

MULTIPLE LEARNINGS ABOUT IDENTITY FROM NARRATIVE RESEARCH: CANADIAN WAR-BRIDES AS TEACHERS AND CATALYSTS

ROSEMARY CLEWS *St. Thomas University*

KRISTIN NEWMAN *University of New Brunswick*

ABSTRACT. This study illustrates how stories about people's experiences half a century ago can still be of educational value today. Using as a case example an interview-based study with war-brides who came to Canada after World War II, the authors show how reflexive narrative research can be a catalyst for learning for several groups of people on at least two main levels, in relation to the concept of identity. This methodology can stimulate learning for the researchers themselves, both personally and professionally, as well as for the research participants. Also, it has the potential to be a catalyst for learning by people interested in the findings of such research, in this instance students and teachers, researchers working on other projects, those who are "newcomers" today, and those responsible for policies and services to assist them with resettlement.

**MULTIPLES APPRENTISSAGES À PROPOS DE L'IDENTITÉ À PARTIR DE LA RECHERCHE
NARRATIVE : LES ÉPOUSES DE GUERRE CANADIENNES EN TANT QU'ENSEIGNANTES
ET CATALYSEURS**

RÉSUMÉ. Ce travail illustre comment le récit des expériences vécues il y a un demi-siècle conserve aujourd'hui une valeur éducative. Citant comme un cas type une étude fondée sur une entrevue avec des épouses de guerre arrivées au Canada après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, les auteures démontrent comment la recherche narrative réflexive peut servir de catalyseur de l'apprentissage pour plusieurs groupes, et ce sur au moins deux plans importants liés au concept d'identité. Cette méthodologie peut stimuler l'apprentissage pour les chercheurs eux-mêmes, tant sur le plan personnel que professionnel, de même que pour les participants à la recherche. Elle peut également servir de catalyseur de l'apprentissage pour les personnes intéressées à connaître les résultats de ce type de recherche, en l'occurrence, les étudiants et les enseignants, les chercheurs qui travaillent à d'autres projets, les « nouveaux venus » d'aujourd'hui, ainsi que les responsables des politiques et des services afin de les aider dans le processus de réinstallation.

NARRATIVES ABOUT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NARRATIVE STUDY

Multiple learnings can occur by reflecting on stories of yesteryear. Our purpose in this text is to demonstrate how this happens by illustrating the value of acknowledging experiences from the past and of using them to understand the present and to plan for the future. Specifically, we will consider how both the data and the process of a narrative research study can act as catalysts for the learning experienced by the researchers themselves, by the research participants, and by others who, for various reasons, may be interested in the findings that the study reveals. As an example of such a study and how it has the potential to stimulate such a range of learnings, we will describe an interview-based study that we are currently conducting which analyzes the narratives of women who came to Canada from Europe as war-brides during and after World War II. We will be looking with special interest at what they recounted to us concerning one theme in particular, the theme “identity.”

When narrating their experiences of resettlement, and in the course of discussing the themes of “home,” “community,” and “family,” the women in the study made frequent reference to their *identities*, especially their *national* identities. It is our belief that their experiences can enrich our research and practice in the field of human services, by enhancing our understanding of the processes that are involved for newcomers in “re-storying” identity. At the same time, their narratives can assist us personally by facilitating a degree of re-storying about specific aspects of our own identities. Furthermore, besides the learnings derived from the topics these women addressed directly, there were other learnings that we experienced as we reflected on diverse matters that the interviews triggered for us, such as the theme of national identity in general and relationships between women of different generations.

In this paper, we will be departing from a conventional academic approach to organizing a research report (i.e. literature review, theory, methodology, results and analysis). Such a structure, we feel, does not fit well with our narrative thesis and methodology, nor does it illustrate how the study promoted learning during both planning and data collection stages. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 121) point out, “narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical.” Indeed, they say, “our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines.” In a similar vein, we have found that a narrative structure that chronicles the process of our work, or tells its story, illustrates most effectively how multiple learnings can emerge.

