Sheila Trahar’s “Learning and Teaching Narrative Inquiry” is an edited volume that is a story in itself of the various journeys in narrative inquiry as it is practiced and taught in various places around the world. She identifies that there is only one other text (Josselson et al., 2003) about “teaching narrative,” which and that one is focused on the North American context, and as such, so this volume can contribute to the conversations on narrative inquiry as it is viewed and realized in other contexts. This volume could serve as a useful text for entering the conversation as a researcher or a teacher, and although Trahar makes no claims that it will teach how to teach narrative inquiry, some contributing authors offer reviews of their methods of teaching it in their contexts.

In her introduction chapter, Sheila Trahar identifies that her goal in seeking writers for each chapter was not to be able to compile a volume on teaching narrative inquiry but rather to allow each writer to “engage in critiques of narrative as well as [extol] its virtues” (p. 2) in order for others to learn from their process. As such, she sought contributors from various parts of the world using narrative inquiring in many different contexts. She reflects that the subtitle of her volume, “Travelling in the Borderlands,” reflects the tensions found in this journey of narrative inquiry around the globe, and then she summarizes and explains the chapters as a journey around the globe for conversations of narrative inquiry encountered along the way.

Chapter 2, “Interfaces in teaching narratives,” is co-authored by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboudou, three directors for the Centre for Narrative Research at the University of East London. Each author writes a section from a different perspective. Andrews relates the challenge of drawing students into thinking about narrative, drawing them into the messy world of stories that “do something, they have a point, a function” (p. 19). Squire digs into the value of helping students find their own path in determining what narrative research is, giving the starting point of Labov’s discussions (1972; 1997), which leads to the definition “…involving stories told in the first person about particular events by a narrator who experienced it him/herself” (p. 23). She relates how students are then led through other perspectives, including understandings of selves and hearers’ interpretations (Ricoeur, 1991) and interviews and co-performances of identities (Riessman, 2008). Tamboukou relates her work with narrative, which she uses to teach her post-graduate students, and tells how she has sought to make it rigorous and systematic, while recognizing that it is what she calls “narrative phenomena” (p. 26). From her perspective, narratives do something and narrative research is concerned with the production and interrelated effects of narrative. As a whole, the chapter does not seek to mandate any particular definition.
above?) of narrative or way to teach narrative, but it relates each of the authors’ perspectives on narrative and the broader contexts in which they see it at work.

Chapter 3, “Becoming a narrative inquirer,” is co-authored by D. Jean Clandinin, Janice Huber, Pam Steeves, and Yi Li. They start the chapter setting their perspective from a Deweyan theory of experience (Dewey, 1938), not necessarily based on teaching narrative inquiry, but rather on “learning to think with stories” (p. 34). The chapter is structured as experiences from a typical class, narrated to illustrate their method of leading their students into this perspective. Yi Li contributes a narrative works-in-progress to illustrate one of the key components, an autobiographical narrative inquiry from a former graduate student perspective, and they discuss how that helps create the inner dialogue and wakefulness that stories can bring. (Please reword the previous sentence) The authors conclude by emphasizing that this process of growing as narrative inquirers involves being attentive to the dialogue in narrative and not taking the view of being an expert or critic.

Chapter 4, “The circle game: Narrative inquiry as a way of life in ACE,” is co-authored by Ariela Gidro, Bobbie Turniansky, Smadar Tuval, Ruth Mansur and Judith Barak. They write from the perspective of teacher educators in Israel who make narrative inquiry a way of life rather than as teachers of narrative inquiry as a subject for students to learn. They also base their perspective on Deweyan principles (Dewey, 1938), specifically, those of interaction and continuity “that together help define the complexity of the experience” and “the theoretical stance that people are storytellers by nature” (p. 54). They relate how students take workshops as part of the teacher education program with foci that involve using storytelling to shape the students’ way of life in the program: a workshop on cultural identity and cultural sensitivity, a workshop that accompanies the students’ field of practice, a workshop that accompanies their teaching experience and is designed to help them examine their personal beliefs and assumptions. (Please reword the previous sentence) The authors discuss that this process in their program is for the purpose of professional development and helps the students de-construct their images of the ideal teacher while seeing the complexity of context.

