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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a project at Arizona State University West to generate a collection of narratives to be used in professional teacher education and to examine ways narratives and narrative research techniques could be used with students. The first half of the paper lists members of the research team, their individual concerns, how they came together, and the nature of the work: to gather narratives from professionals in elementary education, to supplement the narratives with commentary from the team, and then to find ways to use the narratives and commentary with education students. The bulk of this section describes the ethical dilemmas that arose from doing the project which included how to treat the stories, how to construe the tellers of the stories, what tellers gain from participation, the impact of listeners on how the stories emerged, transforming the stories to written finished narrative, creating the commentary to accompany the story, and dilemmas in using the stories. The second half of the paper contains a finished narrative about a high school administrator dealing with student fights and describes how the story was solicited and used and what students might have gained from it. (Contains 27 references.) (JB)

'Crafting Narratives for Pedagogical Purposes: Practical Issues and Ethical Dilemmas'

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1. Introducing the project. (Vi McLean)

Our team is engaged in a narrative research project at Arizona State University West that was funded by a grant under the university's 'Instructional Development' scheme. The project has two basic purposes: Firstly, to generate a collection of narratives that can be used in professional education, and secondly, to examine the ways narratives and narrative research techniques might be used with our students. In the compilation of the collection of narratives, we have acted as narrative researchers, but many of our graduate students in early childhood education, educational leadership and counselling courses also have been involved as narrative researchers, and as 'consumers' of other's stories.

The team:
Arnold Danzig has a PhD in Educational Sociology and teaches in a graduate program in Educational Leadership. His current interests lie in educational policy, integrated services for families and the effects of social class. He is the father of a multi-handicapped daughter and has three other children.
Louette McGraw has a PhD in Educational Psychology, and has an extensive teaching background as a high school social studies teacher. Her major scholarly interest is focused on text comprehension of adolescents. She is Native American and also is investigating Native American families and their support for their children's education.
Sara Aleman has a PhD in Social Work. She teaches social policy courses and supervises school-based social work practicums. Sara is Mexican American and has a research focus in Mexican American family systems.
Ruth Reese has a PhD in Human Development and Counselling. At ASU West she teaches courses in human development, school and society, and counselling. She grew up in rural Wisconsin and maintains a private practice as a counsellor.
Vi McLean (self) holds a PhD in early childhood education, teaches in early childhood curriculum and foundations, is interested in teacher stories and teacher's personal practical knowledge (and is an Australian citizen).

The team came together at different times and for different purposes during the Spring and Summer of 1993. Initially, I had been talking separately with both Louette McGraw and Arnold Danzig about a common interest in narrative research. My focus was on teacher stories of professional practice, teacher's personal practical knowledge, and the ways stories could be used in both pre-service professional education, and professional development for teachers in the field of early childhood education. I had completed several small research projects on how stories were used in pre-service teacher education, but in both Australia and Arizona, I had been unsuccessful in attracting funding for a teacher stories research project examining the usefulness of collaborative story sharing as a form of in-service education.

Arnold Danzig was hoping to write his own narrative about his experiences as a parent, in trying to access services for his multiply-handicapped daughter. Another dimension of his interest was to look at social class variations in parents' experiences in trying to get services from multiple agencies, and examining the effects of policy decisions on individual lives.

Louette McGraw had been doing interview research with Native American families, examining their perspectives on their children's schooling and the level of support these families provided for formal education. She was interested in cultural differences in how families identified the need for services and interacted with professionals.

The three of us met several times during February '93 and tried to hammer out our common interests and insurmountable differences. These were intellectually stimulating debates, but there weren't many agreements, and all of us wondered if we could work together, and if we could find a common focus.

This early work focused on the intersection between individual and organization, and the ways organizational realities helped construct the positioning and experience both of the professionals who worked there and the families who sought services there. One noteworthy agreement was that we needed to broaden the focus beyond educators, to include other professionals, and so Sara Aleman was invited to join our team in March 1993.

Sara had a Social Work background, and had done interview research on services for the Aged. She also had an interest in using a systems approach to understand families' needs and their experiences with service providers. And most importantly from our perspective, Sara was working with school-based social workers and guiding this practical component of the Social Work undergraduate program.

So we four enjoyed even more stimulating debate and more lack of closure until April, when it was decided that I should go ahead with an application through the Instructional Development scheme to get the project off the ground, and to focus in on the educational dimensions of the still-ethereal larger project. That application was successful and the project finally got underway in September, when we were joined by Ruth Reese.

Ruth approached us, because she had heard of the project and was intrigued by the idea of gathering stories and examining their use with students. Ruth had been using case studies and a systems approach in her Counselling courses, but narratives were a new idea for her in teacher education and one that she would soon become aware of in her own professional field. Ruth was keen to include children's stories in the project and hoped to involve some school counsellors.

Thus, the team and the current project were formed.

The stories:
We set out to gather stories from parents, teachers, school administrators, school-based social workers and some children. We wanted to explore some of the differing perspectives people brought to these encounters, their differing ways of making sense of these encounters, and assumed from the beginning that the vehicle of stories would be a good way to record and access these complex and often ambiguous realities (Carter, 1993:7).

We asked our storytellers to provide two types of story. Firstly, to tell us about themselves- their own stories- a biography of their lives and/or career. And secondly, to provide first hand accounts of occasions when they had sought or been involved in providing services for children through schools.

We wanted to be able to situate their stories of encounters with others, within their own personal narrative. People do not come to encounters with others as blank slates. They bring to each encounter a sense of their own story, their own experiences and background, and they use their story to interpret and make sense of what they are experiencing of the other. In Diane Brunner's (1994:17) terms, we are producing: 'embodied narratives'. (Brunner describes this as: 'narrative that takes on the presence of persons engaged with and situated in the world in a variety of ways.')

