

**Date:** 30-11-2022

## **S102. Exploring identity interplay through performative textual analysis**

### **1. Introduction <a>**

Identity is not a fixed and stable entity but is transforming, challenged and adjusting through actors' interactions (Horstmeier et al., 2016; Horton & Griffin, 2017). Identity is a process in a state of becoming (Fachin & Langley, 2018) and its development is the result of individuals' social relations, experiences and interactions with the social context (Brown, 2015). This processual understanding of identity suggests that, as organizational members engage in everyday work, the context of interaction shifts, requesting individuals to bring forward different identities to respond to the changing needs of the organization (Kourti et al., 2018). Through identity interplay, organizational members can make use of the deposit of identities they have available and bring forward identities that fit emerging organizational situations, needs and contexts (Kourti, 2021).

It is hardly surprising that organizations seek ways to understand the identity interplay that takes place in times of organizational instability and change (Kreiner et al., 2015), while organizational identity researchers seek ways to cover the gaps that remain in our exploration and understanding of the interplay between multiple identities (Miscenko & van Day, 2016). Horstmeier et al. (2016) call for organizational studies that do not only examine a particular identification focus, while Horton and Griffin (2017) call for studies that go beyond a single and fixed organizational identity. Within this call for more studies on multiple identities, Ramarajan (2014) requests new methodological approaches that enable the exploration of identity interplay that takes place in organizational settings.

This chapter responds to the need for methodological approaches that enable the exploration of multiple possible identities simultaneously. Particularly, this chapter offers an analysis method which distinctively combines the textual (Gee, 1991) and performative approaches (Goffman, 1981) for the analysis of personal narratives in order to explore identity interplay in organizational settings.

As Kourti (2016) explains, narratives have been used as a methodological approach to explore qualitatively the multiple identities present in organisations. Research has illustrated that narratives have several levels (Czarniawska, 2000; Boje, 2001) with each level assisting the exploration of different identities. For example, macro-level narratives are used for the

exploration of cultural identities (Hermann, 2011), meso-level narratives have commonly been employed for the exploration of organisational identities (Kramer & Miller, 1999) and micro-level narratives for the analysis of personal identities (Preuss & Dawson, 2009). Nevertheless, research has also illustrated that organisational members could have more than one identity (Ramarajan, 2014) and studies look for ways to explore how actors move between different identities in organisational settings (Haslam, 2001; Brown, 2015). It is therefore difficult to capture the transforming and adjusting nature of identities (Horstmeier et al., 2016; Horton & Griffin, 2017) and explore identity interplay by using a single level narrative. We need to find an alternative methodological way that will allow the use of narratives for the analysis of different identities.

This chapter suggests the use of personal narratives as a valuable tool to explore multiple possible identities and identity interplay. The terms narrative, account, and story are often used interchangeably (Vaara et al., 2016). Following other organizational studies (e.g. Czarniawska, 2000; Rhodes & Brown, 2005), a distinction between narratives and stories is not being made here. The below extracts from Kourti (2013, 100-101) along with original work present the role of personal narratives for the exploration of identity interplay.

People of every social background use personal stories in different kinds of settings as an everyday activity (Ruebottom & Auster, 2018) to transform knowing into telling (Figueiredo, 2009). In their interviews individuals may provide personal stories to organize their experiences, events and reality in a meaningful way, and reply to the interviewer's questions. However, these personal narratives are not fixed stories formed in a similar way for different audiences (Bold, 2012). They are alive (Riessman, 2013) composed in the dynamic context that the interaction between the narrator and interviewer creates.

Personal narratives "are works of history, as much as they are about individuals, the psychosocial contexts they inhabit, and the societies they live in" (Mills, 1959, cited in Riessman, 2002: 697) and, when narrators present their stories, they offer information about the specific context where their narratives were developed. They also present information about individuals, the societies they live in and situations they experience (Bruner, 1991). By presenting information about the context, narrators can position events and actors, organize their experiences and make sense of actions and events (Riessman, 2013). Personal narratives therefore operate as structures for meaning-making (Riessman, 2002), "located in particular times and places" (Mills, 1959; cited in Riessman, 2002: 697) that allow interviewees to present events that were affected by a specific context of interaction while they also affected this context. Even though they are personal narratives, they emerge through the narrators'

interaction with the context and others, illustrating experiences, social relations and events that occur in a particular time and place. This means that the context which participants present in their narratives is not stable, but changes as a result of the participants' experiences, social relations and (inter)actions. Personal narratives are context-related presentations regarding specific experiences and actions that narrators have experienced (Ruebottom & Auster, 2018). Looking at personal stories, knowledge about the context and contextual changes as well as about narrators' actions located in particular times and places is achieved (Bold, 2012).

