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Before There Were Numbers: The Power of Narrative Inquiry

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Introduction

Fifth graders, in a decrepit setting, fighting for a new school building; single mothers struggling to connect their cultures to their education; a researcher trying to humanize a "dropout;" a multilogue with renowned curricular theorists; an emergent teacher grappling with pedagogical concerns while immersed in her students' cultures; reflections on words, trials, truths and falsities—what stitches these seemingly disparate pieces together? "The push and pull of narrative," as Ayers described it (2008), is the common thread.

When I asked mentors and colleagues to contribute to this issue on narrative research, I anxiously awaited their responses. I was anxious in a positive way: I couldn't wait to read their work. The articles began to trickle into my e-mail at the end of the summer, each one unique, each voice distinctive. I was not disappointed. I cannot help but think in sewing metaphors, as throughout my life it has been a craft to which I am drawn. Be it for curtains in an old house near the lake or quilt squares that remind me of my daughters' childhoods, I admire fabrics and the stitching that binds them. I love that, like a patchwork quilt, the "pieces" I received could be gathered together into a cohesive, creative whole. What seams this issue together in my eyes is the broad basting stitch of narrative; what embroiders it for me are the flosses of cross-cultural narrative, the strands of contemporary school reform, the cords of educators willing to get close to the "ground."

Ancient people sometimes told their stories through their stitches and sketches; humans have responded to the power of story, of narrative, for millennia. From the drama of mythology across cultures to the tales of ordinary folk retold over centuries, to the parables of Christ, to early medical case studies, well-told stories have revealed knowledge to people in an engaging and informative way. Narrative provides fertile ground for educational research to be sewn in another sense; it offers the potential "to develop a fuller understanding of ourselves and the experience of others" (Phillion & He, 2008). It does not reduce students to "subjects" but rather, encourages the humanization of participants and the recognition of the "multilayered, dynamic reality of schools and classrooms" (Ayers, 2008).

Einstein had a quote on the wall of his office that read:

Not everything that can be counted counts.
And not everything that counts can be counted.

The research, reflections, and creative work that this issue enfolds will reveal thoughtful questions, anecdotes, searches for understanding, self-doubts, imagined conversations, speculations, and advocacy. It will not manipulate numbers, make generalizations, or proclaim conclusions. In some circles, it will not "count." In others, it may reach beneath and behind what portends to count.

Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Narrative Inquiry in Educational Research

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Historical Origins and Evolving Developments

Narrative is increasingly found in the literature of the social sciences (see Polkinghorne, 1988, for a comprehensive review), in the literature on teacher education (e.g., Carter, 1993), in the literature on educational research (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and, most recently, in a wide array of areas in education including multicultural and cross-cultural inquiries (e.g., Carger, in press; Chan, 2006; He, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003; Phillion, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d; Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005), and research for social justice (He & Phillion, in press). In this paper we discuss narrative inquiry in educational research with a focus on multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiries. We briefly position narrative in the social sciences and discuss the development of narrative inquiry in education. We examine influences on this form of inquiry that have led to the development of *multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry*. Much of this new work has an explicit orientation that focuses on equity, equality, and social justice which impacts the role of the researcher, the research process, and outcomes of the inquiry.

Much of this new work has an explicit orientation that focuses on equity, equality, and social justice which impacts the role of the researcher, the research process, and outcomes of the inquiry.

The creative possibilities and exploratory methods of narrative inquiry have found fertile ground and continue to develop in the social sciences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) traced the historical origins of the narrative inquiry they pioneered, and found that social scientists in various disciplines came to narrative by different routes and with different justifications. Major work, written by leading scholars in their disciplines, make the case for narrative in different fields: Geertz's (1995) *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* and Bateson's (1994) *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* in anthropology, Denzin's (1997) *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century* in ethnography; Polkinghorne's (1988) *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* in psychology, Schafer's (1992) *Retelling a Life: Narration and Dialogue in Psychoanalysis* in psychotherapy, Coles' (1989) *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* in psychiatry, and Crites' (1971) *The Narrative Quality of Experience* in theology.

These scholars discuss why narrative is increasingly important and how it is developing in their disciplines. Geertz (1995), an anthropologist, in a retrospective examination of his 40 years of inquiry claimed that narrative is the way we make meaning as we reflect on the past, form accounts of change over time and place, and weave fact and interpretation to craft coherent accounts of complex experiences. For Bateson (1994), an anthropologist, narrative is a means of capturing the complexity of changing life experience, of recognizing patterns within changing experience, of sharing learning from reflection on experience, and of improvising new ways of living that savor the ambiguity of life experience. Denzin (1997) examined research practices in ethnography and identified narrative as an approach that focuses on an understanding of individual

experience and in which meaning is made with, and by the people who are researched rather than by the researcher alone. Polkinghorne (1988), a psychologist, found that narrative has a long history of use by practitioners (e.g., psychotherapists, historians) in the social sciences and claimed that there is a turn to narrative in research as it bridges theory and practice and makes research more relevant to practitioners. Schafer (1992), a psychoanalyst, discussed therapy as a narrative encounter, a telling and retelling of life stories, and the manner in which it is a collaborative meaning making process. Coles (1989), a psychiatrist, emphasizes that stories embody moral contradictions, develop a fuller understanding of ourselves and the experience of others, and give context and meaning to the social and political narratives of society at large. Crites (1971), a theologian, highlights the narrative quality of experience and embeddedness of personal stories in grand contextual stories. This work in different disciplines is important to understand the pervasiveness of narrative as a new wave of social science thinking about, and inquiring into, human experience.

Influenced by the above mentioned work in the social sciences, the narrative inquiry created and developed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) builds on Dewey's (1938) theory of experience and education. One of the major contributions of their work, best seen in Clandinin and Connelly (2000), is what they term the "three dimensional space" (p. 60). Like Dewey, for Clandinin and Connelly, experience has both temporal and existential dimensions—temporal in that every experience, no matter how instantaneous or historical, has a quality of past, present, and future; existential in that experience takes place in a personal and social dimension, not solely within a person. Every experience has a past, present, and future and is simultaneously personal and social.

Another major contribution of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) work is what they term "thinking narratively" (p. 21), by which they mean that every experience takes place in the context of a story; every experience is shaped by stories lived at the time of the experience; and every experience embodies meaning in relationship to people, time, and place embedded in stories. With this perspective, when social science and educational researchers study phenomena, they are studying the stories that shape experience. Therefore, the stories are the phenomena. This leads to a distinction between story and narrative in that story is the phenomena of inquiry and narrative is the method of inquiry.

Connelly and Clandinin were among the first to bring narrative inquiry to the field of education, and they have the longest sustained program of narrative research. Researchers in different educational fields are using narrative inquiry and stories, for instance: Carter (1993), Casey (1993), Florio-Ruane (2001) and Hollingsworth (1994) in teaching and teacher education; Witherell and Noddings (1991) in teaching and learning; Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) in teacher development; Rishel (2007) in administrator education; Chang and Rosiek (2003) in science education; Schubert and Ayers (1999) in teacher lore and curriculum studies; Craig (2006) in teacher knowledge and school reform; and Freeman (1996) in language teacher knowledge. Narrative inquiry also appears in research review literature, for instance in reading (Alverman, 2000), and in multicultural teacher education (Sleeter, 2001).

Every experience has a past, present, and future and is simultaneously personal and social.

Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Narrative Inquiry

Parallel with the developing interest in narrative inquiry in the social sciences, there has been increased emphasis on multicultural and cross-cultural issues across disciplines, particularly in education (Kalantzis & Cope, 1992). Multiculturalism impacts education at all levels, from universities to public schools. Many universities have established courses and programs on multiculturalism to cultivate multicultural and cross-cultural awareness of a global society (Nussbaum, 1997). In public school education, the interest in multiculturalism relates to school practice (Banks & Banks, 1989; Cummins, 1989; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Howard, 1999; Nieto, 2000), and to scholarship and research (c.f. Banks & Banks, 2004). There is a rethinking at the policy level taking place in response to changes in societies, in particular in response to changing student demographics, especially in urban areas (Dentler & Hafner, 1997). There is also increasing awareness

of multicultural and cross-cultural issues in areas not traditionally thought of as "needing" multicultural education, especially in rural areas (Yeo, 1999) and in predominantly White areas (Glazer, 1997).

One of the major shifts in multicultural education is the recognition that multiculturalism has become a global issue rather than what has often been perceived as solely a North American issue (Grant & Lei, 2001; Moodley, 1992). Another shift is a move beyond Black and White issues to the inclusion of a diversity of ethnic and cultural groups (Seller & Weis, 1997; Wu, 2002). There is also a shift from demographic and population studies, combined with prescriptive action to be taken by policy makers and educators, to studies of the quality of multicultural life in communities, schools and families (Soto, 1997; Valdés, 1996; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez & Shannon, 1994).

In response to the emergence of multicultural and cross-cultural phenomena in many disciplines there has been a movement toward developing methods appropriate for understanding these phenomena. There is a new wave of thinking in education that challenges traditional ways of engaging in and interpreting research. It has been called the "sixth moment" (Denzin, 1997), a time of questioning whose knowledge should be considered valid, and a time when research participants have their own ideas on how their experiences are to be interpreted, theorized, and represented. Many researchers have searched for ways to respond to the sixth moment; some researchers have developed approaches to multicultural and cross-cultural issues in education that focus on an in-depth understanding of diverse experiences of individuals, families, and communities. Much of that work has been done by women; many are ethnographers and critical ethnographers, some are narrative inquirers, many are from the same ethnic background as the people with whom they work, many are fluent in the languages of the communities in which they live and study, and many advocate on behalf of students, parents, and communities (Carger, 1996; Feuerverger, 2001; Soto, 1997; Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999).

Another major response to the sixth moment is a turn to narrative, which Denzin and Lincoln (2003) call the "seventh moment." This turn to narrative is in response to recognition of the complexity of human experience in increasingly diversified societies. Researchers in different educational fields, responding to the call of the seventh moment, incorporate narrative, story, and experience into inquiries in education such as Bell (1997), Carger (1996), and Valdés (1996) in language and culture issues; Ayers (2001), Foster (1997), and Michie (1999) in teacher narrative; Feuerverger (2001) and Soto (1997) in family and community narrative; Chan (2006), Elbaz-Luwisch (1997), Hollingsworth (1994), and Phillion (1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d) in multicultural teaching and learning; Conle (2000), He (1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003), and Schlein (in press) in cross-cultural teaching and learning; and hooks (1991) in race, gender, and class. Narrative is also becoming prevalent as educational researchers draw on critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998). These researchers use stories to tell hidden and silenced narratives of suppressed and underrepresented groups to counter the preconceived meta narrative represented in "scientific based research" that has often portrayed these groups as deficient and inferior.

One quality of narrative inquiry that distinguishes it from other forms of educational inquiry lies in understanding experience in its own terms rather than categorizing experience according to predetermined structures and theories (Phillion, 1999). This form of inquiry is "peopled" with characters, rather than filled with categories and labels. In some forms of traditional educational research, experience is seen, shaped, and written about by the researcher using theoretically derived forms; in effect the experience is determined by the theory. In contrast, experience is the starting point of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and is in the forefront at every stage of research; as such, narrative inquiries arise from

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experiences of researchers and participants, rather than being formulated as abstract research questions, and they proceed by continual reference to experience

as field texts are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and as meanings are crafted.

Another quality of narrative inquiry is the fluidity of the inquiry. This notion of fluid inquiry is influenced by the work of Schwab (Westbury & Wilkof, 1978). For Schwab,

There are two kinds of inquiries: stable inquiry and fluid inquiry. "Stable inquiry lends itself to fixed research phenomena, questions, purposes, objectives, methodologies and outcomes . . . ambiguity characterizes fluid inquiry . . . focused on developing understandings of changing real-life situations and contexts, rather than on the use of pre-established, often unfit, theory" (He, 2003, p. 80).

This fluid quality permeates every aspect of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquirers explore experience by bringing personal experience to bear on inquiry, seeing research as having autobiographical roots, as connected to, rather than disconnected from life; by thinking narratively, seeing experience as the starting point of inquiry, as fluid and changing rather than fixed, as contextualized rather than decontextualized; by being in the midst of lives, seeing research as long-term, passionate involvement in daily lives of participants, rather than short-term, in and out, detached observation; and by making meaning of experience in relationship, rather than making meaning in isolation (He & Phillion, in press; Phillion & He, 2001, 2007). Narrative inquiry, an approach that focuses on experience, humanizes research.

The promise of narrative inquiry, for us, is that it permits and encourages the study of human experience in the context of changing life and in the pursuit of broad educational questions in global contexts (He & Phillion, in press). Within the turn to narrative, there is a significant shift of focus on narrative and contextual qualities of experience to a focus on the complex and untold experience of marginalized and underrepresented groups and individuals played out in contested cultural, linguistic, and socio-political milieus. We term this recent, significant shift *multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry* (He, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003; Phillion, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d).

This shift originated in our growing concerns with language, culture, identity, and power issues in the education of immigrants and minorities. To understand these issues, rather than relying solely on theoretical literature in this area (Banks & Banks, 1989; Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2000), we turned to life-based literary narratives written by immigrants and minorities including memories, autobiographies, and novels (Hoffman, 1989; Kaplan, 1993; Kingston, 1975; Rodriguez, 1982; Santiago, 1993; Tan, 1989), narrative inquiries (Carger, 1996; He, 2003, Phillion, 2002d), and ethnographies (Feuerverger, 2001, Soto, 1997; Valdés, 1996), which focus on in-depth, nuanced explorations of the experience of diverse individuals and groups which are often either stereotyped, misrepresented, or dehumanized in the literature (Phillion & He, 2004).

Life-based literary narratives bring theoretical literature to life; develop narrative imagination—the ability to reflect on experience, question assumptions, and actively empathize with others; and foster critical self-examination of who we are as educational researchers and how we live and relate to others in a global society. Unlike theoretical literature, this work is filled with people with names and faces, experiences and actions, feelings and emotions. It promotes learning to listen to, and to hear, the stories of others, to enter the realities of others' lives different than our own, not through abstract reasoning, but through developing emotions and empathic understanding. As we develop this understanding, we create possibilities to think of ourselves as connected to all human beings, to be aware of the importance of commitment to equity and social justice, and to recognize our obligation as researchers to link inquiry to social and educational change.

Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry has also been influenced by Ayers' (2004, 2006) life long commitment to social justice as an activist researcher. Ayers calls for a strong social justice agenda for educational research in which inquirers "recognize the necessity of opening spaces 'to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them)'"(Saïd, 1994, p. 12 in Ayers, 2006, p. 85). The core of research "must be human knowledge and human freedom, both enlightenment and emancipation" (Ayers, 2006, p. 87). Researchers must "join one another to imagine and build a participatory movement for justice, a public space for the enactment of democratic dreams" (p. 96).

Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry builds on Dewey's theory of experience (1938), Schwab's fluid inquiry (Westbury & Wilkof, 1978), Connelly and Clandinin's narrative inquiry (1990;

Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), multicultural perspectives (Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), life based literary narratives (Hoffman, 1989; Tan, 1989), ethnographic work (Soto, 1997), and Ayers' (2004, 2006) social justice and activist oriented inquiry. Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry connects the personal with the political, the theoretical with the practical, and inquiry with social change. Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry demonstrates three interrelated qualities: *personal~passionate~participatory*. Each is personal, compelled by values and experiences researchers bring to the work. Each is passionate, grounded in a commitment to social justice concerns of people and places under consideration. Each is participatory, built on long-term, heart-felt engagement, and shared efforts. The principal aspect of this form of inquiry that distinguishes it from some others is that researchers are not detached observers, nor putatively objective recorders, but active participants in schools, families, and communities. Researchers have explicit agendas that focus on equity, equality, and social justice. Rather than aiming solely at traditional educational research outcomes, positive social and educational change is the focal outcome of inquiry (He & Phillion, in press).

Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry connects the personal with the political.

Featured Work

The particular qualities of multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry are demonstrated in *Narrative and Experience in Multicultural Education* (Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005). In the following sections, we draw on the long-term programs of study done by two contributing authors of this book—the ethnographic work of Soto (1997), and the narrative work of Carger (1996, in press). The work featured in the above mentioned book, and the work of Soto and Carger, embedded in lives and communities on the one hand and powerful ideas of being human on the other hand, are at the heart of multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry. These researchers are diverse and their inquiries are far ranging in terms of content, people, and geographic locations studied. They research and represent the experience of disenfranchised, underrepresented, and invisible individuals and groups and challenge stereotypical and deficit perspectives. They bring their personal experience to the inquiries, actively participate in the lives of the people with whom they work, care deeply about the concerns of their participants, and search for ways to act upon these concerns. They develop research questions, perspectives, and inquiry methods by drawing upon what they care about passionately in life. Building upon their passion, they engage in a deeply reflective practice that has the possibility to transform everyday experience into cultural, social, and educational significance.

Soto—*Language, Culture and Power*

In *Language, Culture, and Power: Bilingual Families and the Struggle for Quality Education* (1997), Soto describes an ethnographic study she conducted in Steel Town, Pennsylvania. Growing up Latina in rural Puerto Rico and urban New York, Soto had an understanding of the life lived by Latino families and children in the community in which she engaged in research. She spoke the language of the community and shared their concerns about bilingual education. Derived from her nine-year involvement with the community, Soto documented the chronology of events which led to the dismantling of a 20 year old award-winning bilingual education program, the ensuing controversy, and interactions between bilingual families and school officials. Soto was actively involved in the community: Her children attended the schools; she participated in school and community meetings and events; she talked with children, teachers, community leaders, and policy makers; she interviewed bilingual families about their personal and family histories and documented reflections on their struggles to attain a quality education for their children. She portrayed the community's physical environment, traced its historical roots through archival research (e.g., musical styles inherited by Latino and Black populations), and described the history of key cultural groups in the community and their complex relationships with Latino/as. Soto also collected demographic data on population growth, studied religious and industrial strengths of the community, followed local newspaper accounts that reported on Steel Town's bilingual controversy, and analyzed how the media portrayed the community's responses to bilingual

issues and the events of the bilingual struggle. Soto became an insider to the struggles of bilingual families and joined the community in striving to maintain what the community felt was important for their lives. In her inquiry, Soto used multiple sources to understand how the program was dismantled, the struggles people went through as they attempted to preserve the bilingual program, and in which ways the loss of the program affected the community.

Soto shatters stereotypical notions of bilingualism which center on deficits.

We particularly value the life-based quality of Soto's work, the embeddedness of her research in the community, her respect for the knowledge of the bilingual families, and her advocacy for the community. By being in the midst of the community, being part of the families' lives, sharing their concerns, understanding the complexity of bilingual life, Soto shatters stereotypical notions of bilingualism which center on deficits. Soto claims that there is a need to pursue successful aspects of linguistically and culturally diverse populations, and she calls for broader, more comprehensive, and experiential research designs in the field that foster the move away from deficit perspectives of disenfranchised individuals and groups.

Carger—*Of Borders and Dreams*

In comparison to Soto's work, Carger, in *Of Borders and Dreams: A Mexican-American Experience of Urban Education* (1996) takes us further into the realm of life by writing a book about one Mexican-American child, Alejandro, in the context of family, school, and community. Carger documented a journey that began with Alejandro's parents' perilous entry into the United States from Mexico. The uncertainties, tensions, and risks of the dangerous border crossing foreshadowed Alejandro's language and other learning struggles. The story began prior to the marriage of Alejandro's parents and continued on the west side of Chicago, a predominantly Mexican-American community with a mix of public and Catholic schools. Carger narrated the family's experience of the 15 years following the border crossing and documented Alejandro's life at the borders between his family and community and the world of English America.

Carger described her relationship with Alejandro, his family, teachers, and various schools he attended. Initially, Carger was Alejandro's English as a Second Language (ESL) tutor. As she worked with Alejandro, she became increasingly aware of his family and community, and she grew into the role of advocate for Alejandro. She documented his family's life at home, in the community, and at school, especially in negotiations with school officials. As we followed the plotline of Alejandro's stories, we became acquainted with his neighborhood, his school, the school's philosophy, the principal's character, the role of religion in the family's life, and the place church authority played in education, particularly in Alejandro's learning of English. We began to sense his parents' dreams for his future, the same dreams that drove them to their border crossing years earlier. We began to understand how deeply his parents cared about his education and how they recognized education as the key to his future success, yet, how hopeless they felt not knowing how to realize their dreams. Carger's inquiry began in the midst of life with tensions over Alejandro's language learning, and ended in the midst of life with on-going language learning tensions. We were left to wonder at what the future held for Alejandro.

The most striking qualities of Carger's inquiry were the extent of her involvement in Alejandro's life, the time period over which it occurred, and the passion of her commitment and advocacy. There was a strong sense of Carger's being there in direct participation with Alejandro, in conversations with his parents, in everyday negotiations between school staff, parents and teachers, and in classroom observations. There were no particular hypotheses or theories being demonstrated or tested. Rather, it was an inquiry into the life of an inner city Mexican-American child learning English as a second language in school systems incongruent with the experiences of

Carger's work reveals a great deal about the immigrant experience from the point of view of parents and children seldom heard in the educational system.

immigrants. Carger's work reveals a great deal about the immigrant experience from the point of view of parents and children seldom heard in the educational system, rarely represented in research literature, and often ignored by policy makers.

Carger—*Dreams Deferred*

In *Dreams Deferred: Dropping Out and Struggling Forward* (in press), a continuation of *Of Borders and Dreams* (1996), Carger takes us further into the life of Alejandro and his family. She has followed him for 13 years, as he moved from school to school, experienced precarious relationships with his peers, dropped out of high school, struggled with employment, and had an early marriage and fatherhood. This work enveloped us in what Alma, Alejandro's mother, terms *la vida réal*, real life, in which we had a close look at family members' struggles with school, employment, and life chances. The compelling story of Alejandro's parents obtaining U.S. citizenship paralleled the border crossing story of Carger's first book, illuminated triumphs and tragedies the family, and many other immigrants, experience as they negotiated life in the United States, and as they, all too often, had to forsake their hopes and dreams. We felt the heartbreak as Alejandro went from job to job, unstable and low-paid. We were there as his wife filed for divorce and tried to have sole custody of their daughter. In this inquiry we see the blurring of the lines for Carger—between research and friendship, between practicality and dreams, between advocacy and distance. She continually questioned her research agenda and her role as researcher. Was she researcher, advocate, or friend? There are no easy answers, nor happy endings, to the story of Alejandro and his family in this book, as in *Of Borders and Dreams*.

Carger's work, as well as the work of Soto, raises questions about the education of immigrant and minority students and their families in the United States and around the world. Their work also raises questions for educational researchers: Whose stories are told? What are the purposes of telling those stories? Whose interests are served in educational research? What difference can educational researchers make in the life of underrepresented and disenfranchised individuals and groups?

Contributions, Potentials, and Concerns

The work of Soto and Carger, and many other educational researchers (c.f. Phillion, He & Connelly, 2005), exhibits some qualities of multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry. Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry demonstrates three interrelated qualities: *personal~passionate~participatory.* Researchers engaged in this form of inquiry establish explicit research agendas that focus on equity, equality, and social justice; develop specific research methodologies that foster the participatory process of the inquiries; and aim for outcomes that engender positive social and educational change. Researchers within this form of inquiry, in varying degrees, bring personal, professional, and cultural experience to inquiry to connect the personal with the political, the theoretical with the practical; make long-term and passionate commitment to concerns derived from participants, their communities, and the inquiry; and make meaning of the inquiry in relationship with participants with the intent to address and act upon equity, equality, and social justice.

It is our contention that multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry is inherently democratic.

In *Narrative and Experience in Multicultural Education* (Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005), we borrowed Dewey's (1916) key concepts in *Democracy and Education* to address the potential and concerns of narrative and experiential approaches to multicultural education (p. 294-301). We reiterate the ideas developed in that work to conclude this article. We particularly turn to Dewey's conception of the "Democratic Ideal" (p. 86-88). For Dewey ". . . a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority" (p. 87). It is our contention that multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry is inherently democratic. Inquirers engaged in this form of inquiry, similar to the work of Soto and Carger, do not control the research setting, nor do they determine in detail what steps are followed in pursuit of the inquiry. With this non-authoritarian orientation, acting not only as researchers, but also as concerned participants, the researchers take action and work toward a more eq-

uitable environment in their research settings. These actions are taken within context and are, themselves, democratic acts as each person, as participant, not as authority, recognizes injustices and gives voice to actions which they believe would bring about improvement. Their democratic action is not taken by virtue of imposed authority, but by virtue of participation in, and commitment to, the life under study.

Associated with the participatory and non-authoritarian role, researchers in multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry tend to join the lives of the people and situations studied. Joining the flow of life becomes a way of defining participation in multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiries. This means that researchers neither stand outside the flow of life under inquiry, nor do they control it for purposes of the inquiry. Rather, they enter that life and, to a greater or lesser extent depending on circumstances, become part of that life.

