

Religious Education

The official journal of the Religious Education Association

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/urea20

Engaging Story-Linking Through Conversations Between Mother and Daughter: Explorations in the Hermeneutics of Experience and Christian Religious Education

Jeniffer Fresy Porielly Wowor & Rena Sesaria Yudhita

To cite this article: Jeniffer Fresy Porielly Wowor & Rena Sesaria Yudhita (22 May 2024): Engaging Story-Linking Through Conversations Between Mother and Daughter: Explorations in the Hermeneutics of Experience and Christian Religious Education, Religious Education, DOI: [10.1080/00344087.2024.2352987](https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2024.2352987)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2024.2352987>



Published online: 22 May 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Engaging Story-Linking Through Conversations Between Mother and Daughter: Explorations in the Hermeneutics of Experience and Christian Religious Education

Jeniffer Fresy Porielly Wowor^{a,b}  and Rena Sesaria Yudhita^{b,c}

^aGraduate School of Religion and Religious Education, Fordham University, New York, USA; ^bFaculty of Theology, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; ^cTrinity Theological College, Singapore, Singapore

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to engage the often-overlooked voices of mothers and daughters in the face of patriarchal dominance. Conversations between mothers and daughters are important spaces for the exploration of faith experiences and provide transformative power. Through these conversations, the practice of story-linking comes to life, enabling re-listening to and re-telling Christian faith stories in the Bible entrenched in church tradition. This endeavor promotes a life-affirming approach to transformative learning. Reflecting on these conversations, this study contributes to Christian religious education within the family context, casting ripples of transformation throughout the church and society.

KEYWORDS

Mother; daughter; conversation; story-linking; transformative learning

Introduction

Using our personal narratives and conversations with our daughters, this paper explores the importance of affirming mothers' and daughters' voices in both the church and society. This study poses two critical questions: (1) How do ordinary conversations between mothers and daughters facilitate the apprehension of God's presence and support? (2) To what extent can the practice of story-linking within mother-daughter dialogues become transformative for families, churches, and society, especially in settings where patriarchal norms endure? Our examination unfolds in the ordinary crucible of familial life, and it attempts to explore the concept of story-linking as expounded by Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, within the Indonesian context (Wimberly 2005, 26, Kindle). This study highlights the importance of listening to the voices of mothers and daughters in the familial setting, where the fusion of personal stories and Christian faith stories leads to the tangible experience of God's presence through dialogue.

Methodology

This study uses collaborative autobiographical narrative inquiry as a research method. Rooted in introspective self-reflection, our approach, as mothers, hinges on the

principles of active and compassionate listening within our relationships with our daughters. Autobiographical narrative inquiry encompasses autobiography and autoethnography, constituting an exploration that places the researcher as the subject of study, employing the researcher's personal narrative to illuminate broader societal issues (Kim 2016, Ch. 4, Kindle). This research predominantly aligns with autoethnography narrative inquiry, entailing critical reflections and interpretations of our personal experiences. The term *autoethnography* is rooted in anthropological ethnography, where the researcher is intricately involved in the lives and narratives of the subjects under examination (Kim 2016, Ch. 4, Kindle). Thus, we, as researchers, lay bare the narratives of our own experiences as listeners and conversational partners with our daughters, with the aim of understanding their faith journeys and the impact we have on their religious formation.

Moreover, our research is inherently reflexive, delving into our own introspections, feelings, decisions, and responses within our relationships with our daughters (Kim 2016, ch. 4, Kindle). Our personal experiences are analyzed in the light of our field through biblical and religious educational resources, while also considering how others might have shared similar experiences, especially in the context of mother-daughter relationships within patriarchal societies. This collaborative research approach entails a continual process of comparing and contrasting our personal experiences. To support our findings, we draw insights from related literature encompassing biblical, theological, and Christian religious educational resources. We aspire for this study to shed light on the spiritual enrichment that ordinary mother-daughter conversations can bestow, while contributing to the development of women scholars, especially in the patriarchal landscape of Indonesia.