Exploring personal narratives presented in interviews does not only offer information about social and historical processes and practices, and historicized views about relations and actions developed in specific contexts. It also offers information about participants' identities (Bold, 2012). In fact, while participants talk about their lives, they present their experiences and understanding of themselves, others and the world (Hermann, 2011), claiming identities that affect and are affected by the context they experience every time (Riessman, 2013). Narrators are able to position events and actors (Czarniawska, 2000), moving between different identities that allow them to organize their experiences and make sense of actions and events while telling their personal stories (Riessman, 2013). Personal narratives are located in particular times and contexts (Figueiredo, 2009) that allow narrators to present events that were affected by a specific context of interaction, while affecting the identity they brought forward. Therefore, personal stories do not only tell someone or oneself about one's life but they are also tools that allow individuals to fashion their identities and disclose their identity justifying their actions (Ruebottom & Auster, 2018). From this perspective, personal narratives are important to analyse identities since they illustrate the dynamic, self-shaping quality of human thought along with the ability of stories to fashion and refashion identities (Figueiredo, 2009). They illustrate "the active, self-shaping quality of human thought, the power of stories to create and refashion personal identity" (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997: xiv) and allow the exploration of how organizational members move between different identities as a response to contextual and situational conditions.

Even though personal stories are a useful methodological tool to focus on the participants' context, their (inter)actions and presentations of themselves, the use of personal narratives for identity exploration in organizational settings is scarce (e.g. Kourti, 2013; 2016; Rappaport, 1993). In this chapter, by applying textual analysis (Gee, 1991) with a performative lens (Goffman, 1981), it is demonstrated how personal narratives can be used as a methodological tool to examine the multiple identities that members may have available at

different points of time, and how identity interplay takes place in shifting organizational contexts.

The chapter is structured in three sections. Firstly, it describes how, through a combination of textual and performative approach, personal narratives are prepared and analysed with an aim to uncover the multiple identities that could be available at different times and organizational settings. The next section uses a particular personal narrative as an example to illustrate how the textual and performative analysis is applied in practice and how the findings emerging for this analysis could be presented. The chapter concludes with a critical evaluation of the methodology and suggestions to assist the researchers that are new to the method.

## **2. Description of the textual analysis with a performative lens for personal narratives <a>**

In order to explore how individual actors bring forward different identities in response to changing organizational situations and contexts, the analysis method which distinctively combines the textual (Gee, 1991) and performative approaches (Goffman, 1981) for the analysis of personal narratives is presented next, based on original work and extracts from Kourti (2013, pp.103-110). The multiple possible identities that actors adapt are examined in relation to specific organizational contexts to understand the effect that identity interplay has on organizational life.

Approaching personal narratives with a performative lens means that “everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role... It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves” (Park, 1950 cited in Goffman, 1981: 17). When participants perform, they do so in relation to an audience, they produce “performances with others” (Young, 2000: 109). Performances are treated as “expressive attempts to involve an audience” (Riessman, 2003: 7). During their interviews, participants tell stories they develop in collaboration with an audience (the interviewer or with other organizational members) (Wells, 2011). The social and historical contexts also play an important role in respect of the stories the members express. In fact, narrators “look back on and recount lives that are located in particular times and places”, structuring therefore their performances temporally and spatially (Laslett, 1999: 392). Their performances are “socialized, moulded, and modified” based on specific contexts and events (Goffman, 1981: 30).

The performative element does not propose that participants stage an identity. Instead, it suggests that narrators accomplish and express their identities with an audience, and therefore identities dynamically change in social interaction with others. The stories they tell are “socialised, moulded, and modified” based on specific contexts and people (Goffman, 1959: 30) that trigger identity interplay. The researcher looks at the context, events and people involved in order to examine how narrators move between identities in the presence of others. The performative element is also employed in order to focus on the participants' (inter)actions, on the everyday actions that define how individuals act towards others and themselves in particular occasions and contexts and therefore trigger identity interplay (Mishler, 1999).

