Narrating ‘The Marginalized’

Critical Reflections on Giving Voice

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Katrine Møller Hansen

Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen
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1. Introduction

From September to December 2015, I have been interning at Centre for Narrative Research (CNR) at University of East London’s School of Social Sciences and been supervised by professor Corinne Squire, one of the co-directors of the centre. CNR is the leading international institution for narrative work within the social sciences. Through publications, events, conferences and seminars it seeks to generate and innovate narrative methods and invites to exchanges and collaborations among scholars from various fields and from all over the world\(^1\).

At CNR, I became attached to a teaching and book project in a refugee camp in Calais, North France. In this paper, I will elaborate on the project and reflect on ethical perspectives related to doing research within the refugee area. With an increased amount of asylum seekers arriving in Europe, more than 900,000 people from mainly Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia in 2015, there is an increased amount of people spending months and years in temporary settlements such as formal and informal refugee camps, detention and asylum centers. With a lack of access to education and in some cases even food, sanitation, shelter and clothing the living and reception conditions are concerning human rights organizations. They call for governments as well as the international community to embrace the human rights and protection imperatives at the core of what they consider to be, broadly, a ‘refugee crisis’ (UNHCR January 2015; HRW December 2015). The School of Social Sciences at University of East London (UEL) addresses some of the issues arising with the refugee crisis, for example through research conducted at their Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging. Alongside with my studies of narrative method and theory at CNR, I have sought the opportunity to attend conferences and seminars related to refugee studies, borders and bordering. This invoked my interest in how the generation of knowledge can contribute to and guide policymaking. Furthermore, I became interested in how to understand and address the immediate and long-term psychological needs of asylum seekers entering the EU, often living in temporary settlements under conditions conflicting with basic human rights.

Squire, Davies et al (2014) argue, that attention to human suffering means attention to stories, and that the need to narrate difficult experiences is a part of a human need to be understood by others, and to be in communication, even from the margins. Narrative investigators have drawn attention to the potential of narratives to organize fragmented memories, create change and repair “damaged lives” in times of crisis (Riessman, 2008; Squire, Davies et al; 2014; Plummer, 2013). At the same time, the

\(^1\) [http://www.uel.ac.uk/cnr/]
assumption that narrating is, essentially, individually beneficial and that giving voice to the marginalized is “empowering” has been problematized: The assumption may mask complicated questions about interests and move focus away from economic and political power in the external reality. (Smail, 2005; Molly Andrews in Riessman, 2008:199). Furthermore, scholars critically reflect upon the way researchers use individuals’ narratives in their work (Spivak, 1988; Plummer, 2001; Squire, Davies et al, 2014; Gready, 2008; Riessman, 2008). Especially the traditional researcher/researched relationship, where the researcher speaks the voice of ‘the marginalized’, and where research participants are not included in the interpretive and representational phases of the research process, has been problematized. Several narrative scholars (Riessman, 2008; Squire, Davies et al, 2014; Gready, 2008; Plummer, 2001; 2013) address the political role of narratives. Narratives have the potential of allowing silenced voices to be heard (Dotson, 2011). Researchers are encouraged to interrogate their own contributions to creating and withholding the conditions of possibility of particular lives (Browyn Davies in Riessman, 2008).

With a recognition of both the potential and the challenges of using narratives in the context of refugee studies and in the representation of refugees I will discuss the following question:

*Within the framework of a constructionist approach to narratives and narrative research, how can we understand the ethics and power relations implicated when ‘giving voice’ to and generating knowledge about people in, what may be considered, marginalized positions?*

In this paper, I consider people attributed the category “refugee” as people likely to be in marginalized positions, that is, positions of marginalized influence and power. I will discuss how the position might be retained, reinforced or challenged through research and representations.