The study in question is rooted in Rosemary’s narrative of being born in Canada yet raised in England; a narrative that, in turn, begins with the story of Rosemary’s mother, Judith, who is the inspiration for the study. We will begin by narrating Judith’s story (at least as interpreted by Rosemary) and

follow it with vignettes from Rosemary's personal and professional life. We will then describe the theoretical and methodological basis of the study, and say more about the concept of identity. This will be followed by an account of the potential learnings that can be experienced by specific groups of people; in this case, war-brides, current newcomers, resettlement workers, and finally teachers of humanities, social sciences, and human service professions. We will end by outlining the learning that we have experienced ourselves, as researchers, commencing with Rosemary's learning about identity and about her relationship with her mother and then moving to Kristin's learning about relationships between women who have grown up in vastly different times. This latter set of learnings demonstrates, we believe, how the narratives of research participants frequently lead to learnings that are not anticipated at the outset of a project.

Judith was born in England and emigrated to Canada when she was four years old. While growing up in the Saskatchewan prairies, she learned to be proud of her British birth and heritage, which placed her at the summit of the "vertical pyramid" of social status based on country of origin (Porter, 1965). As a young woman, Judith listened to trains passing through her prairie town carrying people, who she thought must have interesting lives, to different, and she imagined exciting, destinations. Judith seized the opportunity to find a "good catch" among the young British men from the *Commonwealth Air Training Scheme* stationed in the air force base outside her town. She believed that marrying a British man would confirm her "Britishness" and would take her away from her "boring rural existence." Upon arrival in England with her infant daughter, Rosemary, Judith became homesick for the prairie. It seems that Judith maintained Canadian as well as British identities by "turning her daughter into a little piece of Canada." She did this by often telling Rosemary that she was Canadian and by referring to her as "my Canadian daughter." Granted, the process was probably not as clear for Judith as Rosemary describes it. However, reaching this conclusion about her mother's national identity enabled Rosemary to gain insight into her mother's experience, thereby reducing the "strangeness" that often exists between mother and daughter (Bateson, 2000).

Rosemary left Canada for England when she was less than two years old. Her mother's frequent references to her Canadian identity encouraged Rosemary to feel different from her British-born family and friends. She was even dressed to look like a post-war prairie child. During the winter months of her first few years in England, she wore a fur coat sent from Canada to post-war Britain where clothes were on strict ration. She recalls feeling miserable and ashamed of the "Canadian-ness" that set her apart from her peers. Then, after almost half a century in Britain, she returned to Canada where she did not feel Canadian at all. She took up an appointment as a university professor, but like an elementary school child, she set about learning basic facts about

the geography and history of the country she had been taught was her native land but that now she only inhabited. In Canada, after hearing Rosemary speak, people often ask her if she is enjoying her (11 year) “holiday” and when she intends to return “home.” If she visits England, she sounds like the people who live there, yet she feels as though she is visiting a country that she once knew but no longer belongs to.

The birth of this study occurred, then, when Rosemary began discussing her experience as the daughter of a war-bride with her colleague, Laura Taylor, also the daughter of a war-bride. Laura, interested in second-language learning among newcomer seniors, reflected on how her own mother’s stories helped her to understand the learning processes of seniors in general. Rosemary, interested in the resettlement processes of newcomers to Canada, reviewed her mother’s stories of transition from prairie-bride to struggling mother in the austere environment of post-war England. Both Rosemary and Laura realized that the resettlement issues experienced by their mothers were similar to those of newcomers in a different place and time, namely Canada in the twenty-first century.

Rosemary and Laura also reflected on the ways in which their identities had been shaped by their mothers’ experiences as war-brides. Eager to learn more about their mothers and themselves, they conducted a narrative study on the published biographical and autobiographical material about Canadian war-brides (e.g. Barrett & Dicks, 1996; Granfield, 2002; Hibbert, 1978; Jarrott, 1995; Rains, 1984; Wicks, 1992). Although they found many stories about the lives of the war-brides in their countries of origin, they found few stories about resettlement as such. In a desire to fill this gap, Rosemary in New Brunswick and Laura in Ontario thus decided to study the resettlement processes of Canadian war-brides.