One of the most difficult decisions was whether we should try for storytellers who differed in terms of ethnicity and/or class. Several of us were interested in critical theory, and we wanted to be able to examine the stories from a critical perspective. But when numbers are so small, generalizations by category in any case are not possible, so finally, we simply tried to maximize diversity across both class and ethnicity, though the selection of tellers also has had much to do with our personal networks. For example, my teacher stories include a preschool director from a very expensive private schoc , an African American kindergarten teacher working in the inner city with children who are severely economically disadvantaged, and a first grade teacher from a suburban middle-class public elementary school. Amongst the parent stories, we have a low-income Spanish-speaking family, a wealthy Anglo family from North Scottsdale and Louette McGraw currently is negotiating participation with a Native American family.

There are some differences in the types of stories we have generated, both among our team, and the student-researchers. But basically, all are created from transcripts of audiotapes of several interviews, with the researcher acting as story crafter, returning both the transcripts and the draft narrative to the teller for comment and modification.

Once the narrative is complete, in the case of narratives that are entering our permanent collection, we produce a commentary that provides a multiplicity of interpretive voices from our various disciplinary perspectives. By various means, we have tried to ensure that our commentary does not overpower the narrative itself, but this is a difficult and contentious part of the work, and I will say more about that in the final part of the paper, which delineates some of the ethical dilemmas of the project.

The presentation is structured around two major points:
* *What ethical dilemmas have we experienced in the project?*
* *How do we use stories with students and what do they get from it?*

What Ethical Dilemmas have arisen in the project ? (Vi McLean)

In this project, we continue to struggle with many thorny issues related to how we treat the stories, and thus, how we construe the tellers of the stories. Carter (1993:9) claims that in some narrative research projects, the tellers are no more than 'stick figures', but even when you are committed to portraying the tellers as flesh and blood people struggling with the vicissitudes of life like the rest of us, there are many challenges to overcome. The tellers may be considered our 'subjects', or our 'hosts', and the implications of our construal of them has far reaching implications in terms of ethical practice.

As we were imagining the project, the question was raised: 'What will our storytellers get from their participation?' At the time, I felt relatively confident in listing several anticipated benefits- firstly, they would find it an affirming experience, just to have someone interested in listening to their story. Secondly, through the experience of telling their story,

thinking about it, reworking it, they were likely to engage in some deep reflection, that would be good for them, in terms of developing new insights into their professional practice or their encounters with professionals.

I should add that we weren't totally 'Pollyanna-ish' in this belief in the worth of reflection. For example, from my previous work with teachers (McLean, 1991), I was very conscious that reflection was sometimes painful or scary - there could be a darker side to looking closely at your own actions as a professional. But on balance, I still believe reflectivness is a better state than blindness, and I felt reasonably confident that our storytellers would gain from the experience. Now, I am far less sure of that, and I have had a refresher course in understanding the many subtle faces of exploitation of participants, and the fear of ethical transgressions that can freeze an interpretive researcher into silence.

Short-term Outcomes for the Tellers

In the end, it is difficult to be sure what our storytellers have gained from this experience. The affirmation of having someone interested in your story seems fairly clear, but almost without exception, reading the interview transcripts has not strengthened the participants' self-confidence as communicators. The most common response has been 'I don't know how you could make anything of this at all. It is just me rambling on.'

It is also difficult to know what the participants feel about their story after it is completed. When asked what they think of it, they usually indicate that it is fine, in a general sense, but I am yet to have anyone say 'I think it is a wonderful story that really does justice to the complex issues I have to deal with.' I ask the tellers: 'Are you happy with it? Does it still feel like your story? Does it still sound like you?' but so far these questions haven't elicited much response. The changes the tellers have made to the written stories have been minor ones, but whether this conservativism indicates their degree of satisfaction with my story crafting or their feeling of lack of power in our relationship, I do not know. The most clear cut sense of a teller's feeling about her story came via one of my Masters students. I asked these student-researchers to seek

approval from their storytellers to include their stories in our collection (that would be used in classes, and for research purposes that may involve publication). One retired teacher wrote that she would give approval *only* if her story was used as a source of positive examples about how to teach. Her lack of trust in the researcher's use of her story is well placed, as we could not give a guarantee that only the positive aspects would be used. Other participants may have felt a similar lack of trust, but if so, they lacked the sense of power to voice it.

Another question without an answer is the extent to which the telling of the story did prompt reflection in the tellers, and a deeper understanding of past events involving oneself. In the administrator stories gathered by students it seemed the tellers may have been reframing the situation as a result of telling their story. They did use phrases such as "In retrospect,....." Perhaps this was related to the power relationship between them- the teller as superordinate figure and the story crafter as the subordinate figure. But in the teachers' stories I gathered, with a very different power relationship, there were very few clues about this. For example, rarely did a teller say anything like 'Gee, I never thought of it that way before', or 'Now I come to think of it, there were connections there I hadn't seen before.' To the contrary, some parts of the stories seemed to flow without pause, as if the teller felt very comfortable with the story, and did not need to rethink it for this particular telling. Other parts of the stories came out haltingly, or with many diversions along the way, but there was little to suggest that new insights were being built through the telling.

Dilemmas in the Telling.

I noticed a marked difference in this from the more ethnographic approach to interviewing I have used previously. In that work, I had not been afraid to ask probing questions, to interrupt the flow from time to time to ask the interviewee to think more deeply about what had been said, or probe the meanings of events being recounted. In narrative interviewing however, I found myself reluctant to intervene, afraid that an intervention would disrupt the flow of the story, or worse, channel or construct it according to my agenda rather than the teller's.

From the beginning, I knew that inevitably, I would be part of the story

that emerged, and I wanted to bring this to the surface for readers' scrutiny. For example even before the first story was crafted, we decided to include at the beginning of each story, a short introductory piece that told our 'story of the story' for readers' scrutiny. But as the raw material of the story was being laid down, as the interviewer, I tried to make myself as small and unobtrusive as I could. This remains one of the biggest practical dilemmas for me in conducting this type of interview. There seems a fundamental incompatibility between being a low-profile prompter and recorder of oral stories on one hand, and a higher-profile probing 'guide for reflection' on the other.

This project has been a breeding ground for dilemmas, and it is difficult to know how to categorize these. Like stories themselves, it seems everything is connected to everything else. But many of these dilemmas revolve around issues of power, competing concerns, authenticity and empathy.

