?', "the answer has to be narrative" (Ricoeur, 1988: 246). So while our reflection about who we are makes us carve out a journey through time, rendering visible the ways we have *changed*, we maintain a sense of *continuity*, a permanence in time (Ibid.; Hydén, 2010; Kaplan, 2003; Sandino, 2010).

Our analysis has implicitly revolved around the same dialectic, as we observed how our interviewees presented their lives to us through the interplay between different versions of their self that held distinctive narrative points of view and entered a complex interplay. One conclusion we can draw from our analysis of the application of different narrative positions, is that our interviewees, by going into dialogue with earlier versions of their self and defying their point of view, can establish themselves as persons that have undergone a *change*. This change does not belong to one of the protagonists alone. Rather, it arises as a function of dissimilarity between these versions that nonetheless are recognized as fundamentally the *same*. The claim of development that is constituted along these lines in these *narratives of development* can thus be argued to proceed in accordance with the interplay between continuity and change that Ricoeur suggests. In the chapter after this, we elaborate on the notion of narratives of development and examine how autobiographic narratives can be composed in ways that create continuity across generations in families, which in turn offers the individual a possibility of going in opposition to what is identified as continuous.

In this chapter we furthermore we proposed another way in which simultaneously manifest narrative points of view can contribute to an overall sense of change: by visiting past versions of their self and forming moral judgement about the conditions they are in, our interviewees make it possible to position their present selves as in a 'better' place. We suggest that *moral positioning* to ones past can form the backdrop to a moral outlook on ones life, and give the individual an opportunity to identify as a morally matured person. In turn, this might encourage them to formulate ideals about how to best be a parent. Again, this very act is based on the ability of the individual to juxtapose versions of itself that are different and yet one and the same.

Apart from looking at ways in which our interviewees create an air of *change* around themselves, we in our analysis of excerpt J.2 gave an example of how they, via identification with persons outside themselves that

are assimilated into the narrative world that is being established, can construct *continuity* between their life and those of others. We shall further develop this argument shortly, in Chapter 5, when we explore how our interviewees are entangled in the stories of family members and look at how aspects of these family member's lives can become significant to the stories our interviewees tell about themselves. In excerpt J.2, Jette made this identification possible by granting her aunt a role and a very own viewpoint in the world she set up and initiated an interaction between this narrative version of her aunt and her protagonists. We saw a similar exchange happen in excerpt B.4, where a young Bettina visits her father in prison. What these examples show us is how the *garden of forking paths* that Albright spoke of above is not only populated by variations of the protagonist, but also can contain points view that originate outside the individual but come to play a role in the overall subject that is developed in the dynamic between the positions that simultaneously exist in the narrative.

What we have offered thus far, then, is the idea that life stories, rather than putting into words one unitary meaning, expressed by one clear subject, can carry different figures, that can impart their very own outlook on themselves and the situation they are in and can go into dialogue with each other. Ricoeur's dialectic between constancy and change provides a way of looking at subjectivity not in terms of *one* of these positions, but as the sum of all of these 'imaginary variations' of what is basically the same subject. So the narrative reality that is made present in life stories can be quite complex and be characterized by varying degrees of ambiguity. Often it is not possible to deduce *one* overall meaning or determine how exactly the person we hear about is to be understood. Rather, life stories that themselves are interpretations of a life, are open to interpretation - to us, the interlocutors, as well as to the narrating individual itself.

5

THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF BEING

(CP)

And yet everything which touches us, you and me,
takes us together like a single bow,
drawing out from two strings but one voice

Reiner Maria Rilke / Liebes-Lied

We live our lives side-by-side with others, and this relatedness not only pertains to the interactions that are part of our daily lives, but reaches all the way into our self-understanding and perspective on the world. The family, in particular, is often acknowledged as an important source of knowledge for ideas about the world, ourselves, and others (Fivush et al., 2004; Pratt & Fiese, 2004). In this chapter we focus on the ways in which family members play a part in each other's lives and life stories.

Within the approach taken in this study the *interrelatedness* between individuals is a central concern. We are entangled in each other's being, "each of us is caught up in the histories of others. Whole sections of my life are part of the life history of others — of my parents, my friends, my companions in work and in leisure" (Ricoeur, 1992: 161). Besides playing a part in each other's lives by making out contexts for each other, our autobiographic stories are caught up in the stories of those around us. This entanglement becomes clear when we look at how life stories tend to include circumstances about our own conception and birth (Albright, 1994; Neisser, 1994; Ricoeur, 1992; Stone, 2008) that are part of the life history of our older family members but that we could not possibly remember ourselves.

In this chapter, we attempt to show how the lives led by our parents and even our ancestors can become significant for how we come to see our own lives. This speaks to the imaginative aspect of the construction of life stories we alluded to in the previous chapter, as our ability to borrow elements of stories that belong to other people and integrate them into ours, is only possible when life stories are not regarded as mere reflections of lived life.

Similar to the position we have taken, Freeman (2010) considers the composition of life stories as a "poetic act", and he argues that this creativity is reflected in the way we make use of material that lies outside our first-hand experience. Those factors outside ourselves, what he calls the "supra-personal aspects" of our life story (Freeman, 2010: 120), form a great part of who we are. In this regard, he focuses on how our modes of thinking and the conditions we find ourselves in are deeply rooted in our historical and cultural inheritance. When taking into consideration this inheritance, Freeman posits: "(...) autobiography is no longer a matter – or no longer exclusively a matter – of representing a life, from birth until death. Instead, it is a matter of discerning, as best one can, the multiple sources, both near and far, that give rise to the self" (Ibid.: 123).
In this chapter, we follow Freeman's example of considering the importance of the sources that give 'rise to the self', by focusing on how the family may be brought into play in the 'fashioning of an identity', or rather in the composition of a life story. We consider the functions it may have for the individual to make the stories of other family members present in diverse ways, and we explore how this capacity plays into the process of breaking family patterns.

5.1 - **The 'larger self'**

Freeman borrows from Shils the notion of 'the larger self', a term meant to depict how memory, and hence the life story, is made up of not only our own experiences but also includes the recollections of the people we are closely connected to: "From their accounts of their experiences, which frequently antedate his own (...) his image of his "larger self" is brought to include events which occurred both recently and earlier outside his own experiences" (Shils, 1981: 51). This concept speaks to the notion of *interrelatedness*, we posited above, and suggests to us that in each family there are stories that can become part of the particular story of each family member. In this regard, then, the question is: in which ways do the stories become meaningful to the individual? Some stories might gain their relevance from contributing to a sense of cohesion within the family (Stone, 2008; Langellier & Peterson, 2004). In some cases, these stories may even become family legacies (Thompson, 2009), as stories told and re-told throughout a long time or maybe even over generations, may have the function of continuously confirming ideas about the family. As we will attempt to show, sometimes a meaning can be attached to these shared stories that has a much deeper impact on the way the individual comes to see its life. In the following, we look at two cases where the stories of others have become significant to our interviewees and influence the stories our interviewees tell about themselves.
Firstly, we consider this significance in terms of the emotional impact that others' accounts can leave in us. With reference to the ways events in history can be woven into the memories of those who were not physically there to experience them, Freeman suggests a merge of the notions of first- and second-order memory: To illustrate this merge, he considers Eva Hoffmann's reflections on being a second-generation Shoah survivor in her book, *After Such Knowledge.* Hoffmann expresses how the stories she had heard from her parents about this time in history were experienced by herself as "mythology" - as something coming

from a place far away from herself and whose reality was difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, in spite of having taken place in a reality quite different from her own life, the very experience of holding knowledge of these stories, of having vivid images of them, and even of having sensed their significance through the pain she saw these stories had evoked in her parents, warrants that this mythology cannot be severed from her own memory: "this world she has put together, that has become *her* world, is rooted in her own bodily and psychical experiences; these too are "events," although of a different sort than those experienced by her parents" (Freeman, 2010: 108). So what this suggests is that listening to other people's stories about what they have been through can become an experience in itself to their listeners through the powerful impact they can have – an idea that has similarly been suggested by Elizabeth Stone (2008) in her influential collection of family stories.

On this note, let us return to Jette, the woman who tells us about her "tumultuous childhood" (see appendix page 109 for context) of absent parents and a particularly troubled relationship to her mother. At this point in the interview, Jette has on several occasions mentioned her mother's childhood, and in excerpt J.3 we invite her to go more into depth with this topic.

M: A few times now you've touched on your mother's childhood. Do you feel that you have a picture of her childhood?
Jette: Yes...
M: What is it like?
Jette: Oh, I think, well, it looks scary. Uncanny... really uncanny. There was a *lot* of drinking, like *really* a lot of drinking. Yes, it's scary to even think about. But I just can't, uh... It wasn't long ago that she mentioned it. They drank, both of them, I mean – she was, she was *really* neglected, right? And they were five children, and... well they had to go down in the coal cellar and, and she would get beaten at school and she would get beaten at the school dentist, and... and they had no money, and her mother was – she treated her really nasty and.. well, uhm, she met my dad when she was fifteen, and my dad was twenty five, right? Well, that's how she ran away from home. But anyway, it was, it was just drinking, the way I see it. She told about some episodes, where she went to see... her granddad. But it was all about drinking. And then they would leave. They, uh – I never met, what is he, my granddad. I never met them. And my grandmother, that was just some crazy woman, who drank, and then she died. I mean, they were not in touch. And then, then... they lived in some apartment in [city in Jutland]. And she would get some money once in a while for some candy or something like that, she would tell me. But they just went drinking, and then these children were all by themselves, and she had to take care of her little sister.

(J.3)

What we notice in Jette's account of her mother's childhood, rather than being what she tells us, is to notice *how* she does so. In the different stories and situations she tells us about her mother, we detect an emotional undertone: Jette seems to be moved by what she says, almost as though playing out the scenarios in her mind while she is speaking. We get this impression from the feelings of unease she expresses [Uncanny... really uncanny / it's scary to even think about] as well as by her intonations [a *lot* of drinking / *really* neglected]. So what we suggest here is that having knowledge of her mother's childhood experience has had an emotional impact on Jette, that now makes her able to such an extent to put herself in her mother's place. It is Jette's

emotional reactions to these accounts that make this story not only about her mother growing up in a scary home, but just as much about Jette's experience of having a formed an inner picture of it. After continuing the description of her mother's early life, including a story about how her mother was almost raped by a stranger outside a party when she was still young, Jette laments that it was normal for these stories to be told at home with "no filter" when she was a child. It "would have been sensible to have something called 'adult stories' and 'children stories'" (see appendix page 114 for context) – a retrospective evaluation by Jette that might tell us something about these stories being told by an adult to child, even before the child was able to make something of them.

In the next section, we take a look at how other people's stories can become meaningful to the individual in yet another way, by virtue of constituting a context for understanding one's life story.

5.2 - **Weaving stories together**

We now take a look at Ea's accounts of her and her aunt talking about their life stories. First, though, let us briefly recap Ea's story: Ea is a 30-year-old woman who grew up as the middle child with a severely alcoholic mother, who was "absent" a lot of the time, leaving her three daughters to take care of themselves (see appendix page 120 for context). When Ea was nine, she and her sisters were placed in an orphanage. Two years later, they were with a foster family, and shortly after, when Ea was 12 years old, their mother died from alcoholism. Ea characterises her family as generally "dysfunctional", and having been so for "many generations" (see appendix page 119 for context).

On several occasions, Ea mentions her aunt as someone who for periods of time played a big part in Ea's life when she was a child, and with whom she still is in touch regularly. In excerpt E.1 we talk about whether the aunt's impression of Ea's childhood is in keeping with how Ea remembers it herself.

Ea: Well, I've... at least I try, I mean I just *tell* it the way I remember it.
C: Yes.
Ea: .. and I might remember it wrong. That could easily be the case. But at least she's heard it a few times by now – what I remember, and what it was like for us. And then she's added on a bit with how she experienced it.
M: I'm thinking, what is... what it might – what are the two of you giving each other in that situation? What is it – both ways, actually...
Ea: Well, I think – I think it does. I mean, it's like a mutual enlightenment, uh, I tell her a bit about what it was like, and then she tells me a bit about how *she* experienced it and what it was like for them when they were growing up, and... so that kind of led to/
M: /so *she* tells about her *own* childhood?
Ea: Yes, with my mom.

(E.1)

This passage shows us how the connectedness of Ea's autobiography with her mother's and aunt's lives is enacted in dialogue with her aunt. As Ea starts revealing details from her childhood, she tells us, her aunt

simultaneously explains to her what her own childhood, as well as that of Ea's deceased mother, looked like. For now the exact links and functions of these simultaneous narrations are not clear. They might be comparing or drawing parallels between their lives, looking for explanations for Ea's mother's actions, or doing it for a range of other reasons. According to Ea's telling, her aunt's stories of her own past are occasioned by Ea's stories at the same time that she is offering Ea stories about her mother, who played an important role in Ea's childhood. These life stories are being interwoven as they narrate to each other. As opposed to the stories told by Jette's mother, Ea and her aunt are engaging in creating a shared story together, where what each of them puts out there, so to speak, becomes accessible to the other. Each of them have thus offered their own personal narrative for this larger family story, possibly re-shaping some of the shared narratives that were previously available.

Conversely, one could imagine that the new story Ea and her aunt develop could introduce something new to each their own life story. Shortly after the excerpt referred to above, we invite Ea to further elaborate on these interactions where she and her aunt make their life present to each other (excerpt E.2).

Ea: I think that – I think I also asked about how it was for them at home, and... Actually I think it had a bit to do with – because I always had an idea that, uh, my mom was sexually abused by her dad. And actually my aunt always denied that. And then I think she was also sexually abused – I mean all three girls. I have two aunts. Uhm, but she always denied it – that it didn't happen... and I was like "well why were you kicked out then?" And then she talks a bit about what it was like for them at home, and, my grandma didn't like my mom, and... it was like, "yes... well why do you think she didn't like her?" (laughs) uhm, and then, it's not too long ago that we went to a talk with Lisbeth (Zornig Andersen) – and then in the break she said "yes, well I think, I think you're right that we were all sexually abused" (laughs) so, then she had the courage to say it anyway.
M: Okay.
C: Okay, so you also really played a part in... in/
M: /in her/
C: /in her process/
Ea: /yes, definitely.

(E.2)

The significance of this interaction for Ea's aunt is clear, in that it makes it possible for her to express in words the fact that she, and Ea's mother, was sexually abused by their father. We have no way of telling whether the abuse was already a part of a private, untold life story for Ea's aunt, but the difference is that she now makes it available to Ea ["yes, well I think, I think you're right that we were all sexually abused"]. This interaction can be understood as a co-construction of a shared truth about the man who was Ea's grandfather and her aunt's and mother's father. Also, this illustrates how co-construction does not always transpire in a symmetrical fashion, as in this case it is Ea who persuades her aunt to admit to what has Ea has suspected to be true all along.

We could imagine that Ea is extending her life story into the life of her mother. Since the mother is no longer there, the aunt can grant her insight into aspects of her existence that she herself has not lived through. In this

sense, we suggest that by attaining information about her aunt's childhood and vicariously her mother's, Ea becomes able to see her life in the context of a larger intergenerational family story.

One possible function of establishing continuity across generations, we suggest, is that it makes the individual able to compare its life to that of its ancestors. In Chapter 4, we looked at narratives that promote a sense of development in ones life, showing how change is understood through the positioning of oneself in relation to earlier versions of oneself. So could it also be the case that in families, one can position oneself in relation to earlier generations, thus creating a *narrative of family development* that forms a backdrop against which ones own development can be measured? We look further into this question in the following section.

5.3 - **Making new stories available**

So far we have strived to show how family members can borrow elements from each other's lives and integrate them in their life stories, where they come to carry a new meaning. We concluded the last section by suggesting that it might be possible to develop a view of one's life as part of a family story – something we saw all of our interviewees do in some way or another – and in this section we look at how understanding one's life in the context of the family can serve as a backdrop to ones own life course.

In excerpt J.4 we further unfold Jette's story, in continuation of her descriptions of her mother's childhood.

M: I was thinking, you briefly mentioned, that you mother recently... what was the occasion?
Jette: Well I think it was when she mentioned her own childhood, wasn't it?
M: Because you brought it up, i think you said that, well... it was recently, so maybe we already talked about it, or?
Jette: It was that she told about her own childhood recently, is was this thing she mentioned, because she mentioned that there hadn't been a single tooth brush around when she was growing up and she used to eat sugar. And we got to talking about it because I had been to the dentist and I had a tooth fixed and we got to talking about it and then she told me about something like getting some money for candy when they had been out drinking, and stuff like that. Uhm, and when she speaks of it, I just imagine a black hole. But also because when I think of our childhood, we, I mean, I was never told that we didn't have money and we probably did have enough, I mean, we had money, and we had this big, cool house. We grew up in great settings and by the way it suddenly strikes me that, well I grew up in the forest, practically. I lived right by the forest and the beach and stuff. And that is one of the things I remember, that I would play a lot in the forest and I feel it now when we go for walks in the forest, it's not so often, it should be more often, but I really played a lot in the forest with my friends. And we also had, down in the garden, there was a natural plot behind it, you could go through a fence. These were amazing settings, uhm, and she didn't have that, I must say.

(J.4)

We see how Jette's mother makes her own childhood present in response to that Jette has just been to the dentist. Jette proceeds to draw a parallel between the "settings" she herself grew up in, compared to those of her mother, and she positions herself as having been more privileged than her mother by juxtaposing the images of her own childhood - playing in the forest, by the beach, going through the garden into the natural plot - to the "black hole" that illustrates her mother's childhood. Jette, in this sense, is taking an active look

at her life conditions, holding them up against the conditions her mother was given, and thus demarcates the significant differences between the two young girls they each have been. Notice that Jette is not comparing herself as an adult to her mother as an adult. The narrative of family development that applies here is that of showing how the preconditions in Jette's life were – in spite of her own difficult times during her childhood – better than those of her mother. Just as we argued in the preceding chapter, that the recognition of development depends on being able to see the world through the eyes of younger versions of oneself, in this case it is the capacity of Jette to see the world through the eyes of her mother as a child, which makes it possible for Jette to position herself as having had a privileged upbringing, relative to her mother.

Let us take a closer look at the effects this realisation has on Jette, when in immediate continuation, she interrupts herself (excerpt J.5).

Jette: But I just have to say this, this thing about social heritage, it actually just struck me. Actually it was something that was incredibly important to me when I was younger. I read about this social heritage, and I got to thinking about it. And I would say that one of the things that has been really important to me, well it was – and I know that my grandma and my grandma's mum and my mum, all the way through, they are all unskilled workers. And that was actually my biggest motivation to get an education.

C: Okay.

Jette: And this is where that term, social heritage, is relevant/

C: Yes.

Jette: … because I've actually been thinking a lot, because it took me twelve years to get my GCSEs and giving birth to my children, uh, and my sickness. So I was offered rehabilitation, and they let me finish my education as a librarian. So I got a year's extension because my dad died and it was just – I think we had... eight or nine exams during the first year of school, right? But... my driving force hasn't been that I want to necessarily show my children that I had an education, it was actually more about stopping that pattern.

C: Okay?

Jette: But it doesn't mean that much to me like it did before.

C: No.

Jette: But it used to, actually it was curious, then it felt much stronger within me, it's very...

M: How else does it manifest itself?

Jette: Well it manifests itself very much in relation to my children, I would say, a lot, it's so *incredibly* important for me to try to stop this freak show, uhm, you know. If, if I could have the joy, and, and it's so strange, because when I try to express it, then you realise that, well there is no freak show to be stopped as such. We can't streamline their lives and then like think that then we're in a status quo, and they can have children and then it's over, you know.... but, I think it's about - and this is what I think, and this is how I see it: I believe and hope that if we somehow can do our best so that they don't, how do I put it, let's say move away from home without *too* much emotional rubbish that they will need to free themselves from. So if they can be fairly free and they can start doing the things they feel good about and they can, can, build from there, right? If they can be spared having to, well, that's what I'm thinking, right? But I don't know why, it used to be very present in me earlier in my life that this was important, but I don't know if, if, maybe it's because they've grown up so much that maybe you feel like you are getting closer to... getting over the worst... that you think, it will be alright, it will be alright...

(J.5)

In this passage, Jette extends her positioning to other generations, by making not only her mother present, but also her grandmother and her great-grandmother – and then her own children and their future. Here it becomes clear that the line of women preceding her in her maternal family form part of one story revolving

around one common denominator: none of them had an education. Earlier in her life, when becoming familiar with the notion of social heritage, she identifies education as one thing she could do differently that could "stop this freak-show". In this context, her action of breaking a family pattern is very much defined against her notion about *continuity* across the generations preceding her. Jette, by writing her own life story into this family story, renders visible a distance between the life course of her predecessors and her own. It is this difference that she establishes that makes her optimistic that her children are not carrying "too much emotional rubbish that they will need to free themselves from". This narrative of family development is thus not only about the discontinuity from the family up to this point, that Jette has achieved for herself, but rather that she has taken a step for setting the trajectory of the family in a new direction, starting with her sons [they can, can, build from there, right? / it will be alright, it will be alright].

5.4 - **The self across generations**

In this chapter, we have been particularly interested in how fashioning a narrative understanding of one's life can be linked to the fashioning of a wider family story. The self that emerges in life stories is thus a *larger self*, one that encompasses elements that go further back than one's physical being and, as we just saw, also can extend into the future, where we ourselves may no longer be.

As our interviewees have shown us, we have an expectation that our families can give us insights into our 'larger selves' - and this significance rests on an assumption that the lives that have been lived prior to ours are associated with the development our lives take; my life story is relevant to yours and yours to mine. It is this fundamental relatedness that makes us able, by sharing our reality, to influence the realities of others close to us. When family members make their lives present to each other they are not only claiming a reality about themselves, but they also are putting forward a reality to each other that they can go into dialogue with. As we have seen, Ea's aunt accepted Ea's claims about her and her mother's childhood, and by confirming this reality, Ea could gain another understanding of her own mother's life course, possibly offering new explanations to parts of Ea's own life story (E.2).

Furthermore, Jette's mother, by sharing the reality of her childhood, has created a reality for Jette that allows her to hold ideas, impressions and even evaluations of the generations preceding her, where her being able to make them present in her own life story functions as a context against which she can define herself as a pattern-breaker (J.5). We witness in Jette's accounts that it is an awareness of continuity with the line of women in her maternal family that makes it relevant to her to take actions that become her own version of breaking family patterns. In this sense, an understanding of herself as being connected to her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, and a realisation that she would have to take active steps in order not to repeat or pass on those family patterns, seemingly offers her courses for action: getting an education. One might argue that there are certain imaginative aspects evident in her life story, relating to an unspoken sense

of who she could become, if she were to go the path set out by the women in her family. Markus and Nurius (1986) have been interested in how the individual can picture itself in several scenarios - be it in the past, present of future - and use these 'possible selves' to steer their life in desired directions, in that "all of these ideas about what is possible for us to be, to think, to feel, or to experience provide a direction and impetus for action, change, and development" (Markus & Nurius, 1986: 960). It seems to us that Jette, by creating a story about how women in her family have done for generations, implicitly establishes a 'possible self' that relates to the person she would become if she lived her life in continuity with the family line. This expectation, we suggest, could for her have functioned as a way to orient herself away from the patterns she thought she could repeat, unless she took some precautions, like getting an education.

In this sense, both of the above cases show us that the individual has the possibility of entering into dialogue with others – real life ones and imaginative ones – who are seen as extensions of its own lived life.

The understandings of family patterns and of how they can be broken – and even *why* they should be broken – rely very much on notions of family, change, moral, among many others, that are inherent in the social contexts we live in, and that are dominating in a given culture and society. This tells us that while it is important to understand how the individual composes a self-understanding through life stories, drawing from life history, imagination or shared family stories – as we have explored in the past two chapters – in order to fully grasp how our life stories are shaped, it is also relevant to take into account how the outside world impacts on these processes of narrative composition. As we will see in the following chapter, the question about how our life stories are influenced by the social world entails looking at our interpersonal interactions, taking into consideration both those aspects which influence *how* we tell our life stories, as well as *why* we do so.

6

PUTTING STORIES 'OUT THERE'

(CP)

And to understand the workings of our own heart we have to keep on making
new reference cards. We have to dust things off every once in awhile,
let in fresh air, change the water in the flower vases.

Haruki Murakami / Kafka on the Shore

In the past chapters, we have been examining the ways in which different narrative viewpoints may exist in a narrative, reflecting the ways we position ourselves in relation to our life – including other people in it. We have suggested that viewing one's life in narrative terms can bring directions for leading a 'good life' into view. Based on the ways in which our interviewees bring their life into play in the interview with us, so far in our analysis, we have examined how they through reflection develop understandings. Reflection is central to how the individual relates to its life, but it is important to note that this is not a process that the individual carries out all by itself. In this chapter we attempt to show how the new perspectives on its life that the individual gains through time arise in interaction with its surrounding world. These perspectives and the way the individual uses them very much depend on the social interactions it takes part in – and life story work can thus entail more than the mere composition of a life story that promotes certain understandings. It may also include acts that unfold 'out in the world'.

First we turn to how the people the individual shares aspects of its life with can provide it with perspectives on its life and new material for its life story, suggesting that the process of composing a life story can be a highly social one. After this, we look at how culturally shared frames of understanding can be used in the process of reaching an understanding one's life course.

In the final part of this chapter, we examine another aspect of the reciprocal relation between the individual and the world, as we look at how life stories can be directed outwardly into the world and motivated by other desired effects than a change in one's own understanding of things.

6.1 - **The sociality of life story**

A life story is never constructed in a social vacuum. We can always enter into dialogue with others – present in our lives or imagined – when we engage in the process of understanding our life course. The ways others confirm, challenge or even reject our views on ourselves and on the world, play a part in developing our self-understandings, in deciding what directions we want our lives to take and to evaluate the actions of others. The family, in Bruner's terminology, can be seen as a first *reference group* (Bruner, 2001) - the people we identify with, measure ourselves up against and who can offer us interpretations of our lives and who we are. While our families play an important part in the processes of narrative self-understanding, for most of us growing up also entails being confronted with other modes of thinking, of living or seeing the world, where new outlooks on the world can go hand-in-hand with new views on our families and our past. Life stories are understood as a *relational* matter, in the sense that our lives are understood and told in interactions with others. In Bruner's words, the self "turns out on close inspection to be highly negotiable, highly sensitive to bidding on the not so open market of one's own reference group" (Ibid.: 34).

In order to explore how the interpretations offered by others have influenced our interviewees and offered them new understandings, we begin by taking a look at a passage from our interview with Jette. Jette has expressed that she has found it important, in her efforts to break with what she regards as negative family patterns she experienced in her childhood, to meet people who have served as "role-models" (see appendix page 116 for context), sometimes satisfying some of the needs she feels her mother was not able to. In excerpt J.6, we invite her to follow up on this thought.

> M: And you mentioned a school teacher?
> Jette: Yes, exactly. She gave me something that I actually never forgot.
> M: Hm?
> Jette: Her name was Sif
> M: Sif?
> Jette: Sif, yes. She, uhm, in the ninth or eighth grade she, uhm, shed light on the fact that I wasn't doing very well uhm, and she had me see her during some periods – in something – and we were sitting talking about what was wrong, and she says, and I say something... I think I said that I missed my dad, but he has to work, I said. And then she said "well, but he doesn't have to do that so much", or something like that. And then I say "but he has to, because he has the company and we have the house", and stuff like that. And then she says "but he doesn't need to" and at the same time she tells me, "I just divorced my husband because he only wants to work all the time", something like that. But I will never forget it, because it was really honest of her to sit there and say something like that to a girl in the eighth or ninth grade. I never forgot it. But it was also overwhelming, because she completely shook my foundations, she said "it's not necessary for your dad to work, it's just a reality he's creating and says that's the way it has to be"!
> (…)

(…)
M: So what was it she did in that moment?
Jette: She was super honest and then in a way it was, it was commitment, you could say. Couldn't you say that?
C: Yes, I'm also thinking like – trust.
Jette: Hm.
M: Hm.
Jette: It's really touching. She might as well have said "well that's a pity for you that your dad works, that's really a shame", I think it's so – just to say "no, that's not okay", or what?
M: Do you remember at the time, what you, what happened, what did it do to you?
Jette: Well at that time I guess I thought, ugh, I mean, it wasn't exactly pleasant to have that taken away from me.
M: No.
C: Okay...
Jette: But I never forgot it... so in a way I think it was a brilliant comment.

(J.6)

Through her account of a particular interaction with a school teacher, Jette shows us how she became aware that what was a given to her within her own family, was not necessarily a universal given ["it's not necessary for your dad to work, it's just a reality he's creating and says that's the way it has to be"]. Already at that point something is moved in Jette-the-schoolgirl – and there is a certain unpleasantness related to this realisation at the time of the event [she completely shook my foundations / it wasn't exactly pleasant to have that taken away from me]. This suggests that this new perspective at the time might have been, to a certain degree, unfathomable to the girl Jette is making present in this excerpt; Jette, the present narrator, uses the event in the interview setting as a way to show us how she first was presented to a concept of change, also inherent in being a pattern-breaker. This becomes clear through her evaluation of the interaction, calling what the teacher said a "brilliant comment".

This point can be seen in continuation with the ideas we presented about simultaneous meanings in Chapter 4. Jette simultaneously presents two meanings, that not only are different but stand in opposition to each other [it wasn't exactly pleasant / it was a brilliant comment]. What we, however, are most interested in now, is how this extract illustrates that other people - in this case Jette's teacher - can actively and purposefully move something in the individual, impelling them to take a new viewpoint on the givens of their life, and hence encourage a realisation that things can be done in a different manner.

It is also possible to actively search for new interpretations, when the understandings one has lived by no longer seem viable: In the introductory chapters we presented Ivy, a woman who comes from what she terms as 'dysfunctional family' and who in her adult years has joined a support group for people with similar family backgrounds. In response to our question about how she decided to enter this group, she tells us how one day, after having "cried for a year almost" (see appendix page 138 for context) she suddenly decides that she needs to do something. The group becomes one of several initiatives she takes. The group meetings revolve around personal testimonies, where each person who wants to during a meeting can talk, and the listeners are to refrain from "interrupting, commenting and giving advice" in response to the stories that are told (see appendix page 138 for context). In excerpt I.1, first of all Ivy stresses the relief that comes with

telling her story out loud for the first time in her life, and furthermore she finds that this practice of sharing personal testimonies is helpful in offering her new understandings of her own life.

> Ivy: But it *is* also about a catharsis effect. When you haven't been able to tell your story ever. There are many things I *never* told, uhm, before, my crisis, so to speak. It's just "huh, wow, that's also part of me"... uhm, and then there's the other side for me, it's not *only* to tell your story, but also to *hear* other's stories
> M: Hm.
> Ivy: Because it's just "ha? Really? Wow!" And it's also when the story is not just, because, you do know some stories, or you usually think, "that's *completely* different from my childhood," or... but when you hear one *small* detail, *right* there, "oh, your mother said this and you felt it like this" - and I did too (swallowing noise) I can follow that. And *that* feedback mechanism is *so* strong, in my opinion...
> M: What do you feel that gives you?
> Ivy: It offers insight. Because I can't... I can't know how the world works – this is another thing about [term for members of this group]. We don't know how the world works. We don't know what a healthy world is. We don't know what a healthy relationship is. Of course not nothing at all, but when you can't recognise it in yourself when something is healthy, then you need to hear, you need to, you need to hear what is *not* healthy and stuff like that. So there are some of the stories, for example, a few years ago I would just have thought "yeah and so what" and now it's more "wow, well if you felt that way – of course it's not okay for someone to say that" or... it's only *now* that I understand it, because it's only now I have room for it. But for me it's like, it's an insight because, there are many – I've also done this by reading books, it's not only by listening to life stories, but to read other's stories – that's the way I got in touch with my own, including the things I forgot (...)

(I.1)

In this passage we witness how in being confronted with stories of others that she can identify with [and I did too (swallowing noise) I can follow that], Ivy's own past is seen from a new frame of understanding, offering new perceptions on what is healthy in a relationship and what is not ["wow, well if you felt that way – of course it's not okay for someone to say that"]. Ivy argues that coming from the type of family she comes from, she "can't know how the world works" and "what a healthy world is". It is by putting the stories of others in dialogue with her own past, finding similarities little by little, that she can begin to problematise past events in a new way, regarding them as "*not* healthy".

Asides from gaining new frames for understanding her past, the stories she listens to also have the effect of making new elements of her past accessible to herself [that's the way I got in touch with my own [stories], including the things I forgot]. From the perspective we have proposed thus far, getting in touch with "things" that the memory had lost, is maybe not so much a matter of retrieving something that has been gone, but rather something that has been invisible because it has not had any meaning that could provide it a place in ones life. Mishler (2006) suggests that some incidents that have found no place in the stories the individual can tell about its life can remain hidden by virtue of being nameless – meaningless. Growing up in a family where certain things are believed to be right and wrong, and in which there exists some common understanding of how families work, one could imagine that being able to recognise patterns within the family as problematic requires a terminology that the family itself does not possess. As long as members of the family have not acquired words that go beyond this terminology, certain experiences may thus remain insignificant until they can be retrospectively brought to light by the appropriation of a new vocabulary.

In this sense, what makes Ivy able to reconnect with new aspects of her past could be seen as the function of her now finding 'names' that let her integrate the overarching framework of her life stories. So the notion of "unhealthy" could have helped Ivy to ascribe meaning to events in her past, making it possible for her to revisit them from her new point of view.

The status that Mishler attributes to 'overlooked' events, that are not forgotten but at the same time that the individual cannot make present, is similar to how Ivy herself considers the memories that start resurfacing after she begins to actively confront the picture she has of her past, among other things by talking to a psychologist, to family members and writing down her dreams. She describes these "new" memories by telling us that "It's not *forgotten*, but it's not *remembered* either, it's a combination I guess, because I haven't entirely forgotten or never remembered it, but it's just not there, it's not accessible and then it becomes accessible again and all those feeling come to surface." (see appendix page 140 for context).