Experiencing God's presence through conversations with our daughters

Originating from Yogyakarta, Indonesia, we all share roles as mothers, pastors, leaders, and lecturers. Yogyakarta's socio-cultural norms predominantly echo a perception of men in a superior and dominating position within both the ecclesiastical and societal spheres (Wowor 2021, 411). This understanding is reflected in the word *lanang* (man), which conveys the idea of *senajan ta ala tetep menang*, despite being "ugly" or "evil" but still winning, and in the belief that women, referred to as *konco wingking*, must stay behind. The notion of *swarga nunut neraka katut* suggests that a wife's fate is inexorably tied to her husband's, whether he ascends to heaven or descends into hell (Hasyim quoted by Wowor 2021, 411). This patriarchal culture of obedience and silence in our city stifles the voices and roles of women and girls in family life and society. Consequently, issues related to violence against women and girls persistently plague this region (Wowor 2021, 407–408).

Our collective pursuit of doctoral studies in diverse countries, each specializing in New Testament/Biblical Studies and Christian Religious Education, unfolds within this backdrop of patriarchal rule. For women like us, personal achievements such as doctoral degrees are endeavors fraught with challenges. We acknowledge that many may perceive us as overly ambitious, especially when our husbands have not pursued similar paths. We are often exhausted by the expectations of our professional and ministerial environments. Although our husbands support our choices, they face many challenges

of their own. In some quarters, societal judgment looms large when men undertake domestic responsibilities while their wives pursue higher education. Our lives reflect the complexities faced by contemporary young adult families in patriarchal settings. Our conversations with each other reveal that we often question God's presence in the midst of a context that is unfair and degrading to women. However, in that very questioning, we sense God's presence and support through our conversations with our daughters, which can rightly be categorized as theological conversations or "God-talk."

These conversations with our daughters were not born from a research project; they emerged naturally and spontaneously in our everyday interactions as mothers and daughters at home, before the idea of this article formed. These conversations left a deep impression, revealing how God strengthens us through our children. This impression then emerged in a conversation between us as friends who were sharing stories in the midst of our struggles under the pressures of the patriarchal culture that we experienced as women.

These spontaneous conversations embody what we refer to as God-talk, a treasure we cherish amid a patriarchal culture. The mother-daughter conversations are full of intimacy and hope, often serving as conduits for experiencing God's loving presence and support. We consider these to be sacred and meaningful conversations. This unique mother-daughter relationship is also inherently transformative, contributing to religious formation and education within the family. This educative aspect can be seen in the conversations transcribed below:

First Author:

My second daughter is five years old. She is a very active child and likes to tell stories. Once, she asked me, "Mommy, how do I know that God exists? I can't see God!" Then she continued, "Have you ever met God? If you've never met God, I suggest you don't become a pastor anymore!" I just smiled at her words. Honestly, there are times when I can't answer her questions directly. A few days later, I was encouraging her to play with her three-year-old brother (my youngest child). It was nighttime, and suddenly the lights went out. My youngest son cried and said he was scared. His sister replied, "Don't be afraid! God will take care of us!" My son replied, "Where is God?" My daughter replied, "God is in our hearts (pointing to her chest)." My son replied, "Where? Where? I can't see God" (while looking at his chest). Again, I smiled. Then I asked my daughter, "You said before that you have never seen God. How do you know God is watching over you and in your heart now?" She replied, "Yes, actually, God was in heaven before, so I couldn't see God yet. But after that, God moved into my heart." I became increasingly interested in the explanation, so I asked again, "How do you know God is in your heart?" She replied, "When I was at school and taking gym class, I was running, and I felt my heart 'dancing' [heartbeat], and then I told my teacher that my heart was 'dancing.' My teacher said if my heart is dancing, it means my heart is beating and I am healthy. If my heart doesn't beat, I could be seriously ill or even die." I was getting more curious now. "I don't understand. What does your heart beating have to do with God, who is in your heart?" My daughter replied, "I know if my heart beats, it must be because God makes it beat. God is in my heart." "Hmm," I replied. "Why does God do that?" I asked again. She smiled confidently and said, "Because God loves me and keeps me healthy" I think this conversation was an insightful inquiry into faith and theology for a five-year-old. For me, it was inspiring. My daughter reminded me that despite the struggles and challenges of everyday life, God is present even though we don't often sense his presence. My conversation with her made me feel the presence of God.

Second Author:

My eight-year-old daughter struggles with our separation due to my overseas studies. She has always been more attached to me than her older brother. Despite our many discussions and deep talks as a family, she resisted and didn't want me to go. Even a day before my departure, she prayed that I would miss my flight so I couldn't leave. It was a long and emotional goodbye at the airport, with lots of hugging and crying. But after that, we made sure to video call every day to stay connected.

