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The moral work of becoming a professional: The interactional practices of storytelling in professional peer mentoring groups

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In contemporary working life, art-based initiatives are increasingly used in organizational training and development. For artists, this has created new employment opportunities as creative entrepreneurs who provide specialist services for workplaces. In this article, we study the dynamics of such encounters through the narrated accounts of training professionals. Our data come from a professional mentoring program where the working pairs of artists and consultants shared stories about their customer projects. By using conversation analysis as a method, we analyze the way stories are interactionally accomplished in peer group sessions of the program. In particular, we analyze how participants produce different versions of the narrated events, and by so doing, negotiate the questions of blame and accountability with regard to professional action. In conclusion, we discuss stories and storytelling as organizational practice through which the moral order and legitimacy of the program is sustained and the boundaries of the profession constructed.

Keywords: artist-developer, professional boundary-work, peer group interaction, reflection, morality, situated storytelling

Introduction

Working life in post-industrial societies has faced whole new types of challenges as workplaces have become more mobile, multicultural as well as cross-thematic: this new kind of diversity calls for critically creative practitioners (Adams & Owens, 2011) that are able to manage interdependency through collective reflection and critical working methods (e.g. Gratton, 2011; Hautamäki & Oksanen, 2011; Heinonen et al., 2012). In this environment, artistic approaches are considered as value creation potential and various kinds of art-based initiatives are increasingly used in organizational settings for the purposes of collaboration, inspiration, training and transformation (Schiuma, 2011). For artists, this has created new employment opportunities and a possibility to build a second career as professionals who provide, for example, facilitation in innovation workshops or development days for workplaces (Lehikoinen, 2013a, 2013b, 2018). The artists, who typically work on their own as microentrepreneurs, also collaborate with organization consultants as well as research and development and human resources specialists. Therefore, their own daily work is similarly characterized by high diversity and includes complex social encounters where different professional practices, ethics and conceptualizations of work meet and sometimes clash.

In this study, we examine the dynamics of such encounters through the narrated accounts of professionals specializing in art-based methods. Our data come from a professional mentoring program where artists and consultants working collaboratively in the field of organizational training and development shared stories about their work in instructed peer group sessions. The aim of the paper is to show how stories and storytelling function as organizational practice in this setting with its institutional goal of advancing the professional development of the participants. Here, we would like to draw attention to the wider social context of our data. For artists, the new employment opportunities have meant expanding

professionalism with expectations about a new set of skills and competences (Berthoin Antal et al., 2016; Lehtikoinen, 2018; Schiuma, 2011). This rapid social change – and the lack of recognized education it requires – has led to the emergence of new types of cross-organizational learning networks and groups where artists can advance their expertise towards organizational development with an identity of a new kind of *artist-developer* (Lehtikoinen et al., 2016). In this way, the mentoring program of our data can also be seen as a space for negotiating and defining the boundaries of an entirely new profession.

In this spirit, we approach stories and storytelling as discursive resources employed to make sense of the practitioners' fluid and hybrid profession in a dialogical process in the context of new professional networks (cf. Pässilä et al., 2013). By sensemaking, we refer to the relational process where organizational situations are framed and categorized through specific linguistic and discursive constructions and devices and where the agentive boundaries of sensemaking often become blurred (see Nissi & Pälli, 2020). When the participants recount their past events, they build descriptions of characters and circumstances, create sequences of events and formulate causes and consequences. In this sense, stories and storytelling can be viewed as methods that support professional development within the networks by allowing a different type of interaction to emerge while translating and organizing the participants' "experience in, knowledge of, and transactions with the social world" (Bruner, 1990, p. 35; also Czarniawska, 1997; Gabriel, 1995). However, as the stories and storytelling are also constructed through diverse professional trajectories, norms and ideologies, they make visible various polyphonic points of view and comprise contradictions related to, for example, what is considered as good professional practice and how lived experiences can be narrated in the first place.

In analyzing stories and storytelling as organizational practice, we especially connect them to the notion of professional reflection, understood as a collective sensemaking process with four different dimensions (see Table 1).¹

Table 1. Perspectives of reflection (Developed by Pässilä, 2012 from Vince & Reynolds, 2009)

Perspectives	Critical Reflection	Public Reflection	Productive Reflection	Organising reflection
Characteristics	To identify and question taken-for-granted beliefs and values	To become collectively aware of and transform one's own behavior	To develop work and learning activities that change work practices and personal engagement	To take account of emotional and political processes in the workplace
Focus	To question and challenge existing structures and practices	To improve policy and practice	To improve productivity and quality of working life	To generate collective knowledge
Aim	To unsettle established ways of working	To create alternative interpretations	To improve competence linked to productivity and work satisfaction	To organise structures that allow reflection

¹ The concept of joint reflection is originally based on Dewey's (1933) theory which was an inspiration to Schön's (1983) work on the individual 'reflective practitioner'. The shift towards collective and critical reflective practice, namely, organizing reflection, was done by Vince (2002) and Vince & Reynolds (2009).

Key element	Emancipatory	Transformational	Agency building	Organising process

According to Vince and Reynolds (2009), reflection can be one of the key building blocks of organizations or professional communities as it calls to the surface the assumptions and expectations informing day-to-day professional action. In this way, narratives have been seen as important ways to understand, for example, the practices of strategizing (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Maclean et al., 2020) and thereby used as learning tools in management development (Morgan & Dennehy, 1997). However, Vince (2002) also emphasizes reflection – especially critical reflection – as a process where dismantling these assumptions simultaneously raises various types of resistance and counter-narratives. In the mentoring program, such processes become visible in the participants’ attempts to piece together what happens around and between them and for what reason when they are articulating their experiences related to expanding professionalism and responding to each other’s articulations during the program.

In our article, we will focus on analyzing these very processes and the way multi-dimensional reflection is accomplished in situated ways in and through stories and storytelling in the peer group sessions of the mentoring program. Therefore, we examine the participants’ stories specifically as a discursive phenomenon: not as reflections of the social world nor the participants’ perceptions of it, but as a form of social action where the first two are performatively constructed and managed (see Edwards, 1997). Here, we draw on discursive psychology and ethnomethodological conversation analysis that – rather than focusing on narrative structures – examine the way stories are “contextually occasioned and received” (Edwards, 1997, p. 289), namely, how they are produced as part of sequentially

organized talk-in-interaction and what is interactionally accomplished with them. Previous studies have particularly analyzed story beginnings, where the situated roles of the ‘teller’ and the ‘story recipient’ are established and the tellability of the story negotiated (e.g. Jefferson 1978; Sacks 1974), as well as story endings, where the morality of the story is elucidated, often leading to displays of affect and affiliation (e.g. Selting, 2010).

