

A VOLUME IN PEACE EDUCATION

Crafting Peace Through Autoethnography

Reflexive Pedagogies for
Navigating Difficult Times

Susan Mossman Riva



Crafting Peace Through Autoethnography

Reflexive Pedagogies for Navigating Difficult Times

A Volume in Research in Peace Education

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Crafting Peace Through Autoethnography

**Reflexive Pedagogies for
Navigating Difficult Times**

by

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan –
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1
4DL

First edition 2025

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83708-547-7 (Print paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-83708-546-0 (Print hardback)
ISBN: 978-1-83708-548-4 (Ebook)
ISBN: 978-1-83708-549-1 (EPUB)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the Taos Institute founders and associates for co-creating a generative academic space where I was able to participate as a doctoral student. Taos Institute colleagues have continually provided support and nurturing for my research as well as my authorship. I would also like to thank my students for allowing me to showcase their work. I am very grateful for the opportunity of teaching within the Department of Cultural and Social Studies at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and the resources that have allowed me to develop transformational pedagogies for online learning. And I am most grateful for Professor Laura Finley's editing that has allowed me to share my concepts and vision.

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FOREWORD

Sheila McNamee

In *Crafting Peace Through Autoethnography: Reflexive Pedagogies for Navigating Difficult Times*, Susie Riva provides readers with uplifting, creative, and generative resources for a transformative pedagogy. She draws strands from ancient traditions, wide-ranging cultures, and contemporary approaches to research and teaching. In this work, there is no separation between music, art, spirituality, personal life, and scholarly work. The point of pedagogy is to illustrate the power of fusing personal life stories with academic learning. Her point—and it is a vitally important point—is that academic learning (education) is made possible when it is realized (literally “made real”) in our lives.

To this end, Riva proposes an integration of autoethnography and narrative practices. Life stories are central to this work. As learners explore and interrogate their life stories, they are encouraged to connect their personal lives with class materials (readings, etc.). In so doing, learners move well beyond the simple absorption of information that is common in educational contexts. Absorbing course information is most often aimed only at regurgitating it for an assignment or test. But when given the tools introduced in this volume—tools that link narratives of conflict and illness to academic discourses—students find emergent pathways. These new pathways offer alternative understandings of one’s life and provide relational connections that go beyond the individual. These pathways open spaces for new encounters, new ways forward. Thus, an academic course is no longer a container for concepts, theories, and abstract analyses. Now academic coursework entails personal application and social transformation.

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There is so much packed into this volume that reading it is like uncovering a treasure chest with layers and layers of precious jewels. At the center of the treasure chest is an inviting description and several illustrations of Riva's transformagram pedagogy. Drawing on the idea that in conflict we find wisdom, the transformagram learning model provides a tool for what Riva calls the "anthropology of becoming." Through transformagram learning, we begin to "home in" to our inner compass, thereby creating the connectivity and relational "glue" that opens new narratives and thus new possibilities.

As we home *in* to our inner compass, finding new words or meaning containers, we give form to new storylines or flyways. In this creative space, writing like researching can be a future forming endeavor. Words hold a creative seed-force that shape our actions through narrative unfoldment. We can use words with the intention to transform. Re-wording is part of the shapeshifting process. This creative potentiality acts upon individual becomingness, fostering a cultural shift. The two are interconnected. (Riva, this volume, p. xxi)

Stories of trauma, conflict, or illness are now re-narrated in a future-forming manner. Riva offers her own story of reuniting with her birth family as a poignant illustration, offering that "tracing previously unforeseen routes awakened the ability to orient" (this volume, p. 7).

There is one additional, important aspect of Riva's transformagram pedagogy: accompaniment. Here, learners flourish by sharing their movement through the transformagram learning model. Focusing on a conflict/illness experience, students embark on a process of analysis and re-visioning that follows several stages. They are accompanied not only by the orienting questions they are asked to address or the artwork they create as an alternative narrative of their life experience, but they are partnered with another student who also reflects and enters into their story. Thus, the autoethnography mutates into a duoethnography where the criss-crossing of narrative lines opens possibilities previously unimagined.

There is so much to this pedagogy and in this brief foreword, I have not attempted to detail but only to provide an inkling of the pedagogical shift being offered. By *homing in* on the person and emphasizing the relational power of accompaniment, Riva offers us an image of education that transforms the person through connection of the personal with the social, cultural, and ecological. As Riva claims, life-o-grams become transformograms and transformagrams form the future into which we all live.

PREFACE

GROWING WISE

The Story Weaver

I am the story weaver, the connector,

I spin storylines from my loom, to be woven into life-giving patterns,

*The basic plots provide the archetypal forms, connecting and remembering narratives
within the noosphere,*

*The better-formed story emerges from the beautifying process, by carefully choosing
the story strands that galvanize transformation within the ever-expanding tapestry,*

The oeuvre emerges as a story mandala threaded from the loom of life-story,

*Mediatorship guides the creative process, providing directionality held within golden
strands of wisdom,*

Behold the image, transformed through autoethnographic creativity. —Susie Riva

I Ching: The Creative

*“All day long the superior man is creatively active. At nightfall his mind is still beset
with cares. Danger. No blame.*

What does this signify?