I will start by introducing main approaches to narrative research, including the *constructionist approach* mentioned above, and establish the understanding of narratives that I will apply in this paper. I will then introduce the project in Calais as the empirical basis for my discussion of narrative and ethical perspectives of doing research within the refugee area.
2. Narrative research

There is no simple definition of ‘a narrative’ and researchers conceptualize the term in various ways depending on their epistemology and research focus. Scholars, such as William Labov (1972) focus on the linguistics and structure of a narrative and is interested in the universal form of event narratives. His definition of a narrative is less inclusive than the ones offered by later poststructuralist and postmodernist movements. Here the symbol systems of language are not considered independently but in connection to the subjectivities that make and are made by them, and across social and cultural formations (Squire, Davies et al., 2014). Narrative research does not prescribe any particular epistemology, but different narrative approaches have been divided into two different epistemological views: the naturalist approach, with interest in the external world, and the constructionist approach with interest in how meaning is constructed interpersonally, culturally and socially. Researchers using narrative data as a resource, telling the researcher something about the narrators and their worlds, are naturalistic in their approach. In constructionist approaches, the narratives will more likely be the theme of the research in themselves. Here researchers address how narratives work and affect people’s actions and understandings. (Squire, Davies et al., 2014).

Narratives are not contained in oral or written formats only (Squire, Davies et al. 2014; Riessman, 2008). Squire, Davies et al. (2014) offers a broad, inclusive definition of narratives as a set of signs, verbal/sound, written, visual, acted, built or made elements that convey meaning. Catherine Kohler Riessman (2008) similarly underlines that there is no simple definition of a narrative. It may be contained in visual, written or spoken materials and the term is used in a variety of ways by different disciplines. She argues that narratives can be understood in terms of how they function, which is a view also contained in the constructionist approach to narratives where the interest is on how narratives work to make and relate subjects (Squire, Davies et al., 2014). Riessman (2008) outlines four broad approaches to narrative analysis: Thematic analysis where the focus is on the “told” or “what” is spoken; structural analysis with focus on the “telling” or “how” it is spoken; dialogic/performance analysis with focus on “who” an utterance is directed to, “when” and “why” and for what purposes and finally: visual analysis where the focus is on visual communication and the integration of words and images from different visual genres. This last type of analysis draws on thematic and dialogic/performance methods. About the narratives’ function she writes that they can work to reassess memories that may have been chaotic or fragmented before narrating them. Furthermore, they can persuade and engage an audience; they can invite the audience to enter the
perspective of the narrator; they can perform the job of entertaining and or misleading and finally they can mobilize others into action. (Riessman, 2008).

I take a constructionist approach to narratives in this paper since I understand narratives as constructed interpersonally between researcher and research participant, and in their political, social and cultural context. I am not as such interested in the content or truth of the narratives, or their relation to the external world, but more interested in how narratives function: How the telling of a narrative affects research participants; how narratives presented in research affect an audience; how they persuade, engage or invite an audience and how they may mobilize into action. I will use elements from structural, dialogic/performance and visual analyses in my understanding of how narratives are constructed and communicated. As alluded in the introduction narratives perform political work, and since researchers, from a constructionist approach, are constructers of narratives, I find it relevant to reflect upon researcher’s ethical and political responsibility in terms of presenting narratives that may reinforce, challenge or support power relations in the wider world. Furthermore, I will bring awareness to how the narratives themselves are embedded in such relations. In the next section I will introduce the ‘Life Stories’ project as the empirical basis for the following discussion.

3. Life Stories in Calais

At CNR I became involved with a ‘Life Stories’ teaching and book project with a group of refugees in a refugee camp in Calais, North France, referred to as ‘The Jungle’ by the residents themselves. It is an informal settlement with more than 4000 residents. Because the camp is informal, there are few facilities available. Independent organizations, the residents and volunteers from UK and France, among other countries, work in the camp with distribution of received donations (food, clothing, tents etc.) with health care, sanitation and with the establishment and management of initiatives such as schools, art projects, churches, restaurants/cafés and a library. Life Stories is a part of an initiative called “University for All” funded by University of East London and led by my supervisor professor Corinne Squire. We have been visiting the camp, recruiting and teaching interested residents. Apart from professor Squire and myself, the team has, this far, consisted of Dr. Tahir Zaman and UEL student Natalie Ludvigsen. We have been teaching at “Jungle Books Library”, a library in the camp built and operated by volunteers and residents. The residents currently involved are from Eritrea,
Ethiopia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iran and Iraq, many are professionals or students highly interested in continuing their education and, as anyone else, in living creative and productive lives².