Following a performative approach therefore means that the focus is on “narrative as action” (Riessman, 2003: 8), and the analysis does not focus only on what is told (the events that the language describes) (Bold, 2012) but also on the telling (the positions of characters, listeners and self) (Mishler, 1999). The researcher pays attention to the linguistic understanding of actions that indicate the way things were done with words (Riessman, 2002). They arrange the events and elements of the narrative into an order and take into consideration related events in order to provide the context where the narrative is placed and the identity is constructed. The researcher also notes the interactions with the audience (the interviewer or with other organizational members) as well as references to the audience. In this way, it is possible to investigate how the identities shift in social interaction “performed, produced for (and by) audiences in social situations” and particular contexts (Goffman, 1981: 701).

Following this line of thought, the performative approach is combined with the poetic structural analysis (Gee, 1991) to identify the structure and meaning of each text in relation to its context. This analysis does not seek to identify a plot in the text. Instead, it leaves space for the open-endedness of the narratives and therefore the inclusion of the ambiguities related to identity interplay.

According to the textual approach, the researcher analyzes the text in stanzas, scenes and parts (Gee, 1991; Riessman, 2008) (for an example see Box 1). Stanzas are used to incorporate for analysis non-narrative parts of the interviews. “Each stanza is a particular ‘take’ on a character, action, event, claim, place of information, and each involves a shift of focal participants, focal events, or a change in the time of framing of events from the preceding stanza...it represents an image, what the camera is focused on” (Gee, 1991: 23). Gee (1986) suggests that stanzas fall into related pairs that he calls strophes. “The strophe is a pair of stanzas of alternating form on which the structure of a given poem is based” (Gee, 1991: 24). However, here, because of the direct performative reference of the narratives, stanzas are not

organized into strophes, but into scenes (Riessman, 2008). Scenes describe the action that takes place in a different time and setting, and help achieve coherence in the story. They also make clear the different ways the narrators position themselves in the interviews. Therefore, where narrative segments appear, they are directly presented in scenes. Finally, the scenes were placed within parts that bring the scenes together and produced a coherent narrative.

Before analysing personal narratives textually and performatively, the text should be prepared for analysis. For example, brief exchanges between the researcher and the participants, the researcher's questions, and clarification questions or comments should be deleted (Riessman, 2002). Paralinguistic utterances (e.g. 'a', 'uhm', etc.), silences (indicated with --) and discourse markers (e.g. 'it's', 'so', etc.) are included. When the narrator presents in detail information that is clearly irrelevant to the aim of the analysis, the content should be summarized and marked with brackets [ ]. Whenever necessary for the flow of the text and meaning, the researcher adds some information presented in parentheses ( ). Furthermore, to facilitate the flow of the text, the researcher may correct and/or delete obvious mistakes in the narrators' speech. Finally, when necessary, the researcher replaces pronouns that the narrators used (e.g. she, her, we, them, etc.) with nouns in order to keep the flow of the text.

The edited texts are then examined with a performative lens by looking at both the events that the language describes and the positions of the characters, listeners and self in order to determine the beginnings and endings of the narratives. This is a complex interpretative task. In some narratives, the researcher may signal the beginning and ending of the narrative with questions. In other narratives the boundaries may not be clearly presented and their identification becomes a subjective endeavour by the researcher based on the context, theoretical interests and emergent issues. Alternatively, the start and finish of a narrative may be similar to the beginning and ending of an interview while the narrators may also indicate themselves when their narrative started and when it was over.

Once the boundaries of a narrative are decided, following a performative lens, the researcher reads the narrative several times to identify the main image of each narrative. The main image frames the whole narrative, indicates its tone, provides its theme and gives a title to the personal narrative.

The edited transcripts are then divided into stanzas, scenes and parts following the textual analysis. Finally, the performative approach is applied to identify in each narrative the turning points which indicate an important change in the anticipated sequence of the narratives and the narrators' identities. This analysis process also aims to discover the narrative context of the

personal narratives in order to explore how the narrators positioned themselves in changing organizational contexts through identity interplay.