*The Master said: The superior man improves his character and labors at his task.
It is through loyalty and faith that he fosters his character. By working on his words,
so that they rest firmly on truth, he makes his work enduring. He knows how this
is to be achieved and achieves it; in this way he is able to plant the right seed. He
knows how it is to be brought to completion and so completes it; thereby he is able to
make it truly enduring. For this reason he is not proud in his superior position nor
disappointed in an inferior one. Thus he is creatively active and, as circumstances
demand, careful, so that even in a dangerous situation he does not make a mistake.
All day long he is creatively active. This is the way he carries out his undertakings.*

All day long he is creatively active. He moves with the time.” (I Ching, p. 380)

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The *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes* was translated by Richard Wilhelm and it has a foreword written by C.J. Jung underscoring the importance of the book's method that aims at ascertaining the importance of self-knowledge. "I of course am thoroughly convinced of the value of self-knowledge, but is there any use in recommending such insight, when the wisest of men throughout the ages have preached the need of it without success?" (Jung, as cited in Wilhelm, 2022, p. xxxiv).

This ancient Chinese book is a sort of animated being that one can ask questions to and, in return, receive intuitive answers. Jung asked questions of the *I Ching* to demonstrate its method in his forward. I have found this to be an important ritual for beginning creative endeavors. Following this method, I asked the *I Ching* to guide me as I brought my work into the world through this book. I had followed the same method when I wrote, "Homing In, An Adopted Child's Story Mandala of Connecting Reunion and Belonging." This time, I opened to the pages that give insight into the creative act. I was encouraged by the answer that I got. It seemed to suggest that if we continue to be creatively active, working on our words, we may make our work enduring by planting the right seed. This wisdom contains seed-force, a generative force that gives rise to the anthropology of becoming. C.J. Jung lived during a time when ancient texts were translated into Western languages. Jung's introductions linked and mediated the sense of these sacred texts, and in so doing, enriched and deepened our understanding of the human condition.

It is my hope that I am planting a seed that will flourish in the hearts and minds of my readership. This book aims to share the transformational processes that I have discovered through autoethnographic practice in the hopes that these recollections will inspire others to be creatively active through narrative practices. I am convinced that the creative process allows us to bring our lifework to completion for the greater good of the Earth Community.

This book introduces a method for growing wise that has its roots in the ancient wisdom traditions. Conflict wisdom is a rudder guiding mediatorship, an interconnected vision of practice. "Mediatorship offers an interdisciplinary and multi-layered approach to conflict resolution, providing a vessel of exploratory practices" (Riva, 2023, p. 4) Mediatorship contains or holds together a continuum of conflict resolution practices, increasing connectivity while linking the phases of complex peace-making processes. Through mediatorship we can craft peace in a holistic approach, becoming instruments of peace. Being creatively active reinforces our ability to find our way through our conflict and illness narratives. Gnosis, the Greek word for knowledge, is revealed through the questioning process that becomes a quest for knowledge. Through mediatorship we become receptacles of transformative guidance.

Mediatorship implies the ability to imagine a way forward. Jean-Paul Lederach refers to this as *imaginative, mediative capacity* (Lederach, 2005, p. 95). “Mediative capacity requires us to think about social spaces for constructive change processes that have intermediary impact” (Lederach, 2005, p. 95). He suggests that we recognize the relational potential within these intermediary social spaces. These liminal spaces contain creative fecundity that can be activated and used for peacebuilding. He further explains the difference between mediative capacity and mediation. “Mediative suggests a quality of relational interaction rather than specificity of role” (Lederach, 2005, p. 95). Mediatorship embodies this imaginative mediative capacity, linking together phases of resolution processes within an integrated framework that envisions a commonly shared future. This approach shapeshifts our understanding of mediation by highlighting the relationships within the process-structure that is taking form. “The purpose of the process-structure is reconciliation that centers on the redefinition and restoration of broken relationships” (Lederach, 2020, p. 491). Conflict wisdom has the capacity to behold linkedness within resolution processes. In French, I use the term “faire le lien.” Linkedness is a connective force that strengthens relationships in the in-between spaces. I understand mediation to be a form of linkedness (Riva, 2009, 2019). Mediatorship employs narrative conflict resolution methods to galvanize generative potentiality for constructive social change. Mediatorship enhances relational connectivity that engenders transformational processes. Mediatorship infuses transformational processes with directionality, using the imaginative mediative capacity as a future forming method (Gergen, 2015).

Future forming methods like autoethnography allow us to shapeshift. Autoethnography provides a method that develops our ability to increase our connectivity so that we can home *in* to our inner compass. In this heart-felt space, we connect with a source that provides us with directionality. We can learn to become pathfinders by engaging with narrative methods of inquiry. Self-knowledge can be developed through narrative methods that reinforce narrative coherency; a process of brain integration that has been found to protect us from mental illnesses.

Conflict wisdom is a story thread that beatifies our story mandalas. Wisdom traditions offer insights into ancient practices that engender wholeness. Autoethnographic practice incorporates intrapersonal conflict resolution that builds resiliency and fosters peacefulness. We find peace by increasing our narrative coherency, aligning with our highest purpose and vision of the good life. Mediatorship contains an integrated continuum of practices that span from the intrapersonal to the international. “In building our own resiliency, we can further attain intrapersonal peace that will in turn help build international peace” (Silverman, 2020, p. 21). This approach teaches how to craft peace through a transformational learning process.

If I may borrow from a powerful metaphor, this transformational pedagogy provides tools for forging swords used for warfare and conflict into ploughshares used for cultivation. It is generative. This method empowers us to intricately interweave the strands of intersecting narratives, re-storying and repairing the narrative fabric of our life histories. Through autoethnographic practice, we learn how to craft vessels of peace that are constructed from the shared experiences encapsulated in our conflict and illness narratives. This craftsmanship is accomplished by developing a lens that allows us to perceive interconnectivity.