3.1 Narrative material

We introduced the residents to narratives in different forms and modalities - photographs, videos, poetry and novels – which we analyzed and discussed in the teaching. Teaching material included for example Nelson Mandela’s “A Long Walk to Freedom”, Malala’s “I am Malala”, the TED talk “The Danger of the Single Story” by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie and the poem “Refuge” by J.J. Bola supplemented by a Youtube video of Bola’s performance of it (see appendix for references). The material was chosen partly based on the residents own requests and interests and partly as an attempt to demonstrate different ways of expressing stories about war, repression, activism, forced displacement and other themes that the residents could relate to in their current situation.

3.2 Resident resources

Already established initiatives in the camp are included to the extent it is possible. For example, we used residents’ own photos in a photo exhibition, displayed in a dome tent in the camp, set up by British playwrights, as teaching material. We discussed the meaning of the photos with residents and talked about photography as a way of communicating and telling stories. The idea is to draw on the residents’ own resources. Residents we already collaborate or plan to collaborate with are: one who runs an art school and art project in the camp, one who is a photographer, one who has set up a Facebook page called ‘Refugee Voices’ sharing stories from the camp, one who is an animator, and another who has set up two schools in the camp.

3.3 Productions

The residents have started producing life stories themselves. We encourage them to tell their story in the way they want to tell it, whether this is orally or through writing, photography or painting. Some residents find their English language skills a limitation and are not comfortable presenting their stories in a written form. Others have difficulties focusing and writing in the camp environment where it can be cold, wet and where it is challenging to create the physic as well as the mental space for

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concentrated work. We are going back to Calais in February 2016 where the earlier mentioned poet J.J. Bola and a photographer, Gideon Mendel, will join us to work with the residents and maybe inspire the residents’ own creative story telling.

3.4 Ownership and co-authorship

Apart from being a “University for All” project, the aim with ‘Life Stories’ is also to enable a wider audience for the residents’ own accounts by publishing their stories in a book they are co-authoring, and possibly by exhibiting their visual or photographic work. Many residents tell that they want the stories about their journeys and experiences to gain a wider hearing.

The residents’ oral, written or visual life stories belong to them. That means, the stories will not be used by UEL as empirical data in research articles or other publications. Before telling their stories, the residents sign a contract stating that their story will be a part of the book project, that the story belongs entirely to them, and that it will not be used for research purposes by UEL. If the residents tell their stories orally, we record and transcribe the stories for them. We attempt to involve the residents in this process by giving them back the transcript and inviting them to comment, add or rewrite if they wish to do so. If residents move away from the camp, we try to continue the collaboration via phone or email.

4. Narrative and ethical perspectives

Despite the fact that ‘Life Stories’ is not a research project, I will argue why and how the project is a knowledge-generating initiative allowing for other power relations, subject positions and representations than traditional research projects. In order to do this I will discuss ethical perspectives related to narrative representations of people in positions considered marginalized. I will do this within the framework of constructivist narrative research that I earlier presented.