Capturing and maintaining the teller's voice through the various stages of story crafting is a challenge, because even at the most basic level, this process involves a transformation from an oral voice to a written form. I worried most about this with Mrs Gerber, an African American kindergarten teacher. Mrs Gerber used many of the linguistic patterns associated with Southern African-American English, and her speech was so different from my own, I was not sure I could capture it. I crafted the transcript myself, rather than using our transcriber, so I could try to capture the cadences of her speaking voice, by using punctuation and abbreviated words, but Mrs Gerber was appalled at how her story looked in print, and carefully edited it until it was grammatically correct, though at least in my opinion, it then conveyed very little of her dynamic oral voice.

But of course, there are deeper underlying issues about the nature of the story I was being told. Mrs Gerber and I shared very little in terms of our cultural, racial, or social history. Even our shared professional identification as early childhood educators was limited. Her approach to teaching kindergartners was about as far removed from my own as it was possible to be. So what was she making of this situation? How was this telling of her story being affected by my presence? I cannot say for sure. I can only assume that it *was* being affected in a substantial way, and

remind both myself and ultimately the story reader, that this was only one of many stories Mrs Gerber might have told.
As Diane Brunner (1994: xviii) reminds us. stories are always raced, classed and gendered, but I have come to appreciate that this is not only reflective of the teller's race class and gender, but also the listener's, and the extent of shared race, class and gender between both listener and teller. Had Mrs Gerber been telling her story to an African American sister, I have no doubt that it would have been a different story than that she told to a white Australian stranger.

As we have gathered the stories, and observed our students as narrative researchers, we have come to appreciate the importance of the prior power relationship between the teller and the researcher, both in terms of the experience and meanings of the narration, as well as the story that emerges.

The power differential was a particular concern for me, with the teacher Bobbie- a former Masters student. Despite my attempts to try to minimize my power, and distance us from our former relationship, I know Bobbie still saw me as 'the professor' and herself as 'the student'. Undoubtedly, this impacted the story she told, but it also impacted how I received the story. Brunner (1994:.....) writes of academics 'authorizing' positions for their students to take on issues, and as uncomfortable as it is to admit to this concept, I know as I worked on Bobbie's story, I found myself thinking: 'This person has spent a whole semester in my Masters class. How can she still be thinking this way?' So perhaps I also had some way to go in distancing myself from our former power relationship.

Our student researchers also helped make these issues visible. For example, novice administrators found it to their advantage to craft their principal's story. This shared experience built a stronger bond and a more mentoring relationship between them. But there also was a downside to this, as these stories tended to be non-critical 'tales of heroes'. The same tendency was noted in my Masters class, where the most pronounced heroic tales came from two students who chose to write the stories of their mothers, both of whom had been early childhood teachers for many decades. Next time I ask my students to write teacher stories, I will be providing more information on the significance of the pre-existing power

relationship between researcher and teller, and there will be a new guideline: 'No mothers!'

Dilemmas in Crafting the Stories.
The story crafter also impacts the story by the influences that are applied during the crafting process. Our team has felt varying degrees of discomfort with this crafting- the manipulations of words that convert a interview transcript to a finished written narrative. We have discussed whether the written form should remain as an interview transcript, so that the input of the interviewer is more evident, but left in this form, the stories would be virtually unreadable. What is experienced as a coherent story in an oral telling, often is transformed into something confusing, sometimes boring, even incomprehensible, as a written transcription.

To create a written story, that will allow people to lose themselves in the account, and not be distracted by the technical details, requires some reconstruction of the data, but how much reconstruction is acceptable? In the stories I have crafted, I have followed the guidelines provided by Etter-Lewis (1991) and tried to include as much as possible of the transcript, and to make only those changes that seemed necessary for the sake of coherence. This has produced rather long narratives, but it has eased my concerns about my part in deciding what is relevant. Even so, I make a lot of powerful decisions about the placement of blocks of text, the removal of false start sentences, repetition of phrases and punctuation. Taken in isolation, each seems a trivial point, but together, these tiny decisions have a massive influence on the story that is produced.

I have come to realize that crafting these stories is a highly creative activity for me as a researcher, and this makes me a part of the final product, in a much more acknowledged way than any other form of qualitative research I have conducted. I now feel reasonably comfortable with this level of involvement, but other members of the team still have doubts. Some remain deeply concerned about making any changes at all to the transcripts because they fear that we are compromising the accuracy of the data. And I think all of us have some level of fear that by removing the interviewer's words, we are altering the dialogic nature of the story.

One of my former Masters students devised a creative way around this problem, by reconstituting the dialogic context of the story she was told. I had freed them to use any genre they wished for the story, and she decided to write it as a conversation that occurred between a novice teacher and an experienced teacher during a long plane trip- a form that allowed her to reconstitute some of the dialogic nature of the interview. We haven't tried anything so avant-guarde, but the introductory statement on each story goes a little way towards reconstituting the dialogic context. As we move further into writing the commentaries, it is clear that this also is a place for the interviewer to disclose his/her feelings and possible influences on the story.

But these modest strategies increasingly have left us dissatisfied. As we have gone along, we have come to understand that the professionals' and parents' stories we are collecting are only a part of the story we are telling. The bigger story is the project itself- our individual and collective stories about this whole experience in which we are engaged.

We've come to understand that just as our tellers do not approach encounters with each other as blank slates- they bring their own stories to these encounters, to make sense of them- we have brought our own stories to our creation and conduct of this project. In the early part of last Summer, we suddenly realized that our own individual stories had to become part of this bigger collective story, if we were to come close to surfacing our impact on the stories we crafted. So, we are now engaged in writing our own stories, and this paper represents our first attempt at constructing our collective story.

Dilemmas in Crafting the Commentaries.

As I have indicated, ethical dilemmas characterize every part of the story business, from selection of the tellers to the production of a completed narrative. But the most difficult decisions center around the creation of a commentary to accompany the story. This is when the 'moralizing impulse' (White in Carter 1993:9) of the story crafter really becomes most visible and most problematic. In our choice of the word 'commentary' rather than 'interpretation', we are trying to say to others, and remind ourselves, that we do not have the interpretive rights over this story. We are not present to tell readers what the story 'really means',

but to add other voices and other ideas to the voice of the teller. We discussed on many occasions, the possibility of not offering any interpretive remarks at all, just allowing the story to stand alone, but each time, we rejected this safe option, because it did not make best use of the intellectual resources that we could bring. As Grumet (1992:5) suggests: 'The autobiographical narrative encodes that thought for critical and communal processes of interpretation, but it is this phase of interpretation that draws the narrative of educational experience into public discourse.'