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The theories guiding us in our war-bride study are symbolic interactionism, narrative studies, and feminism, and our methodology is qualitative. Symbolic interactionism highlights the importance of meaning in people’s lives (Blumer, 1969). In an effort to understand the meaning that war brides attributed to settling in a new country, we searched for “sensitizing concepts” that represent important aspects of their experience (van den Hoonaard, 1997). Sensitizing concepts are constructs, taken from the vantage point of participants in a research study, which summarize and exemplify pivotal aspects of the phenomenon being studied. As mentioned, the concept of identity is one such concept in the experiences of war brides.

Our approach is, in part, auto-ethnographic. By sharing our own stories and showing how they are enmeshed with the stories of our participants, we are encouraging the reader of this article to engage in the process of

story-creation. As Clandinin and Connelly (1998) put it, our intention is for the reader to cease to be an observer and instead become part of the “intertwined experience of researcher and participant” (p. 151).

For the New Brunswick study, Rosemary, together with Kristin, who is the New Brunswick research assistant, is interviewing a sample of approximately 20 war-brides who came to Canada during and after World War II, and who are now New Brunswick residents. We have aimed for a “maximum variation” sample (Marshall & Rossmann, 1999), following “leads” and seeking participants to represent groups of people we have not heard from in our study. Our sample so far includes women from four countries of origin, several locations in New Brunswick, and a variety of family compositions.

Our interview style is influenced by the work of Rubin and Rubin (1995), Mishler (1986), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and feminist authors such as Bateson (1989 & 2000) and Mauthner (1998). Rather than enter each interview with a pre-determined schedule, we ask our participants to tell us stories about their experiences since coming to Canada as war-brides. Guiding the interview toward post-arrival stories, we therefore gently discourage stories that stray from the purpose of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). We utilize preliminary statements to structure interviews, and enable both our participants and ourselves as interviewers to jointly construct meaning from the words uttered and the stories narrated (Mishler, 1986). During the interviews, we attend to the dynamics of the war-brides’ narrations and to their “shifts and changes,” as Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 71) express it, which means that “we are constantly negotiating, constantly re-evaluating and maintaining flexibility and openness to an ever-changing landscape.” As feminist researchers, we also listen attentively for silent or silenced stories (Mauthner, 1998) and for “political” angles and power dimensions within stories, and for their poetic and hermeneutic dimensions as well (Randall & Clews, 2001).

Reflexivity is an important component of our methodology in the study. Accordingly, we draw upon the work of several scholars who emphasize the importance of reflexive processes in qualitative feminist research (e.g., Doane, 2003; McKay, Ryan & Sumison, 2003). In contrast to phenomenological researchers, who reflect on their research in order to unpack “conceptual baggage” and then attempt to put it to one side so that it does not interfere with the research process (e.g., Kirby & McKenna, 1989), we reflect on our own experiences and how others might perceive us, and then use these insights in our research. Some of our reflections have been solitary, some have been shared in informal conversations, and some have been discussed on tape and transcribed, thereby forming part of the database for this study. These multiple routes to self-awareness (Finlay, 2003) have assisted our different “journeys” as we explore deeper elements of ourselves, and of our

research partnership (Arvey, 2003). Reflexive processes have also provided greater depth in our understanding of the participants' stories and have enabled us to make multiple interpretations of the interview data (Alveson & Sklodberg, 2000). As a strategy for maximizing learning from both narrative research and feminist research, we therefore strongly emphasize the value of reflexivity.

