



Jokela, Emily

Living the Finnish Arctic
Teachers' stories of negotiating their cultural identities

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KASVATUSTIETEIDEN TIEDEKUNTA

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This thesis centres around the narratives of five teachers who identify as being from Southern Finland but have lived in the Finnish Arctic for three or more years. Through their narratives, the teachers described their changing cultural identities whilst living in the Arctic and described a range of intercultural experiences that influenced them. The interviews were open to all aspects of the teachers' lives, rather than purely their professional lives. From this a more nuanced understanding of their experiences was obtained.

Cultural identity was the clear theme that became prominent through both the thematic and narrative analysis. From this a deeper understanding of cultural identities, through looking at the multiple layers of context that influence their development, was obtained. To support these findings the Theoretical Framework centred around cultural identities from a social constructivism point of view. A modified version of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model was utilised to demonstrate the interaction between context, influences, and identity development.

The main findings were divided into the three themes of *Negotiating Arctic Identity*, *Attached to the Arctic*, and *Interacting in the Arctic*. *Negotiating Arctic Identity* examined how participants viewed the Arctic with themes of otherness being present. Participants also reflected upon their own identity and how it is reflected in the place that they live. *Attached to the Arctic* explored how participants were pulled towards the Arctic despite a contrary migration trend and how they became connected to their respective communities. *Interacting in the Arctic* explored the intercultural experiences that participants outlined, both challenging and empowering. Integrated in these findings are longer stories from each participant to allow their voices to be heard with less intrusion from the researcher.

These findings provide an understanding of where universities can alter teaching courses to ensure that teaching is culturally relevant and how teachers can be more successfully recruited and retained to teach in the Arctic.

Keywords: cultural identity, Arctic, teacher, narrative

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1 Introduction

1.1 Orientation to the thesis

Stories are an integral part of being human. Haigh and Hardy (2011) state that “the importance of storytelling as the foundation of communicating human experience cannot be overestimated (p. 204)”. In childhood stories enable one to explore abstract rhetoric such as good and bad, understand values and alternative perspectives, develop imagination, and make sense of life events (Garvis & Pramling, 2017). As children grow into adults, stories, both fiction and non-fiction, are often moved from being an integral part of understanding life to being mere forms of entertainment. Stories, however, can enable one to develop a more holistic and nuanced understanding of a person, theme or idea. Whose stories are told and whose stories are listened to frames the view of the world (Garvis & Pramling, 2017). This thesis will focus on the stories of five teachers who originally lived in Southern Finland and moved to the Finnish Arctic.

When beginning this thesis, I was an Australian early childhood and primary school teacher teaching in a range of schools both regional and rural. The focus of teachers living in Lapland who were originally from Southern Finland developed naturally from an interest in Australian teachers moving from city centres to rural areas to work. In Australia there are high levels of teacher turnover in rural and remote areas with teachers claiming that issues such as isolation, weather, lack of support, lack of training and in some cases a lack of Indigenous understanding made maintaining a position permanently challenging (Kelly & Fogarty, 2014). Through an internship with the University of Rovaniemi with the UArctic Thematic Network of Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity, whose focus is exclusively on education in the Arctic, an interest of whether this issue is relevant in Finland arose. This created a list of questions that provided the foundation for this thesis – who are teachers who move to the Finnish Arctic from Southern Finland? Why do they stay? What are their experiences there? What can be learnt from their stories? The aim of this research is to understand teachers’ experiences living and working in the Finnish Arctic. To understand the experiences and strategies that teachers have had that have influenced their decision to stay in the region to continue to work. This may be important in understanding how to recruit and retain teachers in this area when it is not possible to obtain local teachers. From this starting point the following research questions were created:

How do teachers describe their changing cultural identities whilst living in the Arctic?

What kind of meaningful intercultural experiences appear in teachers' stories?

This thesis is composed of seven sections. This first section introduces the thesis through this orientation, a review on the importance of this research and briefly my own story. Through understanding my story as the researcher, the influence of my values, experiences, and the view I have on the world become clear. Through this understanding greater transparency can be afforded (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The second section focuses on providing contextual reading behind the thesis. For understanding this thesis, it is important to understand the cultural, historical, and geographical aspects of the Finnish Arctic and its relationship with the Southern part of Finland, as well as to have a general understanding of the education system in this region. This section will highlight the power imbalances that exist between remote areas and larger metropolitan areas.

The third chapter will provide the theoretical framework that underpins this thesis. The theoretical framework has grown and developed throughout the thesis process. Originally it was thought that a focus on intercultural learning would be a strong basis to explore the strategies and approaches teacher's utilised to integrate into communities in the Finnish Arctic. However, after undertaking the interviews and analysis the theoretical framework and some reflection the focus was moved to cultural identities. In the theoretical framework cultural identities is explained utilising an altered version of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (Grace, Hodge & McMahon, 2017) as a foundation.

The fourth chapter will explore narrative and life story research in more depth providing a clear description of the process undertaken in collecting the life stories of the participants and the analysis, both thematic and narrative, utilised to develop the findings.

The fifth chapter provides the findings of the interviews. These are organised under the three themes that were developed from the analysis: Negotiating Arctic Identity, Attached to the Arctic, and Interacting in the Arctic. Under each of these themes the findings in relation to the research questions are outlined. In addition, under each of these themes a longer story from each participant is provided. This choice was made to allow each participant the space to have the power to have their voice and story shared with less editing and analysis. It may also allow for the reader to develop further conclusions based on their own experiences, knowledge, and questions.

The sixth chapter explores the trustworthiness and ethics of this thesis. The final chapter, the discussion and conclusion, provides an overview of the findings as well as the components of the research that were surprising and missing. How the research is positioned in relation to the wider field and its implications and importance is outlined. Some notes for future areas of research are made.

1.2 The importance of this thesis

Before engaging in this thesis, it is important to understand how it is related to the previous research. This thesis was completed focusing on research available in English due to language abilities. The following will discuss the importance of this thesis and place it within the previous research.

There is research related to teachers who have moved from Southern Finland to the Arctic. The findings of this research have identified that these teachers often feel underprepared for their new position. In small schools' teachers are unsure of how to meet the needs of a wide variety of students and the other, non-teaching demands of this position (Kilpimaa, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2012). It has been argued that this lack of preparation is due to teaching university courses focusing on the needs of Southern Finland and limiting the exploration of the unique aspects of the North (Lanas, Rautio & Syrjala, 2013). Studies on improving the integration of teachers in the North found that engagement of the teacher with the local community in developing shared goals and incorporating local knowledge led to higher engagement and satisfaction in all areas (Lanas & Kiilakoski, 2013; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2015). This gap in teachers' abilities has an impact upon their students who have stated that there is lack of nature and appreciation of their cultural backgrounds in the school (Keskitalo & Paksuniemi, 2017). Studies have demonstrated that further teacher development in Sami culture and education is needed (Keskitalo, Määttä & Uusiautta, 2012). This thesis provides further information on what aspects need to be developed within universities to provide teachers with an ability to provide culturally relevant education to students. These conversations would benefit from exploring these aspects from an intercultural lens moving beyond seeing intercultural as different nationalities or ethnicities but seeing beyond this to a more dynamic model that takes into a range of factors such as regional differences.

The University of Helsinki offers a Master's Degree in Intercultural encounters, the University of Jyväskylä offers a Master's Degree Programme in Language, Globalization and Intercultural Communication, The University of Eastern Finland offers a Master's Degree Programme in Early Language Education for Intercultural Communication and the University of Oulu offers a Masters of Education International Teacher Education Programme. Through these course offerings it is evident that Intercultural communication and experiences are of interest and importance to the Finnish community. There are multiple researchers in Finland, and abroad, who have explored the themes of intercultural competence/learning/education/communication/experiences such as Fred Dervin and Katri Jokikokko. Exploration, however, of identities of teachers appears to be limited to solely professional teacher identities (e.g., Korhonen & Törmä, 2016; Collanus et. al., 2012; Tryggvason, 2012; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). This research solely focuses on either established teachers or student teachers and how they perceive themselves as teachers. There is no consideration for aspects of the teacher's identity outside of this context. These studies also exclusively focus on educators from Southern Finland. There was one study found with teachers from the North that focused on Sami language teachers and their professional teaching identity (Hammine, Keskitalo & Sarivaara, 2019). This study used life stories and as such some elements beyond professional teaching identity were included but this was limited. As such this thesis' wider examination on cultural identities appears to be a new area of exploration - viewing teachers as a whole entity rather than purely in a professional light. This is important when considering aspects such as teacher recruitment and retention.

1.3 My story

I was born into a regional town in Australia where I lived, with the exception of one year in Melbourne, until I moved to Oulu in 2016 at the age of 25. I was fortunate that there was one of a small handful of regional universities in my hometown that focused on teacher education where I completed my Bachelor in Education. If this had not been the instance, then I would have struggled to support a move to a metropolitan area where the vast majority of universities are situated. Throughout my university education I was afforded the opportunity to travel to Nepal to teach in co-operation with local teachers. This experience shifted my focus into power systems, oppression, and strengths approaches. I continued my partnership with this organisation in Nepal after graduating in 2013.

During my time in university, I had my first encounter with a Finnish person through the university's lecturer exchanges. Through this professional relationship an opportunity to complete my final teaching placement in Rovaniemi, Finland arose. I spent two months living and teaching in Rovaniemi, Finland on the border of the Arctic circle where I had my first engagement in Finnish culture. In 2015 I was contacted by my Finnish lecturer to urge me to consider applying for a position in a master's degree in Finland before changes occurred to the fee system in which students from outside of the European Union would need to begin to pay fees. With this time motivation I applied and was accepted into Oulu university's degree Master of Education and Globalisation.

At this point in time my focus was to complete my degree and use this understanding to strengthen my ability to work ethically in Nepal. I moved to Oulu in 2016 and began enthusiastically attending classes. It was at this point in my life that I began this thesis and in 2017 began the interviews outlined whilst living in Rovaniemi completing my internship. I had an elementary understanding of Finnish culture through a group of Finnish friends. I had no desire to continue living in Finland past my time completing my master's degree.

Shortly after completing the first interview I met my husband Arto. Arto from our first date was passionate and vocal about his dream to live in his family's original area of Kittilä, Lapland. Although at that point in time our relationship was not serious, whilst conducting and completing the interviews I began to place myself hypothetically in the interviewees position – could I live in Lapland? What would it be like? It was at this point that I undertook the first analysis of the interviews. Our relationship became serious quickly and in 2018 I moved to Helsinki, we were married and welcomed our first child, Paola, and in 2020 our second child, Pekka. Now in 2021 whilst finalising this thesis and undertaking a second analysis of the interviews we are in the process of building our family home in Kittilä. Throughout these years my time and understanding of Finnish culture and Lapland has grown and developed and my interpretation of themes has changed with this experience.

2 Context of the Study: The Finnish Arctic

Context is the undercurrent that runs through the entire thesis and impacts on every element. Therefore, it is important to have a thorough understanding of what the Arctic refers to, historical and social differentiation between Northern and Southern Finland, and education in Northern Finland.

The Arctic can be defined by a line of latitude or its climate or its vegetation or all of these aspects (Ingold, 2007). For the purpose of this thesis the Finnish Arctic refers to the land above the Arctic Circle in Finland. When sourcing references and readings the search term Lapland was also used as the vast majority of this state is located within the Arctic Circle. Northern Finland will also be used when discussing aspects of migration and the internal other as the literature sourced did branch outside of the Finnish Arctic but still within Northern Finland.

2.1 Northern Finland – the internal other

Northern Finland, often generally referring to the state of Lapland, has developed a stereotypical view of exoticism, backwardness and nature – an “internal other” within Finland (Lanas, Rautio & Syrjala, 2013; Linjakumpu & Wallenius-Korkalo, 2010). This “socially constructed imaginary myth” was first evident in literature in the second century when Publius Cornelius Tacitus wrote about Finnish Northernness (Ridanpää, 2007). From this time onwards, the North of Finland was viewed by many as primitive and natural and the South of Finland as the cultural and progressive centre which some state was perpetuated to maintain a social order (Ridanpää, 2007). A mostly negative view of the North has been focused and developed on when researching the North with deficits such as the decline of services, schools closing, aging population, alcoholism, unemployment, suicide, and depression explored (Lanas, Rautio & Syrjala, 2013; Rautio, 2010). Many argue that this distinction was orchestrated by the South to fulfil a social order which mimics an internal colonialism (Ridanpää, 2007; Heininen, 2007; Linjakumpu & Wallenius-Korkalo, 2010) - "Colonialised in nationally popular representations that serve to meet the hegemonic needs of the south (Lanas & Kiillakoski, 2013)". Though others agree with this notion they also believe that people living in the North often support and further perpetuate the stereotypical exoticism of the North; this is perhaps most evident through the tourism industry (Tuominen, 2010).

There are people living and thriving in the North who contradict the stereotypical representation that has been enforced (Lanas, Rautio & Syrjala, 2013). People display pride at surviving and adapting in challenging circumstances (Rautio, 2010). “The North as a lived and experienced space – as a location of subjectivity, individuality, community, creativity, agency and emancipation – has, until recently, remained unstudied (Linjakumpu & Wallenius-Korkalo, 2010, p. 4)”. This is changing with an increase in Lappish writers, academics and others in positions of power. There needs to be a deconstruct of the “*colonization of the mind*: the mental and social structures that for centuries have defined the South and the North, centre and periphery, subject and object, what is worth remembering and what is ready to be forgotten” (Tuominen, 2010, p. 11).