### **3. Application of the method <a>**

#### **3.1. Analysis process <b>**

In order to illustrate the application of the textual analysis with a performative lens for the exploration of identity interplay in organizational contexts, Maria's personal narrative is employed in this chapter based on original work and extracts from Kourti (2013, pp. 103-110). Her narrative was identified through 21 narrative interviews that the author conducted with KEDDY (Centre for differential assessment, diagnosis and support of disabled children) in Greece.

Maria works for KEDDY as a psychologist who is expected to collaborate with KEDDY teachers in order to examine disabled children and produce joint diagnoses and plans for the educational support of the children. Even though Maria has been working in KEDDY for two years, she narrates a story from her first days in KEDDY in an attempt to illustrate to the researcher how important it is for the organizational members to collaborate.

The author analysed the text in two stages. Firstly, a thematic analysis was conducted with all the interview transcripts to obtain both a general contextual knowledge about the organization and to explore whether the narrators had brought to the front the organizational identity while telling their stories. The second step applied textual analysis with a performative lens on the interview transcripts in order to explore the multiple (team, personal, professional and organizational) identities present and the interplay between identities in different organizational contexts.

The textual and performative analysis followed the below steps – see also Box 1 for an analysis example:

##### **1) The interview transcript is prepared for analysis**

In Maria's interview the transcript was cleaned of brief exchanges with the researcher as well as of interviewing, prompting or clarification questions. Irrelevant to the topic information was also deleted and replaced with a short summary marked with [ ]. For example, "Anyway, he told me about KEDDY [Maria presents general information that she exchanged with the manager about KEDDY]". Information was added in ( ) when necessary. For example, "All

the team members (psychologist, teacher and social worker) met to discuss their evaluation and diagnosis”. Moreover, obvious mistakes in the speech were corrected. For example, “Kate presented her arguments and my ideas. I meant arguments” became “Kate presented her arguments and my arguments”. Pronouns were also replaced when necessary. For example, in the phrase “she presented her arguments and my arguments” became “Kate presented her arguments and my arguments”.

- 2) The personal narrative is located and the main image of the narrative is identified.

The start and finish of Maria’s narrative was similar to the beginning and ending of the interview. The start was signalled by the researcher’s questions and the end of the narrative by the narrator.

The main image of Maria’s narrative was identified performatively. The main image framed the whole narrative, offered the main theme around which the narrative was developed while the narrator returned to this image several times as they told their story. The author read the stories several times in order to position the characters, understand the role of the audience, the sequence of the events and the language that the narrator used. After several readings, the main image “The power of the organization is in working together” was identified. This image was presented at the start of the narrative in the first paragraph: “I thought that the power of organization was in acting as one unit to achieve our aims”. It was presented in other parts of the narrative too (e.g. part 1, scene 3: “only if we cooperate, we can achieve our aim”) and at the end of the narrative, part 4, scene 3: “KEDDY will achieve its aims only if the members actually collaborate”.

At the end of this process, Maria’s personal narrative consisted of 2002 words.

- 3) The personal narrative is then divided into stanzas, scenes and parts following the textual analysis. The scenes are particularly useful in the method of analysis since they indicate how the narrative boundaries and the way the narrator identifies themselves change during the interview. At the end, the narrative is structured with a main image and parts that include stanzas and scenes. An important aspect of the performative element in the textual analysis is the chronological ordering of the text within the interview. Intentional change of the order is therefore avoided.



In Maria's narrative, four parts were identified: the first and second part consisted each of three scenes, two of the three scenes had stanzas; the third part consisted of two scenes, one of which had stanzas; and the fourth part consisted of three scenes all of which had stanzas. Following a performative lens, similarly to the identification of the main image of the narrative, each part and each scene were assigned a title that reflected its focus.

Box 1 offers an example that illustrates how the textual analysis is performed in the first part of Maria's narrative.