Although our disciplinary differences have caused us many arguments/ lively discussions, we have seen them as a strength, and have been keen to maintain our disagreements, and thus provide a commentary of multiple interpretations, rather than a single interpretation. I agree with Brunner (1994:16) that we should be aiming for text that would: 'keep us questioning longer, and keep uncertain that which is often claimed a certainty.'

From the beginning however, we tried to ensure that our comments would not overshadow the story. We wanted to present our commentary in such a way that the story still dominated. We wanted the story to flow on uninterrupted, and the comments to be non-continuous and to visually portray the multiplicity of voices and opinions we brought to the story. We thought of placing the story in a narrow column down the center of the page and placing the comments around it, but in the end technically this was just too difficult. So we have compromised, with the story on each right hand page, and the commentary as separate paragraphs in different fonts, down each left hand page.

But what do we include in the written commentary? How do we select a few comments from the multitude of possibilities that have been aired in our meetings? The crafting of the commentary also is a creative act, and an exercise in dilemma management. We have multiple theoretical bases underlying this project, including professional problem solving, reflective practice, personal practical knowledge and critical theory. This ambiguity may account for some of our dilemmas in creating the commentary, though equally it could be argued that the root cause of our dilemma lies not in the competing theoretical categories, but in more deep-seated issues

about what constitutes morality in interpretation of human action.

To borrow the fundamental human interest categories from Habermas, what we are struggling with is the appropriate place of criticism. We shift back and forth between the 'Practical' human interest and the 'Emancipatory'. From my work on teacher personal practical knowledge, in the Connelly and Clandinin (1988,1990) tradition, I have come to question the efficacy of the boundary between these two categories. I believe that to understand the nature of teaching, and teachers, we have to look into the murky complexities of their practice and practical knowledge, and that this is contiguous with their societal knowledge, and attitude to social action. Academics may find meaning in more abstract conceptions of social critique and agency, but it is played out in the lives of teachers through action- and through their personal practical knowledge of their work with children and families, and the contexts in which this occurs. So where does that leave us? Still asking if the appropriate role for the commentators is to try to understand the person better, the contextual influences on that person, the beliefs and practices of that person, while trying to maintain a stance of non-judgmental respect, or to be deconstructing the person and the story and offering social criticism, a case of pointing out 'what is wrong with this picture'.

Nel Noddings (1984) says stories should be shared 'in good company', but this is not easily done even when there is only a single storyteller in existence. In this project, where we deliberately set out to gather stories representing many perspectives, knowing that the perspectives of parents and professionals are often oppositional, we are facing particular difficulties in providing 'good company'.

We hope that these stories will portray professional practice in all its complexity. We want the stories to describe the ambiguities and dilemmas that are so much a part of the professional's work, and we are glad when the stories give a sense of how the person's own background colors the interpretations they make of events with children and parents.

But there are times when it is difficult to suspend our judgement about those interpretations. Our own backgrounds as academics have prepared us to be opinionated, to be critical, to probe beyond what is immediately

apparent. We feel an ongoing tension between our desire to respect multiple realities, to provide multiple interpretations, and our desire to prompt readers to take a more socially critical stance. There are times when we wonder if we are providing 'good company' for the story, or only a diverse group of critics.

A further ethical issue lies in our acceptance of multiple perspectives within the story of a single individual. In our society, we are so conditioned to expect uniformity of position, that we are always tempted to label multiplicity as 'uncertainty', or 'inconsistency' or something even more negative. But human lives are not lived according to a singular philosophical or ideological perspective, and to seek such a singular position in the stories people tell is futile at best and destructive at worst. It is simplistic to assume that multiple perspectives come only from multiple people. In actuality, the stories we tell ourselves and others don't represent a unity of perspective, but often (perhaps always) include the threads of many interpretations. As Bobbie told stories of Karen and Jake, for example, she was providing multiple versions simultaneously, describing several interpretations or meanings of what had occurred, and how she felt about it. Karen's parents were 'intimidating', a real pain in the neck to deal with, and at the same time, 'powerful advocates for their child', whom 'I loved to death and they loved me'. Jake's problems were caused by a severe learning disability, and/or poor attendance and/or a 'horrendous home life' and/or immature social development. At least during this telling, and the subsequent consideration of the written narrative, Bobbie felt no need to narrow her account of causality or to suggest a single interpretation.

Acceptance of multiplicity is fine in the abstract, but multiplicity in the particular is a messy business, that fills us with anxiety and uncertainty. We think wistfully that life would be so much simpler of we could just discern one perspective clearly, and offer one true/false interpretation of that point of view. But as Brunner (1994) reminds us, life is not like this. She writes:

'....I suggest both/and constructions rather than either/or, for I believe, particularly in writing, such a construction speaks of shuttling back and forth between private and public words, between subjectivity and

objectivity, between experience and narration- the way we actually tend to live our lives.' (pxvi)
We have such a desire to search for one 'true' answer, even when we mouth the rhetoric of multiple realities or interpretations, we have to continually remind ourselves that life, and belief, and stories, are never that simple.

Dilemmas in Using Stories.
And of course, if we as academics harbor a secret desire for clear cut stories with a discernable moral, this feeling is multiplied many times over in novice professionals, who lack the 'situated frames' (Carter 1993:10) within which to interpret the stories we provide. From my work in researching stories of practice in teacher education over the last five years, one thing is clear, and that is that graduate level students, with a rich practical background as teachers, seem to gain most from sharing stories. But even with this group, the practical uses of stories for educational purposes are not readily understood or implemented.

The greatest strength and the greatest dilemma with narratives in education is that they are highly personal. They are able to pull listeners in, and can really engage them in thinking very deeply about issues. Personal connections are made between the teller, the story and the reader. Emotions get involved as well as intellects. But this very personalization makes it almost impossible to discuss issues or problems arising from the story in the abstract. As discussion leader, there is no hiding behind generalizations, when your starting point is the story.