4.1 Refugee narratives in context

In the contexts of political resistance and transition, from court rooms to trauma counseling self-narration and testimonies are heavily relied upon (Gready, 2008). Refugees rely on their stories in order to claim their legal rights as asylum seekers. Through their descriptions of past experiences they
must demonstrate a ‘well-founded fear’ of persecution in the home country and their stories must be coherent in order to comply with the general assumption that consistency is a sign of credibility (Crawley, 2010). It seems likely that there are less room for narrative fragmentations and multiple narrative truths in such narrative constructions. Furthermore, it might be underestimated that a chaotic narrative may in fact be a fairly accurate reflection of a chaotic situation (Squire, 2008). The narratives can be understood not as a factual report of events, but instead as articulations told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others (Riessman, 2008).

In addition to the legal importance of the refugees’ stories, the stories also play a moral and political role in the world of audiences. According to Plummer (2013), life stories have the ability to deepen the audience’s sympathy, imaginations and critiques of ‘a damaged world’. The stories help the audience to hear different voices, make the abstract concrete and expand their circles of empathy and the moral universes they inhabit. With the above perspectives, I direct attention towards narratives, not as carried by, or arising from within, the individual, but as they arise in interaction with legal, political and moral contexts, in this case the legal, political and moral context of forced displacement or the macro context of the narratives. When understanding narratives from a constructivist perspective, the ethical considerations related to the use of narratives within research, must expand to include such macro contexts. The power to control, reimagine and relive events, to construct identities, social interactions and communities lies, then, not in the hands of the individual but in the space between the individual and its surroundings. In this framework, it becomes meaningful to consider the powers in the society as a macro context, and in the research situation as a micro context, interacting with and shaping the refugee narratives. In the following, I will present concepts I find relevant in order to reflect on the ethics of representing refugees in research, and relate such considerations to the ‘Life Stories’ project.

4.2 Narrative Power
Gready (2008) argues, that narrations offer a form of power, and allow the narrator to reimagine, relive and control events and construct chosen identities, social interactions and communities. However, powers work both within the story (who gets the voice) and outside the story (who lets it be heard) (Plummer, 2013). Narrative power, as Plummer (2013) presents it, speaks to the capacity of others to control or regulate the voices of others and relates to narrative inequality; that not all stories are equally heard. There are worlds of privileged voices and worlds of lost voices. Stories are
always embedded and patterned through cultures of inequalities; of ethnicity and class; of gender and sexuality; of health and age; of nation and country. With the concept of narrative power, we can raise complicated questions about the state, the media and the flows of control, of elite tales and mass tales. (Plummer, 2013). The questions can be related to a battle of truth and a question of who has the power to define the truth. Riessman (2008) argues, that the most important stories can be the ones that diverge from established truth. Such stories indicate silenced voices and subjugated knowledge. An issue that can be conceptualized with the notion of epistemic violence.

4.3 Epistemic Violence
To communicate we all need an audience willing and capable of hearing us. The extend to which entire populations can be denied this kind of linguistic reciprocation institutes what was conceptualized by Gayatri Spivak (1988) as epistemic violence, a way of marking the silencing of marginalized groups (Dotson, 2011). Epistemic violence can be enacted by an audience against a speaker or it can be where audiences do not meet speakers dependencies. A speaker needs an audience in order to be recognized as a knower. The consequence of epistemic violence is the disappearing of knowledge, an effect identified as an epistemic side of colonialism by Spivak, where local or provincial knowledge is dismissed due to privileged, often Western, practices. (Dotson, 2011). Dotson writes that stereotypes can control how certain groups of people are perceived socially and that being classified as belonging to an objectified social group can hinder being perceived as knowers. She argues, that by understanding certain social groups according to stereotypes they are stripped of the ability to be “uncontroversially” identified as knowers. (Dotson, 2011:8).