Once, we had a before-sleep video call, and she asked me in tears, "Mommy, why are you leaving me? Is it because you are a pastor? Please stop working as a pastor, be a dentist instead!" I honestly felt like crying and laughing at the same time. I didn't know how she came up with that idea. Trying to be calm, I asked what the problem was with being a pastor. She replied with more tears, "As a pastor, God is your boss, and you cannot refuse God's command to leave me!" Then, I joined her in tears. I must admit that I could not explain then, so I just said, "I'm sorry for leaving you," and stayed with her until she fell asleep. On another occasion, I asked her again about me being a pastor. This time her response was, "Mom, I don't mind being a pastor's daughter." I asked further why she had changed her mind. She replied, "I know that God is good. God has chosen you and me only because God is good. So, I'm good with that too." This simple yet profound conversation with my daughter reminds me of Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:1, where he says that Christian ministry comes from the mercy of God. This conversation also made me realize that mothers and daughters have a unique and fulfilling bond, even spirituality.

These examples demonstrate how informal conversations with our daughters in a natural setting of love and trust allow us to feel God's presence and support through mutual exploration. In this process, we experience the *Emmanuel* moment, "God with us" (Campen 2021, 2). Even as mothers and pastors juggling multiple responsibilities, we discover that our faith is strengthened by the wisdom radiated by our daughters. These conversations serve as an instructive guide on how to be attentive listeners through our mother-daughter relationships.

Story-linking: connecting everyday life and Christian faith stories through practices of re-listening and re-telling

Conversations between mothers and children in daily life influence their relationship with God. This brand of dialogue can be categorized as spiritual conversations, a concept aptly defined by Luz Marina Díaz as having an inherent educational aspect. Díaz contends that spiritual conversations are instrumental in the pursuit of wisdom (Díaz 2017, 489). In the familial and communal settings, Díaz's idea aligns with the concept of story-linking, initially proposed by Anne S. Wimberly. Story-linking involves a process that interconnects narratives from everyday life with biblical and faith traditions. In the context of African American Christian education, Wimberly elucidates four primary phases in the story-linking process: "(1) engaging the everyday story, (2) engaging the Christian faith story in the Bible, (3) engaging Christian faith stories from the African American [or church/local] heritage, and (4) engaging in Christian ethical decision making" (Wimberly 2005, 26, Kindle). Through this process, intergenerational family relations are strengthened.

Wimberly, in her explication of story-linking, emphasizes the importance of "compassionate listening" (Wimberly 2005, 34, Kindle). This process necessitates the

creation of safe, comfortable, and nurturing spaces for listening, where love can flourish. Joyce Ann Mercer, in a similar vein, states that “the act of listening to another is a spiritual practice” (2008, 12). Mothers often grapple with the distance they experience between themselves and their daughters, especially when their daughters enter their teenage years (Mercer 2008, 75–76). The experience of one author, who has a pre-adolescent daughter, emphasizes the significance of fostering a strong mother-daughter relationship in the child’s earlier years. A strong relationship proves invaluable when navigating the unforeseen challenges of adolescence.

The first phase in Wimberly’s model revolves around the inclusion of the voices of mothers and daughters, engaging the everyday story through conversations. The second phase involves linking the stories encountered and the faith stories found in the Bible. The third phase entails linking these stories with those found in the inherited Christian tradition. This iterative process of linking narratives involves re-listening and re-telling stories to glean theological insights from diverse Christian traditions (Wolfteich 2017, 12–3). This process forms part of the call for liberation through Christian ethical decision-making, the fourth phase of story-linking. It is a call to action, not only for daughters and mothers but also as a contribution to the pursuit of social justice. A spirit of resistance is needed to fight against oppressive patriarchal norms, and this process of linking narratives to combat injustice can become a component of Christian religious education. It begins with the voices of the marginalized, mothers and daughters, within a patriarchal society, engaging in mutual meaning-making and spur-ring action.

Furthermore, Christian faith stories of suffering and hope are an important part of Asian-feminist theology, as they draw from everyday experiences, adhering to a “bottom-up” theological approach. In the study of Asian-feminist theology, women’s and girls’ daily experiences are a valuable resource for interpreting the relationship between God and creation, as portrayed in the Bible (Chung 1990, 5). In relating these experiences, we provide an avenue for mutual meaning-making, affording a platform for the voices of women and girls, previously silenced and shackled, to be released and heard. The process of listening to and recounting these stories serves as a form of support, allowing for the celebration of their uniqueness (Baker 2005, 19).