One of the dilemmas for multicultural and cross-cultural researchers adopting a non-authoritarian stance in which they join the lives of their participants is that the researcher may seem to be powerless and voiceless in the research situation. Carger put aside her academic authority, acted as a participant, and joined the life of Alejandro and his family. There were moments when Carger felt powerless as she witnessed the failure and disappointments Alejandro experienced, no matter how much Carger, Alejandro, and his family tried to do. Carger began to ask herself why Alejandro kept falling through the cracks. Carger felt powerless. This left us to wonder, also, about how much we, as researchers concerned with social justice, can actually do.

Another dilemma for multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquirers adopting a democratic, non-authoritarian, stance in which they live in the midst of their participants' lives, is that the intimacy, closeness, and caring that may develop can create vulnerability (Behar, 1996). The more intimately the inquirers become involved in their inquiries, the more they may come to care for their participants, their communities, and their concerns. With increased involvement of the inquirers, participants begin to develop trust. As the level of trust develops, participants may reveal "sacred and secret stories" (Crites, 1971) which may make inquirers and participants vulnerable. Soto (1997) exposed the fundamental inequalities existing in a Puerto Rican community not only at the present time but also in the past. This revelation of inequality made her and her participants vulnerable to backlash from the larger community and school district—the dismantling of the bilingual program led to the implementation of an English only policy.

Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquirers are also vulnerable within the academic community. From a scientific based perspective, the work of Soto and Carger might be shown, if one wished, to be inadequate. Their work, however, is convincing and credible. Three key points make them credible. First, data are presented in a life-like way; readers vicariously experience people and situations. Second, they link their personal experience to their studies. This conveys an aura of trustworthiness, a sense that they know what they are talking about and that the data presented are merely surface signs of an ocean of underlying experience. Third, the "signature" of both authors is convincing; both demonstrate strong commitment to the plight of their participants and the injustice embedded in the larger society.

Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquirers are also vulnerable within the academic community.

Multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry thrives on the researchers' passionate involvement, strong commitment, and unfaltering advocacy for disenfranchised, underrepresented, and invisible groups. This passion, commitment, and advocacy cannot be cultivated in isolation. Rather, it calls for a community of researchers with shared concerns to work together as allies with schools and communities, to take to heart the concerns of their participants and communities, and to develop strategies to enact educational and social change that fosters equity, equality and social justice. This community can only flourish when the efforts of researchers join with the efforts of all educational stakeholders—pre-service and in-service teachers, educators, administrators, educational policy makers, students, parents, and community members, particularly those who advocate for people who are marginalized and those who are committed to the enactment of social justice and positive educational and social change. This expanded community,

for us, embodies possibilities and creates hope, for more fulfilling, more equitable, more humane lives in multicultural societies.

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Challenging Expectations: Counter-Narrating an Urban Classroom

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When fifth-grade students at a neighborhood school serving a housing project in downtown Chicago were challenged to name problems in their community, the children unanimously focused on replacing their decaying school building. Rather than this being a simple activity, addressing the complicated issue became our curriculum for the remainder of the school year. Narrative storytelling central to the classroom portrays the Room 405 fifth graders' attempts at solving this complex problem through an emergent and authentic, yet rigorous, curriculum we developed together. Essential within this justice-oriented, democratic classroom were explicit ways of teaching codes of power, critical thinking abilities, decision-making and problem solving acumen, and ultimately the skills necessary to participate in school and in mainstream American society. Rather than teaching these practices for their own sake, they were taught in context, through direct participation in an effort to solve an authentic problem.

Challenged with the space and opportunity to change their inadequate school conditions, the young citizens set out to be active participants in a project that revolved around their own lives.

Introduction: Unshackling Urban Classrooms from Mediocrity

This article examines one particular curriculum enactment through a classroom narrative. Issues regarding shared authority and student initiations involving classroom structure and decision making during a social action curriculum project are examined. Together with my fifth-grade African-American students, an integrated curriculum was conceptualized, designed, and implemented as we campaigned for a sorely needed new school building for their public-housing neighborhood. After the students were challenged to identify problems in their community, they deliberated possibilities, unanimously deciding to focus their efforts on the most pressing issue they faced, the state of their school building—a decrepit structure that was no place to learn.

Without hesitation, the students cited major problems with their school in vivid detail: Classrooms were dark, cold, and dreary—lights did not work; natural light did not enter opaque windows pocked with bullet holes; the heat did not function—students wore hats, mittens, and jackets inside the building. Bathrooms were despicable—water leaked everywhere; toilets and sinks did not function properly; stalls lacked doors for privacy; there was not even soap or paper towels. Furthermore, the school had no cafeteria, gym, or auditorium—students ate in the third floor hallway; physical education classes met at a nearby park district; assemblies were held in the school's lobby. Despite the horrific and shameful conditions of the school that the students easily described and the fact that the community had been assured a new building six years earlier by the board of education, the promises had never been fulfilled.

Now, challenged with the space and opportunity to change their inadequate school conditions, the young citizens set out to be active participants in a project that revolved around their own lives. With the naming of the problem beginning in early December, the fifth graders focused the rest of the school year on learning ways to become agents of change to solve their identified problem.

Classrooms that allow students to be the deciders of the curricular direction are not the norm in public schools today. Schools, especially ones in poor urban areas, expect and even strive for mediocrity as evi-

denced by benchmarks in the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Given the current era of high-stakes testing, top-down curriculum standardization, accountability pressures from outside mandates, and unfunded federal legislation, teachers are often forced to use prescriptive curricula (i.e., Direct Instruction, Open Court, Success for All, etc.), spend classroom time on test preparation and ultimately teach to these tests (Kozol, 1992, 2005; Oakes, 2005; Valenzuela, 2005). Teachers, especially those teaching children living in poverty, are certainly advised to adhere to textbooks and adopted curricula rather than follow student interests or concerns. Whereas these expectations are commonplace, there are ways to resist "the conservative solutions" meant to increase "centralized control, standardization of content, reductive testing, [and] authoritarian and sterile teaching methods" (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 9). Through purposeful classroom teaching detailed in this inquiry, I challenged the dominant, high-status knowledge commonalities of schools with elementary students "to create a curriculum that will give young people democratic experiences" through the structure and the processes of the classroom (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 9-10).

Frustrated by what I observed as the status quo in urban schools, I consciously decided to rethink the means by which my students learned and the way I taught.

Through my immersion into curriculum studies literature as a doctoral student while teaching, I found ideas inherent to social reproduction (Apple, 2000, 2004), hidden curriculum (Anyon, 1980), and the way in which different socioeconomic classes were taught to be appalling. Notably, the writing of Dewey (1897, 1916, 1933, 1938), Alberty (1953), Friere (1970, 1995), Hopkins (1937, 1954, 1976, 1983), Schubert (1986, 1992), Schubert and Lopez Schubert (1981), Ayers (2001, 2004), Beane (1995, 1997, 2005) forced me to examine my vision of teaching, and ponder the ways in which the traditional system expected me to conform. Frustrated by what I observed as the status quo in urban schools, I consciously decided to rethink the means by which my students learned and the way I taught. Influenced by a workshop on a civic education program called Project Citizen (Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago; Center for Civic Education) coupled with the theoretical possibilities outlined in the literature, I opted to design a curriculum with my students that would not only teach ideas of democracy and citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), but to practice direct democratic action. Defying the mediocrity of canned curricula and learning by rote memorization for regurgitation, this classroom approach offered an alternative where the students could "shed the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of 'meaning makers'" (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 17).

By analyzing our conceived curriculum affordances in relation to democratic participation, I attempt to show how the curriculum engaged students in the practices of problem-posing, problem-solving, and decision-making while highlighting the students' vast savvy and their ways of developing new abilities. By exploring one particular event of the classroom experiences, I explore how authority for classroom process and knowledge were shared by me as the teacher with my students. Through this narrative examination, I focus on a democratized classroom where there were opportunities for students to design curriculum, choose the direction of classroom pursuits, interact with people and the world outside the school, and thus engage with what was most relevant and meaningful to them.

Research Methodology and Modes of Inquiry

The methodology of this study is qualitative and interpretive. I use a teacher's narrative inquiry (Barone, 2001; Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004a, 2004b; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1990) to examine how authority is shared between students and teacher within the context of a social action curriculum project (Oyler, 1996; Schultz & Oyler, 2006). In the storytelling, multidimensional counter-narratives emerge as I seek to resist, challenge, and describe contradictions to existing norms and expectations of both urban classrooms and the students found within them (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). While narrative inquiry is the primary mode used, I eclectically apply (Schwab, 1971) different elements of other interpretive methodologies to make meaning about my classroom. These include adapting elements of autobiography and *currere* (Grumet,

1990; Pinar, 1994; Pinar & Grumet, 1976), portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997), teacher lore (Schubert & Ayers, 1999), and teacher/action research (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994; Schubert & Lopez Schubert, 1997) to story the classroom.

Data collected include: classroom talk and discourse; semi-structured and informal interviews conducted with students; informal discussions with administrators; student work spanning the length of the school year; and a reflective journal that I maintained almost daily throughout my teaching. Although all of this data collected is being used for the larger project (Schultz, 2008), this article draws upon my own narrative inquiry and theorizing with students while in the classroom (Schultz, 2005, 2007).

The story of this seven-month integrated curriculum is complex, and instances of democratic participation and authority-sharing are situated in particular pedagogical moments. As a result, the stories are analyzed within the classroom context itself, as well as through subsequent reflection. With the establishment of a destination for our classroom endeavors, namely the push for a new school building for the community, I was able to examine the classroom in terms of what Clandinin and Connelly (2004a) call "the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space" (p. 117) to understand the classroom complexity, show layers of meaning, and demonstrate the "intertwined" nature of curriculum and instruction (p. 28).

As the students and I formed a shared vision of where to take the classroom, we negotiated the curriculum (Boomer, 1992). In this way, authority was "enacted through dynamic negotiations between teachers and students" (Pace & Hemmings, 2006, p. 2) and the classroom became a place that allowed for teaching the democratic way (Beane, 2005). In order to portray and make meaning of this, I viewed the curriculum as lived experience (Schubert, 1986; van Manen, 1977, 1990) and as an ongoing interaction and interplay between students, teacher, and contexts (Schwab, 1969; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004a). Our curriculum was not something detailed in lesson plans, dictated by scope and sequence, offered by basal textbook teacher guides, or aligned to state standards for their own sake. The integrated, coherent curriculum (Beane, 1995) in Room 405 instead attempted to work through and solve an identified problem important to the students. Inherent to this lived (and alive) curriculum was a multiplicity of perspectives from all the stakeholders involved, and thus a multivocal or polyvocal inquiry emerges (Lather & Smithies, 1997; Schubert, this issue). Narrative inquiry and storytelling through personal practical knowledge "of our own experience as a text" (Connelly & Clandinin 1988, p. 213) allowed the details of the classroom to be revealed without searching for a final truth, but rather to highlight the range of complexity for all participants.

Since I am studying my own teaching practice, I am cognizant of limitations to the inquiry. Understanding that narrative storytelling is inherently subjective, I embrace my positionality as a White teacher in a classroom made up of students who were all African-American. I draw on my social location to provide and question insight, illuminate discussion, and weave in analysis so that the inquiry is not only trustworthy and credible, but rigorous as well. By triangulating a plurality of data sources to corroborate the storytelling, I make a conscious and deliberate effort to have students' voices prominent in the narrative where appropriate and applicable, but also acknowledge that if Room 405 students were to tell this story it would, perhaps, be quite different than my version.

At the time the following vignette took place, students had been deeply involved for more than four months in developing their social action curriculum project and working towards getting the Chicago school board to come through on its erstwhile promise.

Our curriculum was not something detailed in lesson plans, dictated by scope and sequence, offered by basal textbook teacher guides, or aligned to state standards for their own sake.

Just Like a Record Deal: A Classroom Vignette

The students scoured the Internet to find additional influential people to whom they could send their letter. In classroom conversations, we talked extensively about decision-makers in the local government. Each student was on a mission to get the word out to anyone who could help get a new school. We had brainstormed for politically powerful people. Several of the students saw the task as competitive, and their lists began to grow. By the end of the hour-long

session, several students were bragging as some had found as many as 30 names and addresses.

The compiled list included everyone from Vice President Dick Cheney to local legislators and even candidates running for United States Senate from Illinois. Local news organizations and various media contacts were added, as the students believed this would be the best way to inform others about their plight. With a list of almost 200 individuals, Tavon and Dyneisha were eager to stay after school to do the tedious task of transcribing their peers' writing onto the envelopes.

The next day there was still more work to do. Some students had only been able to get email addresses. The class decided to use the same letter for the emails that they had used for the regular mail. It was also determined that each email letter still needed an appropriate salutation. As one student noted, "Ain't no one want to get no letter that don't have they name on it." The emails went out one by one. Questions fluttered around the room about how long it would take before people responded. I was curious, too, and wondered if this letter, written by fifth graders from Cabrini Green, was going to get any responses at all.

It did not take long to have our questions answered. The following Tuesday morning several messages stamped March 1st were waiting in the students' inbox. The first was a form response from a State Senator offering, "Thanks for recent correspondence. . . . Your opinion will receive careful consideration when the issue is presented in the Senate."

As Jaris read the response to the quietly awaiting class, another student shouted, "That message bogus! He ain't writin' to us. He says that to everyone." He was exactly right; unfortunately, their first taste of a response was typical of an elected official: removed and insincere. But the second email was better, promising a visit from State Representative Delgado and stating, "I would be glad to visit your school. The conditions that you described should not exist in America today . . . I will do whatever I can to make sure that the board of education, and the State of Illinois address these concerns."

"Do you really think he's gonna do anything for us?" Terrance skeptically cried out.

Even with the disbelief, there was a sense the class was getting somewhere. They had made a connection. Someone on their list was actually interested in them! Responding to the email, the students made fists, banging them together—a sort of high-five I may have done 20 years earlier when I was their age. Although they had searched for important people they wanted on their side, they were not exactly aware of what a representative did, or how he could help them. What they did know was that he was coming to Carr and they had better begin investigating.

Another exciting communication arrived the very next day from *Chicago Tribune* columnist Eric Zorn, who replied to the students' query: "I'm very interested in what you're telling me and would like to arrange to visit you to talk about this situation more."

That evening I spoke with Zorn by phone. We discussed the project and the students' efforts thus far. As I spoke to "the real deal" as students referred to him, Zorn was eager to talk with the kids to, as he said, "See for himself." He assured me he was interested in writing a story; it just had to be postponed until he could clear his desk of current stories he was covering.

My principal needed to be approached about the prospects. Fully aware of the project, the principal had been extremely encouraging, but up to now the hype was mostly contained within the school. This was a sensitive topic, and a newspaper article could stir things up in the city and at the Board of Education. Although the principal had been fighting this same cause for years, I wanted to prepare him for the potential buzz and backlash. I knew he had supported the project, but how far was he going to allow the students and me to take it? Would he actually let the story get into the mainstream press? What might the repercussions be?

This was a sensitive topic, and a newspaper article could stir things up in the city and at the Board of Education.

Without hesitation, he approved. The principal supported the students' efforts because, as he said, "It is appropriate for me to back them since they are doing something to help themselves." With his permission, I was excited to tell the class about my conversation with both Zorn and the principal. After

my announcement, one child shouted out, "That's right, that's right, they all gonna want to talk to us!" Another commented, "That cool…we gonna get plastered all over that paper and it's gonna get us a whole new school!" Although there was the expectation of instant gratification, the students were forced to wait several weeks for Zorn to visit the classroom. As we waited, the students looked in other directions to continue their quest.

Days later, a student came in early with an idea. Tyrone told me he had "been watchin' TV news last night with my mama" and had seen "something about the upcoming U.S. Senate race." His idea was that "if these people running wanted to really help out kids in the state, they would come get us a new school." Obviously, it was not that easy, but his naiveté was endearing. After I directed the boy to a few web pages about the approaching Senate primary, he was able to gather a list of candidates to whom he promptly forwarded the class's letter.

There were responses within hours. One primary candidate, Jeffrey Ruiz, responded to the subject "Our school NEEDS your help" by explaining his past role in previously trying to secure a new Carr school: "I visited Carr Academy many times and know that you need a new school to learn better. When I was working as [high-ranking official at] the Chicago School Board, we planned to replace Carr Academy . . . however, I left that position before work began." Intrigued by his knowledge of Carr, the students continued reading, "I'm sorry to say that I do not know why the new Carr school has not yet been built. I am currently running for the U.S. Senate, where I will fight for the money to build new schools across this country. There are lots of schools like Carr Academy and many students just like you need a better school. I am sorry that I cannot come visit Carr at this time. My election is soon and I am working very hard to win."

By the end of his email, many students argued about whether he might be partially to blame that the school never got built. "Why is he apologizing?" asked one boy.

"If he couldn't get Carr built, how's he think he can get schools all over the country built?" another added.

As I listened to the commentary about Ruiz's letter, I sensed a condescending tone. To me, the candidate's response was problematic: rather than commending the Carr students for taking action by reaching out to people they thought could help to benefit themselves, he inferred that the Carr students were just like other students in need of better schools.

Building on the comments of the students, I also believed the letter showed a level of ignorance on this candidate's part. The students were fully aware of what was occurring around them, especially in terms of the gentrification. Ruiz acted uninformed by not attempting to address this issue. Did he not think the students were capable of participating in such a discussion? Was he willing to participate in such a discussion? Frustrated with the lack of resolve, the students, however, did heed his closing advice "to keep working for a new school" with or without his assistance. And, even though their initial response appeared to be negative, the students understood that a quick response from a Senate candidate at least showed respect for them.

The students were fully aware of what was occurring around them, especially in terms of the gentrification.

Ruiz was a very familiar name in the Chicago school district. He had been a high-ranking official for years. My principal had dealt with him directly on many issues, noting that Ruiz had promised, in writing, that there would be a new Carr school built on an adjacent plot of land six years earlier. Students were also painfully aware that the construction had not begun. Daily they passed by the misleading propaganda at the proposed new school site, a sign proclaiming the "New Carr" was continually tagged with graffiti, "NOT!!" scribbled across the false promise.

Later that day, as I waited for students to trek across the street, returning from the borrowed gym—one of the central problems with the school, according to the students—the principal called me for an impromptu meeting. He explained he had just spoken to a gentleman describing himself as the campaign manager for Jeffrey Ruiz. The principal's apprehension was obvious as he handed me a pink message slip. Apparently, Ruiz's campaign manager pitched the idea of a visit to our fifth-grade classroom. My principal questioned Ruiz's motives for the proposed visit and discussed his skepticism.

Although I wanted to respect the principal's wishes, I felt strongly that neither he nor I could

make this decision without consulting the students. I was certain he did not want me to bring it up with the class, but I was passionate about letting them solve this problem. If I was presenting the project as theirs, I needed to really live the ideals and could not relent when the going got tough or when a hard, "adult decision" needed to be made. Due to my own curiosity, allegiance, and commitment to scaffolding the democratic classroom, I needed to at least return the campaign manager's call to find out more details about his intentions.

That evening I called the campaign manager. Sounding rushed, he explained, "Ruiz wants to show he is involved in the community. He wants to have television cameras come for a photo-opportunity. In addition to bringing the publicity to the kids' project," he explained, "Ruiz wants to present the children with a $500 check—a gesture he realizes won't get a new school—but would show he wants to give back to the community."

As I listened quietly without comment, I now understood the principal's reservations about the proposition. Intuition told me the motives were self-directed and political, but I was determined not to make the decision for my students. They were the ones who had reached out, and they should be the ones to respond. But, at what cost?

As I presented what I had discovered, I tried to remain neutral and simply present the facts. It was difficult.

During a sleepless night, I tried to weigh the pros and cons of the situation. I certainly did not want the children exploited for Ruiz' political gain. The principal did not want me to tell them about Ruiz's offer. I was in conflict; should I follow the wishes of my very supportive administrator or should I follow the progressive curriculum I had created with the students? Even though I was uncomfortable with the offer, the decision had to be left to the kids. I was in the midst of creating a justice-oriented, democratic classroom in which the students' voices and opinions really counted, and I needed to stick with this intention.

The next morning when the class settled in, I explained that Principal Miller had received a call from one of the senate campaign offices to which the class had sent their letter. I explained that I had returned the call the prior evening and learned some valuable information that I knew they would be interested in hearing.

As I presented what I had discovered, I tried to remain neutral and simply present the facts. It was difficult. I had pressure from the administration not to present the offer at all. Likewise, I believed the students' decision-making would be worth the gamble and wanted them to have the opportunity to sort it out. What if they were not able to see the offer as the principal and I had? As much as I did not want to give up the authority of my classroom and believed I knew what was best for them, it could not be my decision.

As the classroom teacher, I had the power to make the decision, but now I was yielding that power to the students. This authority was something that I felt I had earned over the past two years, and because of the desire to create a democratic space, I was attempting dangerous teaching by relinquishing it. This was one of the hardest decisions I had to make.

I presented the details of the telephone call. As I outlined the facts, I was quickly interrupted by the students' excitement. "We can buy an X-Box, PlayStation, or GameCube for the classroom with all that cash!" one exclaimed. Another advocated for "pizza every day." I could understand the excitement; I had felt the same sort of energy when I first heard the news. Asking for a decision, almost every student voted to accept Ruiz's offer. Each child also had an idea of how to spend the money to improve the school.

Above the din of the deliberations, Crown, a student who rarely participated in class discussions, strained to be heard. Crown stopped the class by raising his voice slightly, "Y'all put down y'all hands cause we have to talk bout this." Shockingly, he got everyone's attention immediately. I was in awe and envied him. It seemed so easy and effortless for him to get control. I really had never seen this side of him and was eagerly waiting to hear his perception.

Crown spoke quietly, almost under his breath, but it displayed unbelievable confidence, "You guys really trust this man? How d'ya know he's gonna help us? Instead of thinking it like this dude's comin' in to give us 500 bucks let's do some checkin' on him first." The skepticism was not unusual for any of my students. They had often been made empty promises and had often been disappointed. Trust was a big issue for them. But he was not just being reluctant;

he had a lot more to say. I took a step back and let Crown have control.

As Crown slumped back into his blue, school-issue chair, he directed Tavon over to our working computer. He told Tavon to "Get onto one of them websites that has the senate race stuff on it." Quickly, Crown asked Tavon to find out "who had the most for the race." It was a directive that did not seem to make much sense to many of the students in the room or to me. Was he asking about votes or about funding? It did not matter since Crown had chosen his researcher wisely and they connected. He knew the hand-picked classmate was a math whiz and an expert on the computer and would quickly get the information he was looking for. They traded some comments back and forth, and then Crown said, "He got it" and was ready to continue his sermon, "Cause that's all I needed to know."

"Listen here," he said. "Let's think about it like a record deal."

I was not sure of his direction, but I was so curious.

"If y'alls wanted a record deal, what label would you want to sign with?" Everyone had given their attention to this boy, and with his ensuing question they all shouted at the tops of their lungs several different popular labels. Through the commotion I heard Def Jam and Roc-A-Fella. Settling the group down, he continued, "Okay, okay, me too. If they came here I would want to be with them, too. But now, what is a record label you would not want anything to do with?" And without hesitation, Darnell blurted out, "Billie Jean." Billie Jean was one of Michael Jackson's record labels. Jackson had recently been on the news due to charges of sexually molesting boys.

It all came quickly together. Crown brought his real life example of the record label right back to Jeffrey Ruiz's offer. Now sitting up in his chair and using his hands to gesture as he spoke, he eloquently stated, "What Tavon told us about this guy was that he was losing the senate. There ain't no way this man makin' it to the senate." He continued his explanation speaking more emphatically, "He only has three percent of the vote and he can't make it with dat! Listen, it ain't no different than signing with a label. Just like you don't want to be associated with that pervert Michael Jackson, why should we all be associated with this guy who is going to lose?" The faces in front of him had not yet gotten his point, but they remained attentive. "We don't want to go down with his sinkin' ship. If we get seen with him we might never get a new school. Just like you don't want to be hangin' with Michael, we should not want to be with this guy."

It took a few seconds for it to click with his classmates, but then they seemed to understand Crown's explanation and gave some affirming nods. Crown continued, "And anyway, don't you guys remember that we have that writer from the *Trib* newspaper that wants to do a story on us in a couple weeks? If we take that loser's money it might hurt our chances. I say we hold out for the better deal…wouldn't you hold out for the better record deal?"

As the class vocally agreed, Crown continued, "I think this guy is just using us to get in the news heself. He obviously needs something to help and I don't think we should be treated by him. He is just wantin to help out now because it could help him, but lemme tell–ain't nothing gonna help him win his race!"

Crown called for a recount, "Who wants this guy to come and mess us up?" Two hands rose against what Crown presented, as one of the students softly voiced that the class could use Ruiz for the cash just as he was using them for his political gain. The rest of the class realized they did not want to be associated with Ruiz based on Crown's creative analogy of the predicament they were in.

It *was* just like a record deal, but I could never have done that. I was in awe.

Just like that, Crown swayed the class' decision on Ruiz. Crown used his charisma and persuasiveness to convince the class based on how he saw the situation. Now the class actually needed to give a response to the offer. We talked about what they would say and even scripted the conversation. Standing at the front of the classroom, Crown used my cell phone to call Ruiz's office. He explained that he was in my class and began to give an explanation that we had rehearsed, but he did not stop there.