I propose that we consider these insights using the holistic and comparative lens of anthropology to analyze resolution processes. I have applied this pedagogy to medical anthropology more specifically in the disciplines of integrative medicine, conflict resolution, and sustainability. As illness and conflict narratives are socially constructed, they can be shapeshifted-deconstructed and reconstructed. Autoethnography opens to transformational passageways where we experience a form of living wisdom that we can learn to sense. In this creative space, symbols activate a source of psychic energy that can be used to evoke heroic deeds on what can be understood as the hero's journey. Our representations can be energized through creative mythology inspired by our cultural myths.

Journeymanship, or lifelong learning, becomes a heroic endeavor, especially as we collectively search for solutions to the polycrisis humanity is facing. Polycrisis refers to the collective experience of the simultaneous coming together of the pandemic, economic insecurity, political polarization, identity crisis, wars, and climate crisis. The perception of borderlessness confounded by geopolitical forces vying for power threatens stability. The superimposition of these entangled crises have created a mental health shock wave that is affecting youth and education. Polycrisis requires cross-sectional learning that engenders interconnected responses that can be fostered by opening up narrative threads and making insightful connections.¹

In this context, conflict wisdom is used for crafting mediatorship and peace through an integral approach. The wisdom traditions provide seed-force for transformational resolution processes that culminate in narrative concrescence. The *transformagram pedagogy* and *transformagram learning model* were designed to open creative and dialogical space. Through the social constructionist lens, autoethnography becomes a transformational method that is expressed through beautified story mandalas and students' *transformagram portfolios*. By employing the transformagram learning model within social science courses, lifelong learners explore the different facets of mediatorship. Through this creative endeavor, relational matrices are transfigured. This future forming lens works like a kaleidoscope, reconfiguring narrative matters. The book uses "autoethnographicity" to

engage readers in the world-making process so that they can authentically participate in the story being told.

A story mandala is a creative space for autoethnographic practice where story threads circumambulate around Self in a shapeshifting ritual that generates self-transformation. This circular, transformative process becomes a creative act as story mandalas are beautified by weaving storylines together in spiraling forms of narrative concrescence. Increased narrative concrescence is guided by the truth-seeking process that weaves together fragmented parts of Self in a creative act that fosters increased wholeness. This sense of completeness is part of the healing process. The story mandala symbolically represents the transformed *Self* within the transformagram learning model.

Autoethnographic practice shapeshifts and beautifies the patterns within the story mandala. The writing process shifts perceptions and opens up creative space that engenders increased flexibility and a capacity to see new lines of flight or *flyways*. The *transformagram* process opens autoethnographers to new beginnings through the questing process that galvanizes the creative act. Autoethnography takes the reflexive process inward into the intrapersonal and then outward towards the interpersonal, expanding relational awareness that gives rise to increased connectivity and linkedness. Conflict narratives are enriched through an expansive meaning-making process that activates quest orientation.

The Homeric texts are ancient Greek texts that offer perennial wisdom. Homer's odyssey can be understood as a spiritual quest. It is a journey back to where you are.² This journey is not for the feet, it is a *walkthrough*, akin to an inner transformational process. In Homer, we see that **home** is encoded in the author's name. Homer is possibly a key-name that opens to a deeper understanding of each person's journey or spiritual quest. The odyssey traces the **homing in process**, as voyagers find their way back to the homeland and the experience of homecoming. The homeward journey is guided by the memory of the Good. This "memoire" is a guiding force that simultaneously acts on our vision of the future. It is future forming, because it offers a lens for perceiving the good and the beautiful in ourselves, those accompanying us on our journey, and in life itself. This book offers a new vision of scholarship where fellowship is reinforced through mediatorship. The chapters in this book take the reader on an autoethnographic journey, it is an inner transformation that takes you to Self, a journey back to where you are.

ENDNOTES

1. World Economic Forum "Can the word 'polycrisis' help us make sense of a post COVID world? Historian Adam Tooze's response in a podcast.

Retrieved April 26, 2024, from https://open.spotify.com/episode/0GALiyBCvEsuIteyupVoAX?go=1&sp_cid=c844fa859229557c68cf6b0f6b62bdf6&utm_source=embed_player_p&utm_medium=desktop&nd=1&dlsi=ce00d0ba467042af

2. Riva blog, *Spiritual Quest: Homing In to the Meaning of Homer's Odyssey*, Retrieved February 23, 2024, from <https://www.susanmossmanrivawrites.com/blog/spiritual-quest-homing-in-to-the-meaning-of-homers-odyssey>

AN INTRODUCTION TO AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

Let us beat swords into ploughshares.

—The book of Isaiah, Chapter 2

Excerpt from Mary Gergen's Life Stories, *Pieces of a Dream*:

The songs of mermaids are not like other songs. Mermaids' voices sing beyond the human range—notes not heard, forms not tolerated, and each to each, not one to many, one above all. If we imagine the mermaids, we might almost hear them singing. Their voices blending, so that each in its own special timbre, lends to the harmony of the whole. So it might be as one writes—a voice in a choir at the threshold of sensibility. My voice shall be only one of many to be heard.
(Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 65)

When women's voices are amplified through qualitative research methods, previously uninvestigated ethnographies can contribute to the edification of the social, providing qualitative frameworks for research and engaged practices. I have been living with the question, "How can we better prepare our students for living and working in difficult times?" This question has oriented my quest.