In this paper, our perspective as mothers forms the main lens through which we explore the second phase of story-linking, focusing on the narrative of the Syrophenician woman and her daughter in Mark 7:24–30. This story is employed critically to scrutinize the church traditions handed down through the generations (the third phase of story-linking). Finally, this paper culminates in a concrete proposal for Christian ethical decision-making, formulated as part of the fourth phase of story-linking.

Exploring the Syrophenician woman’s story in Mark 7:24–30 through a maternal lens: a hermeneutic of experience

The Hermeneutics of Experience are the first step in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s “Wisdom Ways,” a feminist hermeneutical method (Fiorenza 2001, 172). This initial step provides a platform to appreciate the reflection on the experience of oppression of women and men who are typically ignored and judged. This approach prioritizes amplifying the perspectives and experiences of marginalized communities to provide

a voice to the voiceless (Fiorenza as quoted in Yudhita 2017, 102). This hermeneutic allows us to connect with our experiences, emotions, and insights as mothers while reading the Scriptures. Mothers who read Mark 7:24-30 may relate to the Syrophenician woman's desperation and affliction. A mother's primary concern is the safety and happiness of her child, and she is willing to do whatever it takes to seek help for her child; thus, motherhood is a genuinely loving and selfless experience. As James Hamilton states, "Motherhood is vital to God's mandate and mercy" (Hamilton 2012, 7). Therefore, the perspective of a mother is significant and can serve as a valuable lens for interpreting the Bible.

The narrative of the Syrophenician woman's motherhood diverges from the earlier discourse between Jesus and the Jewish elite men. As Jesus spoke to these respectable Jewish men, Jesus clarified that "uncleanness" does not refer to the external state of objects but to one's inner attitudes and heart. Following the dispute, Jesus embarks on an extensive journey to a pagan region, where the inhabitants are typically disparaged for their perceived "uncleanliness." These two scenes contrast a group of Jewish men bound by the law and a pagan woman who exists outside of it. The Syrophenician mother is a remarkable figure, demonstrating admirable faith compared to the Pharisees, whom Jesus criticizes for their hypocrisy. Even though Jesus attributes her daughter's healing more to her words (λόγος, *logos*) than her faith (πίστις, *pistis*), Mark portrays this mother as someone who demonstrates faith in various ways in different situations as her story unfolds (v. 29) (Skinner 2006, 15). However, the initial interaction between the woman and Jesus might seem confrontational. She persistently asks Jesus to heal her daughter, despite Jesus' initial response indicating that Jesus prioritizes the people of Israel and refers to her (and her daughter) as "dogs."

The Syrophenician mother is cognizant of the barriers obstructing Jesus' response. Still, she boldly approaches Jesus to seek help (vv. 25-26). Although the girl's affliction is not explained in detail, the Gospel of Mark has already demonstrated the severity of being possessed by an unclean spirit. Previous accounts, such as the possessed man from Gerasene in Chapter Five, depict behaviors such as breaking shackles, howling, and self-injuring with stones. In 9:14-29, a boy with a "spirit that has robbed his speech" is mute, prone to falls, foaming at the mouth, grinding his teeth, and with a tendency to plunge into fire or water. It is plausible that the girl is experiencing similar symptoms. Regarding the Syrophenician's daughter, Sharon Betsworth points out that she is not the main character in the story but the emotional focal point. The Syrophenician woman's focus is on her daughter, and Mark clarifies on whose behalf she acts (Betsworth 2010, 130).

The Syrophenician woman demonstrates bravery by challenging societal norms, despite her lack of power and privilege. Historically, Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures have subjugated women to a lower position than men. Throughout their lives, women have been under the authority of men, whether as fathers, brothers, or husbands (Yudhita 2022, 176). However, her courage and faith are rooted in her bond with her daughter. Although the passage does not describe their interactions or conversations, the mother undoubtedly listens to her daughter's voice, and this receptiveness significantly impacts their relationship. Using a hermeneutic of experience, we could even say they engaged in an "invisible conversation." In patriarchal societies, a sick daughter's voice might be considered insignificant due to a prioritization of reason over intuition

or emotion. However, this “invisible conversation” gives extraordinary power to the mother, enabling her to take action and build a relationship with Jesus. The daughter is the source of her mother’s courage to push past the prevailing boundaries.