The history of Lapland has also had a long-term influence, though it should be noted that history is not a linear process with different people experiencing time differently (Tuominen, 2010). It should be noted that the history of the Sami, Europe’s only recognised Indigenous group (Keskitalo et al., 2012), began before the time period discussed here and that their experience during these time periods may have been different. For an English recount reading Neil Kent’s *The Sámi Peoples of the North A Social and Cultural History* would provide a strong understanding of this history. What follows is a very general outline of Lapland’s recent history. During WWII Laplanders were forced to evacuate and upon return faced the task of rebuilding. This was a collective material, psychological and cultural catastrophe for Lapland (Tuominen, 2010). In the 60s the slow migration to the south began as farming and other practices became less economically viable. Terms such as ‘progress’ (Linjakumpu & Wallenius-Korkalo, 2010) and ‘development’ (Tuominen, 2010) are often loaded with power and detached from the lives of those living in the North. For example, after World War II the North was exploited for its resources and economic possibilities. After this time there was an era of social welfare balance throughout Finland, though health inequalities remained (Karvonen, 2007). This regressed during the 1990’s recession with changes made to systems which resulted in regional differentiation. This corresponded with a further decrease in population with Northern Finland one of the most rapidly depopulating regions (Karvonen, 2007). Migration is often seen as the path to becoming ‘successful’ (Lanas & Kiilakoski, 2013). More females than males tend to migrate away from their home communities. They move to larger places with better job and life opportunities. Males do migrate, especially for development project work, but tend to return. There is a slowly developing trend towards a gender discrepancy (Rasmussen, 2007).

Currently globalisation is affecting Lapland with aspects such as international tourism (Linjakumpu & Wallenius-Korkalo, 2010), exploitation of natural resources, environmentalism, traditional livelihoods (Tuominen, 2010) and more international cooperation in science which in turn has created an increase in the number of researchers and theories about and in the North (Heininen, 2007). The circumpolar north is also increasing in relevance regarding world politics due to its energy resources and role in investigating climate change (Heininen, 2007).

2.2 Characteristics of Northern education

“Education is one of the cornerstones of the Finnish welfare society (Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), 2021, para.1)”. Education is free of charge from pre-primary up to higher education. Compulsory schooling starts when a child turns seven and enters basic education and generally finishes when a child turns 18 (MEC, 2021). The number of active comprehensive schools in Finland in 2016 was 2 449 with 550 236 pupils (Official Statistics of Finland (OSF), 2017). Comprehensive education is mainly managed by municipalities. Teachers are highly trained holding a master’s degree (MEC, 2021).

Education is bound by context and as such there are multiple aspects that intertwine to create a unique educational context in Northern Finland including low populations, small student groups, Sami education, lack of teacher availability, natural aspects such as light and cold and long distances (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2015). Teacher education is becoming increasingly focused on southern areas and needs (Lanas, Rautio & Syrjala, 2013) and is not sufficiently preparing teachers for this unique context.

The diminishing populations have naturally led to smaller student groups. Multiple grades due to the small student groups are more common in the North with benefits such as being student centred, flexible, promoting a family atmosphere, individuality and flexibility (Hyyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015; Kilpimaa, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2012). Teachers, however, feel under-prepared for meeting the needs of a wide variety of students and the other demands of this position (Kilpimaa, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2012). These small schools decreased by 65% during 1991 to 2010 with an increase in larger schools with longer travelling required by students (Hyyry-Beihammer & Autti, 2013). The loss of these village schools reported a loss of connection to the local village (Kilpimaa, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2012). This trend of moving schools

out of local contexts may reduce the likelihood that the education in the North will embrace the cultural characteristics of its environment (Lanas, Rautio & Syrjala, 2013).

There has been research focusing on developing specific Finnish Arctic pedagogy to fully embrace the educational context. Lanas and Kiilakoski (2013) discussed that in their research the education in the North was often directing students away from their local context leading to an 'othering' within the classroom. The impact of this lack of connection could be leading to this gap between Southern and Northern students (Lanas & Kiilakoski, 2013). This othering was further present through the phrases teachers used such as 'we' creating an 'us and them' against the village and local culture. In this study further engagement of the teacher with the local community in developing shared goals and incorporating local knowledge led to higher engagement and satisfaction in all areas (Lanas & Kiilakoski, 2013). Määttä and Uusiautti (2015) also discuss developing communalism as a key aspect of Arctic pedagogy alongside collaboration, problem solving skills and opportunities to active learning based on local culture. They believe that Arctic features should be seen through content as well as teaching with an individual, strengths based focus adopted. Lanas, Rautio and Syrjala, (2013) developed three goals from their research in regards to education in the Finnish Arctic: Embrace the present; value staying in a place; accept that change is for the worse only if not adapted to.

The Sami people also occupy Northern Finland, as well as Norway, Sweden and Russia (Keskitalo et al., 2012). There are three main languages of Sami people in Finland: Inari, Skolt and North Sami (Keskitalo & Paksuniemi, 2017). There are several Sami speaking classes in Sami administrative areas in Northern Finland (est. 1979). For the 75% of Sami students who live outside of these areas they receive two hours a week of language teaching. Problems in providing quality Sami education include a lack of teaching materials and the divergent effects of two cultures (Keskitalo & Paksuniemi, 2017). In their research Keskitalo and Paksuniemi (2017) noted that students felt there was a lack of nature in school and that the teachers, most of whom were from the South, didn't know or appreciate their cultural background. Multiple studies demonstrated that further teacher development in Sami culture and education is needed.

3 Theoretical Framework

The framework for this thesis mirrors the research questions and the findings. To begin with the terms culture and intercultural are defined to provide a structure on which to understand the discussions that follow. Following this there is an examination of intercultural identities utilising a framework based on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (Grace et al., 2017).

3.1 Culture

Culture is polysemous and there are multiple definitions and histories (Jahoda, 2012). In a brief simplified version, the current usage of culture moved away from a biological focus of culture being genetic with the works of Arnold in 1864 and Taylor in 1871 (Cobley, 2017). This created two schools of thought with Arnold's developing a focus on the elitist concept of culture being defined in which people should aspire to and Taylor's led to cultural pluralism (Cobley, 2017). As time has progressed the definitions of the term culture have continued to grow and diversify. There are currently multiple definitions of culture which Jahoda (2012) divide into the categories of culture as external, culture as internal or internal/external and singular or multiple. From the examination of multiple definitions, it was established that many of these definitions do not align or support each other and therefore there is no agreed definition (Jahoda, 2012). As such a definition for culture will be provided that will be utilised for this thesis which aligns with the aims and ontology of social constructivism. The term culture is inclusive of both objective culture which examines the "institutional, political and historical circumstances that have emerged from and are maintained by a group of interactive people (Bennett, 2009, p. 2)" and subjective culture which examines the "world view of people who interact in a particular context. It is their unique perspective on how to discriminate phenomena in the world, how to organize and coordinate communication, and how to assign goodness and badness to ways of being (Bennett, 2009, p. 2)". In other words, culture is produced from individuals and their interaction and negotiation with their social world (Egekvist, Lyngdork, Du & Shi, 2016). Intercultural, therefore, refers to occurring between two or more cultures. Dervin and Gross (2016) refer to 'diverse diversities' which looks through the lens of subjective culture as outlined earlier in which everybody is diverse and therefore an interaction between any two people can be intercultural – this is the view taken in this thesis.

3.2 The layers that influence cultural identity

When examining cultural identity, the majority of literature appears to focus upon intercultural communication and the interactions between people of different cultures. Viewing the ever-changing cultural identity in such a limited scope is short-sighted to the wider contextual and cultural factors that mould, develop and shape these communications. To demonstrate this wider scope Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological Model of child development (Grace, Hodge & McMahon, 2017) was altered to show the various layers of influence on a person’s identity. This structure will be used throughout this theoretical framework. The layer closest to the person is the microsystem which contains the people that are closest to the person who they are in communication with frequently such as family, close friends and work colleagues. The next layer out is the exosystem which contains people and structures that influence less frequently or directly such as extended family, people in the community, mass media. The next layer is the macrosystem which contains dominant cultural values, national laws, social structures. Added to this is the new concept of ex-macrosystem which takes into consideration globalisation and its impact such as international politics, technology, migration. Underlying all of this is the chronosystem which looks at how identity changes over time. Added to this diagram is the encompassing aspect of nature and place which directly influences on all aspects. Identity, followed by each of these layers, will be discussed further below demonstrating how they influence identity and in particular cultural identity.

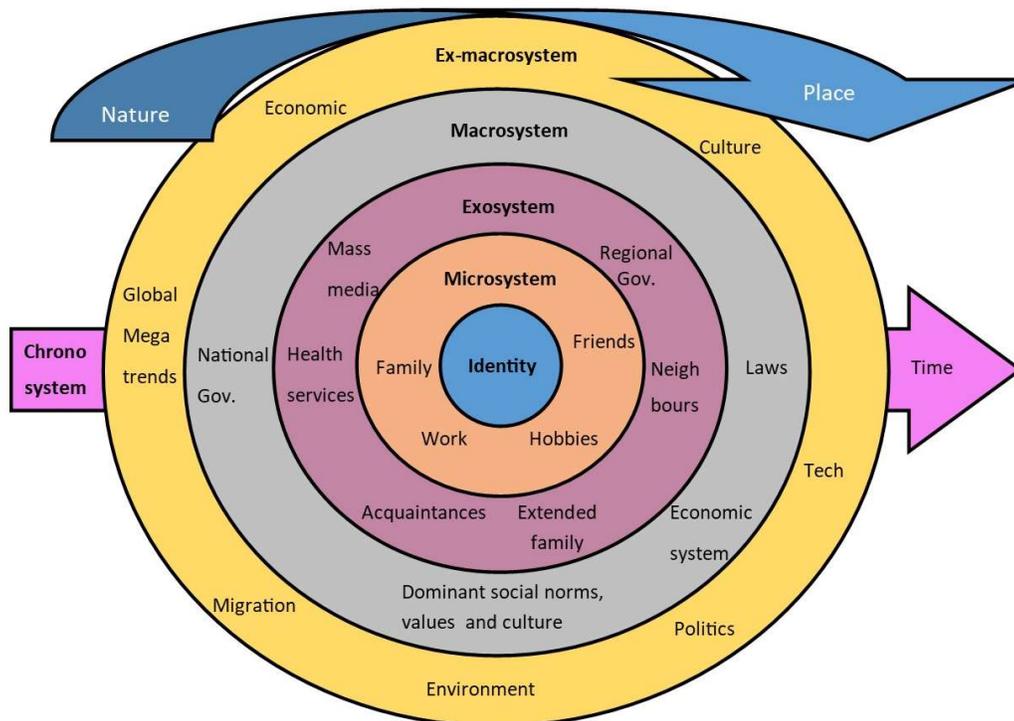


Diagram 3.1 The layers of influence on identity

Identity

Identity and cultural identity has been explored by many different fields and schools mainly psychology, sociology and anthropology but recently extending to marketing, communication and other areas. Each field has had a varied focus which has led to a large amount of literature. This diversity has brought many valuable points to light but also created a fragmented view of cultural identity (Guo-Ming, 2017). “Investigators vary widely, and sometimes intensely, as to what cultural identity is, what it means in the context of intercultural-intergroup relations, and how it is to be researched” (Kim, 2007, para. 2). Underlying these differences in opinion, Kim believes that the movement of political ideology, assimilation, pluralism, integrationism and separatism, has also influenced how cultural identity has been researched and viewed (Kim, 2007, para. 4).

In psychology Erikson first explored the concept that the identity is constructed of both the individual and the group (Kim, 2007). Generally, though, psychological studies have placed an emphasis on group level cultural identity focusing on the perspective of the individual’s orientation to their heritage culture (Kim, 2007). Anthropologists, on the other hand, more typically focus on cultural identity as a continuum that links people together and is “fostered by the communal life patterns and practices associated with language, behaviour, norms, beliefs, myths, and values, as well as the forms and practices of social institutions (Kim, 2007, para. 11). Lastly, sociological research more commonly focuses on culture as a social category.

Cultural identity is seen as being core to both the individual and their ‘common culture’ as outlined by Erikson (as cited in Kim, 2007). This is supported by Grace, Hodge and McMahon (2017) who discuss how one’s sense of self is developed through being in and engaging with the social world. As such in this thesis cultural identity will not be limited to national identity or group identity. Instead, as Guo-Ming (2017) states, cultural identity will be seen as holding “three levels comprised of individual, interpersonal, and group; and cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements are involved in each level”.

Identity has a clear relationship with intercultural experiences. Humans have a need to create order through social categorisation. Kim (2009; Kim, 2015) sees the utilisation of in-group and

out-group, or us and them, categories as an impediment to constructive intercultural engagement (Kim, 2009). Through prolonged intercultural experiences, identity is likely to go through the process of individuation and universalisation which leads to an intercultural identity. Radford (2017) views that identity both shapes and is shaped by intercultural experiences in a bidirectional nature. This is supported by Kim (2009) who states that the more inclusive and secure an individual's identity orientation the greater their ability to engage in cooperative intercultural relationships.