Another point to stress concerning our war-bride study is that there has been no clear divide for us between data collection and data analysis. Interviews and reflections are both data and guides for work with new participants. We analyze our interview data as it is collected and then allow this analysis to help us decide which data to collect next (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In order to deepen our understanding about the stories the war-brides have shared with us, we use some of the methods proposed by Riessman (1993) and some proposed by Lieblich, Tuval-Masiach, and Zilber (1998). Like Riessman, we employ methods of textual analysis, data reduction, and the division of stories into segments so that we can analyse them separately. Similarly, we utilize Lieblich, Tuval-Masiach and Zilber's *form* and *content* as well as *holistic* and *categorical* approaches to analysis. That is, we use literary techniques for analysing the *form* of stories, such as the structure of the plot, the sequencing of events, and the emotions that the narratives evoke. We then combine this analysis of *form* with an analysis of *content*, such as is used in the social sciences. In our *content* analysis, we consider both the explicit and implicit meanings that are conveyed by our participants' words. Similarly, our analysis includes both a *holistic* consideration of each story and a *categorical* analysis of the various segments of which it is comprised.

Such analyses of the war-brides' narratives have provided insights into many dimensions of the process of resettlement. In particular, though, they have revealed the importance of the formation and transformation of *identity* that people experience during that process.

Our views about identity have been strongly influenced by narrative researcher Eliot Mishler (1999). Mishler conceives identity as interpersonal rather than intrapersonal, and as an aspect of ourselves that is constantly shifting, is relational, and is developed through dialogical relationships. With Mishler, we believe that we have multiple identities that are reflected in different ways in different contexts, identities that are in constant states of flux and change. "Metaphorically," says Mishler, "we speak or sing ourselves as a chorus of voices, not just as the tenor or soprano soloist" (p. 8). The aptness of Mishler's metaphor of narratives as "identity performances" is impressive, we believe, as is his view that "we express, display, make claims for who we are – and who we would like to be-in the stories we tell and how we tell them" (p. 19).

MULTIPLE LEARNINGS

As indicated at the beginning, our contention in this article is that research processes, as well as the more specific exploration of research data, can promote learning for many groups of people, including research participants, researchers, and others who have an interest in the study. In this case, the interviews with war brides provided an opportunity for them to gain further understanding about their resettlement processes. But data from the study will also be of value to present-day newcomers to Canada, to the people who assist them with their resettlement, and to students, teachers, and researchers in a variety of fields. Finally, the research processes have certainly acted as a catalyst for our own learning as the researchers. We now consider the learnings of each of these groups in turn.

Learning for the war-brides

Participants often raised issues about identity, which suggests to us that these were important for them to explore. For example, the question of national identity was discussed during the first few minutes of an interview conducted by Rosemary. In an attempt to form connections with the participants, Rosemary often began with disclosure about her mother's war-bride status, as she does here with "Anna":

Rosemary: *My mother was one of the war brides who went the other way. She was a Canadian girl that went to England. I was born in Canada.*

Anna: *But you still have an English accent.*

Rosemary: *I remained in Britain until 1993 then I came back and stayed.*

Anna: *So do you like it better in Canada than you do in England?*

Rosemary: *Sometimes, it's different. And there are times when I think [that] I'd like to be with people whose accent sounds like mine. But then I think Canada has so much to offer.*

Roles are reversed as Anna asks Rosemary for her ideas about the countries in which she has lived. Interestingly, Rosemary responds with the same hesitancy and ambivalence that characterizes the responses of the participants in the study.

Another participant, "Olive," describes a joke about her national identity and also shows uncertainty about it. "They say, 'Anyway, where are you from?' And I tease them sometimes. *I saw this man one day, and I said, 'I'm from South Africa.'* And he was laughing – because they notice, when you talk a little while" [that you sound different]. In response to a question about her national identity, she replied: "I think I would be Canadian. I like Canada, yeah. I think Canada is a wonderful country and I think it's good." After more than half a century, Olive is reminded about her country of origin by chance remarks

from strangers. She makes light of these remarks, but they must contribute to the ambivalence that is suggested by her hesitancy when she is asked about the country with which she identifies. Differences in language, accent, and skin colour are often used to differentiate those who are considered truly Canadian (i.e., English speaking, white) and those who are considered outsiders (Ramos, 2001). This belief about “Canadian-ness” may make it difficult for newcomers to form a Canadian national identity.

