

## Chapter 7

### **Narrative Inquiry as Pedagogy in Education: The Extraordinary Potential of Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Stories of Experience**

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In the last chapter of *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (2003), as Thomas King continues to show that “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (p. 153), he draws close Ben Okri’s (1997) thoughts:

In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or—knowingly or unknowingly—in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (Okri, 1997, as cited in King, 2003, p. 153)

Central in King’s puzzle over ways in which changing the stories we live by might change our lives is his story of experiences he lived in relation with a family he once knew, a family with whom he gradually fell out of relation. As he puzzles over why he lived out a story of disconnecting himself from this family, King wonders about dominant narratives shaping North America, dominant narratives that, as described by Okri, we knowingly or unknowingly live by. In particular, King (2003) wonders about the ethics woven into dominant North American narratives: “It’s not that we

*Review of Research in Education*

March 2013, Vol. 37, pp. 212-242

DOI: 10.3102/0091732X12458885

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don't care about ethics or ethical behavior" (p. 163). "Perhaps we shouldn't be displeased with the . . . ethics . . . or any myriad of other codes of conduct suggested by our actions. After all, we've created them. We've created the stories that allow them to exist and flourish" (p. 164). King then concludes: "Want a different ethic? Tell a different story" (p. 164).

As coauthors of this chapter and as educators who compose our lives as narrative inquirers yearning for dominant narratives in classrooms, schools, universities, and the broader places where people interact to be shifted through attention to relationships and lives in the making, understandings of telling, and of living, a different story if we want a different future, keep us hopeful. As we wrote this chapter attentive to the focus of this volume of *Review of Research in Education* on "extraordinary pedagogies for working within school settings serving nondominant students" (C. Faltis & J. Abedi, 2011, personal communication), we held close understandings of ways in which narrative inquiry embodies potential for shaping extraordinary pedagogy in education. We see this potential of narrative inquiry to remake life in classrooms, schools, and beyond as centrally situated in Clandinin and Connelly's (1998) understanding that it is education that lives at the core of narrative inquiry "and not merely the telling of stories" (p. 246). They write,

We see living an educated life as an ongoing process. People's lives are composed over time: biographies or life stories are lived and told, retold and relived. For us, education is interwoven with living and with the possibility of retelling our life stories. As we think about our own lives and the lives of teachers and children with whom we engage, we see possibilities for growth and change. As we learn to tell, to listen and to respond to teachers' and children's stories, we imagine significant educational consequences for children and teachers in schools and for faculty members in universities through more mutual relations between schools and universities. No one, and no institution, would leave this imagined future unchanged. (pp. 246–247)

This understanding of narrative inquiry, that is, as attending to and acting on experience by co-inquiring with people who interact in and with classrooms, schools, or in other contexts into living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience, lives at the heart of our chapter. We stay attentive to this understanding in each of the four upcoming parts: *The Transcendent Power of Story*, *Turning Toward the Study of Narrative in Academia*, *Diverse Methodological Understandings of Narrative in Education Research*, and *Narrative Inquiry, Education Pedagogy, and the Composing of Lives*. Our attentiveness to this central aspect of ways in which narrative inquiry opens possibilities for shifting stories, and therefore, lives, connects us with the knowing of many people whose thinking in relation with story, narrative, experience, and lives shapes our thinking and living as narrative inquirers. In this way, too, our chapter draws readers toward the voices of people who share a vision of the centrality of attending to lives, and the making and remaking of lives, as vitally important work in classrooms, schools, and communities.

## PART 1: THE TRANSCENDENT POWER OF STORY

As we begin our chapter with a focus on the transcendent, enduring nature of story, we explore briefly the ancient yet timeless ways in which we human beings have

and continue to draw on stories as a way to share, and to understand, who we are, who we have been, and who we are becoming. We also draw on an understanding of the responsibilities and obligations that come with the telling and retelling of experiences. As Lopez (1990) describes,

The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put stories into each other's memory. This is how people care for themselves. One day you will be good storytellers. Never forget these obligations. (p. 60)

Throughout the ages and across cultures story continues to express the fundamental nature of humanity. Stories are not to be treated lightly as they both carry, and inspire, significant obligations and responsibilities: stories must be cared for as they are at the heart of how we make meaning of our experiences of the world. Indeed, "storytelling is about survival" (Ross, 2008, p. 65).

The intergenerational aspects of the interwoven nature of human existence and story are made visible by Trinh Minh-ha (1989) when she puts into writing her understanding of *Grandmas' story* as the world's earliest archives carried in the memories of women. *Grandmas' story* "depends on everyone of us coming into being. It needs us all, needs our remembering, understanding, and creating what we have heard together to keep on coming into being. The story of a people. Of us, peoples" (p. 119). Our very identities as human beings are inextricably linked to the stories we tell of ourselves, both to ourselves and with one another.

Similarly, Le Guin (1980) speaks of the ageless nature of storytelling as she reminds us of the enduring draw of the campfire. As generation after generation circle round the fire, stories flow endlessly, gathering us together. Le Guin writes that as we "huddle closer," the stories we tell one another bear witness to our lives, and in this way, she wonders, if perhaps, one of the shortest stories told was an ancient one chiseled in runes on a stone in Northern England translated as "Tolfink carved these runes in this stone." Like Tolfink, Le Guin believes we story ourselves into being, "unwilling to dissolve into darkness" (p. 194). For Le Guin, it is in these ways that we plant our stories in the lives of future generations: we remind them through our stories and the visible remains of the traces our lives leave behind.

Writer and storyteller Marmon Silko (1996) draws further attention to ways stories connect us, allowing us to be present to and with one another and all things, continuing through generations. In her writing, Marmon Silko paints images of the communal process of storytelling in the Pueblo tradition, which is inclusive of all experiences, even difficult ones, so that a person need never separate from the group or feel alone. Everyone, from the youngest to the oldest in the family, is expected to be a part of the listening, the telling, and the remembering. An intergenerational community is brought into being through the sharing of ancestors' stories and stories of ancestors. We learn this understanding as Marmon Silko remembers her Aunt Susie telling her as a child, "They are out there. Let them come in. They're here, they're here

with us, *within* the stories” (p. 59). Likening communal storytelling to a journey on an inner landscape, Marmon Silko writes of imagination and growing awareness and that being human is both different from, yet connected to, all things living. As she learned from her ancestors, stories are teachings of the heart: “If you can remember the stories you will be all right. Just remember the stories” (p. 58).

Additionally, as she writes about the distinction of her people learning how to live *with* the land rather than *on* the land, Marmon Silko (1996) shows that in the Pueblo tradition “human identity, imagination and storytelling were inextricably linked to the land” (p. 21). Places on the landscape, she writes, serve as reminders of the events of stories and show ways to survive physically and spiritually, on both inner and outer landscapes. Being on the land calls forth stories embedded within the land and, too, within our bones. Living in the midst of these stories, and our interactions with them, they become part of who we are and who we are becoming. These embodied, lived stories, however, as Crites (1971) describes, may never “be fully and directly told, because they live, so to speak, in the arms and legs and bellies” (p. 295) of people.

As someone who extensively travelled in and interacted with northern Alaska, Lopez (1989) explores his relation with the land through the evocative power of stories. Describing these interactions, Lopez highlights how it was through stories that he became more connected with the lives of animals and the landscape itself, thus deepening his experience and his understanding. As he crossed open ground, Lopez heard stories of the wolverine. Listening to these stories shared by trappers evoked something within Lopez, drawing him closer to what it might mean to be a wolverine and deepening his understanding of fierceness. Lopez believes that this kind of encounter with the wolverine, through story, shaped his inner landscape and, in this way, afforded him a richer experience of wild animals and a more responsive engagement. Indeed, Lopez writes that “the landscape seemed alive because of the stories” (p. 63).