**Box 1:** Extract from Kourti (2013, pp.292) from edited transcript of Maria's interview indicating the textual structure for "The power of the organization is in working together"

**Image: The power of the organization is in working together**

Working for KEDDY's collaboration creates mixed feelings. Do I enjoy it? I am not sure. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. To be honest, when I started working for KEDDY two years ago, I was very excited. It was a new challenge for me. I was aware of KEDDY's role and aim. I found fascinating the fact that the organization must overcome so many difficulties in order to support disabled children. You know this is a closed society with many stereotypes. [She talks about the negative image the society has about disabled children]. I can still remember the excitement of my first day at work. I was naive back then. I thought that the power of the organization was in members acting as one unit to achieve our aims. I couldn't see any other way to make it work. However, I didn't know much about the organization, I had to learn how it works.

**Part 1: Entering KEDDY**

**Scene 1: Meeting the nice manager**

I met the manager while I was waiting outside KEDDY. It was the first day you see, and I had arrived quite early. (Manager's name) is a really nice person, everyone likes him. Well, not everyone exactly but everyone should like him. Anyway, he told me about KEDDY [Maria presents the general information that she exchanged with the manager about KEDDY]. From what I understood, employees were expected to work in teams to produce diagnoses and educational plans. He told me that KEDDY employees are like a family and

I could always ask for their advice. However, he clarified that he should be informed about everything and that all reports should be signed by him.

### **Scene 2: Meeting the helpful colleagues**

**Stanza:** **1)** Then, he introduced me to the rest of the team. **2)** He asked everyone to come to his office, which is also our conference room. **3)** Everyone was nice. **4)** I guess they were truly nice, they didn't pretend then. -- **5)** Oh, actually apart from (employee's name) who wasn't very sociable, everyone else was. But that's his style, not that he didn't like me. **6)** I was nervous and I think they could see that. It is a bit stressful to meet fourteen people in one day! **7)** But when I saw how nice they were to me, I relaxed and became friendly. **8)** (Secretary's name) gave me a tour of KEDDY and he showed me my office. **9)** (Physiologists' and social workers' names) explained to me the main rules of the organization and their role in KEDDY. They also offered me their help. **10)** Kate (KEDDY primary teacher who will later be a main actor in the narrative) explained to me how the report production works. **11)** At the time, I didn't realize that she was actually trying to show me the boundaries between my work and hers. **12)** I thought she was trying to help me.

### **Scene 3: Good start**

**Stanza:** **1)** Actually, this was my perspective when I started working in KEDDY. KEDDY's role is very important for our society. [She explains that it is very important to support children with disabilities]. **2)** Although I was new in KEDDY, I could see that the obstacles against our aim are many and only if we cooperate, can we achieve our aim. **3)** I made it clear to my colleagues that I wanted to work hard, learn my job well and help. **4)** I participated in discussions, I asked questions - perhaps too many questions, I offered my perspective, I read books. **5)** I was so excited about my new job at first. **6)** I wanted to carry out my role as soon as possible. So I did my best to learn quickly.

- 4) The personal narrative is also analysed for the identification of the turning points as well as of the main narrative context (see table 1). This allows to identify multiple possible identities and examine identity interplay in a personal narrative.

Following the performative lens, the researcher focuses on each narrative part identified through the textual analysis. The researcher explores on the linguistic understanding of the action that the narrator presents in order to identify the way interactions and occurrences take place with words. By having the events and elements of the narrative in an order, it is possible to identify the main turning points (events, episodes, occurrences) that change the course of the narrative and the way the narrator positions themselves. In Maria's narrative, three turning points were identified, one turning point in each part of the narrative. Each turning point challenged an established identity and made Maria reconsider the way she understood herself as a member of the organization. In the first part of the narrative, the turning point comes at the end of scene 2 - "At the time, I didn't realize that she was actually trying to show me the boundaries between my work and hers. I thought she was trying to help me." As such, each turning point indicated a main event, situation or occasion that made Maria revisit her deposit of identities and brought another identity forward, signifying identity interplay.