The class and I listened as he explained, "We are very happy that Mr. Ruiz wants to come out and see us at our school, but we think and we voted that he should not come out right now. Since the primary is just a couple of days away we think he may be too busy and it might be too crazy for him to come for a visit right now." He paused for a response on the other end and then continued, "We think that it was very nice of him to want to see us and the hard work we are doin' but we don't think it is a good time. We would like to invite Mr. Ruiz to come for a visit after the primary,

and if he comes he doesn't even need to bring us the money." Crown closed the phone and handed it back to me. He did not say a word, but his smile was so big and so confident it remains vividly etched in my memory.

We never heard from Ruiz or his staff again.

The current high-stakes environment decreases autonomy of classrooms to engage in natural and authentic discovery.

Transferable Discovery through Shared Classroom Authority

When students are active participants in the development and creation of curriculum, worthwhile processes and outcomes occur. Within the current climate of back-to-basics teaching and empty decrees of accountability, teachers and their students often do not have much say or decision-making authority in their classroom space. The current high-stakes environment decreases autonomy of classrooms to engage in natural and authentic discovery. When a classroom has the ability to invite students (along with their teacher) to focus on meaningful work that relates to their daily lives and struggles, both teachers and students alike undoubtedly will find learning endeavors to be engaging, enriching, motivating, and enlightening.

By examining this classroom vignette, it becomes apparent students can be curricularists. The students, in fact, knew their needs best, showed they are capable thinkers, could demonstrate achievement and insight, and be critical decision makers. With a facilitating educator, these particular young students realized their abilities through investigation, research, and contemplation of what is most important to them through the development of curriculum focusing on their concerns. The classroom authority was clearly shared as personal insight from the students drove learning, allowing me to step back and learn from them as the curriculum evolved. The students showed that they know how to accomplish their desires and demonstrated their reasoning acumen by actively participating in the process of figuring out how to solve authentic dilemmas. The students developed the necessary skill-base within the context of problem solving a real issue, not for the purpose of a worksheet or end-of-unit-test. Their deliberations and decision-making forced them to learn, develop, and apply codes of power as they participated in mainstream American society (Delpit, 1995). Unfortunately, classrooms especially in schools serving marginalized and disadvantaged neighborhoods such as Cabrini Green rarely allow for students to be creative and challenge the traditional system in such ways. Students need to have the opportunity to figure out the world around them, to live up to Friere's challenge to have them read their worlds rather than simply reading the word (1970), so that they can make sense of their environments for themselves and realize their fullest potentials. In so doing, the curriculum can be a vehicle for student exploration and allow them to genuinely learn how to effectively navigate their own contexts.

Challenging the outside expectations by developing rigorous expectations in Room 405 provided a great opportunity for learning. The bar was raised for students in Room 405 not because of arbitrary benchmarks, but because the students wanted to see results that affected them. If and when classroom authority is shared where students work alongside their teacher to develop the curriculum, authoritarian classrooms can be broken down and democratic practices can flourish. Since the best way to teach democratic participation is through direct experience and practice in sustaining democratic activity, there is much promise to yielding authority to students and negotiating the classroom.

As a teacher, I saw it as my role to inculcate students to become thoughtful and practicing citizens. As I provided opportunities in the classroom for students to make decisions, solve problems, and ask questions, they began to understand their capabilities as agents of change even as fifth graders. Students also learn the means to transfer these acquired skills to other facets of their lives. When they are provided rich curriculum opportunities in classrooms serv-

Their deliberations and decision-making forced them to learn, develop, and apply codes of power as they participated in mainstream American society.

ing poor communities, students see how to connect classroom learning to the outside world because they actually get experience doing it. They get inducted into what it means to participate in our democracy. Students challenged with this responsibility in school have a stake in their learning, and subsequently can dedicate themselves to not only the classroom products, but also to the inherent processes of what it takes to accomplish other tasks in and outside of the classroom.

Emerging Counter-Narratives through the Democratization of an Urban Classroom

Our development of a classroom based on democratic participation and social action yielded a counter-narrative on multiple levels. The classroom structure ran contrary to normative practices in urban schools, while the students from an "infamous" housing project stood up and fought for what they believed was right. Few outsiders initially thought that the students in Room 405 had the interest or ability to help themselves or their community, yet their endeavors, actions, and performance proved otherwise. Although we avoided the ordinary practices of schools and spent no direct time on standardized test preparation, the students (not surprisingly) succeeded on the traditional indicators and measurement—boasting a 98% aggregate attendance rate, as well as significant standardized test score improvement over the previous school year.

The curriculum that emerged in our classroom provided a place for students to use their voices in purposeful ways. Their message beyond the classroom was clear, contradicting what has typically become expected of students growing up in an urban housing project. This classroom structure and the process that emerged from it engaged students in civic and social action while instilling expectations of high achievement. Highlighting that these students were seriously concerned about the environment in which they learn and how they approach their schooling endeavors, the classroom story opposes stereotypes common to African American children growing up in the inner city. In various ways, the students' fight for equity in schooling forced the broader community to see the shameful reality of urban schools. While the students keenly showed evidence of conditions in which they faced, the justice-oriented curriculum vehemently articulated to all those they came in contact with that they are intelligent young citizens and that they do care about themselves, their learning, their families, and their community and deserve better.

Undoubtedly, curricula based on students' concerns can have an effect on the students involved beyond the time spent in the classroom. This sort of co-constructed curriculum can help to shape our world as students learn how to navigate government bureaucracies and learn the means necessary to influence public policy change. Students interested in making their environment better motivate themselves and others. Through their efforts in this case, the young citizens increased awareness of the inequity in schooling and showed the potential of children, no matter what their environment, through meaningful documentation and demonstration.

These students successfully showed their fortitude as they pursued a goal that had the cards stacked against them from the start. News media, politicians, university researchers, and regular citizens heard their plea for equity in schooling. Changes the fifth graders called for were addressed as renovations began happening in the school before the year even ended. Although in the end, the decision makers at the board of education decided to close down Carr Community Academy, the demands for a better learning environment could no longer be ignored. Most students at Carr would end up being transferred the following year to a recently constructed building across a ball field from Carr. But when I made the announcement to the class about the school closure, there were both angry shouts and tearful apprehension.

This sort of co-constructed curriculum can help to shape our world as students learn how to navigate government bureaucracies and learn the means necessary to influence public policy change.

At first many articulated that the year may have "wasted our breathe." They were understandably "very, very upset, frustrated, and sad" because of the decision, but they came to realize that their fight was well worth it and that wonderful things happened as

a result. Although the students did not succeed in getting their perfect solution of the promised new Carr Academy building, one of Room 405's outlined alternative solutions was achieved—no other children from the Cabrini Green community would be forced to learn in a grossly inadequate environment as they had endured.

Amazingly, students were able to separate their disappointment from the value of their campaign. Certainly more resilient than I was, they reflected their fortitude in their journal entries. The following verbatim excerpts from student journals capture questions raised by and reactions provoked by this emotional announcement provoked.

"We did all this work and now they are shutting the school down?"

"I think it not fair, I feel bad beacuse we have been working on project citizen for six months and that is a long time for 5 graders. So did we do this project for nothing?"

But through the displeasure, the students showed a continued fortitude, able to see value in the experience.

"We have got heard by a lot of people like being on the newspaper and the television. . . . We were a good group of kids fighting for what is right. Carr has Carr pride and I will keep it when I go to a different school."

"We did not do this work for nothing we did it because we wanted to."

"That must mean that it is time for us to go to more big and better things. . . . This made me feel good and proud."

"I beivleve that i will be able to use the skill in the future becuase we learned how the government works."

They also saw worth in the curriculum itself: "This is a real good project because it helps you with different problems that you might want to fix in you community."

"I learned alot this year. . . . I think that this is a good project because kids get to do things that others don't."

"I think other classes should do it."

"It gets me to stay focused."

"You don't never have to give up because they say you won't get your goal."

Through calculated and purposeful action, the Room 405 students were able to prove to the outside world that they, and students in similar predicaments, are worthy of everyone's attention. Even more importantly, the social action-oriented curriculum project showed the students that they clearly had a multitude of abilities and intelligences, and that their ideas and insights could and should be transferred beyond the neighborhood into the school and broader social context. Through the lived experience of this counter-narrative, I hope that the students will continue to reflect on this experience. I believe it will continue to have a lasting effect on them and trust that they will come to understand and practice the promises and potential of democracy and active civic engagement.

Realizing classroom democratic ideals may raise more questions than answers, I wonder where this sort of curriculum could and would go if it were to be commonly practiced. As state mandates continue to call for expectations of equity without the foundations of equity, I ponder what the implications might be if other teachers engaged in social justice oriented teaching with their students. Would long-term continuation of problem-posing curricula eventually lead some students, especially poor students of color, to eventually be slapped down by the system, or could it begin to facilitate systemic change? While I cannot answer these questions directly, I would like to believe that all students should have space to be thinkers, doers, designers, and builders, challenging the ideological dominance of standardization and high-stakes accountability.

Epilogue: A Lasting Impact

Students no longer walk the halls at the Carr Community Academy, yet the building remains standing over three years later. Carr has an even more eerie presence than it did while we occupied it. With the high-priced condominiums and townhomes built around the school property in every direction, the redevelopment plan is well underway; Cabrini Green is being transformed. Rumors about the fate of the building abound. Reports indicate the Chicago Board of Education has put the property on the auction block, but apparently is still holding out for a better offer of more millions before letting it go.

After Carr was shuttered, and although the majority of the Room 405 class was transferred to a nearby school within the Cabrini Green neighborhood, residential buildings continued to be demolished, forcing families out of the neighborhood attendance area. As a result, students were relocated to schools where they were displaced.

Although the class members are now located throughout the city, many former students and I meet or talk regularly. We enjoy updating each other on our lives while recalling our fabled, fifth-grade year together. The majority of Room 405 students are completing eighth grade, although two students—able to skip seventh grade because of high performance—are now finishing their freshman years at Chicago high schools.

Despite it being years after the fifth-grade year ended, the students continue to chronicle their story. And they continue to get an exuberant reception and intrigue from those that hear Room 405's triumphant tale. Neither the students nor I have forgotten what our foray into the school and city politics did for us. Together, since the school year ended, we have presented at several conferences, guest spoken in college classrooms, and keynoted seminars.

A follow-up article on the students' push for justice appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* after an education reporter watched one of their conference presentations. The article featured five former Carr fifth graders. Each described the impact the fifth-grade curriculum has had on their lives. Crown, the former fourth-grade truant turned B-average high school student, was quoted, "If it wasn't for that project, I wouldn't be in high school. I'd be out on the block, I know I would" (Dell' Angela, 2007, p. B1).

A follow-up article on the students' push for justice appeared in the* Chicago Tribune *after an education reporter watched one of their conference presentations.

Other students shared similar sentiments about how the project continues to impact them in multiple ways. But beyond rhetoric, their achievement records and commitment to learning speak for themselves. The class was featured in a high school social studies textbook. One student won a district-wide spelling bee championship as an eighth grader. Others consistently made the honor roll at their respective schools. And several hope to attend small specialty high schools in the fall.

There are also a group of students that continue to be involved in activism and change efforts in their communities. They have conveyed to me that they want to continue to learn skills about community organizing, about what it means to embrace responsibilities, and engage in methods that promote change to make our world a better place. As the students continue practicing strategies of active democratic participation, they demonstrate that their fifth-grade year, when they fought for what they believed was right, can and is being transferred to other situations they encounter in their lives.

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The Student Teacher and the Pseudo-Researcher: A Possible Example of Narrative Inquiry (or maybe just a story)

Gregory Michie
Illinois State University

Erin Schaffer
San Jose, Costa Rica

Erin grew up in a small town in western Illinois that sits on the banks of the Mississippi River. In a poem she wrote, based on poet George Ella Lyon's wonderful, widely circulated "Where I'm From," she recalled her early experiences this way:

I am from toastburgers and Grandma's meatballs
From soccer games and swim meets and so many Barbie dolls
I am from the climbing tree in the backyard
And the great big cornfields out back…

I am from 'Love the LORD your God'
And bedtime prayers with my dad
From choruses and praises
And 'rejoice and be glad!'…

I am from week-long birthdays
And good ol' family times
From Christmas Eve services
And 'Let your little light shine'…

I am from mission trips and passports
A need to see God's world
To love it and stand in awe of creation
And 'take His Word to the ends of the earth'…

In the Fall of 2006, Erin was one of twelve undergraduate "interns" who began a year-long student teaching experience in a program I help coordinate on the south side of Chicago. She was also one of five interns who chose to live for the year in Little Village, the Mexican immigrant neighborhood where they would be student teaching. (Our College of Education used grant funds to rent a house in the community, and the interns paid a modest monthly fee to partially offset the costs.) The year-long program, which follows a Professional Development School (PDS) model, is intense: In the fall, interns spend three full days each week in Chicago Public School (CPS) classrooms, and the other two days in university courses and seminars, which are held on-site at a CPS school. In the spring, they complete an extended 17-week student teaching experience which typically ends two days before they graduate in May. It's a demanding schedule, far removed from the more leisurely pace of campus life, and it requires quite a commitment from the interns. But the potential benefits are numerous: more time in classrooms with students, more experience planning and teaching lessons, integrated coursework, closer relationships with mentor teachers, more frequent (and, we hope, more meaningful) contact with university personnel.

In the fall, interns spend three full days each week in Chicago Public School (CPS) classrooms, and the other two days in university courses and seminars.

As the faculty liaison to the year-long program, I began email correspondences with a few of the interns in the 2006-2007 cohort in hopes of capturing some of the meaning of their experiences: the struggles, surprises, and successes they encountered as "outsider" student teachers in an urban Mexican immigrant community. My hope was that regularly

writing about their experiences and engaging in dialogue would help them be more intentional about reflecting on their teaching and the "bigger picture" issues that impacted it. I also thought the exchange might help me stay more in tuned with the specific challenges they were facing in their classrooms. What follows is the partial story of that student teaching year, told largely through Erin's journals and emails, interspersed with my own email responses and retrospective reflections and commentary. Here is Erin's first electronic journal entry, written six weeks into the school year:

2006 October 15

Doubting has become a hobby of mine. Not a hobby I enjoy, but something I have been investing way too much time with. I seem to be doing okay and feeling slightly confident in myself and my ability to be a fairly decent teacher, but before I know it, I am back in this rut of feeling worthless and like my efforts will never be good enough.

Thursday afternoon [following a presentation about the history of U.S. immigration and current reform efforts] was another one of those ruts. By the time 3:00 hit, my head was swirling. I couldn't even think straight, nor articulate what was bothering me....One thing I know about myself is that I tend to put way too much unnecessary pressure on myself. I have incredibly high expectations and I also have this overwhelming fear of disappointing others. I think I started thinking about these things while we were listening to the presentation on immigration reform. I just cannot seem to wrap my mind around all of it. I know I cannot expect myself to be an expert on something I have just started learning about, but I feel like I need to understand it more than I do. I also cannot seem to decide how I feel about all of it. I see so many sides of it, but cannot seem to land anywhere.

There is also this aspect of my personality that has a certain fix-it impulse to it. I just wish I could take away all of the frustrating, unfair things in this world and make it all disappear. My head and my heart just become so overwhelmed and I start to feel defeated. I feel that if I cannot understand these issues, I will be a let-down to others, especially to my students.

Basically, from that presentation on immigration, my mind spiraled out of control and I found myself standing in the land of the unknown, where everything is a huge question mark. From that simple presentation, I found myself questioning for the hundredth time in the past two months whether or not I can do this and do it well. I have a huge desire to teach, to affect change and to inspire and empower, but I fear that I won't be good enough. I know that everyone fails and that it is through those failures that you succeed. But because these failures of mine will impact my students, I start panicking and asking myself if this is what I should be doing with my life. Then I panic a little more because I don't know what else I would do.

These are the things I find myself stressing about lately. I know it is crazy and sometimes unfounded, but I just can't seem to shake some of these doubts.

Welcome to hell," a veteran teacher had told one of our interns on the first day of school the previous year.

I knew it wasn't just the immigration workshop that had Erin doubting herself and possibly even questioning her decision to come to Chicago. Though she'd studied Spanish in high school and college, she was struggling to communicate effectively with several students in her fifth-grade class who had recently arrived from Mexico. She had a supportive and enthusiastic mentor, but she'd been taken aback by the negativity of some of the other adults in the building. "Welcome to hell," a veteran teacher had told one of our interns on the first day of school the previous year. And outside school, her living situation had brought its own uncertainties. The week she arrived, she'd heard gunshots outside the house she was sharing with four other interns. Two weeks later, she woke up one morning to find one of her car windows bashed in and her CD player stolen. I'd begun the year by encouraging the interns to discount popular stereotypes that portray the city as a violent

cauldron, but Erin's first few weeks of living there hadn't exactly served to bolster my position. She was on shaky ground both experientially and emotionally, and I knew of no sure way to help her regain her footing. But I tried.

Erin,

Doubt is not a bad thing. If we had more teachers who questioned themselves, who weren't always so sure they were doing the right thing, we'd probably be a lot better off. I doubt myself on a daily basis: Am I really up to the challenge of preparing future teachers? Do I know enough? Am I teaching them the "right" things, making the appropriate curricular choices, setting the proper tone? Will any of what we're doing together make a difference to them a month, a year, ten years down the road?

I say all this not to put the focus on me, but to reassure you that: 1) You're not alone in your doubting, and 2) A certain amount of doubt is, I think, a healthy thing. Of course, when doubt becomes paralyzing, then it is no longer healthy—for you as a teacher or for your current or future students.

It seems that the presentation on immigration triggered your feeling of being overwhelmed. I'm sorry it had that effect—my intention with the seminars, I hope you know, is not to make you feel more discouraged or overburdened, but to raise awareness of some of the contextual issues that I think are important to your work in Little Village. But I'm not completely surprised to hear you're having those feelings. As is often the case, the more we know, the more we realize we don't know, and that can be a suffocating thought. Still, I think it's important not to beat yourself up because you don't understand it all completely, or don't know how to "fix" it. I don't either. We're all struggling to know more, to understand more clearly, to decide more thoughtfully. Part of what makes a good teacher is the willingness to question, to wrestle with the complexities that come with the territory.

So please don't let your uncertainty and confusion convince you that you somehow aren't or can't be good enough. In this work, most of us fall short every day. In some senses, we can never do enough. But we *can* do something, and on some days, that something is quite a lot.

Hang in there. You're doing great.

The Little Village Professional Development School program is unique in several ways. In most incarnations, PDSs are two-way partnerships between universities and school districts in which student interns obtain long-term, intensive experience in school classrooms (McBee & Moss, 2002). But in large urban systems with hundreds of schools and hundreds of thousands of students (Chicago, for example, has over 600 schools and more than 420,000 students), partnering with an entire district can be unwieldy. In addition, the traditional district-university partnership leaves an important urban constituency—the community—on the sideline. This reality has led Nora Hyland and Shuaib Meacham (2004) to advocate for a "community knowledge-centered model" of teacher preparation. Such an orientation requires a much greater commitment on the part of university partners (and student interns) to connect to community resources, utilize community expertise, and respect the community's needs and values.

The traditional district-university partnership leaves an important urban constituency—the community—on the sideline.

Our PDS program is a community-based effort: a three-way partnership between Illinois State University, several Chicago Public Schools, and a local community organization. Instead of spreading interns out in placements across the city, we place them all in schools within Little Village, a neighborhood of over 90,000 residents which boasts one of the largest Mexican-origin populations in the Midwest. It is a young community, with nearly 50% of its residents age 25 or under, and nearly 27% of families living below the federal poverty level (Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2007). The student populations in our partner schools are nearly 100% Latino, with more than 95% classified by the state as low-income

and over 40% as limited-English proficient (Illinois State Board of Education, 2006).

But these numbers and labels tell only a small part of the story of the community, and come largely from a deficit perspective. To understand the neighborhood more fully, one needs to walk the streets of its bustling shopping district, try an *elote* or *paleta* from the jingling cart of a street vendor, attend an overflowing mass at one of the local Catholic churches, sit in on a community improvement meeting, chat with one of the many parent volunteers who work at area schools. In the PDS, we try to provide opportunities for our interns to look beyond mainstream conventional wisdom about urban areas and to see the many assets that are present in their schools' community. One of these efforts is the series of noncredit Community and Cultural Context seminars mentioned in Erin's journal entry above. Another is a Community Investigation paper that interns write for one of their fall semester courses, taught by our site coordinator, Cheryl Witucke, in which they combine research and their own experiences to describe Little Village as they've seen and experienced it. Erin ended hers this way:

> *I am living in a community that has won awards for its commitment to affecting change and implementing positive programs for its residents. It is truly a vibrant community where residents shine in so many ways....I am learning about ways for teachers to get involved and work for not only the students, but for the community as a whole. This community has so much potential. Hopefully, it can continue to improve and draw lots of creative and dedicated teachers who will be able to impact the neighborhood in positive ways.*

2006 October 31

What do you do when you go out of your way NOT to alienate a student who is usually pegged as a troublemaker who, in return, treats you like crap and disrespects you? For example, you give a student an inch and he takes 12 instead?...I try to empathize and be considerate of this student who is usually on [other teachers'] "lists" of terrible students. I try to give him the benefit of the doubt and not come down on him, but then he takes advantage of it. You know what I mean? How do you deal with that and still try to build a relationship with him? I don't know if that makes any sense or not...if you have any advice, fire it my way.
Thanks so much.
Erin

As the school year progressed, the phrase "Be careful what you ask for" began to echo in my head on a regular basis. I'd invited our interns to write me with their reflections, challenges, and questions, and several, like Erin, had begun to do so. Their emails were honest, raw, sometimes angry, sometimes rambling, sometimes heartrending. But no matter what the topic, they almost always had questions. Hard questions. Questions I often wasn't sure how to answer. Yet, like most young teachers (myself included when I was in their shoes), answers were exactly what they wanted. I tried to oblige, but each time I did a part of me felt like a phony, a fake, a pretender. Here was my response to Erin:

> That can be a tough one. If the kid is being verbally disrespectful to you, I think you have to nip that in the bud. Have a talk with him (away from the other students) and let him know that you like him and respect him but that you deserve to be respected, too, and that the way he's acting is simply unacceptable. There's no negotiating. If he's just being more passively disrespectful (not doing what you ask, trying to get away with things), then you may need to give him more explicit boundaries. That doesn't mean you don't support him and advocate for him (and you can remind him of this), but that you do have certain expectations precisely because you believe in him…

It's not that it was bad advice. It's just that I could've easily ended every sentence with *but there's a good chance that may not work*, or *but that's easier said than done*. I typically did answer interns' situational "What should I do?" questions more tentatively, qualifying my answers with phrases like *every kid is different*, or *a lot depends on the context,* or *these are just suggestions, not solutions*. But I knew that tendency, too, could be maddening for a student

teacher who just wants a surefire answer for how to get Salvador to stay in his seat for longer than three minutes or Teresa to quit bullying the other kids at her table or Marquis to—For once! Just once!—bring in his homework.

I sensed that Erin sometimes wished for quick fixes or definitive solutions, but I also knew she understood that teaching is incredibly complex, and that many of the challenges she faced as a novice couldn't be dispensed with easily or made to disappear overnight. As many questions as she had, I rarely had "answers." To her credit, though, it never stopped her from asking the next one.

I like telling stories. I especially like to write about students and teachers in the city – not just because I find them interesting personally, but because I believe we stand to learn a great deal from the stories of those who spend their days in urban schools. A story, as Kathy Carter (1993) has written, is "a theory of something. What we tell and how we tell it is a revelation of what we believe" (p. 9).

But when you're a tenure-track professor feeling pressured by the expectations of academia, telling stories is generally not good enough. If you want your writing to "count," to move you one step closer to achieving tenure, you have to "do research," and that means your article title has to have a colon followed by a subtitle (see above), and you have to publish in peer-reviewed journals (like this one), and you have to lay out a clear theoretical framework (I'll get back to you on that.). And if you're doing qualitative work, even narrative inquiry, you can't simply tell stories. You also have to spend an appropriate amount of ink analyzing and interpreting what you've observed or heard or been told.

Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000), who first introduced the term *narrative inquiry* in educational research and have championed the field for years, underscore this distinction. "Although in some people's minds," they write, "narrative inquiry is merely a process of telling and writing down a story with perhaps some reflective comment by researchers and participants, the process…is far more complex" (p. 131). That process, they suggest, includes interpretive and analytic components in which a researcher must address "questions of meaning and social significance" (p. 131) that are raised by "field texts." In other words, in writing up a study for publication, the researcher must function as an analytical social scientist, not merely a reporter or witness. "[W]e fight against our desire," Clandinin and Connelly write, "to let field texts speak for themselves" (p. 130).

But according to Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont (2006), too many qualitative researchers have not fought that desire strongly enough. As the use of personal narratives in research has grown, they say, the quality of such studies has become more uneven. They note what they consider to be a troubling increase in narratives that "are collected and celebrated in an uncritical and unanalyzed fashion" (p. 166). This is problematic, they argue, because narrative accounts are no more "authentic" than any other type of inquiry, and should be treated with the same "sustained analytic inspection" (p. 169) that would be given any other "data." Researchers who claim to raise the banner of narrative inquiry without systematically analyzing the narratives they collect, say Atkinson and Delamont, are actually practicing "slack social science" (p. 169).