Cruikshank, a researcher who spent years with Elders in the Yukon, a northern territory of Canada, articulates her awakening to ways in which the Elders spoke in stories about their lives—stories of people, animals, and the land intermingling. Of cultural value, and as a way to gain wisdom, the people travelled with narratives providing a kind of map containing pragmatic information as well as offering diverse ways to be in the world. The stories were from long ago and of the present. Angela Sidney, one of the Elders, told Cruikshank (1990): “You people talk from paper, me, I want to talk from grandpa” (p. 356). For Angela Sidney, story is education in its most holistic form, a kind of education that honors the knowledge of previous generations. Reflecting back, Angela Sidney shared that she has “tried to live her life right, just like a story” (p. 340).

As Cruikshank came to know and to understand something of this centrality of stories in the lives of Yukon Elders, she wondered at the persistence of stories through tumultuous times. These wonders, in part, drew Cruikshank (2005) back to the Yukon and into continued relationships, both of which she depended on in her more recent work. In *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters,*

and *Social Imagination*, she explores how “orally narrated stories do indeed provide empirical observations about geophysical changes and their consequences. But they also demonstrate how glaciers provide substantive material for evaluating changes wrought by colonial histories” (p. 12). Additionally, Cruikshank became “especially intrigued by . . . the potential of stories to make us re-evaluate situations we think we understand” (p. 79).

In compelling and differing ways, each of these writers reveals how narrative transcends temporal, contextual, cultural, and social boundaries. Indeed, Marmon Silko (1996) speaks of human communities as living beings that continually change and, as a result, while the stories change with time, they never end. As well, Trinh Minh-ha (1989) emphasizes that a story, once told, cannot be taken back, but instead perpetually finds ways into other stories: a story is never ending, but changing. Expressing this deeply transcendent, enduring nature of story, Trinh Minh-ha writes that “the story is beautiful, because or therefore it unwinds like a thread. A long thread, for there is no end in sight. Or the end she reaches leads actually to another end, another opening, another ‘residual deposit of duration’” (p. 149).

Reading and thinking with the works of the writers made visible above, our living as narrative inquirers has grown increasingly layered, contextualized, alive, and moving. We see their ideas as foreshadowing tremendous potential for pedagogy in classrooms, schools, universities, and communities. Imagining pedagogy through the transcendent power of story, we see how much difference, openness, and place matter. As we are quieted by these thoughts, wonders emerge. We wonder, for example, about possibilities for storying and restorying ourselves and one another into being; we wonder about new kinds of, or maybe forgotten or written over, obligations and ways of interacting and responding to and with one another.

## PART 2: TURNING TOWARD THE STUDY OF NARRATIVE IN ACADEMIA

Although numerous writers, as shown above, focus on some of the earliest understandings of story, other writers study narrative from diverse perspectives. As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) describe, although “narrative inquiry is an old practice that may feel new to us for a variety of reasons” (p. 35), indeed

human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways . . . we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another’s assistance in building lives and communities. What feels new is the emergence of narrative methodologies in the field of social science research. With this emergence has come intensified talk about our stories, their function in our lives, and their place in composing our collective affairs. (pp. 35–36)

There has, for example, been a long history of narrative within the traditions of narratology, the study and theory of narrative. The term *narratology* is often used in relation to literary theory and literary criticism. In the 1960s and 1970s,

the French structuralists were preoccupied with an overriding concern about linguistic structures (e.g., Levi Strauss's [1963] work on universal structures relevant to different cultural examinations of myth and Labov's [1966] inquiries into sociolinguistic studies of oral stories). These ideas about narrative structures remain traceable in the widespread work of narrative theorists who continue to focus on the literary aspects of narrative in research. We say more about this form of narrative research in Part 3, *Diverse Methodological Understandings of Narrative in Education Research*.

The study of narrative also became increasingly prevalent for theologians, philosophers, psychotherapists, historians, linguists, and literary figures (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Carr, 1986; Crites, 1971; Heilbrun, 1988; Kerby, 1991; MacIntyre, 1981). Indeed, as Mitchell (1981) describes, "To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself" (p. 1). Similarly, Bruner (1986) suggests that narrative knowing is a primary act of mind.<sup>1</sup> Writing that "the formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative" (p. 291) theologian Crites (1971) argues that experience is storied phenomena. As well, Carr (1986) calls for particular attention to the temporal nature of experience as lives unfold. Both Carr (1986) and Kerby (1991) speak about narrative identity as dependent on the degree of coherence and continuity that can be construed as lives are composed.

In linking this early focus on narrative with the ancient, timeless draw of stories foregrounded in Part 1, we now shift our focus toward the already well-documented "turn to narrative" in social science research.

### **The Emergence of Narrative in the Social Sciences**

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) describe the turn to narrative in social science research as a time when "the academy opened up in a way that made a space for narrative inquiry" (p. 3). They highlight four thematic turns in this movement. Of the four, the most significant for narrative inquiry was the change of relationship between the researcher and "the researched." In this turn, *subjects* in human research are no longer treated as fixed in place, that is, as static, atemporal, and decontextualized. When drawing on the methodology of narrative inquiry, which explores stories, narratives of experience, as the phenomenon of interest, narrative inquirers "embrace a relational understanding of the roles and interactions of the researcher and the researched" (p. 15). Other shifts, according to Pinnegar and Daynes, include turns toward understanding stories as *data*, moving toward the particular from the universal, and an acknowledgement of blurred, tentative, and multiple ways of knowing. Pinnegar and Daynes describe all of these movements as stemming from a fundamental shift in which attention to people's experiences became central. In this shift toward understanding experience, experience is understood as "the stories people live. People live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 415).

Understandings such as those highlighted by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) and Clandinin and Connelly (1994) are both shaped by and continue to reverberate within and across numerous fields of study, including anthropology, education, medicine, nursing, psychology, and sociology. Although narrative either as a method used within a research study or as a research methodology continues to evolve, when attending to the four narrative turns described by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), we see ways in which landscapes for narrative research in the social sciences began to take shape. In this way, too, we see the interlapping of ideas across fields of study as narrative terms from one discipline were picked up by researchers working within other disciplines.

In the field of anthropology, for instance, story shaped ways for researchers to interrupt the way people of Indigenous cultures were traditionally studied. An example of this interruption is shown in Sarris's (1993) book where he tells the story of Mabel McKay from Mabel's perspective and not from the perspective of an academic with primary commitments to the academy. Basso (1996), too, is respectful of the non-Western ways of knowing of the Western Apache and of their relation to the land and storytelling, which they recollect as "wisdom sits in places" (p. 53).

Also within the field of anthropology, Geertz (1983) highlights the value of the particular through his notion of "local knowledge." In his memoir, Geertz (1995) looks back on the changes he experienced over time and in so doing brings attention to the temporal and that everything is continually changing. He writes,

The problem is that more has changed and more disjointly than one first imagines. The two towns of course have altered, in many ways superficially, in a few ways profoundly. But so and likewise has the anthropologist. So has the discipline within which he works, the intellectual setting within which that discipline exists, and the moral basis on which it rests. (p. 2)

In the field of psychiatry, Coles (1989) writes of his turn toward narrative as shaped early in his career through his interactions with Dr. Ludwig, one of his supervisors: "What ought to be interesting, Dr Ludwig kept insisting, is the unfolding of a lived life rather than the confirmation such a chronicle provides for some theory" (p. 22). In this way, Coles draws attention to the ethical responsibility involved in narrative, noting that "their story, yours, mine—it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them" (p. 31).