4.4 Representation
The right to narration is not only the right to tell one’s story it is, also, the right to control representation (Slaughter, 1997:430 in Gready, 2008). Spivak (1988), as mentioned above, addresses the issue of representation and asks “Can the Subaltern speak?”. She relates the issue of representation to neo-colonial imperatives of economic exploitation and political domination. More recently, the issue has been addressed by poststructural feminist scholars suggesting alternative representational methods challenging authorial authority (Hladki and Gonik, 2014). Just as interview participants tell stories, narrative researchers also construct stories from their data. Riessman (2008) writes that stories’ connection to the flow of power in the wider world is an important facet of
narrative theory and that narratives do political work. In line with this, Plummer (2001) argues that stories are used by different shades of the political spectrum, they are never just stories. As researchers, we need to look at the contrasting political roles the stories can play. Social researchers are not the mere medium through which knowledge is discovered, the researcher must be seen as a “constructor” of knowledge (Plummer, 2001). An ethical and moral awareness of the potential effects of the research and an awareness of how it contributes to the mass tales in the media and in the public sphere seems important when considering the researcher in the way that Plummer suggests.

4.5 Ownership
Plummer (2001) questions the right of academics to enter the subjective world of other human beings and report back to the wider world on them. Who owns the life being studied, and what right do researchers have to gather up a personal tale, then leave, telling and often selling their stories to others? Unlike the researcher, the respondents will normally not be able to gain prestige and status for their stories since they are published anonymously. (Plummer, 2001). Gready (2008) describes a reluctance among South African survivors to retell stories that appear to benefit others while their lives remain unchanged. He describes a project seeking to enable people to take ownership of their stories in an attempt to free them from the agendas of outsiders. Gready and Plummer bring awareness to the issue of ownership and invite us to think about what the ‘researched’ gains from being researched.

4.6 Challenging power relations and stereotypes
The empowering potential of research has appealed to scholars in oral history, critical theory and feminism for decades. Feminist scholars for example have embraced “empowering research designs” with the purpose of reorienting, focusing and energizing participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it. The validity question radically changed to one of how research leads to dialogue and change (Patti Lather in Riessman, 2008:196).

Feminist and poststructural recognitions are that researcher/participant relations are marked by power, that research understandings are contextual and partial and that it matters who speaks for whom and how (Hladki & Gonik, 2014). Hladki and Gonik (2014) address some of the ethical and political challenges to qualitative inquiry generated by, what they refer to as, a ‘crisis of
representation’: how to engage in ethical relations with participants, how to present research to readers and whose interests are addressed by the research. In their representations of their own research participants they challenge the use of categories (sexuality, race, gender, class) in their attempt to struggle out and puzzle with the complications of knowledge production about research participants. Categories are introduced not as information, but as a beginning place for critical inquiry. Through such representations the researchers experiment with the safe encounter with “the other” or the reading “zone of comfort” that categories, as a knowing-in-advance, provides. (Hladki & Gonik, 2014). The goal of such representation is to explore the complex ways in which the participants have been constituted through diverse representations. According to Hladki and Gonik we need to consider how we open a discussion into how subjects are constituted by the very discourses that incite them. How can we resist a too easy assimilation of the phenomenon of interest by ready-made concepts? How might various experiences be represented without reconstituting fixed categories? (Hladki and Gonik, 2014).

Similarly, Squire, Davies et al. (2014) raise the issue of how women who have been victims of domestic violence not only suffers through the use of violence, but also as they are inscribed in certain categories such as “victim” and “battered woman”. They may themselves refuse to perform such categories. Through the construction of “victim” as a homogeneous concept there is a risk of reducing the woman’s sense of self to that of being battered (Squire, Davies et al., 2014).

In the following section I will discuss the above perspectives and concepts in relation to the issue of ‘giving voice to the marginalized’ and working with ‘Life Stories’ in Calais.

5. Giving voice

As outlined in this paper, stories are never just stories. Not only are they shaped by the researcher and the researched, they are also embedded in a larger cultural and historical context (political/legal/moral). From this point of view, the residents in Calais’s stories are more than individual stories of personal experiences. Their voices are speaking into a world of different imagined audiences: a world of politics, of inequalities and of legal regulations interfering with private lives on a very substantial level. Their voices mirror power relations on a macro level, and some form counter narratives arguing with mass tales currently shaping dominating images of refugee identities and refugee journeys and backgrounds. Adopting the arguments outlined in this paper, that narratives arise in and shape a world of power and politics, the residents’ voices are political, legal
and moral inputs in a public discussion. ‘Giving voice’, understood as the representation of refugee narratives in academic writing or other publications, is therefore never neutral nor objective.