While I sometimes feel like an imposter as a teacher educator, I nearly always feel that way when I try to step into the role of researcher.

In some respects, I see myself as one of the pseudo-researchers Atkinson and Delamont take to task. While I sometimes feel like an imposter as a teacher educator, I nearly always feel that way when I try to step into the role of researcher. In my limited experience as an author of works that have been categorized, at least by some, as narrative inquiry, my writing has been criticized for its lack of an interpretive framework and its inadequate analysis. I have been told that I am too comfortable with allowing my participants to "speak for themselves." During my defense of my dissertation, which was a narrative study of four young teachers of color in Chicago schools, one of my committee members said, "This isn't research. It's journalism." I don't think it was intended as a compliment. A few years later, when a revised version of my dissertation was published as *See You When We Get There: Teaching for Change in Urban Schools* (2005), a generally favorable review

in the *Harvard Educational Review* (Charner-Laird, 2006) pointed out that while the book provided "rich descriptions of teachers who are effective in the urban context," there were also "many other analytic pathways that Michie could have explored in greater detail" (p. 424). The reviewer added, "Perhaps the next step for Michie is naming the theoretical construct that the teachers [in the book] so wonderfully exhibit" (p. 425).

In both of these cases, the problem was not that I was unaware of the expectation that narrative inquiry should include a healthy dose of interpretation and analysis. Instead, my reluctance to engage (or overengage, as I saw it) in analyzing the teachers' motivations, beliefs, and practices stemmed primarily from a fear of slipping into the role of "Great Interpretator . . . whose self-appointed task is to uphold reason and reveal the truth to those unable to see or speak it" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, cited in Lather, 1991, p. 157). As the author/researcher, I believed my analysis should certainly be part of the mix, but I didn't think I always needed to have the last word. Why should I be granted "interpretive authority" (Moen, 2006)? What about the teachers themselves? Or the reader? Advocates of qualitative inquiry talk a lot about concepts like "respectful research," "multi-vocality," and "multiple layers of interpretation," but it's hard sometimes not to think that, in the end, the researcher's voice is the only one that truly matters. Okay, we seem to be saying, you've heard from my participants and taken an intimate look inside their lives—now let me explain what it all means.

Of course, many scholars, perhaps most, would argue that that's exactly what social science researchers—quantitative or qualitative— are supposed to do: use their knowledge and expertise to attempt to explain phenomena, elucidate meaning, interpret social worlds. To do anything less, it could be argued, would be abdicating one's responsibility as a researcher.

Still, when I envisioned this article, I thought of it primarily as Erin's account of her year as an intern, and I didn't want to trample her words, interrupt to dissect everything she said, or— as seems to be common practice in narrative research—use only short snippets of her writing in order to prop up arguments or points of my choosing. It's as much her piece as it is mine, and that's why we're listed as co-authors. Is it research? I'm not sure. But as I consider the question, I'm drawn to the work of Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner (1997), who, in their defense of arts-based inquiry, argue persuasively for broadening our definition of what counts as educational research. They make the case that narrative inquiry about teaching and schools shouldn't always need to be accompanied by explicit theoretical or analytical arguments. Some educational stories, they say, "deserve their own textual breathing space…at least momentarily, prior to ultimate analysis by critics and theorists" (p. 83). Or, I would add, by teachers or principals or 21-year-old interns. We're all theorists, aren't we?

Erin had begun teaching occasional lessons to her fifth graders, and the ones I'd observed had gone pretty well. Like almost any new teacher, she'd had some frustrating moments. Once, after unveiling the materials for a hands-on science lesson she'd spent hours planning and organizing, a student exclaimed, "Hey, we did this last year!" Overall, though, she seemed to be transitioning rather smoothly into the role of teacher. Then again, her mentor was usually looking on from across the room and could chime in or quell potential insurrections when needed. But when Erin began teaching in an after-school "Homework Help" program, she was suddenly solo, completely on her own, and in those sessions her commitment and competence were being put to a serious test.

2006 November 22

I don't know about anyone else, but for some reason, I have this tendency to think that when I fail, I am letting everyone down. I am not a quitter, but sometimes, when I feel like I have really fallen flat on my face, I just want to let go, get out, and move on.

Tonight I had one of those moments at Homework Help. Ernesto is from my class. He has been in the ELL program for several years now, but just doesn't seem to be progressing all that much. I am sure that the homework is really frustrating for him since 95% of it is in English, but what frustrates me is that he doesn't even try to do it himself. Tonight, I was helping him with a worksheet and then moved on to another student. Out of nowhere, he started yelling at me in Spanish, saying something to the effect of, "Why don't you want to

help me? I'm leaving and going to my house because you don't want to help me."

Instead of having a conversation with him in front of everyone, I asked him to go to the hall with me. I tried to tell him (in Spanish) about how I am trying my best to help everyone. I told him he can't get mad every time I get up to go help someone else. As much as I wish I could take 20 minutes with each of those students and really help them (especially the ELLs), I just can't. Then our conversation was interrupted by the sound of chairs and bodies hitting the floor in the classroom.

I stepped back into the room to find two students on the floor with about five chairs around them. Carlos was holding his throat and Abraham was just standing there trying to look innocent. (Abraham also speaks no English and Carlos is a rather large boy, a bit bully-ish).

After that incident, I basically lost control of the whole class. I was so aggravated when I left tonight. I wanted to tell [the program director] that I won't be able to do Homework Help next semester, especially with the language barriers. I was so frustrated with myself for not having a better classroom management. I was frustrated with Ernesto for saying that I didn't want to help him. I was annoyed with Carlos and Abraham for getting into a stupid fight. And all of this took place in less than an hour!

My question is this: What should I have done differently? I don't want to be that "hard-ass" teacher who has no concern for anyone but myself. I refuse to be that teacher who the students are afraid of. But I feel like I need to be doing something differently so my students at least take me seriously. I feel like when I say something halfway firm and serious to them, they just look at me as if to say, "Is she talking?"

I came home and fell apart. I felt so defeated. That is when that feeling of absolute failure settled in and I was ready to throw the towel in. I know that I am new at this and no one is expecting me to be perfect, but unfortunately I have ridiculously high standards for myself and I get so impatient with myself. I definitely need to work on this, or else I am just setting myself up for future failures and letdowns. Any suggestions???

I had a few, but nothing earth-shattering. I suggested that she try to assess Ernesto's Spanish literacy skills, since I thought it was possible that he was struggling not only with learning English, but with reading and writing in his home language as well. I reminded her that her after-school class had grown from eight students to fifteen, and that alone made it more difficult to give kids like Ernesto the one-on-one support they needed. And I reiterated that she needed to keep trying to get past the idea that setting firm limits with students who needed them or using a sharp tone when necessary was the same thing as "being mean." Erin and I had talked a lot about the notion of the "warm demander" (Kleinfeld, 1975)—teachers who mixed toughness with tenderness, high expectations with genuine caring—but I knew that balance came more naturally to some than others. With Erin, the tender part was always close to the surface, but the toughness was hard to summon. Erin's mentor told her—affectionately—that she needed to "bitch up" her classroom demeanor at times. I wouldn't have put it in those words, but the point, I thought, was well taken.

Erin's mentor told her—affectionately—that she needed to "bitch up" her classroom demeanor at times.

Still, there was more to Erin's struggles than that. Her spoken Spanish was improving by the day, but she was still finding the linguistic challenges far more daunting than she'd imagined. Though her classroom was designated as part of the "general" program, several students needed Spanish language support, and two spoke almost no English. Even for Erin's mentor, who was a native Spanish speaker and a skilled teacher, negotiating all the language needs was a formidable task (but also one she embraced). Erin's university coursework—like that of all the other interns—had included no courses specifically focused on bilingual education or methods for teaching English Language Learners, so she felt particularly unpre-

pared. Yet instead of lamenting all the factors beyond her control that were creating unexpected challenges for her, instead of blaming the school or the bilingual program or the student, she generally tried to turn the focus inward – questioning her assumptions, adjusting her lens, striving to see things from her students' perspectives.

2006 November 25

Abraham moved here from Guadalajara in September. I am quite certain that he is here without his parents and is living with either his aunt or his grandmother. I can't begin to imagine living in a new country without my parents, and I am 22! He is only 10 or 11 and trying to adjust to so many things right now. I try to work with him and I try to show him that I care and that I am trying, but he just keeps pushing me away. He has a really bad attitude about learning English and is quite stubborn, but I can kind of see why this transition might be so hard for him.

I read that book, I Hate English *[a picture book by Ellen Levine about a Chinese girl who moves with her family to New York City], and I keep thinking about Abraham. Maybe he is afraid that if he works on his English, he will in some ways lose a part of himself. Or maybe this is a way for him to rebel or take out some of his frustration. I just wish that I knew more Spanish and that I had more confidence in my ability to carry on a successful and cohesive conversation with him.*

Erin's efforts to understand her students' lives and experiences were complicated, of course, by the fact that she didn't share their cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic backgrounds. This is not uncommon among interns in our PDS. When Cheryl and I receive our roster each spring for the next year's cohort, we can be fairly certain, even before meeting the students, that the majority will be White females who didn't grow up in the city. It's simple mathematics: The student body at Illinois State is 89% White, with a large proportion coming from Chicago suburbs or from small towns or rural areas in central Illinois. In the College of Education, the percentage of White students is even higher. Typical undergraduate education courses of twenty-five students might have one or two African Americans at most, and often have no Latinos or Asians. In three years, we have had only one Latino/a intern in our PDS program.

Recognizing that reality, the College of Education's "Chicago Pipeline" office has devoted additional resources to recruiting Latino and African American students from Chicago high schools to come to ISU to study education. But those efforts, crucial as they are, serve as a longer term strategy. For the time being, the demographics of our cohorts will likely remain much as they have been. So, as a teacher educator in this scenario, the questions that focus my work are clear: What knowledge, experiences, understandings, and dispositions are most important for these prospective urban teachers, most of whom are "outsiders" to the community in many ways, to gain or develop? How can we best prepare them to work successfully in city schools?

What knowledge, experiences, understandings, and dispositions are most important for these prospective urban teachers

In the methods course that I teach and in my one-on-one interactions with the interns, I try to keep several things in mind. First, I think it's important to give them ample opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of themselves: who they are and where they're from, what they believe in and what they value, what they've known and not known. I try to push them to examine the ways their racial, cultural, and class identities have shaped their perspectives, and to analyze social advantages and privileges they've enjoyed that may have previously gone unrecognized. If this happens in serious and sustained ways, they can begin to think more purposefully about their reasons for wanting to teach in city schools. They can move past viewing themselves as saviors or martyrs ("I'm a good person for being here.") and gain greater clarity and confidence in their self-identities as teachers.

I also try to help them question stereotypical views of city kids, families, and neighborhoods. I emphasize the importance of "seeing the student" (Ayers, 2001) -- the notion that good teaching always begins with seeing each child, fully and fairly, as an

individual with a unique history and equally unique hopes and dreams, a person of promise and possibility. I try to reinforce the importance of valuing students' cultures and lived experiences -- and making space for them in the classroom. That doesn't mean ignoring or giving short shrift to subject-area content. On the contrary, students in city schools need to be armed with the academic tools, as one Chicago teacher I know puts it, "to overcome whatever they need to overcome." But I think it's possible to do that by "build[ing] on what students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. xiv). The curriculum then can become both a "window" and a "mirror" for students (McIntosh & Style, 1999, p. 143), allowing them to look out on worlds previously unknown to them while also seeing their own experiences with new eyes.

Last, I try to help our interns better understand the bigger picture: the swirling historical, political, and socioeconomic contexts that impact city schools and students' lives -- both inside and outside the classroom. After all, to teach well in city schools, one needs an understanding not only of how to design engaging lessons, but also of what it means for families to live in poverty. One needs to know about multiple intelligences and authentic assessment, but equally important is an awareness of the ways institutionalized racism continues to impact people's lives.

Trying to communicate the importance of all this isn't easy, and I often fall short of my intentions. Just like many of my interns and their mentors, I sometimes feel pressured by what I'm supposed to "cover" in my class (It's technically a social studies methods course.), and I worry about straying too far afield. The school year moves quickly, things get hectic, crises of the moment command our intention. What I hope sinks in for the interns, though, is the notion that, if they really want to teach well— in the city or anywhere else— they have to commit to being continual learners. They have to become students not only of the craft of teaching, but students of their students, students of the communities in which they teach, students of the world. Erin seemed to grasp this, even if she also found it somewhat daunting. In an interview early in the year, she said:

> *Sometimes I get frustrated because I don't have the experiences that the [students] have, and I feel a little bit inadequate. I just feel like they're looking at me thinking, 'You don't know where I'm coming from. You don't know what I've experienced.' But I hope this experience will just add to the experiences I've already had in life [to help me] learn to relate to students who are different from me, and let them know that I don't have all the answers and that I'm learning with them.*

Following a month-long winter break, Erin and the other interns returned to their classrooms for seventeen weeks of student teaching. Since they were already familiar with the students and the curriculum, and had already developed a relationship with their mentor, the hope was that they could hit the ground running. For Erin it was more like a slow jog.

> *2007 January 25*
>
> *I am having a hard time figuring out how to be a balanced teacher. I realize this is only my first week "officially" teaching, but it is something I have been thinking about for a while now. Balance is so important, and not just as a teacher in the classroom. I need to find a way to stay balanced as a whole person.*
>
> *This past week I have started taking more control of things and I am starting to get a bit scared. Today was another one of those full control days because [my mentor] was at a conference. Things were crazy! We had several interruptions and the students were just wired....Rudy, who is a very bright and capable student, has just been out of whack since before Christmas....He has become more defiant and he doesn't respect me anymore. He doesn't listen and screws around in class. Now, he is also distracting others.*
>
> *Here is where that balance thing really comes into play. He is going through a lot at home right now. Their household is full of emotions and tension. I know things are chaotic, and I don't know what that feels like as an 11-year-old. When I was eleven, I didn't have to deal with that and still come to school, ready to listen and learn. However, he can't play the victim forever.*
>
> *I don't want to be mean [to him]. I want to*

be gracious and understanding and try to see where he is coming from. I have had several "heart-to-heart" conversations with Rudy since Christmas, and each time, he genuinely tells me that we can work on it together. No less than 5 minutes later, though, he is talking and laughing in class and bringing others down with him. I just don't know what to do. It's not like we can have personal, private counseling sessions every day. [My mentor] referred him to the school social worker and also told his mom about some free services in the neighborhood for the whole family to take advantage of. It just breaks my heart that he is dealing with so much at home. I want to help him, but I also want to push him to overcome these obstacles and rise above it. Is that being too idealistic?

Anyway, I am trying to find my rhythm as the disciplinarian in the classroom. I want to be their friend, but not in a buddy kind of way. I want them to respect me because I respect them. I want them to look back and think that we had a good time together and that we learned a lot in the process. I don't want them to remember me as a yeller or as a mean person. I know that I shouldn't care what others think about me, but I still do. I have already said this, but I don't want to be that jaded, hard-hearted teacher who everyone dreads. I want to be structured, but leave a little wiggle room. Any advice?

Erin,

It seems like there are two separate, but related, issues here: One is your overall effectiveness in managing the classroom and the other is how to work with Rudy. Unfortunately I don't have a quick fix for your situation with Rudy (Do I ever?). I think it's likely that because he is experiencing so much chaos in his home life right now that he *does* want a more structured classroom. If he feels like his family life is spinning out of control, strict discipline and control at school may actually feel safe for him. I'm not saying that you have to resort to a get-tough, no-nonsense stance, but I think that may be where he is coming from.

I think continuing to talk with him is important. Is there time before or after school a couple days a week where he could help out in the classroom for 10-15 minutes? Even something simple like organizing bookshelves or sweeping. And is the new behavior plan you've created for him a contract? I think it should be something in writing that he carries with him during the day. You could even attach some type of "reward" to it at the end of the week if he meets whatever expectations you (and he) set. I'm not crazy about rewards, but I think in extreme cases they are sometimes useful.

As for the larger question of discipline, being mean, etc.—I think there is a difference between stern and mean. But I think sternness comes more naturally for some than others, and your personality is such that it's not your natural inclination. So you'll have to work on developing "the look" that some teachers use, or a tone that says "I mean business" without having to scream. It may take awhile to do so -- it did for me. I also think you need to realize that just because you raise your voice to a student, that doesn't mean they're going to hate you forever. When strong relationships are built, kids understand that the stern look or harsh tone is coming from a place of care and love—not from disrespect. When they know you care, they'll understand if you sometimes have to put your foot down hard. In fact, they'll appreciate it.

Greg

2007 February 6

Tonight I was reminded why I want to be a teacher in Chicago, or anywhere for that matter.

We had [2nd semester] Homework Help registration from 5-6 pm. I saw several of my students and met a few parents as well. One of my last students to come was Rudy, my young friend who is going through a lot right now. His mom came to fill out the paperwork and while she was doing that, I was talking with Rudy. I asked him if he had eaten supper yet and he replied, "No." He said his mom was going to cook "mole" when they got home. I jokingly said that I would love to have some

of it and that he could bring some for me to school tomorrow. [A couple minutes later] Rudy walked back toward me with a grin on his face. He invited me to come over after registration to eat supper at his house.

So, at 6:30 after we had our last parent, I called Rudy and walked to his house. He lives right across from [the school]. They invited me in and immediately welcomed me. They had already eaten, but made a plate for me anyway and sat with me at the kitchen table. We ended up sitting there for nearly two hours just talking and sharing this and that. It was great to interact with Rudy outside of school and to try to let him see that I am a real person, too.

His family is so great. I am so touched that they invited me into their home. I am sure that some would frown on the fact that I went into one of my student's homes, and that it is a boy student for that matter. To make it worse, I went there alone and at night. But I think that tonight's time might make a huge difference in our daily conversations and interactions. I was able to share with Rudy, and he was able to do the same. I got to use some of my Spanish and I learned a lot about Mexican food.
I have not been home all day and I have SO MUCH to do for tomorrow (grade lots of student work and write letters to six students, plus planning), but part of me does not really care because I think accepting an invitation to Rudy's home carries much more weight and will be something he hopefully remembers. I know I will.

I was glad Erin seemed to be turning a corner with Rudy. I knew there was no guarantee that his peace offering would carry over to the next day's class, but it was a step. Besides, many good things were happening in her classroom. She'd taken over the teaching of science and math, and I'd observed her lead several creative, engaging lessons. Her first science unit, "Living a Healthy Lifestyle," included a brave hands-on activity on communicable diseases (brave because it required fifth graders to stick a hand into a bag of flour and then shake hands with a classmate—lots of potential for disaster there), and a writing/photography project that culminated in a stunning bulletin board titled "The Best Parts of Us," a wonderful example of the notion of "seeing the student" quite literally brought to life.

But March was looming, and that was going to bring another huge twist to Erin's PDS experience. Her mentor was having a baby and would be going on maternity leave for the remainder of the year. We'd all known about it since the fall, and had considered switching Erin to a different classroom to complete her student teaching. But after weighing all the factors, it seemed best to keep her where she was. The students, we all believed, would benefit from having the steady presence of someone they'd known since the year began. And while student teaching under the guidance of a substitute was far from ideal, I agreed to visit Erin's classroom more frequently and to be as available as I could be to support her.

As available as I could be. That was the key phrase. Erin wasn't our only intern. I had eleven others to observe, other interns' journals to respond to, a class to teach on campus, papers to grade, electronic portfolios to assess, research (if it could be called that) to do. Not to mention a life outside of work. Of course, that makes me no different from practically every other professor in every college of education across the country. But knowing that wouldn't give me any more time to devote to Erin in the coming weeks. I was actually feeling some of the same things she was: overwhelmed, inadequate, not up to the task before me. I wanted to be there for her, to provide a shoulder for her to lean on, but I was worried that, once her mentor was gone, she might need more than I could give.

I was actually feeling some of the same things she was: overwhelmed, inadequate, not up to the task before me.

2007 February 16
I know that you may not be able to answer all of these questions, and I also know that this might not count as a true journal entry, but these are just a few of the questions that have been swimming around my mind

this week. Some nights I just go home feeling defeated. I am doing the best I can and I am working my tail off, but sometimes I just feel like I am reaching for something I just can't reach, no matter what I try. Please don't hear me wrong: I LOVE what I am doing, and I love the people I am working with. But I am having a hard time finding my own niche, I guess. Maybe none of this makes sense, but I am just thinking out loud and trying to process a lot right now.

- *How do you manage a classroom/lesson when half of the students are with you and then several have no clue what is going on?*
- *What do you do when more than five students were absent and they missed all of the instruction?*
- *What do you do with a student who is mainstreamed into your classroom, who can't read, and who can't or won't talk?*
- *What do you do with a student who can't read in English as well as her first language and tells you, "When you talk, I don't understand you"?*
- *What do you do when one of your students makes an inappropriate comment about you?*
- *What do you do when you have* x *amount of material you need to cover before the big test and the students just aren't following you? What if the instruction was clear and meaningful, but several of them just couldn't keep up?*
- *How can you avoid teaching to the test?*
- *How can I make sure that I teach both science and social studies and don't just leave them behind, especially in a school where the tests are incredibly high stakes?*
- *What do I do when [my mentor] leaves?*

Damn good questions, every one of them. And I'd intended to write back. I really had. I don't even remember what happened. I guess things got busy, emails piled up, Erin's questions got buried. I never responded.

A week or so after her mentor left, I sat in on Erin's introductory lesson for Tony Johnston's *Any Small Goodness: A Novel of the Barrio,* which she'd chosen as the next book for the class to read together. She was excited about the choice. She hoped her students would be able to connect with the protagonist, an 11-year-old boy named Arturo, who lives with his Mexican immigrant family in an East Los Angeles neighborhood not unlike their own.

"I want you to preview the book with a partner," Erin told the group. "Look at the cover and write down five words or phrases that you think this book might be about."

Nico, a kid Erin had told me wielded a lot power among the other boys in the room, pulled the book closer to his face and examined the cover illustration of the main character. He grimaced. "He looks gay," Nico said. "Can I put 'gay'?"

2007 March 27

Rudy is incredibly intelligent and has a good heart, but he has still been struggling with self-control and appropriate behavior in my classroom. Over the past two months, I have spent several hours outside of the classroom working with him and his family. At this point, we are not making a whole lot of progress. While this is frustrating and draining at times, I keep reminding myself that hopefully it will have an impact on him in his future.

While my mentor was still here, we met with Rudy and created a contract for his behavior. We agreed upon his consequences for home and school. In addition to this contract, I created a behavior chart that mapped out his day. This worked for a couple weeks, but Rudy just stopped taking the folder home or just didn't have his parents sign it.

After this plan started failing, Rudy was removed from his table group/team entirely. He could no longer handle working with his classmates and his consequences were to be separated. After that didn't work, he was asked to leave the classroom periodically to go sit in another teacher's room. He had to take work with him and was expected to complete all of it while he was out. When this was no longer working for him and his behavior became even more disruptive, [the substitute and I] started calling home or writing home

nearly every day. In the past two months, I have been in contact with his mother 21 times. He has served two in-school suspensions as well as one out of school suspension.

Today, he got into a fight with another student in our classroom. At this point, I am running low on energy and short on ideas for helping him. He can be very manipulative, but I keep trying to demonstrate what it means to be respectful and consistent. He continues to test me, and I genuinely want the best for him. Like I mentioned, he is incredibly talented and smart. However, he just cannot seem to get any self-control.

Through this experience, I have learned that problems will not be undone overnight. I am also seeing how some staff members are very quick to give up on students. The art teacher told me last week, "That boy is a lost cause." I stood up for Rudy in that moment by telling the art teacher that he isn't a lost cause, he just needs some discipline and self-control. Even though I have been tempted to give in and give up, I am still trying to figure out ways to help him.

Since Erin's mentor had left, I'd made an even more concerted effort to applaud her efforts with Rudy. I assured her they were making a difference. I reminded her not to take his outbursts personally. I gave suggestions for alternative approaches that might help him. But in truth, it was hard to point to much tangible progress. Yes, there had been small steps here and there. But it had mostly been one step forward, two steps back. Rudy obviously trusted Erin, and occasionally that trust translated into a good day in the classroom. But as Erin's time in Little Village began to wind down and Rudy's erratic behavior and academic decline continued, it seemed clear that the situation would have no tidy resolution. She wouldn't make an inspirational speech that sparked a sudden turnaround. She wouldn't be able to make all the hurt go away. She would never even know exactly what it was that had caused him to come so completely unstrung.

But that's teaching. Not the version on display in *Freedom Writers* or *The Ron Clark Story*, but the real thing. In poor neighborhoods in city schools, and I'm sure in schools everywhere, the real thing doesn't always have a happy ending. For an idealistic 21-year-old intern, that's one of the toughest lessons to learn. The real test, though, once you've learned it, is how you come back, how you move forward, and whether you can still keep at least one eye focused not on things as they are, but on things as they might be.