However, while the stories are always the participants’ situated accomplishments and tailored to some local interactional concerns, they may also constitute broader social roles, relations and hierarchies. The teller may, for example, orient to different kinds of audiences and design the unfolding of the story according to their diverse, extra-situational access to the matters under discussion (Goodwin, 1984). Similarly, the participants may co-construct the story (see Lerner, 1992), and by so doing, display their shared experiences and memories, for example, as members of a team (Djordjilovic, 2012). The relation between the situated production of stories and wider social reality is especially significant in institutional interaction where the structures of everyday conversation are adapted to accommodate specific institutional goals and tasks and thus reinforce entire institutional realms with particular social orders (see Arminen, 2005). In previous research, it has been shown how storytelling is used, for example, in various kinds of therapy (Arminen, 2004; Halonen, 2002) and educational (Karvonen et al., 2018) settings where it is embedded in wider social practices of reflexive identity work. However, in studying the way institutions are talked into being through storytelling, the previous studies have largely focused on established institutions and professions. In that respect, the mentoring program is different as it forms a new kind of organizational context and professional practice in-the-making. Therefore, the article particularly aims at analyzing stories and storytelling as organizational practice through which new professional identities, competences and practices (cf. Schnurr & Van De

Mieroop, 2017) are discursively constructed and wider social changes thus regulated and managed.

Before proceeding to the analysis, we will provide more information about our data and the method of analysis.

Data and method

Our data come from a Finnish mentoring program directed at artists and consultants interested in multidisciplinary collaboration in the field of organizational training and development. The program, which aimed at developing a new kind of hybrid expertise, was funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland and led by a performance artist and a consultant who had conducted pioneering work in various collaborative projects. Four working pairs of consultants and artists – who had a background in theatre, dance, visual arts and design – were chosen for the program through a national call. Although all the participants had applied for the program in order to expand their professionalism they were at different stages of their career: some were already confirmed professionals while others had entered working life only recently.

During the program, the working pairs undertook a pilot project in real customer organizations and discussed these cases and their own professional pathways and expertise in joint mentoring workshops led by the instructor artist and the consultant. The workshops spread over ten months and were organized in office premises in the capital region, apart from the last workshop that was organized in a larger seminar venue and was open to the public (see Table 2). In that, the mentoring program and the individual customer cases were

presented to the audience consisting, for example, of professionals from consulting and arts, company representatives, public officials and political decision makers:

Table 2. Workshops within the mentoring program

I workshop	January, one-day, office; discussion of projects and own expertise
II workshop	March, one-day, office; discussion of projects and own expertise
III workshop	June, one-day, office; discussion of projects and own expertise
IV workshop	August, one-day, office; discussion of projects and own expertise
V workshop	October, two-day, seminar venue; presentation of the program/projects

Workshops I-IV were organized in a similar manner. First, the instructors and all the working pairs gathered together in a circle to exchange news and conduct joint group work (see Figure 1).

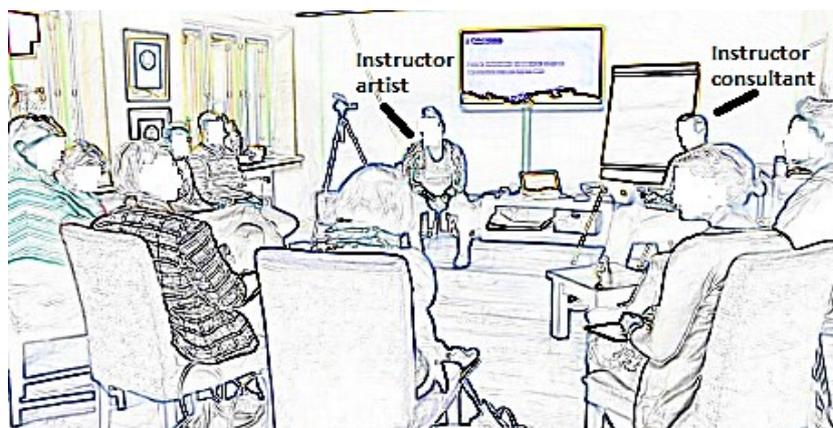


Figure 1. Spatial arrangement of the workshop

Later on, the participants were often divided into two rooms with the artists working with the instructor artist and the consultants with the instructor consultant. In collecting the data, all the workshops were followed ethnographically through participant observation by the first author as well as being videotaped in their entirety. In videotaping the joint session, three cameras were placed in different corners of the room; when the participants were divided into two rooms, the researcher left two cameras with the first group and followed the

second group into another room with one camera. Between the workshops, the participants carried on discussions and conducted instructed reflexive exercises using a joint digital platform. These discussions were also followed and collected.²

It was noticed already during the ethnographic phase that the mentoring program was heavily based on narrative discourse: both the trainees and the instructors told stories about their life, professional background, choices made and people met. However, among these personal stories related to more distant history there were also stories about the ongoing customer projects that were taken up in each workshop. We became interested in these stories as they formed the backbone of the program. In particular, we focused on one story that was produced in the third workshop. At that point, all the customer projects were fully underway and there was an established structure for sharing information about them in the workshop. It was then that one of the working pairs unexpectedly reported problems within their customer project.

Using this ethnographic information as a starting point we continued analyzing the story from the video, thus combining our ethnographic approach with discourse and conversation analytical methods (cf. Larsson & Lundholm, 2013; Moerman, 1987) in order to investigate how the ‘unusualness’ of the story was discursively constructed and managed in and through situated storytelling. Here, we particularly relied on the understanding of the story as the participants’ own discursive category with potential locally negotiated criteria of adequacy in terms of, for example, the story’s ‘completeness’, ‘appropriateness’ or ‘truthfulness’ (see Edwards, 1997; Stokoe & Edwards, 2006; Sacks, 1992). In the peer group session, the adequacy of the story was visibly at stake as the ‘whole’ story was not disclosed

² The ethnographic work began already before the actual peer group sessions when the instructor artist and the consultant were still planning the program and applying for funding. Access to the mentoring program was made possible due to the first author’s engagement with the field through other research projects. In the workshops, the researcher adopted the role of a passive participant, apart from the fourth workshops where she gave a presentation about consulting practice. The second author joined the research project later, but has an even longer involvement in the fields of consulting and the arts.

at once, but built incrementally from story elements in interaction, leading to different – and competing – versions of the narrated events. In analyzing this interactional accomplishment of the ‘story’, we especially focused on examining how morality became an organizing principle for story-telling, namely, how the participants position themselves as professional actors by assigning rights and responsibilities to perform certain actions and by holding each other accountable for their actions (Jayyusi, 1991; Ochs & Capps, 2001), and by so doing, make sense of their profession and negotiate its boundaries.