“Jane” echoes the struggle with developing a single national identity. *“Sometimes women couldn’t adjust, you know, after living in one place.”* She acknowledges her own struggle saying: *“You’re torn between the two. Half of you still lives in Britain and half of you lives in Canada. I’m half and half. I’m really half and half – No doubt about it.”* Jane indicates that there are difficulties with having with a dual national identity. In a similar way, Ramos (2001) and Khayatt (2001) have documented their personal difficulties forging national identities, simply because they do not fit nicely into the dual categories of Canadian or immigrant/newcomer (Khayatt, 2001; Ramos, 2001). Jane resists being one or the other but contrasts her own ability to adjust with the failure to do so by others. “Wendy” contrasts what is real (her Canadian home) with how she feels (British) when she comments: *“I still feel British, but this is my home now.”*

Despite having spent between 50 and 60 years in this country, none of these women responded with ease to the interviewer’s questions about national identity.

“Martha,” however, seemed to have more certainty:

Martha: *I’m so tired of going to England. If, somebody said to me, “where is the last place on earth you’d want to go?” I think I would say England (laugh).*

Interviewer: *You’re a Canadian in your heart now?*

Martha: *Oh absolutely. But I think there are still a lot of war-brides that say, “Oh I’d love to go and live at home.” Mother used to say to me, “Why don’t you come to live in England?” And I used to say, “Mother, I can’t afford it.” A lot of people do go back and they get such a bad shock that they turn around and come back again. We’ve seen a lot of that, you know, a lot of people come back.*

Although there appears to be little identity confusion in Martha’s response, her rejection of England seems very strong and her response to a question about being “Canadian in her heart” is equally adamant. When attempting to form a coherent national identity, some people may feel that they need to reject a large part of their history (Ramos, 2001). Consequently, it is possible that Martha’s strong rejection of England has assisted in her development of

a single Canadian national identity. Martha indicates that others have not adopted a Canadian identity easily and some still move back to England.

In the case of “Helen,” when the conversation turns to issues of identity, she asks the interviewer to turn off the tape. The interviewer reassures her that nobody outside the research team will be given information that could reveal her identity. Helen then agrees that the tape can be turned on and tearfully states: “*I was born a Brit and I’ll die a Brit.*” She indicates that she lets her friends believe that she has Canadian citizenship, even though she still has a British passport. Helen’s national identity is quite painful for her to discuss and is something that she thinks she must hide.

What learnings might have emerged for the war-brides themselves from these disclosures about identity? By asking women in their late 70s and 80s to share their wisdom, the research process alone might have enhanced their sense of self-worth. This is especially the case since our fast-paced and constantly changing world, the North American “love affair with change” as Bateson (2000) puts it, devalues the wisdom of age. Furthermore, writing and speaking personal stories gives people a voice, and may empower them to make corrections in how they have viewed things thus far (Cooper, 1991). Accordingly, although our study was not intended to provide a therapeutic intervention, the review of life narratives provided an opportunity for these women to do what older people often do quite readily, which is to “dwell in the past” or to “live on their memories” (Seabrook, 2003, p. 104). The narration of one’s life-story could act not just as a “clinical intervention” but also as a research tool that provides “a forum for the older person to share personal meanings of life experiences” (Sheridan & Kisor, 2000, p. 120). Helen’s tears, for example, suggested that there was unfinished business in regard to her sense of national identity. In general, our participants’ hesitancy in answering questions suggests that they valued the opportunity not only to *share* this dimension of their identities but to *explore* it and *learn* about it too.

Learning for newcomers and for those who help them resettle

The process of immigration often brings with it a need to re-story many of the dimensions of identity. A move to another country frequently entails a change in occupation, which results in a change in occupational *identity*. The lives of all family members will change as well. With this comes a change in relationships within the family, and for women, a change in identity as mother, wife, or daughter. When we move, our social world changes and this is accompanied by a change in social identity. Whether it be occupational, familial, or social, much identity-restorying thus needs to occur.