What these two passages above show us is that the fashioning of a view on one's life can very much go hand-in-hand with the interpretations that others offer of oneself, both as these voices talk to our stories directly and through the fact that we are able to see ourselves in the stories of others.

6.2 - **Working on a life story**

It is not only the interpretations of our life history that can be broadened in interaction with others, but also the material we have for putting together our life story in many cases is a highly social phenomenon, as we see for instance in theories about social and collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992; Fentress & Wickham, 1992).

In the following ,we will take a look at an excerpt from our interview with Ea who has, a few months prior to our interview, disclosed the "story of her childhood" publicly, by writing a piece in one of the largest Danish newspapers, Politiken. As we will see later in this chapter, Ea's motivation for making this contribution to the newspaper is to defend Lisbeth Zornig Andersen – the former president for the National Council for Children, who we presented in the introductory chapter – after facing criticisms for using her own case in her public function.

For Ea, the step of making her story a public one opens up for reactions from people around her and close to her, making Ea relate to her life in new ways as more and more information about her childhood becomes available to her. At one point in the interview, she describes the aftereffects of writing the piece for the newspaper as "very intense", as she spends a lot of time and energy putting together the new pieces of her life she is presented with by others (see appendix page 127 for context). The incidents that follow the contribution she made in the newspaper end up motivating Ea to search for more facts about what happened when she was a child: she requests access to her social service records, talks to her aunt, and reads documents from when she and her sisters were placed in foster care, where their foster parents wrote down what Ea and her sisters back then remembered about the "concrete circumstances" of their life up to that

point (see appendix page 123 for context). Furthermore, Ea digs out saved notes from the school nurse. This process of fact-finding, she says elsewhere in the interview "has been good, it really gives a greater understanding of things" (see appendix page 124 for context) and shortly after this, in excerpt E.3, Ea speaks of what it gives her to engage in this process, that she is in fact in the midst of, at the time of our interview.

> Ea: I think I just need it, I think actually that I had come to terms with my childhood, I had an understanding of what had happened and, well actually I was able to accept it, that that's the way it was. But then uh, yeah then I wrote the piece and then all these new things started showing up and people started to tell and, eh, then I had to deal with that, and then new questions popped up, and "what happened and who did what", yeah, and a lot of feelings not least, and then I had to find out where they came from and what they were about. So it's been a lot of work, and it's actually on-going, it takes up a lot of time. I don't know if it will ever stop. I just think you have to learn, learn to live with it.

(E.3)

For Ea, figuring out an understanding of her life is thus very much linked to finding new information about her childhood, and other people have played – and still do so – an important part in broadening what might be argued to constitute her autobiographical "raw-material" [all these new things started showing up and people started to tell / new questions popped up, and "what happened and who did what"]. Ea seemingly accepts the process itself as a sort of end-stage [I don't know if it will ever stop. I just think you have to learn, learn to live with it] as opposed to before sharing her story publicly, where she appears to have had a conception of the past as a finished story [I had come to terms with my childhood / I was able to accept it / that's the way it was]. With new information coming to light it is not only the facts but also all the feelings linked to her past that seem to have to be sorted out and put in order [and a lot of feelings not least, and then I had to find out where they came from and what they were about], impelling her to revisit her life story.

So what do these excerpts tell us about the development of life stories? In continuation of Chapter 4, where we looked at how the stories of one's life can continuously be re-transfigured in the light of new endings, we see from the passages referred to above that these processes of reconfiguration do not proceed isolated in the individual. Rather, they may very much transpire in interaction with those people who in one way or another take part in its life. We see in Jette's encounter with the perspective of her school teacher (J.6), how another person can cause her to reconsider what she regarded as a given, 'shaking her foundations' and ultimately the comment the teacher made contributes to a change in her views on something completely basic in her life, that is, what the role of work is, in a family. On a similar note, Ivy at one point in her life makes a decision to change her views on some fundamental aspects of her life, namely her relationship to people in her family. She senses that something in these relationships caused her distress, but she cannot herself find words for what exactly is wrong. For both of them, it is the interpretations of others that have played an important part in their processes of reflection on their lives.

Furthermore, Ea's search for information might also be understood as entailing active choices that serve as invitations for change in how she sees her life, since the information she is in the process of digging up has

the potential of giving her new perspectives on what she has been through. She is giving herself the possibility to gain understandings, possibly in the moment, but maybe most notably in the future, as in the midst of this process she cannot grasp all the implications these actions will have. What we propose, then, is that concrete steps, such as searching for new information about one's life history, may be regarded as 'narrative work' when they contribute to the possibilities one has for composing one's life story, by broadening the accessible autobiographic material. Just as we saw that for Ivy, listening to the stories of others brings about a change in the way she relates to her own life.

The process of composing a life story as explored in Chapter 4 could easily be regarded as reflective work that is conducted from a position where the individual has shut itself off from the world to look inward. As we have shown in this and the preceding chapter, this is *not* in accordance with what we propose. In our point of view, the narrative configuration of a life is innately relational and thus social, as the influences and interactions with the world around the individual cannot be separated from the reflective work that it puts into the fashioning of life stories.

A note on the contexts of the interview

We would like to dwell for a moment on the autobiographic work that Ea and the people around her take up in the aftermath of her publication. We find it interesting to consider not only the search for information, but also to ponder what type of autobiographical material seems meaningful in the process of gaining understandings of her life course.

Following Bruner (2001), the study of any personal narrative "involves not only the construction of self, but also a construction of one's culture" (Ibid.: 35) as well as self-making "depends heavily upon the symbolic system in which it is conducted—its opportunities and constraints" (Ibid.: 36). The way the individual puts together its life story, in this sense, is never detached from the culture it is embedded in, and it relies on the assumptions about the self and about life course, which are embedded in the culture, language, and ways of interaction avaialble (Bruner, 1990; 1994; 2001; 2003; Freeman, 2010; Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001; Mishler, 2006; Phoenix, 2008; Ricoeur, 1988; Ricoeur, 1992). So, when Ea tells us about the important process of finding out more about her childhood, an interesting question is: what cultural world is Ea implicitly making present to us in this narrative? What does this, for instance, tell us about what significance is put on childhood experiences in Western culture, when searching for an understanding of the present self and the life course?

One way of exploring how culture is 'reflected' in Ea's narrations – or in any of our interviewees' life stories – is to consider in which ways we, the interviewers and our respective interviewees, are making culture, our common wider societal contexts, present in the context of the interview. For instance, Ea tells us – in response to our question about where she lived as a child – that she has recently found out that by age ten, she and her family had lived at least 15 different places. We ask about this in excerpt E.4.

M: Yeah, what was it like? I mean so much moving and all/
Ea: well, I think these were just the conditions, that, that's just the way it was.
M: Yes.
Ea: I don't think we gave it that much thought.
M: No.
Ea: But of course it's stressful and chaotic and insecure.
M: Yes.
Ea: that's… that's obvious…

(E.4)

Ea, just as we have seen a few times before in our interviews, offers her evaluation of what it was like for her in her childhood [But of course it's stressful and chaotic and insecure] even if she can simultaneously maintain the meaning held by her child self [that's just the way it was], and she positions herself in relation to her childhood in a different way then the child point of view does. In this small excerpt, however, Ea seems to draw on the interactional context of the interview she finds herself in and on the context of the wider culture. She seems to implicitly make use of the culturally held assumption that children need stability and she takes this assumption for granted [of course / that's obvious] just as we do in that we invite her to give us this assessment [what was it like? I mean so much moving and all]. This show us how Ea's accounts are "relational and societal" (Phoenix, 2008: 69) as well as our questions are embedded in societal understandings about what a good childhood entails - and in this context what it does *not* entail.

Whether it is the interview context and her assumed expectations to us that prompt the conclusion about it being "stressful, chaotic and insecure" to move so often or it is something she has thought of earlier and which could have provided her explanations about aspects of her life remains an open question. What this does suggest, however, is that we (interviewers and interviewee), in the interview setting, have a common understanding or a common 'theory' about childhood, that is unspoken but yet shines through in exactly what is taken for granted in the exchange. These observations remind us, in Phoenix's words, that "focusing on the minutiae of the interactional context can facilitate analysis of wider canonical and cultural contexts" (Phoenix, 2008: 65).

The view we propose above is an extension of the general assumptions underlying the present research project. That is, growing up in a 'dysfunctional family' puts a strain on children that can influence their life trajectory, and that breaking the patterns of such families requires some kind of effort. Naturally, it does not only apply to our interview with Ea, but to all of our interviews. This leads us to the next section in this chapter, where we take a look at how the wider social contexts we live our lives in offer us frames that we can apply to the narratives about our life.

6.3 - **Identifying the 'not normal'**

We have now looked at how concrete interactions with others have contribute to tour interviewees' processes of gaining new understandings of their life, forming part of the material and perspectives that are available to their life stories. Jette's teacher made an impact by expressing her personal opinion about whether fathers and

husbands should work a lot, and one could ask: could there also be more general socially shared ideas in the wider cultural context the individual finds itself in – expectations about how to live life – that affect the way it engages in the process of narrative understanding, by offering it, as Bruner stated above "interpretations of our versions" (2001)?

With his notion of *folk psychology,* Bruner (1990; 1994; 2001) offers a view on exactly the question of how ideas existing in our culture impact on how we understand the world, providing for instance stories of our childhood with a meaning that makes sense within a given culture: "(...) the very shape of our lives – the rough and perpetually changing draft of our autobiography that we carry in our minds – is understandable to ourselves and to others only by virtue of those cultural systems of interpretation" (Bruner, 1990: 33).

These systems of interpretation are part of what determines, on the one hand, *what* we observe in the world – mediating what is significant – and also *how* we understand it, in that we use the "canonical representations of the social world" (Ibid.: 56) as a way to frame our experiences. It is this framing, this way of putting into a context of understanding, which, according to Bruner, makes it possible to remember events at all, because without a certain schematising "we would be lost in a murk of chaotic experience" (Ibid.: 56). It is also this knowledge about what constitutes the norm, knowledge about convention, that makes the individual able to distinguish itself from the rest and identify what makes it exceptional. This is closely tied to how, then, we present ourselves to others, where "we focus upon what, in the light of some folk psychology, is exceptional (and, therefore, worthy of telling) in our lives" (Bruner, 2001: 29 p.).

With these points in mind, we take a look at how Jette may have used such "systems of interpretation" to take a stance towards the way things were in her childhood home. We return to a passage we explored in Chapter 4, where Jette tells us about the "dad-tenderness" her father possessed. In this section we, however, analyse a cropped version of excerpt we already analysed in Chapter 4.

Jette: But, and because of this I remember, and my dad really cared about it and my dad really cared about, that thing about wetting the bed and I actually remember very well, that he would come get me at night when he got home around one at night then he would get me up on the toilet and pee and at the same time – do you know that "god negl" [nail polish to prevent nail-biting]

C: Yes

Jette: He would put that on my nails, uh, and I remember this cold feeling, right? And my point is just, that, that he *did* care for me a lot, but he didn't have unlimited strength, he worked and worked so much, right, but he had this tenderness, he had dad-tenderness, I mean he gave the care that parents do, right, and I don't remember my mom ever touching me or stroking me or anything. And I remember this, because I used to go, I went to see a psychologist when I was very young and I've met psychologists during my time in treatment and I remember that when I spoke to a psychologist once, and she, she said it was very interesting that it was my dad I would tuck in with at night – when I wanted to cuddle. And I can actually see that now, and it just *is*, but it wasn't at the time and actually it still isn't now when I talk about it, so I think, it's logical that I would tuck in with my dad, because I want to, I mean, so... but she never... she doesn't do it now either (…)

(J.1)

Jette in this passage establishes a conflict between what is naturally "normal" to her and what she later comes to understand as a norm, by opposing the experience of her father as the most caring parent, to the idea expressed by her psychologist, namely that it would usually be the mother playing this part [she said it was very interesting that it was my dad I would go tuck in with at night]. In this passage, Jette seems to partially embrace the understanding presented to her by her psychologist, who introduces her to a conception about what is normal, and by virtue of that makes herself aware that her bond with her father is "interesting". It does, however, conflict with what she simultaneously regards as "logical" on some level [it's logical that I would tuck in with my dad].

Inspired by Bartlett, Bruner stresses how "experience in and memory of the social world are powerfully structured not only by deeply internalized and narrativized conceptions of folk psychology but also by the historically rooted institutions that a culture elaborates to support and enforce them" (Bruner, 1990: 57). Considering our field of study, the family could be seen as a such institution. In accordance with what we see in this passage, however, the psychologists Jette is referring to might also be representative of an institution which – even if it only plays a part later in Jette's life and thus has not always been a given to her – has a say in how she frames events and makes them part of her life story. The insight that she got through psychotherapy, she says, is the very reason why she even remembers the difference between her relation to her mother and her father [And I remember this, because I used to go, I went to see a psychologist]. In other words, it could be argued that it was the understanding she derived from the structure of interpretation offered to her in psychotherapy that rendered it relevant to her life story that her father offered her tenderness as a child, rather than her mother.

So, Jette appears to make use of a culturally shared notion about families, against which she assesses the ways of her own childhood. Even though Jette seems, to some degree, to hold on to what felt right to her when she was a child [actually it still isn't now when I talk about it, so I think, it's logical that I would tuck in with my dad], Jette simultaneously seems to understand the relationship she had to her parents in terms of what the psychologist said [she said it was very interesting that it was my dad I would go tuck in with at night – when I wanted to cuddle. And I can actually see that now, and it just *is*] and thus, maybe has come to view her childhood in a different light.

In a similar vein, Ea, after being placed an orphanage, for the first time in her life starts visiting school friends. Seeing their homes, she comes to realise that "what we had was not normal" (see appendix page 126 for context) – an insight, which seems to have had quite an impact on her. So, how can we understand this impact and the impact the psychologist had on Jette? What is it that these recognitions of the "not normal" have contributed to our interviewees' efforts to break family patterns?

We suggest that being able to make this assessment can give the individual a sense of having developed away from his or her family, since as we showed in Chapter 4, the juxtapositioning of two positions can serve to demarcate *development*. One might even take this one step further and look at how the identification

of the "not normal" can contribute to establishing a moral stance towards one's childhood home: what happened not only deviated from the norm, but was *wrong*. As we argued in Chapter 4, identification of the 'wrong' can serve to see oneself as someone who knows better and thus can encourage taking step towards what is assumed to constitute a morally better place. This insight in turn, we proposed, could further an understanding of oneself as a pattern-breaker, and even function as a guide for establishing new ways of building a family.

Conveying a life

Apart from looking at how Jette relates to her childhood in light of existing expectations to family life, and how through that she arrives at certain understandings, one could also consider what it is that she is conveying to *us* through what she is telling. In other words, another way of looking at what Jette does here is to take the possible dialogic functions of what she says into account (Bruner 1990; Abell et al., 2003; Bamberg, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Mishler, 1986; Ochs & Capps, 2002; Phoenix, 2008). For Bruner, as we mentioned above, the meaning the narrating individual itself is able to draw from its life is intrinsically linked to how it presents itself to its interlocutors. The interview situation, of course, is no exception to this, for the interviewee is not deaf to "the kinds of situative, and local interactive forces within the biographer finds him-/herself in" (Bamberg, 2006: 66).

Seen in this light, Jette's narration could also be understood as a way for her to make an effort to frame her life story to us so that it is clear what makes her a pattern-breaker, offering a culturally acceptable explanation of something not being right in her childhood home, where the psychologists' expert voice may serve as a confirmation of this. Let us elaborate on this point: The overall trajectory that Jette conveys to us about breaking family patterns begins in a more or less well-off home in an environment she characterises as "amazing settings" in passage J.4. As we heard in excerpt J.5, she tells us that "we probably did have enough, I mean, we had money, and we had this big, cool house. We grew up in great settings". In this sense, the claim of having a story to tell about pattern-breaking might require another level of explanation, as Jette has not, so to speak, moved upwardly in a socioeconomic sense – a move she might expect *us* to read into the notion of pattern-breaking.

As Phoenix (2008) notes, the anticipations of what the interviewers expect to gain from the interview influence what the research participants bring to the table. According to Phoenix "The participants in any conversation, including interviews, have to establish their right to speak on the topics being discussed" (Ibid.: 70 – a similar point has been made by Bamberg (2006) as well as Bruner (2003)). While we do not suggest that Jette needs to "establish her right to speak" any more than our other interviewees, we do argue that her establishing of convention (mothers tuck you in, not fathers) could have a function of creating a common understanding with us that her family in indeed did constitute an exception to the norm, and that she *had*

something to 'break away' from. She thus establishes herself as a pattern-breaker in a manner that is comprehensible to all of us in the interview situation.

Just as the individual's life story can be influenced by others, and it can take actions to further new understandings, as the first section of this chapter shows us, one can also be presented to and actively make use of culturally shared ideas in order to gain new perspectives. Nevertheless, if we focus solely on how narratives function to further the individual's own understanding of things, we might miss useful insights into the cultural and social contexts that these understandings are created and conveyed in. Sometimes, a changed understanding is not the entire outcome of telling ones life story, and we suggest that it neither is always its purpose. For instance, the main motivation for telling a specific story could be to present yourself in a certain way in a certain situation – as might partially have been the case for Jette. Actions that do not look 'narrative', as suggested by Ea's fact-finding, can, in fact, ultimately lead to a change in the way one sees one's life, and thus can be argued to constitute acts that ultimately can be seen as narrative work.

In the following, we will shift our focus away from those situations where we have viewed narrative understanding as the desired outcome of storytelling, and instead we look at how narratives can also have a social salience, which may motivate the telling of a life story. In this sense, we will look at narrative as something we can "put out there", which has an impact on the world.

6.4 - **Coming out – turning the personal into the social**

In the introduction to the present thesis, we presented Lisbeth Zornig Andersen's autobiographical documentary - a portrayal of her upbringing in a part of society, which is usually either taboo or otherwise sensationalised in the media, when horror-like stories about poverty, abuse and neglect are brought to light.

At the end of her documentary, Lisbeth Zornig Andersen states: "I'm interested in giving a realistic picture of this environment, this norm-less 'sub-Denmark' that we wonder about, when we... meet families like the Brønderslev family, and so on" (Min Barndom I Helvede, minute 56:06). Here, she is referring to a case of extreme abuse and neglect that had come to Denmark's attention through the media in 2010. Lisbeth Zornig Andersen thus expresses the wish to alter the public knowledge and ideas regarding these particular social issues.

Shortly after becoming a noted public figure, on the backdrop of her documentary and her autobiographic novel, she is publicly criticised for using her position in the National Council for Children to promote her personal cause. As we have hinted to a few times before, this event prompts Ea, for whom Lisbeth Zornig Andersen's efforts had come to mean a lot, to send in "her story" to a Danish newspaper, Politiken, where she includes events she had never shared before. In the following, we look into at Ea's account of taking this step in excerpt E.5.

Ea: Well it wasn't too long ago. Uhm, I think – I wrote a piece for Politiken, uhm, it was published on May 22nd. About Lisbeth [Zornig Andersen]. It was at the time when she was criticised by John Halse (psychologist/debater) and... all this about her using her position as the chair of the National Council for Children for her own profit, and so on...
C: Yes...
Ea: And that's when I wrote a piece for Politiken, where I wrote that, uhm, that I thought she was doing a good job and that it was important for people like us to have role models and heroes like her, and so I wrote about what it had been like for me. Uhm, and I think that's when [my aunt] reacted. She wrote to me that she thought it was good, and that she hadn't known how hard it had been and...
C: So that piece, was that like – was it a first, uhm...
Ea: Yes, it was the first time I, like – well, people knew that I – it isn't something I had been keeping a secret
C: No...
Ea: But it was the first time I, like, made it public, right? That I told my *whole* story. For example no one, no one *at all*, had known that I was sexually abused at the orphanage.
M: No...
Ea: But then I wrote that in the piece. Uh, so that was an extra detail [laughs]
C: Okay...
Ea: So that was how – I came out, then, with my *entire* story.
C: And what made you make that decision at that point?
Ea: Well, actually, I don't know, I was just sitting there, writing the piece, and then I thought: well, I can't write it without telling *why* I'm writing it, I mean, what's my justification (baggrund) for writing this piece. And so I just had to write about my life, right? And then it just came to me, I just wrote it. So this is the moment... apparently (laughs). I mean, not even my husband knew it. Well, I've said a *little* bit about it, but I always said that "I didn't remember". If anyone says that, it's not true.
All: (Laugh)
C: Well, that's good to know.
Ea: Of course you remember.

(E.5)

Ea describes the act of sharing her story publicly as 'coming out', and she thus is embedding this act in a framework of the known 'coming out of the closet' genre. For Ea, this seems to entail primarily the announcement to others about being sexually abused, something she had always said she did not remember. Describing the action of disclosing her personal story publicly, according to this genre, turns this step into something that she shares with many others. It is a 'type' of action, something pre-defined, that cements a social connection with a group – with others who have also come out with similar stories.

Squire (2012) has been particularly interested in the use of genre for framing one's personal stories and she suggests that what can be achieved through this is "similarisation". Personal stories can become open to identification across different contexts, in spite of the particularities of each person's own story, with the potential of building "identificatory communities of listeners" (Squire, 2012: 55). Merely by naming this genre, which is implicitly understood by us and requires no further explanation in the interview setting, Ea is writing her personal story into a collective story and thus makes present similar stories told in the public arena, assuming a common understanding about the presence of this genre of stories in the minds of her interlocutors. A culturally known genre is hence reflected in her account, as well as in the common ground of the conversation.

How then can we make sense of why she might have chosen to use the rhetorical trope of 'coming out' in this particular case? Or, in other words, what might be the function for Ea of drawing on a known socially shared category of stories?

Ea tells us her contribution to the public debate was motivated by defending Lisbeth Zornig Andersen's decision to go public with her personal story despite her position in a public institution – which in Ea's eyes makes her a "role model" and a "hero" [it was important for people like us to have role models and heroes like her]. The wish to defend and support this figure drives Ea to disclose what she has been through herself [I can't write it without writing *why* I'm writing, I mean, what's my justification (baggrund) for writing this piece. And so I just had to write about my life, right?].

The disclosure of intimate narratives, according to Squire (2012), has become increasingly linked to social change, and in this regard the format of the coming-out story can function as a 'map for action' for how to contribute to a shared cause through the integration of one's own story in a community of people who have had comparable experiences (Ibid.). In a similar vein, Plummer argues that there has been a change towards a focus on personal stories' contribution to collective awareness, rather than on the isolated individual, as "gradually, more marginal voices speak – indeed have to speak; and as they do, they speak not just of themselves but of and for 'others' in the world" (Plummer, 2001: 90). Both Lisbeth Zornig Andersen's and Ea's disclosures of their intimate narratives could be understood as being in line with this phenomenon. Lisbeth Zornig Andersen explicitly has said that she wants to provoke a change in public awareness about the "norm-less" subculture that exists in Denmark ("I'm interested in giving a realistic picture of this environment") – and Ea might be understood to contribute with her story to this new "realistic picture".

We propose that the very act of 'coming out' with her story publicly can be seen as a way of joining a movement or a new social discourse started by Lisbeth Zornig Andersen – following the example of intimate disclosure for this purpose. We believe this motivation to also be reflected in the way she conveys the act to us. By labelling it as one of 'coming out', she creates a "narrative connection" (Squire, 2012) with other pattern-breakers. The use of the 'coming-out' trope might thus be understood at the same time as a way of establishing an identification with a group, as it can be seen as a way of expressing how the act of telling her story is meant as a contribution to a social movement with the potential to instigate social change – in accordance with the ambitions expressed by Lisbeth Zornig Andersen.

In a similar vein, recall Chapter 4 (B.1), where we gained insight in Bettina's very negative experiences with social workers as a child. After the embarrassing moment of "leaving home" with her mother, and sitting at the local authorities with her baby brother without any adults paying attention to her, this served as a motivation as an adult to start giving lectures to social work students. On this note, Bettina tells us later in the interview, in excerpt B.5, about how she came to the decision to do this.

> Bettina: And I only started giving talks once I felt I had it under control, once I had cried all the tears, uhm... and, and had all the frustrations. And, all this about my self, well, I'd done it many times, I read it, I wrote it in the course of a long time, and I've read it through many times, put it away and taken it up again, uh, added to it, thought about things, reflected out and in and, by myself, so to speak. And only when I was done crying about it, and I could explain to people objectively, and in a level-headed manner; what is this about. And then I was able to reflect on it in an *adult* way, I started giving talks. And, now it's been fifteen years since I started giving talks. So this is even further back. Uhm, and then, for many years I only gave talks to students – and by only I mean I limited it, because there are so many other things and if I'm going to tell my story it shouldn't just be because it looks good on Ekstra Bladet [tabloid paper]. Then it has to be because it makes sense. To me, also, right? To the listeners, but also to me. And it makes sense to me, because if I can contribute to someone getting more knowledge, or learning more about some of the things *I* can contribute to, and, uhm, this way they've all gained something from it, right?

(B.5)

In short, what we observe in this passage is how Bettina has gone through a long process of trying to determine how to relate to what she has been through in her life [I wrote it in the course of a long time, and I've read it through many times, put it away and taken it up again, uh, added to it, thought about things, reflected out and in and, by myself, so to speak]. The process seems to have been targeted towards the development of an end product that now can serve a social function. In Bettina's own account, it is the change she can provoke in the outside world that makes the stories she tells meaningful [And it makes sense to me, because if I can contribute to someone getting more knowledge]. So in her eyes, the understandings of her life that her stories can provide her with seem secondary; gaining new insights is not her primary goal. Instead, she considers her story ready to be shared with the world, according to the standards she herself sets up [objectively, and in a level-headed manner; what is this about].

6.5 - **So this is the moment... apparently**

In the past section, we have looked into the some ways the use of narrative can have an impact in the social world, but also how the configuration of a narrative can be targeted towards these desired social functions. When our interviewees describe these acts, however, the topic of reaching understandings about their lives never ceases to be present. In Ea's case, a story about a tough childhood that has not been fully disclosed to anyone before, suddenly comes to serve a not only social but highly public function, as Ea uses it in her aspiration to contribute to raising public awareness and to defend her "hero". In this sense, the function of this sharing is a social one. The interaction, although at that point mostly virtual through the media, occasions Ea to tell her life story in the service of a purpose extending beyond Ea's personal life. The consequence of this desired effect, however, is an alteration of what she can include when telling her life story to others, in that new information is now unexpectedly being included and becomes a central part of it, as we see in excerpt E.5 [And so I just had to write about my life, right? And then it just came to me, I just wrote it. So this is the moment... apparently (laughs). I mean, not even my husband knew it. Well, I've said a

little bit about it, but I always said that I didn't remember]. The desired function of sharing her personal story decides *how* it is told and *what* is told. For the first time, it includes intimate information about sexual abuse. In this sense, the function Ea wants to achieve determines how her life history is turned into a life story, rendering new aspects of her past relevant for narration. As we observed in the beginning of this chapter, however, Ea's step in contributing to the public debate has another effect. Different from the initial purpose, though maybe not unexpected, this step entails sharing this story with people close to her, who in turn themselves start to share their perspectives on it. Besides the possible effects her story might have had in the public conscience, another effect of this step has ultimately been a modification of the conception she has previously had of her past, and she is impelled to take new steps that may further influence this conception. In the end, the socially motivated disclosure of intimate details of her life also comes to involve a change in her narrative understanding of it, by showing us that the social and personal functions of narrative are closely linked.

Bettina and Ea both use their stories in order to produce social effects. In order to support this function, they make use of the effects of intimate disclosure and the social salience this type of narrative has in society. Whereas for Ea this opens up for a long process of creating new narrative understandings, in Bettina's case it is the other way around: only after a long process of narrative work, fashioning and re-fashioning her understandings of her life, can she take the decision to use her life story publicly. In the Chapter 7 we will further explore the interplay between social and psychological functions and effects of narratives, as we shift our focus back to the family, and what it means for our interviewees, in this context, to be a pattern-breaker.

6.6 - **Making a difference**

The ever-developing world we take part in, where new situations never cease to arise, where no moment is identical with the next, is at the core of our life stories. It constitutes the condition that we always find ourselves in a new potential point of departure, wherefrom we can consider our lives in new ways.

Our understandings of our lives and the ways we see ourselves are dynamic, where it is not only the structural possibilities in narrative that make up for the fact that our stories can be told in ever-new ways, but as we have strived to show in this chapter, it is ultimately the multiple relational aspects of the retelling of our lives that make the life story a never-ending work in progress. The various types of situations we have explored show us how it is through interactions with the world that our interviewees have been inspired, or even pushed, to see aspects of their lives from new angles and use their stories in new ways.

Others can influence the individual by making their own stories available to it, or by engaging with its life, giving it new material, new perspectives, and new words. The individual itself can also seek to be influenced, by searching for contexts through which it can come to see its life differently. Jette, for instance, is able to

see her life through the eyes of her psychologist (J.1), and Ivy can see her life in a new light, after being confronted with the stories of others that she has found in literature as well as in her support group (I.1).
These types of acts, however, are not merely about adding new perspectives onto our lives for our own sake. Rather, they form part of our reciprocal relationship with the world: we are also putting our stories 'out there', seeking for new places to tell them and where we can consider what it means to put them into words. The very idea that others are able to understand elements of our experience, and maybe even use them in some manner, might be argued to add a different reality to a story - different from when a story remains unverbalised. When a story is meaningful to others it can acquire a life of its own, with the potential of impacting others.
By participating in an interview, for instance, the stories of our interviewees come to have a new meaning, which is linked to the particular situation. But their stories, asides from taking shape in interaction with the situation they are told in, become actions that can come to take a place in the world outside of themselves. Bettina expresses this when explaining why she makes such great efforts to convey the aspects of her life that almost seem impossible to describe to others who have not lived through situations similar to hers:

> "(…) I do it because it's so important for me to pass it *on*, I mean if you can somehow make out what it's like to be in there, when you... I mean there must be others besides from me who feel this way, this is what I think. So if you can somehow, those people who are smart and clever, people like you, who are going to have people in your hands, people who are in trouble – if you can understand what it is, and maybe almost *feel* it, well that's when you can *really* make a difference, in my opinion, it's when this (points and her head) and this (points at her heart) are connected, right? Then, then we'll have come a step further, right? And this is why I work so hard trying to explain it."
>
> (see appendix page 132 for context)

In this sense, by sharing the aspects of her life that she finds important to tell, Bettina is giving her life story a new significance, even a purpose, as she can use it to impact the realities of her interlocutors (us, in this particular situation). Her wish to achieve this becomes clear in the effort she makes to not only make her story present to us, 'working hard' to really make us understand what she wants to explain. The life of her story, however, does not stop with us. Through us it continues beyond us in the potential that others – the people she imagines we will be in touch with in our future work as psychologists – might even be able to benefit from her efforts to give *us* a better understanding of her life, on her terms. By interviewing with us, she is explicitly making an effort to make a difference for the others she identifies with and for whom she wishes that we, as psychologists, will have a special knowledge of their situation. In Rapley's words: "(…) interviewees don't always speak "as individuals"; they can speak, at various moments, as representatives of

institutions or organizations or professions, as members of specific (sub)cultural groups, as members of specific gendered, racialized, sexualized categories, *as well as* thoughtful individuals, experiencing individuals, etc.” (Rapley, 2004: 29). The interactions that contribute to shaping Bettina's stories are thus not only situated in the interview. They extend into the future interactions that she imagines us in, and as such she is also acting on behalf of others.

7

CLOSER TO A SHARED STORY

(CP)

I dwell in Possibility -
A fairer House than Prose -
More numerous of Windows -
Superior – for Doors -

Emily Dickinson / I dwell in Possibility

In the preceding chapters we have made an effort to understand how our interviewees work on their life stories in ways that we believe to have played a part in their endeavour to break with family patterns. We have examined how life stories can be argued to offer an interpretive frame for making sense of one's life, and in this regard, we have alluded to the intricate ways in which narrative understandings are accomplished through temporal leaps, just as we have explored how life stories can draw on features of both the proximal and distal context of their composition.

Just as the individual is tied to the world it inhabits when tailoring its accounts, it is also onto this world that its narratives are projected. In the context of breaking family patterns, this can have profound implications for the relationship between the individual and the family members it shares its past with, as the realities the individual defines for itself also pose a claim about others' lives. What we will explore in this chapter is the tension between the interrelatedness of the lives of family members - as seen in Chapter 5 - on the one hand, and what we established in Chapter 6, namely that breaking patterns for our interviewees has involved looking for new interpretations of their lives that differ from the understandings in their families. Here, we will let our interviewees tell us about the consequences of their acquisition of new ways of perceiving their childhood, their families, and the world in relation to their families.

7.1 - **Actual history in families**

According to Ricoeur, a group can have an identity that can be considered in the same way as the identity of an individual: just as the stories we tell about ourselves constitute our identities, the stories families tell about themselves constitute its narrative identities. As Ricoeur states, “we can speak of the self-constancy of a community, just as we spoke of it as applied to an individual subject. Individual and community are constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that become for them their actual history.” (Ricoeur, 1988: 247).

So group identities, such as those of a family, are largely created and maintained trough the stories that are told within a group. The mere act of telling a certain type of story is a way of ‘performing’ a group, legitimising it as a cohesive group, with a shared history and a shared future (Hydén, 2010; Stone, 2008; Langellier & Petersen, 2004; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Pratt & Fiese, 2004) and the practice of storytelling contributes to establishing truths about the family, where members engage in the *co-construction* of ideas about who they are as members of the family, for example what their values are, what characterises them, ultimately what ties them together (Thompson, 2009). When one member of the group has developed ideas away from those that are part of the foundations of the family, it is also the view on the family's 'actual history' which is altered.