Analysis of storytelling as a means for professional boundary work

In the following, we will analyze the interactional construction of the working pair’s trouble telling. First, we will examine the initial production of the story vis-à-vis the usual design and sequential environment of the customer project stories within the peer group session. After that, we will investigate how the story is taken up again and assembled incrementally as a joint accomplishment of the working pair and other participants, and is thus accommodated within the institutional context of the mentoring program.

Eliciting professional reflection and development

Similar to many other institutional encounters, the mentoring workshop has a defined overall structure so that it includes multiple, sequentially organized phases with distinct interactional activities (Robinson, 2012). In the overall structure, there is one specific place for customer related story-telling: exchanging news at the beginning of the meeting. This kind of a ‘newsround’ has also been found in other peer group settings. Halonen (2002), for example,

notes how group therapy sessions are regularly opened up with story-telling where the participants disclose their current ‘feelings’. This marks the transition to the therapy context with its particular inferential framework, the therapist now interpreting the stories from the viewpoint of addiction (Halonen, 2002).

The institution-specific use of story-telling can also be seen from Extract 1³ which comes from the third workshop and where the instructor-artist (A) creates a place for the trainees to update information about their ongoing customer projects (lines 1-2). The turn is allocated to trainee 1 (T1a)⁴ who has already been discussing her current situation privately with other trainees while waiting for the workshop to begin.

Extract 1

01 A: pitäskö alottaa [nimi=T1a] susta silleen että (.) vähän kuulostellaan kuulumisii ja *should we begin from you [name=T1a] so that (.) we hear the news a little bit and*

02 (0.3) jotenki (0.3) (että) missä vähän oma prosessi (.) menee.
(0.3) kind of (0.3) a bit like where one's own process (.) is going.

((lines omitted: C confirms A's idea about a newsround))

03 T1a: em mä ↑t*i*ä onks mulla mitään ihmeellistä (.) sano(h)ttavaaahh. (0.6) ööh (0.4)
I ↑dunno if I have anything special (.) to sa(h)yhh. (0.6) uhm (0.4)

04 ↑ihan hyvää kuuluu. (0.4) ↑tän prosessin suhteen ni (.) meil on se (0.3) keikka?
↑I'm just fine. (0.4) ↑in terms of this project (.) we have confirmed that (0.3) gig?

*A AND C NOD

05 (.) vahvistunu syksyllehh. (0.5) se on (0.3) <sairaalas*sa>. (0.3) öö
(.) for the autumnhh. (0.5) it will be (0.3) <in the hospital>. (0.3) uhm

06 hoitohenkilökunnalle ja siel on (0.4) on hh (0.3) haastavaaki (.) siin mielessä
for the nursing staff and there are (0.4) are hh (0.3) also challenges (.) because

*C NODS

07 et siel on tosi (0.3) huono (0.6) työhyvinvoin*ti
they have really (0.3) poor (0.6) well-being at work

³ See Appendix for transcription conventions.

⁴In the extracts, small letters *a* and *c* are used to indicate whether the trainees are artists or consultants, so T1a and T2c form a working pair and T3a and T4c form another working pair. *A* refers to the instructor artist and *C* to the instructor consultant.

((words omitted: T1a elaborates the issues related to the customer's poor well-being))

- 08 nyt oon ehkä päässy siihen vaiheeseen että (mä en oo) niin paljon enää (0.3)
I have now probably got to the stage where (I am not) so much anymore (0.3)
- 09 miettiny sitä niinku <omaa osaamista> jotenkin (.) sellasta vaan mä oon yrittäny
thinking like about my <own competence> kind of (.) thing but I have tried to
- *C NODS SEVERAL TIMES, RAISES EYEBROWS, SMILES
- 10 miettiä just sitä <keiss*ia>. (0.3) ja se (.) se ↑on inspiroivaa. (.) et siin tavallaan
think about the <case>. (0.3) and it (.) it ↑is inspiring. (.) that one can kind of
- *A NODS AND SMILES
- 11 pääsee niinku (0.3) jotenkin (0.4) kattoon sitä toisesta (.) vinkke*listä.
like (0.3) somehow (0.4) look at it from another (.) perspective
- 12 C: ↑joo.
↑joo.

At first, trainee 1 resists the position of the teller and going first (line 3) and then produces the routinized second pair part 'I'm just fine' (line 4), thus orienting to the previous turn as the first pair part of a non-institutional adjacency pair of 'greeting' and 'exchanging the news' (see Sacks, 1992). However, in this context, this is not treated as sufficient: there is no speaker transition and the trainee moves on to a longer story, providing information about how their customer project has proceeded (lines 4-6), and furthermore, what kinds of challenges they have encountered within the project (lines 6-7). After the disclosure of this practical information, the turn still comprises another component where the trainee explains how she has changed in the process: 'I have now probably got to the stage' (lines 8-10). Importantly, this is followed by the verbalization of a new skill or insight that has emerged as a result of the change (lines 10-11). Here, the trainee uses a generic zero subject⁵ which has been shown to create a place for the recipients to identify with the matters under discussion (Laitinen, 1995), thus constructing a collective, shareable experience about professional

⁵ In Finnish, the subject is missing and the verb is in the 3rd person singular.

growth. Therefore, she produces a small story that reports not only about the customer project, but also about her own inner transformation. More specifically, the story is designed to identify complexities in the project, and in this way, call attention to professional reflection and development: the project is presented as challenging but not unmanageable as the trainee has learned to overcome obstacles related to her professional confidence and focus on the customer. Through the stories, the trainee thus acts out her situated identity of a trainee and orients to 'doing being' a good practitioner. As seen from the extract, this is also strongly validated by the instructors through embodied actions of nodding and smiling (lines 10-11).