Erin's last day in her classroom was Thursday, May 10. On May 12, she and the other Chicago PDS interns—along with over 1,000 other graduates from the College of Education—participated in their commencement ceremony. Erin was chosen as the student speaker. This is part of what she said:

My name is Erin Schaffer and I am one of 12 graduating interns from the Little Village Professional Development School in Chicago.

I transferred to Illinois State from Lincoln Christian College after my sophomore year. Because I joined the College of Education later than most of my fellow classmates, I never really felt a strong sense of community or belonging. However, after spending a year in Little Village with 11 other interns and two very supportive professors, I truly feel like Illinois State has become home to me.

While ISU has had other urban partnerships, ours was unique. For the first time in history, the university placed student teachers in the middle of an urban community, not only to teach, but to live as well. Five of us had the privilege of living right down the street from the schools where we student taught. Since August, we have been living and working in Little Village, a working-class neighborhood on Chicago's southwest side. This was not just a partnership with a school, but with the entire community. My journey to Little Village may have been filled with many hurdles and doubts, but looking back, choosing the PDS program was one of the best choices I have made in my college career.

For most of us, this past semester or year has been spent diligently working on projects, bulletin boards, reflective essays, and more lesson plans than we can count. But hopefully, through all of those projects and lesson plans, there were many lessons learned.

I would like to share one lesson I have learned. This is a thought from Myles Horton, a grassroots educator who spent a great deal of energy working to

transform the impoverished and oppressed conditions of African Americans and rural Southerners during the Civil Rights movement. He developed what might be called the two-eyed theory. With one eye, we focus on things as they are. With the other eye, we focus on what ought to be. As teachers, we need to learn to use both eyes equally.

Horton said: "I like to think that I have two eyes that I don't have to use the same way. I try to see with one eye where people are as they perceive themselves to be. I do this by talking to them, by learning what they enjoy and what troubles them. I try to find out where they are in that moment. That's where I have to start. You have to start where people are, because their growth is going to be from that point. Now my other eye is focused on where I'd like to see people moving. It's not a clear blueprint for the future, but movement toward goals they may not conceive of at the time."

Horton worked with poor families in the Appalachian Mountains. In Little Village, we worked with the children of Mexican immigrants. Others of you student taught in various contexts—small towns, suburbs, cities—but the principle is still the same: As educators, we have to do whatever it takes to meet our students where they are and help them see how they can move forward from that point. We must keep one eye on the sometimes harsh realities our students face, but the other eye on their amazing potential and all the beautiful possibilities. We are all going to be shaped and sifted. There will always be those tough situations that we can't fix. But we can always hold on to the hope we have for our future and our students' futures. Don't be afraid to look for those beautiful, seemingly impossible goals—we can reach them.

Graduates, I encourage you to adjust your eyes and to sharpen your focus. Don't lose sight of the enthusiasm and idealism you have right now. I have no doubt that we will face many challenges in the years to come, but I wish you all the successes as you step out and make a difference in your corner of the world.

Postscript: October 2007

Erin tried at the end of the year to get a job in Little Village at the school where she student taught. Two classroom positions were available—one in fifth grade—but a principal change and the usual plodding pace of hiring in Chicago Public Schools conspired to drag the process far into the summer. In the end, Erin decided she couldn't put the next year of her life on hold waiting for the decision of a new principal who might decide to bring in teachers of his own. In September, she and her boyfriend left western Illinois for a year in San Jose, Costa Rica, where they are living with local families and studying Spanish at an intensive language school. The latest news is that they plan to get married in May 2008. Erin says returning to Chicago to teach is still a real possibility.

Of the eleven other PDS interns from the 2006-2007 cohort, seven got jobs in Chicago and are currently teaching in public schools in the city. One, who's teaching eighth grade, recently called to tell me what a difficult time she's having with some of her students. She was looking for answers. I still didn't have many.

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A Re-Storying Framework: The Intersection of Community and Family Narratives in Puerto Rican Chicago

Laura Ruth Johnson
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A young mother of color is walking quickly down an urban street; the sidewalk is cracked and littered with trash; graffiti on the walls of buildings serves as a backdrop. Barely keeping pace with the woman is her young daughter, who is being shuttled along and guided by her mother's arm, which also serves as a shield against hustlers who are barraging the pair with nefarious sales' pitches. However, their "product" is not of the illicit kind, as one might assume; rather than pushing drugs or stolen merchandise, these particular street denizens are hawking alphabet books and high school diplomas. The ad ends with the following "punch-line": "Because you can't get your GED on the street."

The above television ad for the National Institute for Family Literacy (NIFL), which aired in 2004, is unequivocal in its message that the urban neighborhood in which this mother and child live is a destructive and dangerous place, one to be avoided and discarded rather than a site of knowledge and source of educational possibilities. Other print and television ads associated with this campaign convey a similar perspective, where "moving up" in terms of education and economics means "moving on" and abandoning an "old way of life."[1] While the aim of the family literacy promotion is to encourage parents to achieve educational goals and better the life of their family, this betterment is positioned in opposition to low income families' homes and communities, which in the ads and posters were represented by spray painted and dingy hallways, overcrowded project housing, and trailer parks deluged with garbage. As the ads exhort parents to "come in" to family literacy programs, they also imply that they must "get out" in order to improve their life.

1 For examples of the ads see http://www.adcouncil.org/campaigns/fam_lit/.

In their depiction of low income communities as antithetical to success and essentially as drags on learning, the designers of these ads are promoting an all too familiar narrative within the field of family literacy. An early rallying mantra associated with family literacy campaigns and programs was that they aimed to "break intergenerational cycles of illiteracy." This slogan's antecedents are culture of poverty theories forwarded by researchers such as Oscar Lewis (1970) and the Moynihan Report (1965); the latter referred to low income African American families as "tangle[s] of pathology." Under these sorts of views, poverty is associated with negative and destructive traits and behaviors that are passed on intergenerationally. The Moynihan Report (1965) more specifically identified low income African American culture as deficient and in particular was used to point the finger at single African American mothers. Cultural deficit theories continue to be used within educational and social policy debates, especially within discourses that label certain cultures as not valuing education.

While the aim of the family literacy promotion is to encourage parents to achieve educational goals and better the life of their family, this betterment is positioned in opposition to low income families' homes and communities.

Soon after the inception of family literacy programs, researchers critiqued their underlying model as premised on views of families from non-mainstream backgrounds as deficient in literacy and parenting skills (Auerbach, 1995, 1989; Taylor, 1997).

Some scholars have also provided alternative typologies that are more strengths-based, or what Auerbach (1995) has termed "wealth models." These types of models build on families' experiences and their distinct cultural views of education and childrearing. However, other researchers have suggested that many family literacy programs employ a "rhetoric of strengths" while utilizing practices that reflect a deficit orientation. Valdés (1996) has questioned the very notion of offering any sort of parent education, as she considers all attempts to change parenting practices as tampering with participants' cultural views of childrearing and education and viewing parents as in need of "fixing."

Given these debates over the orientation and intent of family literacy and parent education programs, the purpose of this article is to provide an antidote to deficit views of communities and families through the use of research I conducted among young Puerto Rican and Latina mothers attending a family literacy program in Chicago's Puerto Rican community. In particular, I aim to argue against narratives, such as those utilized within the aforementioned ad campaign, that portray low income families, and more specifically mothers, and their communities in negative ways. By sharing the stories and experiences of young mothers and community members, I demonstrate the ways that families and communities can serve as "funds of knowledge," as repositories of experience and sites for learning. Furthermore, the community-based model of the family literacy program which was the focus of my research offers an alternative to narrow and unitary approaches to literacy instruction within the field and can enhance our understanding of how a community, along with its businesses, institutions, organizations, and social and cultural life, can serve as the foundation for the acquisition of literacy skills and academic knowledge (Guerra, 1998; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Moss, 1994a, 1994b)

By sharing the stories and experiences of young mothers and community members, I demonstrate the ways that families and communities can serve as "funds of knowledge," as repositories of experience and sites for learning.

This study also aspires to contribute to research that has gathered community narratives and perspectives and in particular used oral history to heighten our understanding of a variety of issues, including poverty, citizenship, and identity development, and how they are related to and understood by Puerto Rican women (Benmayor, 1991; Benmayor, Torruelas, & Juarbe, 1992; Benmayor, Juarbe, Alvarez, & Vazquez, 1987; Olmedo, 2001, 1997).

Theoretical Framework

Within this study, I have made use of narratives and stories in order to provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of complex social and cultural phenomena, particularly those related to the lives and experiences of Latina women. In this regard I have been inspired and informed by the work of Abu Lughod (1993) among Bedouin women, in which she affirmed the power of storytelling as a way of "writing against culture." Other researchers have used in-depth portraiture as a means of illuminating certain issues salient to the lives of specific groups of women (Heller, 1997; Lightfoot, 1997). While some might prefer work than can offer up generalizations and produce neat and tidy conclusions, I side with those who believe that it is necessary to pay tribute to the contradiction, tension, and fluctuation that are natural and intrinsic facets of everyday life. Although this may be viewed as a subjective and "non-scientific" approach, and ultimately not useful for designing and developing effective instructional programs, I would argue that the lessons learned from listening to the diverse and varied stories of individuals and their families are integral ones to be incorporated into not just family literacy programs, but all educational programs. Furthermore, to respond to those who question the truthfulness on the part of the storyteller and who view their narratives as just "tales," the significance of individuals' stories and life narratives resides not just in the content or what is talked about, but in the telling of the story. Individuals construct the stories of their lives in particular ways, and these particularities tell us much about how one's experiences figure into their processes of identity development (see Johnson, 2005).

My work is also rooted in "funds of knowledge" theories within the field of education that have sought to challenge the deficit-oriented views of families that have predominated in schools, particularly those that

work with low income and immigrant communities (Amanti, Moll, & Gonzalez, 2005). While funds of knowledge approaches have been used to bring the experiences and expertise of families and households into classrooms (Amanti, Moll, & Gonzalez, 2005), in my research I have extended this idea to include an entire community setting. Another key concept that frames my study was one conceived by the late educator and founder of the Highlander Folk School, Myles Horton, that as individuals get "their history in their hands . . . the role of education changes" (p. 218). In other words, educational approaches that enable students to participate in historical events—rather than just reading about history—promote engagement in the educational process. Furthermore, such a perspective views history as made and enacted by "everyday" individuals through daily struggles and events and recognizes the relationship between the formation of identity and the concept of struggle on a local everyday level, as well as in a broader, more historical sense (Holland & Lave, 2001).

Research Site and Methods

The Family Learning Center (FLC) is a family literacy program of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), a grassroots community based organization that has provided educational and cultural services and programs to Chicago's Puerto Rican community for over 30 years. Founded in 1994, the FLC offers adult education classes, early childhood education, parenting workshops, and family activities, as well as support services. Women graduate from the program with a high school diploma, made possible through a partnership with an alternative high school, which is housed in the PRCC. Other programs of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center include a bilingual child care, an AIDS education and community health program, and a youth-run cultural space.

During the time of my study, the women attending the program ranged in age from 17 to 29; while the majority was Puerto Rican, there were also a number of Mexican and African American students enrolled. Only a few of the Latino students had been born in their native country. Thus, the majority of the students had attended U.S. schools since primary school. In fact, many of the Puerto Rican students had never visited the island, and a few were third-generation mainland Puerto Ricans. Some still had extended family in Puerto Rico, and one student sporadically visited her grandmother on the island; however, most students' immediate families had relocated to Chicago and had few remaining ties with *la isla.*

Data for this study was collected across a variety of settings and employing ethnographic methods such as in-depth interviewing and participant observation. Over the course of a year, I interviewed 12 young Puerto Rican/Latina mothers enrolled in the program and observed the participation of more than 30 women in program classes and activities, such as literacy and parenting workshops, as well as in other community settings. I also interviewed program staff and teachers and conducted brief interviews with other community members (some non-mothers). The findings presented here are part of a larger dissertation study (Johnson, 2005) that explored the women's educational and familial experiences and how their participation in the FLC and community activities contributed to the development of their identities as learners, women, mothers, and above all as Latinas and *Puertorriqueñas* (Puerto Rican women).

Researcher Role

My relationship with this particular community did not begin with this research project, but rather nearly 10 years previous to this study when I accepted the job as program director of the FLC, a position I remained in for 5 years (but not while I was conducting this research study). While working there, I developed close relationships with the community leaders and activists who worked at the PRCC and affiliated community organizations. Through my participation in community life and interactions with co-workers and FLC students I became well-versed in many aspects of Puerto Rican history and culture, as well as gained insight into some of the predominant experiences, values, and ideologies that characterized various sectors of the community. Once I returned to Chicago to conduct my research and live, I rented an apartment in the community, located one-half block from *Paseo Boricua* and the FLC, set aside for me by a longtime community resident and activist who owned the building, where I resided after my dissertation research was completed. My residence there provided me with a window into daily community life, as well as enabled me to build casual relationships with individuals beyond those I had worked with or who had attended the FLC, such as business owners and workers and other neighborhood residents.

Thus, because of my longstanding relationship with the PRCC, I was afforded the status of "insider" in some respects, despite the fact that I was not Puerto Rican and had not grown up in the community. However, these close ties I had forged with community members did not negate aspects of my identity—I am Anglo, was raised in an affluent suburb of Washington, D.C., and was not a mother during the time of the research—that positioned me as an "outsider" relative to many community members and the women attending the FLC.

Community as Classroom: A Funds of Knowledge Approach to Family Literacy

The FLC regularly utilized the surrounding community as a context for educational activities. Located in the heart of the Puerto Rican business district—the area was called *Paseo Boricua*, or Puerto Rican Walk—the community offered numerous opportunities for students' acquisition of knowledge. For example, tours of community murals allowed for the discussion of topics in Puerto Rican history and culture, as well as the exploration of a variety of community issues. Annual events, most notably the Puerto Rican parade, not only involved students in community life, but also provided the occasion for the creation of cultural projects. An oral history class trained women in interviewing skills so that they could gather and share the life narratives of their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. Furthermore, such activities also enabled for the exploration of students' familial narratives, as they made connections between significant events in the community and their own family histories. In the following section, I will more specifically demonstrate how the FLC built upon the experiences and personal stories of participating women and employed the community as a classroom.

The Crucifixion: Community as Classroom

During the time of my research at the FLC, a community mural was in danger of being destroyed by a condominium development encroaching from an adjacent lot. The mural, entitled "*La Crucifixacion de Don Pedro* (The Crucifixion of Don Pedro)," was especially significant as it was the oldest Puerto Rican mural in Chicago and depicted figures associated with the Puerto Rican independence movement, such as Pedro Albizu Campos, Lolita Lebron, and Luis Muñoz Marin, along with the *Lares* flag, designed for use in the *Grito de Lares* uprising against the Spanish in 1868. Community activists and leaders organized a rally, in which women enrolled in the FLC participated, to protest the destruction of the mural. Afterwards, as part of an assignment for their Latino Literature class, FLC students were asked to write, and perform, short plays that centered on the mural. In class, a group of women discussed and planned the script they were to write on the mural:

> Rosa asks, "Why now they want to come into our community and make gentrification?" Raquel provides some input: "We can talk about Lolita" (she is referring to Lolita Lebrón,[2] who is featured in the mural; in 2005 the FLC renamed the program in her honor) … [and] start talking about the mural and what it means to be Puerto Rican." Rosa begins to draft the story and recites as she is writing: "We feel that they can't destroy our memories … something that they didn't create." The students begin to discuss the figures depicted in the mural, which include Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos who Marta describes as "the one who wanted Puerto Ricans to stand out for his country." Monika, an African American student, asks the other women to tell her what the mural is about. Rosa responds: "To make a long story short, these are the revolutionaries from Puerto Rico and they're trying to destroy it." The instructor, who is circulating from group to group, responds to one woman's comment that Dr. Campos was the president of Puerto Rico: "Puerto Rico has never had its independence … there has been no president of Puerto Rico [and] there is no such thing as a president of Puerto Rico." Rosa pipes in, "I know he was a lawyer." The instructor continues, informing them that he was the first Puerto Rican to graduate from Harvard, had five degrees, and spoke seven languages: "He was called *'El Maestro'* (The Teacher) because he used to teach people about Puerto Rico."

2 Lolita Lebron is a Puerto Rican nationalist who spent over 25 years in prison for her role in an armed attack on the U.S. Congress in 1954. She was released and pardoned by President Carter 1979 and has since continued to be active in the Puerto Rican independence movement.

The women's participation in the protests provided them with the opportunity to be directly involved in community issues such as gentrification and then transfer this experience into the classroom context.

As the above vignette illustrates, the women's participation in the protests provided them with the opportunity to be directly involved in community issues such as gentrification and then transfer this experience into the classroom context, in the process amplifying their own knowledge of Puerto Rican history, as well as teaching classmates who had not participated in the protests. Furthermore, their involvement in the classes at the FLC helped augment their understanding and appreciation of the mural, for they learned of the historical significance of the figures it depicted, which for all was new knowledge. While they may have passed by the mural thousands of times, as it was located in a high traffic area and contained recognizable symbols and figures, such as the *Lares* flag and the crucifix, the 100 years of history it portrayed was largely unfamiliar terrain. An article from 2004 in the Chicago Tribune described how many neighborhood residents identified with the mural even if they were unaware of its historical significance.[3] Rosa shared how her involvement in the efforts to save the mural spurred a discussion with her father, who revealed that when he first met her mother—or, in his words, "*conocia su mama*"—they had stood in front of the mural on a date. Thus, the experience of the mural protests not only provided students with new knowledge, but allowed for the sharing of family narratives intergenerationally.

"I remember": The Role of Family Narratives ...

During interviews, many of the women identified some of the cultural elements—such as *vejigante* mask making and *bomba y plena* (Afro-Caribbean music and dance) workshops—as their favorite parts of the program.[4] Some of these in-class activities were linked with community events, such as when masks were made to wear at the Puerto Rican parade; a number of women also practiced their dancing skills at local *bombazos*, or dance events. Wanda described her first reaction to learning about *vejigantes:* "I didn't know about it. Didn't even know that that even exist. And it was weird to me 'cause, I don't know, I'm Puerto Rican and I didn't even know what it is." She also detailed an interaction she and her father had around the mask-making activity:

> My dad knew what it is, because I told him I was making it, but he [had] never told me about it … and I was like wow, I never learned that we had *vejigantes* in Puerto Rico … and he was like, "I'm gonna make one too." 'Cause he said he knew how to make them and everything.

Interestingly, similar to Rosa's conversation with her father around the mural, Wanda's experience of making a *vejigante* mask within a classroom setting spurred a discussion that revealed her father's own expertise in mask making. In this way, her participation in certain activities offered at the FLC unlocked a familial fund of knowledge previously unbeknownst to her. Moreover, her statement that she felt "weird" about being unaware of the existence of *vejigantes* indicates the importance she places on knowing her cultural heritage as part of her Puerto Rican identity. It was also interesting that her father had not himself shared this knowledge until she brought it up. Sulema, a student who was half Puerto Rican and half German, admitted that, although she had grown up in the area, she was not aware of the local community-run Puerto Rican parade (that is, until attending the FLC) held as an alternative to the corporate-sponsored mainstream parade that occurs downtown on the same day.

Other women had similar experiences where knowledge gained within classroom and community contexts intersected with family narratives. Rosa was also impacted by the making of *vejigante* masks and made connections between the historical and cultural significance of the *vejigante* and her father's past

3 A wall that builds bridges: Neighbors can't picture Humboldt Park without their mural--but it's disappearing, by Allan Johnson, Chicago Tribune, February 8, 2004.

4 Vejigantes are masked trickster figures that are featured in festivals and carnivals.

experiences growing up in the Puerto Rican town of Ponce, renowned for the masks. The mask making activity inspired Rosa to write a poem dedicated to her father. She began the poem by addressing him directly, and invoking the stories about Ponce he used to tell her as a child: "Papa, Papa, *te recuerdos* (do you remember) when you use to tell me the story about the barrio Ponce *onde te criaste cuando ibas al Carnival del ano, para ver los vejigantes* (where you grew up where you went to the yearly Carnival to see the *vejigantes*)." Later in the poem, she made a direct connection between the act of making the masks as part of the FLC and the family narratives her father shared with her: "*Con mis propios manos, haciendo la mascara de Vejigante, recordandome la historia que te me contaba* (with my own hands, making the *vejigante* mask, remembering the history that you told me)." After performing the poem at an event where her father was present, Rosa hugged him, crying; months later, when she was asking me which of her poems she should read at the graduation ceremony, and I suggested "*Me Recuerdo*," she replied that she was unable to read it without crying.

A Re-storying Framework: Reclaiming versus "Breaking" Cycles

The above examples illustrate the ways that one's community and family can serve as sites and resources for learning within family literacy and other such programs, rather than as antithetical to educational development, as portrayed in the NIFL ads. The FLC's emphasis on providing participating women with opportunities to learn about their culture and engage in a variety of community activities—in this way getting their "history in their hands" a la Myles Horton—was integral to their taking up the goal of learning about their history and culture on their own terms (Horton & Friere, 1990). While culture was addressed broadly, it was also enacted on a personal level, and allowed for women to share their individual cultural experiences within their own families, to tell their own stories, and in this way participate in history while also learning about it. This *re-storying framework* enabled for women to place themselves at the center of the educational process, and viewed participants' distinct cultural and familial narratives and particular life experiences as worthy of exploration and strengthening, instead of as deficits and obstacles that "got in the way" of legitimate educational instruction. Moreover, in many cases the women's participation in FLC activities helped them reclaim cultural knowledge and familial experiences, or in the words of Rosa, keep their memories from being destroyed. Such a phenomenon contrasts sharply with the rhetoric of "breaking cycles" utilized so frequently by family literacy programs and ad campaigns.

This re-storying framework enabled for women to place themselves at the center of the educational process.

Although educational programs are often lauded for the integration of culture into the curriculum and their ability to be culturally relevant to the lives of participants, the "bottom line" concern, especially for policymakers, is more intent on assessing conventional educational effects and outcomes, such as the acquisition of specific reading and numeracy skills and employment and college entrance rates. Thus, cultural education and the inclusion of students' familial funds of knowledge are often viewed as a positive program element, but as extracurricular rather than as a substantive educational component. The FLC provides an exemplar of how to utilize culturally relevant content as the foundation for curriculum and literacy instruction: Students not only gained new "funds of knowledge" but also employed this knowledge to produce new texts and narratives, such as short plays and poetry, and in this way improve academic skills. The social outgrowths of the type of cultural immersion offered at the FLC, among them the development of a positive self-identity and pride in culture, are usually not included alongside measurements more typically used to evaluate educational institutions and programs, such as standardized test scores.

The women's narrations of the knowledge gained from previous generations, and that acquired in the overall community context, attest to the ways that communities can serve as not merely as "funds" but as vast storehouses of knowledge (Olmedo, 1997; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Such community experiences and knowledge are viewed by many in the educational field as part of the picture, an additive, yet one fund of many in a context where more powerful discourses often hold sway. The experiences of the women attending the FLC, and that of their families and the surrounding community, remand us to instead tip the scales in favor of community knowledge and narratives, to recognize the significant knowledge circulated and transmitted within particular community contexts, acknowledging it as beneficial rather than discarding it as a detriment. Above all, the lesson to

be gleaned from women's experiences in their families and communities is that the "street" does not need to be situated in opposition to "school," but that communities, while containing dangerous elements, can also often serve as educative spaces.

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Narrative Push, Narrative Pull

William Ayers
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Words words words words. Weird words common words, fragile words and sturdy words, empty words and blah blah blah, imaginary real life, falling filing failing hiding, straight words queer words, plagiarism ecstasy clichéd agony, word games mind storms, music rhythm blossoms thorns.

You, you, you, you. Coffee coffee tea tea. Turn away go pee. Sit down ease in, tremble, panic, sweat, begin. Rub forehead stretch hand stand up begin again. Face the paper, face the screen, bleed a little, breathe steam. Relax flex smile frown, search a word wall up and down. At last at last, surprise find, secret pearl round a grain of mind.

Writing:

- You: A singular intelligence and unique mind—the one and only only only one who will ever trod this earth—falling in love just so with this person in this way, suffering suffering suffering like no other. No one else will have these particular babies and not other babies, lose this mother and this father rather than another mother and father, get this scar and that one and not another, experience this ecstasy in this place with this person instead of all the other ecstasies that might have been with all the others, take on that one project and build that exact thing over there, mess everything up over here, pick up this stone on that road, choose and choose and choose and choose. You can choose to not write, choose a strategic silence as a powerful expression, a kind of resistance of stillness, choose to speak without words using brush and body to shout the ineffable. No one else can do what you can do because quite simply no one else is or ever will be just this right now you. But if you want to write you must find words and you must do work. You must.

- Words: They're waiting to be breathed into life—to be mustered up in military formation and marched dutifully in black rows onto white fields, or to be piled into incendiary heaps, anarchist bombs and unruly explosions spreading fire and chaos on the page and then running off in all directions. It depends. It depends on what you want your words to do. Do you write to change things, to make a difference, to expose injustice, to fight the power? Or do you write in defense of the status quo? Ray McDermott invents an entire vocabulary to describe the debasement of language that coincides with schools designed to coerce, dominate, and oppress: exanimation—an exam that sucks the life out of a person; accessment - an assessment meant to exclude; imperical - an active technology of governance; eunichs of analysis - the kids themselves of course. You decide.