In the preceding chapters, we have looked at how our interviewees have shared their stories with others. In this chapter, however, we argue that telling our life stories to our families is quite different from telling them to a support group instructed not to respond, to the general population through a large newspaper, or even to two psychology students in the context of a research project. The act of telling, according to Schiff (2012), serves to objectify and project our experiences “into the world of social life”, making them present for one's own and others consideration and subject to responses, just as others can take our versions of experiences across contexts (Ibid.: 37). When narrating we are thus not merely bringing the past into the present for our own evaluation and positioning, but we are making ourselves present *to* others, thus making it possible for others to add on to our point of view. This act inherently brings with it the possibility of granting others a say in the stories we tell, as we have seen throughout our analysis thus far.

Up to this point in the cases we have brought up, the processes of exchanging 'memories' have been rather unproblematic, but actually, for our interviewees, this has often not been the case when they have tried to do so with family members, as their new found perspectives have clashed with what others can accept as the truth. Nevertheless, all of them tell us about repeatedly having sought out family members to tell them about what they have become able to see in retrospect - late. In the context of family, at the same time as the individual makes present its own life it is also presenting its family members with a reality that concerns *their* life. As such, it is not only the self-understanding of the narrating individual that is at stake, but also the self-understanding of its family members as well as the shared stories that unites them as a group.

7.2 - **Claiming new truths**

As we observed in Chapter 6, Ivy, after having embarked upon the process of getting to the root of why the problems of her family seem to affect her present situation, has arrived at new realisations about her past, gaining insight into the aspects of her family and their relationships that she now can recognise as "*not* healthy" (E.1). Asides from these new realisations, Ivy also tells us about her experience of memories and feelings that had been "packed away" surfacing in connection with seeking help (see appendix page 140 for context). Passage I.2 begins shortly hereafter, and here she tells us about finding room for her 'own story' about her family.

Ivy: (…) I've become strong enough to be weak. I got space in my life, because I finished my dissertation, because it was so full, or it was so big and so difficult and because, because somebody passed away. I think, I think this gave me more space.
C: Okay.
Ivy: My dad and my grandmother. Especially my dad. Because – and he was the big alcoholic. *Really*.
M: Hm.
Ivy: Really like, boom, or, he was the centre of attention, in the family. Uhm, and when we, when he died, then there was room for other stories, or *other's* stories.
M: Could you elaborate on that?
Ivy: Uhm... because he was a very, very, strong character. Very smart, and very wild, somehow. And very much an alcoholic. Uhm, but even calling him an alcoholic, nobody has ever done that. My whole life. It was just "he drinks a bit too much", but a bit too much – a bottle of whisky a day is *not* a bit too much. And even that is already like pfff. Just that tells us quite a bit (laughs). That's just not *a bit* too much (laughs). That's not it. It's something deeper, and much more problematic. But he was such a big character. And then there were all of my siblings, and my, uhm, there were three mothers in the family. And, uhm, his sister. All kinds of things, that, with him in the middle, everything revolved around him. And when he died, then "ah, there's space"! (Laughs)
C: Yeah.
Ivy: It's also sad, and I do miss him too, but there's also space, because, he would... he *wasn't* going to change really, or there wasn't really any hope. Or there was hope, but not really. That over the next ten years, he would change completely and come and talk to the people he had hurt and... he was *so* far from that. So far. He denied his drinking. So just, at least it's, it's my understanding that when I decided to tell my family my story, which had been hidden for so long – it's because it was only now there was space for it too. Because we would "it was just dad". Or, there had been several crises in the family, but there was never room for mine. I was the one who was doing well, and was smart and went, everything went well with – and it's a story that was created about me/
C: /yeah/
Ivy: /that I contributed to create, but that wasn't accurate (laughs) at all.

(I.2)

For Ivy, speaking about her understanding of her father's alcoholism [he was the big alcoholic. *Really* / very much an alcoholic / it's something deeper, and much more problematic / he *wasn't* going to change] on the one hand is a matter of telling a story about her father, different from the stories agreed upon within the family ["he drinks a bit too much" / "it was just dad"], stories she sees to be distorted. At the same time, this action of telling is strongly linked to her telling a story about herself, in response to her identity within the family [I was the one who was doing well, and was smart and went, everything went well with].

By deciding to present her view on her father, Ivy is setting up a new frame of reality to her family which is in accordance with her understandings of herself – one of growing up with a father who is a "big alcoholic" rather than a father who "drinks a bit too much". She is making this condition a context for her crisis, which she is repossessing space for [there had been several crises in the family, but there was never room for mine], as she has become "strong enough to be weak".

So the stories agreed upon within her family – in this case about her father's drinking – have had an important impact on Ivy's identity, showing us that self-understanding is entangled with agreed upon stories about the groups we form part of and its members in such a way that they can preclude us from claiming the authority to tell our reality, and ultimately, tell ourselves. In Ivy's case, it is only when her father, who was a "very, very strong character", dies, that there is "room for" the story that she has developed over the years, but has not been able to share with her family [my story, which had been hidden for so long / it's because it was only now there was space for it]. In this sense, Ivy's account also illustrates how the co-construction of shared stories, for instance in families, is often not a 'democratic' process where all participants have an equal say. Rather, it can be a quite asymmetrical one (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Schiff & Noy, 2006).

7.3 - **Negotiating realities**

While there may exist stories that merely constitute a new contribution to the pond of family stories, when a single family member proposes a radical new formulation, like Ivy does in the above excerpt, he or she is providing a threat to the versions of the past that the other family members hold, and that their own self-understandings are invested in. So, if Ivy shares her story about her father with her family, it is not only her own reality and identity as a "daughter of a big alcoholic" that is brought into play, but she is also challenging what in her family is established as the 'actual history'. So Ivy's actions could come to mean that other members of the family would have to consider to which extent they are prepared to alter the 'history' they have believed in up to this point and work with Ivy on the co-construction of a new version of it.

The confrontation that can result from conflicting versions of reality is explained shortly after the above passage, when we invite Ivy to follow up on "a story that was created about me" in her family. Ivy tells us that after her father died "the true story has been brought to light" (see appendix page 142 for context) – and in excerpt I.3 she gives us her accounts of some of the steps she has taken in the process of making this "true story" known to her family.

> Ivy: I called them and told them things that they didn't want to hear. One example, which is very family-like, and not... uhm... there was this one time, in our family, where my dad, uhm, beat my mother a lot, and very violently. On her 40th birthday. And they were not together, or, I don't know if they were together, but my dad already had a daughter, with another woman. My little sister, that is. Uhm, and I saw that, and my older brother saw it, and it was pretty traumatic, you could say that – it was really, really upsetting. In many ways. In *many* ways. That has *never* been spoken of. Never. Or, a week later we had to visit our dad, and everything was as usual. Of course, my mother didn't see him again, for many, many years, but it was never spoken of. We were never asked how we felt about it. Never. And that's one of the stories, for example, that I have taken up the past few years, and I've gotten *many* more details, which are *extremely* interesting, or, which help me to understand other things. Uhm.
> (…)

(…)
M: How did you get those details?
Ivy: Because I've spoken to more people than before. That's one of the things. Because before, I had almost... maybe my mom. For many years I thought it was only with her, but she's just a closed book. It almost doesn't matter what I tell her, because she doesn't say anything back. And she doesn't tell anything. But I've started talking to my other siblings, and my other brothers, and with my aunt and all kinds of things. And then I started to get many more – and then get a small cue here, and confront here, and back again. That's one of the ways. A lot of people. And the other thing is that it wasn't done in a very ”oh, I just need to ask you”. It was with tears, all the time, and with a very intense presence on my side. I felt really bad about all that. So I also had, I had no energy. ”She's not saying anything, but if she talks to me for three hours, where I'm crying like crazy for three hours, *in the end,* maybe she'll say ”oh, it might be true that... da da da””.
M: Yeah...
Ivy: So that way something came. That... because it was so intense, that, or/
M: /you don't think they would have given you the same, or *wanted* to give you the same if they hadn't felt how much was at stake, or...
Ivy: No, not at all.

(I.3)

In her account, Ivy shows us how making present an event she lived through, and that had great impact on her [it was pretty traumatic / it was really, really upsetting. In many ways. In *many* ways] is not acknowledged by the people who lived through it with her. This happened neither at the time of the event [everything was as usual / it was never spoken of. We were never asked how we felt about it. Never], nor later, when bringing the story forward as an adult [they didn't want to hear]. Here, a perspective on Ivy's interactions as both making present *to* others and making *each other* present, might help us to understand different facets of her actions. By claiming the space for telling her story, she is implicitly bringing others' experiences to the table, challenging the stories they live by, and that *their* self-understanding is closely tied to. For her mother, for instance, to accept Ivy's experience of seeing her father beat her is necessarily linked to acknowledging aspects of her own life: having also been beaten by the father of her children. An awareness of this doubleness might serve as one possible frame for understanding the reluctance of Ivy's mother to respond to Ivy's stories [It almost doesn't matter what I tell her, because she doesn't say anything back. And she doesn't tell anything], although we cannot from this interview know exactly what an agreement with Ivy's version of events would actually entail for her mother.

Similarly to Ea who, since making her story public as we saw in Chapter 6, has engaged in a long process of broadening her view on what happened in her childhood, Ivy's steps in making her stories known make it possible for her to gain much more information relevant to her life story [I've gotten *many* more details]. In our analysis of this excerpt we have considered what Ivy does as a claim to a certain reality that she presents to her family, but apparently this reality has still been susceptible to "many more details" presented to her – she even seems thrilled about these contributions [details, which are *extremely* interesting, or, which help me to understand other things]. This brings us to wonder whether what Ivy is actually putting forward is a *presentation* of a finished formulation of the past, or if it is not rather an *invitation* to create a common re-evaluation of it. Let us elaborate on this point: Throughout this paper we have mostly concentrated on the

dynamic aspect of life stories as told by the individual. This dynamic has been regarded as deeply relational, in that the individual is able to be moved by ideas presented by specific or general others. However, what Ivy here brings to our attention is how storytelling can be a *collaborative practice* around shared stories in that storytelling "encourages others to listen, to share, and to empathize" (Riessman, 2002: 697). And so, the stories that are told in families can also be dynamic, as they can be revised in the light of new input. It could thus be argued that Ivy is not only struggling to have her versions of the past acknowledged, but she is doing what she can to reinstate a common ground from where family members, through co-narration, can negotiate a family story that can also contain the things that now are important to Ivy.

Ivy, when presenting her stories to her family, is making it possible for others to join the modification of the reality shared in the family. As Ivy's accounts show us, this receptiveness can result in a broadening of one's view, but it is also this openness to the perspective of others, which makes it vulnerable to other kinds of possibly negative responses. Ivy's invitation has also been rejected and ignored, as her mother proves unwilling to respond, and hence denies the basic premises for entering Ivy's reality.

Jette also has experienced how an invitation to look at the past together can be subject to negative responses. Her mother is reluctant to accept her perspectives on her childhood – the invitations she sets forth to her mother fall on deaf ears, as we see in excerpt J.7.

C: Do you think your mom would be able to recognise the way you, you describe... the way things were – at home, when you were a child?
Jette: … Yeah... well... She and I are like night and day, right, but uh, well for many years of her and my life together, she has put me down and said, that, uh "oh well, it probably wasn't that bad" right? - as a defence mechanism.
C: Yeah
Jette: So my immediate answer to that would be, that I could give two shits – whether she recognises it. That's probably my immediate answer. I don't know if she would.
M: When you say/
Jette: /She would have another version of it, probably
M: When you say that she, she just said "it's not that bad". Is it, is it because she like, did you talk to her about it or have you/
Jette: /Well I did when I was younger.
M: Yeah, you you have, so she, so in your experience there were like different/
Jette: /well I experienced, oh God, so much "yeah, yeah", like condescending, very like "we can talk about that when you're older" or, yeah, yeah, but that's typical of alcoholics.
C: Okay
Jette: So you stop doing it at some point.

(J.7)

While Jette recognises having tried to present her experience of her childhood home to her mother when she was younger, in this passage she actually rejects the relevance of our question about whether her mother would be able to recognise Jette's versions of their shared past [I could give two shits – whether she recognises it]. This is an endeavour she has given up on after many rejections [well I experienced, oh God so much "yeah, yeah", like condescending, very like "we can talk about that when you're older" / So you stop doing it at some point]. In addition to explicitly denying the importance of her mother's acceptance of her

truth about the past, Jette devaluates the perspective of her mother, by calling her reactions to Jette's stories out as "a defence mechanism" and "typical of alcoholics". Hence, this further refuses the validity of what her mother thinks about their past. Implicitly, Jette thus seems to convey a development, going from trying to talk to her mother about their past [I did when I was younger] to now, having given up [you stop doing it at some point]. Common for Ivy and Jette, then, is that 'official' versions of a shared life or the dominance of somebody's voice can turn it into a battle to bring forward the stories that are important to one's life. At the same time, both of them have regarded this battle as one that is worth fighting, in spite of the frustrations they bring about. In the following section, we attempt to get a better understanding of what makes it so important to them to endure this type of struggle.

7.4 - **The possibility of being understood**

At the onset of this chapter, we posed the view that families, through shared stories, maintain a sense of cohesion and shared family identity. Although Ivy (I.3) has moved beyond the realities that the family has lived by for most of her life, she appears to still strive for this cohesion. Her rather painful confrontations [I'm crying like crazy for three hours, *in the end,* maybe she'll say "oh, it might be true that... da da da"] could be understood as an expression of the urgency of her invitations for a reinstitution of a shared version of the history of the family. Similarly, Jette (J.7) also seems to have gone through similar frustrations in trying to help her mother see things from her point of view, until in the end, giving up on this endeavour.

As we have discussed in this chapter, it is also the individual's self-understanding that is rejected, when its perspective on past events is denied by others. In this sense, the rejection of a told story can be seen as a rejection on several levels. We wonder what it means to the individual when those it shares its life with are not able to see important aspects of who it is.

In some way or another, all of our interviewees bring up how their process of breaking family patterns has put them in a situation where they lack the fundamental feeling of community that a family usually provides. In fact, the topic of feeling alone has come up in this context repeatedly. This sense of *aloneness* is described in diverse ways and they all view it as a consequence of different circumstances. In some cases it is linked to a feeling of having 'outgrown' their families, as when Ea describes feeling like a "reverse black sheep" in relation to her biological family (see appendix page 126 for context), or it can have to do with distancing themselves from their family due to troubled relationships, as Ivy makes us understand by saying "you really loose people who are your family" (see appendix page 138 for context). For Bettina, the feeling of loneliness already appears to her at the age of 13, the year when she is repeatedly sexually abused by her father and ends up reporting him to the police. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 4, the veracity of her allegations is denied by her mother and the inhabitants in her hometown, in spite of her father being found guilty and sentenced to time in prison. In the passage B.6 we have just asked her about the harassment she was subjected to by her father's friends.

> Bettina: Yes. Because my dad was the king of [hometown]. My dad had pleaded not guilty. And my... people knew him to be, many things, but actually for having – it sounds absurd – but good morals. At least in some regards. Uhm, so I was shamed (lagt for had). Uh, I was, my own mother, she didn't believe me. Well, her last comment, when she left the courtroom, that was – and she *loved* my dad, and you know what, she still does. He's been dead for two and a half years, and she still loves him... Yeah, well... but, uh, the point is, that her last comment was: "how can you lie like that about your dad?". Uhm, and that was, well, that was the year – I told you, thirteen, I got to understand what it is to be lonely, and to be completely alone.

(B.6)

In the last part of this excerpt [that was the year – I told you, thirteen] Bettina refers to something she says another place in the interview, which we will quote in full length in the next chapter. There she tells us that being raped by her father for the first time makes her realise that "that crap about "mom and dad and family and people who take care of you", that's not how it *really* is" and that in fact "*really*, you're *completely* alone". So in this context, when her mother rejects the claims of abuse as a lie, for Bettina it seems that this only adds on to the aloneness that she has already encountered.

From the perspective we have developed in this chapter, Bettina's mother could be argued to deny an important aspect of Bettina's reality, and thus of who she is. Bettina's mother closes off the possibility of having a fundamental understanding of what her daughter is living through. The rejection takes place when Bettina is young, however, it seems that the mother's love for Bettina's dad [and she *loved* my dad, and you know what, she still does] implicitly entails a continuous unwillingness to acknowledge a part of her daughter's life that has been crucial to her, and hence to recognise her as 'a woman who has suffered incest'.

Bettina's feeling of "being completely alone" could be seen as a consequence of being left completely alone with her perspective. Her father disregards her feelings by abusing her, and her mother afterwards denies the truth of it, and thus they are refusing to put themselves in her place.

In the past chapters we looked at how the individual can continuously find new perspectives on its life, and as we noted above, to verbalise the stories we find significant to who we are, to share them with others, creates the possibility for others to empathise with us, see the world from our perspective and understand our point of view. Telling can thus establish a fundamental *connectedness* with others – as Schiff (2012) notes, it "functions to establish close bonds" (Ibid.: 44). For this reason, when others close their eyes to what the individual considers to be the reality of its life, the emptiness that can follow is so the much bigger.

In this chapter we have looked at various functions of telling ones family about new insights, where presenting them to new understandings of oneself and inviting them to collaborate in creating new shared realities has been important to our interviewees.

To tell our stories is a way to give others a chance to show that they can understand our perspective. Thus storytelling can be a way to reach out and has the potential for establishing a sense of connectedness between ourselves and the people we share our lives with.

8

A CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

(MP)

The purpose of poetry is to remind us how
difficult it is to remain just one person, for
our house is open, there are no keys to the doors,
and invisible guests come in and out at will.

Mary Watkins / Invisible Guest

The irreversibility of time is a fundamental premise for our very material existence; our bodies can only walk in one direction, following 'the arrow of time'. This principle of linearity, however, does not apply to the way we as conscious beings navigate our life, for we can revisit our past or imagine how the present would look had things only gone differently. We can project ourselves into all kinds of futures and from there look back in time. And sometimes, we long for things that are only real in our dreams and mourn a past we never had. These are only a few examples of how we in our thoughts sidestep the limits of linear time.

In this thesis we have proposed a model of time that follows the rules of *narrative.* Inspired by Ricoeur's concept of narrative time, we have explored how the individual relates to its life and itself through intricate temporal operations, carrying out diachronic jumps all the while being firmly rooted in the present. A key argument we have made is that the past, rather than being irrevocably gone, plays a continuous role in our life. It stays with us, not as a fixed image of what once was, but as a malleable narrative frame we examine our life through and through which we determine who we are. We have suggested that the meaning of one's life depends upon the articulation it is retrospectively given within a particular here-and-now and argued for a cultural perspective on the order that is established out of the heterogeneous aspects of one's existence. This perspective thus points to the importance of considering the *contextual* dimensions of human temporality. In our analysis we have asked: How is the appraisal of one's life shaped by the *context* it is conducted in and what functions could this formulation serve in this particular situation? This interest has led

us to address fundamental questions regarding the relation between the individual and itself as well as the relation between the individual and the social world it inhabits.

In this concluding part of our thesis, we look back on the position we have developed throughout our analysis, and propose an overall view on the way the individual relates to its life and itself as innately *dynamic* and *relational*. Furthermore, we sum up how this approach to the study of unwanted family patterns has contributed to understanding the acts that have made it possible for our interviewees to break them.

8.1 **Possibilities in simultaneity**

A basic assumption that has guided our inquiry into the ways in which our interviewees make sense of their life has been that the particular configuration that is extracted out of the jumble of one's life is constitutive of a reality. This reality claim, we have argued, is mediated by the dialectic between the overall meaning that is expressed through the narrative plot and the retrospective articulation of the significance of the specific episodes that make up this plot. The corollary to this idea is that our ever-widening life history provides us with a wide (and even ever-widening) range of possibilities for re-orientation: what emerges when we look at our life as a whole can continually be re-transfigured, the weight of single episodes can be taken up to revision - attain new relevance or be discarded - and new elements can enter our stories and become impregnated with meaning.

In the outset of our analysis, in Chapter 4, we established our view on the fundamental principles that govern how life stories are constructed and we emphasised the intra-narrative dynamic between different narrative points of view, carried by temporally distributed versions of the protagonist as well as by characters that are narrative versions of other people. These kinds of juxtapositioning are only possible when applying a principle of *simultaneity* to the way the individual relates to time. Within the perspective developed here, with storytelling conceptualized as a situated act of *making present,* the distance between events that are spread out in time, as understood in linear chronological terms, is cancelled and replaced by *temporal positions* that exist simultaneously. In the narrative world that the individual opens, persons that have lived in entirely different times and places can co-exist and can be brought in dialogue with each other and with temporally distributed versions of the narrator. This is only possible because all temporal spheres *co-exist* in the world that is created in the here-and-now of the narrative event.

In the view we have presented in this thesis, then, the dialogic relationships between simultaneous narrative points of view are vital to our understanding of the individual, as the overall meanings we can draw from life stories, rather than stemming from one clear position, arise in the relation between narrative viewpoints that constitute counterpoints for each other. This perspective reminds us of Bakhtin's idea about the innately constitutive nature of 'polyphony' that we briefly presented in Chapter 2. In Bakthin's eyes, every meaning emerges from a dialogic relation between voices. So just like we propose that life stories contain points of

view that create an intra-narrative dynamic, Bakthin stresses the importance of attending to "what happens *between various consciousnesses,* that is, their interaction and interdependence" (Bakhtin, 1984: 36, author's emphasis). In what follows we present our findings on how our interviewees have made use of this relational quality of life stories to define their life.

8.2 - **Intra-narrative dialogue with oneself**

Based on the terminology we developed in the outset of our analysis, with life stories understood as an interplay between simultaneously present narrative points of view, we in Chapter 4 saw how our interviewees bestowed protagonist versions of themselves that spoke from different times in their life, with a certain autonomy. They could articulate meanings that differed from each other and could even be in opposition with the standpoint the narrating individual claimed for its *present* self. In this way, these narrative figures provided points of reference for each other and through their interplay defined an overall development, a narrative identity, that rather than belonging to one of the figures, arose out of the interactions between the totality of their viewpoints. In Chapter 4 we suggested that our interviewees, by juxtaposing imaginary variations of their own 'I', became able to frame their life as *narratives of development*. In these cases it was the discrepancy between temporally distributed viewpoints, that by virtue of the *continuity* that implicitly existed between them, made it possible for our interviewees to distinguish themselves as *changed* persons. The dialogical relations that underlie this insight can only occur because the individual is able to juxtapose long gone versions of itself, by turning them into characters in a story, where they by virtue of their simultaneous existence have the possibility of being compared to each other. This same capacity also founds the type of narrative act that we have identified as *moral positioning*. In Chapter 4, we concluded that our interviewees by passing moral judgement on the parents, who caused them pain in their childhood or the general societal conditions that enabled them to do so, could frame their life as a journey towards moral growth and establish themselves as 'evolved'. This is achieved through a dialogue between the child-perspective and the voice of the narrator that is situated in the narrative event. By recognising what they were exposed to as children as a matter of moral injustice, our interviewees indirectly juxtapose the helplessness of their childhood selves to the ability they now have to stand up against what they have endured, calling it out as 'wrong'. The person that is born out of the dissimilarity between these two positions, is one that has undergone a development that has made this person able to tell 'right' from 'wrong'. This mere identification, we suggest, may encourage the individual in its development of ideals that can lead it down another path than the one its parents have walked. In addition to diachronic juxtapositioning of what is essentially the same person, acts of moral positioning could also be seen as entailing dialogic relations between the individual and its parents. In taking a moral position to the harm done to them in their childhood, our interviewees implicitly enter a dialogue with the adults that are now held responsible, comparing their behaviour to the moral standards our interviewees implicitly claim for themselves. The

difference revealed in this view, manifests discontinuity across generations and portrays the individual as someone who has not repeated its parents' way of doing family.

So in this sense, moral positioning in narrative also illustrates how the individual in the stories it tells about its life, defines itself in relation to persons 'outside' itself. In the course of our analysis, we identified several ways in which the point of view of others was significant for how our interviewees saw their life. It is the dialogues between the individual and others we make our focal point in the next section.

8.3 - **Life stories and interpersonal dialogue**

In our analysis, we have explored the profound ways in which our understanding of our life and of who we are is tied up in the lives led and stories told by those we engage with. The accounts of our interviewees have all revolved around interactions that have in some way led them to reconsider their outlook on life, just as they have all told us about situations where they themselves have effected such a change in others or at least have tried to do so. As we have demonstrated, interactions with family members seem to have been of great significance to our interviewees. There have, however, been occasions where people that play far more peripheral roles in their lives or have only briefly crossed their path come to leave a lasting imprint, just as some of our interviewees have used their life stories to influence not only people close to them, but a generalized 'other'. Let us consider what our analysis has shown us in this regard, starting with the interactions with family members that have had an impact on how our interviewees relate to their life.

Life in the context of the family

In our analysis we have tried to get an understanding of what it is that makes certain conversations with family members stay with our interviewees, exploring why these exact events are granted a place in the overall story they tell us. What seems to be going on in some of the referenced interactions is a kind of 'memory'-exchange, where the family members contribute to the life stories of one another. In Chapter 5, we saw how Ea and her aunt made their respective childhood present to each other (E.1) and shortly hereafter, we looked at Jette's account of how her mother presented her with a story about the poor conditions in her childhood (J.4). Finally, in Chapter 7, we heard how family members provided Ivy with new details about past events they had lived through together, yet not ever talked about, until Ivy broke the silence she no longer could accept (I.3). In all of these referenced interpersonal dialogues, the family members seem to make new perspectives available to each other, which in turn, we propose, for each of them can open the way for a different way of recounting their life. In Chapter 5, we spoke of the bond that can tie family members together, as *interrelatedness*: by virtue of sharing a significant part of their life history, family members can add on to each others stories and thus can have a say in each others self-understanding. So the self of each family member is in fact a *larger self*, as both living, deceased and hypothetical future family members can

become integral parts of how each member comes to see his or her life. This was illustrated in what seemed to be a recurring type of narrative, in which our interviewees drew on the lives of their parents or even on prior generations, whose lives where used as reference points against which our interviewees' own position could be defined (J.3 & J.5). Since the principle behind this type of narrative reminds of the *narratives of development* through which our interviewees render visible how they themselves have changed over time, we suggest that narratives that make evident development across generations can be termed *family narratives of development*. By making family members present in these kinds of intergenerational stories, our interviewees can go in dialogue with their predecessors and measure their life up against the lives of these other family members. What this seems to accomplish in the cases we have analysed, is to bring into view the ways in which our interviewees have been able to break with family patterns that have persisted through generations.
As we made clear in Chapter 7, which concludes our analysis, while family members may be able to relate - and hence contribute - to the life stories of the individual in ways that distinguish them from people, who share less history with the individual, it can also we particularly difficult for them to be confronted with what the individual has to tell. So *interrelatedness* has a flipside: when the individual makes its life present to family members, it at the same time makes aspects of *their* life present to them. This in turn can provoke a conflict between the reality the individual proposes and the ones the family members hold - their life can come to be at issue. In our analysis we directed attention to how both Ivy (I.2 & I.3) and Jette (J.7) repeatedly have run into a brick wall when trying to get certain family members to see how their shared past looks like from their perspective. For these family members, we argued, an acknowledgement of the reality that was claimed by our interviewees would compel them to radically reconsider the picture of their family life they live by. This, we argued, might explain their reluctance to accept the invitation set forth by our interviewees to revisit the past on their terms. So while the overlap between family members' life histories may make them able to add new perspectives onto one another's life stories, widening the scope of each other's *larger self*, incompatibility between different interpretations of the family history can preclude family members from wanting to enter into this kind of dialogue, shutting off the possibility of collaboration around a shared truth.

To be moved by others

In Chapter 5 we made use of the notion of interrelatedness to lay emphasis on how family members can feed into each other's life stories. On the basis of what we have found in our analysis, however, we can conclude that this closeness is not at all reserved to families. For what has come to the fore in our investigation is how life stories are continuously influenced by encounters with ideas the individual comes across *beyond* the realm of family. Even brief interactions can bring about enduring alterations, as demonstrated by Jette's story about the time her schoolteacher in grade seven or eight tells her that people don't have to work as much as Jette's father does (J.6, chapter 6). In Jette's own account, this comment had a strong effect on her right away

and it obviously has stayed with her, as it is carried all the way into the here-and-now of the interview. In a similar vein, we saw how Jette at some point in her younger days consulted a psychologist, who proposed an assessment of her relation to her father as "interesting" (J.1). Though Jette still seems to be in the process of figuring out how to relate to this perspective, it is nevertheless with her, challenging what simultaneously feels most natural to her.

These two excerpts exemplify how our interviewees have been susceptible to points of view presented to them by others that in some way - unintentionally - have caused a change in their outlook on life. But this kind of transformation has in other cases been brought about by interactions that our interviewees themselves have initiated, directly aiming for a widening of the overarching narrative framework, according to which their life can be given meaning. Namely two of them, Ivy and Ea, appear to be in the midst of a rather systematic process of actively searching for new perspectives: Ea, besides talking to family members, has found it useful to consult different sorts of written records that hold information about her past that she either can not remember or, as it turns out, had misunderstood when she was a little girl (E.3, Chapter 6).

Ivy, likewise, after realising that she has to get a clearer picture of what went wrong in her childhood, takes an array of initiatives, amongst other things seeking therapeutic help and joining a support group for people with a past in 'dysfunctional families'. What comes out of this for Ivy, as we observed in Chapter 6 (I.1), is that she becomes able to see her family and her own role in it in a different light, applying 'words' to it that before were not part of her vocabulary. From this new position, Ivy comes into contact with episodes in her childhood that she could not make present earlier. As Ivy shows us, a dialogue does not necessarily entail reciprocal exchange of utterances, for the support group has strict guidelines that disallow members to respond to the stories they present to each other. Yet in spite of this, what is aired in this setting is not at all one-sided. The life stories Ivy listens in on go in dialogue with what she has been through in her life, they resonate with her in specific ways and Ivy responds to what she hears, by becoming able to reach new sides of her own existence. Ivy mentions works of fiction as another source of insight into her own life, and again, this effect can be understood in terms of a dialogue, proving that even books that are generally known to be rather unaffected by the reader, in fact gain their meaning from standing *in relation* to somebody or something.

Seen from this angle, then, even Ea's piece in the prominent Danish newspaper, where she tells about her childhood and discloses aspects of it that not even her husband has been let in on before, can be considered a contribution to a dialogue. In Chapter 6 (E.5), we heard how Ea gives her story to the newspaper in an effort to defend Lisbeth Zornig Andersen, who by openly admitting to her past in an abusive family, has become a hero for Ea, yet now is being publicly criticised. So in this sense, the life story that Ea sends in is explicitly a response to an ongoing public debate and it receives meaning and significance from this dialogue it enters into. Furthermore, Ea's very account of this step calls for consideration of yet another dialogic relation, for, as we concluded in our analysis, Ea, by referring to her act of sharing her story publicly as 'coming out',

inscribes it in relation to what in her eyes appears to be a social movement towards lifting the stigma from people who come from families like Ea's. So implicitly, Ea opens a dialogue with those who have similar stories to tell, when she applies the culturally known genre of coming-out stories to her act of letting her piece get published. The coming-out genre hence here seems to have the purpose of allowing Ea to express identification with a group that somehow is a part of what she did, when she decided to make her story public. In this way Ea's account both illustrates how narrators can use structural elements for particular situated purposes and how one's self-understanding can be tied up in larger group identities.

As became visible in the end of Chapter 6, Bettina also contributes her voice to the group of people who, following the example of Lisbeth Zornig Andersen, in recent years have openly identified as being from a part of Denmark that is rarely acknowledged in the public eye (B.5). Like Ea, Bettina makes her story available to listeners, social work students amongst others, in order to give them a better understanding of what goes on in those rather dysfunctional families that can fly under the radar of the social services. Along these lines, then, Bettina's talks and lectures can be seen as additions to a dialogue between the reality she has lived through and the reality she assumes to be most prevalent in the Danish population, where physical, psychological and sexual abuse are not part of everyday family life. For her, as well as for Ea, the interview with us might actually form part of this dialogue, where we, as well us our readers, are given insight into a world that is rather closed off and that those, who manage to break out, do not dare to talk about due to the risk of being stigmatized.

Drawing on what we have found in our analysis, it becomes clear that the manner in which the individual forms perspectives on its life and itself is hard to disentangle from the relationships its life is weaved into, confirming the relational character of both our lived life *and* the stories we tell about it. In this section, we have provided an overall picture of how our interviewees through dialogues can obtain new frames for how their life is seen. What makes these real life interactions so powerful, we argue, is the fact that they can become integrated into the stories that the individual can tell about its life, thus shifting their intra-narrative dynamic. This can be further explicated by opening up the concept of dialogue to also describe the relations that occur between points of view in narrative, like we did above when we understood the way the individual relates to its life in terms of a dynamic interplay between different versions of its self. In the next section we return to this perspective on life stories, to also look at the function of narrative points of view that are not variations of the narrators 'I'.

8.4 - **The stories we have with us - and those we leave behind**

We are interactively engaged with the world in which we live. Every narration stands in relation to a specific here-and-now, it is in dialogue with its immediate context and the overarching cultural system that suggests frames of meaning, normative understandings and shared narrative conventions. And in the view that we propose in this thesis even *in* life stories, every meaning is derived from a relation: When the individual

looks at its life and draws a narrative configuration out of it, it does so by playing out dialogues between narrative points of view that are arranged as dialectical opposites. Some of these are essentially adaptations of the narrator, but as we can conclude from our analysis, many of the figures that play a part in life stories are narrative versions of other persons that the individual has encountered at some point in its life. In this sense, when we speak of the self-understanding of the individual as a 'larger self', we not only refer to how the subject that is created in life stories can extend *backwards* in time, to encompass episodes that the narrating individual has not lived through itself. We also wish to draw attention to how the narrative subject is extended *laterally*, in that the voice of persons the individual meets on its way through the world, permeate how it relates to its life. So life stories themselves are relational - or 'polyphonic' as Bakhtin would say - and it is the interplay between simultaneously present viewpoints that generates the special dynamic that makes the individual capable of envisaging ever-new interpretations of its life. Let us flesh out this argument.