When people leave their countries of origin they also leave behind much of their support network. There is frequently a reluctance to worry people “back

home” with even the most pressing of problems (Clews, 2000). Furthermore, a telephone conversation or an e-mail message is rarely an appropriate way to share ideas and feelings that will assist with identity changes. People who are employed to assist newcomers to resettle and volunteers who spend time assisting the work in resettlement agencies will often therefore be called upon to be *story-listeners* to help newcomers with the restorying of their identity. Such resettlement workers need to encourage newcomers to have patience while this restorying occurs. Also, they need skills to engage in effective story-listening, plus an awareness that the process of identity-restorying can continue for decades.

As newcomers embark on their own processes of identity-restorying, they will hear stories of other newcomers engaging in this same process. Our interviews with the war-brides have shown us that, even after half a century, people who have been born in another land may still be exploring their national identities. Several women told us, for instance, that they had contemplated a permanent return to their countries of origin, and many visit their first homes frequently. We have concluded that newcomers need to be patient with themselves and to recognize that the re-storying process is lengthy and complex.

The results of this study also have implications for policymakers. At present, funding is available to assist the resettlement of refugees for one year after their arrival in Canada. At the end of this time, they must rely on benefits and services available to all Canadian residents. From the narratives of the women we have interviewed, policy makers could learn about the complexity and duration of identity-restorying processes and thus perhaps extend the funding for resettlement services.

Learning for students, teachers, and researchers

Narratives can be sources for learning at public schools, colleges, and universities (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Students can learn directly from the narratives of the war brides, and teachers in all levels of formal education can use such narratives to inform curriculum content. Within public schools, for example, these narratives could bring to life classes in social studies and modern history. They could also act as catalysts for students in senior public school and college to explore their own identities and to gain a greater cross-cultural awareness. As well, they might have a place in many humanities, social science, and health or human service courses at the university level, including courses in English, history, sociology, education, gerontology, nursing, and social work. In these and similar courses, methods of learning that encourage reflexivity, such as journaling, role playing, simulations, story writing and letter writing, and exercises that promote cross-cultural understanding could be developed by using narratives or the concepts that lie within them (for example, Clews & Powers, 2004).

Finally, our own narratives as the researchers in this study may assist other researchers who are exploring learning processes that occur during narrative reflexive research. For this reason, we have attempted to describe personal and professional learning that we have gained from our work, in the hope that others will be encouraged to see the value of narrative and reflexive methodologies.

Learning for Rosemary

Rosemary's reflections at various stages of the study assisted in restorying her own *national* identity. Prior to beginning the study, her reflections on her mother's war-bride experiences allowed her to learn more about ways in which her identity-confusion paralleled that of her mother. Re-storying her mother's experience facilitated the re-storying of her own identity. The interviews with the war brides revealed similarities between her experiences of moving to Canada in the 1990s and the relocation experienced by the war-brides half a century earlier, thereby confirming that the stories of yesterday can indeed provide valuable learning for today.

Learning for Kristin

Not all researcher-learnings are about the issues discussed by participants. This is particularly the case for a researcher who is an "outsider" to the research topic. For Kristin, for example, the interviews with the war-brides did not trigger thoughts and feelings about national identity because, having lived in Canada all of her life, her national identity had never been a story that she had needed to narrate. Instead, the interviews triggered thoughts and feelings about her identity as a woman and as a feminist.