When my early childhood students were discussing the teacher stories they themselves had crafted, I found the role of discussion leader particularly difficult. Because of the closeness that had developed between the teller and the story crafter, it was difficult to offer any form of critique without this being interpreted as an attack on the teller's actions or point of view. I was very conscious of my particular burden here, because I not only supported the intensity of personal connections between the story, the teller and the crafter, but I also wanted to encourage and promote multiple interpretations of the stories. It was very difficult to do both of these things simultaneously.

Many of these students gave the narrative research project the highest accolades, saying it had been a wonderful experience in helping them develop deeper understandings of what it meant to be an early childhood educator. But several students with more socially critical perspectives, were frustrated by the non-critical stance taken by the crafters in their interpretations of the stories, and by my perceived inaction in forcing alternative views on the class. I defended my position but I too was left feeling frustration at my inability to promote a more critical view.

Despite these vicissitudes, I remain convinced of the power of stories in developing more reflective professional practitioners. Next time, as I introduce the stories project, I will surface and name the likelihood of the students' developing a sense of personal identification with their storyteller, and try to model an examination of other perspectives in ways that do not demean or threaten those of the teller. But I do fervently hope that in the future, I will find the right questions that will help guide my students as they ponder the many meanings of stories and help them move towards new and deeper understandings of their own work as professionals in education.

How do we use stories with students and what do they get from it?

While several members of the team have had students act as narrative researchers and consumers of other's stories (including some from our own collection) the following paper describes one example of approaches taken.

Do Narratives Enhance the Craft Knowledge and Expertise of Prospective Administrators/Practitioners?

(Arnold Danzig)

Focus of the Project

One focus of our project was to examine whether narrative research would enhance student learning, not only learning about their field, but the more tacit knowledge involved in actually performing a job. Fifteen graduate students enrolled in a course titled *Reflective Leadership* interviewed practicing school administrators. Administrators were asked to provide information concerning their own personal biographies and entry into the field of educational administration. In subsequent interviews, they were invited to reflect upon a problem situation and to examine the ways they handled the problem. Students crafted stories of professional practice which were reviewed by the participating administrators for accuracy and validity. Student researchers concluded narratives with their own comments and summary of what they learned from the experience. These stories of administrative practice became the basis of applying class readings and of guiding class discussion.

Theoretical Overview

Reflective practice implies developing new understandings of how expertise is gained in the real world. Teacher education and administrative training programs are moving to a new stage in their development whereby a balance between practitioner and theoretical insights is proposed (Jacobson, and Conway, 1990). For training programs to be successful, candidates must develop reflective skills by which it is possible to gain from experience. Otherwise, the risk is that mistakes are continually repeated, and that one has the experiences but misses the meanings. The "wisdom of practice" implies not only that one has had experience, but that one has learned from those experiences.

The question of whether administrative expertise can be taught, whether it is innate, or whether it is something learned as a byproduct of experience, is of current interest to researchers and to leadership education programs (Heilbrunn, 1994; Wagner, 1993; Terry, 1993; Bennis, 1989). The has always been a split between those who view administration as a rational-technical science and those who view administrators more as craftsmen, whose art cannot be reduced to a set of scientific principles. Schön (1991) suggests that managers and other professionals do not face simple isolated problems, but dynamic situations involving complex, and interwoven problems. Wagner (1993) explores the importance of tacit knowledge, practical know-how, that is rarely taught or even directly verbalized, but is used to solve the kinds of problems found in the everyday world. Unlike academic problems which

are well defined, practical problems are "swampy":

ill defined,
formulated by one self,
require additional information,
have no single correct solution,
involve multiple methods for obtaining multiple solutions,
involve everyday experience as useful (Wagner, 1993).

If administration is seen more as a craft, it is not easily reduced to a set of principles about "what works." While guiding principles have a purpose, they are merely guides and insufficient by themselves to bring about the solution of real problems faced by school leaders. If practitioner based skills can be taught, then it is likely that it will be based on approaches which emphasize the value of experience and reflection as to what constitutes the wisdom-of-practice (Short and Rinehart, 1994).

Narrative research, as a way to enhance professional growth, is gaining acceptance among researchers interested in understanding and improving professional practice (Richardson, 1994; Carter, 1993; Clandinin and Connelly, 1991; Schön, 1991). Narrative research constructs "stories" of practice as a basis for reflection-on-action. Such methods may be a better way to enhance practitioner growth. Less has been written, however, on whether or how narrative research might assist the researchers themselves, in developing expertise.

Finally, researchers have long been interested in the connection between biography, history, and practice (Mills, 1959; Goodson and Walker, 1991). It was of some interest to see whether the connections between biography, history, and administrative practice would become apparent in the stories of practice, and, whether this would assist prospective administrators to reflect upon what is important about the stories of practice. It was of interest to find out whether students interviews, listening, recording, and constructing stories about practice would help develop the reflective capabilities of administrators-in-training.

My Approach

Fifteen graduate students enrolled in a course titled *Reflective Leadership* interviewed practicing school administrators. A general checklist was given to students to assist entry into the project. Students were asked to report on their initial contact and selection of interviewee, timing and scheduling of interviews, and word processing system used. Some sample questions concerning background and entry into the field were also provided. (See Appendix A.)

In subsequent interviews, administrators were asked how they handled a "swampy problem," one in which there was no predetermined solution or single policy to follow. If possible, the problem situation was to have involved students, families, other agencies or services, although latitude

was given. Student researchers constructed stories of practice which were shared with administrators and became the basis by which administrators reflected on their own wisdom of practice. Students concluded their work with their own reflections concerning what they learned from the experience. In the process, students were privy to some of the deeper thinking revealed in reflection-on-action. These insights also became the basis of student centered discussions in class.