Micro and exosystem

In diagram 3.1 the person's cultural identity is in the centre and is firstly surrounded by the microsystem and then the exosystem. In these systems are where frequent and less frequent interactions occur between the person and other people/environments in their immediate and less direct circles. The vast majority of research focusing on cultural identity examines the role of intercultural communication or intercultural competence/learning (Guo-Ming, 2007). There is a consensus through the literature (Egekvist, Lyngdork, Du & Shi, 2016) that Intercultural Learning is holistic in nature with components of emotional, cognitive, behavioural, social and action.

Intercultural communication has been investigated through interactive face to face approaches, the contrasting of cultural systems, analysing cultural representations, studies of linguistic diversities and the transfer approach (Thije, 2020). Communication between people provides opportunities for people to be presented with conflicting opinions, ideas and concepts. Cultural adaptation theory believes that it is through these conflicts that people are able to work towards moving their cultural identity to having an intercultural identity (Kim, 2007), though it should be noted that one's identity, including cultural identity, is never fixed. Dervin and Gross (2016) see intercultural learning as centring around the interaction and negotiation of identities.

It is important to note that humans are not the only close aspect in the micro and exosystems but also physical and imagined places. Place attachment focuses on "the bonds people form with places and the meanings they ascribe to them" (Gurney et al. 2017, 2 as cited in Lee & Blackwood, 2020). This focus on bonding is supported by Pretty, Chipuer and Bramston (2003, p. 3) who state that "attachment to a community can be understood in terms of the deeper meaning of experiencing close, local relationships with people and, by extension, to places of relational interaction".

The relationship between cultural identity, intercultural communication and relationships can be briefly broken down as the (inter)cultural identity formation of a person impacts on their ability to engage in intercultural communication, which has a direct impact upon the development of belonging and attachment (Radford, 2017).

Macrosystem

Alongside examining cultural identity in relation to intercultural communication, another area of exploration regarding cultural identity has been through broader categorical cultures such as national identity and heritage identity. For example in Australia Brooker, Suomi and Lawrence (as cited in Grace, Hodge & McMahon, 2017) conducted studies where they asked high school students from an “ethically diverse area” where they felt they were “exploring and committing to each of their cultures” (p. 97). In this study the focus was on how students related to having an ‘Australian cultural identity’ as though this is a separate cultural identity to their heritage culture. Considering Australia’s highly multicultural population this seems to be a shallow exploration. Finland, on the otherhand, is significantly less multicultural and has a history that has established a more unified cultural identity, though, as outlined in the contextual aspect of this thesis, there are regional differences. “Finnish national identity and ideology is framed by the national narrative authored in Finland's pre-independence period (Marakowitz, 1996, p. 1)” and strong aspects of this are still visible when generalising. However, it is still viewed as problematic to focus exclusively on a national cultural identity.

Although focusing exclusively on a national or heritage culture as the sum of one’s cultural identity might appear limited, it is important to take this into consideration as an active part when exploring cultural identity. Dervin and Gross (2016) outline that is important not to ignore objective culture as this can lead to discourses of power, discrimination, and superiority being hidden and ignored. For example, Guo-Ming (2017, para. 7) explores how intercultural communication research itself is still heavily dominated by a “Eurocentric perspective, which is characterised by the neglect of the potential impact of culture in perceiving the concept of identity.” Through this dominance non-European and non-USA problems and ways of conceiving cultural identity are excluded.

Ex-macrosystem

The ex-macrosystem outlines the impact and influence of globalisation and other international level factors. Lecler (2019) outlines the key dimensions of globalisation as mobility of people, expansion of trade, financial and cultural flows worldwide and international cooperation.

The growth and change in globalisation, as well as the change to capitalism, has also had an impact on migration. As briefly outlined in the context section of this thesis there has been a steady amount of people migrating out of Northern Finland after the economic boom of 1985-1990 (Rutherford & Törmä, 2009). The following burst of the bubble created issues of migration out of the north and an increase in unemployment. This corresponded with the time in which information capitalism (Lecler, 2019) began to grow. With the increase in the demand for knowledge based professions more people began moving to urban areas where there were/are more employment opportunities. This also began in increase in transnational migration in Finland. In 2019 there were 423 494 thousand people of foreign origin out of the 5 101 798 population (OSoF, 2020). This compares with around 50 000 in 1991 to a population of 4 998 000. International students have grown from 2 percent of all students in 2000 to 7 percent in 2016 (Mathies & Karhunen, 2020). Through these statistics it is clear to see that in the last twenty years Finland has had a large increase in both internal and external migration creating an increase in intercultural experiences both within regional areas of Finnish culture and with cultures from abroad. This has increased the opportunities to people to develop and expand their cultural identities.

Humans are now living in “a world of clashing traditions and collective identities” (Kim, 2009, p. 57). Through globalisation people are presented with more intercultural experiences and exposure in not only their physical interactions but also through virtual communities. Technology has allowed for culture to be spread faster and further than ever before. It has also removed the requirement of face-to-face interactions. Traditionally aspects of cultural identity were formed, either constructed or imagined, around a territorial sense of cultural identity (Guo-Ming, 2017). The large scale and amount of migration in combination with the growth of technology has brought into question the relevance and impact of territories as well as larger international cooperation such as the European Union. How cultural identity is influenced and formed within a global society has been researched with a focus on aspects such as global identity, global citizen and environmental identity.

At this global level there should also be a consideration of not only the impact upon a person's cultural identity but also how the concept itself is viewed. In the identity section the way different fields explore and view cultural identity was explored but there are also differences in the way cultural groups around the world view cultural identity (Guo-Ming, 2017). For example, Heisey (as cited in Guo-Ming, 2017) discussed how in three different continents there were views of identity being "dialectical", "harmonious interfusion", and "flexible and multiple". The "flexible and multiple" viewpoint was categorised as being dominant in Britain and Europe which aligns with the previous point outlined when discussing intercultural communication. This difference further stresses the importance of taking a holistic view which has become important with the increase of globalisation (Guo-Ming, 2017). Strizhakova and Coulter (2019) outline that there needs to be a further exploration in how the global and local intersect in the formation of cultural identity.

Chronosystem

Time is an ever present force both over short periods and long periods. For an individual they are born without an existing cultural identity but into a social world full of different cultures. Over time this cultural identity develops through influence within the various layers. Over time it continues to change, though Guo-Ming (2017, para. 9) believes that when an "authentic cultural identity is formed, it becomes less flexible or susceptible to change". This is countered by Kim (2007) who believes that cultural identity is constantly shifting and adapting. Over long periods of time cultures or "cultural identity as a collective consciousness of a group (Guo-Ming, 2017, para. 9)" are changing and being transmitted throughout generations. Interestingly Guo-Ming (2017) believes that although throughout history cultural identities have vanished that the shared history is sustained in different forms.

Nature

Due to the migration aspect of this research, it is beneficial to also explore the geographical examination of identity in relation to place. Place identity, sometimes referred to as emotional attachment, focuses on how a place, including nature, provides individuals the opportunity to express and affirm their personal identity, as well as express their symbolic attachment to a place (Lee & Blackwood, 2020). This is supported by Pretty, Chipuer and Bramston (2003) who discuss how indicating that the town where someone lives is not "the place for me" suggests that the town is not part of one's self-identity.

Place dependency, sometimes referred to as functional attachment, focuses on how people see themselves associated with and dependent upon a place and shows how people view the instrumental value of a place (Lee & Blackwood, 2020). Pretty, Chipuer and Bramston (2003) describe it as the “goal oriented behavioural component”. The development of place dependency develops before place identity (Lee & Blackwood, 2020). Stokols and Schumaker (1981, as cited in Pretty, Chipuer & Bramston, 2003) describe two components of place dependence, firstly how the place matches the goals through the resources available and secondly how it compares to other places.

3.2.1 Process, person, context and time

An important component of Bronfenbrenner’s later work was the idea of **Process, Person, Context and Time (PPCT)** (Grace, Hodge & McMahon, 2017). This aspect stresses the bidirectionality that people have on the environments outlined above and vice versa. Proximal *processes* are the reciprocal interaction between the person and their context – this aspect stresses the bidirectionality that people have (Grace et al., 2017). For example, the person may have their cultural identity influenced by their work colleagues but through proximal processes they may also have an impact on the development of their work colleagues cultural identity. The *person* at the core has an impact upon proximal process through aspects such as gender, age, physical appearance, temperament and motivation (Grace et al., 2017). For example, a female child will receive different cultural messages that impact upon their identity than a male child. The *context* aspect is outlined above in detail through the systems of the microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem, exomacrosystem and chronosystem. *Time* is broken down into three aspects micro, meso and macro (Grace et al., 2017). Micro time is during the proximal process which in this instance would be interactions and events that influence the development of one’s cultural identity. Meso time is the frequency of the micro time. Macro time is seen as manifested through the chronosystem. Through PPCT it can be seen how one’s cultural identity can be influenced and developed throughout their lifetime and continue to have an impact across the generations.

3.2.2 Justification of using Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model

The theoretical framework has utilised an altered version of Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological model. This model was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner over his lifetime to explore the role

of nature and nurture in the development of a child (Grace et al., 2017). This section will provide a justification for why this model is a good fit in exploring cultural identity.

The majority of the research articles and books that were sourced for this thesis (and referred to in the previous section), appear to focus on one part of cultural identity rather than looking at the concept in a holistic format. For example, the research might explore heritage culture, dominant culture, ethnic culture, group culture, global culture. Alternatively, the research focuses on the processes in which change within one's cultural identity occur e.g., intercultural communication, conflict, adaptation, integration. The benefit of this focus is that it allows for depth but on the other hand it makes it challenging to gain an understanding of how they fit together to construct one's cultural identity. Most aspects were relevant to the thesis and a cohesive model was wanted to demonstrate how all aspects impact upon participants' cultural identity in this thesis. During the research for the theoretical framework, only models that explored the process of identity could be found (e.g. Cohen & Kassan, 2018). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model provided a clear framework on which to demonstrate the interrelationship between the different aspects of cultural identity and through the person – process – context – time (Grace et al., 2017) the processes are also evident.

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model looks holistically at development, in which identity is a part (Grace et al., 2017). Therefore, it is clear to see how the model can be utilised to look at one particular aspect of a child or persons development. The model has been used to explore focuses such as fundamental movement (Nobre et al., 2020) and mental health (Mutumba & Harper, 2015). Although Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model was designed to primarily examine child development, as a core aspect of the model the chronosystem explores the role of time (Grace et al., 2017). The inclusion of this demonstrates that the model explores a person's development over time, from birth to death, and as such is relevant to any age group. This is supported by its use with adults in the following research by Bettis et al. (2020) and Moore et al. (2020). Through this it is evident that Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model can be used to explore cultural identity in adults.

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model does not contain the layers of ex-macrosystem or nature (Grace et al., 2017). These were added for different reasons. The layer of ex-macrosystem was included originally as it was felt to be limiting to restrict the examination of context to a nation state. As discussed earlier, globalisation has had an increasing impact over the last two decades, this was after Urie Bronfenbrenner had passed away (Grace et al., 2017). It is clear to see that

the impacts that this can have throughout the systems and on the development of a person's cultural identity. Upon review there have been similar criticisms as explored by Christensen (2016) with Drakenberg (as cited by Christensen, 2016) supporting the inclusion of an ex-macro-system. Nature, on the other hand, was added after a revision of the findings of this thesis and coming to the realisation that this key aspect influenced all the systems directly. No study could be found to support this addition, though this may be due to the difficulty in isolating the search terms. These studies support the inclusion and utilisation of the ex-macro-system and nature.

Through using an altered version of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, a clear understanding of the context and influences surrounding the participants dynamic cultural identity is provided. The use of this model is supported through previous use in specific foci and critical reflection on adding additional elements. Though it should be noted that this model, as can be ascertained, has not been utilised in cultural identity previously and as such further research in this area would be beneficial.

4 Methodology

This section will analyse the choice of using Narrative as a means of methodology by examining what narrative research is, evaluating its appropriateness for this research, an exploration of the epistemological and an ontological framing of this research, with finally an overview of the methodological steps taken within this research.

4.1 Narrative as methodology

Stories are a part of being human, they surround every aspect of life. History, entertainment, memories are all narratives that influence how one sees themselves and the world in which they are situated. Perhaps due to this, narrative research is a popular qualitative research methodology (Garvis & Pramling, 2017). Despite, or perhaps due to, this popularity there is no singular, clear definition of what narrative research is and what steps should be taken (Garvis & Pramling, 2017). Reissman believes that the definitions and criteria for narrative research are too broad and there needs to be a more explicit systematic method for analysis to ensure reliability to strengthen narrative research (as cited in Bold, 2011). However, others argue that such a strict linear outline goes against the adaptability of narrative research. This thesis will focus on the shared aspects of narrative research and define it as “the investigation of individuals’ experiences and stories with the contexts of their lives (Garvis & Pramling, 2017, p. 2).”

There is much criticism aimed at narrative research for providing no “large samples and statistical generalisability (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010, p. 2)”. This need for research to provide easily replicated studies that provide easy answers and solutions to improve practice and productivity can be linked to the commercialisation and industrialisation of the education system, which in turn is due to domineering capitalism (Enders & Jongbloed, 2015). How research is created and documented is tied to funding, which is often only provided to those proposals who offer a clear, tangible outcome (Enders & Jongbloed, 2015).

There is value in qualitative narrative research. Through focusing on narrative with smaller sample sizes a deeper examination is provided. This can reveal “ambiguity, complexities and contradictions that exist in real life (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010, p. 2)” which are often ignored when looking for simple answers. Narrative research is also seen as providing an opportunity for participants to negotiate their own identities and try to make meaning of their experiences (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010).