In Chapter 4 we made the point that life stories, by virtue of the plurality of points of views they display, often have an *ambiguity* to them that makes it rather difficult to be sure about what they express. What our interviewees have shown us is that the meaning 'real life' encounters have come to have for them, often cannot be expressed through a simple statement, summarising what they where about. Instead, we were presented with whole dialogues, attending to both different versions of their own perspective and that of the conversation partner(s). The polysemy that characterises these accounts, we suggest, gives a glimpse into how the meaning of particular events as well as of life as a whole, is subject to ongoing deliberation facilitated by the continuing dialogue between existent points of view and the ones that are obtained as the individual moves through life.

We saw this exemplified in Bettina's description of the visit she paid to her father in prison when she was 14 years old (B.4, Chapter 4), where besides playing out a rather sparse exchange of words between father and his daughter, Bettina reads an admission of guilt into what is said and this makes her able to consider this conversation as one that "broke him".

Jette, by the same token, shows us that past interactions can be preserved, not as a static image but as a *site* that the individual can make present and enter back into from a new basis for understanding (J.2, Chapter 4): Jette in light of recent conflicts between her brothers and the mothers to their children, seems to suddenly realise what her aunt, Dorte, must have thought when having late-night conversations with her. Based on her own relation to her nieces that are insufficiently cared for by their parents, Jette today can understand the dialogues she had with her aunt in a new way, now being able to empathise with the sadness she assumes these situations must have given her aunt.

What these two cases show us is how past interactions can stay with us - we can seek them out and re-evaluate their meaning and significance. And from then on, we can have them with us in a new way. Furthermore they demonstrate that the new perspectives that the individual becomes able to apply to its life do not drown out the understandings that existed before. It is here that our framework deviates from purely

constructionist approaches, where the individual through construction and re-construction of life stories is believed to work out *singular* perspectives on its life. In the view we put forward, every new angle from which the individual can look at its life becomes part of the interplay of viewpoints that already exist in how the individual relates to its life. So the individual, when introducing a set of new eyes to its inner world, goes in dialogue with earlier understandings. A few times now we have turned to Albright (1994) for poetic analogies to points we make, let us do so one last time. What we are arguing is that "Past events do not lie brightly, overtly before our gaze, but are instead swaddled in a thick tissue of prior recalls and prior recallers, each adding colors and shadows to the original" (Ibid.: 36).

We suggest that while some 'old' voices may be persuaded to give in to new ones, others may well prove stronger, refusing to stop talking. We cannot express it better ourselves than Bettina does when she speaks of the fundamental feeling of aloneness that she has not been able to shake, since she was 13. This was the year when, as we saw in the previous chapter, she was sexually abused by her father and the truth of it was rejected by her mother and people from her community. In the following quote, Bettina dates this sense of being alone back to the very first time her father laid hands on her:

> "(...) what happened was that I came to understand… it has never ever left me since - that I am completely alone. So what I realised then and there was that all that crap about "mom and dad and family and people who take care of you", that's not how it *really* is. That's how the *story* goes but that's not how it is, *really*. *Really*, you are *completely* alone, you know. And *that* is the most horrible thing you can ever experience and I wish I could just programme myself to be able to reach a different understanding, but what makes this really difficult is that it's not just thoughts I have but rather it's a deep, deep, deep understanding (...) but I know for sure, when I analyse myself it becomes clear to me that I have this understanding "save yourself, my girl, 'cause nobody's coming to save you". And that's, it's like from when I was 13 I have felt that I was all by myself in this life and when I look at my fantastic family that I have described, which is everything a family ought to be according to H.C. Andersen's tales, the *ideal* of a family… well… how can one feel *alone* with all of that, you know? And that's how my life is complex sometimes (…)"
>
> (See appendix page 132 for context).

What Bettina makes heartbreakingly clear hear is that some understandings cannot be overpowered - invalidated by subsequent experiences that prove the opposite. However much our life changes, some critical aspects of earlier selves may remain active, speaking to us with a voice that is hard to defy, in Bettina's case saying "save yourself, my girl, 'cause nobody's coming to save you". But at the same time, Bettina's account also illustrates how these "deep, deep, deep understandings" might stay with the individual, but can come to do so in ways that are different from when they first where established. For Bettina implicitly confronts the

voice of the 13-year-old girl, telling her and us that today she has a "fantastic family", that there is no need to feel alone anymore. So even though Bettina has a sense of being unable to "programme" herself to get rid of the point of view of the young girl, this girl's voice is now only *one* in the dialogues Bettina can see her life through. The story Bettina has with her now is one about a woman who may carry an old understanding of being alone, but today actually isn't. The voice may still be there, but today it is objected to.

We may never be able to leave behind some events we have lived through or certain truths we are presented with by others or that we have set up ourselves. The reality they form part of can change though.
We are thankful to our interviewees for letting us see how they work on the stories they have with them.

9

FURTHER PERSPECTIVES

(MP, CP)

In this final section we briefly consider the further perspectives our study might open up for.

The framework we have presented in this thesis renders visible some of the steps the individual can take to re-position itself to its life. Acts that at first sight might not appear to constitute 'life story work' can, in the perspective we have put forward, end up being constructive for how the individual relates to its life and itself, by influencing the intra-narrative dynamic that the individual defines its life through. Our inquiry into this dynamic, consisting of the interplay between co-existing narrative points of view, has led us to identify three types of life stories that exhibit specific configurations: Life stories can be organised to facilitate *moral positioning*. Here the individual, by juxtaposing its present position to past circumstances that an earlier version of its self is located in, takes a moral stance to what it went through at that point in its life, determining itself as morally evolved. In *narratives of development* the individual through dialogue between variations of its self, comes to see its life as a trajectory that has led it through changes in its outlook on the situation it is in, on who it is, and on the possibilities it has. The third type of narrative organisation we identify, we have termed *narratives of family development*. They embed the individual's life in a larger family story that extends beyond the life course of the single individual, allowing it to assess its life in terms of intergenerational positioning.

These findings derive from our empirical investigation of how pattern-breakers relate to their life and what is of significance to them. Their accounts have helped us shed light on the dynamic way in which the past stays with the individual and what these three types of intra-narrative interplay have in common, is that they unfold the *developments* that the individual undergoes both in relation to its own life and to the family history it is born into. However, it is possible that it is particularly relevant to pattern-breakers to see their life in light of developments, as leaving behind the ways of their childhood homes is a crucial facet of who they are. Other research samples might open our eyes to alternative ways in which the narrating individual can make use of the interplay between narrative points of view. So further research, based on our overall framework, could be aimed at identifying additional types of intra-narrative dynamics in life stories and

explore how they relate to each other and to the ones we have identified: Are some of them more general than others? Could there be types that have particular relevance under certain circumstances or to specific people? Ultimately an attempt could be made to draw up a classification of these narrative organisations and their corresponding functions, giving us a broader understanding of how the individual relates to its life through life stories. So it would be interesting to look further into the possibilities that simultaneous narrative points of view offer the individual.

The present study could also serve as a point of departure for an elaboration of how therapeutic work can benefit from the potential for re-orientation inherent in life stories: This thesis has been an exploration of how the individual *in general*, in interaction with its surrounding world, comes to see its life in narrative terms. And as we made clear in the introductory chapter, we have refrained from discussing the clinical implications of the ideas we have set forth – an endeavour into this would require a whole other investigation. However, based on what we have established and what could be found through further research, it would be relevant to go into depth with how elements of our framework could contribute to therapeutic work: How could the notion of simultaneous points of view be constructive in the therapeutic process - and how could the therapist support the individual in bringing them into play in productive ways? Furthermore, the approach we argue for invites to take into account that the individual continuously takes initiatives that help it define new directions for its life. So how could therapy take advantage of these everyday acts that might not take the form of reflective work - but *can* become part of life stories? A discussion of the therapeutic dimension of our framework would require us to look into existing therapeutic practices that operate with assumptions that are not far from what we propose. In this way we could discuss what it is that our framework could contribute with to the field of clinical psychology.

How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts?
And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account,
to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life.
Told to others, but – mainly – to ourselves.

Julian Barnes / The Sense of an Ending

REFERENCES (Total standard pages: 2524[1])

Abell, J., Stokoe, E., Billig, M. (2003). 'Narrative and the discursive (re)construction of events'. In M. Andrews, S.D. Sclater, C. Squire & A. Treacher (Eds.), *The Uses of Narrative*. New Jersey: Transaction

Albright, D. (1994). Literary and psychological models of the self. In U. Neisser & R. Fivush (Eds.), *The Remembering Self, Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Standard pages: 27

Andrews, M., Squire, C., Tamboukou, M., Esin, C., Brockmeier, J., Erben, M., Freeman, M., Hydén, M., Jolly, M., Sagan, O., Georgakopoulou, A., Hyvärinen, M., Rustin, M. (2012). Looking Forward, Looking Back: Future Challenges for Narrative Research. *Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations, & Interventions* 2(1), pp. 4-32. Standard pages: 32

Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevky's Poetics*. Trans. C. Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 5-46. Standard pages: 47

Bamberg, M. (2006). Biographic-Narrative Research, Quo Vadis? A Critical Review of 'Big Stories' from the Perspective of 'Small Stories'. In K. Milnes (Ed), *Narrative, Memory & Knowledge: Representations, Aesthetics, Contexts*. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, pp. 63-79. Standard pages: 18

Basten, F. (2012). Going Narrative: But Where Will It Take Us? *Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations, & Interventions* 2(1), pp. 48-66. Standard pages: 18

Brinkmann, S. (2010). Etik i en kvalitativ verden. In S. Brinkmann & L. Tanggaard), *Kvalitative metoder: En grundbog.* København: Hans Reitzels Forlag. Standard pages: 18

Brockmeier, J. (1997). Autobiography, Narrative, and the Freudian Concept of Life History. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology,* 4(3), pp. 175-199. Standard pages: 47

Brockmeier, J. (2001). From the end to the beginning, Retrospective teleology in autobiography. In J. Brockmeier & D. Carbaugh (Eds.), *Narrative and identity: Studies in autobiography, self and culture*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Standard pages: 33

Brockmeier, J. & and Carbaugh, D. (2001). Introduction. In J. Brockmeier & D. Carbaugh (Eds.), *Narrative and identity: Studies in autobiography, self and culture*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Standard pages: 23

Brockmeier, J. & Harré, R. (2001). Narrative: Problems and promises of an alternative paradigm. IIn J. Brockmeier & D. Carbaugh (Eds.), *Narrative and identity: Studies in autobiography, self and culture*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Standard pages: 20

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of Meaning.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
Chapter 2: Folk Psychology as an Instrument of Culture. Standard pages: 24

[1] Standard pages counted for references that have not been used in previous curricula

Bruner, J. (1994). The "remembered" self. In U. Neisser & R. Fivush (Eds.), *The Remembering Self, Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Standard pages: 16

Bruner, J. (2001). Self-making and world-making. In J. Brockmeier & D. Carbaugh (Eds.), *Narrative and identity: Studies in autobiography, self and culture*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Standard pages: 14

Bruner, J. (2003). Self-Making Narratives. In *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self, Developmental and Cultural Perspectives*. R. Fivush & C. A. Haden (Eds). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers. Standard Pages: 17

Daniel, S.I.F. (2011). Adult Attachment Insecurity and Narrative Processes in Psychotherapy: An Exploratory Study. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy,* 18, pp. 498-511

Elsborg, S. et al. (1999). *Den sociale arv og mønsterbrydere.* København: Danmarks Pædagogiske Institut
Chapter 1,2. Standard pages: 15

Fentress, J. & Wickham, C. (1992): *Social Memory.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
Foreword & chapter 1. Standard pages: 55

Fivush, R. et al. (2004). Family Narratives and the Development of Emotional Well-Being. In M. W. Pratt & B. Fiese (Eds.), *Family Stories and the Life Course: Across Time and Generations*. New Jersey: Routledge. Standard pages: 26

Fludernik, M. (2005). Histories of Narrative Theory (II): From Structuralism to the Present. In Phelan, J & P.J. Rabinowitz (Eds.), *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. Standard pages: 20

Freeman, M. (1991). Rewriting the Self: Development as Moral Practice. In M.B., Tappan & M.J. Packer (Eds), *Narrative and Storytelling: Implications for Understanding Moral Development.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers. Standard pages: 26

Freeman, M. (2010). *Hindsight - The Promise and Peril of Looking Backward.* New York: Oxford University Press. Standard pages: 198

Freeman, M. & Brockmeier, J. (2001). Narrative integrity, Autobiographical identity and the meaning of the "good life". In J. Brockmeier & D. Carbaugh (Eds.), *Narrative and identity: Studies in autobiography, self and culture*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Standard pages: 30

Georgakopoulou, A. (2006). The other side of the story: towards a narrative analysis of narratives-in-interaction. *Discourse Studies,* 8(2), pp. 235-257. Standard pages: 24

Georgakopoulou, A. (2007). Small Stories, Interaction and Identities. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Chapter 4: Small stories and identities. Standard pages: 37

Gubrium, J. F., Holstein, J. A. (2009). *Analyzing Narrative Reality*. Los Angeles: Sage. Standard pages: 263

Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Chapters 1-8. Standard pages: 180

Herman, D. (2005). Histories of Narrative Theory (I): A Genealogy of Early Developments. In J. Phelan & P.J. Rabinowitz (Eds.), *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. Standard pages: 18

Hermans, H. J. M. (1996). Voicing the self: From Information Processing to Dialogical Interchange. *Psychological Bulletin,* 119(1), pp. 31–50. Standard pages: 48

Hermans, H. J. M., Rijks, T. I., & Kempen, H. J. G. (1993). Imaginal Dialogues in the Self. Theory and Method. *Journal of Personality,* 61(2)*,* 207-236. Standard pages: 23

Hydén, L.C. (2010). Identity, self, narrative. In M. Hyvärinen, L. Hydén, M. Saarenheimo & M. Tamboukou (Eds), *Beyond Narrative Coherence. Studies in Narrative*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Standard pages: 18

Hyvärinen, M. (2012). Prototypes, Genres, and Concepts: Travelling with Narratives. In *Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations, & Interventions.* 2(1), pp. 10-32. Standard pages: 21

Hyvärinen, M. (2010). Revisiting the Narrative Turns. *Life Writing* 7(1), pp. 69-82. Standard pages: 16

Jæger, M. M. (2003): *Mønsterbrydere og social arv i Danmark – Perspektiver fra Socialforskningsintituttets Ungdomsforløbsundersøgelse*. København: Socialforskningsinstituttet. Standard pages: 37

Kaplan, D. M. (2003). *Ricoeurs Critical Theory*. Albany: State University of New York, pp. 47-99. Standard pages: 63

Langellier, K. M. & Peterson, E. E. (2004). *Performing Narrative. Storytelling in Daily Life.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Standard pages: 270

Markus, H. & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist,* 41(9), pp. 954-969. Standard pages: 33

McAdams, D.P. (2003). Identity and the Life Story. In *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self, Developmental and Cultural Perspectives*. R. Fivush & C. A. Haden (Eds). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers. Standard pages: 19

Medved, M. I., Brockmeier, J. (2010). Weird stories. Brain, mind, and self. In M. Hyvärinen, L. Hydén, M. Saarenheimo & M. Tamboukou (Eds), *Beyond Narrative Coherence. Studies in Narrative*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins

Mishler, E. (1986). *Narrative Interviewing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Chapter 6: 'Narrative Analysis.'

Mishler, E. G. (2006). Narrative and identity: the double arrow of time. In A. De Fina, D. Schiffrin, M. Bamberg (Eds.) *Discourse and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Standard pages: 19

Neisser, U. (1994). Self-narratives: True and false. In U. Neisser & R. Fivush (Eds.), *The Remembering Self, Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Standard pages: 20

Ochs, E. & Capps, L. (2002). *Living Narrative. Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Chapter 1: A dimensional Approach to Narrative.

Packer, M. J. (1991). Interpreting Stories, Interpreting Lives: Narrative and action in Moral Development Research. In M. B. Tappan & M.J. Packer (Eds), *Narrative and Storytelling: Implications for Understanding Moral Development.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers. Standard pages: 24

Patterson, W. (2008). Narratives of events: Labovian narrative analysis and its limitation. In M. Andrews, C. Squire and M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage

Pennebaker, J. W. (1995). Emotion, Disclosure, and Health: An Overview. In J. W. Pennebaker (Ed.) *Emotion, Disclosure, & Health.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Phoenix, A. (2008). Analysing narrative contexts. In M.Andrews, C. Squire and M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage. Standard pages: 16

Plummer, Ken (2001): Documents of Life 2. 2nd Ed. London: Routledge,
Chapter 4: The Auto/Biographical society. Standard pages: 30

Pratt, M. W. & Fiese, B. (2004). Families, Stories, and the Life Course. In M.W. Pratt & B. Fiese (Eds.): *Family Stories and the Life Course: Across Time and Generations*. New Jersey: Routledge. Standard pages: 19

Rapley, T. (2004). Interviews. In C. Seale et al. (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage. Standard pages: 33

Ricoeur, P. (1980). Narrative time. *Critical Inquiry*, 7(1), pp. 169-190. Standard pages: 27

Ricoeur, P. (1988). *Time and narrative*. Trans. K. Blamey & D. Pellauer, Vol. 3. Chicago, IL:
University of Chicago Press, pp. 60-96, 240-249. Standard pages: 61

Ricoeur, P. (1991). Life in quest of narrative. In D. Wood (Ed), *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*. London: Routledge. Standard pages: 20

Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as Another*. Trans. K. Blamey. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, pp. 1-55, 113-168. Standard pages: 136

Riessman, C. (1993): *Narrative analysis*. London: SAGE Productions
Chapters: Introduction, 1, 3, Conclusion. Standard pages:40

Riessman, C. (2002). Analysis of personal narratives. In J. Gubrium & J. Holstein (Eds), *Handbook of Interview Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 695-710

Schiff, B. & Noy, C. (2006): Making it personal: Shared meanings in the narratives of Holocaust Survivors. In A. De Fina, D. Schiffrin, M. Bamberg (Eds.) *Discourse and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Standard pages: 27

Schiff, B. (2012). The Function of Narrative: Toward a Narrative Psychology of Meaning. *Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations, & Interventions,* 2(1), pp. 33-47. Standard pages: 14

Sandino, L. (2010). Artists-in-progress, Narrative identity of the self as another. In M, Hyvärinen; L. C. Hydën; M. Saarenheimo; M. Tamboukou (Eds). *Beyond Narrative Coherence*. Amsterdam/Philadelpjia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Standard pages: 19

Sclater, D. S. (2003). What is the subject? *Narrative Inquiry*, *13*(2), pp. 317-330. Standard pages: 13

Sermijn, S., Devlieger, P. & Loots, G. (2008). The Narrative Construction of the Self. Selfhood as a Rhizomatic Story. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 14(4), pp. 632-650

Shils, E. (1981). *Tradition.* Boston: Faber and Faber Limited.

Stone, E. (2008). *Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins: How Our Family Stories Shape Us*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
Introduction & Chapters 1, 2, 5, 8. Standard pages: 92

Squire, C. (1999). Neighbors Who Might Become Friends: Selves, Genres, and Citizenship in Narratives of HIV. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 40(1), pp. 109-137. Standard Pages: 38

Squire et al., (2008). Introduction. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage

Squire, C. (2008). From Experience-centred to Culturally-oriented Narrative Research. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage

Squire, C. (2012). Narratives, connections and social change. *Narrative Inquiry* 22(1), pp. 50-68. Standard pages: 23

Søgaard, U. (2002): *Mønsterbrud - teorier, forskning og eksempler.* Værløse: Billesø & Baltzer Forlagene
Indledning. Standard pages: 2

Tamboukou, M. (2010). *Broken Narratives: Textual and Visual Interfaces. In In the Fold Between Power and Desire; Women Artists' Narratives*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 1-14

Tanggaard, L. & Brinkmann, S. (2010). Interviewet: Som forskningsmetode. In S. Brinkmann & L. Tanggaard), *Kvalitative metoder: En grundbog.* København: Hans Reitzels Forlag. Standard pages: 26

Thompson, B. et al. (2009). Family legacies. Constructing individual and family identity through intergenerational storytelling. *Narrative Inquiry* 19(1), pp.106-134. Standard pages: 31

Other media:

Korsgaard, Mette (2012). *Min Barndom i Helvede*. Kragefilm.
http://www.dr.dk/TV/se/min-barndom-i-helvede/min-barndom-i-helvede#!/03:00

Interview med Jette / 26. oktober 2012

00:04:40
Carolina: Nu nævnte du, nu sagde du noget med **tumult** i [i en e-mail før interviewet]/ *Quote, Chapters 4 and 5*
Jette: Nå i min opvækst?
Carolina: Ja, måske kan du fortælle os lidt om hvad det vil sige?
Jette: Ja det kan jeg godt, jeg er vokset op med... jeg er den yngste ud af en søskendeflok på tre, jeg har en storebror og, jeg har to storebrødre som er fem og seks år ældre, øhm, jeg er vokset og med, øh, jeg har en mor, der har været alkoholiker, tror jeg det meste af min opvækst... øh, og min far – altså de... øhm, jeg er ikke vokset op i sådan en lavstatus miljø. Jeg er vokset op i [barndomsby]. Og de arbejdede. Min far arbejdede rigtigt meget, han drak ikke så meget, men min mor hun var, sådan, meget nervepræget og, og drak utrolig meget. Øhm, men vi boede jo der i [barndomsby] og tingene fungerede jo på overfladen, så der var ikk' rigtig, øh, ja... men det var, det var dysfunktionelt, det var det. Og jeg var så dét yngre end mine brødre, kan man sige. Der hvor filmen knækkede for min mor, det var jo da de begyndte at drive forretning sammen, at det kunne hun ikke følge med til. Og så eskalerede hendes misbrug, øh... og det rammer så mig væsentligt hårdere. Og når jeg så siger det er en konsekvens at jeg har fået den her bipolare lidelse, så er det fordi at man kan se i familien, at det har været der – også tilbage. Og den teori man har i dag, det er jo at det anlæg, det har du allerede i fostertilstanden, og derfor, så, så tror jeg – eller jeg er jo ikke i tvivl om – at det er simpelthen dét der gør, at det udløser, ikk'? Øhm, så... Og der kommer hele begrebet 'social arv' jo ind, i... jeg ved det jo ikk', da jeg er helt ung, at jeg har den her sygdom, kan man sige. Men altså, det kommer jo ind, begrebet social arv, i mit liv på den måde. Men, øhm, én ting er hvad der konkret sker i min familie, at min mor drikker og sådan noget. Det er jo ikk' særlig smart, kan man sige. Der sker jo mange ting, øh... Men der er jo også hele det følelsesmæssige vil jeg sige... fordi *hendes* mor drak jo *også*, og hendes *far* drak jo også, ikk'? Altså... så…
Carolina: Ja...
Mikka: Så, du nævnte noget med en forretning? Din mor og din far/
Jette: /Ja, min far han var, øhm, min far han var uddannet kok og tjene, og... det var ligesom det han ku' blive dengang. Og han var vokset op ude på landet. Han ville gerne ha været bibliotekar
Mikka: (griner)
Carolina: Nå, okay, hvor sjovt
Jette: Så der var også noget dér, kan man sige, Jeg var ikke så bevidst om det da jeg egentlig valgte uddannelsen, men altså der var noget dér, tror jeg også... øh, kan jeg se senere hen – han er død i dag. Øh, han døde for tolv – elleve-tolv år siden. Men, øh, men det pudsige – det skævvredne i min familie, eller i min opvækst, var nok at min *far* egentlig havde rigtigt mange forældreevner, ikk'? Men han, øh, arbejdede hele tiden. Så, der var lidt et pr– der var han ligesom ikk' tilstedeværende, vel? Øhm, men min mor har ikke – *har* ikke de forældre evner. Hun har aldrig fået dem med – hun er selv vokset op i noget kummerligt, forfærdeligt noget – noget der var værre, kan man sige, end det vi voksede op i, øh, fordi der var nogen rammer omkring os, ikk'? Altså, som var okay, ikk'? Øhm, så, øh, men der var ikke nogen som forsætligt ville skade os – og, og man kan sige, de gik jo ikke afsted hver dag, fordi de skulle ud og drikke, vel? De gik afsted for at skulle arbejde.
Carolina: Ja...
Jette: Og der *blev* jo arrangeret barnepiger, og sådan noget, for at passe på os, men, øh, der var nogle prioriteter, kan man sige, der ikke helt holdt stik. Men der kom jo så, øh, der er kommet nogle indrømmelser senere hen i voksenlivet. Det er også guld værd, ikkp'?
Carolina: Ja? Kan du sige lidt om...
Jette: Nåmen det, altså, fra min fars side i hvert fald, ikk'? Altså han ... Ja, i hvert fald sagde han at – altså han har jo sagt mange ting – men jeg kan i hvert fald huske at han sagde til mig, at det gik op for mig- eller for *ham* – fordi de byggede et stort hus derude i [bynavn] hvor vi boede, ikk'? Og... der boede vi så i ti år, eller noget... Og der siger han så på et tidspunkt, at det går

op for ham, hvorfor han brugte egentlig alle de her penge, egentlig, på det her store hus, når han aldrig havde tid til at være der. Og det gik op for ham, at det var jo ikke lykken for hans børn – altså det er jo meget banalt, ikk'? Og det er jo en erkendelse mange mennesker må komme til på et eller andet tidspunkt, ikk'? Men *stadig* så er det jo det, der, ligesom, ligger i mennesker, ikk'? At de jager efter det der... at det er den der, uddannelse og bilen og huset, og så kommer bør... altså... og jeg ved ikk' hvorfor vi gør det, vel? Altså, men, men ... og så nå til den erkendelse – altså det er jo klart, det optimale er selvfølgelig at du har så mange penge, at du så også kan nå at være derhjemme, ikk'? Men det *er* jo bare de færreste, ikk'? Fordi det holder aldrig op, den der jagt på den der tryghed, tror jeg vel... så skal vi skal ha' flere forsikringer, vi skal ha' f... altså, jeg ved ikk', øhm... men der er i høj grad kommet indrømmelser, og der er også kommet indrømmelser fra min mor. Øhm... men det fine er jo så, at, øhm, at du kan jo så, du kan jo så godt hente det andre steder. Altså, du kan godt få det andre steder. Selvfølgelig kan du ikke få det hele, men du kan godt få det andre steder fra, og det kan jeg jo bare se, at der har været andre voksne i mit liv. Og det er jo, det er jo der, hvor... det er i hvert fald *min* anke imod – det kan godt være det har ændret sig, altså nu er jeg jo fyrre, men jeg læste jo meget psykologi da jeg var de der 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, tror jeg, indtil jeg fik børn (griner) så stoppede jeg. Men altså, der læste jeg *rigtig* meget psykologi: og der var måske også rigtigt meget af det jeg ikk' forstod, men der er også meget af det jeg forstod. Men dengang, der var det sådan... tror jeg, meget sat, ikk'? Altså, hvis det gik galt med mor og far, så var du bare *dømt*, altså så *var* det gået galt, med dig, *ikk'?* Hvor man kan sige, at... øhm... du kan hente rigtigt meget fra andre voksne, det kan du...

Mikka: Hvordan har du gjort den erfaring?

Jette: Jamen, det har jeg gjort – blandt andet så blev vi sendt ... Altså, min far og min mor kommer jo fra Jylland, og, øh... min far, han har – havde, har, hvad siger man, når han er død? De lever jo, altså – søskende. Og han havde, har, blandt andet to fastre. Og jeg blev sendt til Jylland, også over til min bedstemor – en meget gammel, bestemt dame – hun er også død i dag. Men øh, jeg havde to – jeg har to fastre. Og den ene faster, Dorte, hun havde tre unger, og den ene – min kusine Signe – vi er jævnaldrende. Og så blev jeg sendt over, for de skulle jo arbejde. Så blev jeg sendt over i fem-*seks* uger ad gangen, ikk'? Og jeg var jo knust, altså, jeg led af hjemve og alt muligt

Carolina: Hm

Jette: Og det tror jeg var den der totale mangel på den der kontakt, ikk'? Så, giver, så giver det sig til udtryk. Øhm... men jeg kan bare huske, at øh, at Dorte her, hun var bare så god til... hun favnede ikk' kun sine egne unger, hun favnede også mig. Så jeg var bare en del af det der, ikk'? Og, og, og... jeg kan ta' mig selv i, i dag, i forhold til mine egne børn, at mange af de elementer – den måde hun var mor på – at den måde er jeg også.. at dét har jeg taget videre, og selv er mor på, ikk'? Og det er, sådan, meget i den fysiske omsorg... kan jeg mærke, ikk'?

Mikka: At det har du fra Dorte?

Jette: Det øh, ja, fordi det kan jeg høre den måde jeg kan tale til dem på, den måde, ja, det vil jeg vove at påstå, det har jeg meget fra den jyske familie som jeg jo så var en stor del af når jeg var derovre den store den af sommerferien, ikk'. Hele den kultur der lå i denne der jyske familie, ikk', også når jeg var hos min bedstemor. Og jo også fra min far, ingen tvivl om det, for han havde, de var jo de her fem søskende, han var de ældste og han skulle meget tage sig af sine små søskende, ikke og han var, når han kom hjem, øh, om aftenen der, så kom han hjem halv-et-et, så var det meget ham, altså jeg bed jo negle, jeg havde mange tegn på at var omsorgssvigtet, altså, jeg blev faktisk indlagt da jeg var fem år og eller sådan noget ude på [hospital] - det er jo helt vanvittigt tænker jeg i dag, når jeg selv har børn, ikke også. Men jeg tissede i sengen og rent faktisk så lavede jeg også stort i bukserne engang imellem, det ville man jo ikke bare i dag, men jeg blev jo så også indlagt på [hospital], der var bare det aber dabei, jeg havde ikke mine forældre med, jeg var alene indlagt som 5-årig og så, så fik jeg at vide jeg skulle hjem til min mor og far efter en uge, men det skulle jeg så bare ikke, da mor kom og hentede mig: Jeg skulle lige være der en uge længere. Det

J.1, *Chapter 4 & 6 (cropped in ch. 6)*

ville man aldrig gøre i dag, vel?
Carolina: Nej.
Jette: Men, og derfor, så kan jeg huske, og det gik min far jo op i, det der med at tisse i sengen og så kan jeg huske faktisk rigtig meget, at han tog mig op der om natten når han kom hjem der ved et-tiden så tog han mig op at sidde og tisse på toilettet og samtidig, kender i det der 'god negl'?
Mikka: Ja.
Carolina: Ja.
Jette: Det gav han mig på, øh, og jeg kan huske denne der kolde fornemmelse, ikk'. Og med det vil jeg bare sige, at, at han *havde* jo en masse omsorg, men han havde jo ikke uanede kræfter, han arbejdede og arbejdede så meget, ikk' også, men han havde den omsorg, han havde far-omsorg, altså han havde forældreomsorgen, ikk', og jeg husker aldrig nogensinde at min mor har rørt ved mig og kærtegnet mig eller noget. Og det kan jeg huske, for jeg har jo gået til, jeg gik til psykolog da jeg var helt ung og jeg har jo mødt psykologer gennem min tid med behandling og der kan jeg huske at da jeg snakkede med en psykolog på et tidspunkt og hun, hun sagde at det var meget interessant at det var min far jeg lagde mig ind til om natten - når jeg skulle putte. Og det kan jeg egentlig også godt se i dag, at det er det jo, men det var det jo ikke dengang og det er det jo sådan set stadig heller ikke når jeg taler om det, så tænker jeg, det er jo logisk at jeg ligger hos min far, fordi jeg vil, altså, så… men hun har aldrig… hun gør det heller ikke i dag. Altså, man får et kram, ikk', men det ligger ikke til hende, at ae og kramme, det gør det ikke.

00:16:00
Carolina: Jeg tænker på, det her du siger med din jyske familie/
Jette: /Ja/
Carolina: /at have fået meget med fra dem. Jeg tænker, er der sådan, øh... vil det give mening at, sådan, spørge, er der et tidspunkt hvor du begyndte at blive bevidst om at have fået noget med derfra, eller at der var noget du *ville* have med? Eller er det noget du har indset efter du har fået børn?
Jette: Noget jeg lige kommer i tanke om, det er at hende Dorte her, som vi var hos, det var jo, at når så alle andre var gået i seng og Dorte hun var sådan en der ravede rundt om natten, hun havde så meget hun skulle lave - de boede på en gård, ikk' også - så kunne jeg blive oppe og så kunne Dorte og jeg - så kunne hun snakke med mig. Øhm, så, så man kan sige - og det nød jeg jo, for så havde Dorte tid til at snakke med mig, ikk' også. Jamen jeg tror, om jeg har været b.. jamen man kan jo sige… om jeg egentlig har været bevidst om det på det tidspunkt - nej! Øhm…. Det er mere en følelse jeg nok har haft inde i hjertet og jeg tror faktisk at man skal.. jeg har i hvert fald nok skulle rimelig meget op i årene før jeg har kunnet sat pris på det og tænke… Jeg tror, der hvor det mere kommer til udtryk det er i forhold til mine nevøer og niecer og selvfølgelig i aller højeste grad i forhold til mine egne unger, at jeg tænker "hold da op, hvor betød det meget" - og så er det noget *jeg* giver videre. Og det i høj grad i forhold til mine niecer, vil jeg sige.. Jeg har to hold niecer og en nevø, som er skilsmissebørn, som kæmper med nogle ting, uden tvivl, hvor der er nogle konflikter omkring mine brødre og deres koner, hvor, hvor de så kommer ud og besøger mig, hvor jeg måske efterhånden har sådan en faster Dorte - jeg er så bare faster Jette, ikke også - hvor jeg tror at *min* faster Dorte, hun har stået og tænkt – det var jo hendes bror der jo var gift med hende alkoholikeren – hun har da stået og tænkt: "(sukker), det er flo.." altså hun har jo stået og tænkt: "hvor er jeg ked af det, på min brors vegne, at han ikk' har fået en anden kone, der kunne støtte hende". Og så sidder hun med sin, øh, niece, dér, der er ulykkelig, ikk'? Og det går først op for mig *lige* nu, når hvor vi snakker faktisk. Fordi jeg står i en situation nu, hvor min ældste storebrors børn har nogle konflikter kørende med hans nye kæreste. Og jeg tænkte bare, da de var gået, børnene, så tænkte jeg bare: "ej, hvor gør det ondt, fordi..." Ja, nå...
Mikka: Det må du gerne… Du må gerne..
Jette: Nå men, det, det er bare fordi at, så kommer ungerne og fortæller at nu er Jon begyndt at trappe ned og være mere hos mor fordi at denne her nye kæreste min storebror har mødt som jeg synes er skide sød hun har fået sagt

J.2, *Chapter 4*

nogle ting hvor Jon er blevet ked af det og så vil han he.. altså, hvor jeg bare har det sådan, ej hvor bliver jeg ked af det og hvor jeg bare håber at Bjørn ikke mister sin kæreste og kan de nu få det hele til at fungere og hvor er jeg ked af at ungerne bliver, altså, men jeg tager rollen stadigvæk og lytter og, og er så upartisk som jeg overhovedet kan være ikk' også og så tænker jeg, sådan har Dorte og så stået i tidernes morgen og siddet og lyttet til mig, ikk'.
Mikka: Har du stadig kontakt med Dorte?
Jette: Ja det er jo det sjove, det har jeg jo så hvert andet år hvor vi mødes alle sammen, vi finder sådan nogle steder vi lejer og så mødes hele familien og alle os fætre og kusiner og vi er en hel masse, vi er en hel perkerfamilie når vi mødes, vi er så mange, ikk' (…).