In response to the woman’s plea, Jesus makes a derogatory remark. He says that the bread (ἄρτον, *arton*) meant for the children (τὰ τέκνα, *ta tekna*) should not be thrown to the dogs (κυνάρῳ, *kunariois*) (v. 27). The woman cleverly rephrases the insult in verse 28. Betsworth claims, “While Jesus uses ‘children’ (τέκνων, *teknon*) to refer to the children of Israel, the woman uses ‘little children’ (παιδιῶν, *paidiōn*) to point out that her daughter is a child too and deserves bread as well, if only of crumbs” (Betsworth 2010, 131). Ironically, although Jesus has taught his disciples, they still struggle to grasp his message. Yet, the mother seems to have a better understanding. After praising her statement (λόγος), Jesus sends her home and assures her that her daughter has been healed (vv. 29–30).

Reading this passage from a mother’s perspective highlights several noteworthy aspects for Christian religious education and family ministry. The mother’s faith and responsiveness were vital to her daughter’s healing. Furthermore, the relationship between the mother and her daughter transforms Jesus’ mission. However, it’s the loving relationship and conversation between a mother and her daughter that break down religious barriers that cannot be dismantled in any other way. This opens up a space for listening and responding to others, where God’s healing power can be experienced.

As one of us read the story of the Syrophenician woman with her daughter, the girl remarked, “This girl is great, Mom! Even though she doesn’t have a name and is sick, I believe she is a star! Without her, this incredible story wouldn’t have happened!” This novel insight elevates the sick daughter and her mother from the margins of society to the center of communal life – a place where they belong because the mother’s relationship with her daughter can transform Jesus’ mission and relationship with non-Jewish people. Consequently, the Syrophenician woman and her daughter, both nameless in this narrative, play vital roles in both private and public spheres within the community.

Engaging voices of the voiceless: setting an open table for all

The third phase of the story-linking process seeks to engage Christian faith stories from the Asian heritage, including their application in the Indonesian context. In the Asian context, Hope Antone, a religious educator from the Philippines, has expressed the importance of meal table sharing or conversation in the context of Asian societies. Her religious educational methodology can be described as in-depth, honest, open, participatory, and dialogic with an invitational emphasis (Antone and Sutanto 2010, 131). As Antone writes, the process of mutual enrichment, whereby two people “feed each other,” exists without the shadow of conversion or proselytism in Asian culture (Antone and Sutanto 2010, 133). The hospitality at the dinner table opens up a space for sharing life stories, religious experiences, concerns, and aspirations.

Antone’s insights have inspired us to delve deeper into the relationality that arises from shared meals and conversations within the church through the Holy Communion

sacrament. This sacrament is intended to symbolize table hospitality, encompassing greetings, conversations, dining, and drinking together. However, several church synods in Indonesia still prohibit children from participating. One of the girls expressed her feelings about this situation, expressing that she felt “forbidden” and “excluded” from the church’s community (Pelupessy-Wowor 2019, 79).

The prohibition on children’s participation in the practice of Holy Communion arises from long-standing church dogma. Although a detailed examination of the background and history of the churches in Indonesia is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning that the broader Christian tradition allows children to partake in the Holy Communion. In fact, conversations with children play an important role in this tradition. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Sacrament of Holy Communion occurs during the feast of Unleavened Bread, a meal to commemorate the Jewish Passover (Hebrew: *seder*). In its Jewish context, this meal was typically familial, with relatives being invited. This meal was served with the finest utensils, and it was led by the head of the family, dressed in white robes. During one part of the meal, known as the *mah nishtanah*, several questions were posed, usually by young children: “Why are we eating only with unleavened bread (Hebrew: *matzah/matzo*) tonight? Why are we eating only bitter vegetables tonight? Why do we dip our food twice tonight, and why do we recline rather than sit up straight tonight?” (Singgih 2017, 174). All these questions were answered by the father or another adult present. Children were not just present at the *seder* but were actively engaged in a dialogue with adults during the meal.

This explanation demonstrates that children could have been present at the simple banquet Jesus shared with his disciples. The presence of children is more likely given Jesus’ high regard for them. Jesus’ community encompassed not only the twelve disciples but also those who were marginalized and despised, such as tax collectors, and women who followed Jesus from Galilee (cf. Luke 23:49). If women were present, it is highly probable that children were involved, as mothers didn’t typically leave their children behind (Christiani 2013, 3). Aris Widaryanto (2012, 32–34), a theologian from Indonesia, has noted that Jesus’ supper with His disciples adheres to the pattern of the Jewish Passover, which included children. The tradition of involving children in the Sacrament of Holy Communion persisted until the Early Church era.