In response to increasing evidence of decreasing mental health in youth and particularly among young women, it is necessary to adapt our teaching methods to prepare students in the social sciences for the realities of

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pandemics, war, and climate change. Social constructionist perspectives posit that mental health and mental illness are relative to the context of the social environment (Morshidi & Toh, 2023, p. 2). The current global situation is being referred to as polycrisis. I believe that our current polycrisis requires educational response-ability. My teaching story shares a method for addressing complexity with the method of narrative inquiry, honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and experience (Clandinin, 2013, p. 17).

Relational responsibility grounds the meaning-making process in use-embedded accounts. This approach has directed social constructionists to ask, “Perhaps, the central issue, then, is what kinds of social worlds do different theories make possible?” (McNamee & Gergen, 1999, p. 5). By giving value to the importance of relationships, we can shift our focus to the potential inherent in fostering relational resilience. As we face difficult times, it is necessary to not only increase narrative coherency within individuals, but to develop methods that strengthen relationships among peers. As scholar practitioners, this positionality allows us to acknowledge our relational responsibility as teachers, and in so doing, search for more ethical teaching methods that consider the whole person. This relational approach recognizes our relational being and the importance of relational processes in the social sciences. But it goes beyond. “There is a space then, for appreciating the sacred potential of collaborative practices. Daily life takes on spiritual significance” (Gergen, 2009, p. xxix).

Exploratory research has shown that the *transformagram learning model* develops resiliency by using narrative methods that accompany students throughout the transformative process. This interdisciplinary approach not only develops a holistic lens, but places importance on mutual accompaniment through relational processes. Learning in difficult times requires pedagogies that elicit adaptability so that students can develop the necessary skills needed for our current epoch. Autoethnography is a method and tool that can be applied in pedagogies designed to develop what psychiatrist Daniel Siegel refers to as narrative coherence that happens through narrative and neural integration.

This mapping process may be at the heart of autobiographical narrative and the way the mind attempts to achieve a sense of coherence among its various states: trying to make sense of the self in the past, the present, and anticipated future. (Siegel, 2020, p. 454)

As teachers, we cannot ignore the fact that societal concerns are influencing the mental health and well-being of the student body. Students need to actively quest for solutions in ways that don’t endanger their mental health. As teachers, it is important that we tell our stories of resiliency, reinforcing relational bonds between teachers and students as they learn

to find their way. Though this narrative exposure may make teachers more vulnerable, it may also help students to better navigate their lives, modeling teaching methods that are aligned with relational approaches and the theoretical frameworks that support this positionality.

Students can gain from wisdom that has been transmitted through integral learning approaches and traditions. As growing numbers of students increasingly face mental health problems linked to societal problems, reflective learning processes, inspired by social psychology, can offer insights into the co-construction of new teaching models. It is upon us to recognize the warning signs and respond with appropriate solutions. We need to consciously address how the rapid social revolutions that we are experiencing are contributing to the vulnerability of our young people. “Life trajectories that young adults go through make them vulnerable to social changes and mental health issues” (Morshidi & Toh, 2023, p. 3)

This book reinforces scholar practitioners’ response-ability. Autoethnographic quotes, from my adoption and reunion story, illustrate how narrative practices generate a form of narrative coherency, spanning from the intrapersonal to the societal. Social psychology provides a conceptual framework for understanding how individuals are nested within larger social processes and the relevance of this perception for education. Within this context, transformational learning pedagogies have rendered medical anthropology courses more relevant by incorporating illness experience through narrative practices. Scholar practitioners are invited to ask fundamental questions that will elicit reflections that can link their teaching practices to the evolving needs of students. Research has documented the emergence of mental health problems related to the multiple factors characterizing the current global context. “The social sciences as a discipline, provide a vital perspective in understanding of how the complex interactions between social forces and individual factors impact the mental health and psychological well-being of young adults” (Morshidi & Toh, 2023, p. 1).

How can we show up with courage and resourcefulness in times of crises? And how can new learning models provide us with effective ways for connecting with our inner source and compass for efficacious wayfinding? Countering uncertainty with knowledgeability and promoting well-being with self-knowledge is the seed-force for growing wise. With the increasing mental health problems that have been documented among students, it is necessary to develop pedagogies that present knowledge about current crises in ways that nurture narrative coherency and well-being. This is especially true for future health professionals that have high burn out rates that stem from the constant stress they face in healthcare.

When young students participate in my medical anthropology courses, they open themselves to transformational learning experiences that reinforce their resiliency. There are students considering professional pathways

in health administration, some as healthy lifestyle coaches, and others as nurses and doctors. I often have professional students in various healthcare fields that are part of continuing education programs.

The focus on knowledgeable ability provides a referential framework that reveals interconnectivity on multiple levels, making academic knowledge relevant in the field. This vision requires an integral approach that is also an embodied approach. Even more so, this interdisciplinary approach makes medical anthropology more significant for professional practice by relating theory to lived experience. Transformational learning is understood as going beyond in reference to transforming, transitioning, transcending, and transdisciplinary. “A passageway is a liminal space—a space of limitless possibility as the passerby considers multiple possibilities in search of new understanding (Marsick et al., 2022, p. vi). Students are invited to enter *in* to the shapeshifting process that prepares them for their lifework while raising awareness about polycrisis.