The process, as outlined was largely inductive with detailed texts and transcriptions providing the basis for developing codes and categories. All interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. Students were then asked to craft narratives concerning the biography of the school administrator, the problem situation and how it was managed. This was shared with the administrator for corrective feedback and validation. A final section of each paper asked for general comments by the researcher concerning the administrator, the problem and how it was handled, and the student's own thoughts about the case. Finally, each student was asked to prepare a summary (1 page, a graphic, presenting metaphor) which would describe the key issues of the case study to be used in a short (5-10 minute) class presentation.

Story One - An Administrator Deals with Student Fights (written by Brandi Haskins)

This is the story of Connie, (a pseudonym), an administrator at a high school in Arizona. The information included in the following story is the result of interviews with Connie and her recounting of particular events and issues of her life and professional practice. It will be presented in a narrative manner to capture the nature of her practice and the inferences she draws from these events. The events are described as Connie herself describes them. Because it is the involved party reflecting on her actions, it does have a certain cultural or historical interpretation but the process of reflection and storytelling often allows for the practitioner to relate the events as they have significance to their work (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991).

Background

Connie grew up in a small town of about two thousand people. Her parents owned their own business and raised four children. She was very involved in sports and played competitive sports for 10 years, including college, before embarking on her educational career. She recalls that the choice to enter the field education was an easy one. She earned a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in secondary education. At the time she entered college, she found that the acceptable career choices for women were limited to education and nursing. Very soon after her own college career, other opportunities became open to women, but she felt she was limited in her options.

Because she was highly skilled in athletics and liked to help people learn how to do things, she turned to physical education. Her first teaching experiences were at the elementary level where she taught for five years. She moved from teaching physical education to mathematics when her principal asked her what core area she would be most interested in. Connie credits this principal for extending her teaching career since there are so few positions in physical education. She then moved into the high school setting where she taught for fourteen years before she became a full-time administrator.

Connie credits coaching as having the largest impact on who she is today. Her first coaching assignment was at the high school level coaching girls' softball. At the time she knew very little about coaching that particular sport except what she knew of recreational softball. She remembers at the end of her first game of that season the opposing coach approaching her after her team had lost and telling her that her team had a great deal of talent and that she should "do something about it". She began to research the physics and geometry of softball and analyzed what it would take to perform the sport to perfection. She then asked the team how good they wanted to be. They responded that they wanted to be the best they could. They committed to the hard work required to achieve at that level and together they went to region play that year for the first time any girls' sport had done so at that particular school. She remembers however, that they did not reach their goal because they did not make it to state competition. The final game of that season was lost due to one member of the team "not doing her job". The player missed a play that ultimately cost the team the game. She remembers this instance and says it taught her that teamwork was important. That if one person, including herself, does not hold up their end of the administration then the whole system can break down. She describes the administrative team like a sports team, although it may not always look like a task is being accomplished by a whole group of people, if one of them does not do their part then they can't be successful. She describes the administrative team as working for the betterment of the school and without everyone doing their jobs, they won't be able to accomplish that goal.

Eventually she did coach a state championship team and has had many players go on to play at Division I universities. She encourages her athletes to take full advantage of what the universities have to offer. In her own college career as a player, universities rarely paid for women's athletic scholarships and she views this as an important barrier that has been broken down. She also sees barriers coming down as far as administration in schools. Although she recognizes that women have been discriminated against in many areas, she feels that women should be recognized as equals and not for the fact that they are a woman. Education is a field that she says allows women to be equal since everyone in education has a relatively equal amount of education and receives equal pay for equal work. According to Connie women are treated as equals in education more so than in other areas of work.

Connie's own venture into administration came after nineteen years in the classroom where she says she had come to feel stagnant. At that time a friend approached her and asked if should would be interested in running a night school program for a large district. She inquired as to her responsibilities and found out that it would entail running the entire school. Although she didn't have an administrative certificate at that time, she accepted the position and went back to school to earn her certificate, all the while maintaining her classroom instructional duties. In that position she felt she learned a great deal about how schools function including curriculum and the purpose for schools. According to Connie curriculum should be the focus of what schools do and that although there are pressures on schools today to "water down" the curriculum, it is the role of the administrators to maintain high standards. She believes that if you set high standards for people then they will meet those standards.

She credits one person with having a large impact on her life and that is another administrator that she has worked with. This administrator, Jeanine (also a pseudonym) was the principal who helped her move into math and also the person who encouraged her to take the position at the night school. Connie consulted with Jeanine when she was considering taking her first full-time administrative position (the position she holds now) and Jeanine encouraged her that it was time to move out of the classroom and into administration. Jeanine encouraged Connie by stating that she felt Connie would be successful.

Her future goal is to become a principal, possibly at the elementary level. Whether at the elementary or high school level she wants to move into a principal position and that is the plateau of her administrative goals. She does not want to move into a district office position that would put her in a position of only working with adults on a daily basis, and not with students.

In describing herself, Connie notes the personal characteristics of integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness as being the ideas she has built her life upon. She relates that it is easier to be honest than it is to keep straight the lies that you have told. She says that she would rather say she doesn't know the answer to a question rather than lie about the information that she knows or may not be able to discuss freely. To Connie this is not the same thing as an outright lie since it's purpose is to protect someone. She does however say that when a superior asks her a direct question, she will give an honest answer. Lying is easy for her to spot in someone and it does not make for what she considers to be a positive working environment. She states that it is easier to work for someone that is honest because you always know where you stand and you don't have to spend time worrying about whether or not you are being told the truth. She even says she would rather be given an answer she doesn't like or agree with if it is an honest answer, because it is easier to move on from. She once was told by a superior that she couldn't apply for a particular position but

because she knew that up front, it was easier for her to handle. Connie states that although honesty can get you into trouble, she has seen too many people get into trouble for lying. Her personal philosophy is that if you can't say anything that isn't going to be a lie then either don't say anything or just say that you can't answer that question. She believes that there is always another way out than to lie.

An Example of Professional Practice

The situation that Connie described as an example of her practice happened within the last month of the most recent school year. The scenario dealt with student discipline, fighting, and due process.