The Last Supper was a symbol of “the Kin-dom of God,” and the Sacrament of Holy Communion also exhibits these characteristics (Isasi-Díaz 1990, cited by Kim-Cragg 2018, 68). Thus, this sacrament has a strong connection with children. Jerome W. Berryman even used the structure of Holy Communion as a pattern for the Godly Play experience with children, emphasizing the vital role of the experience, namely, “the relationship with God in community” (Berryman 1991, 45).

Engaging hope, wisdom, and grace in transformative learning

In Wimberly’s book, she emphasizes the themes of hope and wisdom for a revitalized Christian education in the context of family life. Our conversations with our daughters have left us in awe of God’s presence and support during these interactions. We witness God’s grace in the budding faith of our children. Through these conversations, we can reexamine and retell the biblical narratives and the church’s

inherited traditions. We also glean wisdom that emanates from our daughters – after all, “Children can touch us and teach us” (Miller-McLemore 1994, 155). The process encompasses practical applications through the journey of faith within the family, which includes conversation, reflection, and transformation. This process unfolds within the natural relationships built between parents and children, including mothers and daughters. The church has the opportunity to accompany parents in reflecting on the wisdom and faith learned through natural conversations with children in daily life. This process is important in facing the dominance of patriarchal culture.

Within the realm of conversation, the process of mutual meaning-making occurs through faith dialogues that take place in everyday informal activities between parents and children. According to Carol Gilligan (2003, 173), this represents the power of the diverse voices of women, within the inseparable connection between relationships and responsibilities in the framework of an ethic of care. Faith, as it unfolds through interactions among family members, including ongoing conversations in various forms (intergenerational interactions), influences one’s relationship with God. Spirituality is fundamentally about relationships – with oneself, with God, and with others. A child’s perception of God is shaped by their experiences of interaction and dialogue with adults, most of which transpire within the family home (Miller-McLemore 2019, 116, Kindle). The home is thus an invaluable space for faith development (Miller-McLemore 2001, 454).

This process encourages us to reflect on faith conversations with children, offering a mechanism for re-listening to and re-telling biblical stories and church traditions, which have often been understood and transmitted within a context of cultural dominance. This historical approach often neglected the existence of children or was less child-friendly. As demonstrated in the story-linking process, this mechanism demonstrates how wisdom can emerge through reflection grounded in faith dialogues with children at home. Therefore, Christian religious education for children, especially in the family, through informal conversations and relationships, warrants attention. bell hooks (2003, 177) emphasizes the importance of the family as the initial learning community before the broader community. Hence, the church should prioritize religious formation and education in the family context to strengthen informal relations among family members in a way that allows space for faith to flourish. This entails the creation of an environment for informal daily intergenerational conversations that involve even the youngest participants.

Consequently, churches must facilitate family empowerment to promote faith growth and develop strong relationships between children and their parents, including mothers and daughters. In its development, it is essential to pay attention to mothers so that they have space to reflect on important matters in faith conversations with their children. Depending on specific contexts, this attention can extend to “other parenting adults whose practices of parental care can support girls’ lives of faith” (Mercer 2008, 19). Thus, it can also apply to fathers, sons, gender nonconforming persons, adopted children, and more. Given the patriarchal context, this article primarily focuses on discussions between mothers and daughters.

This reflection goes beyond the transformative impact on parents and children; it resonates with the broader context. This is the essence of transformation. As Miller-McLemore reminds us, “Seeing God in the face of the child opens the eyes to

the face of God in those around us” (Miller-McLemore 1994, 158). The church must demonstrate humility in listening to the voices of the marginalized. Under patriarchal dominance, the church has often been confined to rigid and standard dogma, with no space for the voices of children and women engaged in critical faith reflection.

The hope for the transformation of families and churches depends on the spirit of inclusivity. Reflecting on conversations with children provides wisdom for understanding biblical texts and church traditions, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Consequently, it continues to be life-affirming for all people, be they adults, children, or those marginalized by society. This process of including children and the marginalized in both church and family practices is the cornerstone of hope for realizing justice and equality in the context of a society dominated by a patriarchal culture. Jennie S. Knight aptly labels this process “transformative listening” as a component of transformative learning (Knight 2008, 226). It signifies an openness to listen to others, be changed by their narratives, and act accordingly (Knight 2008, 228).