The phases of this book begin with an explanation of the autoethnographic process while incorporating illustrations from the author’s autoethnographic *oeuvre*, *Homing In: An Adopted Child’s Story Mandala of Connecting, Reunion, and Belonging* (Riva, 2020). My autoethnographic writing allowed me to develop concepts that I share in this teaching story. The chapters develop a methodological mandala incorporating narrative methods within a social constructionist framework for individual and social transformation. Autoethnographic practice is shown to be a form of way-finding that activates the inner compass by developing narrative coherency that gives rise to directionality. Illustrations from the author’s lifework show how the generative process is future forming. This transformative process encapsulated in authorship is explored through concepts that emerged from the conscious intention of writing to transform relations (Riva, 2019). The homing in mechanism is explained within the context of an adoption and reunion story. This innate ability to home in can be activated through the searching or questing process. The homing in mechanism was documented by Stiffler, who studied 70 families to better understand what she referred to as the reunion phenomenon. Her research looks at how synchronicity functions when an adoptee is separated from their birth family. She recounts the real-life drama of the search (Stiffler, 1992).

While writing *Homing In* (Riva, 2020), concepts emerged from the insights revealed through the narrative and relational processual, giving form to a teaching story. Not only did a referential scaffold emerge from the writing process, but the conviction that autoethnography is a powerful teaching tool. Remembering, or connecting memories with meaningful stories, captured events that held kernels of wisdom. Authorship allowed the unfolding storyline to elucidate the quintessence of each story kernel. Through the meaning-making process, perceptions were transformed,

which allowed for new pathways and flyways to come into sight. The invention of words generated new meanings, showing words to be vessels, transporting meaning in newly fitted word containers. For example, inspiration came in the form of the word “Earthship.” I am convinced that re-wording is part of the creative process that can potentially engender constructive social transformation.

Envisioning ways to live *in/on* “Earthship” came to mind not only as a possibility to imagine new ways of living on Earth, but also a way for redefining mutually enhancing relationships with Earth. Imagining new words that express new meanings fostered future forming possibilities. As we home *in* to our inner compass, finding new words or meaning containers, we give form to new storylines or flyways. In this creative space, writing like researching can be a future forming endeavor. Words hold a creative seed-force that shapes our actions through narrative unfoldment. We can use words with the intention to transform. Re-wording is part of the shapeshifting process. This creative potentiality acts upon individual becomingness, fostering a cultural shift. The two are interconnected.

A relational approach within a social constructionist referential framework provides a backdrop for understanding transformative social processes as well as the methods that can enact change (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). A cogent theoretical framework emerges when narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013) and medical anthropology are interwoven with transformational learning methods. Conflict resolution methods further enhance a promising methodological mandala for social transformation (Cobb et al., 2020). Narrative conflict resolution especially provides a transversal approach that connects narrative therapy with narrative conflict resolution. When autoethnography is recognized as a useful method, it can be employed to further the connections through what I refer to as linkedness.

Autoethnography provides a reflexive approach that reinforces our ability to connect and link our memories. By remembering life experience, and recounting our stories, we participate in a form of mediation. “Travelling within and back to our formative experiences with difference can support our evolving capacities to tolerate, integrate, and respond to being affected by the difference others make in our life and worlds” (Tarc et al., 2012, p. 7). Reflexivity is reinforced through relational approaches and narrative methods that enhance connectivity, mediating our life experiences.

The hero’s journey that Joseph Campbell illustrated in his writings is a metaphor for the transformational process (Campbell, 1986). As we quest, researching and searching for more viable ways of going on together, we look for pathways. Constructive social change requires a stepwise approach, walking together on the road towards the good life.

Conflict and illness narratives can be understood as the *Holy G-rail Way*, a railway towards individual and social transformation (Riva, 2020).

This *G-rail* Way has been constructed through autoethnographic workmanship. We are sacred containers like the *Sacro Catino*, the Holy Grail in the Saint Lorenzo Cathedral in Genova, Italy. This sacred basin made from ancient green glass is a relic and treasure that reinforces the existence of the legend. The Holy Grail legend has fashioned Western culture. And like this sacred vase, our body is a sacred container, filled with our verses or narratives. As we *walkthrough* our conflict narratives, exploring the meaning and using insights as steppingstones, our mind-bodies are transformed. The mind-body connection, a central concept in Integrative Medicine, is a holistic concept that reinforces our search for wholeness (Riva, 2022).

Words are meaning containers that allow us to craft mediatorship, a vessel of transportation that contains conflict wisdom. The quest takes us on a journey towards increased wholeness. Conflict and illness narratives are multifaceted and require conversational space to be recounted and heard. They often entail multidimensional narrative matters that, when spoken, become ever more coherent narratives.

The capacity to enlase individual and societal narratives requires practices gleaned from multiple theoretical frameworks and transformative practices. This *G-Rail Way* emerges from interdisciplinary generative approaches in the social sciences. Journeymanship becomes a pilgrimage from brokenness to linkedness when lifelong learning pedagogies incorporate transformational learning, engendering wholeness.

Writing and dialoguing about our lives unites us in a *communiverse* (Gergen, 2020), engendering relational mind-body within experiential learning spaces. In this space of collaborative practice, we learn to transform together. Designing pedagogy that allows world citizens to enact what has come to be known as the Green New Deal requires a relational approach. Relational being is a social constructionist concept (Gergen, 2009). Designing relational spaces where teachers and learners encounter each other within innovative learning landscapes is grounded in social constructionist practices. In this relational space, education can be understood as social construction (Dragonas et al., 2015). This scholarship envisions hopeful ways to live together *in/on* Earthship. Beholding this depiction of education is transformative. “As we behold, we actively transform the image” (Riva, 2020, p. 435).