Narrative research was chosen for this thesis to enable participants to be viewed as a whole, rather than simply through the singular lens of ‘teacher’. Goodson (2014) discusses how through their research history teachers have integrated aspects of their own lives when discussing professional issues. This is echoed throughout their colleagues’ experiences and some limited research (Goodson, 2014). Historically this information has been viewed as “too personal, too idiosyncratic, too soft” to be included (Goodson, 2014). This ignores the fact that one’s life beyond the classroom is a key aspect of a teacher’s identity and therefore shapes their practice. Narrative research was also chosen due to the power dynamics that it allows for (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010). Through having broad, open ended questions throughout the interviews, participants were able to share the aspects of their lives and themselves that they thought were most important to them. This allowed for new themes that were not expected to appear and the focus of the thesis to shift. It also allowed for teachers to have more power in their role as participant (Goodson, 2014).

4.2 Ontology and Epistemology

This thesis will utilise social constructivism as its ontology and epistemology. Social constructivism puts forth that there is no singular truth but rather truth and knowledge are formulated by social actors within a group – basically that it is socially constructed (Bryman, 2015). This is in a constant state of change as aspects are renegotiated.

This view stance was the starting point for this thesis and can be seen in multiple places throughout the thesis such as in the definition for culture and the framework used for identity. This view stance provided the foundation for then choosing narrative as a methodology for this thesis. Through believing that individuals are active in constructing and developing their reality it then becomes of importance to understand these actors and how they negotiate this in their lives.

4.3 Data Collection

The data for this research was collated through undergoing semi-structured, face to face narrative interviews with five participants. Each aspect of this will be justified and explained to provide an understanding of why these decisions were made at the time, followed by a reflection on problems that arose throughout this process.

The five participants were collected through purposeful case sampling (Bryman, 2015). The location of Lapland was chosen as it aligned with the aforementioned internship (see 1.5 My Story). From this an email was sent to all schools with the participant requirements of – self identifies as being from Southern Finland and has taught in Lapland for over three years. From this, four participants were collated. A fifth was found through opportunistic sampling (Bryman, 2015) as a colleague had mentioned this thesis to a past colleague who met the requirements. This colleague then made contact expressing an interest in participating. These participants were chosen specifically due to an interest in looking at the retention of teachers with no connection to Lapland beforehand.

The decision to collect narratives from the participants through semi-structured verbal interviews rather than other avenues such as written text was made due to the nature of the thesis. After engaging with multiple texts that explicitly engage with the topic of research interviews (Bryman, 2015) a semi structured framework was developed. A list of open-ended prompting questions were developed and drafts were reviewed by critical friends and the thesis supervisor through which criticisms were embraced and a final copy produced. A semi structured interview was chosen as it would be flexible, but also provide a guideline (Bryman, 2015). This was thought to be useful given my limited previous interviewing experience. The guideline, however, did make it difficult to enable a natural discussion as there was the constant thought of missing something. This did allow, however, for each participant to be asked similar questions which allowed for some comparison in answers.

Face to face interviews were chosen to allow for a more natural progression of storytelling. This also reduced the likelihood of technical difficulties such as connection issues, unclear voices and distractions which had been experienced in previous research situations. The negative of choosing face to face interviews was that, due to practical considerations such as time and cost, there would only be one interview per participant. In hindsight it would have been beneficial to meet on more than one occasion as with each participant the discussion began to flow in the latter half of the interview. This would have allowed for a stronger rapport to have been built and further depth gathered.

Each interview was successfully completed and recorded with a handheld recorder with the guideline questions answered and some natural progression included. These interviews went mostly between one hour and twenty-five minutes to one hour and forty-five minutes with one

outlier of fifty minutes. The natural progression was hindered through multiple aspects that stemmed from cultural differences, for example, natural silences. In Australian culture there are rarely places of comfortable silence and silence is viewed more as an uncomfortable moment in a discussion. When relistening to the interviews in 2021 it became apparent that further depth and insight may have been provided from participants if the silence had been allowed rather than filled by the interviewer.

4.4 Data Analysis

The raw data for this research was analysed several times over a long period of time utilising different approaches. The original interviews were undertaken in the European summer of 2017 with transcription and a thematic analysis begun. This original analysis was then left until the project was reinstated in 2021 when the thematic analysis was complete, and a narrative analysis was taken. The following will outline both analysis as they are both utilised in developing the findings of this research.

4.4.1 Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis followed the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Throughout this process each interview was analysed for themes and subthemes which resulted in a final thematic map.

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 16-18)

During the interviews, in the self-reflection phase directly afterwards and in discussions with peers the analysis of the data began. The narratives provided were not as initially expected with less focus on explicit intercultural learning experiences. Each interview was then listened to several times and transcribed word for word with brackets used when required to indicate aspects such as tone or long silences. The process of transcribing ensured that each word and phrase was given specific focus. These were then emailed to each participant to ensure that there were no errors or aspects that they wished to add to or retract. Each interview was then read through multiple times with some notes jotted down on main ideas that came through such as belonging, community, identity.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 18-19)

Each interview was then coded using a data driven frame which allowed for new ideas to emerge. An open code approach was followed. The following (Table 1) is an example of a coded section from Jenni's interview.

Table 1

Data Extract	Coded For
We will stay here until our kids are grown up then I don't know. Like they have their friends here, hobbies. I have been moving lots as a child and I don't want to do the same to my children. They like it here and school is good and their hobbies so I think we are staying here until that but after I don't know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staying due to positives for children - Future unsure - Negative past experience of moving

The following table (Table 2) is an example of a coded section of the transcript from Antti.

Table 2

Data Extract	Coded for
Well I remember that I was surprised that I would have thought that you know that the Lappish culture would seem to be more present in schools. But these days I think the kids are you know quite the same with their phones and iPads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expectation of cultural difference - Similarity in children all over Finland

The following table (Table 3) is an example for a coded section from Katri's transcript.

Table 3

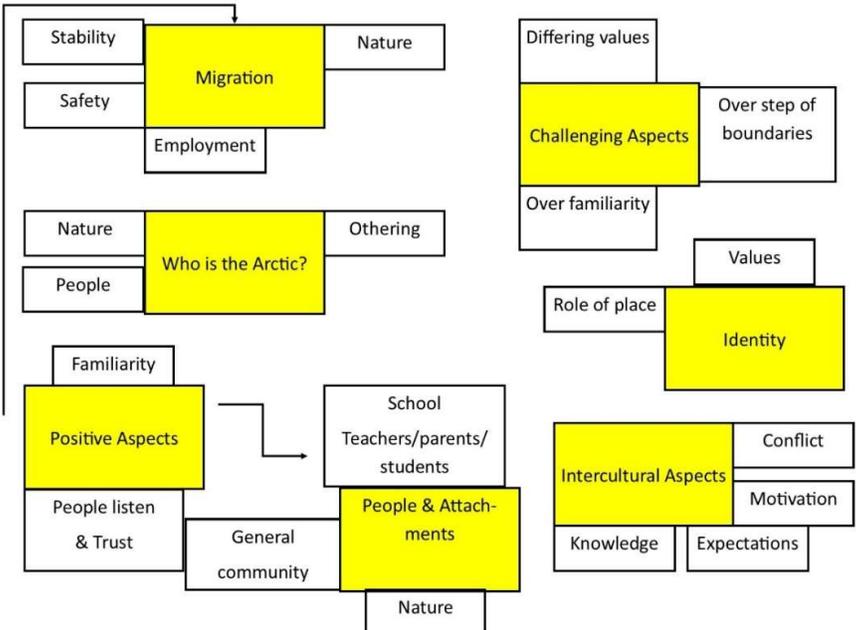
Data Extract	Coded for
I didn't know much about the Sami tradition and things because they don't teach those things in Southern Finland. We just know one or two things, some stereotypical things. So um I felt that it was important for me to find out some things about the Sami culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unaware/stereotypical understanding of Sami culture - Motivation to gain intercultural understanding - Connection to Sami provided motivation

<p>and it turns out that I have very good colleagues and friends here at school who are Sami people. So I wanted to know something about their culture ... I took a course from the university. I took a course from the university because I wanted to know more about people who live here and their culture. Because I think its important for everyone who lives here to know something about it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action taken to improve intercultural learning - Belief in self directed learning.
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In hindsight these codes were perhaps too descriptive, too specific and too numerous and could have been more general. These codes were condensed and changed throughout the following phases.

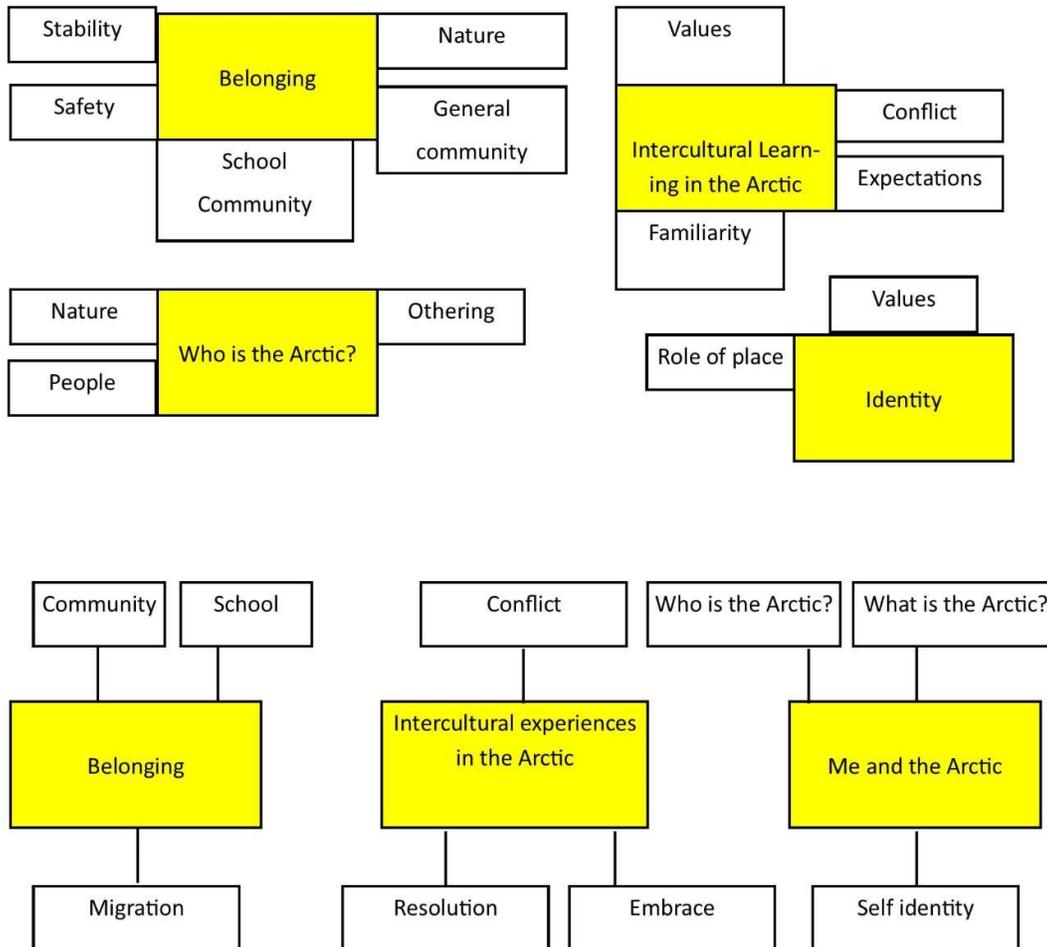
Phase 3: Searching for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 19-20)

Due to the aforementioned issue of lack of specificity in the codes, organising and developing themes was more time consuming. Each code was written on a sticky note and then placed with similar codes in piles. Then these codes were renamed, and this continued until there were a smaller number of codes which were then moved onto a hand drawn mindmap. The following Figure 1 is an example of the thematic mindmap in progress.



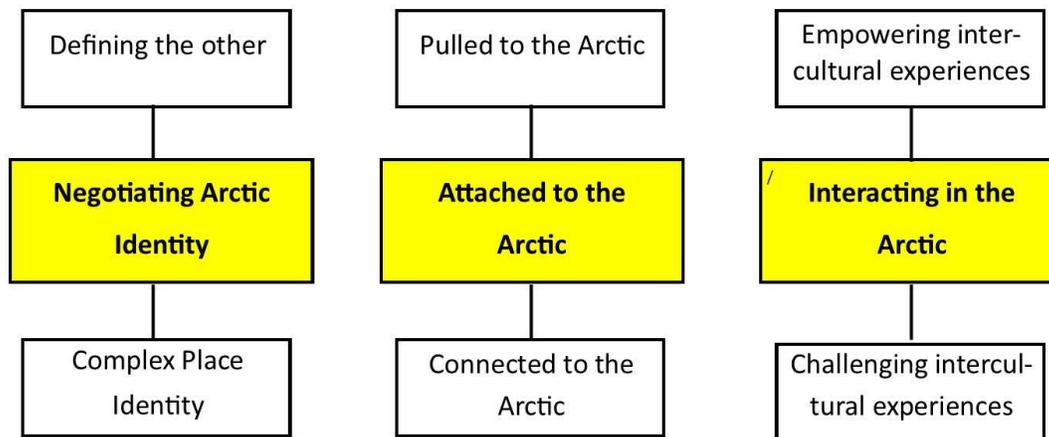
Phase 4: Reviewing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 20-21)

From this rough thematic mindmap a long drawn out process occurred in which themes were created then removed and then created again and then renamed. An example of the development of the thematic map can be seen below in Figure 2 and Figure 3.