On a Friday afternoon while waiting at the bus pick-up area one young man approached another young man in a violent manner. The campus security officer told the young man who was confronting the other person to back off of the situation but he did not and both boys reacted, resulting in a fistfight. When the campus security officer separated the two young men, one of them fell to the ground. The student who fell to the ground had been harassing some other students on the campus and several students took the opportunity to throw some punches at this student. Since this was after school and the buses were just arriving to pick up the students there were approximately 700 students in the vicinity. As the security officer and other adults tried to separate the students flare ups would occur a few feet away making it difficult to get it under control. It took approximately 4-5 minutes for 6 men to stop the incident. The bus driver nearest the situation radioed to transportation to call the police. A bike officer happened to be in the area and was at the scene within a very few minutes. When the police arrived, students started clearing the area. As she surveyed the situation she found that only two students had been injured, one student with a broken hand (which he broke in striking another student) and one student with gash on his head. These students were taken to the office, cleaned up, and parents were called to come and attend to the immediate medical needs. Since the incident occurred on a Friday the process of discipline could not begin until the next Monday when the pieces could be put together.

As the administrator responsible for discipline, Connie came in on Monday morning and had to begin to handle the situation. When the security guard arrived he asked Connie "What are you going to do?" She replied that she couldn't do anything until referrals were written and statements put together so that they had grounds to begin to call students in. The security guard started by writing a general description of the incident and then listed the students involved in the incident. Because these students were back on campus on that Monday she asked that the security guard begin with the referrals with those students who were most actively involved in starting the incident or throwing blows. Once the referrals were written and the information about the incident was recorded on paper then the students were called out of class, a few at a time, in groups of friends to alleviate tensions

in the outer office. When one group of friends had been dealt with then they were sent home and the next group was brought in. Connie felt it was important to suspend as many of the involved parties as possible by lunchtime that day to eliminate some of the tension on campus. She thought that by lunchtime there was a possibility of problems occurring if these students were still on campus. She compares fights to forest fires because she says if you don't put it out completely then other sparks can fly as a result. She describes a fight as creating tension on a campus that shouldn't exist and that students and teachers cannot keep their minds on what they need to do if the school environment is not safe. She wanted to move quickly to try to bring calm back to the campus but she pointed out that she didn't move so quickly as to make mistakes. Before implicating a student she wanted to have complete details about their involvement.

The discipline policy on the campus spells out the punishment for a particular offense such as fighting- for the first incident the student is out of school on an off-campus suspension for five days, the second incident requires nine days of an off-campus suspension and a hearing with the district hearing officer to determine when the student is to return to campus. Once the student has been involved in more than one fight it is policy to take the cases to the hearing officer so that the final decision is made there regarding when the student should return to that campus. These punishments for fighting are automatic, whether the student is the instigator of the conflict or not.

The usual procedure for a fight situation would be for each student who is identified either by security or through the process of interviewing other involved students to write an incident report explaining what took place, who was involved, what was the cause, etc. These reports are written before she sees the student for disciplinary action. In this case due to the volatility of the situation, students were asked to write their case on their referrals so as to speed up the process. In meeting with the students Connie asked each of them whether or not they were involved and they responded in writing on their referral forms whether or not they admitted to being involved. For those that said they were not involved she then went about collecting proof or evidence of their involvement. She described this process as talking to students, security, witnesses, in general finding out more information about the incident.

By lunchtime on Monday, five of the main participants had been suspended but it took two full days for the investigation and conferences with the students and their parents to be completed. Connie compared that to the two hours that she would normally take to complete the investigation of a basic fight. Once the process of bringing students in and suspending them if necessary was completed, Connie recalls that the other students she spoke to said that things were calm again on campus, that they felt safe, and things were back to normal.

There were two students that had been suspended for five days where the parents and the students denied involvement. Connie made the determination from the information she had received that the students had been involved, had thrown blows, and that they should be treated accordingly. Although the parent threatened to appeal Connie's decision, she did not. Connie surmises that once the parent talked to the parent's of other students involved who lived in the same neighborhood she may have come to the realization that her students were involved.

The next phase of the incident for Connie were the hearings for those students who had been suspended for nine days due to previous incidents of fighting or related offenses. At the end of the nine days each of those students had an individual hearing with the district hearing officer. Connie described these hearings in general as much like a court trial where the student can have their parents, a lawyer, or both at the hearing. The school presents their side of the situation and the student presents their side. Normally, the hearing officer makes the decision right then as to whether the school will be granted the action they are requesting or if he will shorten the time out of school, but in this case because of the number of students involved, he waited until he had held the five hearings to make a ruling.

In these hearings Connie presented the school's request and information that they had gathered. She requested that these students be suspended for the remainder of that school year and the next full school year. In some of those cases that request was granted, in others it was modified, depending on a variety of issues. At the hearing they presented a full composite of each student. This included their current and past grades, teacher comments, attendance records, and discipline records. She describes this process as getting a full picture of the student and where school is in that student's life. For those students who were not allowed back in school for an extended period of time, Connie and the school encouraged them to go to out of district schools or to the county run alternative school. Her purpose for removing these students from the school is not to banish kids from school altogether but to have the students change their behavior. She states that everyone who comes on campus at a public school should feel safe and if a student is creating an unsafe situation then something needs to change. If the change is the removal of the student from that campus then she sees that as a necessary action to keep a campus safe.

Connie asked each of the students during the hearings whether or not they threw a blow. Connie then related to the parents and students that if they threw a blow then they were involved because they made a choice to become involved by taking those actions. Connie, in the course of the hearing, told the parents that the police had told the school that had the police been on campus for the incident that they would have used mace to break up the crowd and would have taken the students in. According to Connie this information was convincing to most of the parents that this was a serious situation. During the

hearing for one student Connie asked the student a question that the parent did not understand because it had to do with "street wise" information. Connie at that time explained the information/terminology to the parent since she finds that many times parents are not aware of this type of information. She approached this particular situation as trying to make the parents fully aware of what their student is involved in, not trying to turn the parent against the student. Her description of her actions in these hearings is non-personal. She describes herself as there to present factual information but not to make a judgment about a student. She tries to keep the meeting from deteriorating into a bantering situation but when involved in a conversation with the parents or students, Connie will make statements or even ask questions to help bring about a fair resolution and understanding of the case at hand.