00:37:40
Mikka: Jeg kunne have et spørgsmål.
Carolina: Hm?
Jette: Hm?
Mikka: Nu nævnte du før, i starten at der har været nogle indrømmelse, øhm, blandt andet det med din far, at det er gået op for ham at, at han måske arbejdede lidt får hårdt for det hus. Øhm, kan du fortælle lidt om omstændighederne omkring de her indrømmelser, er det noget som bare sådan er kommet op naturligt i samtaler, eller, eller er det noget nogen har opsøgt?
Jette: Nå altså, om det er komme fra ham selv eller om jeg ligesom skulle have presset det ud af ham nærmest?
Mikka: Ja.
Jette: Nej, det er noget som er kommet som, øh, det var noget, altså nogle af de senere år han levede så havde vi nogle rigtig hyggelige stunder hvor han gik hjemme til sidst og så kom jeg ned og besøgte ham og fik noget kaffe. Og så var det nogle refleksioner han gjorde sig. Og så kan man sige, så en del af hans refleksioner var jo i forhold også til mit liv fordi at jeg på det tidspunkt øh, netop var frustreret og ked af at vores liv ligesom ikke pegede i retning af det der skide hus, vel. Og så var hans refleksioner jo, og det var det tætteste vi kom på en indrømmelse, men det var den der refleksion over, fordi de ti år hvor de kørte deres egen forretning, de var ikke gode og de ved godt, og så fordi, det er jo også fordi at jeg har fået denne her sygdom, og på det tidspunkt vidste man ikke helt hvad den gik ud på og både min far og min mor har haft meget skyldfølelse over at jeg skulle have denne her sygdom. Så det var også det det bundede i. Og jeg tror også at de sammen har snakket meget om, jamen det var jo også de ti år, der gjorde det. For engang, det var jo i '94 jeg blev indlagt første gang, der kørte man lidt på at det var nok fordi man havde siddet skævt på potte - så blev man psykisk syg. Så, så det handlede det også om. Man snakkede slet ikke om psykisk sygdom på den måde. Øhm, så de indrømmelser var nogle refleksioner, der gik mange veje. Men de handlede også om at, at, ja. Så de havde flere facetter.
Mikka: Og du nævnte også din mor, i den forbindelse, med indrømmelser...
Jette: Ja, hun havde, har sagt til mig – ja, det har hun sagt flere gange, hun vender også tilbage til det – men hun har flere gange sagt til mig, at, øh, hun har beklaget – fordi hun startede med at arbejde sammen med min far da jeg var – jeg har været omkring to år. Og der har hun sagt til mig, at hendes dilemma var, at hun havde gået hjemme med mine brødre i mange år, og hun ville gerne ud og arbejde, og det ku' bare være så spændende og interessant. Men hun ku' også se, at hun svigtede mig. Øh... ja? Og så siger jeg jo så til hende: "hvad, kunne du så have overvejet at lade være med at sæt... altså...". Fordi, den anden historie går så på at hun ville så gerne ha' en efternøler, og *ville* så gerne ha' en pige .
Carolina: Hm.
Jette: Ja. Men, øh, men det er fair nok. Det smerter jo måske hende mere i dag end det smerter mig. Fordi jeg ved jo også hvad det vil sige at være mor. Og hvis jeg skulle leve med at bære den smerte i mit hjerte, at jeg havde valgt at gå ud og arbejde i stedet for – altså, forstår I? Ja..
Mikka: Ja...
Jette: Så.. men det – der er noget andet jeg ville sige, som jeg faktisk synes

er vigtigt. Fordi at jeg har tænkt over det her, det er jo: jeg har *aldrig ikke* følt mig elsket.
Carolina: Hm?
Jette: Jeg har altid følt mig elsket.
Carolina: Ja.
Jette: Altså grundlæggende. Men man kan så sige, hvordan den kærlighed er, er, altså.. men, men det er jo ikk' sådan at jeg har fået at vide at jeg var en møgunge, der skulle bare ha' tæsk og sådan noget. Men, men, der, der, altså, der er noget med prioriteringerne derhjemme, og der var fravær, og der var. Der, der er *noget* der bare ikk'... altså.. for det har jeg tænkt over også er én af overlevelsesteknikkerne. Jeg tror ikke det er godt hvis man vokser op og forældrene bare drikker og siger at man er en møgunge, og man er... jeg tror, jeg tror det er dér hvor skaden sker, det jeg har tænkt over at der hvor skaden sker, det er altså når forældrene er fucked op rent følelsesmæssigt. Altså, på nogle måder, så de ligesom fastholder børnene i... altså dér, hvor, øh... sad, så I det dér XL generation med tykke børn i går?
Mikka: Nej.
Carolina: Nej.
Jette: Nej, det var faktisk – nu var det bare tilfældigt – men der ku' man så høre nogle forældre sidde til samtaler, og det var sådan typisk.. der sad barnet nærmest og omtalte 'mor' og 'jeg' som 'vi'. Altså, hun sad og talte i 'vi' form, ikk'? Forstår I hvor jeg vil hen?
Mikka: Ja.
Jette: Altså, hvis der – hvis følelsesmæssige bånd er såeh.. og så er der vold og alt muligt indover .
(…)
Mikka: og, og mener du at, øhm, din mor har gjort det, eller/
Jette: /ja, men det *har* hun jo, på nogen punkter har hun jo, altså, hun *har* jo nogle fastlåste definitioner, altså, men det er jo ikk' noget hun helt har kunne fastholde *mig* i, i hvert fald. Men altså, så kan man få sådan nogle klare definitioner af, hvem man er, ikk'? Men det har jeg da mere sådan sagt (sukker)... men alligevel... og, altså... hun ka' jo ikk' beskrive hvem jeg er. Det ka' hun ikk'.
Mikka: nej?
Jette: Dét ka' hun ikk'.
Mikka: Hvorfor tror du ikk' hun ka' det?
Jette: (sukker) det ved jeg sgu ikk'. Jeg sidder og tænker på hendes egen opvækst. … Jamen jeg sidder også og bliver i tvivl – kan jeg beskrive min søn? Pas...
Carolina: Tror du din mor ville kunne genkende den måde du, du beskriver… hvordan tingene foregik - derhjemme, da du var barn?
Jette: … Ja... altså… Nu er hun og jeg som dag og nat, ikk' også, men øh, altså der er rigtigt mange år af hendes liv og vores liv sammen, hvor hun har nedgjort mig og sagt, at, øh "jaja, så slemt var det jo nok ikk', vel?" - som forsvarsmekanisme
Carolina: ja
Jette: Så mit svar vil umiddelbart være, at det vil jeg sådan set skide på – om hun kunne genkende det. Det vil nok være mit umiddelbare svar. Det ved jeg ikk' om hun kunne.
Mikka: når du siger...
Jette: hun ville ha' en anden udlægning af det, nok
Mikka: når du siger, at hun, hun bare har sagt: "så slemt er det jo ikke". Er det, er det fordi hun sådan, har du snakket med hende om det eller har du.
Jette: Jamen det har jeg jo gjort da jeg var yngre.
Mikka: ja, du du har, så hun, så du har oplevet at der ligesom var forskellige/
Jette: /jamen jeg har oplevet, åh gud afsindig meget sådan, "ja, ja", altså nedladende sådan meget "det kan vi snakke om når du bliver ældre" eller, ja, ja, men det er jo sådan typisk alkoholiker agtigt, ja.
Carolina: okay
Jette: Så det holder man op med på et tidspunkt.
Carolina: Konfrontationer...
Jette: Men jeg er jo også blevet voksen på et eller andet sted, så vælger man jo når man bliver mere moden at sige, okay... Fordi jeg har jo også lagt det

J.7, *Chapter 7*

bag mig, altså på mange punkter, ikk', altså det var jo det, kan man sige.
Mikka: Nu har du, jeg tænker, hm. Nu har du, nu har du nogle gange sådan strejfet din mors barndom. føler du at du har et billede at hendes barndom? **J.3**, *Chapter 5*
Jette: Ja..
Mikka: hvordan er dét?
Jette: Åh, jeg synes jo, det ser jo scary ud. Uhyggeligt... Rigtigt uhyggeligt. Der var *rigtigt* meget druk, altså, *virkelig* meget druk. Ja, jeg bliver helt bange, altså. Jamen jeg kan bare ikk', øh… Det er ikke lang tid siden, hun nævnte det. De drak, begge to, altså – hun var, hun var *rigtig* forsømt, ikk'? Og de har jo været fem børn, og.. altså skulle i kulkælderen og, og så fik hun tæsk oppe i skolen og så fik hun tæsk hos skoletandlægen, og... og de havde ikke penge, og hendes mor var – behandlede hende rigtig grimt og... jamen altså, øhm, hun mødte jo min far da hun var femten år, og min far var fem og tyve, ikk'? Altså, hun stak jo af fra sit hjem på den måde. Men altså, det var jo... det var jo bare druk, som jeg ser det. Altså hun har fortalt sådan nogle episoder, hvor hun kom hjem til … hos sin bedstefar. Men det var druk. Og så gik de. De der, øh – jeg har aldrig mødt, hvad bliver det, min morfar. Dem har jeg aldrig mødt. Og min mormor, det var bare sådan én eller anden tosset dame, som drak, og så døde hun. Altså, der var heller ikke nogen kontakt. Og så, så... de boede i en eller anden lejlighed ovre i Esbjerg. Så fik hun nogle penge en gang i mellem til et eller andet slik og sådan noget, kunne hun fortælle. Men de gik bare på druk, og så var de alene, de der børn, og så skulle hun passe på sin lillesøster. Hendes lillesøster var produktet af mormors utroskab, fordi de hed alle sammen noget med K og så kom Lene. (griner)
Mikka: (griner) Nå?
Carolina: (griner)
Jette: Ja, det er helt åndsvagt. Nå ja, men det var druk på druk og der var ikke noget omsorg overhovedet. Og såeh, blev min mor – så skulle hun forloves med min far. Jeg ved sgu ikk' hvor gammel hun har været, sytten eller atten år. Så dør hendes far – bum. Øhm, og så har hun bare, igennem det meste af sit voksenliv haft nogle rigtigt voldsomme oplevelser. Altså, hør en anden histore – de er ude til én eller anden fest da hun er tre-fire og tyve år gammel. Hun går ud for at tage sig noget frisk luft, så bliver hun overfaldet … af en mand, der er pakket ind i bandager her henover. Og han vil voldtage hende, og hun skriger og hun skriger og hun skriger. Og så, åbenbart, løber den her mand – og så kommer hun tilbage, eller der er nogen der henter hende ind til festen, og hun fortæller og hun skriger og hun skriger og hun skriger bare, ikke også? Og bliver lagt ind i et eller andet rum. Og det er sådan set dét, ikk'? Det ville vi jo aldrig gøre i dag, der ville vi jo .. sørge for noget hjælp, ikke også? Men dét her, det – igen, dét bliver bare, sådan, altså...øøhm... Og så har hun bare, sådan, lidt jævnt og stød af angst, det meste af sit liv ikke, også? Det er jo derfor hun drikker. Og i dag har hun sådan problemer, hun kan ikke rigtig synke og sådan, angst og sådan noget.
Carolina: Okay... og de her historier, er det noget, er det noget du altid har haft en viden om, eller...?
Jette: Ja altså, historierne er blevet fortalt rigtig meget i vores hjem, **der var ikke rigtig noget filter** på de der historier.. *Quote, Chapter 5*
Carolina: Det var der ikke?
Jette: Nej, nej, altså, hun var meget sådan, ja... Ja.
Mikka: Hvordan, hvordan, kan du huske hvordan det var som barn for dig at høre?
Jette: Nej, fordi jeg har ikke prøvet andet
Mikka: Nej.
Jette: Det må jeg sige. Nej fordi jeg har ikke prøvet andet så jeg kan ikke huske egentlig hvordan det var. Jeg tror, hvis jeg kigger tilbage så vil jeg tænke at det var da ikke særligt smart. **Og jeg synes det kunne have været smart hvis det ligesom var noget der hed "voksenhistorier" og "børnehistorier"**. *Quote, Chapter 5*
Carolina: Okay...

00:53:00

Mikka: Jeg tænkte på, du nævnte ganske kort, at din mor for kort tid siden… hvad var det for en begivenhed? **J.4**, *Chapter 5*

Jette: jamen jeg tror det var der hun fortalte om sin barndom, var det ikke?

Mikka: fordi du bragte op, jeg tror du sagde, at nå…. der er for kort tid siden, så har vi faktisk snakket om det, eller?

Jette: det var at hun fortalte om sin barndom for kort tid siden, der var det her hun nævnte, fordi hun nævnte at der overhovedet ikke havde været en tandbørste i hele hendes opvækst og hun spiste sukker. Og vi kom til at snakke om det fordi jeg havde været til tandlæge og havde fået lavet en tand herinde og så kom vi til at snakke om det og så fortalte hun mig om sådan noget med at få lidt penge til noget slik når de havde været ude og drikke og sådan noget. Øhm, og når hun taler om det, jeg ser bare sådan et sort hul for mig. Men også fordi når jeg tænker på vores barndom, vi, altså jeg fik aldrig at vide vi ikke havde penge og det havde vi nok, altså, vi havde jo penge, og vi havde det her store fede hus. Vi havde fede rammer og det var for øvrigt også noget der slår mig, det er jo, jeg er jo vokset op i skoven nærmest. Vi boede lige ved skov og strand og sådan noget. Og det er noget jeg kan huske, at, jeg legede afsindig meget i skoven, altså, og jeg kan mærke det nu når vi er ude at gå i skoven, det er ikke så tit, det burde være oftere, men jeg har virkelig leget meget i skoven sammen med de venner og veninder jeg nu havde. Og vi havde jo også, nede i haven, der havde vi sådan en naturgrund bag ved, man kunne gå igennem sådan et hegn. Vi havde nogle rigtig lækre rammer, øhm, og det havde hun da ikke, må man sige. ...Men altså jeg bliver nødt til lige at sige, det der med den sociale arv, det slog mig faktisk lige. Det var faktisk noget, der var utroligt vigtigt for mig da jeg var yngre. Der læste jeg om det der med den sociale arv, og det fik jeg tænkt over. Og der vil jeg faktisk sige, at noget af det, der har været rigtig vigtigt for mig, det var jo – og jeg ved, at min mormor, og min mormors mor og min mor, der er ufaglærte hele vejen, derigennem (?). Og det har faktisk været min allerstørste bevæggrund for at få en uddannelse. **J.5,** *Chapter 5*

Carolina: okay

Jette: og der kommer det der begreb, social arv jo ind/

Carolina: ja

Jette: … fordi jeg har tænkt meget over, for jeg har faktisk været tolv år undervejs med min HF og mine fødsler, øh, og min sygdom. Så har jeg så fået en revalidering, og fået lov til at tage min bibliotekaruddannelse. Så fik jeg så et år forlænget, fordi min far døde og der var simpelthen – jeg tror vi havde... otte eller ni eksamener på første år i bibliotekaruddannelsen, ikke også? Men … min drivkraft har ikke været den der med at jeg skal nødvendigvis vise mine børn jeg havde en uddannelse, det var faktisk meget det der med at stoppe det der mønster.

Carolina: Okay?

Jette: Men den fylder ikke så meget inde i mig, som den har gjort tidligere.

Carolina: nej

Jette: men det gjorde den tidligere, det var faktisk meget pudsigt, der var den stærkere inde i mig, det er meget…

Mikka: Hvordan kommer den ellers til udtryk?

Jette: Jamen den kommer *utroligt* meget til udtryk i forhold til mine børn, vil jeg sige, *utroligt* meget, det er så *afsindig* vigtigt for mig at prøve at stoppe det her cirkus, altså, øhm, altså. Hvis, hvis jeg kunne få den glæde og, og det er også så mærkeligt, når jeg så prøver et sætte ord på, så går det også op for en, jamen der er jo ligesom ikke noget cirkus at stoppe på den måde. Vi kan jo ikke strømline deres liv og så ligesom tro at så er vi status quo og så kan de få de der børn og så ender det, vel… men altså, jeg tror det er det der med, sådan tror jeg, og sådan ser jeg det. Jeg tror og håber at hvis nu vi på en eller anden måde kan gøre vores bedste til at de ikke, hvad skal vi sige, så lad os sige flytter hjemmefra med *alt* for meget følelsesmæssigt møg de skal frigøre sig fra. Så de kan være nogenlunde frigjorte og kan gå i gang med det de har det godt med og kan, kan, bygge derfra, ikk' også. Hvis nu de kan være fri for at skulle, ja, det er det jeg tænker, ikke. Men jeg ved ikke hvorfor, det har fyldt meget mere tidligere i mit liv at det var vigtigt, men jeg ved ikke om, om, det er måske fordi de er blevet så store at man føler måske

man er ved at nærme sig.. komme over den værste… at man tænker, det skal nok gå, det skal nok gå…
Carolina: Ja... Men det har været en stærk motivation for dig, i forhold til/
Jette: /Det har det, ja/
Carolina: /at få gjort nogen, nogen bestemte ting/
Jette: /Ja... Men det fylder ikke overhovedet nær så meget. Nu er det mere for mit eget, øh, vedkommende, at øh, at det er vigtigt at stå med, med uddannelseskortet, ikk'? Og det *er* jo også vigtigt. Når man sidder og snakker, den ældste er startet på, på gymnasiet, at det ville jo virke lidt hult og sidde som ufaglært og sige "ej, jeg synes simpelthen det er vigtigt du... tager din gymnasie og tager det altså, det – der er jo ikk' den samme kraft i det, der er der jo alt andet lige ikke, det er der jo ikke. Men, øh, på den anden side er det jo heller ikke givet at fordi du tager en uddannelse så får du et lykkeligt liv, altså. Det er det... og chancen er jo større ikk', altså.
Mikka: Jeg tænkte på, er det noget som du har snakket med Peter [mand] om...
Jette: Tænker du på øh...
Mikka: På det her med sådan at, at, bryde noget...
Jette: Nej. Ikke med at bryde noget som sådan. Øhm... Ej. Nej.
Carolina: Og, når du siger at det tidligere har fyldt rigtigt meget for dig, var det før du fik børn, eller da du var yngre? Eller kan det overhovedet sådan placeres på den måde? … For du sagde egentlig også da du kom, at det er noget du tidligere har tænkt over men har givet slip på, ik?
Jette: …Jamen jeg tror at, øhm, jeg tror at det har plantet sig, det er kommet lidt fra, fra, måske er ideen kommet lidt fra før jeg fik børn og alligevel så kan jeg godt blive lidt i tivl, men den har sådan, den har været der sådan fra før jeg fik børn og så er den sådan aftaget måske sådan… den er sådan aftaget her indenfor de sidste…fire-fem år, tror jeg.
Carolina: Okay.
Jette: Ja, det tror jeg, ja, sådan tror jeg det er…. Og jeg kan ikke forklare hvorfor, egentlig.
Carolina: Nej, nej, så det har været sådan, måske en lidt naturlig proces.
Jette: Jamen jeg ved ikke om det er fordi uddannelsen er afsluttet egentlig, når jeg sidder og tænker mig om, kan det være. Det kan jo godt være det er derfor? At uddannelsen er afsluttet og så er det ligesom om at så kan man sige at så, så er det væsentlige kort i land. Øhm, altså så må vi bare afvente og se hvordan ungerne - afkommet - arter sig, ikk'.
Alle: (Griner/klukker)

1:26:00
Jette: Men jeg synes jo også det er vigtigt, altså man møder jo også mennesker i teenageårene, ikke mindst, der er også en klasselærer, jeg har jo også haft en øh, jeg har altså også haft en privat praktiserende psykiater, som også har betydet rigtig meget for mig, øh, igennem nogle år fordi det, det er jo… den sociale arv… hvornår definerer man den sociale arv? Er den sådan meget afbilledet der altså, eller er det mig, der roder rundt i begreberne?
Carolina: Hvad tænker du på?
Jette: Jeg tænker på, det der med, det der med at man møder mennesker undervejs, som man "spiser fra", om jeg så må sige… Øhm, så kan man sige, når man så får børn, så skal man give videre, ikk', og så har man undervejs mødt mennesker - men det gør man jo hele vejen igennem…
Mikka: Men det er meget interessant! Du må gerne forfølge den tanke!
Jette: Fordi… hele processen med at man undervejs møder mennesker, der betyder rigtig meget i denne her proces for, hvad skal vi sige… vi har… det der med at vi et eller andet sted ikke bliver mødt i behovet hos moren, så, øh, er vi ude i vores gang hvor vi, øhm, hvor vi møder andre, nok primært måske voksne, eller nogle der er ældre, altså **rollemodeller**, i et eller andet omfang, ikke. Og det er bare det jeg tænker at, at, øh, at nogle møder vi i vores barndom, og så møder vi nogle i vores skoletid og så møder vi nogle i vores ungdom og så møder vi nogle i vores tidlige voksenliv og sådan noget.. der var sådan, jeg har mødt en psykiater på et tidspunkt, som jeg kom hos, fra jeg var de der 24 til - han var med inde over mens jeg blev skilt og sådan

Quote, Chapter 6

noget - jeg kom hos ham i tre-fire år. Han var en enormt flippet psykiater og sådan noget, men han betød utroligt meget for mig, også i mit senere liv her - jeg er meget rebelsk i forhold til psykiatrien og sådan noget der - men han var enormt god til sådan at hive i land i forhold til deres diagnose (……)
men min pointe var jo bare, at det der med den sociale arv, hvor starter og stopper det henne, ikke?
Carolina: Nu talte du, nu siger du det ligesom en… En ret lang proces..
Jette. Jo, for jeg bliver i tvivl!

1:32:29
Mikka: Du talte om de her mennesker man kan "spise fra". I løbet af sit liv/
Jette: /Nåh, ja/
Mikka: /Det var virkelig smukt sagt synes jeg – når man vokser op. Hva', hva' øhm... Af de mennesker, som *du* har mødt, som, k, har kunnet gøre det for dig.
Jette: Ja.
Mikka: Hvad har gjort at de var en rollemodel – altså hvad er en rollemodel?
Jette: Jeg tror, altså, en rollemodel... Jamen jeg tror det allervæsentligste det er de der mennesker, der hvor du kan spejle dig. Det er der hvor du kan, ligesom pudse, og så, at du kan se, her, at der kan du se, et eller andet se noget af dig selv, eller hvor du f... altså, ja hvor er det du kan spise noget henne, hvor er det du kan, kan opnå den genkendelighed. Det er jo, der er det at der skal være en eller anden form for kemi. Men der skal også være sat nogle roller ikke også? Der skal være sat en eller anden form for... øh... Altså du kan jo godt komme til en psykiater, lad os nu bare tage den, det kan også være psykologen, ikke også. For du kan jo godt komme hos en psykolog og så er det jo ikke til stede, det er jo ikke altid til stede, vel? Fordi hvis ikke kemien er der eller, situationen er der. Men jeg sidder og tænker at, at øhm, hvad er det der gør, at man kan, at, at det her er tilstede. Hvordan opstår den kemi. Jamen det gør den jo, jo men det handler jo om at, at den du kommer hos giver noget af sig selv. Fordi hvis vedkommende bare sidder og, og... Nu bliver jeg sgu i tvivl.
Mikka: Du nævnte, måske kan vi tænke på nogle af de konkrete der har været, mellem, mellem, før du nævnte psykiateren. Så nævnte du en skolelærer?
Jette: ja, lige præcis. Hun gav noget af sig selv, som jeg aldrig har glemt faktisk.
Mikka: hm?
Jette: hun hed Sif
Mikka: Sif?
Jette: Sif, ja. Hun øhm, i ottende eller niende klasse så øhm, så satte hun fokus på at jeg faktisk ikke trivedes så godt og så øhm, havde hun mig ovre i nogle timer - i et eller andet - og vi sad og snakkede eller hvad det var, og så siger hun, så siger jeg et eller andet… Jeg tror jeg har sagt jeg savnede min far, men han skal jo arbejde, sagde jeg. Og så siger hun "jamen, det behøves han jo ikke så meget", eller sådan noget. Og så siger jeg "jamen det skal han jo fordi han har jo forretningen og vi har jo huset", og sådan noget. Og så siger hun "jamen det behøves han jo ikke" og så siger hun til mig samtidig, så siger hun, "jeg er jo lige blevet skilt fra min mand fordi han vil jo også kun arbejde hele tiden", sådan noget i den dur. Men jeg glemmer det aldrig, fordi det var jo pisse ærligt af hende at sidde og sige sådan noget til en pige i ottende eller niende klasse. Jeg har aldrig glemt det. Men det var jo også overvældende, for hun tog jo hele fundamentet, hun sagde "det er ikke nødvendigt din far han arbejder, det er bare en virkelighed han stiller op og siger, sådan skal det være"!
Mikka: Så hvad var det hun gjorde i det øjeblik?
Jette: Hun var hamrende ærlig og så et eller andet sted, så det var da, det var engagement, kan man sige. Kan man ikke sige det?
Carolina: Jo, jeg tænker også sådan - en tillidserklæring.
Jette: Hm.
Mikka: Hm.

J.6, *Chapter 6*

Jette: Det er da vedkommende. Hun kunne også bare sige ”jamen det er da synd for dig at din far arbejder, det er da ærgerligt altså”, jeg synes det er enormt - at gå ind med, og sige, ”ej, det er sgu ikke okay”, eller hvad?
Mikka: Kan du huske dengang, hvad du, hvad der skete, hvad det satte i gang hos dig?
Jette: Jamen på det tidspunkt har jeg vel tænkt, uha, altså, det var da ikke rart at få taget den fra mig.
Mikka: Nej.
Carolina: Okay.
Jette: Men jeg har jo aldrig glemt det igen.. så et eller andet sted synes jeg da det var en genial kommentar.
Mikka: Det er da pudsigt at, at det så, at du så husker den samtale med din far også, hvor han siger, ”måske…”
Jette: Ja.
Mikka: ”… måske behøvede jeg ikke at have gjort, at have arbejdet så meget”
Jette: Ja, det er rigtigt, det er rigtigt. Ja. Jamen øhm. Ja.

Interview med Ea / 12. December 2012

00:01:15
Carolina: Måske kan du sådan, fortælle lidt om din barndom eller hvad det vil sige at være fra den familie du kommer fra?
Ea: Nu kommer jeg fra en meget **dysfunktionel familie** *Quote, Chapter 5*
Carolina: Ja.
Ea: Så, især på min mors side – ja, jeg kan kun tale på min mors side, jeg ved ikke hvem min far er.
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Men det har i hvert fald været en familie som har haft det hårdt i rigtigt mange generationer. Altså, det jeg ved af, det er i hvert fald min oldemor har haft det hårdt, ja, med tæsk og fattigdom og min mormor har også, og så min mor og selvfølgelig os. Så det har været noget der har været der altid.
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Øhm, jaeh, så sådan, det var det – sådan var det jo bare.
Carolina: Ja, okay, så du siger gennem flere generationer.

00:03:40
Mikka: Og, hvor boede i - og flyttede i/
Ea: Vi boede hovedsageligt i Korsør og omegn, vi flyttede rigtig meget rundt. Man kan se, af sådan nogle optegnelser af hvor vi har boet henne, der kan jeg se at jeg har boet, hvad var det, femten steder de første ti år af mit liv. Og det er bare dem der er registrerede, så er der jo alle de andre hvor man bare flytter rundt, hvis hun nu blev sur på en kæreste og...
Mikka: Okay.
Ea: Boede hun hos nogle veninder, og hendes forældre og, ja, såeh… vi har ikke boet fast i længere tid af gangen.
Carolina: Okay.
Mikka: Nej.
Carolina: Og når du siger det er regist, at du har set optegnelser/
Ea: Ja altså jeg har set sådan nogle optegnelser af ved min storesøster hvor, jeg ved ikke hvor de har det fra, men, med hendes Cpr.nr. kan vi se hvor hun har været registreret.
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Alle de adresser.
Carolina: Ja, okay.
Mikka: Og har, skulle du så også skifte skole eller har/
Ea: Nej, det var før jeg kom i skole jeg flyttede rigtig meget rundt.
Mikka: Okay.
Ea: Men æh, hvor mange folkeskoler har jeg gået på? (tænker i ca. 10 sekunder) Fem folkeskoler har jeg gået på
Mikka: Ja, hvordan var det? Altså med al den flytning og al/ **E.4**, Chapter 6
Ea: /jamen altså, jeg tror egentlig bare at det var sådan et grundvilkår, at sådan var det bare.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: Jeg tror ikke vi tænkte så meget over det.
Mikka: Nej
Ea: Men selvfølgelig er det stressende og kaotisk og utrygt.
Mikka: Ja
Ea: Det…det er klart…
Carolina: Øhm, var der sådan, var der andre vigtige personer i din barndom? Altså/
Ea: /altså der boede, altså i Korsør der boede min mormor, og så min moster.
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Og nogle gange hjalp de til og nogle gange gjorde de ikk' det, det afhang lidt af om de var gode venner eller uvenner.
Carolina: Hm
Ea: Det... det kunne skifte meget hurtigt.
Carolina: Okay
Ea: Så, men når de var gode venner, så var vi sammen.
Carolina: Ja.

Mikka: Hov, undskyld var du i gang med at sige noget?
Ea: Nej, ikk', jeg tror ikk', i sådan i min tidlige barndom har der ikke rigtigt været andre.
Mikka: Nej
Ea: … stabile
Carolina: Okay... og har der sådan været senere? Når du siger, ikke i din tidlige barndom/
Ea: /jamen, jeg boede sammen med min mor til jeg blev... øh... jeg kom på børnehjem da jeg var ni, var det ikke ni? Det tror jeg nok. Hvor jeg så boede i to år. I knap to år, og så bagefter kom vi i plejefamilie. Så derfra er det så lidt mere... stabilitet og sådan noget, personer omkring mig.
Mikka: Hvad skete der med dine søstre da du kom på børnehjem?
Ea: Vi kom alle sammen samme sted. Både på børnehjem og i plejefamilie.
Mikka: Okay.
Ea: Så vi fulgtes ad.
Mikka: Hele vejen?
Ea: Ja.
Mikka: Og I har kunnet være ved en plejefamilie? Eller?
Ea: Ja.
Mikka: Okay, det er meget heldigt (griner).
Ea: Ja.
Mikka: Okay.
Carolina: Jeg tænkte, du nævnte sådan, jeg tror du sagde, sådan, fattigdom og tæsk, sådan som to ord der sådan lidt karakteriserede... er det sådan hvad der ville... Hvis vi sådan skulle få et billede af... af hvad der sådan prægede …
Ea: Ja, altså i hvert fald fattigdom. Lige… altså min mor har ikke sådan... tæsket os.
Carolina: Nej.
Ea: Så det har jeg ikke oplevet. Men altså... fattigdom og, og druk. Hun drak.
Carolina: Hm.
Ea: Det var ligesom det, der, sådan, et **stort fravær**, af min mor, som ikke var hjemme. *Quote, Chapter 5*
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Så vi måtte klare os selv.
Carolina: Fra små?
Ea: Ja, ja.
Carolina: Okay... så fravær ville være sådan.
Ea: Ja, ja helt sikkert. Forladthed og, og fravær.
Carolina: Ja.

00:08:00
Ea: Jeg besøger nogle gange min mormor i Korsør med mine børn. Fordi jeg vil godt ha' de ved hvem hun er.
Carolina: Ja
Ea: Men det er sådan lidt ambivalent, ikk'? Fordi, altså, jeg ved godt at hun er hovedårsagen til at min mor havde det skidt, øhm, så det er jo lidt svært at skulle være sammen med hende. Men altså... Men på den anden side så har hun jo – altså – det var jo bare normen og som det *var*. Så hun har jo ikk' gjort andet end hvad hun bare selv har oplevet, altså. Så det er sådan lidt dobbelt, og jeg har det lidt svært med det. Øhm, og min moster... det er sgu også lidt svært. Hun er altid sådan – hun har aldrig lagt skjul på at hun godt ville ha haft mig – også da vi boede hjemme – men at min mor ikke ville ha det. Men hun har ikk' været så god til, da vi sådan voksede op i plejefamilien og efterfølgende, altså, til at tage kontakt og være en del af mit liv. Det har altid været mig der skulle skrive, så det har jeg været træt af.
Carolina: Hm
Ea: Så, det kan godt være intentionen var der, men det var ikk' noget hun viste. Men vi har fået lidt mere kontakt nu på det sidste, efter jeg er begyndt at fortælle om mit liv.
Mikka: Hvordan har det, påvirket jeres relation?