Phase 5: Defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 22)

During this phase the vision for each theme was produced and each theme was given a more appropriate name. The final thematic map can be seen below in Figure 4.



4.4.2 Narrative analysis

Many researchers inadvertently gloss over the messy nature of analysis to create a "victory narrative (Lather, 1997 as cited in McAllum et al., 2019)" whilst trying to achieve credibility. After the completion of the thematic analysis the writing of findings was begun. When this process was reinstated again in 2021 it sparked a reflection on the goals and motivation behind the research. It was felt that although the thematic analysis utilised short excerpts of the interview material it removed the voice of the participants in leading their story and stripped their stories down into small pieces removing many of the nuances. It also created a disjoint from the narrative focus in the interviews to the findings. Due to this it was decided that an experience narrative analysis as outlined in Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013) would also be examined. The process for this is outlined in the section below. Both thematic analysis and narrative analysis are under the umbrella of interpretive qualitative research which utilise a social constructivist lens (McAllum et al., 2019). Although there are similarities, they position the participant and their identity differently. Through utilising both methods of analysis further insights can be gleaned through the different perspectives provided.

In the new 2021 analysis each interview was first rewritten as a life story placing all of the information in a chronological order. This step allowed for a re-familiarisation of the data, better flow of story telling and also allowed for a more holistic view of the data from each participant to be examined. The first step outlined in in Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013) is to describe each interview thematically. Although this overlaps with thematic analysis it “is

distinguished by its attention to the sequencing and progression of themes within interviews, their transformation and resolution” (p. 57). The most prominent theme (using the themes from the thematic analysis) were chosen for each participant. Their stories focusing on this theme were then rewritten in the first person utilising as much original text as possible. An analysis of the story follows. Ethically this fit better within the aim of the thesis as it allowed for each participant to have an equal place to share their story with less intrusion from the researcher. This not only allows participants to have a more active voice, but it also leaves the data open to the reader to bring their own experiences, knowledge and understandings to the data (McAllum et al., 2019). These stories can be found within section five of this thesis.

5 Findings

This chapter delves into the key themes that were established during data analysis. Each theme and subtheme are explored utilising small extracts from participants to support and illustrate relevance. There is a more general discussion utilising the thematic analysis. Intertwined within this is an experience narrative analysis for each participant which includes a rewritten story focusing on the key theme for that participant. Through these findings a better understanding of the complexity of teachers lives in the Arctic in Finland can be gained.

5.1 Negotiating Arctic Identity

The theme of Negotiating Arctic Identity was developed through the integration of a range of codes such as identity, role of place, values, nature and othering were brought together. These codes could clearly be broken into two groups, one which discussed the identity of the participant in relation to the Arctic and another in which the identity of the Arctic itself was outlined. These sub themes are named Complex Place Identity and Defining the Other.

5.1.1 Defining the other

Throughout the interviews the participants view and understanding of what makes a Finnish Arctic identity were provided. These are important as they inform the context in which the following themes are explored. This enables an understanding of the positioning of the participants within their context. There were various codes that were utilised in this section such as values, traits, nature, and othering.

Nature was interwoven throughout all interviews almost as an omnipresent factor. It was often described using the language outlined in the context section of this thesis (Chapter 2) with ‘exotic’ being the most frequently utilised. When discussing her first experience in the Finnish Arctic when moving to her first teaching position Jenni described the Finnish Arctic as being akin to living overseas.

It was really dark and cold, but I don't know, it was like going abroad. I always thought I would go to some other country or something like that, be a 1000km away from home but this was just in opposite direction. I always thought it would be South not North –
Jenni

This idea of the Finnish Arctic as a foreign experience was not as directly explored with other participants but was present through their use of language such as “exotic”, “romantic”, and

“remote”. This links clearly to the idea that the Finnish Arctic is somehow separate or “different” from Southern Finland.

It was kind of a joke. Haha (laughs). It was like – What would you say about Lapland? Where there’s reindeers and all that kind of stuff. – Senni

The key aspects of the nature in the Finnish Arctic that were explored revolved around the weather, which was something that all participants stated that they struggled with at times. For Katri and Senni they struggled with the days when the weather was below minus 40. But for Antti there was a bigger impression.

I hate the dark period of the year. It’s still a challenge for me, I am really grumpy and tired. I probably say ever year that this the last winter we are staying in Lapland but then spring comes, and I don’t want to leave. – Antti

On the other hand, the natural beauty was also equally positively emphasised with three participants describing this consistently throughout their interviews. As this discussion was linked more in the discussion to a key aspect of attachment/belonging this will be discussed further in that section of the thesis under 5.22 Connected to the Arctic.

The final key physical aspect of Finnish Arctic identity that was discussed was one of remoteness. For all participants family were located a long distance away and this was often an aspect that was brought up when discussing not only past events, but also the consideration for the future. Senni’s husband lives in a different city located in Northern Ostrobothnia. This requires one of the pair to drive late Friday night so that they can spend the weekend together. This is required as there are no employment opportunities for her husband in the small town in which she lives. For Antti the challenge of remoteness only grew once he had children and he witnessed how it made it difficult to establish close relationships with cousins and other family members.

And that the relatives are so far away. With the kids, like, it takes one whole day to drive there. So, you don’t just decide “hey today we are going to visit grandad”. – Antti

Jenni shared an amusing anecdote about her first teaching position in the very far north of Lapland which encapsulates the concept of remoteness.

It is a very small village, and it was New Year’s Eve, and we were driving there and with some sort of snowstorm going around us. I think my mum and dad had never been in Lapland before that and we were driving there with my husband’s parents and all our stuff and finally stopped in Rovaniemi and my mum was like “I think we are almost there”. I

was like “Um, no, we are not even halfway,” there was something like 500km left. And we were there in the middle of the night and I mean we passed the village as it was so small. – Jenni

Interestingly, in seemingly direct conflict with the focus on remoteness, some participants mentioned the international connection of their communities. These stories of international connection were often told with pride and mentioned as a positive reason for continuing to reside in the Finnish Arctic.

Maybe this place, we are so far away from other places, but I feel that here is more international. Like I worked in (Town) that’s only 150km from Helsinki airport. And there were only one or two people who were going abroad. Here there is always someone going here or coming from somewhere or we are just going somewhere. We are working with the etwinning and Erasmus and all those. Here we have got all of those, everyone’s coming over all the time. So, it’s more like in the middle of Europe than the Southern Finnish school – this is international school - Katri

Of course, the Finnish Arctic is not only a physical place. The people form an integral part of maintaining and transforming the culture. All participants discussed the values and traits of people in the Finnish Arctic and of their communities. The word “warm” was used consistently by all participants when describing people in their communities. Other aspects were “really open”, “they trust”, “really friendly”. The communities were simultaneously described as “old fashioned” but also as forward thinking and “international”.

People really made an effort to welcome you and make you feel like, “Ah we have always wanted you here”, and they call you after work “hey you want to go for a walk or do you want to go to the bar”. They take you in.– Senni

The main value of the communities in the Finnish Arctic was interestingly safety. The idea of Lapland as safe was brought to the fore in three interviews.

Because I am feeling like that my kids are very safe here, they don’t have to think about the things here that you have to think about in Helsinki, maybe I have never lived there. But I think that my kids can be safe here and that’s really important, and I can be safe I can go outside in the evening and jog and whatever and don’t have to think about what time it is, it doesn’t matter. – Katri

Through understanding how the participants view the Finnish Arctic as a place and the aspects of its identity, it provides a context for the discussions that will follow. It is often this idea of the Finnish Arctic identity that participants would relate themselves and their own cultural identity to. The following section will explore this aspect.

5.1.2 Complex place identity

Interestingly most participants, unprompted, discussed their identity in relation to the place that they now reside. For Antti and Senni they have developed a deep attachment and see their communities as their “home”. Their attachment journey is outlined in more depth under the theme 5.2 Attached to the Arctic.

For Katri and Perttu there was a discussion of that although they feel that they belong to their communities, they have a detached identity where their identity is not linked to the place in which they reside. For them the communities in which they lived did not impact upon who they are as people.

I have never understood how someone is mentally addicted to a place. I think the everyday life is the same anywhere and my happiness is not because some surroundings but due to the things I do myself and the people around me. – Katri

I think that I don't actually feel like I am, I live in X, but I am not Xalainen. – Perttu

To demonstrate the complex nature of identity, further on in the interview Katri provided the following excerpt.

I'm sort of like, proud that I live here, I think I am a little bit proud. It's kind of exotic to tell someone in the South or if you are abroad that I am from Lapland, the sun shines all the time in summer and not at all in winter. But it's something that I can be like uh proud or something more. – Katri

In this story it appears that although Katri may feel as though her identity is separate to the place in which she lives, there is a clear aspect of living in the Finnish Arctic that is a part of her identity. The idea that she feels “proud” to share with others that she lives in the Finnish Arctic suggests that she has a positive correlation with the Finnish Arctic identity.

5.1.3 Jenni's story of being the "weird one"

A main theme for Jenni's interview was her identity in relation to where she now lives. This theme was reiterated numerous times throughout. Overall, Jenni expressed that she felt separate to the Finnish Arctic identity that she outlined but was instead a "weird one" who should be living in Helsinki or another metropolitan hub. The following is a rewrite of Jenni's interview with the focus on her identity in relation to place. Italics indicate parts which have been paraphrased to improve the structure and flow of writing.

After six months in a small village on the border of Norway we eventually settled in TownA. I made a couple of friends from agility; I took the dogs. So, I went there but then when we got our son and then started going to all those clubs for mums, then I started to make some more friends. And I think that was the thing that I started to get connected here with more and more people. But I think that I still feel that we just live here. I have been thinking about this lately, that we have been here for 12 or 13 years, but I still feel that we are living here but I am not from here. It still feels like some exotic experience, sometimes I think "why I am I living here still". I don't think I am that normal a person to live in TownA. I love big cities and I am a vegetarian. We are not religious at all and our kids are adopted. So, our family is colourful. But on the other hand, people are really nice here. Even though they probably think that we are really weird ones. I think that I also miss all of my friends and all of those people that think the same way. During the last couple of years they have been discussing how people in Helsinki live in a bubble, they're in their own world and their own opinions, they are quite liberal. I feel that I have my own bubble here, people here think quite differently to me. I think I am the type of person who should be living in the centre of Helsinki. Maybe religion is an example, I feel that people are quite religious here or they are quite traditional with their values. Um I am very liberal and an atheist which is one thing that comes up once in a while. Then politics, I am one of those city greens they think, like there are mines here and people want mines, but I think that they destroy the nature, though there are people here who think that. And then we are travelling a lot and that's something that people are like "Oh how can you go there all by yourself and" I mean I have lots of friends who travel. People here seem happy in their own little world and maybe once in every ten years they do Canary Islands or something. We have been travelling all of the time. So, I have still that outsider feeling here, but I don't know. There are many other teachers who are from Southern Finland and I think that helps as I get that outsider feeling with people who have been living here and I still feel like I don't know what they are talking about if it isn't a

student or a parent of a student. I think we also have other teachers from Helsinki and southern Finland they are also the weird ones, so I am not alone. Because some of our other teachers who are from Southern Finland like I am they have this, like, I am having this living abroad a little bit feeling because it is so different from the place I used to live. I have the feeling that we live in some other country and then we go to Southern Finland to that *is the* normal world. Some teachers they come here and they just they enjoy the nature and quite soon they feel that this is the place they always want to be. There are kind of two teachers. I don't know why I have this feeling that this is just the place I am living in because it doesn't mean that I don't like living here, I just miss the city and the city life and the nature in Southern Finland. But we have those long holidays which is why we can live here. A lot of our holidays are abroad or are in Southern Finland. I think that is very important to me, then come back until I feel I need to be somewhere else - then we go.

From this story several aspects of identity become apparent. Jenni positions herself as the “weird one” in her town alongside with the other teachers who originate from Southern Finland who share her values. For Jenni the liberal values she holds appear to be main factor in which she differentiates herself from the people in her town. In this regard Jenni sees herself as the other whilst simultaneously upholding the othering aspects of the Finnish Arctic that was discussed in the context section in Chapter 2. Although she has been able to establish friendships within the town there appears to be no overall feeling of belonging. It seems as though for Jenni she feels as though the Finnish Arctic identity and her identity are not compatible creating situations where tensions arise and a lack of connection.

5.2 Attached to the Arctic

Throughout the interviews, attachment to the Arctic was a theme that presented itself through two separate but related fronts. Firstly, participants described the journey that brought them to the Arctic in the first place which was brought together under the sub theme of Pulled to the Arctic. Codes utilised in this subtheme included employment opportunities, family influences and nature loving. Secondly, participants detailed the relationships that they have developed with the people in their communities and their wider community itself. These are outlined under the subheading Connected to the Arctic. The codes under this subtheme included community attachment, school attachment, nature attachment and family attachment. It is noted that nature is included in both internal and external forces – this will be expanded upon below.

5.2.1 Pulled to the Arctic

Four out of the five participants were mainly drawn to the Arctic through employment opportunities and for all participants employment played a role in their ability to stay. For Jenni and Perttu their original position was the only one where there were two positions available in the same area in the middle of the school year.