For the most part, Connie perceived that the parents were satisfied that their students had been treated fairly. None of the parents chose to appeal the decisions of the hearing officer. She describes the decision to appeal as the parent's choice and not a personal attack on herself as an officer of the school. As far as her role as the person responsible for discipline, her role is to follow a policy. The guidelines are set down and she is doing her job by following them. The students are given handbooks which spell out these policies and when a student chooses to violate one of them it is her responsibility to make sure it is dealt with appropriately. She sees her role as maintaining a safe and orderly environment on the campus and that dealing with discipline matters is a matter of applying guidelines fairly and without judgment.

The incident ended with the completion of the hearings for those students who had been required to attend one. The students who were suspended, served their suspensions and returned to school. In the few weeks remaining in the school year, there were no other occurrences of tension resulting from this incident. Students on a campus, as described by Connie are watching how administrators and teachers handle situations, especially those that involve incidents like fighting. She says they are looking to see what they administrators are going to do and what action is taken sends a message to the students about what the expectations for behavior are. The campus, according to Connie, moved on with their business and an orderly, safe environment was maintained. (The end of Brandi Haskins's Administrator story.)

Some Preliminary Analysis and Findings of What Students Have Gained from the Narratives Task

My analysis is only at the preliminary stages. In general, the goal of the assignment was to enhance student learning about educational administration and administrative practice by listening to the inner thinking and dialogue of the principal. In part, the student is listening to the *reflection- on-action* of a practicing administrator (Schön, 1991). In other words, the story is a reconstruction of events which have already happened. As a result, there will be a reduction of complexity by the story

teller. However, there is still opportunity to see if the student would be able to apply vocabulary and concepts taken from the reading and class discussions and apply them to the case analysis. In the long run, it was hoped that this would build a bridge from novice to expert practice and enhance the ability to learn from experience.

Richness of Description of Beliefs and Knowledge

Part of the assignment asked about the extent to which the narratives and descriptions of practice capture beliefs and knowledge of the school administrators being interviewed. The story of Connie begins with discussion of Connie's background. Growing up in a small community, the importance of team participation in sports (teamwork) become part of Connie's administrative style. The personal characteristics and values Connie subscribes to include "integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness as being the ideas she has built her life upon." Connie says "it is easier to work for someone that is honest because you always know where you stand. . ."

Others have noted the differences between practitioners professional values (in this case, teamwork) and personal values (honesty and integrity). Raun and Leithwood (1993) for example report the findings of their survey study of values of CEOs in Ontario schools (equivalent to US superintendents). They were interested in the influence of values on how the CEOs handled problems and dilemmas. They seem to argue that administrators adopt a pragmatic perspective grounded in professional values, rather than relying on the more general moral values. Basic human and general moral values are important in response to context-free questions. However, they describe a high degree of emphasis on professional values when CEOs address solving particular problems in context. Perhaps most related to this story, the authors report that integrity and honesty did not appear to be very important in the context of problem solving.

Drawing from Schön (1991), Raun and Leithwood report a discrepancy between "espoused theories" and "theories in use." While CEOs espoused basic human values, when it came to practical applications, pragmatism and duty (instrumental values) emerge as increasingly influential. The authors suggest that this is the way that CEOs balance being true to their own values and serving the values of the organization.Their solution is to hold a set of values which honors the values of others (such is the value of Connie's team participation). How do administrators come to the values they hold? According to Raun and Leithwood, while other people come to help CEOs recognize their espoused value system, on-the-job experience or work setting which is more important to development of the CEOs values-in-use. CEOs direct experience of what works, what is best or sensible, may be the most powerful influence on development of professional values-in-use.

In terms of Connie's story, the student connects personal values, as constructed in the narrative, to be relevant to the handling of the case. At the same time, personal values are seen to be almost secondary to professional values. The administrator is quoting as saying "I am not here

to make a decision about a student, but to enforce policy" and this is cited by the student to explain how the fight situation was handled. And, it appears that the novice gains understanding of professional problem solving, and its relationship to personal and professional values.

Personal and Practical Knowledge

Another example of student learning is seen in the discussion of the administrator's handling of the Friday afternoon fight; the student comments how administrators are called upon to make decisions that will effect the lives of students and teachers in the school. The student asks how the principal comes to act "confidently and efficiently" in unique situations and she draws upon the interviews and her readings to suggest that "it comes from a variety of areas such as *reframing, anticipation, reflection in action, and the understanding of the culture of the school*, all of which allow her to take a possibly complicated situation and narrow it down to the most important issues, dealing with those quickly and fairly."

Finally, the student's analysis of the case provides the opportunity for the student to recognize some of the complexity of the performance which has been described.

> *Rather than just identifying one or more students as the cause of the event and only disciplining them, she looked at the situation as one where a group of students who had a conflict not only chose to deal with it in a manner that was against school policy but also did not respond when the security guard asked that they not become involved in the incident... Although she describes this as being "non-judgmental" or "non-personal" it seems that this is really an example of reframing a situation to understand it on a level without placing blame... She seemed to create an atmosphere where the students must reflect on their actions before any type of discipline takes place...*
> *Her use of anticipation could easily be overlooked... Examples of this in Connie's practice would be calling the students in only after having written reports of behavior to avoid unfairly accusing a student, calling the student in with their friends to avoid more conflicts in the office, and finally prioritizing which students needed to be removed from campus the quickest to avoid flare-ups come lunchtime...*
> *Her handling of students in a quick and fair fashion does connect to her own description of her personal qualities. In describing herself as processing honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness she is listing the qualities she finds most important about herself. In the study of this one*

case of her practice she shows herself to be non-judgmental in dealing with the students ("I am not here to make a decision about a student, but to enforce policy" and fair (not bring in students without documentation of their involvement) (Student Reflection on Connie's Case July 1994).

This analysis is taken to be an important source of learning for the prospective administrator, who while not yet an expert, is certainly familiar with many aspects of the school environment.
Student comments concerning what that they learned from the experience were rated positively by the class. In anonymous ratings, students rated the experience highly favorably (.90) on a scale of 0 to 1.0 with 1.0 being the highest) and were highly satisfied with the narrative assignment.

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