5.1 Narrating voices

‘Giving voice’ to refugees, may seem like one way of handing narrative power to a group of people who risk having their voices silenced or misrepresented in the medias or in mass tales arising in political contexts. Similarly, presenting refugee narratives seem like a way of fighting epistemic violence, challenging established truths, and generating a knowledge that otherwise would have ‘disappeared’ or been ruled out. With the previously mentioned concepts and perspectives in mind we may, however, also critically reflect on how representations and the mere idea of giving voice can contribute to and reinforce mass tales and stereotypes, and how research itself risks performing epistemic violence by allowing certain stories to be told, while intentionally or unintentionally silencing others.

I read Spivak’s critical view on academic representations of the subaltern, and Plummer’s questioning of the researcher’s right to invade and ‘sell’ the voice of the researched, as an encouragement to revisit and carefully consider current methods involved in research and representation. This implicating reflections on how to narrate the voices of people in positions considered marginalized without reinforcing such positions. We may for example consider how ‘giving voice’ can be done without ‘taking the voice’ of people and how to create spaces where it becomes possible for participants to represent themselves. I consider the ‘Life Stories’ book project, where residents are co-authors and owners of their stories, as an attempt to allow for such spaces. Encouraging personal and alternative ways (not conforming with traditional academic representations) of expressing stories might make it possible for residents that would otherwise not speak their own voice to take part in the project. By not interpreting and not including stories in UEL research projects, we are not taking ownership of the residents’ voices. However, there are ways in which we (the team), the artists, the publication company and other people engaged in the project are shaping the stories and representations. For example, I have been transcribing some of the stories we recorded in the camp. A transcription is, in itself, an interpretation. Furthermore, the stories have to be adapted to the purpose of book publication. This means that we try to write the stories in a way so they make sense to an audience. The importance of an audience capable and willing to listen in order to communicate and being recognized as ‘knowers’ was outlined previously. The question of ‘giving’ or ‘taking’ voice is not a
simple one. In the case of this project, the purpose of ‘taking voice’ is to make it more likely that the voices are heard and listened to by the addressed audience. This is important, partly because the narratives have the potential to affect the audiences’ worlds, as described by both Riessman (2008) and Plummer (2013), and because the voices represent a knowledge that might otherwise disappear or be dismissed or overtaken by the ones that are more privileged (Dotson, 2011). When we are aware that narratives are not neutral, and when we understand ourselves as co-constructors of knowledge, not simply a medium transmitting it, we can make active decisions in terms of how and with which morality we want to engage in the production of knowledge. In the following section, I will discuss the importance of being aware of the stories and concepts given attention in research and public representations.

5.2 Narrating complexity
Post-structural feminist ideas about representations challenging identity categories may inspire us to rethink the established category ‘refugee’ in a way that allows for more complexity, for in-coherences and multiple narrative truths. Such representations seem less likely to appear in the legal and political contexts where asylum seekers narrate their stories in order to establish a valid case and their status as asylum seekers, a subject discussed by Crawley (2011) and outlined earlier. The issue of representation was raised at the conference: ”Gendering the Refugee Crisis” hosted by Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration in London on the 11th of Dec 2015, which I attended. Researchers presented work challenging typical stereotyped images of refugee women, for example that of ‘being a victim’, and work challenging typical concepts normally used to conceptualize the lives of refugees, for example that of ‘integration’. For example, Dr Umut Erel presented her work on refugee women enacting citizenship. She presented an image allowing for a complex understanding of the refugee women as reproductive and innovative at the same time, and reframed the study of migrant mothers from the typical one of ‘integration’ to that of ‘citizenship’. Dr Heaven Crawley discussed the implications of the legal procedures within the asylum system where women have a better case if they narratively construct themselves as victims: ‘raped’, ‘beaten’ or ‘suppressed’. In the case of asylum children, Crawley (2011) problematizes the lack of agency that the narratives constructed in the asylum procedures allow for. The picture presented at the conference was one of refugees affected by, but also responding to, the frameworks representing them. The

narrative power does not belong to the researcher alone, but is shared with participants and the many audiences and platforms making it possible for research to be presented, heard and read.