As the 'newsround' continues, other trainees also produce similar kinds of stories about their ongoing customer projects and one's own professional development. From the viewpoint of situated storytelling, they can be seen as second stories through which the participants display an identification with previous speakers and achieve a shared 'trainee experience' (cf. Arminen, 2004; Sacks, 1992). However, as mentioned earlier, one of the working pairs produces a story that deviates from this pattern. This is shown in extract 2 that continues the previous data example.

Extract 2

01 T4c: meillä [nimi=T3a] kanssa että mehän (.) tämmönen kolmen kerran (.) prosessi
with [name=T3a] that we us there has been (.) this kind of three meetings (.) process

*A SMILES AND NODS

02 ollaan tässä (0.3) tässä vetästy *(.) ↑vetästy niinku kevään aika[na. (.) aikana ja
that we have (0.3) have delivered (.) ↑delivered like during during the spr[ing. (.) and

03 A: [mm]

04 T4c: onki jotenki kiva vähän m- (0.3) jossain kohtaa pysähtyy ehkä sit refleктоimaan sitä
it is somehow nice to a little bit m- (0.3) at some point perhaps stop to reflect on it

05 (0.3) sitä tarkemmin. (.) mä oon jte jotenki (.) >liittyen siihen keissiin< ja ja
(0.3) it more closely. (.) I am myself somehow (.) >related to that case< and and

06 muutenkin omas työssäni (0.3) (huomannu) et mä oon viime aikoina miettiny

- also more generally in my work (0.3) (I have noticed) that I have now lately thought*
- 07 paljon niinku työelämän <muutoksia> ja sitä niinku muutostahtii. (0.3) mikä
a lot about the <changes> in working life and like the speed of changes (0.3) that
- 08 näkyy niin vaikka täs ↑meijän prosessis meil oli kolme tapaamista kuukauden
is also shown for example in this process of ↑ours we had three meetings once a
- 09 välein (.) .hh niin tuntu et joka kerta se (.) niinku tilanne oli jotenki ihan
month (.) .hh so it felt like every time the (.) like the situation was somehow entirely
- 10 ↑erilainen.
↑different.

Similar to other participants, trainee 4 also begins to tell about their customer project. However, although she discloses practical information (lines 1-2) and reports about issues that can be viewed as challenges (lines 6-10), her turn lacks many of the usual elements of the newsround story in as much as it does not acknowledge any inner change or development even if the customer project is already completed and can be looked at retrospectively. Instead, the challenges related to this individual case are contextualized as part of wider changes in working life, which implies that they are potentially irreversible and cannot be resolved with the tools and expertise gained within the mentoring program. All these features mark the working pair's experience as 'different' in relation to other trainees and their stories and for the rest of the article we will focus on analyzing how this story is dealt with in the group, namely, what kinds of local reasons are called upon to explain and account for its deviance.

Giving reasons for unexpected experience

As mentioned, the mentoring workshop has a specific overall structure and the customer project stories are routinely requested by the instructors during the newsround at the beginning of the workshop. However, due to the unusual design of the 'different' story, it is

taken up again later on and given a new, designated place in the workshop.⁶ As the story is relocated in the overall structure of the workshop it is turned into an independent agenda-item which is announced by the artist instructor as part of her agenda management as the chair of the meeting (cf. Angouri & Marra, 2010). This opens up a slot for a longer story in workshop interaction. Moreover, it creates expectations that the story will be more than just the usual report about the customer project and the skills and insights developed with it, delivered by the trainees with primary epistemic access to the matters under discussion. Instead, the participants are to jointly make sense of experience disclosed in and through story-telling.

Extract 3

- *GAZES AT THE WORKING PAIR
- 01 A: *↑otetaan siihen semmonen (0.3) puolisen tuntii vähän vajaa et kuullaan teidän (.)
 ↑*let's take kind of (0.3) half an hour a bit less so that we can hear your (.)*
- *GAZES AT OTHER PARTICIPANTS
- 02 <tapausta> ja (0.7) mietitää *(.) yhdessä.
 <case> and (0.7) think about it *(.) together.
- 03 (2.1)
- 04 T3a: ↑mistäs oikee mennään sisään.
 ↑*where shall we really begin.*
- 05 (0.4)
- 06 T4c: mh
- 07 (2.0)
- 08 T4c: ↑hmm. (0.3) (mistäs sen nyt) (0.3) no (se me) jonkin verran ollaan tätä (0.3)
 ↑*hmm. (0.3) (where to begin) (0.3) well (it we) have to some extent (0.3)*
- 09 tätä avattu (.) ↑avattu että (tässä oli) tämmönen (0.5) kolmen (.) kolmen
opened this up (.) ↑opened this up that (this was) kind of (0.5) a three (.) three
- 10 kerran prosessi ja se (0.4) tilaus tuli tämmöseltä sijaistavalta esimieheltä ja
meetings process and the (0.4) order came from this kind of substitute boss and

⁶ During the newsround, trainee 4 also implies that their story would require more floor in order to be fully told (see lines 4-5). The story is taken up again in the afternoon, after the lunch break.

- 11 sit tämmöseltä kehittäm_is ih- (.) ih_miseltä jotka olivat saaneet (0.3) ↑saaneet
then this kind of human resource per- (.) person who had received (0.3) ↑received
- 12 tota vähän (.) köh uhm (.) (tota) hätähuutoja ja tilausta työyhteisöltä että
like a few (.) kr uhm (.) (some) cries for help and order from the work community that
- 13 nyt tarviis (0.3) ↑tarviis jotain et me ei oikeen tunneta to_isiamme
now there is a need (0.3) a ↑need for something that we don't really know each other
- 14 eikä eikä sitä että mitä (.) mitä täällä k_ukin t_ekee ja. (.) tuli kokemus vähän
and not not that what (.) each one of us is doing here and. (.) one got a bit of a feeling
- 15 puhumattomuuden k_ulttuurista ja tuntu että vähän semmosta kivireen vetämistä
about the culture of not speaking and it felt kind of like pulling a dead weight
- 16 ja. (0.4) ja tota (.) muuta että. (.) et sitten (0.4) öö ö- itse asiassa t_ilaus oli
and. (0.4) and like (.) things like that. (.) so then (0.4) uhm uh actually the order was
- 17 varmaankin jotain tämmöstä niinku (0.3) työyhteisön niinku (.) <voimaan↑nuttaista>.
probably something like (0.3) like <em↑powering> (.) the work community.
- ((lines omitted: T4c provides information about when the workshops took place))
- 18 ni ennen (.) ensimmäistä (.) tapaamista ni edellisenä päivänä sit vanha esimies
so before (.) the first (.) meeting the day before that the old boss
- 19 p_alasi. (.) ↑palasi takaisi siihe työyhteisöön.
returned. (.)↑returned back to the work community.