Within the broad field of psychology, Bruner (1986) is a pioneer in the establishment of the idea that narrative is a primary way of knowing and that we construct worlds from our own perspectives, living by story. Similarly, as Polkinghorne (1988) highlights the need for research approaches that are "especially sensitive to the unique characteristics of human existence," he turns toward "narrative knowledge" (p. x), which he gradually describes as two narrative forms of inquiry, "analysis of narrative" and "narrative analysis" (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Also within the field of psychology, Freeman (2010) and Sarbin (2004) highlight processes of imagination in narrative work. Sarbin writes of imaginings as embodied and perceptual knowing that is constructed narratively such that we draw on our

rememberings and enable our *as if* stories. Without imagining there is no possibility of becoming. Additionally, Freeman (2010) considers autobiographical inquiry as a reconfiguring of the past in an evolving narrative that makes sense in present circumstances, thereby shaping more responsive and responsible living in the future. Describing this understanding, Freeman writes that autobiographical inquiry, “Thus emerges as a fundamental tool for ethical and moral recollection, taken here is the classical sense of ‘gathering together’ that which would otherwise be lost owing to our pervasive tendency toward forgetfulness” (p. 26).

As feminist orientations began to arise in many disciplines within the academy, people working within diverse fields were drawn toward considerations of alternative ways of thinking and working, ways that continued to shape openings for the increasing acceptability of narrative as, or within, research (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007). One groundbreaking example of this intersection between narrative and feminist theories took shape within the field of psychology as research on voice in relation with women’s knowledge and identity was pursued collaboratively by psychologists Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986). Along with the provocative idea of researching and writing collaboratively, Belenky et al. write of women’s development in terms of “a narrative sense of self—past and future” (p. 136).

Similar intersections between feminist understandings and narrative can be seen in the work of cultural anthropologist Bateson (1989), who writes of women “composing lives” in improvisatory and relational ways, always making sense of transitions through inventing new stories. Educators Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, and Turner Minarik (1993) also worked in collaborative ways with one another and with groups of teachers as they developed the notion of “relational knowing,” knowing that evolves over time through sustained conversation and relationships. As well, lived knowledge and understandings of complex and pluralistic identities permeates the work of Lugones (1987) as she explores how “we inhabit ‘worlds’ and travel across them and keep all the memories” (p. 14). Playing with the idea that as our lives unfold, as we move into and between multiple worlds, Lugones shows that as we “world”-travel across worlds we construct images of who we are and what we are about, as well as images of who others are and what they are about. Carrying forward these images from across worlds, we gain deeper understandings of ourselves, of others, and of the contexts in which we live.

In the reverberations shaped in these intersections between narrative and feminist orientations within and across multiple disciplines, the publication of books such as *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1984); *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Anzaldúa, 1987); *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color* (Anzaldúa, 1995); *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Lorde, 1983); *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Lorde, 1984); and *Ain’t I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (hooks, 1981) shaped awareness of what Adichie more presently names as “the danger of a single story” (Adichie, 2009, TEDGlobal, posted October 2009).



### The Emergence of Story, of Narrative Inquiry as Research

Shaping a homeplace for narrative inquiry within this emerging narrative landscape, while at the same time keeping experience as a foremost consideration in their understanding of life in classrooms, Clandinin and Connelly's development of narrative inquiry as a research methodology is deeply shaped by their well-documented turn, and returns, to the works of the paramount philosopher in education in the 20th century, John Dewey (1925, 1934, 1938). For Dewey, education, life, and experience are one and the same. Education is life and life is education, and to study life, to study education, is to study experience. As a philosopher of experience, Dewey theorizes the key terms *personal*, *social*, *temporal*, and *situation* to describe characteristics of experience based on his principles of interaction and continuity. Considering the quality of interaction and the quality of continuity in any given situation, Dewey highlights the possibility of understanding experience as educative or mis-educative.<sup>2</sup> Dewey's conceptualization of the nature of experience engendered a way to explore experience, and for Clandinin and Connelly (2000) his ideas shaped an "imaginative backdrop" (p. 2) for the development of narrative inquiry.

Engaged in teacher education, with a particular interest in teacher knowledge, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) grew increasingly attentive to additional education scholars for whom understanding experience is central. In particular, two educational philosophers, Johnson (1990), whose work focuses on embodied knowing, and MacIntyre (1981), whose work focuses on narrative unity, further shaped the development of Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) early conceptualization of narrative inquiry as both phenomenon and method.<sup>3</sup> They write,

It is equally as correct to say inquiry into narrative as it is to say narrative inquiry. By this we mean that narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. (p. 416)

As we show in later chapter parts, Clandinin and Connelly (2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) now argue they no longer see narrative inquiry as method but as methodology and, even more so, as a way of composing a life, of living (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Such understandings shift attention away from narrative inquiry as only focusing on the telling or representation of stories to understandings that "relationship is key to what it is that narrative inquirers do" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189).

As narrative inquirers draw on these understandings of narrative inquiry they note, as highlighted by Elbaz-Luwisch (2010, drawing on Griffiths & MacLeod, 2007), that narrative inquiry is increasingly written about as not only a research methodology but as relationships that can "provide a hearing for the stories of people on the margins, whose experience is generally not heard" (p. 274).

Indeed, narrative inquiry resides in the relationship of researcher and participant(s) who may also become co-researchers as the relationship evolves. It is through relationship that the co-composing of new lives for both becomes possible. Experience

as in continual motion and as in continuous co-composition, which shaped narrative inquiry terms such as “being in the midst” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63), are now quite commonly understood as critically important in methodological and pedagogical understandings of narrative inquiry. Woven within these understandings are additional understandings of the messy, uncertain, and nonlinear nature of living out narrative inquiries.

### PART 3: DIVERSE METHODOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF NARRATIVE IN EDUCATION RESEARCH

In this part of our chapter, we turn toward a focus on some of the diverse and ever-emergent understandings of narrative research methodology. Within the field of education, the possibilities of including perspectives from authors who engage with narrative on diverse academic or disciplinary landscapes supported a broader and deeper knowing of engaging in inquiries, as well as increasingly textured and richly nuanced descriptions of these engagements. As we highlighted earlier in relation with Marmon Silko’s (1996) understandings of story and place, particular stories begin to grow out of particular landscapes.

In 1993, for example, Carter highlights that story and narrative were beginning to be used in the field of education, particularly in relation with understanding teacher knowledge. Considering what it means to be human through studying experience narratively allowed for much more expansive and compelling entry points into educational studies than did a traditionally narrow, technical approach. Drawing on Noddings’s (1991) sense that “stories have the power to direct and change our lives” (p. 157), Carter (1993) expresses the excitement of bringing teachers’ storied knowledge to bear on research in teaching and teacher education. At the same time, however, Carter points out that in acknowledging teachers’ voices a different world for teacher educators might need to take shape, perhaps a world shaped by “helping teachers come to know their own stories” (p. 8).

Also in 1993, Greene brought into the conversation in education stories of “not yet” as she argues for the centrality of the arts and story in a “curriculum for human beings” (p. 211). Greene’s notions of *wide-awakeness* and of stories of “not yet” intertwined most notably with narrative inquiry in the possibility and promise of retelling and reliving experience in new and more attentive ways. Additionally, Greene (1995) writes of the necessity of teachers revisiting childhood landscapes to discern multiplicity in the “shapes of childhood” narratives. This notion of multiple selves gave rise to awakening to the idea that there could be other ways of being and living in the world. These ideas became particularly important for narrative inquirers focused on the continual motion of experience and of the potential of retelling stories of our lives through attending across time, place, and situations.

In this same era, Paley’s work in education supported attention to the wholeness of children’s lives, that is, to ways in which children make sense of their experiences through story and play. Paley (1997) considers schools as places “where children are

broken into pieces in order that adults may observe, label and classify them” (p. 54). Indeed, Paley wonders, “And having been so dissected, how does the child become whole again” (p. 54). Significant for narrative inquirers who come to these ideas are the links with living stories, that is, that we are always in a process of becoming.