By activating the homing in mechanism, the inner compass guides autoethnographers to passageways and flyways marked by signposts. Increased wholeness is gained by interweaving narrative methods into a mandala of transformational practices. Insights are revealed through this holistic approach. Glovircal homeplaces are envisioned and co-constructed to offer online learning opportunities for those in the margins. The global and local come together through virtual landscapes that provide safe learning spaces or homeplaces for students to explore the complexity of the social sciences.

These glouviral learning spaces underscore the growing importance of academic partnerships that can reach those in the margins (Riva, 2022).

Innovative concepts, including the meaning of living *in/on* Earthship, mediatorship, the Holy Grail Way, and relational approaches to social transformation, are presented through a social constructionist lens. The aforementioned concepts arose from autoethnographic practice, incorporating creative mythology in a way that galvanizes the power to transform. These word vessels are imbued with new meanings. These words represent concepts that elicit future forming potential. This conceptual framework will be described and further defined throughout the book chapters. It arose from a generative, greening power that St. Hildegard von Bingen referred to as *viriditas*. In this context, viriditas is fostered through generative autoethnographic practice.

Convinced of autoethnography's potential to transform, a *transformagram pedagogy* was scaffolded and developed using *transformagram pedagogies* in courses in medical anthropology and conflict resolution. This teaching story provides a transformational learning model that creates a shift. The transformagram concept was inspired from Hinton and Kirmayer's flexibility hypothesis. Their use of the word transformagram in psychiatry has been applied to transformational learning in university courses. In this way, higher education uses narrative means for therapeutic ends in reference to narrative therapy developed by White and Epston's pioneering work. In this context, pedagogy incorporates therapeutic ends.

The chapters interweave narrative methods into a mandala of transformational practices. A referential framework is presented that provides insights into the mechanisms for individual and social transformation that can be cultivated through experiential learning. Lines of flight or flyways are traced to show how generative processes are enkindled in an anthropology of becoming.

The inner and outer journey come together by offering a template for experiential learning using course resources to develop knowledgeable ability that can be applied to lived experiences. The inner world is explored using autoethnography while the outer world is studied and apprehended through coursework that reflects academic discourses. The *transformagram portfolio* brings the two dimensions together-in unison. This coming together is part of the integration process that enhances narrative coherency.

The concept of journeymanship is illustrated by embarking lifelong learners on what can be understood as a learning pilgrimage. During the journey, new landscapes of meaning appear on the horizon. Pilgrimage becomes a catalyst for experiential learning and performance. Our questing process is our performance.

We are, instead, performing inquiry. We are living and acting and being relational in our everyday engagements. For many, this is the most challenging aspect of a relational constructionist stance. It is not enough to talk/write about it. We must perform it. (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 111)

The transformagram portfolios provide a performative space. When students participate in the mapping of resources and the conceptualization of cartographies, they learn to distinguish important relationships while performing accompaniment. Students map their learning pilgrimage in a cartography that serves to elicit narrative integration.

This book offers scholar practitioners a map for teaching narrative methods like auto/duoethnography within social science courses. The reflexive pedagogy unfolds in stepwise phases that culminate in a transformagram portfolio. The pedagogical template for integrative medicine and conflict resolution can be transposed to fit other social science courses. For example, courses on environmental sustainability could be created using a *transformagram template* for eliciting an ecological conversion. The transformagram learning model can also be transposed and adapted to different subject matters.

Students engage in emancipatory process as they write their illness and conflict narratives, represent their illness/conflict in artform, and map a cartography of resources that support the resolution process. Knowledgeability is also gained by reading course materials and applying them to relevant life experiences. Learning to discern appropriate practices and methods is yet another aspect of the learning process. Through accompaniment, professors and peers give duoethnographic feed-back that increases reflexivity. This book presents narrative methods and pedagogies that can generate social transformation, using shifters that configure life-o-grams into *transformagrams* (Riva, 2021).

The chapters offer scholar practitioners a transformational learning template using narrative methods. This actionable tool kit can be employed for individual and social transformation in connection with the social sciences and, more specifically, in peace studies.

Autoethnographic practice is shown to generate wayfinding by activating the inner compass. This exploration interweaves concepts and methods into a teaching story mandala. The methods that are shared provide directionality for future forming research. When we don't have the answers to the difficult situations before us, we need to learn how to better live our questions.

PART I

WAYFINDING—AUTOETHNOGRAPHY'S GENERATIVE POTENTIALITY

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CHAPTER 1

HOMING *IN* TO PEACEMAKING

“I have Arrived, I am Home.”

—Thich Nhat Hanh

Homing *In* uses autoethnography, a transformational method, to recollect relational connections linked to kinship. *Homing In: An Adopted Child’s Story Mandala of Connecting, Reunion, and Belonging* (Riva, 2020) provided a transformative space using remembrance to better understand the radical amazement (Heschel, 2009, p. 117) embedded within my adoption and reunion story. This creative narrative space also allowed me to reconstruct my identity by remembering the events of my life “hi-story” in a way that generates narrative coherency. This process led to insights about “kinning,” a word used to describe how adopted families bond (Howel, 2007). I analyzed kinship through the lens of adoption, engaging in the autoethnographic process to tell my adoption and reunion story. I looked at attachment and identity from the perspective of an adopted child that “shape-shifted” when she found her birth family. This story evolved into an interconnected peacemaking process. The awe that was experienced through reunion was reinforced within our relational matrix by recognizing the synchronicities that had guided us and seemingly brought us together. Writing to transform relations and identifying these synchronicities lead to healing conversations.