As seen from extract 3, the working pair - the trainee artist and the trainee consultant - begin to produce the story together, and by so doing, establish an interactional team that has shared accountability for the action (Djordjilovic, 2012). At first, they orient to the possibility of holding the floor for an extended period and negotiate their mutual tellership (cf. Lerner, 1992) and where to begin to unfold the chain of events (lines 4-8) – a decision that is rhetorically potent as it asserts different causalities and accountabilities (Edwards, 1997). After this story preface (Sacks, 1992), the story is taken up by the trainee consultant who provides background information needed for understanding the case: the training project was initiated by a substitute boss and a human resources person of the customer organization who, for their part, had received the order from the work community (lines 8-17). However, before

the training started, the old boss returned (lines 18-19). In constructing the story, this functions as an orientation (see Labov, 1972) that introduces the setting and the main characters and forms an interpretative frame for the upcoming story. In the extract, the orientation portrays a conflictual situation with different parties: the old boss who, it is suggested, has caused a poor company culture (lines 14-15), the substitute boss who has taken over and wants to empower the personnel (lines 16-17) and the suffering personnel who want to recover, displayed by the use of an affective phrase 'cries for help' (line 12). In this way, the orientation also reduces the working pair's own agency in the matters so that in the story they appear only in the role of the service provider who has been thrown into the midst of an organizational conflict.

Once the story begins to unfold, the trainee consultant and the trainee artist jointly fill in the details, and in this way, elaborate the description of the conflict by reliving the situation and providing retrospective analysis.

Extract 4

01 T3a: siin ensimmäisellä kerralla (.) kun hh (0.3) jotenki mulle se välitty ainaki (0.3)
in the first time (.) like hh (0.3) somehow it appeared at least to me (0.3)

02 semmosena et se (0.4) vanhan esimiehen sijainen oli saanu tu- (.) tuotua siihen
that the (0.4) substitute for the old boss had ma- (.) managed to bring into the

03 yhteisöön niinku (.) niinku jotenki et se (0.3) oli niinku valmis uudistumaan
community kind of (.) like somehow it (0.3) was uhm ready to renew itself

04 ja menemään n- (.) eteenpäin. (0.3) .hh ni sit jotenki niinku (0.) siinä itekin (.)
and move fo- (.) forward. (0.3) .hh so then somehow (0.3) one also got (.)

05 innostu niinku siinä @no ↑hyvä että täällähän on kauheen hyvät lähtökohdat@
excited that @well ↑nice we have a really good foundation here@

((words omitted: T3a elaborates how well everything worked during the first meeting))

06 et (0.5) me ei niinku osattu odottaa (0.3) niinku sitä että tavallaan mikä ois voinu
so (0.5) we could not expect (0.3) like what could have in a way been kind of

- 07 olla kyllä ihan hyvin niinku ennakoitavissa ja ajateltavissa että kun se (.) vanha
easily expected and like thought of that when the (.) old
- 08 esimies kuitenkin palaa sinne että varmaan ↑joku niinku tavallaan vanha
boss anyhow returns then surely ↑some kind of old is in a way
- 09 tulee myös niinku jatkumaa.
also going to continue.
- ((lines omitted: T3a describes how people appeared different the second time))
- 10 T4c: se kontrasti sen niinku ensimmäisen ja toisen (.) kerran välillä oli ihan (.)
the contrast between like the first and the second (.) time was just (.)
- 11 ihan <älyttömän suuri>. (0.3) et siel oli niinku (.) se oli ↑ihan kun eri porukan
just <incredibly big>. (0.3) that there was like (.) it was just like being with a
- 12 kanssa (0.3) ois (.) ollut.
different (0.3) group (.) of people.
- ((words omitted: T4c elaborates how positive people initially were))
- 13 se oli selkeesti niinku siin oli semmonen joku regressio kyllä niinku hyvin
it was clearly like there had been some kind of regression that had like very
- 14 vahvasti tapahtunu.
strongly taken place.

In telling the story, the trainee artist constructs causal relations between the work atmosphere and management style, explaining how the personnel was willing to 'renew itself' and 'move forward' with the new leader and thus factualizing the problems in the past (lines 1-4). Importantly, he embeds reported speech in the story (line 5). In reported speech, the speaker portrays a piece of talk that belongs to another interactional context (Clift & Holt, 2010). In extract 4, the trainee artist quotes his own words or thoughts during the first meeting with the work community. This is produced as a direct quotation, which means that it is transferred into the new context in its original form. However, a direct quotation is also a speaker's reconstruction and can be used for stance taking, since it not only demonstrates what was said but also how something was said (Holt, 2000). In the extract, the direct quotation is produced with an excited voice quality. In this way, it discloses the trainee

artist's 'feeling' at the time and thus functions to indicate the authenticity of the story: things really were like that and the good work atmosphere is not just an afterthought.

However, after that, the trainee artist frames the voice from the past with reflection that stems from the perspective of here-and-now: 'so we could not expect' (lines 6-7). Here, he marks the chain of events and the bad outcome as culturally recognizable – although they themselves could not perceive them at the time due to the first meeting being so successful. Therefore, the working pair cannot be blamed for not foreseeing the problems, namely, that the return of the old boss was going to transform the work community for the worse. This causal relation and the psychologization of the problem (see De Vos, 2012) is confirmed by the trainee consultant who shows that he shares the trainee artist's experience by describing the observable changes within the work community (lines 10-12), and furthermore, by using the term 'regression' that can be seen to belong to specialized psychoanalytic discourse (line 13). All in all, the story produced jointly by the working pair thus locates the problem within the human relations of the customer organization.

Extract 5 shows how the working pair particularly uses character description for crystallizing the narrative arc, the trainee artist introducing 'the mirror person', an employee whose behavior reflected the process at large.