Identifying the context of Maria's narrative was also a performative task. Personal stories are about individuals who are trying to make sense of their reality as it is expressed in a specific context. As such, every narrative is produced, articulated and positioned in a dynamic context, while the narrator is represented as an agent that acts in this specific context. Indeed, "narratives... articulate the deepest structures of the social world and their contradictions" (Bourdieu, 1999: 511), and only by taking into consideration the context of the telling is coherence established. In Maria's case the main context was competitive as she found herself, a psychologist, in competition with the teachers of the organization, with whom she was expected to collaborate in order to produce a diagnosis for a disabled child. Examples of contextual elements that illustrate the competitive context of Maria's narrative were statements such as: "I was naive back then"; "... everyone likes him. Well, not everyone exactly but everyone should like him"; "I didn't realize that she was actually trying to show me the boundaries between my work and hers". Locating the story in a narrative context offered an understanding of the particular contextual elements that affected how Maria understood and positioned herself in particular situations, enabling the conditions for identity interplay through interactions in a competitive context.

An example of the main elements of the textual and performative analysis performed by the author to Maria's narrative is presented below (Kourti, 2013; 2016):

**Narrator/ Main narrative image/ Narrative context:** *Maria* in a narrative of "*The power of the organization is in working together*" that takes place in a *Competitive* context.

### **Narrative parts/Turning points / Identity Interplay:**

*-Part 1: Entering KEDDY/ Dealing with a case/ New organisational member*

*-Part 2: One case two diagnoses/ Disagreement with the teachers about the diagnosis/ Expert psychologist*

*-Part 3: Experienced vs inexperienced staff/ Bringing forward different experience/ Inexperienced colleague*

*-Part 4: Being a psychologist/ Proving the validity of the diagnosis/ Expert organizational member*

The application of a textual analysis with a performative lens focuses on the narrators' own structuring of the narrative in order to discover how they adapt different identities, organizing accordingly their interactions with the audience (organizational actors and the researcher). The outcome is the emergence of self-narratives that describe the participants' self-understandings and identity interplay in different organizational contexts and situations.

### **3.2. Findings presentation <b>**

It is important to present the findings in a way that reflects both the textual and performative analysis of the text. The findings section could offer a title that reflects the main actor and the main image of the narrative. One or two introductory paragraphs that summarize the main events of the narrative and introduce the main actors could help the reader immerse themselves in the narrative from the start. Presenting the whole narrative or complete parts of the narrative is important for the reader to understand the main image assigned to the narrative, the events, turning points and context in which the narrative takes place.

Elements of the textual analysis (stanzas, scenes and parts) and elements of the performative analysis (audience, performances, main image, characters positioning, context and turning points) should be included in the findings presentation to guide the reader through the parts of the narrative that indicate the ways the narrator identifies themselves and others when they present specific events, situations and actors in their personal story. The performative element indicates the dynamic process of identity construction which takes place in relation to an audience. The narrator switches between identities in their accounts of shared practice and individual experience while they try to construct a particular self in the presence of others. The researcher puts the events and elements of the narrative in a sequence and considers related cases. This produces a context where the narrative is placed and the narrator's

identity shifts are demonstrated. In this way, it is possible to present the multiple identities that organizational members bring forward in relation to specific organizational contexts and understand the effect that identity interplay has on organizational life.

An example of findings presentation emerging from a textual and performative analysis performed by the author is presented in Box 2 using Maria's case. This example is put together from a textually and performative approach throughout. However, here some words are presented in bold to assist the reader in the identification of instances where the researcher clearly indicates the performative and textual analysis elements.

**Box 2:** Extract from Kourti (2013, pp.162-164) from the findings presentation of Maria's personal story demonstrating the textual and performative approach

**Maria (KEDDY employee): The power of collaboration is in working together**

Maria has been working as a psychologist in KEDDY for two years. The **main image** of her narrative presents her view that only if the members collaborate will the organization achieve its aims. Maria presents this **image** throughout the whole interview. She does not initially admit that some of KEDDY's employees are divided into teachers and psychologists because this contradicts the ideal view of the collaboration she has constructed. However, her disagreement with KEDDY teachers over a child's diagnosis offers the **turning point** in the narrative. This disagreement shifts the boundaries that fitted all of her colleagues, and Maria identifies herself as a psychologist.

Maria's narrative is divided into **four parts**. By presenting Maria's first days in KEDDY, the **first part** introduces the physical **context** and the main **characters** in the narrative. The next **part** describes the case of a child who went to KEDDY for support. The **third part** presents the **main tension** in the narrative; the disagreement between KEDDY's teachers and Maria regarding a child's diagnosis. In the **final part** of the narrative, disappointed about the

lack of collaboration between colleagues, Maria turns to the psychologists' group for support.