My autoethnographic practice gave rise to a generative conceptual framework. This transformative learning process was then integrated

into pedagogies for social science courses. In this context, *transformagrams* employ narrative methods that provide a template for experiential learning (Riva, 2021). Remembering the different phases of this exploratory process illustrates how the inner and outer journey are interwoven in what has become a methodological mandala. As the storyline unfolded, it became an *oeuvre*. The art of storytelling allowed me to beautify my story mandala, transforming hardship into mediatorship. The metaphors and references that were woven into my story mandala gave it depth, linking my lifework to the lifework of others. This happened through relationships with mentors and by reading authors whose work provided great inspiration. Ultimately, this creative space became a story catcher that evolved into a teaching story.

Autoethnography can be practiced on an individual level. Autoethnography and duoethnography are also methods that can be incorporated within courses to engage students in reflexive processes that galvanize constructive social change in higher education. Duoethnography provides shared space for writing and reflecting on the autoethnographic process, increasing reflexivity while engaging in accompaniment.

Sharing my process is a way of transmitting my knowledgeable ability. I use the autoethnographic voice and method to explain my explorations that led to the discovery of a transformational learning method. I begin with my story that was told in *Homing In*, incorporating quotes that trace my process of becoming. This becomingness shows the stepwise approach that is marked by signposts. My adoption and reunion story begins with a numinous sign.

I was reunited with my birth family under the auspices of a blue moon. “Once in a blue moon” refers to rare happenings. The week we first met was astrologically marked by a second full moon within a single calendar month. We were reunited on my 33rd birthday, July 5, 1996. We finally met in Washington D.C. where my birthparents were attending a conference on education.

As I unwrapped the carefully tied package with the pretty paper print and ribbons containing the script of my life’s beginnings, I began a journey of self-discovery that was intense and all-encompassing. I experienced the incredible joy of being reunited, the reconciliation and peace that came over us all, and the intense pain contained in the deep relational wounds awakened by the search process I had initiated. It is one thing to find your birth family. It is yet another to maintain long-lasting relationships within such complex relational configurations while facing the shared sorrow that led to them making the choice to give me up for adoption and then keep on trying to live a normal life. (Riva, 2020, p. 126)

As an adopted child who found her birth family, I have explored the homing in mechanism through autoethnography, tracing relational

patterns, and developing methods that activate the inner compass. The homing in mechanism is possibly related to “DNA, memory, or the earth’s electromagnetic field” (Stiffler, 1992, p. 170). Stiffler’s (1992) case studies illustrate how those experiencing reunion embarked upon a form of spiritual journey that can be understood in Jungian psychology as the individuation process. They identified synchronicities that acted as guideposts. “Synchronicities act as clues to an underlying system that is ineffable, inexpressible, awesome, and numinous” (p. 63).

This experience of the ineffable was the catalyst for my writing process that allowed me to experience a form of transcendence. “For parents and children whose lives before reunion were based on elements of falsehood and denial, a true and complete selfhood after reunion seems to activate movement in the direction of freedom and transcendence” (Stiffler, 1992, p. 166). I experienced the homing in mechanism as a stepwise approach marked by signposts.

Through a stepwise approach, insights serve as signposts in a way forward that has a traceability imprinted within synchronistic events that serve as a waveguide for homing in to wholeness. My experience suggests that we are finely tuned pathfinders. Possibly adopted children that reunite with their birthparents exhibit this pathfinding ability in a more visible way. (Riva, 2020, p. 70)

Homing *in* became a journey illustrated through my story mandala, an *oeuvre* or lifework that reinforced my transformational process. In the preface of my book, I list several explanatory models that can offer a theoretical framework explaining the convergence that my birth family experienced when we were reunited. Not only did I find my birth parents, but my sister, who was given up for adoption a year after me, found our family the summer that I traveled from Switzerland to Nebraska to meet our birth parents. Our maternal biological grandmother was dying of cancer and somehow, we were both moved to home *in*.

My autoethnographic process began when I was 32 years old, when I first wrote a letter that was to be given to my birth mother through the Nebraska Children’s Home Foundation that had placed me in my adopted family in 1963. In that letter, I tried to tell the story of my life and explain why I was reaching out to my birth mother. That letter was a mediating artifact that allowed us to connect. But it was also an important autoethnographic exercise that obliged me to begin telling my story. “Who am I?” began the questioning process that affirmed, “I am.” in an expansive story mandala.

After our reunion, I wondered how it was all made possible. One of the theories that allowed me to better understand the connectivity that existed between our family members is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s concept of the *noosphere*. Later, I found other researchers and professors that expanded on this concept, making it even more relevant for me today. Our family’s

story underscores the existence of a connective field or planetary mind that allows separated family members to home *in*, through a synchronistic timescape. It seems that our interconnected heartstrings manifested our reunion. Somehow, we heard chords rising from the strings of a harp that were playing a coded melody, resonating throughout the heartsphere. We attuned to this melodic guidance from the harpist who was calling us home.

Reunion heightened my sensitivity to integral approaches. Being consciously aware of interconnectedness shaped my understanding of belonging within my multiple families and belonging on Earth, within the Earth Community. This expanded my understanding of time and space and how they are intertwined. The word timescape accentuates a multi-dimensional understanding of time embedded in space. It is also a word being used to discuss notions of time in relation to the Anthropocene (Bensaude-Vincent, 2022). Timescapes allow us to explore how hindsight, foresight, and insight all interact when looking at life history.¹ Remembering is more of a circular process than a linear process. Timescapes bring together multilayered memories where the remembering process in the present acts upon the past and the future. Reminiscence in a timescape transforms perceptions of life history through the recollecting process that resonates through time. Reminiscence acts on our ability to lifescape, transforming the landscapes of meaning. Remembering captures and intensifies our attention, focusing our regard in a way that opens our eyes to new vistas that were hidden from our view.