Chapter 5, “Teaching narrative inquiry in the Chinese community: A Hong Kong perspective,” is co-authored by Yu Wai Min and Lau Chun Kwok. They also share a perspective of using narrative inquiry in teacher education, but they look at its development in Chinese contexts, which they note are different between Taiwan, Mainland China, and Hong Kong due to reasons such as language barriers for research and publication as well as the differing number of tertiary institutions between these three contexts. They use narrative inquiry in three ways: as a research tool, as a medium for professional development, and as a strategy of teaching. For each way, they break it down as that use, and then describe how to teach it for that use, coming to a conclusion that while there are activities, methods, and steps that can be used in teaching it, teaching it as a way of thinking is the most important result. (Please reword the previous sentence as it is difficult to follow). They note that as a research methodology, narrative inquiry is still developing and often marginalized, and that some researchers (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007) have recommended that not only is extensive life experience needed to gain the personal qualities necessary to build quality research from narrative methods, but that researchers should have a broad basis in other methods as well.
Chapter 6, “Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry: Conversations between advisor and advisee,” is co-authored by JoAnn Phillion and Yuxian Wang. Phillion starts with a narrative from her perspective of finding a “critical perspective a social justice orientation” (p. 87) (is there a comma missing in the quote?) in narrative approaches that she felt had previously been missing but was essential for her and her students’ inquiries. She felt that this orientation allowed her and her students to better explore and understand the experiences of marginalized groups that, groups that are not the majority population and are in a cross-cultural position in relation to the majority population researcher. Wang then narrates from his perspective as a majority population Chinese researcher who is discovering the challenges of narrative inquiry in a cross-cultural context. Following that, in an interview format, the authors address issues of the role of the researcher, the impact of context, the role of theory, and how to represent findings, with Wang answering the questions from his in-depth narrative study of three students in a Chinese minority. Phillion and Wang conclude with a reflection on the experience and a discussion of the issues involved, such as critical self-examination, rigorous methods, and careful interpretation and representation in conducting a multicultural, cross-cultural narrative inquiry, as with any other narrative inquiry.

Chapter 7, “Scrapbooks and messy texts: Notes towards sustaining critical and artful narrative inquiry,” is co-authored by Malcolm Reed and Jane Speedy. Throughout the chapter, they, as authors, highlight the differences in their perspectives and approaches, and part of those differences are ascribed to narrative inquiry being an art. Their chapter reflects on their journey exploring the values and approaches they use in their doctoral teaching in the UK. They discuss their intention in the doctoral programme in Narrative Inquiry of establishing a space for researchers to work in Clandinin’s three dimensions (Clandinin et al., 2006) while and being mindful “from the outset of the demands, complexities and tension of this form of inquiry” (p. 110). Instead of concluding, they end by noting that the threads of time, (something seems to be missing here) context and relationships that have been brought into play are confusing and messy, but that they are in the rigorous process of being engaged in narrative inquiry.

Chapter 8, “Many more than two of us: Denaturalizing the positions of speech and writing in a narrative constructionist research workshop,” is authored by Veronica Larrain. Larrain narrates from her perspective of teaching a workshop introducing Narrative Constructionist Research (Sparkes & Smith, 2008) as part of a series on research methodology at the University of Barcelona. Her approach within the course has students placing themselves in the role of “storyteller” (i.e. narrative inquirer) as well as collaborator (i.e. informant), or the person telling their own experience. In describing the activities she uses, she draws out the complexities and naturally occurring fears related to identity and relationships that occur in oral narratives and testimonies, as well as the ideological expectations of narrative conventions. She concludes with a set of questions that call for narrative inquirers to reflect on the tensions, subtext, beliefs and suppositions that they, the “storytellers,” bring to the relationship and use to make choices regarding in what and how to create the stories from the research relationship.