Although Polakow’s (1994) work echoes similar concerns, she positions her research into the lives, and silences, of single mothers and children as both situated within, yet also shaped beyond, dominant institutional (school) narratives to include broader social, cultural narratives at work in America. As she reflects on how the “language of democracy muffles the voices of poor women and their children that echo in the invisibility of the spaces *we* have constructed for *them*,” Polakow describes that she has “chosen to tell the story of one vulnerable and growing group of people, for I too am a mother” (p. 3). However, in coming to know and to tell the mothers’ stories, Polakow reveals that she has been profoundly affected by the experience, that is, that as she engaged in the inquiry she gradually awakened to the understanding that she cannot know the stories of the mothers and children without reflecting on herself and ways in which the lives of the mothers are considerably different from her life as a mother.<sup>4</sup>

This focus in Polakow’s (1994) work on the need to know, the need to understand stories still silent is highlighted in Casey’s (1995) review of narrative in education when she writes that “the repertoire of stories still waiting to be told (and studied) is practically limitless. What better way to grapple with making sense of our rapidly changing world than through the study of stories?” (p. 240).

Similarly, as Delpit (1995) writes from within her experiences as a Black mother of a child “who has struggled through nine schools from first to eleventh grade in our attempt to find a school that makes sense” (p. xiii), she highlights that “students of color are doubly disadvantaged in trying to get their voices heard, particularly in the university classroom” (p. 109). Matters of voice and narrative intersect again in Delpit’s work as she stories the experiences of non-White educators who feel left out of the dialogue and silenced in matters around educating children from diverse backgrounds. Delpit urges attentiveness to these margins and to the silencing that lives in these places. She simultaneously calls forward questions of whether or not educators are really hearing the stories of so many children and youth in schools. Similar concerns about the “need for story” in classrooms and schools are raised by Dyson and Genishi (1994) when they write that in the midst of then “current concerns about our increasingly diverse student population and about the school’s effectiveness in serving those students, we collectively declare . . . the need for story” (p. 6).

One of the ways this growing awareness of the “need for story” in education research was taken up can be traced through Barone’s (2001) scholarship, seminal work in shaping a “literary turn in human studies” that opened up possibilities for research embodying “characteristics of imaginative literature, including expressive, evocative language and an aesthetic form” (p. 2). The reverberations from this scholarship continue as, for example, Coulter and Smith (2009, drawing on Barone, 2007) recently drew on Barone’s earlier notion of “narrative constructions” as a “recasting

of data into a storied form” (p. 577) to argue that “the purposes of research are not antithetical to the purposes of narrative, which include keeping the reader reading to the last page, and that the use of literary elements helps the process” (p. 587).

Rose’s (1989) work, which traces his own earlier lived experience as he simultaneously attends to the experiences of youth presently marginalized in schools as a result of dominant institutional narratives that perpetually position youth from “working class backgrounds” as low achieving, is a strong example of the kind of scholarship that marked this turn toward the literary aspects of telling stories as research. In the work of each of these writers it is the wholeness of lives, and the play of contexts on those lives, which directs where attention needs to be turned. Similarly, Vinz (1996, 1997) highlights a teaching life as always in motion, as always composing. Her notions of *dispositioning to un know* and *not know* open up understandings of the importance of seeing teachers as in processes of continual growth and change. Phillion, He, and Connelly (2005) further engaged with teachers from diverse backgrounds to bring less often heard narratives to the fore.<sup>5</sup> So, too, did hooks (1994) as she inquires into experiences in her life, experiences both as she was growing up and as she teaches adult students. Miller (1998), reflecting on Greene’s (1995, 1997) thoughts about the necessity of incompleteness in teachers’ stories, similarly highlights that “incompleteness certainly points to forms of autobiographical inquiry that challenge any fixed or predetermined notions of who one ‘is’ or ‘could be’” (p. 153). The importance of tentative knowing resonates as a tenet of narrative inquiry. Tentative knowing embraces a multiplicity of perspectives over time and place, preserving a sense that the story could be told otherwise. It calls forth that the story is for now; it is unfinished.

As these ideas in relation with narrative and education became significant, so, too, did the ideas of Clandinin and Connelly (1986), which express a similar sense that

the narrative study of schooling has potential for freeing education from a language of the technical, for ensuring that understandings link with fundamental qualities of human experience; and for establishing bonds in method and meaning between education and other fields of endeavor. (p. 385)

Clandinin and Connelly (1986) connect their fundamental premise about narrative to their interest in the “becoming” of teachers. With respect to narrative they write that “it is the study of how humans make meaning by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future” (1986, p. 385). They link the development of teacher knowledge not to the development of specialized techniques and terminology but to “providing (teachers) opportunities for reflection upon their practice particularly at moments of contradiction and discontinuity to allow novice teachers to begin to reconstruct their narratives of experience” (p. 386).

For Connelly and Clandinin (1988), one aspect opened up through these experiential, narrative understandings of the enduring influence of teachers’ life experiences in shaping classrooms and schools is that curriculum is a life course, a journey that continuously

emerges, taking shape along the way. Understanding curriculum in this experiential way requires that “all teaching and learning questions—all curriculum matters—be looked at from the point of view of the involved persons” (p. 4). Connelly and Clandinin see that the people most centrally involved in curriculum are teachers and children.

Key in this experiential, multidimensional, and relational understanding of curriculum as something co-shaped by teachers and children interacting in school situations is that

situations are . . . composed of persons, in an immediate environment of things, interacting according to certain processes. . . . At any point in time there is a dynamic interaction among persons, things, and processes. . . . Every classroom situation grows out of some preceding classroom situation. . . . Situations have a future. . . . Situations are directional. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, pp. 6–9)

These situations and experiences are shaped and shared by children and teachers as they each draw forth and rely on their personal knowledge. It is this knowledge that children and teachers carry forward and that gets called forth in situations; thus, each enters situations as knowing beings. This narrative understanding of teachers’ personal knowledge is described by Connelly and Clandinin as “personal practical knowledge.” They write that this experiential, narrative understanding of teacher’s knowledge

is a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. . . . [Personal practical knowledge is found] in the person’s past experience, in the person’s present mind and body, and in the person’s future plans and actions. Knowledge is not only “in the mind.” It is “in the body.” And it is seen and found “in our practices.” [Personal practical knowledge] is a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25)

In this way, then, “a narrative, curricular understanding of the person is an understanding that is flexible and fluid” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25), it is an understanding that

recognizes that people say and do different things in different circumstances and, conversely, that different circumstances bring forward different aspects of their experience to bear on the situation. According to this view, a person’s personal practical knowledge depends in important measure on the situation. . . . A narrative understanding of who we are and what we know, therefore, is a study of our whole life, but it does not presume a kind of syrupy “Hollywood” unity. It acknowledges the tensions and differences within each of us. We are, in important ways, what the situation “pulls out” of us. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, pp. 25–26)

These similar and differing ideas in relation with narrative and education, each traceable to questions of experience and of the place of experience in composing lives, continue to unfurl in shaping narrative inquiry as a research methodology in education. So, too, do questions about the different ways in which narrative is methodologically understood within education research. Here we are reminded of the

works of authors foregrounded in Part 2 and the range of ways in which narrative is understood and taken up, which includes structural linguistic understandings, understandings of plot lines, literary analysis, the composition of literary texts as research, and so on.

In exploring the borderlands between narrative inquiry and postpositivist, Marxist, and poststructuralist forms of inquiry, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) highlight “borderlands *within* the community of narrative inquirers” (p. 68, italics in original). They offer the following explanation as a way to show these borderlands:

Some narrative inquirers are more interested in the structure of professional identity narratives. Others are more interested in the difficulty some individuals have in addressing the big picture social justice issues in our world. Others are more interested in working with people to aesthetically craft new narrative representations of experience. Some find themselves working to combine these interests and others. (p. 68)

Exploring these internal borderlands, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) make clear that just as borderlands with narrative inquiry and postpositivist, Marxist, and poststructuralist forms of inquiry can be spaces of tension, struggle, and possibility so, too, can the borderlands within the growing field of narrative inquiry.