### **Narrative context: Competition**

Maria carefully introduces the **researcher** into her narrative which is a **complex performance** presented in **four parts**. The narrative was prompted by the **researcher's question** "Do you enjoy working for the collaboration?" which aimed at **positioning** Maria in the organization life. Maria refers to her arrival in KEDDY and how her colleagues welcomed her as a new member in their team. She provides **narrative detail** and therefore the **audience** should not infer a great deal.

In the following segment, which serves as the **introductory part of the narrative**, Maria introduces the main challenge she experiences as a member of the organization; namely, the lack of cooperation between the KEDDY members. This challenge is also the **main image** of her narrative. Maria also introduces herself as a newcomer to the organization who is excited about her new job.

*Working for KEDDY creates mixed feelings. Do I enjoy it? I am not sure. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. To be honest, when I started working for KEDDY two years ago, I was very excited. It was a new challenge for me. I was aware of KEDDY's role and aim. I found fascinating the fact that the organization must overcome so many difficulties in order to support disabled children. You know this is a closed society with many stereotypes. [She talks about the negative image the society has about disabled children]. I can still remember the excitement of my first day at work. I was naive back then. I thought that the power of the organization was in members acting as one unit to achieve our aims. I couldn't see any other way to make it work. However, I didn't know much about the organization, I had to learn how it works.*

In this **context** Maria frames herself as a newcomer willing to collaborate. She then enters the **first part** of her narrative and presents her first days at work. In this way she introduces the **context of the narrative**, competitive KEDDY, and the **main characters**. Maria constructs the **first scene** of her narrative with only one **character** besides herself. This scene refers to her arrival in KEDDY and more particularly to her meeting with the manager. It is

clear that Maria likes her manager, although it seems that some of the KEDDY employees do not share her feelings.

*I met the manager while I was waiting outside KEDDY. It was the first day you see, and I had arrived quite early. (Manager's name) is a really nice person, everyone likes him. Well, not everyone exactly but everyone should like him. Anyway, he told me about KEDDY [Maria presents the general information that she exchanged with the manager about KEDDY]. From what I understood, employees were expected to work in teams to produce diagnoses and educational plans. He told me that KEDDY employees are like a family and I could always ask for their advice. However, he clarified that he should be informed about everything and that all reports should be signed by him.*

In the **second and third scenes** of the **first part**, Maria presents many **characters** in an attempt to introduce to the **researcher** Kate, the other **main actor** of her narrative, with whom she had to collaborate later for the production of a diagnosis.

In the **second scene**, Maria explains her first meeting with her colleagues, her anxiety and her positive first impression. By **positioning** the KEDDY employees as social and helpful, she **expands the boundaries** of the narrative to include all her colleagues as well as constructing her identity as a friendly employee. At the end of this **scene**, she very briefly presents the **main narrative context**.

*Then, he introduced me to the rest of the team. He asked everyone to come to his office, which is also our conference room. Everyone was nice. I guess they were truly nice, they didn't pretend then. -- Oh, actually apart from (employee's name) who wasn't very sociable, everyone else was. But that's his style, not that he didn't like me. I was nervous and I think they could see that. It is a bit stressful to meet fourteen people in one day! But when I saw how nice they were to me, I relaxed and became friendly. (Secretary's name) gave me a tour of KEDDY and he showed me my office. (Physiologists' and social workers' names) explained to me the main rules of the organization and their role in KEDDY. They also offered me their help. Kate (KEDDY primary teacher who will later be a main actor in the narrative) explained to me how the report production works. At the time, I didn't realize that she was actually trying to show me the boundaries between my work and hers. I thought she was trying to help me.*

Through the description of her first meeting with KEDDY's staff, in the **third and last scene** of the **first part** Maria constructs a twofold identity without **positioning** other **characters** in this scene. On the one hand, she restates her identity as an excited newcomer which she had presented at the start of her narrative. She also explains that she is a newcomer willing to collaborate, offer and share with her colleagues. On the other hand, Maria is also a learner who tries to adapt to a new working environment and respond to her job responsibilities. In restating herself, she gets the chance to expand the **boundaries** of the **context** so as to become a more **active participant** in her narrative.