Ea: Jamen i positiv retning, hun synes det er rigtigt godt og vil godt bidrage med at fortælle om hvordan hun har oplevet det.
Mikka: Okay.
Ea: ...og hvordan tingene hang sammen. Så på den måde er det rigtigt godt.
Mikka: Dét kunne jeg godt tænke mig at høre mere om.
Ea: Ja, men...
Mikka: Hvordan opstod det, eller...
Ea: Jamen, det er ikke så lang tid siden. Øhm, jeg tror – jeg skrev et oplæg i Politiken, øh, i maj, 22. maj blev det bragt. Om Lisbeth [Zornig Andersen]. Det var lige da hun blev kritiseret af John Halse og... alt det med at hun brugte sin position som Børnerådsformand til egen vinding, og sådan.

E.5, Chapter 6

Carolina: Ja.
Ea: Og der, der skrev jeg et debatindlæg i Politiken, hvor jeg skrev at, øhm, jeg syntes hun gjorde det godt og at det var vigtigt for sådan nogle som os at have nogle forbilleder og helte som hende, og jeg skrev så hvordan jeg selv havde haft det. Øhm, og der tror jeg at det var der hun reagerede. Hun skrev til mig, at hun syntes det var flot, og at hun ikke vidste hvor hårdt det havde været og...
Carolina: Og med det indlæg, var det sådan – var det en første, øh...
Ea: Ja, det var første gang jeg sådan – altså, folk har jo godt vidst at jeg, altså det er ikke noget jeg har lagt skjul på.
Carolina: Nej.
Ea: Men det var første gang jeg, sådan, gjorde det offentligt, ikk'? At jeg sådan, sagde *hele* min historie. For eksempel er der ikk' nogen, *overhovedet* ikk' nogen, der havde vidst at jeg blev seksuelt misbrugt på børnehjemmet.
Mikka: Nej.
Ea: Men det skrev jeg så i det indlæg der. Øh, så det var lige en ekstra detalje (griner).
Carolina: Okay
Ea: Så det var sådan – jeg sprang ud der, med *hele* min historie.
Carolina: Og hvad fik dig til at tage den beslutning på det tidspunkt?
Ea: Ja, jeg ved det faktisk ikk', altså jeg sad bare og skrev det indlæg, og så tænkte jeg, jamen jeg kan jo ikk' skrive det uden lige at fortælle om hvorfor jeg skriver det, altså hvad er min baggrund for at skrive det her indlæg. Og så skulle jeg så skrive om mit liv, ikke? Og så kom det bare, jeg skrev det bare. Så må det jo være nu, åbenbart (griner). Altså ikk' engang min mand vidste det. Altså jeg har sagt liiidt om det, men altså jeg har altid sagt jeg ikk' ku huske noget. Hvis der er nogen der siger det, så passer det ikk'.
Alle: (Griner)
Carolina: Det er jo godt at vide.
Ea: Selvfølgelig kan man huske det.
Carolina: Nå, okay.
Ea: Så ja, det er jo interessant.
Carolina: Ja, okay, så det kom faktisk bag på dig, på dig selv at det blev gjort på det tidspunkt.
Ea: Ja, men jeg tænkte også da jeg læste det, da tænkte jeg, jamen okay, altså, så gør jeg det.
Mikka: Jeg tænker, nu siger du, du sådan blev nødt til at komme med din historie også for at man ville kunne forstå dit indlæg. Var det for at støtte Lisbeth Zornig eller var det også for at få den ud, ligesom selv?
Ea: Nej, hovedformålet var at støtte Lisbeth, det var det, helt sikkert. Altså der var ikke nogen sådan bagtanke med det. Det var bare sådan ren arrigskab, jeg tænkte ”fandeme nej, det skal han ikke have lov til”, nu havde jeg endelig fundet én, som turde fortælle hendes historie, ikk’ altså, så skulle han ikke komme der.
Carolina: Okay, er det så rigtigt forstået at det egentlig var noget uden for dig selv, der fik dig, der gav sådan det skub i forhold til det?
Ea: Ja, ja, ja!
Carolina: Eller ja, et eller andet formål.
Ea: Et eller andet større, ja.
Mikka: Altså nu sagde du at din moster havde reageret på at høre det, er der andre der har reageret på det?

Ea: Altså der har været sådan venner og familie og naboer og sådan, min omgangskreds.
Mikka: Hvad har du opdaget der?
Ea: Kun positivt, altså, folk har syntes det er flot og… modigt at jeg tør stå frem og fortælle og… at det er godt jeg gør det, kun positivt.
Carolina: Jeg tænkte, det du sagde med øh, men din mormor – den her ambivalens. Du sagde hun var hovedårsagen til at din mor havde det som hun havde det/
Ea: /ja/
Carolina: /jeg tænkte på, hvor har du den viden fra, eller ...
Ea: ... jamen egentlig... jeg tror det er sådan en grundlæggende følelse altså, det er fra min mor (?). Men det er også fordi de altid har haft sådan noget kærlighed-had, ikk'?
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Men så også fra min moster, der har fortalt om hvordan det var da de boede hjemme som små.
Mikka: Hm, kan du huske i hvad for nogle forbindelser det er kommet op, altså, i samtaler med din moster?
Ea: Jamen, det har mest være her, efter/
Mikka: /efterfølgende/
Ea: /hvor jeg har spurgt ind til hvordan det var, hvad hun kunne huske, og så har hun fortalt.
Mikka: ja, er det, så det er dig der har – det er ikk' så meget hende, som har gjort det af sig selv, eller...
Ea: Hm, begge dele vil jeg sige, ja.
Mikka: Har du nogen ide om hun har fået noget ud af det?
Ea: Ja det tror jeg. Jeg tror selv hun er begyndt at tænke lidt mere over det og hun har også oplevet en masse ting som hun, hun siger hun er begyndt at bearbejde lidt, og... få styr på sit liv.
Carolina: Og er det i samme sammenhæng – altså når du siger du ved det går tilbage til oldemor. Er det samme, fra de samme samtaler du har, du har den historie?
Ea: Ja. Ja, det er også derfra.
Carolina: Okay, så din mormor er den direkte kilde til det, eller?
Ea: Ja, ja hun har også sagt det. Eller hun har ikk' sagt – hun siger ikk' så meget.
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Hun taler ikk' så meget. Jeg tror egentlig heller ikk' hun har set de ting jeg sådan har – altså jeg tror ikk' hun har set det i Politiken. Og jeg var også med i et program på TV2 Fyn. Øh, jeg tror ikk' hun har set det, fordi hun er ligesom ikk' på internettet. Jeg tror ikk' hun har set det, så det er heller ikk' en naturlig snak for os.
Carolina: øhm, ja jeg tænkte sådan med øh, altså det her billede du giver sådan af din barndom og din fortid, er det noget der sådan har, har det forandret sig med tiden? På en eller anden måde?
Mikka: eller har det altid været sådan her?
Carolina: eller er der nogle ting, nogle indtryk omkring din barndom som har forandret sig?
Ea: ja, ja, altså jeg tror mit indtryk af min mor har forandret sig. Øh, jeg har jo i mange år tænkt at, altså, hvorfor, hvorfor var det sådan her, hvorfor gjorde hun ikke noget. Altså, hun kunne da havde gjort alt muligt. Men nu er jeg ligesom, jo mere jeg får at vide og finder ud af jo mere kan jeg godt se, at det kunne hun ikke, altså, hun var ligesom en del af et ondt mønster og det kan man altså ikke bare springe ud af, hvis man ikke får hjælp. Så jeg har fået mere, større forståelse og meget større accept af hende, af det hun gjorde og jeg kan bedre forstå de valg hun traf.
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Så det, det har været rigtigt godt.
Carolina: Og... nu ved jeg ikk' om det overhovedet er muligt at sådan sætte ord på, altså hvornår de her indsigter eller de her ideer, altså har det være i

forbindelse med noget der er sket i dit eget liv? Eller er det bare det at have tid til at tænke.
Ea: Ja, ja. Det er mere det der med at finde ud af detaljerne, og hvorfor flyttede vi der, og hvorfor havde hun det ikk' godt hjemme, og så, altså, baggrunden for at vores liv var som det var.
Carolina: Okay, ja, så det er kommet med mere viden.
Ea: Ja, ja det er det.
Mikka: Det med, det med sådan detaljerne, altså, det er sådan, er det bare fordi du selv er blevet voksen - eller bare og bare - er det sådan at du er blevet voksen og sådan har forstået, "ah, okay, sådan er det", eller er der andre ting, hvor du tænker, "der oplevede jeg lige pludselig at jeg forstod noget"?
Ea: Nej, det er mere det der med når jeg får fortale nogle ting, eller, men det er også noget andet, for nu har jeg selv fået børn og ved ligesom hvor hårdt det er, så det er ligesom en blanding vil jeg sige…
Mikka: Ja. Det du siger med at når du får fortalt det så, når du formulerer det… eller hvad mener du?
Ea: Hvis nu min moster for eksempel fortæller om hvordan det har været og…
Carolina: Og de her nye overvejelser, har de fået dig til at gøre et eller andet anderledes i dit liv? Spørger jeg vagt…
Alle: (Griner)
Carolina: Fordi jeg fisker ikke efter noget.
Ea: Anderledes… nej, det tror jeg faktisk ikke... atså… jeg tror måske jeg sætter mere pris på, at jeg har brudt den cirkel. Ja... og jeg ligesom ved at, det skal i hvert fald ikk' dén vej. … men ikk' sådan, ikk' sådan noget *anderledes*.
Carolina: Eller, eller ja – til at handle?
Ea: Ja, ja, altså jeg har brugt det mere til at – for at finde ud af mere. Altså, jeg vil bare vide det hele. Og...
Mikka: Okay.
Ea: og søgt aktindsigt
Mikka: Oh.
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Så nu vil jeg vide *alt.*
Alle: (Griner)
Mikka: Hvordan, kan du huske sådan, hvad, var det sådan en bestemt periode det startede i eller var der et eller andet der startede det?
Ea: Ja det hele er jo egentlig her efter det indlæg der i maj, ikk', altså det sidste halve år.
Mikka: Okay, så har du bare forsøgt at finde ud af så meget som overhovedet muligt?
Ea: Ja.
Mikka: Ej, hvor spændende, eller…
Ea: Ja (griner) det er rigtigt spændende.
Mikka: Jeg tænker, det er da sjovt, at, at det kommer sådan et punkt, hvor det lige pludselig sker!
Ea: Ja.
Mikka: Det er da interessant. Og hvad har du, så du har søgt aktindsigt.
Ea: Jeg, jeg har ikke hørt noget endnu desværre, det er heller ikke sikkert de har noget jo, det er jo så mange år siden.
Mikka: Nej, og så har du talt med din moster.
Ea: Ja.
Mikka: Hvad har du eller gjort i den/
Ea: /jamen altså jeg har fundet nogle papirer jeg havde. Da vi kom ud i plejefamilien, der var de ret gode til at få os til at fortælle og skrive ned og altså, hvad kan I huske og hvor boede I henne og alt sådan nogle ting og ja, sådan nogle detaljer, **praktiske detaljer**, øh, og de papirer har jeg så fundet igen og jeg har fundet, hvad hedder sådan noget, skolesundhedsplejerskens notater og sådan nogle ting som jeg åbenbart havde. Så, det er ret spændende.
Mikka: Hvordan har det været?

Quote, Chapter 6

Ea: Jamen det har været godt, det **giver virkelig en større forståelse af tingene**, som for eksempel vidste jeg ikke jeg havde boet så mange steder, det havde jeg ikke nogen idé om, jeg kan kun huske at vi boede ét sted, altså, øh, jeg kan godt huske at vi har været andre steder men jeg havde bare troet at det var besøg, eller.. og så har det vist sig at vi faktisk boede der, det har så kun været en måned eller to, eller et eller andet, ikk'. *Quote, Chapter 6*
Mikka: Ja.
Carolina: Hvad med, er der nogen personer som har være involveret i den her proces... sammen med dig? Altså din mand, eller søstre, eller...
Ea: Ja, altså min mand har selvfølgelig (griner). Men ellers har jeg øh, brugt, øh, Lisbeth [Zornig Andersen] meget og Tine [fælles veninde].
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Så, vi er en lille... gruppe (griner).
Carolina: Ja?
Ea: … der hjælper hinanden og snakker sammen og … ja.
Mikka: Hvad føler I, altså hvad føler du at, at, at I kan give hinanden?
Ea: Jamen det er jo meget sjovt, for jeg har egentlig – jeg har altid, altså altid haft sådan en ensomhedsfølelse. Og, øh, jeg har jo godt vidst at der har været andre der har haft det hårdt og, jeg har aldrig sådan været i gruppe med nogen eller kendt nogen... andre end mine søskende. Så lige pludselig at få kendskab til sådan en hel flok her, ja, det er helt fantastisk. Og, der er sådan en... samhørighed og... stille accept, og respekt af hinanden, og uden at skulle forklare så meget.
Carolina: Ja.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: det er helt fantastisk. Det har jeg ikke oplevet før. Jeg suger bare til mig (griner) Men det tror jeg vi gør alle sammen, altså det er sådan en gensidig (sukker) - "det havde vi behov for". Et frirum, tror jeg.

00:27:00
Mikka: Jeg tænker alligevel også samme spørgsmål, bare med din moster: Føler du at, at hun har et billede af din barndom?
Ea: Nej, jeg tror ikk' det har været helt ens, for det hun har givet udtryk for er i hvert fald at hun - hun har sagt et par gange nu, at hun vidste ikk' at det var så hårdt.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: … at vi havde det så slemt.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: Såeh, jeg tror ikk' hun – selvom hun, altså, vi var så tætte og jeg boede hos hende mange gange, og… hun alligevel var ret involveret med min mor, så havde hun simpelthen ikk' nogen idé om hvor slemt det var. Så jeg ved ikk' om det var for... at benægte det, eller, at hun bare ikke så det, eller. Det er bare svært at forestille mig, at man ikk' ku opdage det. Så….
Carolina: Er det, er det noget du har konfronteret hende med?
Ea: Nej, det har jeg ikk'.
Carolina: Nej.
Ea: Det må vi vente lidt med.
Alle: (griner)
Mikka: Et skridt ad gangen.
Carolina: Nej, så det er ikk', sådan, en del af det I snakker om.
Ea: Nej, nej.
Carolina: Det er mere med at prøve at finde ud af hvordan det... var.
Ea: Ja.
Carolina: Har det været vigtigt for dig at sørge for at, at hun *nu* har et billede af hvordan det var?
Ea: Ja, altså, nu har jeg jo... jeg prøver i hvert fald, altså jeg *fortæller* det jo bare som jeg kan huske det. **E.1**, Chapter 5
Carolina: Ja.
Ea: … og det kan jo godt være jeg husker forkert. Det kan jeg jo sagtens. Men nu har hun i hvert fald hørt det et par gange efterhånden – hvad jeg husker, og hvordan vi havde det. Og så har hun sådan suppleret lidt med hvordan hun oplevede det.

Mikka: Jeg tænker på hvad det... hvad det må – hvad I to giver hinanden i den situation? Hvad er det – begge veje i virkeligheden...
Ea: Ja, men det synes – det tror jeg det gør. Altså, det er sådan en gensidig oplysning, øh, jeg fortæller lidt om hvordan det var, og så fortæller hun lidt også hvordan *hun* oplevede det og hvordan de har haft det som børn, og… så det har ligesom ledt op til.
Mikka: Så *hun* fortæller om sin *egen* barndom?
Ea: Ja, sammen med min mor.
Mikka: Okay.
Ea: Men også om da vi var små, og hvordan vi havde det dengang og... alt... Hun bruger selvfølgelig meget tid og energi på at sige at hun gjorde alt hvad hun kunne, og... ligesom at rose sig selv, eller sådan. Frikende sig selv i den her. Ja... ja... det er lidt interessant om det vender på et tidspunkt.
Mikka: Til hvad?
Ea: Til sådan et mere... realistisk syn på det hun siger. Fordi, ja.. jeg har boet hos hende tit, og gerne, altså flere uger af gangen, indtil min mor og hende blev uvenner igen eller et eller andet.. så skulle jeg hjem. Men altså, og hun siger også at hun (?) at underrette... eller hun underrettede det faktisk – hun arbejdede på et fritidshjem dengang, og der var hun inde og snakke med lederen om at det ikk' gik så godt og bad dem om at underrette kommunen om det. Og det viser sig så, at det gjorde fritidshjemmet så ikke. Men hvor jeg så bare tænker; jamen hvorfor gjorde du det ikke *selv*. Og så min mormor siger også "jamen vi var også nede og underrette kommunen om det" - det har hun så åbenbart været. Og de gjorde ikk' noget. Jamen hvorfor gjorde I ikke *mere.* Altså, det er lidt som om det, sådan, frelser sig selv for, at de har gjort *lidt.*
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: Hvor de måske skulle ha' gjort mere. Så jeg er lidt spændt på at se om...
Mikka: Om det drejer…
Ea: … den proces kommer på et tidspunkt.
Mikka: Ja... jeg tænker på, når, noget du nævnte før at, at øh, at hun også har fortalt om sin egen barndom?
Ea: Ja.
Mikka: Jeg tænker på det, hvordan, hvordan har det fundet sted. Er det fordi du har fortalt om din barndom, og så har hun fortalt om sin? Hvordan kom det...
Ea: Jeg tror at – jeg tror også jeg har spurgt om hvordan det var derhjemme, og... Jeg tror egentlig det hang lidt sammen med – fordi jeg har altid haft en ide om at, øh, min mor blev misbrugt af sin far. Og det har min moster egentlig altid benægtet. Og så tror jeg også hun er blevet det – altså alle tre piger. Jeg har to mostre. Øhm, hun har altid nægtet, at det skete ikke... og jeg var sådan, jamen hvorfor blev du så smidt ud? Altså, jamen så snakker hun lidt om hvordan de havde haft det hjemme, og, min mormor ikk' ku li min mor, og... det var sådan, ja... jamen hvorfor tror du hun ikk' kunne det? (griner) Øhm, og så, det var ikk' så lang tid siden vi var til foredrag sammen med Lisbeth [Zornig Andersen] – og så i pausen sagde hun "ja, jamen jeg tror, jeg tror du har ret i at vi alle sammen er blevet misbrugt" (griner) så, så turde hun alligevel godt sige det.

E.2, Chapter 5

Mikka: Okay.
Carolina: Okay, så du har virkelig også spillet en rolle i... i/
Mikka: /i hendes/
Carolina: /i hendes proces/
Ea: /ja, helt sikkert.
Carolina: Jeg tænkte, du sagde før, det her med at indse et mønster, som der havde været i familien gennem generation og at de ikke har været, at man ikke har været i stand til at bryde med det uden hjælp.
Ea: Ja.
Carolina: Jeg tænkte, nu, nu, ja, hvad/
Mikka: /hvad er hjælp?
Carolina: Ja, hvad er det, hvad er det der *kan* gøre en forskel i forhold til?
Ea: Ja, altså, vores hjælp var jo at vi kom på børnehjem, at vi ligesom blev fjernet fra miljøet. Og fra de der normer, og... de mønstre der er … og fik, sådan, indsigt i at der var et andet liv også.

Carolina og Mikka: Hm.
Ea: Det var først da jeg kom på børnehjem, og fik, øh, sådan, klassekammerater og veninder, og kom hjem til *dem,* at jeg faktisk så at, **at det vi havde ikk' var normalt**. Og der var jeg alligevel otte-ni år, ikk'? Det er første gang jeg ser et rigtigt hjem. *Quote, Chapter 6*
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Og jeg bare tænkte "jaeh, nå, sådan kan man også bo. Og det er da egentlig meget hyggeligt og trygt og dejligt". Øhm. Så det har i hvert fald gjort et stort udslag for mig. Og så også... at have nogle personer, som er stabile, og som vil én det godt. Og holder én i hånden og siger "nu skal jeg hjælpe dig fremad".
Mikka: Hm
Ea: Det betyder rigtigt meget.
Carolina: Og hvem har de personer været for dig?
Ea: Altså... min moster har gjort det i perioder, men det har været lidt svingende. Men ellers fik jeg en, øh, en pædagog på børnehjemmet, Laila, som øh, som ligesom var *min* person, og som tog mig med hjem når hun ikke var på arbejde, og gjorde sådan at jeg legede med hendes børn, så, altså, sådan lidt **normalt familieliv**. Hende, hun har fulgt mig lige siden, og jeg ser hende stadigvæk ret tit. Hendes store dreng, Martin, er gudfar til mit barn. *Quote, Chapter 4*
Carolina: Okay.
Ea: Så, sådan nogle gode personer til at/
Mikka: /Ja. Hvad, øhm, hvad gjorde hun ved dig? Eller hvad var det, hva/
Ea: /Jeg tror hun, jeg tror det var den der indførelse i en normal familie, og at lade mig føle at jeg ikke var så anderledes. At jeg bare var en del af familien når jeg var der. Jeg følte mig også lidt speciel fordi jeg fik lov til at komme med hende hjem, ikk'? Og den der (griner)
Mikka: (Griner)
Ea: /fantastiske følelse. Der blev gjort lidt ekstra.

00:36:40
Ea: Altså, jeg tror at det jeg har været god til, altid, det har været det der sociale spil. Jeg har været ekstremt god til at få folk til at kunne li mig. Øhm, jeg har været god til at vide, hvad jeg skulle gøre for at de syntes jeg var sød. Øh, og det betyder jo meget i det her, for at få noget igen – få fyldt det (?) op med noget kærlighed, tryghed... øh... og det ved – det har mine søstre ikk'... på samme måde. For eksempel, min søster var ikk' .. en man holdt af.(...) Og så har jeg også været boglig. Og det er selvfølgelig også en vej ud af elendigheden. Det er uddannelse.
Carolina: Ja.
Ea: Ja, og så har jeg også altid – det tror jeg selvfølgelig også de har haft... et ønske om at få det anderledes. Men det tvivler jeg nu ikk' på at de har.
Carolina: Men det siger du – det har du altid haft?
Ea: Nej ikke altid, det var først der, da jeg kom på børnehjem og kunne se andres hjem og de andres familier, altså der begyndte jeg at få sådan et ønske om at jeg bare var normal eller var ligesom dem. Og det har egentlig drevet mig og gør det stadigvæk (griner) jeg føler jo stadigvæk at jeg er sådan lidt ved siden af, altså også hvis jeg bare gør et eller andet lige som de andre, går i det rigtige tøj og, så bliver jeg lige som dem.
Carolina: Jeg kunne egentlig godt tænke mig, det er sådan en ting vi har talt om generelt i forhold til og nu prøver vi bare at spørge, altså sådan, hvad er det man, hvad er det man bryder med? Altså, når man bryder med den sociale arv, eller er mønsterbryder.
Ea: Ja.
Carolina: Er det noget man kan sætte ord på?
Ea: Ja, lidt, eller jeg har brugt det, øh, lidt – jeg er med i en bog, hvor jeg skriver om hvordan det er var være i plejefamilie. Øhm, og dér, der siger jeg at jeg, i forhold til min biologiske familie, føler mig lidt som, sådan et, **et omvendt sort får.** *Quote, Chapter 7*
Carolina: Ja.
Ea: At pludselig er det mig, der er sådan lidt... anderledes og lidt fin ikk' nu skal hun pludselig ha en gymnasial uddannelse.
Mikka: (Griner)

Ea: Og går i fint tøj, og … og snakker med sin plejemor. Jeg er ligesom blevet sådan et sort får fordi jeg har klaret det godt.
Carolina: Ja.
Ea: Altså jeg tror det er sådan jeg vil beskrive det. Jeg blev måske ikk' udstødt, øhm... men sådan lidt hen i retning af det, altså... forståelsen for hinanden, den... den går lidt væk. Også for *mit* vedkommende. Altså jeg har jo bevæget mig så langt fra dét miljø, at jeg har jo svært ved at sætte mig ind i de normer, sådan, igen, altså, og den tankegang, og...
Mikka: Hvornår kommer – hvornår kan du mærke det mismatch?
Ea: Altså nu *bor* min mormor og moster her ikk' – eller min mormor bor selvfølgelig stadig det samme sted, men nu, altså, de har ikk' præcist det liv som vi havde. Altså, de har det trods alt bedre. Øhm, så det er ikk' sådan noget. Det var mere da vi var yngre, synes jeg.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: …da skiftet skete for os.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: At vi blev fjernet, og fik et normalt liv, og det hele ændrede sig. Det var ligesom dér, at forskellen var størst lige pludselig.

00:41:13
Ea: Jeg har egentlig ikk' haft nogen drøm om at jeg skulle ha' en lang uddannelse, eller jeg skulle have et godt job, eller jeg skulle have tre børn.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: Det har jeg sådan aldrig, jeg har aldrig på den måde haft, sådan, fremtidsdrømme.
Mikka: Nej.
Ea: Det har mere været i nuet.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: At, øh, jeg skulle bare være lige som de andre. Jeg skulle bare, ligesom, passe ind.
Mikka: Okay.
Ea: Jeg skulle ikke skille mig ud, og... ja så det er jo, sådan, med at jeg kom i gymnasiet, det var jo mere fordi at det gjorde de andre og så må jeg hellere gøre det.
Mikka: Ja.
Ea: (griner
Carolina: Okay, så det er noget med at følge en eller anden strømning?
Ea: Ja, jeg følger bare flokken. Fordi så er jeg normal. Så gør jeg ligesom de andre gør. Så er det bare heldigt at jeg havde hovedet til det også.

00:44:02
Mikka: Men det er også noget som I har begyndt, eller I har også snakket efter at denne her artikel er kommet ud?
Ea: Jeg tror bare det medfører sådan en/
Mikka: /ja, det må være vildt
Carolina: Jeg tænker det må være, det må være noget arbejde, alligevel, altså sådan mange ting, der skal samles op
Ea: Ja, det er jo, **det har virkelig også været intenst** *Quote, Chapter 6*
Mikka: Ja.
Carolina: Ja.
Ea: Helt vildt, jeg har brugt virkelig meget tid på det, og, energi, og..
Mikka: Ja, jeg tænker, hvad, hvad det det værd? Eller hvad er det det giver dig? Eller hvad er det der sker?
Ea: Jeg tror bare jeg har behov for det, jeg tror egentlig jeg var rimelig afklaret med min barndom, jeg havde sådan en forståelse af hvad der var sket og, altså det kunne jeg egentlig godt fint acceptere, at sådan var det. Men så øh, ja så skrev jeg det der og så dukkede der også en masse nye ting op og folk begyndte at fortælle og, øh, så skulle jeg selvfølgelig også håndtere det, og så kom der nye spørgsmål op og hvad skete der så og hvem gjorde hvad, ja, og en masse følelser ikke mindst, og så skulle jeg finde ud af hvor de kom fra og hvad de relaterede sig til. Så det har været et kæmpe arbejde og det er **E.3**, Chapter 6

jo stadig i gang, det tager ret lang tid. Jeg ved ikke om det nogensinde stopper. Jeg tror bare man skal lære, lære at leve med det.
Mikka: Ja.

1:04:25
Mikka: Hvad tænker du overhovedet der *er*, som man bryder med – eller hvad har du oplevet, du har skullet bryde med?
Ea: Hm.
Mikka: …tænker jeg, fordi det, det – man bruger ordet sådan meget naturligt, men hvad er det egentlig man bryder med. Fordi du har jo stadig forbindelse til din familie.
Ea: ja, jaja, det er jo ikk' sådan familien jeg har brudt med. Det man, det *jeg* har brudt med, sådan, det er nok normen og tanken – tankemåden
Mikka: ja
Ea: man tænker sgu specielt i de miljøer, ikk'? Så, man får nogle andre normer end normale familier, og "det er sgu okay at slå børn"
Mikka: mm
Ea: og "det er okay at vi drikker altid" og "de har heller ikk' behov for nyt tøj" og... at bryde den … norm. Og så også bryde med miljøet, men det er en del af det. Altså, det tror jeg egentlig er det... altså man kommer ud og ser noget andet. Får et andet syn på livet.
Mikka: jeg tænker på, er der, sådan, nogen situationer hvor det kan være særligt svært? Eller nogen tidspunkter i løbet af ens liv, eller...
Ea: hmm, nej... altså, det er svært i starten, selvfølgelig, fordi det er jo noget helt andet.
Mikka: ja
Ea: og det tager jo mange år at lære. Det er ikk' noget der sker fra én dag. Altså, det tog mig en fem-ti år, ikk'?
Mikka: ja
Ea: men altså *nu,* synes jeg ikke jeg, sådan, 'falder ud' nogen gange eller tænker fuldstændig anderledes end andre, eller (?). Sådan har jeg det slet ikke. Nu tror jeg egentlig, jeg er rettet så meget ind at jeg tænker og føler som alle andre.

Interview med Bettina / 14. december 2012

00:16:05
Bettina: Men, øhm... altså, det er jo det klassiske mønster. Min far har – eller, nu siger jeg har, han er jo, han er jo død, men altså. Min far havde en meget... mandsdomineret syn på tilværelsen. Altså han ku' aldrig *drømme* om at løfte hænderne i forhold til vasketøj, madlavning, indkøb. Altså, han ville hellere dø af sult end han ville smøre sig en mad. Altså, og det var ... ja, altså det prægede – var alting jo præget af, og han var meget ... (sukker) altså hvordan skal jeg beskrive det, han – hvis vi nu tager den *ene* side af ham først, ikk'? Han er virkelig sådan Dr. Jekyll og Mr. Hyde, havde jeg nær sagt, fordi han – på den ene side af ham, han var en smuk mand. Og ikke så stor. Han var en smuk mand, han havde lys, lyst hår og han var senet og, sådan, muskuløs og – ikke pumpet men sådan, som man *er* når man arbejder i marken... og fit, og han var *skide* skæg. Altså, han havde en *mega* go' humor, ikk'? Og han, øh, han *elskede* skæg og ballade og han var en *leve*mand, du ved, og "øj" og slog med armene og *gav* den gas os sådan, ikk'? Så han var – som barn var han jo en fantastisk far. *Den der* side. Altså, jeg var så stolt af ham, og jeg kiggede på ham, og jeg ønskede mig bare han ville gå med til et eller andet skolearrangement eller noget – hvad han selvfølgelig aldrig nogensinde gjorde. Øhm, og den side af ham var jo også stolt af mig, ikk'? Altså han var rigtigt stolt af mig og… min far var intelligent og det vil jeg sige, det har nok øh… ja både hjulpet en del, men det har også gjort, at han så… har været klar over sin egen manglende formåen i nogle sammenhænge og jeg tror det har givet en masse mindreværdskomplekser, men det er jo så lommepsykologen som taler, havde jeg nær sagt, ikke, altså det, det kunne man i hvert fald tænke.. Min mor var meget underdanig og meget, altså jeg vil, øh, altså det grænser til det gulv.. undskyld, gulvslæbende, vil jeg sige ikke. Og intet selvværd, altså overhovedet. Hun kunne have selvtillid på nogle få ting, altså hun var for eksempel meget dygtig med sine hænder, altså hun kunne frembringe næsten alt håndværk og sådan noget, ikke, men hun, så altså i de sammenhænge kunne hun have selvtillid og opleve at hun var god til ditten af datten, men det var sådan en lille mikro my i forhold til det store og hele hvor min far jo understøttede den følelse hun havde af ikke at du til en skid. Han, han nedgjorde hende konstant og han, han havde en taleform overfor hende som gjorde, at, at hun jo gradvist er blevet nedbrudt, nedbrudt, nedbrudt, nedbrudt. Og det kunne jeg ikke få øje på selvfølgelig som barn, og heller ikke som ungt menneske, og det er jo noget af det som jeg virkelig har skullet, øh, snakke med mig selv om, for det er jo svært at se i øjnene, at man har været hård ved sin mor, som i virkeligheden har gjort alt hvad hun kunne, men som bare ikke formåede særligt meget, ikke, altså det er sgu, det er lidt tungt at leve med synes jeg faktisk. Men øh, ja. Så, så det var ligesom sådan de to var.
Og nu sagde jeg jo den positive side af min far. Hvis du nu tager den negative side af min far, jamen det var jo denne her mega mands, øh, mandschauvinistiske, øh fyr, som var super voldelig og som, som alle havde respekt for selvom han var 1,65 eller sådan noget, ikke, det var der omkring han var, så havde alle bare respekt for ham fordi han var *fuldstændig* lige glad, han gik ikke af vejen for noget han havde denne her, han havde ikke, han havde ikke *kanten*, hvis i forstår hvad jeg mener. Når mennesker taler om, at hvis nogen gør mine børn noget, så slår jeg dem ihjel, så er det gældende for langt, langt, langt de fleste mennesker, jeg har ikke procent på det, men det har I sikkert, men langt de fleste mennesker, de gør det jo ikke! De tror bare de gør det, indtil de står i situationen, så er der en eller anden kant, der alligevel gør et eller andet, hvad fanden ved jeg. Men den kant, den er jeg meget overbevist om, at min far ikke havde. Og øh, hvis jeg kan trække parallel til mit liv, så har hele mit liv, og det kommer tilbage til nogle af de restriktioner jeg giver mig selv, handler om, at jeg er *meget* nervøs for, at jeg heller ikke har den kant. Øh, for jeg kan mærke helt ned i fodsålerne, at når nogen… altså en lidt privat ting kan man sige, på et tidspunkt så var der en kvinde, der havde kastet sin kærlighed på min mand og han synes jo også at hun var forfærdelig dejlig og det, altså, der kunne jeg mærke på mig selv, at der var jeg villig til at gå hele vejen. Og det var så skræmmende at

jeg måtte sådan sætte ting op for mig selv, fordi at det, altså jeg tør slet ikke tænke på hvad der var sket hvis han havde truffet det forkerte valg, som jeg tænker det, altså, hvis i, på tidspunkt kunne jeg mærke, det var jeg ikke i stand til at kontrollere.. Og, og sådan har jeg det også med mine børn og det er derfor jeg er bange hele tiden. Altså jeg er bange for at der skal ske noget, fordi jeg ved, altså jeg har denne her *dybe forståelse,* som ikke kommer fra hovedet, men som kommer fra hele kroppen af, at jeg ikke kan håndtere mig selv, hvis nogen gør mine børn for alvor noget. Altså sådan, for alvor, ikke. Nå, men alt det kom af at jeg ville sige, den, min far havde ikke den kant, det, det, det er jeg ret sikker på. Altså han, han var ikke bange for at slå nogen ihjel og han var ikke bange for noget som hest. Det var han ikke. Øh, ja. Så det var en skræmmende far at have. Det kan jeg godt hilse og sige. (….)