Additionally, Clandinin and Murphy (2009) explore ways in which borderlands within narrative inquiry can be shaped by differing ontological and epistemological assumptions. Woven into and among Clandinin and Murphy’s wonders is their understanding of narrative inquiry as relational research. They write,

First, and most important, we speak to our participants and ourselves to fulfil the relational responsibilities of representing our co-constructed experiences. The priority in composing research texts is not, first and foremost, to tell a good story; the priority is to compose research texts in relation with the lives of our participants and ourselves. (p. 600)

Clandinin and Murphy (2009) outline three additional concerns about ways in which not privileging the relational in narrative research texts could cause misunderstandings, particularly among readers new to narrative research. They wonder, for example, if less of a focus on the relational aspects might displace, and subsequently result in readers overlooking, the ontological commitment to the relational that “locates ethical relationships at the heart of narrative inquiry” (p. 600). They also revisit ways in which the research texts composed by narrative inquirers need “to [stay open to] invit[ing] meaning making on the part of the reader,” in part, “because of the nature of storied experience itself” (p. 600). Their final concern is about ways narrative research texts could be read, that is, as the narrative inquirer being positioned as an “omniscient researcher as someone ‘possessing all of the facts’” (p. 601) instead of making visible ways in which narrative inquirers are also part of the phenomena under study. Similarly, as Munro (2007) reflects on “the future of narrative,” she writes that “research is still seen as representation. We invest our trust in methods not in our relationships” (p. 493).

In this chapter section, as well as in earlier parts, we have travelled to, within, and across differing times, places, situations, and relationships. In so doing we showed

some of the similar as well as different ways in which story and narrative in and as research methodology in and outside of education are understood across cultures, places, and times. We also showed some of the similarities and differences between understandings of narrative in research in diverse fields, including within the field of education (see also Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Conle, 2003; 2010; Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007; Murray Orr & Olson, 2007). As readers are likely sensing, our living and thinking as narrative inquirers is grounded within Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) understandings of experience as the central aspect of narrative inquiry. They write that

as we tell our stories as inquirers, it is experience, not narrative, that is the driving impulse. We came to narrative inquiry as a way to study experience. For us, narrative is the closest we can come to experience. Because experience is our concern, we find ourselves trying to avoid strategies, tactics, rules, and techniques that flow out of theoretical considerations of narrative. Our guiding principle in an inquiry is to focus on experience and to follow where it leads. (p. 188)

Although these experiential understandings of narrative inquiry are central in the living and telling of our research, we also see their potential reverberations in education pedagogy, reverberations filled with the promise of seeing and living anew.

#### **PART 4: NARRATIVE INQUIRY, EDUCATION PEDAGOGY, AND THE COMPOSING OF LIVES**

In bringing these methodological understandings to an understanding of pedagogy in education, we see that who a teacher is and who a teacher is becoming is indelibly connected with the processes, strategies, or style(s) of instruction lived out by a teacher. This too is lived out as teachers are profoundly connected with their students, families, and communities. Thinking in this narrative way about pedagogy we draw on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) description of narrative inquiry as an ongoing process of "thinking narratively" (p. 21). Becoming increasingly interested in the possibilities opened up by thinking narratively, Clandinin and Connelly draw on Dewey's (1938) theory of experience and his notions of situation, continuity, and interaction to encourage attention to three inquiry terms or "commonplaces of narrative inquiry" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). These terms are *temporality* (which draws attention to the past, present, and future), *sociality* (which draws attention to interaction between the personal and the social), and *place* (which draws attention to the place or places where stories of experience are lived and told). Furthermore, Downey and Clandinin (2010) highlight that "stories are not just about experience but experience itself; we live and learn in, and through, the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of our stories" (p. 387).

Clandinin, Huber, Steeves, and Li (2011) echo these ideas, that is, that thinking narratively as narrative inquirers is "much more than telling or analyzing stories" (p. 34). They draw on Morris's (2002) distinction between thinking about stories and thinking with stories:

The concept of thinking with stories is meant to oppose and modify (not replace) the institutionalized Western practice of thinking about stories. Thinking about stories conceives of narrative as an object. Thinking with stories is a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative . . . [but allow] narrative to work on us. (p. 196)

When thinking narratively with stories as pedagogy, that is, attending to the meeting of the diverse lives of teachers, children, families, and communities in school and university classrooms, we need to stay wakeful to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Staying wakeful in this way entails that we are simultaneously attentive to the temporal, social, and place dimensions and interactions within and among all of the stories, all of the personal, social, institutional, cultural, familial, and linguistic experiences lived out and told. We more fully illuminate these ideas in the upcoming section, *Thinking with Counterstories*.

It follows then, that in understanding pedagogy in education by thinking narratively we need to understand teachers, children, families, and community members, individually and socially, as composing storied lives, inside and outside of schools. We also need to understand teachers, children, families, and community members as continuously living out the moments of their days by stories of who they are and who they are becoming. These individual stories entangle with, become shaped by, and shape one another. Similarly, the stories lived and told by children, families, teachers, and community members entangle with and become shaped by, while at times also shape social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives.

Thinking narratively about pedagogy is a complex undertaking. This complexity, in part, is shaped by understanding that all of the stories are always in the midst (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Each story, whether personal, social, institutional, cultural, familial, or linguistic, is alive, unfinished, and always in the making; stories continue to be composed with and without our presence. Another complexity that emerges when thinking narratively about pedagogy is that doing so entails the asking of hard questions about what is educative (Dewey, 1938) in the composing of lives. In this way, schooling becomes more than a didactic effort, more than a mere telling of facts, or stories. Education in our lives as narrative inquirers is an ongoing process that sees education as unfolding over time, through interactions, across generations, and embedded within place or places. In thinking narratively we sense responsibilities and obligations to children, families, and communities. Seeing schools in these ways means that we need to imagine the significance and possibilities that our work as educators holds. As we engage with children, youth, families, and also with students in university classrooms, we need to imagine future possibilities and retellings of our encounters.

Here, we are reminded of Lyons and LaBoskey's (2002) work, which looks at teaching practices as scholarship and makes narrative teaching practice public as various scholars across North America story their pedagogy. Lyons, in later work (2010), examines reflective practices and sees some of the key components as having a



perspective on knowing, making investigations into one's own practice, taking on an inquiry stance to interrogate the contexts of learning, and adopting attitudes necessary for acquiring the methods of inquiry. Downey and Clandinin (2010) add to this conversation as they explore the tensions and possibilities of understanding narrative inquiry as a form of reflective practice.

Although outside the field of education, yet significant when attending to the importance of thinking narratively in practice, Clandinin and Cave (2008; Clandinin, Cave, & Cave 2011) worked with medical practitioners to develop narrative life histories and identities, in which they see as intertwined practitioners' personal and practical knowledge. They develop the concept of narrative reflective practice with the intent to make visible the knowledge that is often expressed in physicians' practices; a reflective process that allows for the telling, retelling, and reliving of the experiences and tacit knowing; in the long term they focus on shaping opportunities to shift practices (Clandinin, Cave, et al., 2011).

As highlighted throughout this and other sections, thinking narratively about the meeting of lives in classrooms, schools, and universities is indelibly connected with the understanding that "education is interwoven with living and with the possibility of retelling our life stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 246). In this way, we understand that we meet on storied landscapes with a sense of wonder about who students and teachers are, and are becoming.