- Work: The trick is to develop the discipline of the desk, to commit yourself to words on the page in a principled and predictable way. Every day is good—say from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m., or from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.—or three times a week, or all day Saturday. That's it—not perfect prose nor a sudden visit from some magical muse nor publishable pieces, *but a writing routine*. Sounds simple, but it isn't. You must show up, you must nurture the habit of writing, you must put your words on the page. It's labor. With words on the page you can rework rethink reorganize and edit and edit and edit, but without words, you are left with good intentions, grand plans, big hopes—in other words, not much.

The schoolboys of Barbiana, a group of working class Italian youth who wrote a series of letters addressed to the teachers who had pushed them out of school, had this to say about the rules of writing practice:

> Have something important to say, something useful to everyone or at least to many. Know for whom you are writing. Gather all useful materials. Find a logical pattern with which to develop the theme. Eliminate every useless word. Eliminate every word not used in the spoken language...

So get to work.

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"How is it," Edward Said asks, "that the premises on which Western support for Israel is based are still maintained even though the reality, the facts, cannot possibly bear these premises out?" In a notable 1984 essay, "Permission to Narrate" Said attempts to answer his own complex question: "Facts," he writes, "do not at all speak for themselves, but require a socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustained, and circulate them."

He's right, of course. Think, for example, of newspaper headlines you've seen that, while the facts and the content may be upsetting, are nonetheless instantly absorbed because they fit easily into a script already written, that is, they conform to a socially accepted narrative: "Toddler Left Unattended in Southside Apartment Bitten by Rat;" "Eight City High Schools Labeled Failing;" "Two Teens Charged in Playground Shooting."

The facts in each of these situations are supported by a familiar and, therefore, comfortable story. The story adsorbs the facts, sustains them, and circulates them repeatedly, far and wide. It often seems as if the stories are already written, resting comfortably in the back of a computer somewhere, awaiting only this or that predictable fact as authenticating detail, at which point they explode instantly onto the front pages.

Imagine the disequilibrium that would accompany a headline that organized the same facts in the service of a different narrative: Failure of City to Eradicate Vermin Claims Another Victim; City Bureaucracy Delays Childcare Benefit, Unattended Boy Sustains Rat Bite; Easy Access to Assault Weapons Puts Guns in Kids' Hands.

Or think of the site of ritualized hyper-narratives in conflict: the courtroom. From car accident to corporate looting, from criminal case to child custody dispute, the struggle is always a fight to fit the available facts for judge and jury into a credible narrative that serves a specific outcome.

In a trial I observed years ago, a large group of Irish Americans and recent Irish immigrants, all known supporters of the Irish Republican Army, had been charged in federal court in Brooklyn with accumulating weapons to send to the IRA in support of their fight with the British. The prosecution contended that the political beliefs of the defendants along with their avowed support for the IRA motivated them to conspire and to break a number of federal statutes.

The defense told a different story: the defendants, they maintained, were part of a long and proud tradition of anti-colonial struggle against imperialist powers like Great Britain, a tradition that embraced the founding of the United States itself. Further, there was no criminal intent, since the defendants were convinced that they were acting in concert with US policy and as adjuncts to a known federal agency.

The trial took place at the height of the Malvinas crisis, an ugly war that almost went nuclear between Great Britain and Argentina.

It happened that the defendants in the case were acquitted. The defense apparently had an insight the prosecution missed entirely—they worked systematically to put an audience in the jury box that would be receptive to their particular narrative. The facts were only in minor dispute; the larger argument was over whose narrative was believable.

The defense succeeded in selecting a jury that was overwhelmingly recent immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, from Central and South America. The trial took place at the height of the Malvinas crisis, an ugly war that almost went nuclear between Great Britain and Argentina. The crisis didn't register with most Americans, but it was the top story in Latin American newspapers where the undisputed bad guy was Great Britain. For these jurors at this time, a narrative of independence from the evil empire was easy to hear, completely acceptable to believe.

Here's a different, perhaps more familiar courtroom story, a parable really. But it's true enough and

it happened in April, 1989. Our own boys were 12, 9 and 8 at the time, and they'd cut their teeth on the swings, slides and sandboxes of Central Park playgrounds, jogging around the reservoir, celebrating birthday picnics at the carousel, watching West Indian cricket matches, awestruck.

When a 28-year-old jogger, a white investment banker, was found raped, bludgeoned, and in a coma in the underbrush of Central Park, the telling became, like the river of terrible crimes before it, an international news story with epic legal and policy consequences.

Five children were arrested and charged with assault and attempted murder and gang rape within 24 hours. The immediate language of the media was unequivocal and it resonated: "packs of bloodthirsty teens from the tenements, bursting with boredom and rage, roam the streets, getting kicks from an evening of ultra violence." The liberal Pete Hamill wrote, "They were coming downtown from a world of crack, welfare, guns, knives, indifference, and ignorance. They were coming from a land of no fathers…They were coming from the anarchic province of the poor...And driven by a collective fury, brimming with the rippling energies of youth, their minds teaming with the violent images of the streets and the movies, they had only one goal: to smash, hurt, rob, stomp, rape. The enemies were rich. The enemies were white."

Under interrogation, the youth confessed on videotape. Almost immediately, all five repudiated their confessions. They were tried and convicted of rape, sodomy, sexual abuse, riot, and assault, and sent to prison. The victim testified that she had no memory of the attack. There was no forensic evidence linking any of them to the assault. All there was were the videotaped confessions. And the familiar story.

But the narrative was strong. It was black and white, male and female, Wall Street and Harlem, law-abiding adults and barbaric youth, heroic woman versus feral beasts, the establishment versus Black teens, order versus terror, human versus animal, thoughtful versus mindless. It was open and shut. Each young man served six to 12 years in prison.

And now the problem: all five were innocent. The perpetrator confessed 13 years after the fact, and, after some painful re-examination, the prosecution admitted error. But the narrative, the false story, had done its work.

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Every narrative is, of course, necessarily incomplete, each a kind of distortion. Reality is always messier, always more complicated, always more idiosyncratic than any particular story can honestly contain. A single insistent narrative, by its nature, lies.

Perhaps that's why courtrooms are ultimately dissatisfying—sometimes profoundly, often mildly so: One of the narratives must triumph over the other. And in newsrooms, too, there seems to be little room for nuance, none at all for two contradictory narratives existing side-by-side. And perhaps that's what makes classrooms at their best such infinitely wondrous places: Not only are all master narratives and triumphalist stories—as well as all manner of orthodoxy—challenged and laid low, but whatever emerges as the new truth is then questioned, reflected upon, seen as inadequate in itself. Classrooms can be sites of curiosity, investigation, skepticism and agnosticism, narratives in play.

Every narrative is, of course, necessarily incomplete, each a kind of distortion.

Whenever a single narrative takes on the authority of truth—that is, when it puffs itself up to a size and density that overshadows every alternative possibility—it becomes like a magnetic hole in space, consuming all available energy and light, sucking the air out of every room. Such is the status of the story told inside the United States regarding Israel/Palestine.

The dominant narrative has transformed only slightly over half a century, its broad outline essentially intact: The site of origin for Judaism and the Jewish people is the historic land that lies from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, from Dan to Beersheeba; exiled for millennia the Jews collectively have longed to return to that specific place; the Nazi Holocaust in Europe, in which some six million Jews were rounded up and slaughtered, energized modern Zionism and catalyzed within the international community vigorous support for the creation of a Jewish state; the state of Israel, founded on the site of origin, is a spunky little beacon of liberalism, democracy, and

human rights within a sea of autocratic dictatorships.

This narrative ignores certain inconvenient facts, chiefly the actuality of the Palestinian people on that same land, a people whose very existence was initially denied in the narrative broadcast to the West: "Israel is a land without people for a people without land"—this represents the rhetorical erasure of an entire swath of humankind. This kind of statement may be compelling to some, but it is also, importantly, verifiable or falsifiable—that is, its truth or falsity can be discovered. But the verifiability was never of much interest, since it became more important to insist on the historical rights of Jews to the land and to render inadmissible any talk of native inhabitants, any narrative of Palestinian life. This sentiment had endless variations, the most persistent, that the Israelis found nothing but a primitive backward place, and that upon that rock a modern state was created—the soundbite: "They made the desert bloom."

When the existence of the Palestinians became undeniable, when they failed to comply and exit easily, they were transformed into an obstacle to progress and peace, rubble to be removed. The dominant available images prescribe a particularly parochial set of options: a barricaded and insulated rejectionist leadership; pitiful masses suffering in teeming refugee camps or squalid, quarantined communities; and, most prominent of all, terrorist suicide bombers, fanatical malevolent creatures, bereft of normal human motivation and well beyond our comprehension.

The recurrent American story—dominant, habitual, profoundly functional—is similarly a tale of democracy and freedom, of forward motion, perpetual improvement and never-ending progress. That story, told and retold in official and scholarly and popular venues over and over and over again, echoes in our consciousness until it achieves the exalted status of common sense, a truth beyond doubt: America is the greatest country on earth,land of the free, home of the brave. God bless America.

The Puritans provided one of the most durable symbols of the American experiment, a symbol that is as resilient and resonant today as it ever was: America was to be a city on a hill—an exalted place, chosen by God—whose inhabitants, themselves a chosen people, would engage in an errand into the wilderness, their task to shine their countenance upon the darkened world and thereby to enlighten it.

The project of a blessed people bearing civilization and progress and truth offers a ready justification for anything—conquest, theft and mayhem, mass murder: We come in peace, we are messages of God; we embody a greater good. Opposition must be the Devil's handiwork.

Beyond political calculation and opportunism, military advantage and strategic aims, imperial dreams and desires, this foundational symbol goes some way toward explaining many misadventures, including the bullheaded and single-minded support the US offers Israel today. That nation, too, was built by a determined band of self-proclaimed chosen people who suffered and survived, and arose phoenix-like to create their plucky little democracy in the midst of hostile and threatening and notably darker skinned neighbors. Perpetual but righteous war would become the necessary order of the day for the forces of goodness. And so it is.

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The dominant narrative in contemporary school reform is once again focused on exclusion and disadvantage, race and class, Black and White. "Across the US," the National Governor's Association declared in 2005, "A gap in academic achievement persists between minority and disadvantaged students and their white counterparts." This is the commonly referenced and popularly understood "racial achievement gap," and it drives education policy at every level. Interestingly, whether heartfelt or self-satisfied, the narrative never mentions the monster in the room: White supremacy.

It's true, of course, that standardized test scores reveal a difference between Black-and-White test-takers: 26 points in one area of comparison, 20 points in another, 23 in a third.

But the significance of those differences is wildly disputed. Some argue, as Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein did in their popular and incendiary book *The Bell Curve*, that genetic differences account for the gap, and there's little that can be done to lift up the poor inferior Black folks. An alternate theory, popular since the 1960s, holds that Black people are not *inherently* inferior to Whites, but merely culturally deprived, and that fixing the massive pathologies in the family and community will require social engineering on a grand scale.

Each of these explanations has a large and de-

voted following. The first, while difficult for many Whites to endorse publicly, carries the reflected power of eugenics and the certainty that what they've always secretly suspected, that Whites are indeed superior beings, is true; the second has the advantage of pretending to give a bit more than a pig's eye for the well-being of Black people while disturbing none of the pillars of White privilege. Either theory can live comfortably beneath the obsessive focus on the achievement gap.

Gloria Ladson-Billings upends all of this with an elegant reversal: there is no achievement gap, she argues, but actually a glancing reflection of something deeper and more profound—America has a profound education debt. The educational inequities that began with the annihilation of native peoples and the enslavement of Africans, the conquest of the continent and the importation of both free labor and serfs, transformed into apartheid education, something anemic, inferior, inadequate, and oppressive. Over decades and centuries, the debt has accumulated and is passed from generation to generation, and it continues to grow and pile up. Chicago serves 86% Black and Latino students and spends around $8,000 per pupil per year while a few miles away Highland Park, 90% white, spends $17,000. This is emblematic of what's going on in every community in America.

Ladson-Billings imagines what could be done if the political powers took the achievement gap seriously.

Ladson-Billings imagines what could be done if the political powers took the achievement gap seriously: immediate reassignment of the best teachers in the country to schools for poor children of color, guaranteed places for those students at state and regional colleges and universities, smaller classes, smaller schools, a Marshall Plan-type effort to rebuild infrastructure. Ladson-Billings argues that the US owes a moral debt to African-Americans, a debt that `reflects the disparity between what we know is right and what we actually do.

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In "Why I Write," George Orwell gives four reasons why all writers, including himself, write: One: "Sheer egoism. Desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death, to get your own back on the grown-ups who snubbed you in childhood… Serious writers, I should say, are on the whole more vain and self-centered than journalists, though less interested in money." It's impossible to deny: there's a peculiar pleasure in showing off, in disproving doubters, in expressing oneself.

Two: "Aesthetic enthusiasm. Perception of beauty in the external world, or, on the other hand, in words and their right arrangement. Pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story. Desire to share an experience which one feels is valuable and ought not to be missed."

Three: "Historical impulse. Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity."

Four: "Political purpose—using the word 'political' in the widest possible sense. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other peoples' idea of the kind of society that they should strive after."

Orwell elaborates: "I am a person in whom the first three motives would outweigh the fourth. In a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer."

The Spanish Civil War "turned the scale" and for Orwell, "thereafter I knew where I stood."

"Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism," he writes. " What I have most wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, 'I am going to produce a work of art.' I write it because there is some lie I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention."

Of art and politics, combining the aesthetic and the political, Orwell says, "I have tried to write less picturesquely and more exactly," and concludes, "And looking back through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked a *political* purpose that I

wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generality."

In *1984* Orwell provides an unrelenting vision of the totalitarian impulses and powers around him. Neither Winston's intelligence and memory of things past, nor Julia's effort to escape through her own individuality and sexuality are a threat to Big Brother—both are short lived, quickly detected, and easily crushed. In fact, the only hope Orwell projects is the *prole* woman humming a tune in the courtyard outside the room where Winston and Julia rendezvous: "people who had never learned to think but were storing up in their hearts and bellies and muscles the power that would one day overturn the world. If there was hope it lay in the *proles*."

Otherwise Oceania, the multinational political entity ruled by Big Brother abounds with doublethink: "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," and "Ignorance is Strength," as well as the Ministry of Peace which wages war, the Ministry of Truth which propagates lies, and Ministry of Love, where torture is carried out.

In the Foreword to a recent edition of *1984* Thomas Pynchon wrote: "His anger, let us go so far as to say, was precious to him. He had lived his way into it—in Burma and Paris and London and on the road to Wigan Pier, and in Spain, being shot at and eventually wounded by fascists—he had invested blood, pain, and hard labor to earn his anger and was as attached to it as any capitalist to his capital. It may be an affliction to writers more than others, this fear of getting comfortable, of being bought off."

But at the same time Pynchon writes that *1984* is not just an angry diatribe against where the world is inevitably going: "It is not difficult to imagine that Orwell in *1984* was imagining a future for his son's generation, a world he was not so much wishing upon them as warning against. He was impatient with predictions of the inevitable, he remained confident in the ability of ordinary people to change anything, if they would."

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Educational research, a post-World War II invention chasing federal dollars, has grown to monstrous proportions, and yet I'm hard-pressed to say what good has come of any of it. Grants are funded, projects launched, dissertations written, careers made, but for all that, not much has been accomplished for children. Academic writing is mostly dry and boring, so deadly you risk suffocating just reading the stuff. When it cloaks itself in self-referencing dogma—so smug and so sure, so proud of its ironclad conclusions—I want to throw open the window either to jump or to breathe the free air.

In fact, the language of pseudo-science that has come to dominate the discourse about schools has led to a hollowing out of our consciousness of what actually occurs in classrooms, the intellectual and ethical core of what really goes on. In the "scientific" narrative, teachers and students are reduced to an S-R relationship, standardized tests—simpleminded, deceptive, and fatally flawed—rule supreme, and everyone is asked to genuflect in front of the phrase, "the research says." All of this becomes a bludgeon to beat educators and children and families into submission.

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Narrative inquiry can be a useful corrective to all this, for it posits storytelling and story listening as important ways to understand and improve classroom life. It suits the noisy, idiosyncratic, complex, multilayered, dynamic reality of schools and classrooms. It can fit itself to that reality rather than hammering the natural messiness into a convenient if choked and clotted frame.

Narrative begins with something to say—content precedes form. You must have something to say, something you want to say, something of burning importance that only you can say. You don't have to think that you're better than others, or to compare yourself to John Dewey or Toni Morrison, but you do have to believe that the message you want to send is of vital importance and that you must, therefore, muster the confidence to do the work. You must nourish

your own awareness, your engagement, your curiosity, and you must harness all of it with dedication and discipline.

The hallmark of writing in the first person is intimacy. But that intimacy can trap a writer into a defensive crouch, into airing grievances or self-justification. Annie Dillard argues that while personal essay is an art, it's not a martial art, and that the personal pronoun can be the subject of the verb—I see this, I did that—but not the object of the verb—I discuss me, I quote me, I describe me. The goal of the writing is to set up a relationship, a dialog based on both identification and difference, harmony and disharmony. The assumption is that there is a unity in human experience, that within each of us is the human condition. But in narrative the universal is revealed through the specific, the general through the particular, the essence through the unique, and necessity is revealed through contingency.

Narrative writers strive for a personal signature, but must be aware that the struggle for honesty is constant. The mind works in contradiction, and honesty requires the writer to reveal disputes with herself on the page. Human beings are incorrigibly self-deceiving and self-justifying, and in order to create a reliable narrator, readers need to see a writer interrogating her own ignorance, investigating what she doesn't know, searching for and writing into contradictions—rather than running away from them with easy conclusions—as they appear.

Creating a credible narrator is the first and most difficult assignment. Honesty, yes, and also boldness, the strength to claim her position on the page, to resist undermining her own authority by constantly referencing others or refusing to take a stand on issues of real importance. Authority is established when a writer knows when to show and not tell—when to provide an instance or an anecdote or a detail that brings a scene or a person to life—and just as important, when to synthesize, generalize, and sum up. Writing is not a skill separate from thinking, and there's nothing more interesting, engaging, and, yes, dangerous than an intelligent mind thinking out loud. That's something shot through with discovery and surprise—a writer must free herself from dogma and self-righteousness, and she must conduct basic research on herself, anti-systemic, experimental, often accidental. She searches for understanding on the page, an investigation of something out there, but, perhaps more important, of something in here, a struggle to make sense—and the reader must actually see the struggle. It's a journey, not by a tourist, but by a pilgrim.

The writer can never make causal claims and can never generalize—and this can be painfully difficult given the dominant narrative in education—but beyond that, she is free to theorize, to speculate, to wonder, and to advocate. Paradoxically, the inability to generalize and the necessity to stay close to the ground allows the writer to make gigantic existential claims. To do this well, she must continually stay in the middle of things, the concrete and the real, and at the same time remain up in the air, contingent and unfinished.

The Chicago writer David Mamet told an interviewer that he believed that you're only a writer when you write the last line—before that you're a failed writer—and that after you write that last line, you're an ex-writer. Mostly we aspire to write, and reaching toward something mysterious and elusive is where the work actually lives. So we're mostly aspiring and failed writers, and, as for me, I'm an ex-writer now.

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Problems and Possibilities in Narrative Inquiry: A Multilogue[1]

William H. Schubert
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Prologue

Multivocal or even polyvocal inqury has become increasingly popular in narrative educational inquiry during the past decade[2]. I consider it a good and expansive trend that tries to recognize many diverse voices often absent in research portrayals. The multivocal or polyvocal, however, almost always refers to *inter-vocalities*, i.e., expressions of voice by or among different individuals, or stakeholders, in research or evaluation projects. While this is indeed a useful approach, one I support, I am also interested in *intra-vocalities*, i.e., the multiple speakers *within* each person.

I have come to realize, over my 40 years in education, that there is not just a solitary me. Rather, I am *we*. I am several—exactly how many I do not know. I think it depends on the situation. My varied selves arise to meet the flux of circumstance. I began to use them pedagogically to exemplify different perspectives on history, literature, and other subjects as an elementary school teacher. For the past 30 years I have brought them forth as *guest speakers* in teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in education, and in a variety of consulting venues.[3] Despite the plethora of selves within me, a few emerge more frequently when I discuss education. Some want to see them as schools of thought; I caution this, viewing my *speakers* as more fleeting and less definable. These frequently emergent *speakers* have coalesced to form mini-selves that battle within me, sometimes collaborating and arriving at eclectic integrations, and at other times repelling one another, thus, keeping ambiguity alive. Both are important to recognize in dealing with life and education: synthesis and the impossibility of synthesis.[4]

I have named a few of my prominent educational selves and I let them emerge overtly in some of my writings and in much of my teaching. In the latter, I introduce these *guest speakers* (one at a time) as if they are in the hallway, leave the classroom or lecture hall, return in character[5], speak with wholehearted advocacy, sans costumes, so that objectivity is maintained—the characters, my selves, are not then judged by their appearance or level of elocution; thus, they do not become forceful means of indoctrinating students, for one can hardly agree with one without contradiction becoming obvious if agreement with another were expressed.[6] So, students cannot engage in the usual practice of gaining *points* through adopting the professor's view, for it is evident that either I as the professor have many contradictory views, many selves, or that students try to sort them out in an effort to determine the real me. Yet, the real me is in continuous formation, and multiple.

Five of the *speakers* appear here as principal characters; their commentaries constitute the corpus of this article, illustrating a discussion with my self (more accurately, among my selves). Since there are five protagonists, I cannot defensibly call this a *dialogue*, which implies two participants, even though there are several participants in many presentations of dialogue—Plato's Socratic dialogues, for instance. In any case, I use the term *multilogue*.

This article, then, is intended to be both a presentation of my ever-emergent ideas about narrative inquiry[7]

1 In an effort to sustain an uninterrupted play-like flow, footnotes are used rather than parenthetical citations.

2 See Hertz (1997), Lather and Smithies (1997), and Rinehart (1998).

3 For written renditions of this see Schubert (1986) in which three fictional guest speakers within me critique ideas presented at the end of each chapter. Also see Schubert (1996, 1997), and McClain and Schubert (1997).

4 For me, the corpus of John Dewey's work illustrates a move toward synthesis and the corpus of Albert Camus's work shows the necessity of dealing with ambiguity.

5 See Schubert (2003) and Schubert and Ayers (1999)

6 The joke is offered at the expense of the Social Behaviorist.

7 See Witherell and Noddings (1991), Clandinin and Connelly (2004), Phillion, He, and Connelly (2005).

(its possibilities and problems) and an illustration and advocacy of a form of narrative inquiry— the *multilogue*. Moreover, I contend that the article *is* inquiry and not just portrayal or representation, because in the writing (as in my teaching) I never know exactly where each speaker will go. In a non-religious (or perhaps neo-religious) way, I often say (tongue-in-cheek), that I am *speaking in tongues*! The *guests* that I am often surprise me.

As in any play (referring to both theatre and playfulness) there should be a character list. There will be intentionally no description of each character, since they are characterized by the positions they espouse; the maxim often bestowed on would-be novelists, "character is action," can be re-stated for present purposes: character is commentary.

Characters

Intellectual Traditionalist (IT)
Social Behaviorists (SB)
Experientialist (EX)
Critical Reconstructionist (CR)
Postmodernist (PM)

Multilogue

Experientialist:

It has been heartening to have a career that spans the ascendancy of narrative inquiry in educational research. In fact, this movement has lead to the increased use of the term *inquiry*, rather than the more limited and scientistic term, *research*, in some circles of qualitative inquiry.[8]

Social Behaviorist:

Now wait a minute. *Scientistic*? Why do you insist on a parody of the greatest invention of the modern age— scientific inquiry? Science overcame the propensity of the eloquent talkers and writers to dominate scholarship, and brought argument based on objective evidence— with checks on different sorts of validity and reliability. It seems to me that narrative inquiry is a return to the dark ages of power by rhetorical persuasion. Why must you be so pejorative with the sarcastic use of *scientistic*, rather than the more respectful term, *scientific*?

Experientialist:

I wish you would let me complete my position statement.

Social Behaviorist:

I doubt that you would ever get there, with your stream of conscious approach. Go ahead.