Extract 5

01 T3a: oli yks työntekijä (.) joka niinku tavallaan (.) ehkä niinku (0.3) tavallaan
there was one employee (.) who in a way (.) like maybe (0.3) kind of

02 toimi (0.4) niinku peilinä et jotenki et mitä siin koko ryhmässä tapahtu se oli
acted (.) like as a mirror for what happened in the whole group in the

03 ensimmäisel kerralla (.) kauheen mukana ja prooaktiivinen
first time he was (.) really involved and proactive

((words omitted: T3a describes how the person took part in workshop activities))

04 ja sit taas (.) ↑toisella kerralla (.) niin tota (.) se oli jotenkin menny

and then again (.) the ↑second time (.) like (.) the group had somehow gone

05 se ryhmä niinku tavallaan semmoseen vanhaan
like into some kind of old

((words omitted: T3a describes how all people took part in the activities reluctantly))

06 siinä kohtaa tää niinku (0.4) peilihenkilö taas oli niinku semmonen et se oli
at that point this (0.4) like mirror person was then again like kind of that he was

07 hyvin jotenkin niinku ehkä semmone niinku neutraali
somehow like really probably kind of like neutral

((words omitted: T3a describes how the person acted in a neutral way))

08 sitte taas ↑kolmammnella kerralla (.) niin (.) tuntu että se (.) jotenki et siel joku
then the ↑third time (0.3) then (.) it felt that (.) there was kind of like some

09 <kriisi> oli.
<crisis> *going on.*

((words omitted: T3a elaborates the description of the crisis))

10 sitte tää (.) niinku (0.4) tää (oli jotenkin niinkun) vihamielisen oloinen jo
then this (.) like (0.4) this appeared (somehow like) already aggressive

11 tää niinku tää kolmas henkilö (0.3) kolmas henkilö siinä et hän tota vaan totes et
this like this third person (0.3) the third person that he just like noted that

12 @voi vittu että voisinko mennä tekemään oikeita töitä@ niinku siis ku (-) (.)
@oh fuck could I go to do some real work@ like when (-) (.)

13 kerroin et täs on tämmönen lämmittelyharjoitus mikä tehdään niin sit se (.)
I told that there is this kind of warm up exercise that we are going to do so it (.)

14 reaktio tuli niinku sijitä.
was a reaction to that.

In the trainee artist's storyline, there is incrementally rising, complicating action where tension builds up as organizational issues rise to the surface and the mirror person's behavior and stance towards the training alters (lines 1-5), finally leading to the confrontation where he openly rejects the training activities (lines 8-14). The rejection is also brought into the story as reported speech (line 12), namely, a direct quotation where the trainee artist lends his voice to the story character and reconstructs his affect (cf. Selting, 2010) by using a

changed voice quality that can be seen to display ‘anger’ and ‘fed-upness’. This is the climax of the story that also works as an embedded evaluation (see Labov, 1972), revealing the point of the story: the working pair is jointly producing a complaint story that formulates the nature of the trouble and seeks alignment and affiliation from the story recipients (see Drew & Holt, 1988; Selting, 2010).

At the heart of the complainable matter is the categorization (see Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015) the rejection is based on. More specifically, the ‘mirror person’ rejects the training activities by establishing a dichotomous category pair ‘work/non-work’ with category bound features of ‘productivity’ and ‘uselessness’ and by positioning the training activities in the latter. In the world of the story as well as in here-and-now storytelling, the rejection creates a moral dilemma as it calls into question the working pair’s right to deliver the training, and by so doing, threatens the integrity of the whole profession. Therefore, it can be seen how the story is constructed in the manner that it reports about trouble but at the same time explains and makes sense of these difficulties. In other words, the problematic categorization does not have to be taken seriously as it is only a manifestation of the person being ‘in regression’ and the working pair is not responsible for the situation. Instead, if someone should be blamed, it is the old boss with his leadership style, the organizational culture of the customer organization or even present-day working life with its rapidly changing and unpredictable work arrangements.

Shifting the blame and normalizing the problem

Upon completion of the story, the teller and the recipients move to a reception sequence where they re-engage with the turn-by-turn organization of talk and jointly negotiate the meaning and relevance of the story (cf. Jefferson, 1978). As mentioned, the working pair’s

story can be viewed as a complaint story that projects an affiliative response from the recipients. Extract 6 shows how it is initially followed by the instructor artist's paraphrasing formulation that expresses sympathy for the tellers and validates the morality of their story (line 1). However, after that, the instructor artist corrects the focus of the story and calls for its tellability by asking the working pair to report about their own motives (lines 5-7), hindrance (line 8) and adaptation (10-11) in the described situation. By doing so, she orients to the institutional goal of the workshop and the related use of the stories, showing that they are expected to be about the personal and professional development of the trainees. Therefore, even after the new, designated place, the working pair has not produced a 'valid' story that would focus on observing and analyzing the inner experience of the tellers and the instructor artist thus has to specifically ask for it.

Extract 6

- 01 A: (et) aika kovaaan yhteisöön ootte tavallaan nyt tässä ensimmäises
(so) you've kind of had to deal with a rather difficult community in this first
- 02 T4c: ↑joo.
 ↑*yeah.*
- 03 T3a: mm.
- 04 A: (mut sit) mun tekee mieli jotenki mieli vähän aikaa (.) ö niinku (0.4) palata näihin
(but then) I feel like I somehow feel like (.) uhm (0.4) shortly returning to this
- 05 (0.3) niihin työpajoihin et[tä (0.3) (elikkä) et <↑millasia (.) asioita te koette että>
(0.3) to those worksshops that (0.3) (so) that <↑what kinds of (.) things you feel>
- 06 T4c: [mm
- 07 A: siinä työpajan aikana te ootte pyryny (.) pyrkiny niinku (.) ratkasemaan. (.) tai
you have tri- (.) tried to like (.) resolve during the workshop (.) or
- 08 minkä kanssa te ootte tavallaan (.) ite ollut tekemisissä.
what is the thing that you have in a way been dealing with yourself.
- 09 T4c: ↑hmm.