### **The Potential of Thinking Narratively in the Meeting of Lives in Classrooms and Schools**

Craig (2011) describes Clandinin and Connelly's ongoing development of thinking narratively as moving from "narratively accounting for teacher knowledge" as personal practical knowledge, to a focus on "narratively accounting for the context in which teachers come to know—their professional knowledge landscapes—to narratively accounting for teachers' identities—that is, teachers' 'stories to live by'" (p. 25). What Craig highlights is both years of sustained inquiry with children and teachers in schools and with pre- and in-service teachers in university classrooms. She also highlights two additional narrative conceptualizations, teachers' professional knowledge landscapes and teachers' stories to live by, each of which continued the growth of thinking narratively about pedagogy and pedagogical possibilities. For Clandinin and Connelly (1995), the metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape enabled attention to

space, place, and time. Furthermore, it has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships. Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things. Because we see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places, and things, we see it as both an intellectual and a moral landscape. (pp. 4–5)

In addition, Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) conceptualization of teachers' stories to live by weaves together their earlier understandings of teachers' personal practical knowledge and teachers' professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Clandinin et al. (2006) write that when thinking narratively with the narrative conceptualization of stories to live by

Teacher identity is understood as a unique embodiment of each teacher's stories to live by, stories shaped by knowledge composed on landscapes past and present in which a teacher lives and works. Stories to live by are multiple, fluid, and shifting, continuously composed and recomposed in the moment to moment living alongside children, families, administrators and others both on and off the school landscape. . . . Teachers' stories to live by offer possibilities for change through retelling and reliving stories. This retelling and reliving is a restorying that changes their stories to live by. (p. 9)

Although, as Craig (2011) describes, thinking narratively may "run against the grain of the dominant perception" (p. 22), she, and we, see thinking narratively as central in shaping counterstories (Lindemann Nelson, 1995). These counterstories push against the dominant social, cultural, linguistic, familial, and institutional narratives that currently define, often in narrow and technical ways, that what matters most in classrooms, schools, and universities are not lives in the making but compliance, silence, and test scores. These dominant narratives press down on the lives and dreams of children and youth, as well as the lives and dreams of teachers and families. Thinking narratively creates possibilities for imagining counterstories; stories that hold tremendous potential for educative reverberations in lives, in and outside of schools.

Caine and Steeves (2009) link imagination with playfulness. They see play and imagination as deeply intertwined with the relationships they hold. Imagining counterstories in this way makes the composition of counterstories a relational and active process, a process allowing us to think with relationships. As Xu and Connelly (2010) point out that thinking narratively in practical school-based research draws forth the imagination of an inquirer, they support understandings of ways imagination shapes the complex interactions between teachers, children, families, and narrative inquirers as their lives meet in schools.

### **Thinking With Counterstories**

Lindemann Nelson (1995) describes a counterstory as a narrative told within a chosen community that allows the teller the ability to reenter and reclaim full citizenship within the found community of place in which the teller lives. She further argues that a chosen community offers moral space for self-reflection, as well as offering space for reflection on the dominant community in which the teller finds herself/himself participating.

Piecing together fragments of counterstories made visible in the work of various narrative inquirers, we want to highlight key aspects of thinking narratively, which for us, include notions of co-composing, relational ethics, multiple perspectives, tensions, not

fixing and replacing but evolving and shaping, slowing down, and careful, deep attending. As readers will experience, these aspects of thinking narratively in narrative inquiry are entangled in the living, they do not stand separate from one another.

*Co-Shaping Narrative Inquiry Spaces on the In-Classroom Place*

One way narrative inquiry became lived out within a number of classrooms in western Canada was through the creation of narrative inquiry spaces co-shaped by children and teachers as they gathered to share, to listen, and to respond to one another's life stories in the making. For example, in an urban, culturally diverse Year 1–2<sup>6</sup> classroom we learn of ways a *support circle space* shifted from teachers prefacing the topics to be attended to in the circle, to children sharing stories of feeling left out and not belonging in the classroom and school, to the expression of concerns about practices and structures on the out-of-classroom place, to the sharing of "very personal, real issues and concerns" such as death, divorce, unemployment, and family difficulties (J. I. Huber, 1999, p. 19).

In the accounts of two additional in-classroom narrative inquiry spaces known as *peace candle spaces*, one in an inner-city Year 3–4 classroom and another in a rural Grade 1 classroom, we learn of the educative ways in which the liminality within these spaces shaped opportunities to "step away from the scripted stories of school" to "negotiate[ing] a curriculum of diversity, a curriculum that fit the moment and the lives being lived" (J. Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2003, p. 359). Subsequent inquiry into these *peace candle spaces* foregrounds the tensions present in this meeting of diverse lives, tensions not to be smoothed over if our intentions are to live in ways attentive to lives. Across these accounts of the *support circle* and the *peace candle spaces* we learn of their shifting, evolving nature as a result of the contexts that shape the lives of the children and teachers. These spaces remind us of Marmon Silko's (1996) thinking of the importance of including all of the stories of the people, even stories that differ from those commonly told, as well as stories that are troubling. Although readers are cautioned about the difficulty of engaging in this uncertain, and often uncomfortable, work given the dominant institutional narratives shaping classrooms and schools, liminality is highlighted as "an urgent burden" (J. Huber et al., 2003, p. 360) if lives of diversity are to be respected.

Additional understandings of negotiating narrative inquiry spaces as pedagogy are visible as M. Huber, Huber, and Clandinin (2004) "map out an alternative understanding of resistance on school landscapes" (p. 193). Their inquiry draws on two moments of tension when children's and teacher researchers' stories to live by bumped against stories of school and ways in which the teacher researchers respond in a way that could be interpreted as resisting the story of school. Huber, Huber, and Clandinin<sup>7</sup> provide insights into Jean's and Janice's negotiation of their professional knowledge landscapes in relation with the meeting of their and children's stories to live by. Through their explorations, practices of narrative inquiry pedagogy become

visible. For example, through narrative inquiry into rhythms and practices that Jean and Corina lived with one another the bumping of their stories to live by with a school story of discipline becomes visible. In the moment of living, not fully awake to this bumping, Jean enacts “her preferred story of school as a place of inclusion, of belonging” instead of “the part teachers . . . [are] supposed to play in . . . [the school] story of [discipline]” (p. 187). Narratively inquiring into Jean’s response awakens Huber, Huber, and Clandinin to how Jean’s resistance of the school story of discipline is not, for Jean, an act of defiance or of undermining a dominant story of school. Rather, it emerges as Jean searches for coherence with memories of herself as a child in school, her stories to live by as a teacher researcher, and Corina’s and Jean’s “shared narrative of living stories of belonging” (p. 188).

In the current push on the educational landscape to live out narratives of the technical and of standardization, it is common to not fully understand the complexity teachers are negotiating in the meeting of these dominant narratives with their lives and in the meeting of these narratives, their lives, and the lives of children and families. We want to emphasize here how important it is to for teachers to have spaces where they can attend to their narrative histories and to all that is at work in the meeting of their and children’s diverse lives. For us, M. Huber et al. (2004) highlight that to live pedagogy as narrative inquiry requires understanding that “we cannot understand a moment where [an educators’] . . . and a child’s [youths’, family members’, or colleagues’] stor[ies] to live by bump up against each other without trying to understand how this moment of bumping reverberates back through the stories of each person” (p. 194). Being wakeful to these reverberations is an important aspect of living narrative inquiry as pedagogy.

*Co-Shaping Narrative Inquiry Spaces That Interconnect  
In- and Out-of-Classroom Places*

Steeves’s work (2000) invites the possibility of considering narrative inquiry relationships as embodying pedagogical purposes in co-composing responsive communities in a time of transition on school landscapes. Steeves lived alongside both a principal in her “out-of-classroom place” and a teacher in her “in-classroom-place”<sup>8</sup> during a time when both of them, each from their own positioning on the school landscape, were experiencing the school landscape as in transition, as shifting and changing. Living on this shifting landscape the evolving stories to live by of both participants became vulnerable. Attending to both the principal’s, Jeanette’s, life and the teacher’s, Karin’s, life as they came into relationships with Pam, a narrative inquirer, and together with one another, shaped the beginnings of a responsive community in the school. In this work we learn of ways this narrative inquiry relationship shaped a safe space for the opening of imagination and the broadening and deepening of attention through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. In this way, Karin, Jeanette, and Pam co-shaped a space seldom experienced on school landscapes, a narrative inquiry space that supported their stories to live

by to continue to compose, often through improvisatory ways during a period of transition at the school. Attending to the life composing of diverse people on school landscapes, including teachers and administrators, enacts an educative life-making place.