Experientialist:

Thanks. When I was a student in graduate school, everyone had to take statistics and behaviorist research. It was deemed the great prerequisite to insight. Knowledge was viewed as a giant puzzle and each research project a new piece of that puzzle. Empiricism was the royal road to truth, or even Truth. This state of affairs evolved because social scientists and psychologists sought credibility granted to natural scientists, and moved their research from social theory to empirical research expressed in quantitative forms.[9] This mimicking of natural sciences (or at least what it was thought to entail) for the sake of gaining credibility is sometimes referred to as *physics*

8 See Denzin & Lincoln (2003).

9 This has been argued on numerous occasions by Joseph J. Schwab; see Schwab (1975 & 1979), for example.

envy.[10] Those who sought scholarly credibility for education and other professional areas of study followed suit. Meanwhile, natural scientists had moved to theoretical pursuits; to wit, Einstein's relativity theory and Planck's quantum theory, for instance. When social science and psychological research caught up and emphasized theory, natural science research had moved to situational analysis—black holes, quarks, strings—all with individuality, even using poetic expression; consider terminology associated with quarks: strange, up, down, charm, unitary symmetry. These are attempts to understand natural phenomena through artistic metaphor. Research in education lagged still farther behind than that in social science and psychology. That is why I refer pejoratively to educational researchers' clamor to be like scientists as *scientistic*. They continuously parroted forms of research that were outmoded—and mediocre, at that. My contention is that the emergence in educational research of ethnographic studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and then arts-based research[11] in education over the years has been more consonant with the evolution of natural science than has been the drab attempt of educational researchers to emulate research in the natural and even social sciences and psychology. In fact, in European scholarly circles such research, including phenomenology, is referred to as among the *human sciences*.[12] I could go on and on.

Social Behaviorist:

I know you could. Let me interject that your image of natural science (with the likes of Albert Einstein and Max Plank) is a cutting edge image. The run-of-the-mill natural scientists were rule followers, like those you call *scientistic*, not mere paradigm parrots. The cutting edge educational researchers and psychologists consistently have offered new pathways for inquiry (e.g., E.L. Thorndike, William James, Robert Thorndike, Charles Judd, Ronald A. Fischer, B.F. Skinner, Jean Piaget, Ralph W. Tyler, Jerome Bruner, Fred Kerlinger, Nathanial Gage, Lee J. Cronbach, Donald Campbell, James Coleman, Gene Glass, R. D. Bock, Benjamin Bloom, Robert Linn, Thomas Cook, David Berliner, Jere Brophy, Thomas Cook, John W. Tukey, Howard Gardner, Robert Sternberg, Larry Hedges, Robert Mislevy, Edward Haertel). These examples from education and psychology are clearly scientific, not merely scientistic.[13] Nevertheless, far too many remain scientistic, giving formulae precedence over substance of inquiry.

In any case, I suggest that there is good reason for the attempts (though too often faulty) to model social, psychological, and educational research after the successes of the natural sciences. I admonish all of you to ponder your environment, as I do so often with stark amazement each time: the wonder drugs, air conditioning, modern surgical techniques, communication (the Internet, personal computers, television, DVDs, CDs), transportation, production of food and other goods and services. Compare these and other technological achievements to forty or fifty, or even ten, years ago. All of this you and I frequently take for granted, and even get upset if malfunction occurs for even a moment—all of this, indeed, is the result of science. Please tell me that if the doctor prescribes a medication or type of surgery for you or those you love, that you do not want the testing of it to have been with double-blind controls and steeped in all of the sophisticated tests of reliability and validity that can be mustered. Is not the education of children sufficiently important to merit the same thoroughness?

Experientialist:

Your twists and turns of logic (and illogic) are amazing. I want even more for our children. The education of human beings is a much different phenomenon than surgery and drugs. Education is not just about dissemination of learning packages, knowledge and skill delivery, and testing. It is about how human beings take stock of their experience and anticipate possible futures in the course of present action. It is about reflection on who they want to be and to become, what they want to overcome, and the kinds of contributions they want to make. It is the attempt to fashion identities—to be and become, to continuously recreate oneself and one's relations to and in the

10 This term is often attributed to Patty Lather, an attribution for which she should take credit when the chance is there, since it carries a seminal critique.

11 Especially see work of Elliot Eisner; a tribute to that work is found in Urmacher & Matthews (2005).

12 See Max van Manen (1990).

13 The work of Thomas Kuhn (1962) has long indicated that it is the rare scholar who enables a paradigm shift, one who can identify anomalies sufficiently well to promote a breaking away from the dominant mind set that defines an era.

world. To make meaningful sense of that, a process sometimes called *currere* (the Latin verb rather than the usual and commodified noun, *curriculum*), requires cultivation of narrative inquiry that is nuanced and personalized to needs of idiosyncratic experience.[14] The arts and literary portrayals are much better suited to this than the sciences. So is introspective and collaborative investigation of influential milestones on life journeys—key events that shape ideas and perspectives that guide life's actions for anyone. We need stories about such matters—everyone an author of precedent for others—written and unwritten stories, oral traditions included.

Intellectual Traditionalist:

I have remained quiet for some time now, but your emphasis on artistic and literary portrayals inspires me. (Though I like much that you [EX] say, I remind you that introspection and even stream of consciousness are part of the history of an emergent science— psychology, though I digress a bit before I begin.) I *am* an advocate of narrative inquiry, a rich dimension of the liberal arts tradition, though I have the same caveat about it that you and the Social Behaviorist share about science. Just as there are cutting edge scientists, whose work I admire, there are producers of great works in literature and the arts. Meanwhile, mediocrity abounds in the humanities, as well as in the sciences and in education. When I read stories by educational researchers, offered under the rubric of narrative inquiry, I wince with the thought, "That author is no Chekhov, no Toni Morrison, no Emily Dickinson, no Borges, no Li Po." Everyone, in fact most, cannot tell a good story very well. That being the case, I recommend that they turn to good stories, both good stories and well-told ones (for one can have good story and tell it poorly), and realize that most good stories actually *are* about education, not necessarily schooling but education via life. We need to draw more on real and beautiful literature for the educational insights invariably embodied there. It is ironic that there is so little literature of this sort in the so-called "literature reviews" of dissertations and scholarly publications. "Literature reviews" are too often thumb-nail sketches of resultant hits on a computer search, a venture of the same scholarly level of mindless, formulaic, (yes) scientistic, quantitative studies. If one has a genuine interest about inquiry to pursue, the narrative should be tailor-made to the topic, not pirated from another study or from some over-generalized commentary about the nature of research.

Critical Reconstructionist:

I especially like the last point you make. Too many students who have been schooled to be servants of the dominant members of a given society, even when they get to the doctoral level (perhaps, especially so, with all those years of indoctrination), wind up saying: "Hmmm, I like ethnography, or I like arts-based inquiry, or I like narrative; now, what topic shall I do it on?" Quite obviously, the problem must be posed, as Paulo Freire[15] has taught well, before the problem-solving methodology is derived. I say *derived*, not *selected*, because the inquiry is an imaginative process wherein substance and method are symbiotic. However, the hegemonic process of perpetuating inequalities of a society is built on selecting from options approved by the bases of power, not by creating innovative questions and ways to pursue them. We must expose and loosen the colonial grip on all inquiry, especially narrative inquiry.[16] It has the potential to contest and resist.

This is why I oppose your emphasis on great works. How were they deemed to be great? I contend that the process of identifying greatness is highly politicized; thus, the resultant canon promotes the ideals of a powerful few and subordinates the needs of the many. Usually, such discrimination is based on key categorical variables: race, class, gender, sexual orientation, health, defined ability/disability, place, language, ethnicity, membership, age, appearance, and more.

Postmodernist:

I agree to an extent, and this is precisely why I advocate narrative inquiry. We need subaltern stories—nar-

14 See Pinar and Grumet (1976) and Pinar (2004) for elaboration of *currere*.

15 See Freire (1970) on the value of *problem-posing* vis-à-vis *banking* as a method of both pedagogy and inquiry.

16 Tuhiwai Smith (2001) develops this point exceptionally well, from her Maori background.

ratives of the oppressed, those whose voices have been denied. We need a host of multiple narratives, not just master narratives. The colonizer narrative is an example of suppression of the stories of the colonized. And don't think that just because there are fewer official colonial powers, now that European colonialists have been pushed from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and many island cultures, there is no more colonization. I know that you agree (nodding to CR) on this one.

Critical Reconstructionist:

Absolutely! There was a time when *globalization* referred to everyone on planet Earth realizing that we are but a small spaceship, a fact that admonished us to cooperate or become extinct. Today needs a new meaning. *Globalization* refers to perpetuation of a homogeneity of culture, value, and political orientation that opposes diversity and pluralism. It is the attempt by a nexus of corporate-governmental-military-religious-mass media power to create a world order that supports their avarice.[17] Some would call this an economic colonization, though it much more pervasive than economic context alone – while empowered by economic greed, it smacks of all of the value orientations of manifest destiny on a global basis. More even than the call of Marx for the proletariat to rise and revolt against a nationalistic dictator, monarch, or autocratic president (which my comrades and I have supported in the past), we now need a world-wide awakening and revolution against the barons of this new global order. Nations are becoming fictions, convenient residue to dupe the general public into thinking that greed to control our planet is actually a push toward freedom, democracy, patriotism, the good life, and more. We must realize, on a world-scale, the injustice of this and fight for justice, before it is too late. We are not at a post-colonial state, as some carelessly assert; the whole world suffers from sordid *neo-colonialism.*[18] Narratives of its impact are sorely needed.

Postmodernist:

I only agree partially. You go too far. Your application of Marxian analysis to global proportions (even to national ones) is a master narrative. No one narrative is complex enough or accurate enough to explain everything. This is the central reason I disagree with you, as well (nodding to SB, EX and IT) as each of you. Science is your (to SB) master narrative, and the politics of great works is yours (to IT). And yours (to EX) is a faith in John Dewey that rivals religious zealotry.

Critical Reconstructionist:

I do agree, of course, that science (especially the *scientistic*) is your (to SB) downfall. Its ideology is that of the corporate-military state; so is its mask of objectivity. Your (to EX) Deweyan adherence only bothers me a little, given that real participatory democracy allows for many narratives. Naturally, however, we cannot have participatory democracy without a new state created by revolution. I particularly want to focus on you (IT), because your canon has always been the canon of royalty, today's royalty being the barons of capitalist globalization, supported by their public relations teams in the mass media.

Intellectual Traditionalist:

You need historical perspective! The stories perpetuated in the great works *do not* advocate one political view. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Cervantes, Moliere, Sir Walter Scott, Voltaire, Jane Austen, Dostoevski, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Charles Dickens, the Bronte sisters, Henry Fielding, Honore de Balzac, Albert Camus, James Joyce, and many more (just to draw on European narrative) were all innovators, paradigm shifters, though I would decry the popularity of the term *paradigm* as getting so out of hand that it is becoming meaningless. They all challenged, critiqued, exposed, satirized, and belittled the dominant power of their day. They were the real revolutionaries! I cannot see how they could all defensibly be said to support the system. Besides, they embody

17 Chomsky (2003) develops this argument well, with immense documentation on his web site.

18 I owe this partially to conversation with William H. Watkins, professor, colleague, and former doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

multicultural perspective. Consider that the castigated canon of the West is derived from African (e.g., the library of Alexandria), Middle Eastern (e.g., Byzantine), Asian, Greek, Roman, native, Moorish, and more origins, as well as well as European tribal genesis. The same can be said for American canons, though I remain critical of both.

Critical Reconstructionist:

These canons support the system in one giant way, not by the content of their works (which I grant you was once revolutionary, sadly almost entirely forgotten), but by the use of washed-out information about great works as a mere gatekeepers. The gates that sort[19] societal participants into diverse levels of haves and have-nots open and close with knowledge of plot outlines, matching of characters and authors with titles of works, and identification of ideologically empty literary devices, just as they do with knowledge of social and natural science, mathematics, and verbal comprehension. The classics are safe so long as readers do not interact with them to critique or change society. The canon has become emasculated.

Experientialist:

And great works are also safe so long as readers don't use them to change their own lives. It seems taboo to help learners find education meaningful to the salient task of composing their lives.[20] That is precisely the task that education should engender, but rarely does. I submit that there would be no discipline problems in schools if students knew that they could create and re-create their lives there. Why can't something so simple be realized?

Critical Reconstructionist:

Because its realization would mean self-realization, and that endangers the nexus of power. States are no longer (probably never were) representations of the people, so how can we expect that they would support or even allow study that could overthrow them and their wealthy puppeteers? The same can be said, perhaps more vehemently, for private or parochial schools for the well-to-do, for they ultimately are supported by the same puppeteers. So, students turn to counter cultural activities to help create who it is that they are becoming. If they do not, they are merely indoctrinated. Yet, what are their counter-cultural options? Where do they turn? Where could they turn? Clearly, we need narratives galore about this—depictions, interpretations, and critiques of what allegedly is happening.

Postmodernist:

Yes, we need stories about how school prevents pursuit of self-realization, and stories about how so-called *primitive* or *third world* peoples engage in a kind of grassroots post-modernism, thus, providing precedent about how all of us could evade the hegemony of globalistic intent[21] through the networks of *deschooling*[22] or the imaginations of *unschooling.*[23] Furthermore, we desperately need both utopian and dystopian renditions to stir the batter of possible futures. And these renditions need to be made from subaltern and colonized sources of many dimension.

Social Behaviorist:

This is getting ridiculous! You (to PM) say everyone but yourself and your post-modern colleagues are governed by master narratives. I say that when you say this you are a self-appointed physician who needs to heal

19 Joel Spring (1989) has long argued that schools are merely a sorting machine for society, one that keeps the powerful in power.

20 Composing one's life is the central theme of Mary Catherine Bateson (1990), and I contend that it should be the organizing center of schooling if schooling is to actually promote education (Schubert, 2006).

21 One can find many of these stories worth telling in work by Madhu Suri Prakash and Gustavo Esteva (1998) on escaping hegemonic education in grassroots cultures, and Esteva and Prakash (1998) on the postmodern character of grassroots cultures.

22 Ivan Illich (1971) is perhaps more relevant than realized.

23 See John Holt (1981) for the most far-reaching kind of home schooling, which he called *unschooling*.

yourself. The song you sing is that there are absolutely no absolutes[24] —clearly, a master narrative in itself.

Furthermore, I challenge any of you believers in the promise of Deweyan participatory democracy or Freirian problem-posing dialogue to write narratives of its practice. I may be lost in a cloud of unknowing, but I cannot say that I have seen or experienced any examples. Our complex world needs to be controlled and governed; left to their own devices, human beings are extremely inventive, though without benevolent organizational leadership, history tells us that humans are also predatory and destructive.[25]

Experientialist:

I cannot abide this construction of human nature. If it is true, there is no hope. With Dewey, I must have faith in the basic goodness of human intent.[26] To support my case, there are plenty of examples of education based on human goodness and participatory democracy in the history of progressive education, particularly in memoirs of practices of women progressive educators who have been overshadowed by the progressive male theorists—Dewey, George Counts, Harold Rugg, William H. Kilpatrick, L. Thomas Hopkins. These narratives need to be reconstituted for their relevance today.

Critical Reconstructionist:

Yes, I think of all of the nearly forgotten stories in old radical journals of education: *The Social Frontier*, *Progressive Education*, Yearbooks of the National Society for the Study of Education, and those of the John Dewey Society for Education and Culture? What of educational stories of minority groups, seldom considered in the official field of education: Jose Marti, W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Benjamin Mays, Horace Mann Bond, and others? And as you say, what of the women progressives: Ella Flagg Young, Elizabeth Harrison, Jane Addams, Margaret Haley, Evelyn Dewey, Patty Smith Hill, Ann Shumaker, Helen Parkhurst, Sarah Chase, Caroline Pratt, Margaret Naumberg, Laura Zirbes, Margaret Willis, Louise Rosenblatt, Hilda Taba, among others. Many of their stories can be seen as narratives of critical inquiry enfolded in action.[27] This is the case, especially, with the vast amount of documentary history available on the Eight Year Study.[28]

Intellectual Traditionalist:

From my perspective, philosophy and biography (including autobiography) are salient sources that should not be neglected. The best of these are high art. I think of Alexander Meiklejohn, who created the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin in the 1930s. The first year curriculum shaped all subjects around Plato's *Republic* and the second year used *The Autobiography of Henry Adams* as the organizing center of life and learning in this residential collegiate experiment. The story of this is another exemplary narrative from the educational past.[29]

Postmodernist:

Barring some autobiographical sources, most of what you advocate is an advocacy of literary traditions that, beyond poetry, are mostly fictional. Why? Are you saying that fictional accounts are better than prose discourse?

Intellectual Traditionalist:

I had hoped that you might ask this, because it may be a point on which we agree more than most would think. In literary circles, there is increased recognition that the boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred. I contend that narratives by the greatest of writers are such a complex blend of fact and fiction that it is impossible

24 William Wraga has a song that he has recorded and has sung at AERA about this – a cutting satire on postmodernism.

25 See analysis by economist John Gray (2002).

26 Dewey's *A Common Faith* (1934) is his secular theological synthesis, a faith in human beings and participatory democracy.

27 This was also developed in Chapter One of Marshall, et al. (2007)

28 For the best illustration on the Eight Year Study, see Kridel and Bullough, Jr.(2007).

29 Citations of Plato's *Republic* and Adams' *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907), like Shakespeare's Hamlet, in note 39, need not be included in the reference list, for there are so many editions, and they are common knowledge. The rendition of Meiklejohn's (1932) account of his Experimental College is cited.

to tell where one begins and the other ends. Moreover, the greatest writers have immersed themselves in the situations they write about; this means that they *research* their characters, contexts, and events intensively. Too many persons seem to think that their stories simply emerge from their head as Athena from the head of Zeus.

Social Behaviorist (sarcastically):

Then, why not just write fictional educational research!?

Experientialist (seriously):

Exactly! And one reason we should do so is the well-founded worry about saying too much about persons studied (participants, formerly called *subjects*, implying minions of the researcher monarch), something that might hurt either them or the researcher; implications for human subject review and its ethical and legal ramifications are immense. We often restrain ourselves in order not to incriminate. Think how much more latitude is provided by fiction to portray situations studied vividly. Here I speak of fiction steeped in connoisseurship,[30] developed carefully and aesthetically through experience and the expertise that derives from careful reflection.[31]

Postmodernist:

Yes, fictional narrative seems germane to me, too. It gives the author opportunity to construct stories from experience and imagination with a range of subaltern perspectives whose commentary is too often quashed by one-dimensional narratives.[32]

Intellectual Traditionalist:

I want to reiterate that this is what great writers have done throughout history. We need to look at their writing for its educational insights, thereby re-interpreting it as an educational text. I have been pondering again the brilliant literary quest of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and I illustrate with his story of two friends from Florence or *The Tale of Ill-advised Curiosity* (Chapters 33 and 34). I am sure you are all familiar with it, so I don't have to elaborate. Suffice it to say, if the idea of love and trust were substituted with education and trust, we would have a brilliant educational narrative. I think we already do in this Cervantes text, actually, for the idea of trust is so important to both love and education.[33]

Social Behaviorist and Experientialist and Critical Reconstructionist (in unison):

I don't remember it.

Intellectual Traditionalist:

All the more reason for this kind of narrative.

Social Behaviorist:

Sometimes it seems that the two of you (EX and IT) agree, and I can't fathom why. You seem to be so contradictory. Your (IT) narrative holds that education should be a journey through the great works and disciplines of knowledge, and your (EX) position is that anything the learner is interested in should be pursued *ad infinitum*, and that with a little facilitation, it will grow to embrace all necessary knowledge, skill, and value.

Experientialist:

We (nodding to IT) are closer than you think. Many teachers tell stories of trying my advocacy of student

30 The idea of connoisseurship is well-developed by Elliot W. Eisner (1991).

31 The writing of William (Bill) Ayers both illustrates the blending of fact and fiction (2001b) and explicates it fact-fiction that constitutes memory (2001a).

32 . Here I draw upon talks with Bernardo Gallegos about the value of fictionalized research, sponsored by the Schubertian Center for Curricular Speculation.

33 Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, NY: Signet, 2001 (translation by Walter Starkie).

interests; however, they deal only with surface interests. Then, they discard the idea, lamenting that there are as many interests as there are students, thus the need for more curricula than possibly can be developed. We need narratives about this, and *even more* we need narratives in which students can be seen sharing their interests—realizing the interconnections among them, and defining them ever-tentatively and ever more deeply as shared.[34]

Critical Reconstructionist:

Ah! They would be pursuing what Habermas calls common *human interests*.[35]

Experientialist:

I suppose so. The sharing evokes story telling about the context of interests (student-generated oral narratives), and students begin to join with each other at a deeper level, because they see common threads. If sufficient time for sharing and probing deeply is provided, a normal sized class might evolve three or four projects, maybe only one. These projects are often interdisciplinary and coalesce around the students composing the next phases of their lives and life commitments. We need stories of this, desperately.[36]

Critical Reconstructionist:

But stories don't convince authorities.

Social Behaviorist:

Amazingly, I finally agree with you on something. Only the facts will, the numbers, the stats.

Postmodernist:

What about the stories of Jonathan Kozol,[37] and his opportunities to speak to high level policy makers? He weaves in numbers which strengthen his story; however, it is the compelling power of well-crafted narrative that moves power.

Critical Reconstructionist:

Little but force, revolutionary pressure, moves power. The rest is adherence to myth that you need to overcome.

Intellectual Traditionalist:

Don't degrade myth. Think of the power of myth in world religions and secular sources, as well. [38] Think of myth's central place in the sordid quest of manifest destiny—through genocide of native populations and slavery which is the genocide of cultures if not persons in many parts of the world. What we need is new mythologies (or revival of those suppressed) to counter hegemony and colonization. We need to search extant literary sources to find more of them—both contemporary and historical sources.

Critical Reconstructionist:

Here, you sound more like me than I do!

Intellectual Traditionalist:

Remember Hamlet's admonition to Horatio: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."[39] So you didn't think I am aware of the great complexity? Hmm! There is more to us, the intellectual traditionalists, than you might realize in your quickness to align us with the pillars of power.

34 Position exemplified in John Dewey (see, 1916), L. Thomas Hopkins (1954), Harold Alberty (1953), and James Beane (1997).
35 Habermas (1971).
36 A vivid example is the story of Brian Schultz's (2008) journey in urban education.
37 See many of his books, especially Kozol, 1991, and Kozol, 2005.
38 See Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers (1988), and other sources.
39 Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 5.

Postmodernist:

Your caveat is accepted. All this makes me wonder about the usual stencils for doing research and writing grant proposals. In fact the whole idea of having an idea all worked out and then implementing it seems perverse.

Experientialist:

I couldn't agree more. Too, we perpetuate it in requirements for dissertations. First, students are told to demonstrate amassed knowledge (information, research studies, and especially citations). Second, they have to state their problem as a question, and the laudability of the question resides in the subjective judgment of an advisor and dissertation committee. What if a student has a host of questions? What if he or she is convinced, as I am, that asking good questions is more important than the tentative answers? What if the student wants simply to explore a phenomenon of inquiry, not provide an answer? What if *an answer* is deemed impossible and intellectually indefensible? Third, they have to conjure up a *theoretical framework* that is supposed to bestow scholarly authenticity. I think of the great novelists and wonder where they presented their theoretical framework. I guess critics and scholars have done that for them in endless commentaries. No one needs to convince me of the deep theoretical insight in a Shakespeare or a Ralph Ellison or a Cervantes or a Jane Austen, because their theory is embedded in their nuanced depictions, in their portrayals of character, context and event. Their narrative would be interrupted, despoiled, and destroyed by a chapter on theory. Fourth, they have to cite a lot of scholars who discuss research methodology in a vacuum that too often does not include the particular substance of any substantive inquiry. This would be laughable, if not so widely imposed. Indeed, if a dissertation becomes a book, the author is usually asked to remove such discussion, or to place it in an appendix. Is that not ironic?

Social Behaviorist:

Well, it is not research if it does not start with a question (clarified from a felt need or dilemma). Then, you can research the topic to find a small part that needs to be studied, and you add to the great unfinished puzzle. Don't the rest of you agree at least with that fundamental principle of research?

Critical Reconstructionist:

Have you not been listening? Those tasks and the image of research that you espouse for education just keep a scholar occupied with busy work. They keep you saying at the end of every study little substantive conclusion and the major conclusion remains the need for more research. I contend that this is designed to prevent otherwise imaginative scholars from discovering and exposing corruption that governs the world. Sometimes I think it is an ongoing conspiracy of power-wielders in a board room somewhere, deciding that universities should be places to "lock away" those who suffer from creativity, making them fight like rats among one another over limited funds. Moreover, they are forced to police each other and judge the merit of one another to continue in what they come to believe is an elite intelligentsia. If they are approved to continue, they are given the green light to say anything they want (regardless of how radical or reactionary) in the most highly touted sources of publication—sources that almost no one reads![40] Speaking of ironic….

Postmodernist:

Eerie! Nevertheless, this story of making researchers needs telling. It certainly flies in the face of the assumption that states create universities so the brightest and best can study issues for lengthy periods of time, so they can imagine worthwhile possibilities and submit them to the state for potential use.

Critical Reconstructionist:

And today it seems that almost the opposite is practiced. The state or corporate foundations set agendas and scholars fight for approval to do their bidding. It effectually removes the best and the brightest from public discourse.

40 See my piece on The BIG Curriculum (Schubert, 2006).

Social Behaviorist:

Well, then, what do you have to say about the review of literature and the presentation of a rationale for methodology? I suppose that for this, too, you advocate practices that are wildly different from our time-honored scientific traditions.