While interviewing and transcribing interviews, Kristin noticed a shared narrative among the war-bride participants about what it means to be a "good woman" (e.g., standing by your man, putting others' needs before your own). From a feminist perspective, however, the "good woman" narrative is problematic, because it prescribes particular ways for women to live their lives, ways that typically benefit others (men and children) and not the women themselves (e.g., Rich, 1986). Consequently, the "good woman" narrative hinders possibilities that are important to women's mental health and well-being. As a feminist who struggles both personally and professionally to deconstruct this narrative, Kristin thus felt conflicted while listening to the war brides – who had so much more life experience than herself – support this "good woman" narrative that has been oppressive to many women. This internal conflict provided an opportunity for her to read and reflect on the differences between herself and these women who are 50 years her senior. She noted how the war brides had very different lives from her own. During their teen years, they had faced life and death issues around safety, shelter, and food. In contrast, during Kristin's teen years, she worried

about matters such as school, career, and relationships. Born in 1975, into a growing and vibrant feminist movement, she therefore had the benefit of having access to narratives that promote gender equality. When the war brides were women in their twenties, however, these alternative narratives were not as accessible. The discontinuity that Kristin experienced across generations of women may be a result of the continuously shifting social and political climate regarding women's rights (Bateson, 1989). Due to the oppressed nature of women's status in society, women's lives are much more discontinuous across generations than those of men, and as a result different generations of women may have a different set of narratives available for how to live their lives "as women." Reflections about this difference helped Kristin to be less critical towards the narratives of the war brides.

CONCLUSION: NARRATIVES OF WAR-BRIDES – CATALYSTS FOR LEARNING?

Inspired by North American Aboriginal teachings, one scholar has argued that we should teach from our own stories rather than from the stories of others (Zapf, 1997). An Aboriginal colleague told one of the authors of this article that it is important to tell a story and then allow others to construct their own learning from it (Sacobie, 1999). Here we have shared some of our learnings about our identities as women, as people who work with newcomers, and as researchers. We invite our readers to take from these stories what they will. Rather than ending at this point, however, we will conclude by reiterating some of the most powerful learning for ourselves that has arisen from our research because these insights may also be relevant for others.

First, our hunch that the wisdom of war-brides would facilitate multiple learnings has been confirmed: we have learned about ourselves as women, as professionals, and as researchers. One of us has explored issues about her national identity, and has done some re-storying of her mother's experiences; the other has learned more about relationships between women of different generations. Both of us can identify learning that will assist us in our professional activities as researchers and as human service workers alike. Our anticipation is that the learning we have gained from these narratives about identity could also act as catalysts for the learning of a variety of specified groups.

Second, our awareness of the multi-faceted nature of identity has grown through our work with the narratives of these women. In this paper, we have explored one dimension in particular – national identity. However, our participants also shared (and possibly developed) their occupational identities, their social identities, and their identities as family members.

Third, we have learned once again the vital importance of reflexivity in narrative studies. We will continue to read about reflexivity and to devise new methods of individual and team reflections at all stages of our research

process. Our interviews elicit richer data and our analyses are stronger, we believe, because we have engaged in reflexive processes concerning the interplay between our own stories and those of our participants.

Finally, we are more committed than ever to narrative research. We have enjoyed hearing the narratives of war-brides and learning from their experiences. As each interview has ended we have felt privileged that these women have been willing to share the wisdom they have gained from their life experiences. The stories of the war-brides have acted as catalysts for learning on numerous levels. We thank them.

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ROSEMARY CLEWS is a Saskatchewan-born woman who moved to England with her war-bride mother when she was two years old. She spent her childhood in England. Rosemary was educated at several British universities where she was employed as a social work researcher, educator and practitioner. She returned to Saskatchewan in her 50th year. At present she is Assistant Vice President (Research) at St. Thomas University, Fredericton, NB.

KRISTIN NEWMAN is a doctoral candidate in psychology at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

Née en Saskatchewan, ROSEMARY CLEWS déménage en Angleterre à l'âge de deux ans avec sa mère, une épouse de guerre. C'est en Angleterre qu'elle passe son enfance. Elle a étudié dans différentes universités britanniques où elle a travaillé en tant que chercheuse en travail social, éducatrice et travailleuse sociale. Elle revient en Saskatchewan dans sa 50e année. Elle est actuellement vice-présidente adjointe (recherche) à l'Université St. Thomas de Frédéricton au Nouveau-Brunswick.

KRISTIN NEWMAN est candidate au doctorat en psychologie à l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick à Frédéricton.