00:23:20
Bettina: (…) Der sker flere forskellige ting det år jeg bliver ti. Der sker det, at min far og mor bliver skilt. Der kommer en meget dramatisk hændelse, min far kommer hjem og har en kvinde med i bilen, den helt, altså maggi-terningen af det er at, han kommer hjem og så banker han min mor sønder og sammen fordi hun ikke vil aflevere huslejepengene og han tager pengene og kører sin vej og min mor, eller inden da har min mor altså smækket døren så den er gået i tusind stykker, denne her glasdør og jeg kan bare huske, altså jeg kan stadig faktisk få denne der følelse, når jeg tænker på det…..altså ”nu bliver der ballade”, ikk'.. Altså fordi min mor har aldrig sådan sat sig op imod min far, men gjorde det der, der tænkte jeg.. nu siger jeg ”fuck i skuret”, altså det… der tænkte jeg ”nu, nu, nu bliver der ballade, ikk'?”. Og der skal i tage med, at jeg er altså vant til en, en rimelig del af ballade, så når jeg tænker ”ballade”, så taler vi big time ballade, ”nu dør nogen”, taler vi. Men, hvorom alting var, min far ente altså med at køre. Min mor gik derfra og den historie vil jeg lige komme tilbage til fordi den er faktisk helt særlig og *meget* lidt sjov.
Men inden da har jeg fået en lillebror, der, som jeg husker det, måske seks-otte uger gammel, ikke mere. Så min mors hormoner har jo sikkert også været i vild galop ikke, og inden da er jeg også lige skiftet skole, kommer op på en folkeskole, [skolenavn], hvor jeg også i øvrigt har brugt et par år på at pille mig i næsen, fordi jeg bare var lysår forud for de andre, da jeg kom derop. Men, og, det sidste der var sket, det var at jeg havde været ude for et seksuelt betinget overfald af en mand nede fra [institution], hed det dengang, altså, man vil vel kalde ham evnesvag, eller hvad fanden hedder sådan noget i dag, det ved jeg ikke engang. Øh, men altså, han, han var e, han var drevet af sine drifter, altså det var ikke en, som jeg har forstået det senere hen, var han ikke drevet af ondskab men af seksuelle lyster, han har altså kigget på mig nogle dage jeg har kørt hjem fra skole og så kørte han efter mig bla bla ba. Øh, men det var sådan meget dramatiske ting der skete i mit liv.
Mikka: alle sammen da du var ti år?
Bettina: ja. Det var det år jeg var ti. Og øh, og det skete egentlig alt sammen inden for en relativt, altså det er inden for det kalenderår, det er inden for en relativt kort periode, fordi jeg husker ikke noget vinter, så det må have været i hvert fald fra tidligste forår måske til seneste efterår, ikke. Og det er jo altså sådan jeg må beskrive det, fordi jeg kan ikke helt klart definere, det var i september, det var… det er simpelthen umuligt for mig, ikke. Nå, men øhm. Ja…

00:28:40
Bettina: Men sagen er i hvert fald at jeg, jeg, jeg…i meget store dele af mit liv har oplevet livet positivt selvom det sandt for dyden er svært at få øje på når man kigger på det tilbage og ser, hvad fanden var der lige at være glad for? Det ved jeg sgu ikke, men altså jeg, jeg, jeg husker jeg var bare tit glad, altså, jeg ledte efter situationer, hvor jeg kunne være glad, ikke. Altså jeg bragte mig selv i nogle situationer, kan jeg nu se bagefter, som gjorde mig godt! Altså på en eller anden måde, ikk’! Ja.. det er noget, faktisk meget mærkeligt, nu man faktisk sidder og tænker over det, specielt når man fortæller det, men øh... Nå. Men øh, oppe på den nye skole gik det jo også

godt, fordi igen, altså hvis man er, altså.... hvis man ikke er *alt* for dum, så kan man jo slippe igennem folkeskolen. Og hvis man så samtidigt er boglig, det vil sige har *nemt* ved måden vi lærer ting på i skolen, altså, sådan er det jo stadigvæk de fleste steder, at man helst skal være boglig. Så, så er der bare nogle ting der bliver lidt nemmere. Så, så det var rigtigt fint Jeg takker min skaber for at jeg ikke er sådan et super kreativt menneske, der kan lave alle ting med hænderne, men som har det hårdt med bøger, fordi så havde det sgu være op ad bakke, ikk'. Ja... Nå. Øhm... ja. Hvis vi nu går så et halvt skridt tilbage, ikk', så er, eller sker der det, da min mor "går hjemmefra", som jeg kalder det… det kan betegnes som relativt dramatisk fordi jeg er ti år og på det tidspunkt, der begynder man - jeg begynder i hvert fald - at være klar over, eller tænke over hvordan andre mennesker ser mig og jeg får en, jeg får en forståelse af, at jeg er en del af *noget* og det der noget kigger på mig og vurderer mig, i forhold til, altså samfundet, ikke. Jeg har i hvert fald en forståelse af, at jeg kan ligesom ligne de andre eller *ikke* ligne de andre, eller, sådan der. Og jeg har det som jeg tror de fleste har det, jeg har ikke lyst til at stikke af, vel. Altså jeg har ikke lyst til at sådan, at springe ud og være anderledes - jeg *tror* nok det gælder de fleste børn. Øhm, så min mor hun tager min lillebror, som skriger i vilden sky, han står på bordet, i liften, tager liften, *sådan der*, og så tager mig i armen, *bang, sådan der* og river os ud af døren. Og så går hun bare, altså det er et fuldstændig absurd billede, hvis I kan forestille jer det! Går op ad denne her lille vej, hele vejen ind ad [gadenavn] op igennem gågaden og ned på kommunen og jeg, jeg har ingen, jeg har strømpesokker på! Altså jeg har strømpesokker for fanden, ikk'! Og min bror han skriger og er gasblå i hovedet og min mor ligner noget der er løgn - hun har fået høvl, altså gedigen høvl og tårerne sprøjter hende ud af, ud af øjnene og så ligner hun sådan en lille trold hvor hårene stritter ud til alle sider. Altså det var… det lyder absurd med alle de ting jeg har oplevet, men det er noget af det mest *pinlige* jeg har prøvet i mit liv, altså det, det står for mig stadigvæk som… jeg kan *slet ikke* rumme at tænke på det, altså det… ja, det kan jeg godt, men altså hold kæft, hvor var det pinligt. Altså og det er åbenbart sådan nogle tanker man får når man er lige omkring ti, det der når man er det der med hvordan man ser ud i forhold til de andre, hvad tænker de andre ikke, op igennem gågaden ikk', jeg synes det var bare.. fuck i skuret, mand.. Og det blev ikke bedre af at, så kom jeg ned på kommunen, øhm og de er sikkert meget søde, men det ændrer ikke på at de lod både min bror og jeg at sidde ude på venteværelset og jeg kunne så sidde og trøste min bror lidt og så tog de min mor ind og så tog de min mor ind til en sagsbehandler, og der gik, ja, hvad jeg betragter som en del tid, jeg kan jo ikke - det kan jo have været ti minutter ikk', men det føltes i hvert fald som flere timer. Og på det tidspunkt, der er ikke en *eneste* der kommer over og siger, "skal vi ikke hjælpe dig med din lillebror" eller "vil I sidde her ovre lidt for jer selv" eller "vil I have en tår at drikke eller et Anders And blad eller en pakke rosiner" eller et eller andet, de der forbandede voksne, de gør bare ingenting, så der sidder man til offentlig skue i sådan et venteværelse og det er bare... *helt* håbløst altså og det, det er derfor jeg tager ud til de socialrådgiverstuderende, så de kan (klapper i hænderne) lære, at sådan skal de ikke gøre… fordi det er, det er fandeme ikke sjovt. Nå, men min mor kommer så ud og, og, og er færdig med at snøfte og alt det her og så kommer den gule bus. Og den gule bus er kendt i hele byen, fordi det er den, der kommer ude fra børnehjemmet. Og så kommer den gule bus og henter os. Og det… synes jeg fandeme ikke var særligt, altså sjovt. Min mor havde jo på dette her tidspunkt altså… mange gange bedt min mormor og morfar om hjælp og de har også hjulpet mande gange, men de sagde til hende, "ved du hvad, du kan godt efterlade Bettina her, men du skal, nu må du få noget permanent hjælp, ikk'", og det oplevede min mor som en afvisning, det har hun senere fortalt mig. Som mormor fortæller mig det oplever jeg det sådan at de forsøgte at presse hende til at stå ved sin beslutning fordi det var skidt for hende at være hos far, ikk'.

00:42:00

Bettina: (…) Nå, men jeg kommer derhjem, finder ud af at det er en skide go' idé, og så bliver jeg udsat for incest – det er igen maggi-terningen. Og det

når at ske tre gange. Øhm, det sker første gang i forbindelse med, altså, min far har nær slået Sanne [farens kæreste] ihjel. Fordi min – Sanne var anderledes end min mor. Øh, min mor hun siger jo bare ja og amen og gjorde hvad hun fik besked på, men Sanne, hun drak som et svin og hun slog igen, ikk'? Altså det var helt s... altså det der hjem, det var så syret, så.. hold da kæft altså, der skulle man godt nok, altså det var tit jeg fandt mig selv sådan bare lade være med at trække vejret, I ved, sådan (gisper og holder vejret) **B.3**, *Chapter 4*

Mikka: Ja

Carolina: Ja

Bettina: Jeg kunne holde vejret i *umindelige* tider, og hvorfor? Det er fordi, I ved godt, der kommer en lille bitte lyd inde i hovedet når man trækker vejret... en lille bitte.. den er nærmest ikke eksisterende. Det var nok til, jeg kunne ikke, den lyd kunne jeg ikke have fordi alle mine sanser skulle være klar, ikk'! Det er jo sygt! Men altså... sådan var det. Altså jeg kunne sidde - det var mange gange på en dag, hvor jeg sad, uanset hvor jeg var sad jeg bare helt stille. Uden at trække vejret, ikke, så jeg, ku' sanse og fornemme: hvor var de og hvad skete der og hvem gjorde hvad og hvordan. Også når nogen kom, så skulle jeg: var det far der gik i gruset derude, eller var det.. hvem eller hvad - det kunne jeg jo høre, så…. Øh, men hvorom alting var, det [incest] skete tre gange og første gang var selvfølgelig den allermest grænseoverskridende, hvis man kan tillade sig at gradbøje den slags, fordi **det der skete for mig, det var at jeg fik en forståelse af….som, som aldrig har forladt mig siden - at jeg er helt alene. Altså jeg blev klar over det, dér, at alt det der fis med "far og mor og familie og nogen, der tager sig af en", det er ikke sådan det *rigtig* er. Det er *historien*, men det er ikke sådan det *rigtig* er.. Som det *rigtig* er, det er at man er *helt* alene, ikk'. Og *det* er noget af det mest øresynderrivende at opleve og jeg ville ønske at jeg kunne programmere mig selv til at få en anderledes forståelse, men det der er problematikken det er, det er ikke bare tanker jeg har, men det er simpelthen en dyb, dyb, dyb forståelse og jeg baserer det - når jeg siger det er en dyb forståelse baserer jeg det på de reaktionsmønstre jeg har i best, i bestemte sammenhænge som vi også kan komme tilbage til, hvis det er interessant, men hvor jeg er helt sikker på at, når jeg sådan analyserer på mig selv, det er helt tydeligt, at det er den forståelse jeg har, "red dig selv, min pige, fordi der kommer ikke nogen og reder dig". Og det er altså, man kan sige fra mit trettende år der har jeg haft oplevelsen af at være fuldstændig alene i livet og så trækker jeg en parallel op til min fantastiske familie, som jeg har beskrevet og som er alt hvad en familie jævnfør H.C. Andersen eventyr skal være, altså den ultimative *gode* model…altså… hvordan kan man være *ensom* samtidig med at man har det, ikke? Og det er jo dér, hvor mit liv bliver komplekst engang imellem** og der, når jeg skal forsøge at forklare andre mennesker, altså det, det der er så så svært, det er, jeg har aldrig mødt et menneske, udover min søster og det er derfor jeg føler mig så knyttet til hende, tror jeg, hun forstår hvad jeg siger, når jeg siger "[søsters navn], kig på det" og hun kan mærke hvor lykkelig jeg er, med min familie og sådan noget, og så samtidig så forstår hun når jeg siger "jeg er ensom, jeg føler mig sgu helt alene", ikk'? "Jamen det forstår jeg godt" siger hun så "sådan har jeg det også". Og jeg kan bare – altså det er det der med, det er der så mange der siger. Men hun kan mærke det. Altså, hun kan, hun kan sådan mærke det. Det... det bliver måske en redning, hvem ved. Fordi jeg så der har forståelsen af, at der er et andet menneske, der har forståelsen af det her helt... unormale, ikk'? Nå, ja, men kan kan jo blive helt bims når man sidder og tænker over det sådan helt ud i øh... Øh... ud i... hvad hedder sådan noget, ud i yderste led, ikk'. Men jeg bruger en del krudt på, når jeg skal forklare det overfor andre, sådan, at finde *ord* til at beskrive det, jeg synes det er *meget* svært at beskrive en forståelse. Altså, det der med at du kan forstå en forklaring - men at forklare en forståelse, det er edderhylme op ad bakke, ikk'… **Men jeg gør det fordi, fordi det er så vigtigt for mig at give det *videre*, altså hvis man på en eller anden måde kan blive klog på hvordan det *er* at være derinde, når man... altså der må være andre end mig, der har det sådan jo, det er det jeg tænker. Hvis man på en eller anden måde, de folk, der er kloge og dygtige, sådan** *Quote, Chapter 8* *Quote, Chapter 6*

nogle som jer, som skal sidde og have mennesker i hænderne, som er på røven - hvis I kan forstå hvad det er, altså, og også måske næsten få *følelsen* af det, altså der hvor man sådan *rigtig* kan rykke, synes jeg jo, det er jo når både denne der (peger på hovedet) og det der (peger på hjertet) hænger sammen, ikk'? Så, så er vi sgu noget et skridt videre, ikk'? Og det er derfor jeg slider så hårdt med at prøve at forklare det.

1:07:45
Carolina: Jeg tænker, jeg bed mærke i at du også sagde... det her med, også det at opdage at du var en dygtig mor... eller, at være en god mor. Jeg tænkte måske kunne vi... skulle vi springe lidt over til, til det med at *blive* mor? Eller sådan, hvad for nogle tanker du havde gjort dig... inden da.
Bettina: Jeg tror, som med *alt* andet, så gør jeg mig ikke synderligt mange tanker om noget.
Carolina: Ad hoc.
Bettina: Yeees!
Mikka: (griner)
Bettina: Jeg kaster mig ud i det og... da vi blev gravide, så var det, ja jeg var 24, vi var begge to 24, vi er lige gamle. Øhm, så ville [mand] rigtigt gerne have børn. Og det skal så ikke høres sådan, at jeg *ikke* ville have børn, men... altså, ja... vi havde kendt hinanden ikk', på det tidspunkt, i seks syv år, og så... altså, jeg syntes sgu godt, altså, jeg tror måske at jeg sådan uden at have det i defineret tankesprog, så tror jeg måske jeg har, alligevel har haft det sådan lidt, altså mor... det er fandme – hold da op, ikk'? Så skal man tage vare på sådan et lille liv, du ved, og hvad er op og ned, og... jeg havde ligesom ikke det bedste at sammenligne med, vel? Og alle andre går hjem til *deres* mor og siger, hvordan skal jeg gøre det her, eller... kan man sige, ikk'? At det var ligesom ikke en... en option, syntes jeg. Men, øh, da vi så blev gravide, så... så tænkte jeg jo bare, jamen så går jeg med det, og alle blev jo glade. Og jeg var jo også glad, men jeg var også sådan lidt, jamen så ser vi hvad der sker... og det blev i øvrigt en lidt dramatisk fødsel, såeh, så min mand kom til at møde [søn] førend jeg gjorde, og jeg havde det sådan bagefter, at, da de kom med ham, så, jeg vågnede op der fra operationen, og så tænkte jeg med mig selv, jamen det er fint. Dér kommer de med et barn – det kan være hvem som helst. Altså, og det var, det var skræmmende for mig, fordi – jeg tænkte "det tør jeg sgu da ikke sige til nogen". Altså, "det tør jeg fandeme ikke sige til nogen, for det er jeg godt klar over, det er fandeme ikke normalt". Øh, sådan nogle tanker har jeg jo, ikke så tit mere, men, men, igennem mit liv har jeg haft det *masser* af gange, hvor jeg har tænkt "Bettina, du er jo ikke normal". Altså, du ved "det er er jo ikke *normalt*". Altså, og når man siger sådan til sig selv, så, det er jo... nå, så skal man lige have med *det* at gøre, ikk'? At man ikke er normal... agtig, i sin egen definition. Men, øh, men det kom hurtigt. Altså jeg knyttede bånd til ham meget hurtigt, altså i løbet af... ja, altså det jeg vil sige det første døgn, så får jeg det sådan her og jeg kan jo mærke [mands] kærlighed til ham, og jeg kan, så, så snakker jeg med mig selv "jamen ka' jeg ikk' se der er lidt der ligner og så er der, er der jo bare noget med de der børn. Altså de, jeg tænker de kan få hjertet til at smelte, ikk'? Jeg, jeg forstår slet ikke hvordan det kan lade sig gøre at have en fødselsdepression, altså sådan over lang tid. Øhm, jeg *anerkender* det kan lade sig gøre, men jeg *forstår* det ikke. Fordi den der følelse jeg selv – jeg oplevede jo selv ikke at tænke "ja, barn, det er fint", øh, ikk'? Til så at blive fuldstændig overmandet af det der lille menneske, som har behov for én, og som dufter godt og elsker én og, og – tror man. Man elsker i hvert fald dét, ikk'? Ja. Øhm... men jeg vil sige at jeg knytter godt bånd og jeg gør ting godt og rigtigt, og jeg er jo... med alt hvad jeg gør, øhm, både mit arbejde og min familie – selvfølgelig er min, eller det ved jeg ikke om det er en selvfølge, men min familie er selv... har fortegn, ikk'? Men, øhm, jeg gør mig altid umage, og jeg giver altid 100 procent. Og hvis jeg

kan mande mere op end 100 procent, det er hvad en matematiker siger at det kan ikke lade sig gøre, men omvendt så kan jeg godt nogengange få to og to til at give fem, så... Lad os sige 110 procent. Jeg giver altid 110 procent, og... og det gør jo at man tit bliver god til det man gør, altså når man anstrenger sig meget. Og kærlighed – altså en ting som jeg har lært fra min mormor det er, at der kan mangle *alt* muligt, alle mulige evner og alle mulige ting, men kærlighed, det, det har vi jo i rigelige mængder. Det, det er ligesom den eneste brønd der aldrig bliver tør. Altså, den, den kan man jo bare give af. Det er ingen problem, at gi', gi', det, der er ikke noget slut på det. Og det synes jeg er en god lære, og så... har jeg bekymret mig meget... Som jeg startede med at fortælle, så øhm, børnene sendte sms'er også da de var 19 år, ikk', og 20, i omsorg for mig. Og det er jo fordi jeg er sådan en, der beskytter rigtig meget og jeg har *altid* været det og jeg kan huske en situation, en bestemt situation hvor - det var sommer, min søn er født i maj, 15 maj, i øvrigt i 92, det år vi blev europamestre, det er vigtigt at huske i en fodboldfamilie! Øhm, seks uger var han da det skete: bum! Nå, men hvad hedder, det, øhm, det var sådan at vi boede i en lejlighed og det var godt vejr og jeg kan huske så havde jeg jo læst alle bøgerne selvfølgelig, det er klart og snakket med sundhedsplejerske og jeg havde snakket med alle jeg kunne komme i nærheden af for jeg skulle satme være en god mor og så var der jo det her vejr, hvor jeg på den ene side, skulle jeg nu give ham hue på? For hvis jeg gav ham hue på fik han jo ikke træk i ørene, som jo var det *ene* man lige skulle passe på - meget teoretisk tilgang til det. Og den anden ting var, men hvis han nu var for varm, så fik han varmeknopper! Og øh, jeg kan, når jeg, bare jeg fortæller, det er jo helt håbløst (griner) men sådan *havde* jeg det! Jeg syntes min verden var ved at brase sammen! For jeg kunne simpelthen ikke, aaaaaarh, og jeg vidste han skulle ud på denne der altan og stå for det var *godt* for ham med det friske luft, men skulle han have hue på, skulle han ikke have hue på? Du ved, så jeg ringede til min sundhedsplejerske, *en del* gange, vil jeg sige. Og så sagde hun til mig "Bettina, har du behov for jeg kommer forbi?", "ja, det ville jeg være glad for!" og så kom hun, og det var første gang i mit voksne liv, jeg fortalte nogen mennesker om hvad jeg havde været udsat for, igennem min opvækst. Øhm... jeg fortalte hende *hele* dynen. Jeg fortalte også om det, som vi for eksempel ikke har været ind på, det, min, min far blev jo meldt til politiet. Jeg fik fortalt min mormor det – det var sket. Og min mormor gik med mig og det blev meldt til politiet – jeg blev jo undersøgt i.. nu siger jeg det lidt bramfrit – i hoved og røv, havde jeg nær sagt, som man jo gør – bliver kørt på hospitalet og al den slags. Og, øh, blev afhørt og ditten, dutten, datten. Han fik et års betinget – *ubetinget* – fængsel, til afsoning i [fængsel], øh, og alt det der. Og som følge af det – det tager jeg lige som en indskudt bemærkning, for det er en meget væsentlig del af mit ungdomsliv, som vi faktisk slet ikke har fået snakket om. Der bliver jeg chikaneret rigtig meget af alle vennerne. Jeg får bank efter skole, jeg får kastet sten ind i min rude med sedler på, og … øh/

B.2, *Chapter 4*

Carolina: /af hans venner?

Bettina: Ja. Fordi min far var jo kongen af [hjemby]. Min far havde nægtet sig skyldig. Og min.. folk kendte ham jo for at være, alt mulig, men faktisk for at ha' – det lyder absurd – men en god moral. I hvert fald på nogen punkter. Øhm så jeg blev lagt for had. Øh, det gjorde jeg, min egen mor, hun troede ikke på mig. Altså, hendes afsluttende kommentar, da hun gik ud af retssalen, det var – og hun *elskede* min far, og ved du hvad, det gør hun stadigvæk. Han har været død i to et halvt år, og hun elsker ham stadig... Ja, nå... men øh, sagen er, at hendes afsluttende kommentar det var: **"hvordan kan du lyve sådan om din far?"**. Øhm, og det var jo, altså, det var året - jeg fortalte om det der, 13, jeg fik forståelsen af det at være ensom, og være helt alene. I den retssal, der sad jo pædagoger, der sad nogle af mine klassekammeraters forældre. Der sad jo – og det er en lille fucking lorteby, ikk'? Øh, og så alle de der venner. Jeg var skræmt. I kan ikke, I forestiller jer ikke den angst jeg havde. Altså, det var/

B.6, *Chapter 7*

Quote, Chapter 4

Mikka: /hvor gammel var du der?

Bettina: Jeg var 13. Ja, det var lige op imod jeg blev 14, at han blev dømt.

Det var så forfærdeligt, så det endte jo faktisk med – ja nu kommer jeg lige med en indskudt bemærkning, og så må I jo hygge med at sortere i det bagefter, men, hvad hedder det, det var jo ingen der ville hjælpe mig med det her, fordi på det tidspunkt der forsøgte jeg at tage mig selv – tage livet af mig selv flere gange. Og, øhm, det der ligesom forløste – eller udløste – at jeg fik sagt det til min mormor, det var at jeg fik et nervøst nervesammenbrud. Og, øhm, man forsøgte at få mig indlagt på psykiatrisk afdeling. Men, mormor stod fast, og jeg ville – den eneste – jeg opførte mig som et vildt dyr, har jeg læst mig til, og jeg har også fået at vide, altså, hylede og skreg og hvæste og viste tænder og, altså, kradsede og sparkede...altså det var helt, øh, det var *helt* galt, ikk'? Øhm, men min mormor kunne tale mig til ro, og derfor fik hun lov at tage mig med hjem. Øh, helt uhørt. Hm, men det fik hun lov til. Og der var det så, at jeg fik lov at sove lidt, i hendes arme, og så da jeg vågnede, var det hun sagde "Bettina, *nu* skal jeg vide hvorfor du opfører dig som du gør". På god gammeldags manér. Alle de der psykologbørger, dem havde hun ikke hørt om. Så det var bare "hvorfor opfører du dig sådan, min skat. Hvad er nu det for noget". Ikk'? Og så kom det her frem på den der måde. Men sagen er at, øhm... jeg havde kun min mormor at støtte mig til. Hun er den eneste der aldrig har spurgt mig om jeg nu var sikker på at det var rigtigt det der jeg sagde. Og på trods af, at der var fysiske beviser – og ellers får man altså heller ikke et års ubetinget, sådan, smaf, på den der måde. Det gjorde man i hvert fald ikke i de tider, fordi der fik man *latterligt* lave domme. Øhm... så troede folk jo ikke på mig.
M: Nej
Bettina: Og, og det var, og ikke engang min egen familie troede på mig, så det var virkelig, øh... Det var fandeme op ad bakke. Men det endte altså med, at jeg, den eneste pjækdag jeg nogensinde har haft i mit 45årige liv, øhm... jeg havde sparet sammen, jeg havde, jeg havde passet hestene. Og jeg havde vasket bussen ude på børnehjemmet. Og jeg havde gjort alt muligt, ikk'? Fordi jeg endte jo med at komme tilbage på børnehjemmet efter det der med min far. Ja... øhm, hvad hedder det øhm, så havde jeg sparet penge nok op, og hævet mine lommepenge, og hævet nogle tøjpenge, som jeg så godt vidste jeg ikke kunne aflevere kvittering for senere, hm, det var ikke så godt, men nok om dét. Såeh, så tog jeg en pjækkedag, så der var ingen der vidste det. Jeg havde skrevet til min far og spurgt om jeg måtte komme og besøge ham. Og han havde svaret tilbage – det er i øvrigt det eneste brev jeg nogensinde har fået af min far. Jeg har aldrig fået et brev eller gave af min far ellers. Øhm... men der skrev han tilbage at advokaten havde rådet ham til at…

[Her mangler få sekunder fordi vores optager går i stå]

…han havde sørget for besøgstilladelse. Så den dag, der kom jeg så derop – der var ingen der vidste det, kun min far og mig. Ja, og så advokaten, kan man sige, men... øhm, men jeg tog [meget udførlig beskrivelse af rejseruten fra børnehjemmet til fængslet] Jeg kom igennem, blev kropsvisiteret, og kom igennem og alt det der, og mødte min far... Og min far var blevet tyve år ældre på det der halve år, der var gået. Øhm, ja... og jeg s, vi snakker lidt sammen, og på sin bryske facon siger han "hvordan går det? Passer du skolen?" ikk'? Og så får jeg på en eller anden måde – altså jeg er jo angst for ham stadigvæk – får jeg taget mig sammen til at sige til ham – det er jo første gang jeg ser ham, skal I regne med, efter retssalen og efter alt det her, det er jo virkelig, øh, faktisk forstår jeg slet ikke jeg havde kræfterne til det, jeg fatter slet ikke hvordan det kunne lade sig gøre. Men, men det gjorde jeg. Øhm, så siger jeg til ham "ved du hvad, når du spørger, det er rigtig svært at passe skolen. Fordi dine venner, de gør sådan og sådan. Ditten, dutten, datten". Og jeg fortæller ham hvordan det her er – og jeg er, jeg har aldrig sladret til min far, altså... øh, altså, det var bare ikke et tema. Det gjorde man ikke, det er der ikke respekt for i de kredse. Øhm så, så jeg kiggede på min far, kan jeg huske, og så sagde jeg til ham "Far, hvorfor nægtede du dig skyldig?" Øhm... og det tror jeg faktisk, altså, knækkede ham en lille smule. Fordi, her stod hans datter, som ha... elskede ham betingelsesløst, og som

B.4, *Chapter 4*

han har gjort så ondt, og som han egentlig er stolt af, og kigger på ham, og ved at far har altid lært mig at vi ikke skal lyve, og "jeg har efterlevet alle dine regler far, og jeg har gjort alting, og hvorfor gør du så det"? Det tror jeg faktisk knækkede ham. Øhm, dengang vidste jeg det jo ikke. Øh, og så kiggede han bare ned, øh, og så sad han lidt, ikk'? Og så kiggede han op igen, og så sagde han "det er jo kun dig og mig, Bettina, der ved hvad der virkelig er sket." Og det er det eneste, vi har talt om. Vi snakkede ikke mere om det. Øh, jeg fortalte ham lidt om... han sagde jo "du skal sørge for at få dig en uddannelse, du skal gøre alle de der ting", og så tog jeg hjem igen. Og tænkte ikke nærmere over det. Og det *var* min, sådan, grunden til jeg tog derop, det var fordi at jeg var så langt ude, altså havde der været internet på det tidspunkt, så havde jeg sikkert ikke været her i dag. Fordi så havde jeg fundet ud af hvordan jeg skulle tage livet af mig selv. Øhm, men det, det fandt jeg ligesom aldrig rigtigt ud af på en måde som, som ku' føres ud i livet. Så – om jeg så må sige (griner), føre ud i livet, det var, det var en skæg, nå...
Mikka: (Griner)
Carolina: (Griner) (…)
Bettina: Så skete der det at, så holdt det op. Det er jo det man kan i de kredse. Så jeg ved ikke om han har sat det i gang, til at starte med. Men det tror jeg ikke han har. Jeg tror det er noget der er sket per automatik. Men det stoppede. Og det stoppede fra den ene dag til den anden. Og den dag i dag, det er jo nu 30 år siden, et par og 30 år siden, der når jeg kommer hjem stadigvæk, så er jeg jo Sigurds datter. Og der er ingen, øh, der kommer i nærheden af mig. Nu er far død og borte, så kan man sige, så holder det vel op. Næh, fordi hans trofaste venner, de holder øje med mig. Og øh, så kan man sige, er jeg glad for det? Nej, det er jeg ikk, for jeg bryder mig ikke om at det fungerer på den måde. Det er sådan en kriminel måde at løse tingene på, synes jeg, altså... det er jo en forkert forklaring, men det er det bedste jeg kan gøre Men hvis jeg skal vælge, så bliver jeg nødt til at sige at det er bedst for mig selv at det er sådan her. Altså og jeg udnytter det ikke, jeg har aldrig nogensinde trukket far-kortet. *Aldrig* nogensinde, men det har været nødvendigt for mig og for min overlevelse ganske simpelt. Så på den måde er det selvfølgelig fint, ikk'? Nå, og grunden til at jeg nåede at fortælle alt det, det var fordi det havde vi ikke fået snakket om før, og alt det fik jeg fortalt min sundhedsplejerske. Jeg fortalte hende hele lortet. Om min mor, og alle *hende*s selvmordsforsøg, og... pss... psykisk sygdom, og indlæggelser og pis og papir, ikk'? Øh, og børnehjem og ditten og datten, og hun var... det – hun var så fantastisk. [Navn], hed hun. Hun sagde til mig "ved du hvad", sagde hun, "så kan jeg godt forstå, at du ikke ved hvordan du skal være en god mor. Og ved du hvad, du må spørge mig lige så meget du vil, du må ringe lige så mange gange du vil, for nu er jeg klar over hvorfor. Men, du gør det rigtig godt", sagde hun. Og det var jo, det var jo sådan der og så sagde jeg igen det der med huen, og så sagde hun "ved du hvad, du skal bruge din sunde fornuft. Og så skal du tænke over, at *hvi*s du skal vælge, vil du så helst ha' at han får træk i ørerne, måske, øh, altså mellemørebetændelse, *eller* at han får varmeknopper. For lige meget hvad du gør, resten af livet, så kan du ikke sikre, der ikke sker dine børn noget. Så må du prøve at begrænse skaderne. Sig: hvis, hvis der skulle ske noget, hvad ville du så helst. Varmeknopper? Så giver du ham en lille hue på." Og det helt enkle råd, det har jeg efterlevet lige siden. Og jeg skal faktisk have et møde med hende inden så længe, igen i forbindelse med min bog. Og der vil jeg fortælle hende om, hvilken betydning det her simple lille råd har haft. Det betød faktisk at jeg holdt op med at ringe til hende. Så vi fik et helt normalt forhold, ikk'? Som andre mennesker har til deres sundhedsplejersker (griner) går jeg ud fra, ikk'. Så det er faktisk en rigtig god historie.