Intellectual Traditionalist:

You must remember that the very idea of tradition (particularly in the United States) is rather new. Science itself is relatively new. And yes, I have my doubts that the greatest of works—in the arts, literature, philosophy, or other humanities—were all planned out from the start, as advocacy of proposal writing presumes. The act of creation would seem to me to be a continuous act of re-inventing purpose through continuous study—a process of surprising oneself and then later surprising those who experience the artistic rendition. However, funding agencies, dissertation committees, and even some publishers do not allow for this, which is precisely why many scholars and independent artists or authors choose to create (e.g., write narratives) on a shoe-string, rather than seek prior approval or sponsorship.[41]

Experientialist:

Yes, what is more boring than "writing up" (a strange phrase) research already fully planned? In any case, what I like to find under the guise of *literature review*, instead of the usual thumbnail sketch of many suspiciously related studies, is an autobiographical essay that depicts what has led an inquirer to the point that they want pursue a certain interest and then elaborates transformations that occur in the inquirer as he or she pursues the inquiry.[42]

Intellectual Traditionalist:

I often express it as the "intellectual conversation" that positions students or any researchers to do the research, to perceive the worth of the topic of inquiry. Here, I want to know how the great ideas from the literature they have studied have shaped their intellect, enabling them to pursue creation of a new idea or perspective. Often this may include literature that does not, at first glance, seem to pertain to the idea being advanced, though something about it has implicitly, if not explicitly, moved the researcher closer to the idea, an idea that he or she finds is saturated with contradiction. Then it is the task of inquiry to *write into* the contradictions, depicting the struggle for understanding that never ceases.[43]

Experientialist:

It is not just about ideas, though, so I prefer the term *autobiography*— portrayal of the reading in the context of life's vicissitudes—how the person shapes the idea, lets it shape him or her, embodies it, nurtures it, and shares it. Guiding ideas are not just intellectual; they are embodiments. The researcher is not a mere *instrument* of inquiry, a term often touted in qualitative research circles, it is an *embodiment*.[44]

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41 Impressive examples abound in the work of many artists and literary figures throughout history and at present, and in education as well, for instance: Herb Kohl's early work (1964) on his experience as a teacher of urban children; and Chris Carger's novel-like narrative (Carger, 1996) of the educational life of an urban Mexican immigrant and his family, which is widely used to engender empathic response to multicultural and immigration situations from educators and others. A sequel, continuing this life portrait, is completed and it is telling that still reviewers hound for explicit theoretical framing, rather than letting it remain implicit in context, character, and event portrayals.

42 This is well illustrated by Ming Fang He's autobiographical rendition (He, 2003).

43 This orientation has grown out of twenty years of service on many doctoral committees with my colleague, Bill Ayers, discussions with him with the many doctoral students with whom we have shared, and continue to share the opportunity of mentorship.

44 This was first taught to me through a dissertation on which I could not officially serve: the dissertation of my late wife, Ann Lynn Lopez Schubert (Lopez Schubert, 1993).

Social Behaviorist:

I suppose that all of this speaks somehow to the usual request for the *significance* or importance of the research.

Critical Reconstructionist:

Of course it does. In my estimation, it must speak to greater justice or else it is not a topic worth pursuing. It must expose hegemony, oppression, colonization, and the like. It should challenge forces behind such consequences, helping to overcome them and move to a better state of existence.

Experientialist:

I think those who enter the world of inquiry should already have something they want to say that is derived from their experience—ideas or practices that they want to offer the world. They should have stories to tell and want to become better at doing so. They ought to see doctoral study as an opportunity to refine their capacity to relate their unique insights. To me, that is a far better indicator of potential for doctoral study than a GRE test score! We should encourage essays, interviews, and media portrayals that help us realize the potential of prospective students to engage in such inquiry, create narratives about it, now matter how fast they can negotiate verbal, quantitative, and analytic question games that are usually foreign to their interests.

Social Behaviorist:

If their insights are unique, how do they apply—how are they generalizeable, i.e., more than an *n of one*? Research should be about knowledge that is generalized to some population, shouldn't it?

Intellectual Traditionalist:

Certainly some research should be—that about the workings of things, but not that which pertains to insight into the human spirit and understanding of lived experience. For these matters, the humanities matter most. There are many forms of generalization, besides external validity that dominates quantitative analysis. For instance, we all know *an old Scrooge* or *a Lady MacBeth*. These, too, are generalizations. When one reads a story and responds to a particular part by saying to oneself with empathic surprise, "That speaks to my situation," this is a form of literary or existential generalization. One can readily find such educational insights in the best forms of literature and art, narratives of the highest quality, rather than relying on inexperienced writers to create crude versions renditions. And I guarantee you that they are there, deeply embedded in most art and literature about the human condition. The human condition is subtly almost always about education, about transformations of identity, self-understanding, and contributions in the world. This is the education that schooling too often neglects, the education we need to make prominent in well-selected narrative forms.

Postmodernist:

You need to narrow or obliterate your idea of *crude*, and make your idea of *good literature* more inclusive. We cannot expect privileged authors to write subaltern narratives. They haven't the experience, the suffering to do so. We need to seek expressions of narrative from the oppressed and the neo-colonized.

Social Behaviorist:

So, let's conclude by saying something we advocate for narrative inquiry. I will begin by arguing that story is, well, okay as a form of research. At least it can provoke new topics for more rigorous study. It can generate novel hypotheses. You have helped me see, also, that there may be other forms of generalization drawn from the arts and literature. Nevertheless, narrative inquiry should be real stories, derived from empirically verifiable and replicable research.

Since I am parsimonious by nature, and since we have been rather long-winded, here, I suggest that we each make one substantive suggestion about a necessary and neglected kind of narrative inquiry. I, for example, recommend that we observe and tell stories of persons in daily life activities, portraying what they spend their time

doing and extrapolating what they need to know in order to do these things.[45] This could contribute to purposes that enhance behavior in actual (not just academic) social situations.

Intellectual Traditionalist:

Well, you have come a little way in your understanding of the possibilities of narrative inquiry; however, I must say that you have a long way yet to travel. By the way, who empowered you to tell us that we can make one suggestion? Oh well, time is fleeting, and one is better than none.

Having used this pedagogical device in class setting and consultancies, I advocate narrative inquiry that asks more individuals what works of art or literature have had a major impact on their outlook.[46] Then, I would like them to reflect on the author or artist as a curriculum developer and on the artistic or literary work as a curriculum. It is of particular interest to me that artists and authors can have transformative impact without even knowing the reader (learner) in a personal way. And progressives (such as EX) so often claim that the great educational prerequisite is to know the learners well, and they argue for smaller class sizes. So, how is it that great authors and artists reach thousands or millions, influencing our lives profoundly without knowing us personally? Do they speak to the great mysteries of life that concern us all, thereby invoking fundamental human interests and conditions that reach us with meanings common to all humanity?

Experientialist:

I suggest that we ask individuals to identify an interest that is highly important and meaningful to them. Then, I would ask that they imagine a pathway illustrative of their meandering journey through life thus far. I would further ask them to tell stories about the milestones on their pathway—key turning points—shaped their lives. What was the context? How were they treated? What were the seeds of learning, growth, motivation, inspiration, and active pursuit of their interests? I think we could learn a great deal about what constitutes meaningful learning from stories about such matters. I contend that sharing of common seeds would bring meaningful group discourse, as well.

Critical Reconstructionist:

I would like to elicit stories of oppression. I advocate study of participants' opportunity and capacity to pursue whatever they consider worthwhile, with special focus on how that opportunity or capacity has been influenced by any (or a combination) of the following factors: socio-economic class, race, gender, age, appearance, health, disability/ability, place, ethnicity, language, membership, or any other relevant categorization. The mutual sense of oppression can lead to necessary revolution—hopefully of a peaceful nature, though I am not sanguine that it could be peaceful, given the powerful forces to sustain greed in our fragile world.

Postmodernist:

I would advocate study of a variety of persons engaged in allegedly the same event. I suggest that their stories be looked at, compared and contrasted, to glean an expansive complexity of the situation—even looking at stories of the same persons at different times—the *multivocality* that is internal and external to each of us. I am particularly interested in how narratives of individuals from dominant groups compare with those from subaltern orientations.

Conclusion

Through my *guest speakers*, I hope that I have conveyed several different orientations to narrative inquiry, and some of the problems and possibilities inherent in each, while complicating dilemmas that make us all wonder deeply. I also want to add that the selection of five speakers is not intended to lead to a rigid categorization scheme. These categories are merely samples of the many selves within me. They are fluid and flow into and out

45 This harkens back to Franklin Bobbitt's notion of *activity analysis* (Bobbitt, 1924).

46 George Willis and I did this with curriculum scholars, as illustrated in Willis and Schubert (2000).

of one another, keeping me productively uncertain. I hope, too, that the multilogue has provided an illustration of yet another kind of (semi-fictionalized) narrative inquiry. Finally, this is a call to discover and imagine many kinds of good and well-expressed educational narratives that enrich the vicarious experience that enables us to travel beyond our particular lived experience.

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Narrative Trepidations

Chris Liska Carger
Northern Illinois University

About ten years ago I completed a narrative inquiry in which I followed a bilingual Latino middle school student who struggled with second language literacy and learning disabilities in large, urban school systems. I simply told the story of Alejandro Juarez, Jr. in his eighth grade year of elementary school which unfolded, more accurately, as the story of a Mexican-origin immigrant family's struggles in the United States. The vignettes I related of him and his siblings' educational experiences in public and private schools illuminated many of the severe shortcomings of American school systems and the curricula they "serve-up" to diverse students. Over the years, readers of my first book, *Of Borders and Dreams: A Mexican-American Experience of Urban Education*, contacted me from across the country to ask about Alejandro's welfare. So, eventually, I began to chronicle his experiences once again. Many readers spoke to me about their enjoyment of narrative research methods I used and how comprehensible it made issues of education for bilingual, non-mainstream students. I continued in this style, narratively relating what happened after Alejandro's pivotal, life-changing decision to drop out of school.

That was how I began my next long journey with Alejandro and his family. In some ways it was like a rollercoaster ride that just would not end. I followed Alejandro in the out-of-school contexts of a string of blue collar jobs he attempted to hold down. Each time I believed that I reached a somewhat satisfying conclusion to his story, he would lose a job, typically being laid off because of a slow economy. Finally, I realized the cyclical nature of employment for unskilled laborers and brought the study to an end, albeit not the uplifting ending for which I had hoped. To my surprise, the publisher of my first book accepted the new one with the condition that I revise it into a more traditional format with explicit theoretical references and clear conclusions.

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The piece that follows was my initial answer to those requests: my attempt to defend narrative inquiry and explain how implicit my theoretical underpinnings were. I share it here because I believe that narrative researchers are routinely faced with defending their methodology and making their concerns transparent. There is an adolescent poetry book entitled *I Never Said I Wasn't Difficult* (Holbrook, 1997) that makes a part of me wants to subtitle the work I've done, "I Never said Narrative Wasn't Difficult to Do." I called the piece that follows, "Without a Map."

Chapter One: Without a Map

I once described the ethnographic research I did in my first book *Of Borders and Dreams: A Mexican-American Experience of Urban Education* as taking a journey with a basic road map prepared but always allowing for the possibility of unplanned side trips. Looking back on that work, I think that was an accurate analogy. That book grew from my doctoral dissertation, and although I was obliged to predetermine my inquiry and to include what Schubert and Ayers (1992) called the "pseudo-scientific baggage of scholarly citations, propositions and conclusions" (p. 21), I was able to use narrative inquiry to complete my study. Though I struggled against the traditional paradigm of educational research required in order to gain the academy's sanction and entitlement to enter their ranks, I did, at certain points, compromise my own preferences regarding the doing of meaningful and humane research in order to move my study through the approval process. For example, in completing the Review of the Literature section I had read many scholarly articles on cultural pluralism, assimilation

and home-school continuity and discontinuity studies, but I had also read autobiographical works, historical fiction, and fictional literature done by Latino/a authors, regarding their educational experiences. The reading of "real literature" for the literature review greatly upset one of my committee members so, in order to appease her, I proposed that I clearly, and overtly delineated scholarly citations from literary references. She found that acceptable. I also found it difficult to formulate a distanced purpose statement referring to the child I followed as the "subject" of my study. Instead I spoke of schools' failure to service diverse students. And this departure from format I was not able to salvage. In fact, at my graduation ceremony, the co-chair of my dissertation who presented me with my academic hood, read the original purpose statement I had created, which he had saved. In that piece, I wrote strongly about my distaste for objectifying this human being as a deficit-ridden subject to study. Despite that loss, my decision to write my inquiry in narrative style, the first of its kind at my university, was accepted and I took some interesting side trips on my journey that I believe informed me immensely.

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Now, several years later, I find myself writing about Alejandro Juarez and his family again and musing once more over formats and frameworks. I realize that this second book really has evolved differently from my first one. The student who was once the focus of my inquiry, Alejandro Juarez, is no longer a student in any school system. I found myself in educational settings in the broader community and looking at two homes now, Alejandro's original family and the new family he now finds himself supporting.

Recently a colleague and I were looking for a public library in a suburb with which we both had some familiarity, but we were not completely sure which street would take us directly to the building. I knew the general direction in which to head and felt comfortable selecting a street and looking for landmarks, knowing it was a small town center I had visited a couple of years ago. But my friend who was driving pulled the car into a parking lot, got out a map, and plotted exactly how to navigate the mile into the town's center. I realized that she felt relieved and needed that certainty. I also realized how much I did not. In fact, I felt more stress looking for exact street names than I did when we were feeling our way into Naperville.

A well-worn analogy, but my approach to what I call experiential narrative research, is very much in the style I prefer for traveling: I sketch out a basic route and I take some notes along with me. When I read Ruth Behar's (1996) proclamation of her distaste for maps and her invitation to follow her in her anthropological journeys, "If you don't mind going places without a map…." (p. 33), I thought of my own continuing journey with the Juarez family. I planned several interviews, home visits, school and community agency meetings, and read research on adult education and dropouts, particularly Latino/a dropouts. But I never laid out a specific path; it was never obvious to me. Once again, the Juarez family's story took me on winding roads I did not anticipate traveling. And in grappling with the issue of Latina/o dropouts I found myself cast "into the enormous sea of serious social issues" (Behar, 1996, p. 14) although I was dealing with just one dropout student who, years ago, had touched my heart.

The points of my compass rose are formed by my belief in reading and learning as a transactional process.

However, after much reflection, I realize that I do travel with a compass that is so basic to my work, so naturally provides my direction that I forget that I have it with me always; like the tires on my car, it is something I take for granted to carry me where I am hoping to go. Throughout my teaching career I have worked in the field of literacy, most frequently in bilingual or English Language Learning situations. Almost thirty years of educational experiences in that field grounds me firmly in a social constructivistic, sociolinguistic theoretical emphasis that is ethnographically informed. The points of my compass rose are formed by my belief in reading and learning as a transactional process, as described by both Rosenb-

latt and Dewey in 1938. It is one in which students are invited to share their lives and knowledge in the classroom rather than extract information imposed on them by texts. That point intersects with my belief in communicative based approaches to second language acquisition and context-embedded language instruction that provides English Language Learners with comprehensible, meaningful input in a supportive environment (Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1981). Also forming my compass rose is my credence in the incorporation of ethnographically researched data into the curriculum in order to create instructional contexts that honor and include the capabilities and cultural resources, the funds of knowledge of diverse families, the schematic understanding of the world and its conventions, specific subjects, and ways of organizing words and ideas (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). My goal is always to help construct classrooms that strive to become inclusive communities of learners. A Freirian trust in the intellectual ability of the diverse learners with whom I work to handle not only basic skills and direct instruction but also higher-level thinking skills and the pursuit of an engaging curriculum and aesthetic reading where feelings, attitudes, personal experiences and associations are encouraged crisscross my compass too. And finally, all of those points are colored by my own faith, a liberal Catholic orientation anchored in a social activism which sees poverty as a condition, not as a pathology. One that encourages human interactions that cross boundaries of race and ethnicity in the pursuit of equity and justice. With these theoretical bases as my footing, I look closely at an immigrant family's experiences after the loss of formal schooling for their oldest son. I analyze the information I gather, recognizing themes and pedagogical implications the stories I share might offer those involved in the education of the "Juarezes" they may discover in their own professional careers.

Coles (1997) wrote that each of us "brings . . . a particular life to the others who are being observed . . . each of us will engage with the others differently, carrying back from such engagement our own version of them" (p. 5). I wrote my version of the Juarez family after their son drops out of school, seen through my eyes: a teacher from a very blue collar, non-economically privileged upbringing whose grandparents were Russian and French peasants. I was first generation college educated, and my adolescence was punctured with the assassination of my heroes, over and over, as the Vietnam War rumbled in the background. I remember the day our young male high school teachers, whom we so admired, waited to hear their draft numbers. I remember wearing black taffeta armbands on Moratorium Day. I remember a young nun defending my written account of the Kent State murders in the school newspaper (replete with photographs I convinced my town newspaper to lend me) to our principal, Sr. Thomas, who was angry that the story was covered. That town, Paterson, New Jersey, the city that William Carlos Williams immortalized, is really where my research style began over 30 years ago as I tutored children of color in an after-school storefront program. Inner city Paterson, a stone's throw from Ground Zero of 9-11-01, is where I later worked in an interdenominational summer day camp and began visiting the homes of my students, African-American and Puerto Rican children, accepting invitations to their birthday parties. It was where I walked through tenements from our modest wood-framed homes on the hilltop to save the 15 cents bus fare and go downtown to Grant's Five and Ten to buy a "45" record and then visit the large, old Paterson Library.

I caused a controversy in my small Catholic college in upstate New York because I studied Spanish for a semester in Ponce, Puerto Rico instead of Madrid, Spain, in order to learn the language of the bilingual children I was preparing to teach. When I won the Excellence in Spanish Award at graduation, the professor in charge of the Study Abroad Program in Spain stood up and left the assembly in protest while our new Puerto Rican professor jumped up and cheered. Later, while working in a dual language bilingual program as a young teacher, I became deeply involved with a Mexican immigrant family, the Camachos.

That first spring I taught, I noticed Enrique, my newly arrived fifth grader, always wore a white turtleneck to school despite temperatures of 90 degrees and above. I went to visit his home and found his single mother with five children housed in a wretched two-room apartment, with one bed, living on canned peaches as Mrs. Camacho waited for her newly acquired factory job assembling purses to begin to pay her. I had no qualms about my role then. Another young teacher and I collected clothes, furniture, food, and a vegetable garden donated by a local church for the Camachos. In the winter I fought with an absent landlord to turn on their heat because Mrs. Camacho's

English was very limited. I shopped the sales to add some presents to their Christmas celebration. I saw it simply as part of my role as a teacher, a profession my Catholic mentors taught me to view as a vocation, not simply as a job. I learned about the courageous journey the Camacho family endured to get to the east coast of the United States, learned how to crochet from Mrs. Camacho, improved my conversational Spanish, heard songs and poetry of a life far away from my own. We were exchanging abilities and drawing strength from each other. Away from college and away from home, the Camachos offered me friendship and values close to the ones I learned from my own teachers and parents—work hard, strive to do your best, treat everyone with respect, build community. Those experiences translated easily into experiential narrative research informed by ethnographic inquiry, into ordinary and particularized research, into using a long-felt bent for writing to report what I saw, human to human.

After the several student-teacher-family relationships that had flourished for me in New York, I moved to Chicago, "the city of big shoulders", to become involved with Mexican families of the preschoolers I taught in the Pilsen neighborhood. They welcomed, [with mostly open arms], the first *huera* (white woman) they selected through their parent council to teach in their bilingual early childhood center. When I eventually met the Juarez family while directing an outreach ESL program, "entry" into the field was neither contrived nor difficult. I was just *Maestra Cristina* (Teacher Christina) visiting a student's home, a student whose amiable personality and serious learning difficulties were hard to overlook. The desire to share those often innocently powerfully informative experiences creates questions and ethical dilemmas I now grapple with daily. Yet my conviction that the sharing of this research is helpful, particularly in breaking down negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants who become students of mainstream teachers who struggle to educate them, drives me to continue this journey with the Juarezes.

Coles (1997) reminds me of the polarities that pull at social observers and ethnographic writers—objectivity vs. subjectivity, quantitative vs. qualitative, detached and analytic vs. morally engaging and partisan, theoretical vs. practical. I come down on the "soft" side of these dyads; I hear myself saying, with that bias I was taught, that the "hard sciences" are the best intellectually, that only quantitative methods "count," that math is the king of subjects. I was never good at math, good at science only conceptually, until it involved math. Math is a language that doesn't speak to me; I don't see the patterns, the formulas don't make sense, the theorems elude me. I am skeptical of educational statistical analysis; it seems most often and at best anomalous when applied to children and learning. At worst, deceptive, as I learned in graduate courses that non-parametric statistics permit you to coerce your data into supporting what you want them to support. I wish I could do a post hoc test on Alejandro's data and write that he will get a GED, a good job, grow to be a responsible husband and loving father. Or I wish I could find a miracle method for teaching literacy skills to people like Alejandro's parents who find visual memory so challenging, print so elusive. I'd put them in the experimental group, too bad for the control group, and I'd create a bar graph showing their progress. But my "method" doesn't afford me that luxury. In fact, it encourages me to be concerned about interfering, about imposing my cultural values, about personalizing interpretations, about being a white woman involved with a family of color. It offers me the dichotomous role of participant observer. It begs me to be cautious and concerned if I expose too much emotion, for what place does emotion have in educational research?

Away from college and away from home, the Camachos offered me friendship and values close to the ones I learned from my own teachers and parents.

Behar says that she is in search of a genre, quoting Geertz who said, "There seems to be a genre missing" (1996, p. 44). "Consider this book a quest for that genre," she answered in 1996 (p. 9). At first, I found myself next to her mouthing those same words. But now in my mid-fifties, I no longer feel I need to beg for a genre or apologize for a method. In fact, genre and method seem increasingly blurred in my eyes. Narrative inquiry was unheard of thirty

years ago. "Now, there are undergraduate and graduate courses in narrative; there are conferences on narrative inquiry; there is a journal of narrative inquiry; and research papers abound at conferences" (Phillion, He & Connelly, 2005, p. 3). Clandinin & Connelly (1990, 2000) trace the roots of narrative inquiry to basic notions of philosophy, history and the study of cases. And narrative inquiry coupled with multicultural education is seen by Phillion, Connelly and He (2005) as "having the potential for profoundly productive links in the pursuit of democratic life" (p. 4).

So consider this book an invitation to give emotion a place in educational research; consider this book a productive link in the pursuit of democratic education. Consider *this* book a unique recipe that blends anthropology, journalism, ethnography, sociology, and documentary with pedagogical, phenomenological and hermeneutic reflection. Consider this book experiential narrative research from someone who unapologetically wears her heart on her sleeve and travels cautiously, without a map, into the heart of educational inquiry.

Admittedly, I step over the line from research to advocacy when I attend a school staffing and translate a nurse's dictionary Spanish for the mother I accompany, when I encourage a daughter not to give up her dream of becoming a teacher and go to chef school instead because she is afraid of college, when I buy books and art materials for the toddler who is the daughter of the boy who touched my heart. I throw aside the camera (Behar, 1996, p. 1) and fling my arms around the child whose life I hope will be happier than her parents'.

It was my mother, who was not wont to reflect much upon me, her youngest child whose academic bent she did not really understand, who once told me that I wore my heart on my sleeve. I can vividly remember that rare moment of insight she tenderly shared, and I can recall envisioning a bright red heart clinging to my shoulder. And at 55, I am finally ready to embrace that "heart" and to say out loud that, through my narrative research, I offer the possibility for intellectual and emotional engagement. I am ready to go further and to proclaim that I believe that the most potent learning involves emotion. And that, as a teacher educator, I want to touch my students' hearts so that to some degree they come to care about *their* students and to understand *them* even when the students' worlds are very different from the ones they themselves experienced. I could simply tell my readers that Alejandro Juarez, Jr. fits the common characteristics of students at risk of failing in school and that his parents have many of the deficit hallmarks of dropouts' families. I could cite the experts in the dropout data and collect updated dropout statistics in Chicago. But instead I choose to tell the story of parents that mourn the loss of formal education for their son, fears for his siblings' academic futures, and consciously try to be good role models for their children despite their own lack of formal schooling. I embrace the framework that narrative inquiry affords me; I welcome the possibility of sharing data that integrates learning and emotion, that brings concepts to life in ordinary moments that might let the reader feel the pain of the challenges faced by one whose only diploma is from elementary school. So follow me, if you will, with my notes and compass in hand. We will journey, without a map, and try to arrive at some understandings of dreams deferred.

So consider this book an invitation to give emotion a place in educational research.

Post Note

After struggling to de-narrate my study for a few years, I eventually culled out the imposed empirically bent insertions I painstakingly made and returned to the paradigm I love. I also weeded out most of the narrative angst that crept into my work once it was criticized. I regret the time I lost in sharing the continuation of Alejandro's story and my own weakness in the face of one editor's opinion. I am convinced that Alejandro's story deserves to be told and that doing so narratively makes sense in a myriad of ways. And I am happy to say that just recently another publisher gladly and unhesitatingly accepted the narrative research I entitled, *Dreams Deferred: Dropping Out and Struggling Forward.*

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