As I mentioned in my description of the ‘Life Stories’ project, we experience and hear about many of the refugees’ own initiatives and resources when we visit the camp in Calais. With the above, I wished to make the point, that resources and initiatives might drown or disappear in the stream of stories victimizing refugees, or stories tied to concepts and categories reinforcing stereotypes. Using categories such as ‘Syrian refugee woman’ or ‘young refugee man’ provides readers with associations and allows for a “safe encounter” with “the other” (see for example Gonik and Hladki, 2014). Researchers may ask how to challenge fixed categories as ‘refugee’ and the ones referring to class, age, nationality and gender. Without knowing what the final product of the ‘Life Stories’ project will look like, it may allow for other and maybe more complex stories than the ones we hear in the media.

I find it important to mention, that some residents have already established platforms at social medias, fx ‘Refugee Voices’, as mentioned earlier, where they engage in storytelling challenging the images in mainstream media. Collaborating with and supporting such initiatives might be the best way to fight epistemic violence and challenge inequalities in terms of narrative power.

5.3 Final considerations

I will round off with some final considerations about the ethics of doing research within the field of refugees. As Plummer (2001), researchers may also question their own right to invade the lives of others, regardless of researchers own good intentions they may ask themselves about the refugees’ interests in the research/representations. What will the refugees themselves gain? Will they receive any of the profit that the researcher possibly gets? Will the research change anything for them, or in their lives? Will it change their position? As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, a lot of refugees are in situations where basic human rights are a concern. Doing ethical research can be considered a question of primarily addressing such basic rights and creating projects that gives the participants something in return. Leaving them with their lives entirely unchanged while yourself and others benefit from their stories is from the point of views I have presented in this paper (Gready, 2008; Plummer, 2001), something to be avoided. While there are many ways to do this, teaching, as in the ‘Life Stories’ project, might be one way of offering opportunities for change. The teaching project is possible because it is funded by UEL. Sponsorships, funding and collaborations is of course, a crucial
aspect of doing research and establishing projects like the one I have described in this paper. Funding is another issue worth discussing but beyond the scope of this paper.

6. Conclusion

This paper was based on theoretical perspectives and ethical considerations I have been involved with as an intern at Centre for Narrative Research and through my work at the ‘Life Stories’ project in Calais. I have problematized the notion of ‘giving voice’ to people in what may be considered marginalized positions, and I have used narrative theories and methods to establish an understanding of knowledge as constructed in a complex interaction between micro and macro contexts, and of narratives as shaping and being shaped by power relations in such contexts. Finally, I have outlined ethical considerations that might inspire non-traditional research designs.
7. Literature

Crawley, H. (2010): ‘No one gives you a chance to say what you are thinking’ – finding space for children’s agency in the UK asylum system. Area vol. 42, no. 2. 8 ns.


Smail, D. (2005): Power, Interest and Psychology. Elements of a social materialist understanding of distress. PCCS Books. Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4. 120 ns.


**Web pages**

22/12-2015. 2 ns.

UNHCR (August 7, 2015): UNHCR calls for comprehensive response to the Calais situation.

Total: 625 ns
8. Appendix

Adichie C. (2009) TED Talk:
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  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uWqV31QqLo


Yousafzai, M., Lamb, C (2013): *I am Malala. The Girl who Stood up for Education as was Shot by the Taliban*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.