Furthermore, the practice of daily listening to children and young people through conversation can build relationships that are the basis for them to feel that they are heard, valued, and able to voice their concerns without fear of rejection. This is the safe space within conversations that leads to action in authentic relationships (Knight 2008, 240). In this listening, people can begin “to engage their faith in relation to larger social issues. They are able to say ‘no!’ to social forces of sexism, racism, consumerism, classism, and other forms of oppression, trusting that God says ‘no!’ alongside them” (Knight 2008, 240).

In summary, the practical application through conversation, reflection, and transformation embodies the critical values of story-linking as a pedagogical process, allowing mothers and daughters to participate together. This is essential in interpreting everyday conversations that might otherwise be considered normal or overlooked (invisible conversations), especially within a patriarchal social and ecclesiastical setting. Mother-daughter conversations provide a space for reflection and transformation when their voices have been traditionally unheard. This safe space for reflecting on conversations for those marginalized and silenced in life needs to be a concern in religious education. Through this approach, transformation arises not from spectacular events orchestrated by individuals in power but through reflection and wisdom gained through natural daily conversations. This process signifies a struggle for justice in which the silenced become active participants in life, and their voices hold significance.

Conclusion

Our experiences as women juggling work, service in a ministerial capacity, academic pursuits, and the responsibilities of raising children are often challenging, especially within the confines of a patriarchal culture. The collaborative autoethnographic study presented in this article aimed to illustrate that our conversations with our daughters are a source of spiritual vitality. These exchanges help us to feel God’s presence and support. When we create a space for our daughters to express themselves, listen, and respond, we empower ourselves to undertake a critical reexamination and re-telling of Christian faith stories found in the Bible and within church traditions through the

story-linking process. This process reverberates not only within our families but also resonates with the transformation of the church and society.

Re-listening to and re-telling Christian faith stories for the betterment of both the church and society is important to implementing Wimberly's story-linking concepts within the framework of family ministry in Indonesia. This undertaking translates to practical implementation through conversation, reflection, and transformation. Ordinary conversations occurring between mothers and daughters offer a unique opportunity to reassess biblical interpretations and Christian traditions that, in the grip of a patriarchal culture, have sidelined or silenced children and women. We envision that through this process of story-linking, "invisible conversations" can metamorphose into a "visible" discourse, offering a safe space for meaningful exchange. The aspiration of this study extends to fostering a more expansive space for faith development through informal relationships. Finally, our hope is that the voices of more mothers and daughters will be heard within the fabric of the church and society through an ongoing transformative process. We aspire for more mothers to feel empowered to take on multi-role responsibilities and become stronger in their relationships with their children.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Jeniffer Fresy Porielly Wowor holds an MA from Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary, Seoul. She is an assistant professor in Christian Religious Education at the Faculty of Theology, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Indonesia, and a reverend in the Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat (The Protestant Church in the Western Part of Indonesia). Jeniffer is a PhD Candidate at the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education, Fordham University, Bronx, New York, USA. Email: jwowor@fordham.edu

Rena Sesaria Yudhita is an assistant professor in Biblical/New Testament Studies at the Faculty of Theology, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Indonesia, and a reverend in the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (The East Java Christian Church). She finished her MTh in New Testament Studies at the Protestant Theological University (P ThU) in Kampen, the Netherlands. Rena is pursuing her DTh in New Testament Studies at Trinity Theological College, Singapore.

ORCID

Jeniffer Fresy Porielly Wowor  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1414-6716>

References

- Antone, Hope, and Maryam Sutanto. 2010. *Pendidikan Kristiani Kontekstual: Mempertimbangkan Realitas Kemajemukan Dalam Pendidikan Agama*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Baker, Dori Grineko. 2005. *Doing Girlfriend Theology: God-Talk with Young Women*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press.
- Berryman, Jerome. 1991. *Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.