00:05:50
Mikka: (…) jeg ku' bare så godt tænke mig, hvis vi kunne høre om den her bog.
Bettina: Ja?
Mikka: Og hva', fordi det lyder som om du er, du opsøger nogle af de her

mennesker... og nogle af dine gamle kammerater du har haft, og sådan noget. Hvad er det, hvad er det for en proces?
Bettina: Ja, altså for rigtig mange år siden der skrev jeg min historie, øhm, bare til mig selv. Øhm, som jeg tror, altså som jeg sagde; jeg har ikke rigtig respekt for folk, der tager ud og, og holder foredrag og så bruger det som en eller anden terapeutisk proces. Det kan sgu godt være – det er nok, der er nok et eller andet galt med mig i forhold til det, men jeg *synes* i hvert fald at det er en forkert måde at gøre det på. Det er nu engang bare sådan jeg har det. Og det bliver jeg nødt til at stå ved. Så, sådan vil jeg ikke selv gøre. Fair nok andre gør det, men jeg vil ikke gøre det. Men jeg kunne mærke jeg havde brug for den, jeg havde brug for at være i en proces, og jeg havde brug for at tænke tingene igennem og jeg havde brug for at fortælle det... til mange. Og det har jeg gjort ved at skrive, og skrive, og skrive, og skrive og skrive. Og jeg er først begyndt at holde foredrag da jeg syntes jeg havde fod på, da jeg havde grædt alle tårerne, øhm... og, og haft alle frustrationerne. Og, alt det der med mig selv, altså, jeg havde gjort det mange gange, jeg har læst det, jeg har skrevet det over lang tid, og jeg har læst det over mange gange, lagt det væk og frem igen, øh, tilføjet igen, tænkt over ting, reflekteret ud og ind og, af mig selv havde jeg nær sagt. Og først da jeg var færdig med at tude over det, og ligesom kunne forklare folk objektivt, og nøgternt; hvad handler det her om. Og også kunne reflektere over det på en *voksen* måde, begyndte jeg at holde foredrag. Og, det er så femten år siden jeg begyndte på at holde foredrag. Så det her ligger endnu længere tilbage. Øhm, så er der sket det at i mange år har jeg kun taget ud til studerende – kun, altså forstå mig ret når jeg siger kun, altså det, jeg har begrænset det, fordi jeg synes at jeg er så meget andet og hvis jeg skal fortælle min historie så skal det jo ikke bare være fordi det ser godt ud på Ekstra Bladet. Så skal det være fordi at det giver mening. For mig, også, ikk'? For dem der lytter på det, men også for mig. Og det giver mening for mig, hvis jeg kan bidrage til at nogen får en bedre viden, eller en større læring på nogle punkter *jeg* kan bidrage med, og, øhm, og på den måde så har alle så noget ud af det, ikk'? Men hvad hedder det, så har jeg mødt min søster (...)

B.5, *Chapter 6*

Interview med Ivy / 4. december 2012

12:40:00
Ivy: De snakker om hinanden som familie eller "vi" – jeg bruger ikke, men *de* (?)
Mikka: Hvorfor, hvad tror du...
Ivy: Jeg tror det er meget det, det er hvis man ikke har... men man mister rigtigt mange når man begynder at – du *virkelig* mister mennesker, eller **du virkelig mister mennesker som er din familie** og sådan noget, og så mister du *alle* dem du har omgåedes i nogen adfærd som du ikke vil længere fortsætte at være i. Så du mister *alt*. Så det, hvis der ikke er et fællesskab, som, eller flere fællesskaber, som du kan være med i, det bliver meget, meget svært. Og det er dét jeg tror er den største styrke. *Quote, Chapter 7*
Mikka: Ja, fællesskabet.
Ivy: Ja, ikke være alene, og vide at der er nogen, altid…
Carolina: Har du – jeg aner ikke om det på nogen måde kan generaliseres, men har du noget indtryk af hvornår folk får behov for at opsøge det her. Er der et tidspunkt i folks liv, hvor...
Ivy: Kriser (griner)
Carolina: Er det i kriser?
Ivy: Det er én af de store. Øhm, i mig, i mit tilfælde det var helt klart, det var den der, den der – jeg kan huske en dag hér, sofaen var dér, og jeg bare græd *hele* dagen. Der var *et eller andet* jeg skal gøre, for det, for man kan ikke blive *ved* sådan, det er bare – **og jeg havde grædt et helt år næsten**, men, men *pludselig* det var bare, det kan ikke lade sig gøre mere, og jeg blev ved med at græde men jeg gjorde, jeg, næste dag der søgte jeg fire, fem ting af hjælp. Og det var én af dem. Og det har virkelig gjort en forskel. *Quote, Chapter 6*

16:40:00
Ivy: (…) og det var bare der, det er en rigtigt stor ting faktisk, og det er virkelig sådan, de holder ikke jul, de holder ikke pause eller, bare, du *ved* at der er nogen der.
Mikka: Ja
Ivy: Det er en ret stor ting
Mikka: Det er sjovt, fordi, fordi et af vores citater i opgaven det er fra sådan et digt fra 1918 eller sådan, hvor der står "Home is where when you go there, they have to take you in" (redigeret). Og jeg tænker bare lidt, det minder mig lidt om det her, hvor hvis man, hvis man mister den selvfølgelighed, fordi du ved, som udgangspunkt så de fleste mennesker ved at de *altid* kan komme hos deres familier. Og hvis du mister *den*, så er der jo lige pludselig, sådan, hvis det *virkelig* brænder på, hvad skal du så gøre...
Ivy: Ja, for nu problemet *er* din familie (griner). Så det er *ikke* det sted du *vil*, og det er ikke det sted du *kan* – for at have det bedre. Og det er helt klart, i mit tilfælde. Det er ikke... og det er så stærk en samfundsting også, ik? "Hvad skal du til jul – eehh.." alt det der…
Carolina: Ja.
Ivy: Og *nej,* og at bygge en base uden det, det er en ret... anderledes ting, kan man sige, og det er ikke... det er *kun* fordi det er nødvendigt. For det er ikke rart, at gå igennem det.

29:30:00
Ivy: (…) og så er der en runde, en delingsrunde og delingsrunden er… man plejer at få sådan 4-5 minutter og du snakker bare og det er lige meget om hvad, nogle gange det er bare hvad der skete i går og… bare at sige det højt gør en stor forskel. Man behøver ikke, det er ikke forpligtende, man skal ikke sige noget, man kan også bare lytte.
Mikka: Det er ikke alle der skal sige noget?
Ivy: Nej, men der plejer at være noget, det plejer at være dem der er nye, der ikke siger noget, nogle gange, fordi de stadigvæk. Men efter det, vil alle snakke, fordi det er det, der er så…og der siger man, før denne der starter, at, man, man, **man afbryder ikke, kommenterer ikke og giver ikke gode råd**. Og det er meget den der "vi har alle vores egen erfaring og det er vores egen sandhed" og man kan ikke – og selvom det er den samme sygdom, man kan *Quote, Chapter 6*

have mange forskellige symptomer og næsten modsatte symptomer. Man kan ikke, man skal ikke spille... psykolog, eller… Man skal ikke spille at man ved mere…
Carolina: Nej
Ivy: Og så det er kun det der sker. Man fortæller og andre lytter og det er *lige meget* hvad der bliver sagt – *aldrig* der er nogen der siger noget. Nogen gange kan du se en tråd blive taget op igen, men, men det er aldrig om dig. Det er... at når jeg nu hører om en syg mor, ah, min mor var... men selv det er der ikke så meget, det er mere fra sin egen... Det er der, det er der jeg synes der er noget, der er noget rigtigt stor styrke.
Carolina: Jeg sad og tænkte, det her med ikke at få respons på hvad man siger, altså sådan umiddelbart, så, øh, tænker jeg sådan, altså, en stor del at det vi gør med at snakke, det er jo det med at få respons, og gad vide hvad det gør, ikke at...
Ivy: Ja, men jeg tror det der sker er at – og det kan jeg helt klart se at det også er i mit tilfælde – jeg hader at snakke, fordi jeg vil ikke ha' respons de fleste gange… fordi det respons jeg får, det er ikke dét jeg har behov... Jeg har ikke kunnet klare. *Nu* kan jeg mere sige "kan du bare høre det her" og *nogen* mennesker kan gøre det, men der er mange jeg har burde have forladt, fordi responsen er, øh "du skal se med at komme i gang" eller… hele tiden, fordi de kan ikke klare at høre noget svært eller de kan ikke... så i mit, og jeg tror mange voksne børn, er at samtaler *ikke* har været et rart sted at være. Øhm, fordi det startede at *ikke* være et rart sted med vores forældre, hvor man ikke bliver hørt, ikke bliver mødt, ikke bliver set. Og så har vi gentaget dét. Ti tusind gange, i de her samtaler hvor man ikke er blevet passet på og ikke passer sig selv, passer på sig selv. Så det her er som at tage det fra og "(puster ud) ah, det er okay jeg bare siger det her".
Mikka og Carolina: Ja
Ivy: Og skabe sin egen historie, og begynde at... begynde at kunne være i kontakt med sin egen historie, fordi hvis man hele tiden skal fortælle den i forhold til nogen, så er det *dem* der fortæller historien, det er dem der giver respons der præger, hvordan historien er.
Mikka: Ja
Ivy: Hvis de ikke er empatiske mennesker, som de fleste *ikke* er (griner). Det er det der er problemet.
Mikka: Så man kan sige, det er, du, man ender i en situation hvor man får lov til at fortælle sin historie, men man er *fuldkommen* selv herre over den og der er ingen der kommer og foreslår ord eller…
Ivy: Præcis.
Carolina: Det er meget spændende. Fordi mit næste spørgsmål ville have været, er det så, er det sådan en katharsis effekt eller hvad er det, men ud fra det du siger så tænker jeg sådan…
Ivy: Men en katharsis effekt *er* er jo også noget. Når du ikke har kunnet fortælle din historie nogensinde. Der er *mange* ting jeg har *aldrig* fortalt, øhm, før, min krise, kan man sige. Det er bare, "huh, wow, det er også en del af mig" ...øhm, og så der er den anden del for mig, det er ikke *kun* at fortælle sin historie men også at *høre* andres historier

I.1, Chapter 6

Mikka: Hm
Ivy: Fordi det er bare "ha? Er det rigtigt? Wow!" Og det er når historien heller ikke bare, fordi, man kender alligevel nogen historier, men man tænker mest, ej, det er *helt* anderledes end min barndom har været, eller... men når du hører en *lille* detalje, *lige* der, "nå, din mor sagde dét og jeg følte det sådan" - og det, det har jeg også (synkelyd) der er jeg jo også med. Og *den* feedback mekanisme er *så* stærk, synes jeg…
Mikka: Hvad føler du, det giver?
Ivy: Det giver indsigt. For jeg kan ikke… jeg kan ikke vide hvordan verden fungerer – det er en anden ting med [navn for medlemmer af støttegruppen]. Vi ved ikke hvordan verden fungerer. Vi ved ikke hvad en sund verden er. Vi ved ikke hvad en sund forhold er. Ikke, selvfølgelig, ingenting, men når du ikke kan genkende det i dig, hvornår noget er sundt, så skal du høre på, så skal du, så skal du også høre hvad der *ikke* er sundt og sådan nogle ting. Så der er nogen af historierne, for eksempel, for nogle år siden jeg har bare

tænkt ”ja, og hvad så” og nu bliver det ”vao, jamen hvis du har følt det sådan – selvfølgelig er det ikke okay at man siger det” eller... og det er kun *nu* jeg kan forstå det, for det er kun nu jeg har plads til det. Men for mig det er sådan, det er indsigt fordi, der er mange – det har jeg også gjort med bøger, det var ikke kun livshistorier, men at læse andres historier – det er sådan jeg kom i kontakt med min egen, inklusive de ting jeg havde glemt, fordi, at læse, så, eller... Der sker noget i mig - og hvorfor er det? Det er fordi jeg kender det – og hvor kender jeg det fra? Og, og så kommer der bare hukommelsen, den begynder bare at blive brugt…
Mikka: Det er interessant.
Carolina: Ja, fordi jeg tænker at, øhm, altså det at se sig genkendt i noget, altså når det kommer meget senere end det gør for de fleste andre mennesker. Er det noget af det, hvor andre hele tiden føler sig spejlet og genkendt, at der kan gå mange år før man har den følelse… at det ikke er noget man kan tage for givet.
Ivy: Ja, ja det er et privilegium.

37:00
Mikka: Jeg tænkte på en ting. Det du sagde med, når man hører andres historier bringer det en i kontakt med sin egen. Så tænker jeg på, er det noget, som du har oplevet eller, altså, der her med, det er bare fordi jeg kunne godt tænke mig at høre mere om det her med at du, at du husker ting, sådan ”hov, det her, der har jeg måske også oplevet” eller ”det her”, selvom du måske slet ikke havde husket før. Er det noget, som du har oplevet tit, eller kan du sige et eller andet om det?
Ivy: Ja, for mig er det en af de stærke processer, der sker for mig. Både i [navn på støttegruppe] og i bøger og andre steder..
Mikka: Ja.
Ivy: Og det er, fordi det er også det her med, hvad kalder de det, ”indefrosne følelser”, det er en af de kendetegn og den kan jeg helt vildt godt genkende… Øhm, fordi… der er virkelig mange ting i barndommen jeg har bare pakket og sådan tænkt ”du bliver bare der, phhh”, nogle gange bevidst og nogle gange ubevidst, men i hvert fald ”phhh”. Og nu jeg kan indse, at det ikke går (griner). Fordi det faktisk præger alt jeg gør og... og det er virkelig bare en råddent sted. Så det er meget det der, der er sket noget for mig og ”phhh”, jeg lukker, og tænker, der er ikke nogen der skal vide og jeg tror det er min skyld og alt det der. Hvor jeg forstår at det ikke går, eller processen skal være at jeg skal åbne, fortælle og sådan. Men der er mange **ting der er *så* pakket ind**, at jeg næsten ikke har kontakt med det. *Quote, Chapter 7*
Mikka: Nej, ja, ja.
Ivy: Fordi… så nu undgår jeg nogle ting, for eksempel til hverdag stadigvæk, selvom jeg har det så meget, meget bedre. Men jeg skriver dagbog hver dag og skriver alle mine drømme hver dag. Og drømmene er også en af mine kilder til at huske hvad der er sket, fordi der om morgenen får jeg rigtig, får jeg minder. Øhm, nu heldigvis ikke sådan nogle voldsomme minder mere, men, ”lige denne der dag, da det der skete” eller sådan nogle ting. Også mennesker, nogle mennesker jeg har glemt… som jeg har haft for eksempel en lille affære, eller ikke, måske en flirt med et sted og det ikke var rigtig rart. Det var helt *fuldstændigt* ude af min bevidsthed... Og så skal jeg lige høre nogen fortælle (lyd af sammenstød) - eller en drøm - ellers er jeg ikke i kontakt med det! Også fordi jeg pakker jo mit liv med travlhed i andre ting, og, ja. **Det er ikke *glemt*, men det er ikke *husket*, det er sådan en blanding, fordi det er ikke at jeg har fuldstændig glemt eller aldrig husket, men det er bare ikke, ikke tilgængelig-agtigt**. og så kan det blive tilgængelig igen og så kommer de der følelser op igen. Der er ting som stadigvæk kommer. *Quote, Chapter 6*
Mikka: Så er det, er det sådan, når du siger at der er ting du har pakket ned - hvad er det man pakker ned? Er det/
Ivy: /følelser.
Mikka: Ja, følelser.
Ivy: Og… rigtig meget.
Carolina: Og, og, altså… hvad er det der gør det muligt at pakke dem ud

eller tage dem op igen, eller at de kommer… til én?
Ivy: Hm.
Carolina: Er… altså at det har været en del af processen her med at gå i/
Ivy: [Navn på støttegruppe]
Carolina: [Navn på støttegruppe] - det var i forbindelse med det?
Ivy: Øhm, ja for mig, processen er samlet, ikk'?
Carolina: Ja.
Ivy: Så [navn på støttegruppe] er én af trådene, men er ikke den eneste.
Carolina: Nej, nej.
Ivy: Øhm, men det er også klart at fordi jeg har prøvet alt muligt slags hjælp og det er en af dem jeg blev ved med at komme tilbage til, jeg blev ved fordi der var en tryghed eller - nogle gange kom jeg derfra og græd meget mere, men det var en god græde (griner).
Carolina: Ja.
Ivy: Jeg kom i kontakt med nogle gode ting… eller kunne komme videre, når andre… ja, og det, det er begyndt nu, *nu*, jeg begynder at genkende selv hvad der er godt for mig. Og hvornår noget giver mig styrke og når noget tager styrke, og… men hvad der er sket, jeg tror det er… jeg er blevet stærk nok til at være svag. Og jeg fik plads i mit liv, på grund af at have været færdig med afhandlingen, fordi det var så fuldt, eller det var så stort og så hårdt og på grund af, af nogen der døde. Jeg tror, jeg tror det har givet mig mere plads.
Carolina: Okay.
Ivy: Min far og min mormor. Især min far. Fordi – og han var den store alkoholiker. *Virkelig*... Virkelig sådan, "bum", eller, mange kiggede på ham, i familien. Øhm, og når han, når han døde, så er der plads til andre historier eller *andres* historier.
Mikka: Kan du uddybe det?
Ivy: Øhm... fordi han var meget, meget, stærk karakter. Meget klog, og meget vild på en måde. Og meget alkoholisk. Øhm, men selv det at kalde ham alkoholiker, der er ikke nogen der har gjort det. Hele mit liv. Det var bare "han drikker lidt for meget", men lidt for meget – en flaske whisky om dagen er *ikke* lidt for meget. Og bare den der er allerede sådan pff. Det kortlægger noget (griner). Det er bare ikke *lidt* for meget (griner) Det er ikke dét. Det er noget meget dybere, og meget mere problematisk. Men han var så stor en figur. Og så var alle mine søskende, og min, vores, øhm, der er tre mødre i familien. Og, øhm, og hans søster. Alt muligt, som, han i centrum, alt går omkring ham. Og da han dør, så, "ah, der er plads"! (Griner)
Carolina: Ja.
Ivy: Det er også trist, og jeg også savner ham, men der er også plads, fordi, han kom... han *var* ikke på vej til at ændre sig rigtigt, eller der var ikke rigtigt håb. Eller der var håb, men ikke rigtigt. Efter de næste ti år, han kunne få vekslet helt og komme og snakke med nogen han havde gjort fortræd og… han var *så* langt fra det. Så langt. Han nægtede han drak. Så bare, der er i hvert fald, det er min forståelse at når jeg så skulle fortælle min familie min historie, som havde været skjult så lang tid – det er fordi det var kun nu der var plads også. Fordi så var vi "det var bare far". Eller, der har været flere forskellige kriser i familien, men min var der aldrig plads til. Jeg var den der havde det godt, og var klog og gik, alt gik godt med – og det var en historie der var blevet bygget om mig.
Carolina: Ja.
Ivy: Som jeg har været med til, til at bygge. Øhm, som bare ikke passede (griner) på noget som helst. Og det var også, altså, jeg var rigtigt god i skolen, helt fra starten var jeg den bedste, og det var min måde at holde fast i noget, eller, ikke få opmærksomhed til mig eller... for det gik godt, okay.
Carolina: Okay.
Ivy: Eller få opmærksomhed på andre måder, fordi jeg var klog. Men det var også en flugt, det var ikke kun nysgerrighed for læring. Selvom det også var (griner). Ikke kun, det var også… ja, jeg kunne noget.
Carolina: Ja.
Ivy: Det er måske en bedre flugt end at tage stoffer (griner), men det er også en flugt, i din måde at gøre det, for ikke at skulle… kigge på ting.
Mikka: Hm.

I.2, Chapter 7

Ivy: Eller også at flygte, så ku' jeg, så ku' jeg gå hjem fra [hjemland], selvom det jo ikke var bevidst, men, men det er også fordi jeg kunne, eller, jeg byggede den privilegium op, kan man sige, til at jeg kunne… få et stipendium, eller alle de der ting, og… det er det bedste (griner)
Mikka: (Griner).
Carolina: Okay.
Ivy: (Griner) det bedste nogensinde at komme til Danmark (griner)
Mikka: Ja/
Ivy: /i mit liv
Mikka: Jeg tænker på, det du siger, at der var blevet bygget denne her historie op om dig, øhm, og så da din far døde så, så bliver der plads til at…
Ivy: **den rigtige, den sande historie er kommet frem** *Quote, Chapter 7*
Mikka: Og hvad, hvordan har den proces været, er det noget du kunne sige noget, eller er tryg ved at sige noget om?
Ivy: med min familie?
Mikka: Ja altså, hvad, hvad er det du har gj… jeg tænker hvis du siger, at "den rigtige historie er kommet frem", eller hvad, hvad er det der er sket, eller hvad for nogle handlinger har det været, eller…
Ivy: Jeg har ringet og fortalt ting, de ikke ville høre. Et eksempel, som er meget familie-agtigt, og ikke... øhm... der var én gang, i vores familie, hvor min far, øhm, slog min mor rigtigt meget, og rigtigt voldsomt. På hendes fyrre års fødselsdag. Og de var ikke sammen, eller, jeg ved ikke om de var sammen, men min far havde allerede en datter, fra en anden kvinde. Altså min lillesøster. Øhm, og det så jeg på, og det så min storebror på, og det var ret traumatisk, kan man sige - det var virkelig - virkelig ubehageligt. På virkelig mange måder. På *rigtig* mange måder. Det er der *aldrig* blevet snakket om. Aldrig. Eller, en uge efter skulle vi besøge far, og alt var rigtigt. Det er klart, at min mor så ham ikke igen, i mange, mange år, men det blev aldrig snakket om. Det blev aldrig spurgt hvordan vi havde det med det. Aldrig. Og dét er en af de historier, for eksempel, som jeg har taget op nu de sidste par år, og jeg har fået *mange* flere detaljer, som er *helt* vild interessant, eller, som hjælper mig til at forstå andre ting. Øhm. **I.3**, Chapter 7
Mikka: Hvordan har du fået de detaljer?
Ivy: Fordi jeg har snakket med flere mennesker end før. Det er en af de ting. Fordi før, jeg havde næsten… måske min mor. I mange år jeg tænkte det var kun med hende, men hun er bare en lukket bog. Det er næsten lige meget hvad jeg siger til hende, for hun siger ikke noget tilbage. Og hun fortæller ikke til noget. Men jeg er begyndt at snakke med mine andre søskende, og med mine andre brødre, og med min tante og alt muligt. Så det begyndte jeg at få mange flere – og så få en lille tråd her, og konfrontere tilbage, og tilbage der. Det var én af de måder. Mange mennesker. Og den anden var at det ikke var gjort på en meget "ah, jeg skal bare spørge dig". Det var med tårer, hele tiden, og med virkelig en voldsom tilværelse fra min side. Jeg havde det rigtigt skidt med det der. Så jeg havde også, havde ingen energi. Hun siger ikke noget, men hvis hun snakker med mig i tre timer, hvor jeg græder helt vildt i tre timer, til *sidst* siger hun måske "ah, det er også rigtigt at... da da da da"
Mikka: Ja...
Ivy: Så der kom noget på den måde. At… fordi det var så voldsomt, at, eller…
Mikka: Ja, du tror ikke at de ville have kunne give dig det samme, eller *ville* give dig det samme, hvis ikke de ville have mærket hvor meget der var på spil, eller/
Ivy: /nej, overhovedet ikke.
Mikka: - hvor tungt det var, ja.
Ivy: Overhovedet ikke.
Mikka: Ja…
Ivy: Især min mor, øhm, og nogle mere lukkede mennesker. Min, mine søskende… mine sønskende *havde* givet mig så meget, synes jeg, hvis det ikke havde været sådan… Men *alligevel*, alligevel det er nogen t, det er nogen ubehagelige samtaler som ikke nogen vil ha¨. De ville bare… holde fødselsdag og alt det pænt, og, vi beholder bare facaden.
Mikka: Hm.

Ivy: Og det er kun fordi min smerte skreg så meget, at.. deres smerte ku' også komme lidt på banen, kan man sige, eller de, de blev *nødt* til.
Mikka: Ja… sådan at give lidt tilbage, eller sådan nogle ting?
Ivy: Ja.
Mikka: Og føler du at, at, når du siger 'den rigtige historie'. Hvor føler du den lever, altså lever den inde i dig? Eller lever den i familien, eller lever den... hvor, hvor er den henne?
Ivy: jeg tror heller ikke der er én historie, men der er bare elementer af den historie. For eksempel, jeg fortæller min familie historie, og går helt ud over den her ene episode med vold…den går ikke.
Mikka: Nej
Ivy: det gider jeg ikke være med til at skabe. Fordi den var ret stærkt, og ret stort. Og der er nogle flere af den her slags episoder, som – og selvfølgelig kan man sige mange ting om dem, og det bliver... der er forskellige sandheder og min bror så noget lidt andet end jeg så, og sådan nogle ting. Og det er okay at der er forskellige. Men at handlingen selv, eller, at slet ikke episoden kan blive nævnt, dét synes jeg er *usundt*... på en mere dyb måde. Det er ikke at der er kun én sandhed, men der er klart mange usandheder, som *er* usande…. Men hvor den lever, det ved jeg ikke hvor den lever, jeg tror den lever bare i... i de platoniske forhold. Det fineste, at komme i kontakt med det
Mikka: Ja
Alle: (Griner)
Mikka: (Griner) et eller andet sted, helt pæne.
Ivy: Jeg ved det ik', men øhm, den findes. Og sagt på en anden måde: Den lever i alle de her mennesker der er involveret, der er en del af de historier. Og det at sætte den lidt mere sammen, og at jeg kan få mere af den historie, fordi jeg får flere tråde – og mine er også på; min del af historien er også... eller nu begynder det at være en fælles historie, kan man sige... som ikke var før. Der var *mange* hemmeligheder. *Mange* holdt på *mange* hemmeligheder. Og nu der er lidt færre. Jeg ved ikke om der er mange stadigvæk, men fra *min* side der er ikke flere.
Mikka: men hvad, hvorfor/
Carolina: /men... det har været vigtigt, det her med at kunne *nærme* sig en fælles historie, og en fælles forståelse
Ivy: Ja i hvert fald til nogen – selvfølgelig har vi alle vores egne… hvis jeg fortalte min families historie og så min bror fortalte familiens historie, så ville det være to forskellige historier. Men *alligevel* der er nogle elementer i det, som er fælles nu – mere, end det har været, ja. Fordi før her, det kunne have været som to historier som komplet – at man ikke kunne genkende det var den samme familie. Og nu tror jeg godt det bliver mere…
Mikka: Og hvad giver det, når du gør det?
Ivy: På en måde det giver mere familie (griner) tilbage, så, i hvert fald til dem som jeg holder kontakt, som er ret få, har jeg en mere – en forståelse af at "jeg er med, jeg har været med i noget sammen med jer". Og det giver også en mere, øhm… Distance, til nogle andre i familien. For det er mere, ja, eller det bliver nemmere at sætte grænser. Jeg tror det er det, det gør, fordi hvis der er nogen der kan være så vilde at nægte nogle ting, så kan jeg også være så vild at ikke snakke med dem.
Mikka: jeg tænker på om det er, om det er dit indtryk at det er noget som betyder noget for, for de andre i [navn på støttegruppe] også, altså, det her med at – fordi du siger det her med lister, og med at, sådan, at opsøge mennesker. Er det noget, man sådan, beskæftiger sig med? Den fælles historie, eller…
Ivy: …jeg tror i hvert fald der er den her forståelse med at man kan ikke gå frem i fremtiden uden at **rydde op** i fortiden, eller, uden at kigge på det der er, eller var. Og det er ved at opsøge mennesker, og snakke om ting der er sket, og... det tror jeg.

Quote, Chapter 7

Mikka: Hvad er det der sker ved at man, at man sådan møder mennesker fra sin fortid - i nutiden - hvad er det… altså at rydde op, hvad er det... hvad er det man *gør*?
Ivy: man snakker (griner). Jeg skriver et brev, på papir og emails, øhm. Men jeg tror det er meget om… øhm… (lang pause). Hvad er "rydde op", men er

det ikke, for eksempel hvis jeg rydder op her hjemme, så, så, så skaber jeg noget jeg kan starte fra igen agtigt, jeg skaber en ro, jeg skaber, jeg ka' ikke, jeg kan ikke arbejde på bord hvis bordet er ikke ryddet op først, ikk´. Og hvad er at rydde op, det er ikke kun at pakke i kasser ikk', det er også, hvis det er virkelig at rydde op, det er at tage hvert eneste papir op...
Mikka: Og kigge på det.
Ivy: …og lægge de hen og da da da.. og det er samme slags proces som hvis du vil starte ny, på ny igen. Eller det er ikke helt på ny for jeg er alt det jeg er og sådan nogle ting, men jeg tror det er en af de ting og jeg tror det er en af de stærkeste ting der har gjort at jeg er gået helt igennem denne her tid fordi jeg har villet nogle ting, som jeg ikke kunne nå. Og nu forstår jeg hvorfor. Og nu er det sådan oplagt at jeg ikke kunne… men jeg vidste ikke jeg følte kun denne der konfrontation med virkeligheden, "jeg vil det her og det her vil ikke lykkes". Men det at rydde op og gå og snakke med folk fra fortiden for at se om vi har en fælles forståelse af hvad der er sket og hvad er der ikke sket. Og hvis vi har - at tilgive forskellige sider af sagen - hopefully - og tilgive kommer tror jeg fra denne her forståelse, hvis der er sådan en selvanerkendelse og selvansvar også… Og så også, noget der var helt klart for mig det var at, jeg havde, en af de ting der også var, var at jeg ønskede noget og i virkeligheden ikke lagde op til det, jeg har, i ideerne havde jeg rigtig mange mennesker i mit liv eller jeg havde mange venner og i virkeligheden havde jeg ikke. Og det var så, i virkeligheden, det betyder, når det virkelig kom til stykket eller når… så var det ikke rigtigt. Og hvorfor var det ikke? Det var fordi der var nogle historier, der var så brrrrr, blandede af alt muligt… og det behøver ikke være, det kunne være for eksempel min bror, ikke. Jeg tænker "okay, jeg har min bror, lige meget hvad". Men jeg har *ikke* min bror hvis jeg vil snakke om nogle svære ting, når vi aldrig har snakket om nogle svære ting, vi skal bygge det op. Hvis vi kan. Og med nogle af brødrene har jeg kunnet og med nogle brødre har jeg ikke kunnet og dem…bliver ret svært at counte-on-dem-agtigt. Men dem jeg har kunnet det, så er det bare "vao, hvis vi har klaret det her så selvfølgelig kan vi også finde hinanden igen og igen" eller der giver mig lidt håb for fremtiden, eller…

1:04:00
Ivy: Der er mange grunde til jeg ikke vil have børn. Og det ville jeg fortælle jer på et tidspunkt, om alle dem. Men *nogle* af dem, som er dem der relaterer til det her... jeg vil bare fort – det er *helt klart* at det ikke *kun* er den grund. Der er flere grunde. Det er ikke kun dét, men det er *også*. Jeg… først, synes jeg det kan være svært at have børn uden familie, uden at have en familie. Og det er lidt det jeg har, fordi jeg vil *ikke* at min mor kommer over og tager over, som hun har gjort ved min niece, for eksempel. Hun har taget så meget over, at hun er næsten mor til min, min brors barn, så det blev meget, så det er, så, enten kunne jeg acceptere det, det der, og have familie, eller ikke acceptere det, og ikke have familie. Og det er ikke at det er umuligt, og det er der selvfølgelig mange der har, men det er selvfølgelig en stor styrke jeg ser i det fleste familier, at, så kommer bedsteforældre og hjælper, og så der er en søster, der... og man er med i fødselsdagen og alt mulige forskellige ting. Så det har jeg ikke. Enten accepterer jeg de der betingelser, som jeg *ikke* accepterer. Eller det skulle ikke være i familien og jeg skulle bygge en anden slags familie. Så der er noget meget... stærkt der. Og en anden er at, øhm, at jeg tror ikke at jeg er så rask. Jeg tror jeg kommer til at være helt, eller, hvad kan jeg sige – selvom jeg er så bevidst, og selvom jeg ville gøre noget helt andet med mine børn, hvis jeg havde børn – og jeg gør noget helt andet med de børn jeg er tæt på. Og alligevel, alligevel, synes jeg det er noget ret dybt problematisk jeg har. Og jeg synes det kunne være rigtigt, rigtigt svært at, at ændre det, i forhold til børn. Eller, sagt på en anden måde; jeg tror det er muligt, men det er *så* stort arbejde, at så, der er også andre ting i mit liv der aldrig kommer til at have et liv, mere kunstnerisk, og sådan, som jeg bare vælger, at gøre. Men at… så den energi jeg har og det... med den barndom jeg har, og sådan noget – at have børn på en sund måde, skulle være den sidste projekt i mit liv. Fordi den er *så* stort. Så kæmpestort at det ændrer alt det. Det er allerede *rigtigt* svært at ændre min egen adfærd nu, og

det er et stort projekt. Men at kunne bidrage til nogen, og *ikke* have det med – rigtigt – *virkelig* ikke have det - det er kæmpestort. Fordi det er så, *jeg* føler det så – jeg er ikke fri fra det jeg har fået… desværre. Selvom jeg er bevidst om det og det og det. Ja - så jeg er bange for jeg bliver min egen mor. Også hvis jeg ikke skulle blive... Selvfølgelig på mange måder, men der er alligevel nogle ting, som er rigtigt, rigtigt svært at gå fra, fordi det er det eneste jeg kender. Rigtigt. Dybt.
Carolina: Ja… så det er sådan det dybe kendskab, som ligger et sted.
Ivy: Og når man kommer til børn, så kommer meget det der, det instinktive – og hvad har du af de der evner, til at du kan bare klare noget. Og jeg tror, dem jeg har, det er mest, det bliver endnu mere en kobling mellem det jeg har i barndommen til det jeg skulle være. Fordi det er barndommen igen, bare på en anden måde.
Mikka: Det kan der vel også være… at man så på denne der måde også genbesøger barndommen overhovedet fordi man har med et barn at gøre.
Ivy: Ja, præcis. Meget, meget, tror jeg.