After the call I said to Jenni that, maybe we won't get there as when I called the lady didn't sound very happy or something but after a couple of minutes she called back and said were you serious when you called us because she thought we weren't really going there. – Perttu

They were then able to find positions at different schools in the Finnish Arctic that were more suited to their teaching backgrounds.

For Antti there was multiple points in his life where employment opportunities led him to the Arctic or ensured that he could continue living in the Arctic when situations changed. Originally, he found a position as a substitute teacher, then his wife had employment in the same area, then when he graduated from his degree, he found more substitute work.

I applied for many, many, teaching jobs around Finland and I didn't get in or get an interview and I started to get really frustrated and I was at the café at the university, and I was complaining to my friend I said, "Dan I have sent out 50 email applications around Finland and I haven't even got a call for an interview". And he said, "Hey I know this guy in TownA and he's going on a trip around the world, he's a PE teacher and they need a substitute guy for him." And I thought well I have done swimming, so I know something about sports, so I called him, and he was like sure let me think about it. Then ten minutes later he called back and was like sure, come here. And that's how I ended up in TownA. – Antti

This substitute work led to working for the department and then to being a vice principal. For Antti there has been no issues with finding employment when needed but he acknowledges that this is not the situation for many people living within his community

I think that more people would live here in Lapland if there was more work here. There are a handful of young families that have moved to Southern Finland because there's not any work here and they get frustrated waiting for the work and they leave. The work is why we came here in the first place. - Antti

For Katri and Senni their partners appreciation and desire to spend time in the Finnish Arctic was also a factor in deciding to move. Katri's husband was from Northern Finland and it was his desire to live in the Finnish Arctic, that was the main motivator for the family's relocation.

I have been in Southern Finland, because I am from Southern Finland, but my husband is in the army and he wanted to come here in the North. He is from, well not this north but the north – Katri

Although for Senni the main motivation was finding a teaching position, her husband's desire to spend a year in the Finnish Arctic doing photography supported and encouraged the application.

He loves photography and he wanted to take pictures, nature pictures of birds, Northern Lights, everything like that. He said that he would like to come to Lapland to see the nature and everything like that - Senni

These family influences were visible for both why participants came to the Finnish Arctic but also factored into their reflections on whether they could stay. For Senni her husband was unable to stay beyond two years as he had to return to his employment position. This has resulted in a long-distance relationship which is a key factor in Senni's reflection on whether she can maintain living in the Finnish Arctic forever. For Antti his desire for his children to have a close relationship with family members living in Southern Finland was the key aspect that was providing some doubt as to whether they would remain.

The role of nature was also a factor in the decision to spend time in Lapland for three of the participants. For Antti his love of snowboarding, hiking and other outdoor sports factored into his decision to look for work in Lapland

I thought hmm pretty cool and I have done snowboarding all my life and so I was like yeah hmm fits my thinking and I applied for the job and I got it! - Antti

As mentioned previously Senni's husband wished to spend time in nature photographing. Although Perttu did not explicitly mention moving for the nature he did provide a strong presentation in the interviews of having a deep connection and appreciation of nature in the Arctic.

5.2.2 Perttu's story of nature

Perttu's interview contained fragments of various themes shown through to the point statements. Although nature was not the most common theme in Perttu's interview, through use of

voice, body language and more descriptive language it was noted that this was the most significant or important theme for him. When discussing nature Perttu's voice became more animated, he began using hand gestures and providing more detail. This belonging to nature was linked to throughout the interview in which Perttu describes how the Northern nature is a part of his everyday life in both teaching and recreation. The following is a rewrite of Perttu's interview with the focus on nature.

It is by accident or something that I am not a biologist working in a forest. When we were studying, our friends got into teaching in case they couldn't get a job in something else, that's how I got here. Well, I don't look back, I like it. My parents have been in Lapland every summer and every winter since before I have been born. I have been in Lapland every year at least twice. My parents don't like that I live up here but it's their fault as they used to always bring me here, so now I am here. With the students in TownA it was easy to teach biology there because there were hunters and fishers there and we normally went outside to see some trees or insects or go fishing, so I think it was easy to do the same they were doing everyday anywhere. I don't fish much myself, but I hunt a lot and I like to go outside somewhere. We live near the [retracted] when you go like 500m that way you are in the middle of the forest and then the next house is like 300km that way. My hobbies and interests are somewhere in nature. In Southern Finland there are forests, kind of, but so they are so industrialised or something so it's really, really, different here. Like the fells, if I want to see the landscape easily, I just go two kilometres that way and I will see in every direction. Usually, my brother posts something in Southern Finland when he goes jogging or bicycling or something with something like pavement or a house or a road in the background. And then I post a picture at the same time and I am just surrounded by trees.

Perttu was the only participant who had spent his childhood in Lapland. He sees this as a reason for his attachment to the Finnish Arctic and its nature. His teaching focus, biology, is also inherently based on nature. Perttu clearly demonstrates an understanding of the strength of utilising his passion for nature in his teaching and supporting the attachment that many of his students have already with nature through place based learning. Although not explicitly stated, through non verbal cues it appeared as though nature brings Perttu a level of peace and belonging.

5.2.3 Connected to the Arctic

Participants discussed the multiple ways in which they developed ties and became connected to the communities in which they lived. For all participants they described an active and conscious engagement in the community. The range was wide: sewing classes, quilting, Tupperware parties, gymnastics, floorball, hunting, agility. The importance of engaging in the community was outlined by all - as Perttu stated, "It's really easy to just do a job, come home and watch Netflix and see no one." These different ways of engaging in the community could easily be broken into two groups. One in which a dependent was the key and one focused around personal interests. For example, two of the participants discussed how engaging in groups for mothers and their child's hobbies led to developing friendships and links to the communities. One participant described how before having children taking her dog to parks and agility courses led to developing a relationship with the community. The other aspect was focused on personal interests and through engagement with these friendships were developed with a range of community members.

I went to some sewing classes or quilting things and that was really good as I got to know some older generation people, so I know some of the people who are older than me - Katri

For Katri the active involvement in the community had a flow on effect to the relationships she was able to build in the school. After being involved in the Teddy Bear Gymnastics with her daughter she quickly became more involved and began teaching class herself "so now we have kids here in our classroom who has been in my Teddy Bear Group, so you've been in my teddy bear group and they are like oh no! Just a baby!" It was through these experiences that a stronger relationship with both the wider community and the school was created.

Senni described a strong attachment to the local school in which she taught, and it was the sole reason why she couldn't imagine moving away from her community.

The people that we have at work are amazing so that's the biggest thing for me. For when I was in Oulu the staff was like 60, 70 people so you didn't get to know them. Whereas here we have like maybe 30 people, so people know each other, you spend time in work and you spend time outside of work because you have to, because the community is so small that you have to get along. And people really made an effort to welcome you and make you feel like Ah we have always wanted you here - Senni

All participants described a strong attachment to the students and the schools in which they worked. This was a common theme throughout the interviews with schools being described as supportive, amazing, forward thinking, trusting. Students were also consistently mentioned with teachers describing the respect and relationships that they have developed with their students.

I really do like teaching and I've liked all the kids I have taught so far. It isn't always so easy, but I like it a lot. I have really good memories of teaching someone, something. I mean if I move, I will miss this place of course. I think even though I like the nature here I think the thing that I would miss most would be the teaching those students. Like I said I have been teaching 14 years, so I know all those kids and they know me. It is really important to know, if I go somewhere else to teach, if I go to Southern Finland its really, really, hard to start over with that stuff. – Perttu

For participants with children, the attachment that their children have created within their communities was often stated as a reason for staying. For Jenni, the connection to the school and her children's connections are the main reason that she will continue to live in the Finnish Arctic, despite feeling a disconnect with her identity.

I think we will stay here until our kids are grown up, then I don't know. Like they have their friends here, hobbies. I have been moving lots as a child and I don't want to do the same to my children. They like it here and school is good and their hobbies, so I think we are staying here until that but after I don't know. – Jenni

For Antti the interest in nature that supported his move to the Finnish Arctic has progressed into a stronger attachment.

But then when we were driving back home and when we saw the Luosto mountains we were like hey, hey, we are home. I think even if we do move to Southern Finland that we will buy a cottage here as this place will always be in our hearts. – Antti

This was instantly felt by Senni who experienced an immediate feeling of being at home which was instigated by the role of nature in her everyday life.

It felt good from the beginning and we were like yeah this is the place where we are meant to be. We had a house in TownA which is about 8km north from here which was in the middle of the forest. We had a lake about 50m down from the yard and we had a boat

there and the place was just so great that we felt like okay we are at ease here – it felt good. – Senni

Although the role of nature was not discussed explicitly in depth it was a recurring theme throughout all interviews with various aspects of nature such as weather, landforms, forests discussed briefly but frequently.

5.2.4 Antti's story of community

Antti's interview, out of the five, was the one that most clearly outlined the wider community aspect of living in Lapland. There were multiple links made throughout the interview to incidences of community that he found positively surprising. The following is Antti's interview restructured to focus on the community aspects.

After teaching as a substitute for six months in Lapland I decided to become a teacher and enrol in University. During the summer my wife got a position in TownA. I didn't have any work here, but I have a pilot's license. So, I went to the airport and was like "Hey, I've got a license I'd like to fly here ("clicks fingers")" all of a sudden, I started knowing people from here. First summer my wife got quite many friends here as well. We were only here three months, but when we left, we were waving our hands to quite many people. That wouldn't have happened in the city I would say. So, I went back to Rovaniemi to study and the next summer my wife came back here for the same job and I came with her and did my flying and started to know even more people. In Lapland people were really friendly and when they heard we weren't local they asked what hobbies we do. With the flying club at the airport and all of the sudden I was flying with them and then they were like "Hey, why don't we get a few beers". So, I really like, in a way it's like one big family. People take really good care of you and say I need new car tyres or something and I say it aloud in the teacher's room. The next day someone will be like "Hey I know this guy whose selling his tyres, here's his number give him a call." Or like when my wife was expecting a nurse came to visit from the hospital because she had heard that we aren't local so she came with a list of people who would nanny or come to babysit. And we were like wow that's a really good service. And when we told that story to our friends in Southern Finland, they were like "What! We have never heard of somebody coming to your house!"

Throughout the narrative above Antti continually demonstrates surprise at the welcoming nature of the community that he lives. He has experienced multiple moments where the community has not only been welcoming but have gone out of their way to embrace him and his family into the community and ensure that they are supported.

5.3 Interacting in the Arctic

This theme focuses on the intercultural interactions that participants had with people in their community that they found significant. These were then divided into empowering and challenging intercultural experiences. It should be noted that there is of course some overlap as a challenging experience can in itself be empowering. The codes utilised for empowering intercultural experiences included familiarity, being heard, action. The codes utilised for challenging intercultural experiences included conflict, expectations, over familiarity.

5.3.1 Empowering intercultural experiences

Throughout the interviews there was discussions and anecdotes about uplifting and empowering interactions and aspects of living and communicating in the Finnish Arctic. The codes under this theme were familiarity and action.

Familiarity was a common theme throughout all interviews. Familiarity with the community, the parents and the students were discussed in depth and in passing. This was, however, broken into two groups. The aspect of familiarity that was embraced as a positive and the aspects of familiarity that was identified as negative. The negative aspects are discussed in the section below under Challenging Intercultural Experiences. For all participants their role as a teacher in the community was seen as the prompt for the familiarity that was demonstrated. This was embraced as a positive for some participants who saw it as a way to be easily involved in the community.

I think when you are a teacher then everyone knows you and they come up to you and talk to you. I always go to talk to someone because they already know who you are, it's not like talking to a stranger because they know you. – Perttu

Everyone kind of knew who I was before I kind of knew anyone. Because they all, the people knew that I was going to be the first year teacher because I was teaching first class but I didn't know anyone ("laugh"). "Are you the one?" "Yes, I am the one". My kids were very small, the little one was one and the other was three, and I had this special pram

with two kids in a train and I was going with that and that was kind of special here as everyone else had these side by side things, and so I was famous. – Katri

This familiarity with the community was naturally extended to the parents with participants discussing how knowing parents makes communicating challenges to parents about their children much easier.

It's quite easy here to call parents and be like hey your child isn't performing well or did something wrong at school. So most likely they will say hey thanks for calling we will have a chat with our kid after school. And ah I feel that teacher is still quite respected in the community. – Antti

For all participants they stated in depth how the relationship with pupils was key. They are open to being familiar with the teachers out in the community beyond the realms of the school community.

And one thing that I like here is that the pupils, even the bad well bad is the wrong word but the challenging students, they still say hi Antti when I go to the supermarket or hang around in the town. I really enjoy still that the pupils, they are really open, even the ones that I might give someone a talking to but when we close the door they still tell a lot of what they have done and how they are and during the school holidays they still say hi when you see them outside of school yeah but they are really genuine. - Antti

There were very few instances of action in the interviews. The main story of action is outlined below by Katri and centres around Sami culture. This was significant as other participants either did not mention Sami culture or education or brushed it off with the notion that it was the responsibility of Sami teachers.