*Actually, this was my perspective when I started working in KEDDY. KEDDY's role is very important for our society. [She explains that it is very important to support children with disabilities]. Although I was new in KEDDY, I could see that the obstacles against our aim are many and only if we cooperate, can we achieve our aim. I made it clear to my colleagues that I wanted to work hard, learn my job well and help. I participated in discussions, I asked questions - perhaps too many questions, I offered my perspective, I read books. I was so excited about my new job at first. I wanted to carry out my role as soon as possible. So I did my best to learn quickly.*

Although the **first part** of the narrative was not initiated by the **researcher**, the **second part** of the narrative was **prompted** by the **researcher's question** "What made you change your attitude towards your job and your colleagues?" The **second part** of the narrative takes a **different direction** and in it Maria constructs a different identity.

#### <a> 4. Critical evaluation

The performative and textual analysis to personal narratives can be employed to explore how organizational actors identify themselves in interaction with others, taking into consideration that the narratives are performed in a specific context and for/with a specific audience. This illustrates the co-construction of the narratives at different points of the text while it also allows the examination of the different positioning and identification of the actors in different parts of the text. From this perspective, identity is not explored as something stable and absolute but as a process that develops and changes through social interactions that take place in specific contexts (Watson, 2016) and audiences (Young, 2000), in which the actors try



to generate meaning and adapt new identities engaging in identity interplay. In this sense, both the way the identities affect the organization and the way identities are affected by it can be examined.

The textual and performative approach provides a very helpful method to analyse transcripts of talk produced in a variety of contexts. The ideal data for textual and performative analysis can be produced by recording personal narratives created naturally and spontaneously in non-research situations (e.g. through written narratives and observational narratives), or by narrative interviews where the interviewer gives more space and control to the interviewee to formulate the information through telling a narrative, structuring and selecting the elements that they perceive important. The method can be used to identify important personal narratives within the transcripts and to reveal the specific structure and the context of the personal narratives.

Combining the textual with the performative approach provides a useful methodological tool for undertaking a systematic textual analysis while at the same time analysing the linguistic elements, positioning the main actors and interpreting the events of the narrative. This combination offers an analysis below the surface of the text without isolating the personal stories from events, main actors and the audience. Particularly, the method allows researchers to explore participants' narratives developed in collaboration with an audience, placed in particular contexts that affected the development and narration of the narratives. In personal narratives, particular (team, personal, organization etc.) identities are claimed by narrators and the story they shared works to express, confirm and authenticate the claimed identity. The analysis of the linguistic elements of the narratives enables the encoding of the actions that the narrators present, allowing the researcher to examine the perspective of the narrator on the events that occur.

It should be noted that combining the textual and performative approach can be time consuming since preparing the texts for analysis and performing the analysis can take a considerable amount of time. Moreover, the researcher must collect extensive information regarding the participants and the organizational context in order to fully understand how personal narratives are performed. For example, the researcher needs to immerse themselves in the organizational context by familiarizing with the organization and the members before their first visit, spending time in the organization, conducting a large number of observations and collecting internal and external documents. When a large number of personal narratives is identified in the data, researchers may find it challenging to perform this analysis. Moreover,

the interpretative element involved during the text preparation and the analysis can make this approach more difficult or complex, particularly for inexperienced researchers.

Challenges can also emerge in gathering data for textual and performative analysis since affording the power to the interviewees in what and how to tell about a topic can lead to extensive and unhelpful data. Moreover, personal narratives capture only a limited number of experiences, which then the researcher uses to approximate a coherent narrative through textual and performative analysis. As such, the researcher needs to be mindful of what is left out of the individual's narratives along with inconsistencies across narrative accounts, or the meaning of hesitations or saliences in the accounts. This further increases the time required for preparing the text for analysis. The researcher should also be a patient and active listener, and accept that 'wasting time' is part of the process of listening to the narrators while gently guiding them to stay within the research focus.

Despite these challenges, the textual and performative approach enables the exploration of identities as dynamically constructed in social situations, expressed in collaboration with an audience. As such, it puts at the centre of the analysis identity shifts rather than identity stability, which makes this method particularly valuable to explore how individual actors move between identities while interacting with others and responding to dynamic organizational contexts.

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