- 10 A: mitä siinä on tapahtunu tavallaan teissä (0.3) kun te ootte pyrkiny löytään sitä
what has in a way happened in you (0.3) when you have tried to find your
- 11 omaa (.) asentoo miten konsultoida tai miten tehdä niit taide (0.3) tekoja siinä.
own (.) position on how to consult or to undertake those artistic (0.3) actions.
- ((words omitted: T3a explains how the working pair decided after the second time that people are in need of a stronger reflexive space and planned various embodied activities for the third time; in the workshop they took over one hour and it was agreed that T4c will lead a discussion after the artistic phase))
- 12 T3a: ni sit mulla joku sem- (.) tuli niinku semmonen mä huomasin et mä jouduin
then with me so- (.) I had like kind of I noticed that I had to
- 13 ↑kamppailemaan (.) mä en tiedä oliko se mun oman egon tai muun vastaavan
↑fight (.) I don't know if it was my own ego or something similar
- 14 kanssa siinä että mä en ala- alkais änkemään sinne ↑vielä jotain niinku lisää.
but that I wouldn't sta- start to squeeze there like ↑even more activities
- ((lines omitted: T3a explains it felt difficult just to watch T4c leading the discussion))
- 15 T4c: ja taas mun näkökulmasta ku siinä oli tosiaan se joku puolitoist tuntii
and then from my perspective when there was indeed that hour and a half
- 16 nii se oli aika (.) aika intensiivises[ti oli (.) oli sitä tajdetta hyödynnettiin
it was quite (.) quite intense (.) the art was utilized
- 17 T3a: [mm
- 18 T4c: nii (.) mullehan se taas oli et @haa no onpas vauhtia@ paljon niinku kaikkee
so (.) for me it was like @phew well there is some action here@ like a lot going on
- ((lines omitted: T4c explains how she usually uses group discussions in consulting))
- 19 T3a: ↑kyl siin varmaan tuli jotenki semmonen vauhtisokeus >niinku tai siis sillai<
↑surely one got like some kind of speed blindness >like or like<
- 20 et jotenki et tuntu et päästään jonku äärelle ni sit ois vielä niinku et
that somehow it felt like now we have got somewhere so like let's do
- 21 @↑vielä lisää ↑vielä lisää@
@↑even more ↑even more@

The instructor artist's question makes the trainee artist resume storytelling (not shown in the transcript). This time he picks up the chain of events from the second meeting and

provides details that open up the rationale behind the working pair's actions in the third meeting, demonstrating how they had a carefully planned agenda and division of labour and thus constructing them as professional actors with good judgement. After these preparations, the trainee artist orients to the earlier question and explains 'what happened in him' (line 12-14). Now a very different kind of a story begins to emerge. Firstly, the focus of the story is on the trainee artist's own actions that are observed from the outside position: the trainee artist explains how he broke the agreement with the trainee consultant and wanted to introduce further artistic activities against the initial plan. Therefore, in this story version, the problems are also located in the third meeting but they are shown to derive from the training methods, not the organizational issues. Secondly, unlike earlier where the working pair co-constructed the story based on their shared experience (cf. Lerner, 1992), here the story is split into his and her perspective. More specifically, the working pair teams up in here-and-now storytelling in order to describe how they did not team up in the training situation, shown, for example, by their direct quotations (lines 18, 21) that display diverse interpretations of the training situation and what are considered allowable contributions with regard to the intensity of the activities and the time used. Therefore, in this new version the morality of the story is reassessed as the blame is now laid on the working pair, and more specifically, the trainee artist. However, although he ratifies the alternative storyline (line 19), he also shifts the responsibility onto the third party by separating his 'true', capable self from the 'ego' (line 13) that has taken over in the situation and made him act against his better judgement.

After the alternative story, the participants again move to the reception sequence where the instructor consultant (C) now takes the turn to comment on the story.

Extract 7

01 C: (se varmaan) niinku konsul- (.) konsultaatiotyössä aina (0.3) aina se hh (.)
(it probably) like in con- (.) in consulting work there is always (0.3) always the hh (.)

02 kla- (.) klassinen ajatus on että (.) että jokin (.) joku suhde sopimussuhdehan
cla- (.) classic idea that (.) there is some (.) some relation contractual relation

03 siin <täytyy [olla].
that <must exist.>

04 T4c: [mm

05 T4c: ↑joo.
 ↑yes.

06 C: ja (0.3) tavallaan (0.3) se on varmaan semmonen hyvä (.) hyvä oppii että
and (0.3) in a way (0.3) it is probably a kind of good (.) good thing to learn that

07 (0.5) että sitä (.) sopimussuhdetta ikään ku on tärkeä (0.3) niinku (.) arvioida
(0.5) that (.) it is kind of important to (0.3) like (.) assess that contractual relation

08 ja miettiä että miten selkee (.) selkee so- (0.3) sopimus tässä syntyy ja mistä
and think how clear (.) clear co- (0.3) a contract are we making here and what

09 syntyy (0.3) sopimus.
this (0.3) contract is about.

10 T4c: ↑joo.
 ↑yes.

((lines omitted: C elaborates the symbolic nature of the contractual relation))

11 C: ja (0.4) ja mullakin on tää (0.7) hh tämmönen kokemus että että tavallaan siin (.)
and (0.4) and I also have this (0.7) hh thin kind of experience that that in a way (.)

12 sitä sopimussuhdetta kannattaa (0.3) myöskin jotenki <koetella>. (.) että se: (0.3)
it is also worth (0.3) somehow <testing> the contractual relation. (.) that i:t (0.3)

13 siinä (ikään kuin) realistisesti (0.3) öö (0.6) ikään kuin (0.7) ↑puhuu niistä riskeistä
one (kind of) realistically (0.3) uhm (0.6) kind of (07) ↑talks about the risks

14 (.) myöskin että (.) että ikään kuin mä aamupäivällä puhuin siitä että minkälaista
(.) too that (.) that like in the morning I talked about that what kind of

15 transformaatiota halutaan.
transformation is sought after.

16 T4c: [mm

17 C: nii (.) nii tavallaa että niistä riskeistä että: mitä (.) mitä (.) mitenkä paljon niitä
so (.) so in a way about the risks tha:at what (.) what (.) how much are they

18 otetaan ja ↑kuinka paljon sitä (.) muodonmuutosta halutaan. (.) minkä tasosena.

taken and ↑how much (.) transformation is wanted. (.) at what level.