*Co-Shaping Narrative Inquiry Spaces in Postsecondary Education*

Desrochers (2006) provokes wondering about narrative inquiry as creating pedagogical spaces both for learning about, and experiencing, diversity in teacher education. Through participation in a drop-in youth club located in an ethnically diverse low-income community, a space was created whereby preservice teachers began to inquire into their shifting understandings of who they were and, then, who they were in relation with children whose lives were different from their own. Desrochers began by inquiring with the preservice teacher participants into their stories to live by and then continued to inquire into their evolving understandings as their stories to live by bumped against unfamiliar stories told and lived by children they met in the youth club. In this multilayered narrative inquiry, Desrochers creates an intentional narrative inquiry space of “in between” where, as the preservice teachers experienced dispositioning moments of interruption in their stories to live by, they were able to inquire into these moments with Desrochers and one another.<sup>9</sup> Inquiring into these interrupting moments through sustained conversation in relationships attentive to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (attentive to temporality, sociality, and place) offered new insights that supported the preservice teachers to recompose and to begin to relive their retold stories. Once more, narrative inquiry is shown to hold extraordinary potential for envisioning new pedagogical ways of considering teacher education for diversity. This re-envisioning holds tremendous potential for who preservice teachers may become in classrooms and schools alongside children, youth, families, and communities. Iftody (2012), too, offers ways to think of agency and provocation in narrative inquiry spaces in teacher education; Schaefer (2012) writes of narrative inquiry as physical education pedagogy.

Steeves et al. (2009) provide further imaginings of a pedagogical counterstory in teacher education. As they write of “The Research Issues Table: A Place of Possibilities for the Education of Teacher Educators,” they show ways in which narrative inquiry as pedagogy is embodied in this place. The research issues table is pedagogically shaped as a table of life and education in the way Dewey (1938) would espouse. For this to happen, the “table” is a voluntarily filled, but a deliberately created space (Greene, 1993) that brings together educators from across multiple generations, disciplines, and local, national, and international contexts. In this postsecondary place people have the opportunity to live out their lives as continuously becoming. Such learning to become educators is evoked as they attend carefully to one another round the table through relational knowing, respectful listening, response, continuous inquiry, world traveling, attending tensions, and learning to think narratively. The research issues table is a chosen community within the larger university landscape; one that creates a counterstory to the often prescribed agendas of fixing and replacing “what

is wrong in education.” Through narrative inquiry a pedagogical space is shaped for counterstories in teacher education, stories that evolve, stories of reconstruction and of recomposing lives.

What we want to highlight here are the threads that connect each of the above retellings of narrative inquiry as pedagogy. Although the dominant narrative in education, including postsecondary education, is that of being an educator, we understand that becoming an educator is always in process, it is a life continuously composed and recomposed in relation with the lives of the people and communities with whom we engage. In thinking about becoming as an open process we are, as highlighted by Lindemann Nelson (1995), in a process of forbearing, of not shutting down what might be; we are in a process of continuous inquiry into the meeting of, and through this meeting, the potential remaking of lives.

### Reimagining Schools

In *Composing Diverse Identities: Narrative Inquiries Into the Interwoven Lives of Children and Teachers*, as Clandinin et al. (2006) inquire into and learn from their and participants’ experiences at City Heights and Ravine schools they call for a counterstory of school reform,<sup>10</sup> a story “composed to shift the taken-for-granted institutional narrative” (p. 171). The counterstory they imagine is “a story of school composed around the plotline of negotiating a curriculum of lives, a curriculum . . . attentive to the lives of teachers, children, families, and administrators who live on the school landscape at particular times” (p. 172). To understand the negotiation of a curriculum of lives, Clandinin et al. highlight that each of the curriculum common-places, that is, learner, teacher, subject matter, and milieu, need to be attended to in shifting, relational ways. They write that

to understand teachers, we need to understand each teacher’s personal practical knowledge, his/her embodied, narrative, moral, emotional, and relational knowledge as it is expressed in practice. . . . To understand children, we need to understand children’s knowledge as nested knowledge, nested in the relational knowledge between teachers and children (Lyons, 1990; Murphy, 2004). . . . We also need to attend to the nested milieus, in-classroom places, out-of-classroom places, stories of school, school stories, stories of families, and families’ stories. . . . And of course, diverse subject matters are also part of the interaction within a negotiation of a curriculum of lives. (pp. 172–173)

Negotiating a curriculum of lives that continuously seeks to hear and to learn from the tensions experienced by children, families, teachers, and administrators as their lives meet, and bump against each other’s storied lives and with school stories and stories of school, is described as “complex, tension-filled, and challenging” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 173). However, it is within this counterstory, a story that holds within it a place for the negotiation of a curriculum of lives, that lives can become central in schools. In making lives central in school, Clandinin et al. (2006) imagine “compos[ing] stories of school that are respectful, meaningful, and educative for all participants” (p. 174).

For example, Clandinin et al. (2006) make visible the pedagogical promise of thinking narratively in their storying of a principal, Jeanette, a teacher, Lian, a

narrative inquirer, Shaun, and an Aboriginal boy, Dylan, who was 12 years old. Together, as they opened a space to listen and inquire into the stories Dylan lived out, including ones of continual and jumbled interruptions/disruptions to his schooling, a fuller picture of Dylan's life was emerging, and Dylan's stories began to "work on them" (Morris, 2002). Attending narratively to Dylan's stories, which began as they attended to the temporal, social, and place dimensions of his experiences, to trace forward and backward looking stories, to personal and social feelings and emotions, as well as to places, held the pedagogical potential of revealing many resonances between stories. We see this as Jeanette, as principal, thinks about her own child, Robbee, and ways he might feel. Lian, as teacher, remembers her beginning teacher years when she learned in many conversations with Jeanette about attending to the whole lives of young children. Shaun, as narrative inquirer, wonders about the "story of school," a dominant institutional narrative in which full attendance is not questioned but normalized to equate with success in school. In these ways and with Dylan, Jeanette, Lian, and Shaun came to see that Dylan was trying to have agency over some aspects of his life at school, to continue to compose stories that were meaningful to him and the familial and cultural stories within which he was embedded. As they, Jeanette, Lian, and Shaun, gradually awakened to Dylan's life, to his hopes and dreams, they improvised an attendance counterstory with Dylan, which supported him, for example, to excuse himself from his music class when he thought he might get into a fight. Dylan was further able to choose what he did with his time in Jeanette's office, an out of classroom place on the school landscape where the rules and regulations of the conduit often dominate over people's lives. Dylan's decision to draw and paint further fit with his image of himself as a member of his family who was good at, and loved, painting. Careful attending to Dylan's stories over time and on and off the school landscape created a more responsive co-composed curriculum for Dylan, one that was respectful of Dylan's shifting stories to live by.

Another narrative inquiry that supported our reimagining schools is M. Huber's (2008) work. In this narrative inquiry, Huber engaged with teenaged youth and their parents and shows how youths' experiences in school are shaping not only their identities, their stories to live by and life curricula, but also their parents' stories to live by and life curricula. As she considers ways this narrative inquiry deepened her understandings of a curriculum of lives, Huber writes: "I came . . . to my research . . . recognizing that parents' stories to live by shaped their children's school experiences and, as well, stories teachers lived by," but the stories of experience shared by the youth participants and their parents have "awakened me to how parents' stories to live by can be shaped as their children's lives intersect, and bump against, other children's and youths' lives, teacher stories, milieu and subject matter" (p. 186).