I don't know much about the Sami tradition and things because they don't teach those things in Southern Finland. We just know one or two things, some stereotypical things. So, um, I felt that it was important for me to find out some things about the Sami culture and it turns out that I have very good colleagues and friends here at school who are Sami people. So I wanted to know something about their culture because I feel like I can't uh I'm not so, how can I put it, I don't feel myself to be belonging more to anything but Finnish culture, maybe some South Karelian thing in eastern Finland but it's not that important for me. The place isn't that important to me, like I don't care about going back, I can live here it doesn't it isn't so important to me. But for the Sami people it's important

the places and the nature and where you are from so that was very interesting...I took a course from the university because I wanted to know more about people who live here and their culture. Because I think it's important for everyone who lives here to know something about it.

Were you able to include this new knowledge in your teaching?

I don't know, maybe somewhere in the background but not like I am doing that on that. In this story Katri was able to self-reflect that Sami culture was an area that she needed further knowledge in as she had previously limited exposure. She felt as though this was important as she has colleagues who are Sami, and it was important to understand their culture in more depth. Katri was then able to take action in this by seeking out professional development through locating a university course. This action, however, was not then moved actively forward into the classroom and her teaching practices.

5.3.2 Katri's story of being heard

Katri's interview contained fragments of various themes but the aspect of being heard and respected within the school community came through as being the most meaningful. The following is a rewrite of Katri's interview with the focus on being heard.

Moving to Lapland and integrating into the community was easy in some ways because I am a very talkative person and I get along with people. I feel there is a large difference here in Lapland in how I am perceived as a teacher, I can do whatever I want to. I feel like that, like, our headmaster, they trust all their people, they trust that we do, what we are going to do. And that is what I appreciate a lot. It might be a personal thing. But I feel like everyone listens to me here, if I say something, everyone here listens. *In Southern Finland*, Maybe I was younger and that's why before, but I feel like I can talk and suggest things, and no one listens. *But here in Lapland* now if I say something everyone's like "oh what a good idea", so everyone listens to me. That's why I like it here. I think they trusted me to do my work in Southern Finland, but they didn't appreciate my new ideas or something like that. I don't have a specific example but that was the overall feeling. I was really surprised here when I suggested something that people listened, and they gave it another thought. And I like it because everyone of us has the same impact on the whole thing and everyone listens to everyone else, its important. I like it here. – Katri

For Katri the feeling of being heard and having an active voice within the teaching community was of importance. The openness of those in her professional life to engage in further conversation regarding her ideas uplifted her feelings of being a teacher and empowered her to become more active in the community.

5.3.3 Challenging intercultural experiences

Stories of conflict were in the minority, with most participants relating mostly positive experiences and stories. There were still a few anecdotes where participants outlined areas where they experienced conflict in trying to communicate or navigate aspects of their life in the Finnish Arctic. Jenni outlined a story in which the school went to the army camp for an excursion. The setting created a discussion on the compulsory military service for which Jenni is against. One of the teachers stated that “they will pay their son to choose the military option” or disown him if he refuses, to which Jenni replied, “what a great idea I will pay my son to choose the civil option” which apparently left an awkward silence in which “I ate my vegetarian food”. The source of the conflict in this situation was the different value and ideals placed on compulsory service.

In the previous section Katri outlined her story of taking action to develop her understanding of the Sami culture. For Jenni during her six month placement in the far north of Lapland the expectations placed on her from the community, as well as internally, led to a lack of action in developing a deeper understanding and relationship with Sami culture.

Almost all (Kulta Sami) live in that village, they have strong culture there. They have a teacher who was teaching all those Sami stuff, and they were Orthodox, their religion. Sometimes we felt really stupid because, I mean, it was a little bit difficult because they have their own traditions, and we didn't know anything about them. But they were also used to the thing that they get a new teacher every year, then they leave, and they get another one so I don't know. – Jenni

This idea of developing a deeper understanding of Sami culture and teaching practices was not actively discussed by any participant, with the exception of the story by Katri outlined in the empowering intercultural experiences section. It was either not mentioned or in a passing manner with a brush off that the issue was taken care of by Sami teachers.

There were also stories where there were different expectations. For Antti the most frustrating aspect of his work has been trying to engage the families of the students in the school community. He has been trying to get parents to be more involved and to hear their views on the school and its processes. He outlined that this has been difficult as the parents “don’t say much even by Finnish standards”.

There has been a couple of instances this semester that parents have been writing on Facebook complaining about our school which I thought was really annoying because I thought we had given them several options to open their mouth and they hadn’t said it here when we had the parents evening. So, they didn’t say anything then but then they complained on Facebook. But it ended up that we then created our own Facebook page and put a message on their saying Hey if you have any questions please write and we will reply. – Antti

Antti then outlined that they didn’t get one reply to their posts. He believed that this was due to the expectation that teachers and schools are responsible for those aspects. The expectations between the two parties were different from Antti’s point of view.

5.3.4 Senni’s story of (over)familiarity

Throughout Senni’s interview there were multiple mentions and stories revolving around familiarity and overfamiliarity. Although she enjoys the close nature of her school community, in particular her relationships with colleagues and students, she discussed the need to establish boundaries to ensure that there is a separation between work and home life.

It’s a bit difficult here. Everyone always says everyone knows the monkey, but the monkey doesn’t know anyone. That’s kind of strange because I don’t know who knows me and I don’t know them. At first, I thought are people watching every move I make are they watching me when I buy beer from the store, but it hasn’t been like that. Nobody has said what are you doing you are a teacher why are you buying that, I thought it would be like that but no, no, everybody has been so well.

Well I think in bigger cities the relationship between teacher and parents is more anonymous. So, your only contact is by phone or by email or something like that. Here, parents may come up to you in the grocery store and say, “Hey how is my kid going what do you think about this?” And the line between work and free time is kind of blurry here because the parents think that they can come and talk to you anytime of the day. You have parents

as neighbours, and you go and get your mail and they will be like, “Hey what about tomorrow what are you doing in the second class” or something like that. And ah you just have to, usually I say I give a short answer and then say we can talk about this tomorrow in the classroom, or you can write me an email, or call me during my working hours. So, I try to be nice but brief and keep it separated.

I have small groups in my classroom I only have 12 to 15 students, when I was in TownA the biggest group, I had was 35 students. The group sizes, that’s the most memorable thing also because it has such an impact on the teaching. When I was teaching in TownA in 2014, I never got to know the students. I barely knew some of their names. I had this chart with their pictures and names on it and when I gave grades I had to look up, who is Mikko? I don’t have the slightest idea and then I look, and I am like oh its him. It kind of freaked me out that I don’t know the students that I am giving the grades to, I don’t know what they look like I only have his tests and some markings during the year, but I have no idea who he was. Here I know the students, I know them by name um I know some of their hobbies, I know what they like, I know what they don’t like. I have three students who live as neighbours. They are always like “Hei Senni” etc when I am mowing my lawn.

Throughout this story there are multiple points of familiarity and over familiarity. For Senni it feels as though she is known by the whole town which has its positives and negatives, creating a feeling of welcoming but also of surveillance. The familiarity with the families is outlined as often moving into over familiarity which impacts on Senni’s work/life balance. The familiarity with colleagues and students is the highlight for Senni’s experience living in Lapland which enables her to have a deep relationship with her students which has a positive impact on her teaching.

6 Ethics and Trustworthiness

6.1 Ethics

Values reflect “the personal beliefs or feelings of a researcher (Bryman, 2015, p. 35).” Although it would seem most objective if values were not integrated into one’s research it is impossible to separate. These values can influence any aspect of the creation of a thesis including the research question, analysis, interpretation, implementation (Bryman, 2015). One example is developing a “close affinity” or friendship with participants though this is more common in methodology where considerable time is spent with participants (Bryman, 2015). Through engaging in self reflectivity these values intrusion can be limited. The values of the researcher were outlined in the Context section of this thesis. This allows readers the ability to see the values and how they may have influenced the research as well as allowing them the opportunity to note their own values and how these may influence the interpretation of the thesis.

On a wider scale values play out in ethical concerns in research. Bryman (2015, p. 121) outlines that different writers and associations have different ideas of what is and isn’t ethically acceptable. The ethics within this thesis align with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018). The ethics of this thesis will be explored using the four areas outlined by Diener and Crandall (as cited in Bryman, 2015): harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception. As well as the additional aspects of confidentiality, truthfulness and accuracy in reporting data, rapport and friendship, intrusiveness, inappropriate behaviour, data interpretation, data ownership and rewards, inclusion and social justice as outlined by Lichtman (2014).

Harm to participants can include a range of aspects including physical harm, harm to development, loss of self-esteem, stress and making participants perform reprehensible acts (Bryman, 2015). The narrative interviews did not include any aspect of physical harm, harm to development or making participants perform reprehensible acts. The aspects of loss of self-esteem and stress are harder to evaluate. From appearances the interviews did not appear to put participants under stress or lose self-esteem. The closest to harm to participants was evident in the interview with Jenni who stated that the upcoming interview had prompted a reflection on her identity and her sense of place in the community. Although she appeared calm when discussing this it may have caused some stress or lose of self-esteem. To reduce the possibility of harm to participants it was reiterated that they did not have to answer questions if they did not wish to,

could stop at any time, were free to remove their participation in the research at any time and that confidentiality would be maintained.

Lack of informed consent (Bryman, 2015) was addressed at the beginning of the research. Each participant signed a consent form which outlined the research, its aims and the nature of questions that may be asked. This form was written in English which was not the first language of participants. Each participant did state that they fully understood the form. In the future it would be beneficial to have the form translated to the participants first language to ensure that there are no misconceptions.

Invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman, 2015) were fully ensured. Each participant willingly participated and were ensured of confidentiality. Confidentiality (Bryman, 2015; Lichtman, 2014) was assured through the following acts: participants chose what name would be presented in the research which was used on all documents, original names and contact information was stored on a protected hard drive and not on a cloud or other accessible place, names of towns were removed as were other identifiable aspects. There was no deception in this research with all participants fully informed of the research and its aims. In regards to intrusiveness (Lichtman, 2014) of time, space and personal lives, the time frame was clearly stated from the beginning when advertising for expressions of interest and the space was chosen by each participant and ranged from workplaces, to cafes, to homes. Although their personal lives were the focus of this thesis participants had the right to stop at any point; there was no point during any interview where participants appeared to display any negative emotion.

Truthfulness and accuracy in reporting data (Lichtman, 2014) is more difficult to attain in qualitative research. All interviews were transcribed and then the transcription was sent to each participant to ensure a correct transcription. Participants were also asked if there was any point where they would like to add or edit their responses to improve clarity. This member check (Lichtman, 2014) ensured that the data collected was accurate. Early drafts and the completed thesis have been viewed by four different colleagues to provide inter-rater reliability (Lichtman, 2014). In regards to data interpretation the process is more complicated as a researcher a personal lens influences the manner in which data is interpreted. Lichtman (2014, p. 63) states “You have a responsibility to interpret your data and present evidence so that others can decide to what extent your interpretation is believable.” As this is only the second time in which I have

undergone data interpretation this was a difficult process. Through guidance and having colleagues read through drafts I am hopeful that this thesis meets this requirement. Data ownership and rewards (Lichtman, 2014) is not applicable to this thesis as there is no plan to publish results.

In completing interviews, it is important to build a rapport with participants to create an environment where they feel comfortable and free to share (Lichtman, 2014; Bryman, 2015). However, it is important to ensure that this does not move into a friendship which may influence the research. This may be unavoidable in some research but should then be acknowledged. This was not an issue in this research and in reflection it may have been beneficial to have more than one interview with each participant to further build rapport. There was no inappropriate behaviour undertaken by either researcher or participant in this thesis (Lichtman, 2014).

Lichtman (2014) discusses how it is acknowledged that research should “give voice to the voiceless (Benton, Androff & Barr, 2012, p. 246)”. Although this thesis does not address social problems or social justice it does provide the participants stories in their own voices as much as possible in an attempt to provide as much power to the participants as possible.

6.2 Trustworthiness

As this thesis utilises qualitative research methods the framework of trustworthiness, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Korstjens & Moser, 2018), will be utilised. This explores the aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity.

Credibility focuses on the aspects of truth (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As this thesis has an ontology and epistemology of social constructivism it does not believe in a singular truth and instead this thesis focuses on representing the participants truths. Aspects of prolonged engagement (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) were utilised such as encouraging participants to give examples, tell stories, and follow up questions. Though the interviews were not particularly long, and a stronger level of trust could have been developed through multiple interviews. The setting and context were explored as much as was possible through reading but experience in the Finnish Arctic was limited to two months in October at the point the interviews were undertaken. The language barrier between the researcher and the participants may have been an issue in credibility. All participants spoke Finnish as their first language and English as an additional language with the researcher, at the time of the interviews, only understanding a few words and

phrases in Finnish. This may have meant that participants were not able to freely articulate themselves. For example, perhaps participants did not elaborate on aspects as they did not know the words in English. This could have possibly been avoided through having a translator present, but this was not an option. All participants did claim that they felt confident in their English ability to complete the interviews. As discussed in the ethics part of the thesis, participants did a member check of the interview transcripts to ensure that their voice was conveyed correctly.

The transferability of this thesis (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) is proven through the ‘thick description’ (p. 122). The context of this thesis is provided in depth throughout. The context of the participants is clearly outlined in the context section of the thesis, the process of data analyses is explicit and the findings themselves allow for large parts of the participants voice to be clearly visible. This allows the reader to judge whether this thesis is applicable to their personal context and situation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Dependability and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) were discussed in the Ethics section of the thesis under truthfulness and accuracy in data reporting and interpretation. In summation the researcher as a novice may have influenced this aspect but the process has been outlined clearly and was checked by colleagues for inter-rata reliability (Lichtman, 2014).

Reflexivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) was achieved through taking the time throughout the five-year process to reflect on different aspects of the research process. For example, upon reflection of the interviews there were multiple moments where an improvement in interview techniques may have yielded deeper or more layered stories. Providing more silent moments for reflection would have been beneficial and more culturally appropriate. Often at times silence was filled in immediately by me, whereas on reflection participants may have stopped to reflect and add more detail. There were also moments when a question linking to emotions (Jokikokki & Uitto, 2017) such as “how did you feel when...?” may have prompted further reflection for interviewees or questions prompting further reflection. Providing further prompting was avoided as there was a worry of leading participants or creating an environment where there was a clear understanding of what the ‘right’ answers are in which participants may feel pressured to alter their stories to please the researcher (Bryman, 2005). In the future though, it may be beneficial to ensure that some further prompting questions are created beforehand and/or that there is an opportunity for follow up questions after the interview has taken place.

The transformation of the thesis throughout the process has also been a frequent point of reflection. At the beginning this thesis was going to focus on intercultural learning but after the interviews this theme no longer felt as though it fit. This involved undergoing reading on place and space before settling on cultural identity. This process of change can be seen as having a lack of focus, but can also be seen as a strength. Through being receptive to the data it has allowed for a circular process where the theoretical framework informs the interviews, the interviews inform the analysis, and the analysis informs the theoretical framework. This has ensured that the findings are not edited to fit a needed mould (Lichtman, 2014).

7 Discussion and conclusion

7.1 Discussion

To answer the thesis questions of *How do teachers describe their changing cultural identities whilst living in the Arctic? What kind of meaningful intercultural experiences appear in teachers' stories?* the discussion below will utilise the altered Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (Grace et al., 2017) that was outlined in the theoretical framework.

At the centre of the framework is the participants. Each of them had characteristics such as gender, temperament, age, and interests that influenced the intercultural experiences and outer layers they were exposed to and how these impacted on their cultural identity. For example, Katri outlined that she found it easy to approach people as she has a confident and outgoing personality. Antti had a strong interest in flying which led to multiple interactions with the flying community. These characteristics appear to have influenced the opportunities for interactions and intercultural experiences that participants were exposed to and the flexibility of their cultural identity. Jenni, for example, appeared more stringent in the presentation of her cultural identity – there were clear guidelines that appeared to not fit with the perceived general 'Arctic identity' of where she lives. This in and out group (Kim, 2007) focus has a strong influence on her cultural identity creating a strong sense of who she is. Senni, on the other hand, appeared to have been open to the different aspects of the Arctic identity and has adapted (Kim, 2007) components into her own cultural identity creating a strong feeling of belonging.

The intercultural experiences and interactions that participants had in the Arctic were varied. The experiences most influential to the development of participants cultural identity appeared to be positive and empowering. There were experiences of people in the community reaching out to participants to offer assistance and company. Although these interactions did not contain the traditional 'conflict' that is associated with changing one's cultural identity (Kim, 2007), they did create moments of reflection for participants. For example, Antti was very surprised when the midwife visited them at home to share local information that might be helpful. This interaction seemed to create a reflection for Antti on how the local culture was positive in comparison to his previous experience in the South. It can be seen how these positive experiences and interactions could create a change in one's cultural identity through reflection and comparison to previous experiences.

There were some challenging experiences that were outlined by participants. In the case of Jenni these appeared to cement her existing cultural identity and created an opponent in the other person. For Senni, there seemed to be a negotiation to meet halfway the expectation of being available at all times rather than a complete rejection. Interestingly, due to the literature's heavy focus on conflict (Kim, 2007), these challenging experiences did not appear for most participants to have more impact than the positive experiences.

Moving outwards the layers of the macro and exmacro system had multiple influences on the situations that participants found themselves in. Firstly, all participants moved to the Arctic because there was work available. For most participants they had firstly attempted to find employment in Southern Finland. The economical changes that have occurred over time (Lecler, 2019) have made areas of high-density populations more appealing, normally due to the employment opportunities available. In this instance the participants are moving against this national and global trend to instead live in a rural area. In contrast to the rural nature of this area, participants discussed how international their schools and communities are through extensive school programs and tourists. Through these two examples the opportunities for engagement with intercultural experiences becomes possible. Without these forces at play it may be that participants cultural identity would have taken a different path.

The role of nature was a surprisingly strong aspect. The discussion on nature and identity seems to focus on environmental identity and developing sustainable practices. Some participants appeared to have strongly attached the Finnish Arctic nature to their cultural identity. For example, Antti describes how when he sees the Luosto fells that he feels as though he is home. Senni felt the same when she first moved into her house. Katri is proud of living in the north as she is able to survive the physical conditions of the nature. Perttu feels most at home being in the nature which is outside his front door. It was not only the words spoken that made this connection between nature and participants cultural identity but also their body language and voice. These participants became more animated both in body through hand movements and voice through variation – they relaxed and smiled. There appeared to be a very strong connection between participants cultural identity and the nature. Further research in this area would be beneficial.

The Finnish Arctic as a context appears to have influenced all participants' cultural identity, though in different ways. It has created more stringent boundaries and opposition for some,

strong connections and adaption for some, and in between for others. The stereotypical aspects of an Arctic identity as outlined in the context chapter of this thesis were reproduced in most of the interviews but through analysis a wider view that includes safety and warmth was also seen. Most participants seemed to have adopted aspects of this Arctic identity as outlined in the discussion above. Further research in cultural identity and intercultural competence examining internal migration would add to findings of this thesis.

The process of undergoing the interviews and the analysis of the data presented several surprises, including the aforementioned presence of nature. There was a preformed conception on my behalf, regarding intercultural competence, that the participants would be able to provide descriptive stories of incidences of intercultural learning, both personal and in the classroom. Efforts throughout the interviews, through subtle prompting such as “can you give me an example” moving towards explicit questioning such as “what intercultural aspects are in your teaching”, provided limited responses. Through the process of analysis, it was noted that there was limited focus on intercultural learning despite the focus in the questioning and more a focus on the final three themes of identity, attachment, and navigation/communication. The reasons for this missing aspect are unknown but the following are possibilities: poor interview questioning, misunderstanding of concepts, avoidance of difficult topics, and/or general unawareness.

The term cultural has multiple definitions and uses (Jahoda, 2012). It is possible that the terms ‘cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ may have been understood in differing ways by participants. For questions that used the word intercultural, answers focused on distinct cultural groups such as Sami people or international groups and were mostly very superficially answered. For Sami education and experiences there was an overall attitude that this was taken care of by Sami educators and was not directly an issue for the participants. As stated in the findings, it was seen as, “the Sami teacher did Sami things”. It may have been beneficial to spend time at the beginning of the interview or when sending out the overview sheet to provide the definition used for culture and intercultural and to explain the focus on North and South in more detail.

Intercultural learning can be complicated with many teachers afraid to confront this topic in their teaching due to a fear of offending others, teaching aspects ‘incorrectly’ or lacking the knowledge and understanding of how to achieve this. From the responses regarding Sami education, it may be that teachers feel uncomfortable with addressing Indigenous education (Miller,

2011), this can also be seen in other cultural groups. In Miller (2011) teachers expressed that they felt as though it wasn't their place to integrate Indigenous education as they themselves were not Indigenous and they were worried about having a lack of knowledge, causing offence, and not knowing where to begin. Through the brief, superficial answers provided throughout the interviews it may be that participants felt uncomfortable with addressing these issues and perhaps providing an 'incorrect' or 'offensive' answer. For example, Jenni stated when discussing Sami education that "Sometimes we felt really stupid because, I mean, it was a little bit difficult because they have their own traditions, and we didn't know anything about them." Only Katri appeared confident in discussing Sami culture but again there was a hesitation in discussing moving this into her teaching. These aspects of the interview appeared to support the view that some participants felt uncomfortable.

Lastly, it may be that the participants had either no or a limited understanding of intercultural learning and its role in the classroom. This is more difficult to understand as it is explicitly in the National curriculum under the seven transversal competence areas (Finnish National Board of Education [FNBE], 2016). It is outlined here as "cultural competence, interaction and expression (FNBE, 2016, p. 2). However, perhaps it was not an active part of their teacher education at university due to the time between when they completed their degree and the implementation of the National curriculum and/or this has not been a focus within their schools.

There are multiple aspects of this research, both the findings and missing aspects, that have potential implications for different stakeholders. These different stakeholders are the researcher, the participants, universities, education departments and you as the reader. The importance of this research holds its power not in large quantifiable results with a clear hypothesis or outcome in mind but in its wide scoped, diverse and nuanced viewpoints.

Outlined in my story at the beginning on this thesis, this research has had an impact upon me as a researcher, as well as on a personal level. I have been able to critically reflect on all aspects of myself as a researcher with multiple aspects highlighted as needing further development. For instance, interviewing techniques, time management skills and self-motivation. This experience has provided me with a clear understanding of the foundational steps I will need to take in order to successfully undergo research in the future, whether this be as a staff member in a university or within my everyday practice as a teacher. On a personal level the research process has provided innumerate moments of critical self-reflection on aspects such as my place in the world,

my personal ability in intercultural learning and where I need to focus on developing. I am to live in the Finnish Arctic, then what is my role in understanding local culture and how can I fulfil this and how is my cultural identity changing with time as I stay longer in Finland. These have progressed alongside my journey in which at the beginning this thesis content was separate to my current and conceptualised future life (in which I was single and planned on moving back to Australia and continue teaching) to five years later when it is apparent that I will soon in the future experience the same move from South to the Finnish Arctic that the participants undertook (now married with two children living in Helsinki and currently building a home in Kittilä with the plan to move in the next three years). I personally feel that this thesis will continue to provide moments of critical reflection and growth for me as I continue in my life journey in moving to Kittilä and settling into the community.

For the participants of the research there are multiple implications. Multiple participants mentioned that the upcoming interview had sparked a reflection for them on their lives, what had led them to the North and why they stay. These moments of self-reflection and assessment may have provided participants with the opportunity to understand themselves and their motivations on a deeper level. It also allowed them the opportunity to have their voices heard and their stories shared with the wider community. This is of importance, as discussed previously, as often research on teachers focuses explicitly on their professional lives and is heavily controlled by the researcher (Goodson, 2014).

There are three main areas of interest from this thesis for Universities to consider regarding teacher education. Firstly, intercultural competence and its integration. To ensure future teachers are able to fulfil the requirements of the national curriculum universities should be ensuring that Intercultural competence is included throughout their teacher courses in ways that students are able to see practical implications for their future teaching. It should also ensure that the focus is on culture beyond different heritage cultures but be more nuanced to include aspects such as geographical and religious. Secondly, the integration of Sami education. As discussed earlier in this section, this appeared to be an area of discomfort or dismissal for most participants. Integrating at minimum one subject in teacher education focusing on the history and culture of the different Sami groups and the implications for education would enable teachers, regardless of where they are teaching in Finland, to be able to engage more deeply with Sami students. Finally, ensuring that the teacher education courses are not focusing exclusively on metropolitan areas but including rural areas and issues within teaching subjects.

This thesis may be of interest to Education departments who are looking at recruiting and retaining staff within the Finnish Arctic. Education departments can consider the aspects of living and working within the Finnish Arctic that participants outlined. For example, nature, community, and safety were viewed positively and aspects such as remoteness from family were viewed negatively and as a reason to move. Education departments can consider these when finding teachers and other staff to move to their communities. Considerations for how the negative aspects, for example, can be countered such as more paid leave to visit family, can be utilised to ensure that staff retain their positions long term.

Finally, through reading through this thesis you, the reader, has been reflecting and exploring your own cultural identity in relation to where you live. Perhaps a participant's story has sparked some reflection, or you now have a question that you would like answered.

7.2 Conclusion

Through the narrative interviews with participants, insights were provided into how their cultural identities have changed whilst living in the Finnish Arctic. A range of empowering and conflicting intercultural experiences, alongside nature and other aspects have been identified as being prominent in this process. The three themes of negotiating Arctic identity, attached to the Arctic and interacting in the Arctic outline how participants have navigated and experienced the process of living in the Finnish Arctic. Whilst the small sample size makes this research not applicable for generalisation, it does provide a detailed and nuanced understanding which can be useful and provides multiple avenues for further exploration.

Through this research a range of aspects arose that could be explored further in research. Participants strongly related to nature throughout their interviews and the role of nature in the developmental of people's cultural identity could be explored further. The exploration of Sami education and educators' level of comfort and integration in the classroom needs to be researched further to ensure Sami students are receiving cultural safety in the classroom. The exploration of cultural identity focusing on internal migration would also be an interesting avenue to explore further.

Although unconventional, the use of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model to explore the multiple layers of context that influence the process of cultural identity could be utilised in the

future to provide a more holistic view of cultural identity. This provided the most fruitful reflection for me personally to explore how the various layers of context have influenced my cultural identity over my lifetime.

In conclusion, this thesis provided a platform for Antti, Jenni, Katri, Perttu and Senni to share their stories of significance, their lives in the Finnish Arctic. Alongside this my personal story has been influenced by the data and influenced the data through analysis. From this an intertwinement has occurred which provides a reflective read for fellow researchers, teachers, those interested in the Arctic and those from the educational department.

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