- Betsworth, Sharon. 2010. *The Reign of God is Such as These: A Socio-Literary Analysis of Daughters in the Gospel of Mark*, *Library of New Testament Studies* 422. London, New York: T&T Clark.
- Campen, Tanya Marie Eustace. 2021. *Holy Work with Children: Making Meaning Together*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications.
- Christiani, Tabita Kartika. 2013. "Keikutsertaan Anak dalam Perjamuan Kudus." In *Studi Pembinaan Warga Gereja, Lembaga Pembinaan dan Pengaderan Sinode GKJ dan GKI SW Jawa Tengah*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: 22 Maret.
- Chung, Hyun Kyung. 1990. *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Díaz, Luz Marina. 2017. "Spiritual Conversation as Religiously Educative." *Religious Education* 112 (5): 477–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2015.1113039>.
- Gilligan, Carol. 2003. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Reprint Edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press.
- Hamilton, James M. 2012. "A Biblical Theology of Motherhood." *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 2 (2): 6–13.
- Hasyim, Nur. 2017. "Kajian Maskulinitas Dan Masa Depan Kajian Gender Dan Pembangunan Di Indonesia." *JSW (Jurnal Sosiologi Walisongo)* 1 (1) :65–78. <https://doi.org/10.21580/jsw.2017.1.1.1938>.
- hooks, bell. 2003. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. 1990. "Solidarity: Love of the Neighbor in 1980s." In *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, 31–40. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Quoted in HyeRan Kim Cragg. *Interdependence: A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018).
- Kim, Jeong-Hee. 2016. *Understanding Narrative Inquiry*. California: SAGE.
- Knight, Jennie S. 2008. "Transformative Listening." in *Children, Youth, and Spirituality in a Troubling World*, edited by Mary Elizabeth Moore and Almeda M. Wright. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press.
- Mercer, Joyce Ann. 2008. *Girltalk Godtalk: Why Faith Matters to Teenage Girls-and Their Parents* California: A Wiley Imprint.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. 1994. *Also a Mother: Work and Family as Theological Dilemma*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. 2001. "Let the Children Come' Revisited: Contemporary Feminist Theologians on Children." In *The Child in Christian Thought*, edited by Marcia J. Bunge. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. 2019. *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press.
- Pelupessy-Wowor, Jeniffer. 2019. "Menerima Anak Dalam Perjamuan Kudus? Studi Teologi Bagi Pelaksanaan Perjamuan Kudus Untuk Anak Dan Sumbangsihnya Bagi Gereja Protestan di Indonesia Bagian Barat." In *Setelah 70 Tahun: Menuai Benih-Benih Pemikiran Emmanuel Gerrit Singgih*, edited by Jozef M. N. Hehanussa. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 2001. *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books.
- Singgih, Emanuel Gerrit. 2017. *Korban Dan Pendamaian: Studi Lintas Ilmu, Lintas Budaya, Dan Lintas Agama Mengenai Upaya Manusia Menghadapi Tantangan Terhadap Kehidupan di Luar Kendalinya*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Skinner, Matthew L. 2006. "She Departed to Her House': Another Aspect of the Syrophenician Mother's Faith in Mark 7: 24-30." *Word & World* 26 (1): 14–21.
- Widaryanto, Aris. 2012. *Sakramen Perjamuan Bagi Anak-Anak: Telaah Atas Keikutsertaan Anak-Anak Dalam Perjamuan Kudus*. Yogyakarta: Taman Pustaka Kristen,
- Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty. 2005. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Revised Edition. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Wolfteich, Claire E. 2017. *Mothering, Public Leadership, and Women's Life Writing: Explorations in Spirituality Studies and Practical Theology*. Leiden: Brill.

- Wowor, Jeniffer F. P. 2021. "Practicing Communicability, Redeemability, and Educability: The Response of Christian Education to Violence against Women during the Covid-10 Pandemic." *DUNAMIS* 6 (2): 406–25. <https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v6i2.488>.
- Yudhita, Rena Sesaria. 2017. "Apakah Pendapat-Mu Tentang Hal Itu?: Analisa Sikap Yesus Pada Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan Dalam Narasi Yohanes 8: 1-11 Dengan Hermeneutika Pengalaman Feminis." In *Kekerasan Seksual Terhadap Perempuan Dan Anak: Tinjauan Teologi Feminis*, edited by Asnath Niwa Natar. Yogyakarta: Yayasan Taman Pustaka Kristen Indonesia.
- Yudhita, Rena Sesaria. 2022. "Gadis, Istri Atau Janda? Pendapat Paulus Tentang Seksualitas Perempuan Dalam 1 Korintus 7." *GEMA TEOLOGIKA* 7 (2): 175–90. <https://doi.org/10.21460/gema.2022.72.872>.