Another of a number of narrative inquiries that grew out of these earlier multi-perspectival narrative inquiries attentive to the composition of a curriculum of lives (Clandinin et al., 2006; J. Huber & Clandinin, 2005) in classrooms and schools began with a focus on the "experiences of children, families, and teachers in an era of growing standardization and achievement testing at a time when the lives of children,

families, and teachers are increasingly diverse” (J. Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011, p. 1).<sup>11</sup> J. Huber et al. (2011) write that as they engaged in narrative inquiries simultaneously attentive to the experiences of diverse children, families, and teachers alongside questions of standardization and diversity, they “somewhat abruptly, began to realize that, to this point, we had understood curriculum making as occurring only in schools” (p. 2). They write that as they attended closely to one child co-researcher, Loyla, and to “the relationships of Loyla’s life, we saw multiple instances of ways she engaged in relation with others in curriculum making at home and in the community” (p. 2). *Places of Curriculum Making: Narrative Inquiries into Children’s Lives in Motion* illustrates the shifts experienced by Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin in their coming to understand a curriculum of lives as necessarily inclusive of “children engaged in curriculum making not only in school places alongside teachers and children but also engaged in curriculum making alongside members of their families and communities in home and community places” (p. 2). In telling of their awakenings to the worlds of curriculum making beyond the school curriculum making world, Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin highlight multiple tensions, tensions that require children to *world travel* as they simultaneously navigate and compose their lives in these often quite different places.

As we traced in this section some of the ways narrative inquiry has shaped our understanding of the in- and out-of-classroom places within schools, we wanted to continue to make visible the importance of attending to the intersections, to the bumping up places, and to tensions experienced in multiple places and relationships in which life curriculum is made and lived. Attending to these diverse places and relationships allows us to understand narrative inquiry as holding extraordinary potential for shaping pedagogy, that is, for shaping how we might live alongside one another, in classrooms, schools, universities, and communities.

### **CONTINUING TO IMAGINE . . . TO IMPROVISE FORWARD LOOKING COUNTERSTORIES**

As we continue to imagine and improvise possible forward looking counterstories, we remind ourselves that we situate our knowing in the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of experience and relationships. The transcendent and enduring nature of story shapes our understandings of our need to walk with extreme care as we interact with children, families, and communities. Understanding the transcendent nature of stories requires attentiveness to the resonances and dissonances shaped in the meeting of lives, to the gaps and silences created and opened up. In this meeting of lives the transcendence of dominant social, cultural, and institutional narratives also become visible (Andrews, 2007; Young, 2005).

As we look backward, we see an evolving body of scholarly contributions that speak to the telling and retelling of narrative inquiry as a way to engage with people in relational ways. We, too, see the possibilities to live and relive narrative inquiry as both methodology and phenomena in classroom spaces and in pedagogical ways. It is



the attentiveness and ethics embedded within narrative inquiry that calls us to live, to tell, and to retell and relive stories of experience. It continues to be significant for the emerging field of narrative inquiry to attend to personal experience over time, in social contexts, and in place(s), particularly the experiences of people and communities whose experiences are most often invisible, silent, composed, and lived on the margins. Understanding silent, or silenced, lives as holding enormous possibility to shape and to live out counterstories creates awareness of the potential for humbleness and curiosity in our interactions, in school and university classrooms as well as within communities.

As we see the present unfolding we begin to imagine the future, and we see that through seeing narrative inquiry as holding potential for shaping extraordinary pedagogy we can shift the practices and pedagogies within education, within teachers, but most importantly in the relationships we encounter as educators, citizens, and strangers. As we attend to people's experiences through narrative inquiry, a new language, a language of landscapes, of stories to live by, of lives in the midst, develops. Perhaps, as we begin to speak and live different experiences we start to change the stories. Perhaps, it is in these ways that we might move closer to what King (2003) imagines when he writes: "Want a different ethic? Tell a different story" (p. 164).

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of D. Jean Clandinin who served as our consulting author on this chapter. Jean's response along the way was significant to shaping our chapter. We wish also to acknowledge the two people who were anonymous reviewers of earlier drafts of this chapter. Their comments were both insightful and important.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>While Bruner (1986) sees narrative knowing as more cognitively situated, our understandings of narrative inquiry are more shaped by those of Johnson (1990) who saw the "body in the mind," the mind in the body.

<sup>2</sup>Dewey (1938) believed that experience is educative only when it continues to move a person forward on "the experiential continuum" (p. 38) while miseducative experiences, those that are disconnected from one another, have the "effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25).

<sup>3</sup>Johnson (1990) suggests that in order to understand teachers' world views and how they know and interact in their classrooms it is necessary to acknowledge the role the body plays in knowing. He understands teachers' personal practical knowledge as inclusive of the embodied action patterns lived out, for example, in the experiencing and structuring of routines in the classroom. McIntyre's (1981) sense of narrative unity reflects the sense of a unity embedded in a single life. A narrative unity signals one's ability to give a narrative account of one's life that reflects and links birth to death.

<sup>4</sup>As Polakow awakens to this autobiographical aspect of her research she writes that while she gradually realized "how little existential distance separates my life as a mother from that of the mothers and children whose lives are chronicled here," she also stories her awakening to the understanding that "the geography of privilege is all-encompassing—and living on the

other side of privilege in the first America puts one in a world apart from the grim contingency of life on the edges in the other America” (p. 3).

<sup>5</sup>In earlier work Phillion (2002) uses the term *narrative multiculturalism* to highlight the indelible connections between narrative and cultural diversity not only in teachers’ autobiographies but also as an important aspect of life in classrooms and schools. In earlier work He (2003) traces the cross-cultural aspects of three women of Chinese ancestry as they recompose their identities, their lives, on a new cultural landscape.

<sup>6</sup>Year 1-2 differs from a graded structure in school in that children of multiple ages are intentionally grouped together in a classroom so as to value, and benefit, from living and learning alongside children of differing ages.

<sup>7</sup>D. Jean Clandinin (co-author of the paper) is the teacher researcher in one moment; Janice Huber (another co-author of the paper) is the teacher researcher in the other moment and Corina is a child in the classroom.

<sup>8</sup>Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe two epistemologically different places on the professional knowledge landscape of schools. “In-classroom places” are described as mostly safe places where teachers feel secure to live out their personal practical knowledge as teachers alongside children and youth with whom they work. “Out-of-classroom places” are described as professional, communal places filled with imposed prescriptions delivered “down the conduit” (p. 9) in such places as staff meetings, lunchrooms, parent meetings, and so on.

<sup>9</sup>In shaping this kind of intentional space, Desrochers draws on Anzaldúa’s (1987) living in the borderland which she describes as a liminal space, a space that is both a site of struggle and of possibility.

<sup>10</sup>Clandinin et al (2006) provide a sense of the “taken-for-granted institutional narrative” of school reform as they write that

policies and practices around high stakes testing were implemented, in part, because of poor achievement scores, high dropout rates and achievement disparities across racial and socio-economic groups. These policies and practices are designed to set in place strict outcomes, powerful surveillance and monitoring mechanisms, and punitive measures if outcomes are not met. . . . The policies and practices were shaped by seeing through the lenses of a system with a vantage point of power. (p. 170)

Throughout their book, Clandinin et al. show how the taken-for-granted institutional narrative of school is one where policy makers and administrators funnelled down prescriptive knowledge and expectations onto school landscapes and into classrooms (the conduit). These narratives silence, cover over, or make invisible the particular lives of people living on school landscapes and, as well, of the meeting of their diverse lives.

<sup>11</sup>See also Chung (2009), whose work shows ways in which school curriculum making reverberates into the lives of families, and, too, ways in which families’ lives might be invited to reverberate into school curriculum making.

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