Chapter 9, “‘Burt’s story reminded me of my grandmother’: Using a reflecting team to facilitate learning about narrative data analysis,” is authored by Sheila Trahar. Trahar relates her experience using a reflecting team activity as a method for teaching narrative analysis that
challenges dominant knowledge and values knowledge that emerges in the process. She notes that little has been written about using this practice to teach narrative analysis but that the activity is prominent in therapeutic practice (Andersen, 1991), has been used in anthropological studies (Myerhoff, 1980), and has been introduced in management education (Griffith, 1999). Using a teaching experience with a group of students and her own teacher reflections, combined with two students who participated in the activity, she analyzes the responses from her and her students for what contributed to the learning experience and what was a drawback to it. She concludes that the method is innovative in education and allows opportunities for students to engage in “performance/dialogic way of data analysis” (p. 155), which she felt afforded students who chose to use it a greater sophistication of understanding of the process.

Chapter 10, “Negotiating intercultural academic careers: A narrative analysis of two senior university lecturers,” is authored by Meeri Hellstén and Katrin Goldstein-Kyaga. They identify that their intent is to suggest new practices for teaching and learning narrative inquiry and to raise a discourse around the professional challenges involved. To do this, they illustrate with two life narratives, which they analyze for the ontological, public, conceptual, and meta-narrativity dimensions of narrativity, as well as a fifth dimension of cultural or national or personal space. They suggest that the pedagogical uses of such life narratives can be employed in undergraduate courses, teaching issues of global identity construction, and also in graduate level courses, having students personally explore key concepts that are being taught theoretically, such as “culture” or “ethnicity.” They highlight this use of analysis of life narratives as an important method of engaging both teacher and students in a self-reflective process that integrates theory with personal development in key scholarly domains.

**EVALUATION**

This volume functions as an excellent introduction and overview of narrative analysis as it is viewed, taught, and applied by various scholars throughout the world, which to date has been missing from the literature. Current theories and pedagogical applications are recounted by the various authors and co-authors in ways that the reader can have options of which to choose which to focus on. Considering that narrative analysis is not an easily defined field, this edited volume has done an excellent job of gathering authors who can offer different perspectives and approaches and allow readers to draw their own conclusions and applications. Some chapters are more heavily focused on the theories and significance of using narrative in research and teaching, and other chapters offer activities and analyses that can give practical options, benefits, and drawbacks for teachers or researchers wishing to begin to engage in narrative inquiry or transform their practices.

The editor, Sheila Trahar, states in her introduction that she does not intend for the volume to teach narrative inquiry, and from the wide range of applications and perspectives of narrative inquiry found in the chapters, it is clear why. It would be simplistic to teach any single pattern for performing narrative, yet some chapters offer pedagogical activities with analyses that give practical suggestions and considerations for teaching and using it. This volume’s intent and organization can pose a challenge to the reader, researcher, or teacher who wants to learn about
or teach narrative inquiry or teach it, but it also provides an gives an opportunity for them to engage in the discourse of the narrative inquiry community.

As a coursebook or reference for a researcher or teacher wishing to engage in a dialogue on narrative inquiry, this volume gives the tools for generating both discussion and activities. As a whole, the volume keeps an excellent tone of keeping an inclusive tone that does not promote an ethnocentric or limiting view on the questions and issues involved in narrative inquiry around the world, and important issues for engaging academics and teachers in multicultural narrative inquiries are raised.

There is still minimal research published in narrative inquiry, and several chapters in this volume identify that stories and the demands of narratives are complex and messy both in theory and in practice. While this volume is an excellent place to start, it is clear that there is opportunity for further research that can bring some of the current threads of research and application together in order to bring more clarity to the issues while continuing the engaging discourse that these authors have begun. It would be great if you can expand the Evaluation Section a little bit. We are working hard to request that reviewers create slightly more balance between the two sections (though, of course, the Summary will always be longer). One effective way of elaborating would be to select a few chapters that you found particularly striking and discuss some unique or exceptionally positive attributes that found about them. If you can add about two more paragraphs similar in length to the ones you have, that would be wonderful. Thanks!

REFERENCES


ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Kara Johnson is a Ph.D. student in the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching program at the University of Arizona in Tucson, AZ, and recently defended her dissertation on Chinese EFL students’ peer review process in writing. She also has research interests in intercultural communication and rhetoric, teacher training, materials development, and corpus linguistics.