A metaphor for this understanding of time and space can be illustrated in the way we choose the path up the mountain. Some would see a pathway going straight up, while others may find a way that winds up and around the mountain, providing more viewpoints as you make your way up to the top. The mountainscape, from this perspective, offers interconnected scenic views. The circular pathway enriches our ability to see from different vantage points, circling through forest as we make our way up to the mountain peak. Autoethnographic writing can be approached as a journey up the mountain that offers a higher vision or transcendence. “That vision of things not seen eventually changes the way things are” (Lederach, 1999, p. 195). Autoethnographic practice transforms reminiscence through the meaning-making process, changing our perception of the past and how we look to the future, on a pathway that winds upward through our stories. This can be imagined as a spiraling creative process.

Meaning-making processes provide a form of understanding that allows people to endure suffering and overcome hardship as described in Victor Frankl’s (1988) *Logotherapy*. This psychotherapeutic approach recognizes the importance of the encounter that engenders greater relational meaning. “The essential self-transcendent quality of human existence renders man a being reaching out beyond himself” (p. 8). Autoethnography

provides another way of reaching out and connecting with higher forms of understanding and self-transcendence. Frankl's work showed us that we can survive difficult times and situations if we can make sense of our lives.

My adoption and reunion story is grounded in the experience of what Joshua Heschel (2009) calls radical amazement from experiencing the ineffable. The impact of this lived experience of the ineffable is one of the most compelling parts of my reunion story. The insights gained from this life experience have rippled out, fashioning a lens for regarding transformative processes that have been acting on my relational web. Concepts also emerged from this transformative experience of the ineffable that begged to be expressed and shared. "Remembrance is the touchstone of all actions" (p. 162). The narrative coherency that was engendered in this unfolding process reverberated through the timescape. This reverberation acted upon intergenerational relationships, by increasing conscious awareness through family memoir.

I was determined to reach out to my birthmother, hoping to extend an olive branch as I worked with the social workers at the Nebraska Children's Home, attempting to locate her and reconnect. When we finally connected through the Nebraska Children's Home Foundation, I discovered that my birthparents married after giving me up during their last year of high school.

I came to understand the importance of clearing the past so that future generations would not carry the weight of family secrets. I did not want to give power to the unconscious energies that could surface and become fate. I hoped that our reunion would allow us to repair our relationship and become more whole.

Clearing the path towards reunion was part of remembering. Coming together transformed the storyline. I didn't know what I would discover when I reached out. But tracing previously unforeseen routes awakened the ability to orient. This wayfinding was enhanced by different phases of narrative practice. After connecting through my first letter, we began writing love letters that shared stories that allowed us to bond.

As joyful and amazing as our reunion was for us all, it also caused a disruption in our relational fields. Remembering stories in the space of my autoethnographic *oeuvre* allowed me to explore relationships and happenings, retelling my story through the lens of radical amazement that allowed me to make sense of my life story. I used the disruption to explore strong feelings tied to belonging, working through the complexity of having two families, two nationalities, and two languages. My choice to marry a Swiss national and raise our family in the Swiss Alps has accentuated the theme of belonging as I grow older.

Our reunion story is a case study that revealed family patterns that were running through lines of inheritance. Identifying these patterns was

present in our exchanges from the very beginning. Our initial conversations were filled with attempts to locate commonalities and similarities. Once they were spotted, they were integrated into a cartography, mapping our relational connections. These identifications went beyond physical appearance. We also sought to apprehend personality traits and talents as we traced lines of inheritance. Even our penmanship was proof of innate forms of expression. My sister Michelle and I have the same handwriting and often draw little flowers and hearts in our letters. Throughout our letter writing process and the ensuing conversations that led to our physical meeting and eventually the celebration of our homecoming, we perceived synchronicities and patterns that left us awestruck.

Over time, our reunion had an important impact on intergenerational becomingness, shaping each lifecourse through our transformed identities. Together, we integrated the stories that had been suppressed and left untold. Bringing our family history to light took courage and perseverance. Exposing ourselves made us vulnerable. But it also allowed us to embark on a heartening journey towards wholeness. I believe that by increasing our conscious awareness of unconscious patterns that it is possible to bequeath a more enlightened and hopeful future to our descendants. This is the valuable gift of remembrance that I hope to pass on to our five children and grandchildren.

The autoethnographic method allows me to develop these themes within a social science framework that has gained recognition as a promising form of qualitative inquiry.

Yet narrative research is not the only hermeneutic practice of inquiry devoted to social understanding; for example, psychologists have become increasingly interested in autoethnography, a form of inquiry in which the individual researcher describes his or her personal experience in a way that it connects to larger social or political issues. (Gergen et al., 2015, p. 4)

The autoethnographic method bridges the social sciences by remembering, practicing a form of inquiry that is increasingly recognized in academia. This form of inquiry gives voice to individual experience, connecting individual story threads to the fabric of larger societal patterns. Autoethnography can buttress peace education. Ethnographic methods involve an interconnected approach that connects the multiple levels that scaffold peace-making processes.

Autoethnography is used within the *transformagram learning model* to fashion better-formed storylines. Imbued with the intention to transform, it resonates with St. Francis of Assisi's prayer "make me an instrument of your peace." The method acts upon narrative matters, our life histories, forging our stories into better-formed storylines. Narrative practice hollows us out.