19 T4c: mm

20 C: *niinku vaikka siinä schiuman (.) muodonmuutos (0.4) taulukossa jossa lähdetään like for example in that schiuma's (.) transformation (0.4) chart which begins*

21 *että (.) että halutaanko viihdettä (0.4) vai (0.3) vai (.) muodonmuutosta. (.) from (.) from that do we want entertainment (0.4) or (0.3) or (.) transformation (.)*

22 *sit siel on tosi paljon sanotusta sille välille. then there are lots of verbalizations for between those.*

23 T4c: mm

24 C: *ja musta ne on sellasii niinku (0.3) keskustelusuhteessa tärkeitä arviointikohteita and I think they are kind of like (0.3) important assessment targets in a conversational*

25 *et seki voi olla yks (0.4) tapa vähä (0.5) öö (koittaa) puheen harjotteluun käyttää relation that it may also be one (0.4) way to like (0.5) uhm (try to) practice one's*

26 *sitä schiuman ää (0.5) ei- ei niitä ee kohtia vaan (.) vaan sill on se semmonen speech to use that schiuma's um (0.5) no- not the ee things but (.) but he has the kind*

27 *toisen[l- of differ-*

28 A: *[<matriisia> mä voin ladata sen sinne työtilaan. [<matrix> I can download it to the platform.*

In his turn, the instructor consultant positions the problems conveyed through the story in the broader context of consulting practice (lines 1-3). This is done by introducing and legitimizing the core principle of consulting - formulating a joint agreement with the customer - with the use of an extreme case formulation 'always' (see Pomerantz, 1986) and a specialized term *sopimussuhde* 'contractual relation'. In this way, the consultant also normalizes the problems (cf. Svinhufvud et al., 2017) by suggesting that they are merely the result of not following the best practices of the consulting profession. This becomes even more explicit as he then construes the establishment of the contractual relation as a learning object (line 6) and thus uses a stepwise entry to the delivery of unsolicited advice (cf. Vehviläinen, 2001) about how it is done (lines 7-18). Here, the instructor consultant refers to

the scientific book⁷ that presents a matrix for the use and value of arts in organizations (lines 20-27). The matrix functions as a coding scheme that aids the participants in interpreting their social world in socially organized ways and thus forming a basis for their developing professional vision (cf. Goodwin, 1994).

Importantly, by giving advice, the instructor consultant constructs the situated identities (see Zimmerman, 1998) of an ‘expert’ and a ‘novice’, related to consulting practice and the institutional setting of the mentoring workshop. He does not explicitly address the working pair or the trainee artist but uses a generic zero subject (Laitinen, 1995; cf. extract 1) and thus implies that his advice is potentially relevant to all the workshop trainees who belong to the ‘novice’ category. This is emphasized by saving the matrix to the shared digital platform (see line 28). However, due to the previous storytelling context, his advice can be seen to be especially targeted to the working pair. In this way, the instructor consultant confirms the alternative story line where the blame is placed on the working pair, and more specifically the trainee artist, who has not formed a ‘contract’ with the customers but rather forced his activities upon them. Yet, at the same time the instructor consultant also lessens the blame by contextualizing the problems as part of professional practice that the trainees have not yet internalized. Therefore, the working pair cannot be morally accountable for their actions – although in order to become true professionals they must learn to assess their conversational relation with the customer and ‘practice one’s speech’ (line 25), and by so doing, be willing to work towards the ideals of consulting practice.

Conclusion

⁷ Schiuma, G. 2011. *The value of arts for business*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In this article, we have analyzed the use of stories and storytelling in a professional mentoring program where artists and consultants working collaboratively in the field of organizational training and development shared stories about their work and ongoing customer project cases in instructed peer group sessions. The aim of the paper was to show how stories and storytelling function as discursive and organizational practice in this setting with its institutional goal of advancing the professional development of the participants in order for them to make use of the new employment opportunities brought by the changes in working life. In this sense, we approached stories and storytelling as discursive resources employed to make sense of the practitioners' fluid and hybrid profession in a dialogical process where the participants jointly articulate what has happened, why it has happened, what is happening at the moment and what might happen next (cf. Bruner, 1990) with regard to their customer cases.

Following this, we connected stories and storytelling to the notion of professional reflection that is seen to comprise different – organizing, productive, public as well as critical – dimensions (cf. Pässilä, 2012). In the context of the mentoring program, this means that joint, public reflection materializing through stories and storytelling has functions beyond individual or collective competence building and is also employed, for example, for the purposes of policy work regarding the field at large. In our analysis, we showed how this multi-dimensional reflection is accomplished in situated ways as the stories are incrementally built from story-elements in interaction, the participants locally negotiating about their criteria of adequacy in terms of, for example, the story's 'appropriateness' (see Edwards, 1997; Stokoe & Edwards, 2006; Sacks, 1992) in the institutional context of the mentoring program. In particular, we focused on analyzing how the participants produce different versions of the narrated events – in the case of our data a problematic customer case – and by so doing address the questions of blame and accountability (see Jayyusi, 1991; Ochs &

Capps, 2001) with regard to professional action. Through our analysis, we showed how the participants particularly tailor their stories to sustain the moral order and legitimacy of the program and their profession.

In this respect, stories and storytelling can be approached as organizational practice that is specifically used to exercise regulatory professional discourse (Kong, 2014) in the context of new learning networks in order to govern the new profession of an *artist-developer* among all the other specialized professions of the modern world and contemporary society. Although characterized by certain social, cognitive, ideological as well as logistic dimensions the professions are not bound, but open expertise systems subject to transition, fluidity and hybridity (Kong, 2014). This is particularly the case in contemporary working life where the professions' mutual boundaries are reorganized and societal legitimacy negotiated in the context of broader social and technological changes (see Susskind & Susskind, 2015). In this way, storytelling within the networks also contributes to building broader social processes and generating new kinds of social divisions and distributions of organizational and societal power as it aims at producing new training professionals that influence and transform, for example, social relations and decision making processes of the customer organizations. The practical implications of our study could be in advancing the awareness of the very manner stories and storytelling work as organizational practice for such professional boundary work and take part in shaping this profession whose membership does not depend on conventional acknowledged credentials but on mechanisms that are more concealed and transitory.

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Appendix. Transcription symbols.

.	Falling intonation
?	Rising intonation
↑	Rise in pitch
w <u>o</u> rd	Emphasis
>word<	Faster pace than surrounding talk
<word>	Slower pace than surrounding talk
wo-	Word cut off
@word@	Change in sound quality
.hh	inbreath
hh	outbreath
wo(h)rd	Word produced through outbreath or laughter
(0.5)	Pause in seconds

(.)	Micropause: less than 0.2 seconds
[Beginning of overlapping talk
(word)	Talk not clear
((words omitted))	Transcriber's remarks

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