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Women Scholars, Integration, and the Marianist Tradition: Learning from our Culture and Ourselves

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WOMEN SCHOLARS, INTEGRATION, AND THE MARIANIST TRADITION: LEARNING FROM OUR CULTURE AND OURSELVES

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In the fall of 1997, a group of junior tenure-track women faculty in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Dayton decided to meet regularly in order to support each others' scholarly endeavors in the process of achieving promotion and tenure. The group subsequently became known as the Writing-Writers' Support Group (WWSG). In 2000, the group conducted a self-study of its group process to determine how the formation of the women's WWSG fit with the mission and characteristics of a Marianist university. The results suggest that, although each of the characteristics could be identified in the group processes, the group best identified with the Marianist mandate to educate in family spirit. Each member of the group considered the possible reasons for this outcome.

A researcher conducts research with, through, and in the company of others—and others around her, particularly those who are part of her life, must live with the time, thought, and energy she devotes to (but also derives from) her work. (Neumann & Peterson, 1997, p. 1)

As Catholic universities, Marianist institutions of higher education affirm a commitment to the common search for truth, to the dignity of the human person, and to the sacramental nature of creation. These basic commitments support the most fundamental work of a university: the collaborative efforts

of teachers and students to understand and improve the world, the solitary
but deeply communal enterprise of the researcher dedicated to exploring the
boundaries of what is and can be known. (Wesselkamper, Moder, & Fitz,
1999, p. 12)

The stories of junior women faculty are stories that are told in many universities across the United States and around the world. Some stories tell
of joys and successes; some relay fear, anger, and humiliation; and some are
never told. Research and folklore pertaining to academe have confirmed the
struggles women often face in higher education. Bateson (1989), for example, chronicled the special challenges women face in the promotion and
tenure process. She noted that women tend to blend experiences, much like a
patchwork quilt, rather than moving on a linear career path. Tierney and
Bensimon (1996) found that women and members of ethnic minorities are
often excluded from the informal but essential processes of enculturation into
university life and the tenure process. In this article, we explore our experiences as faculty, as women, as teachers, as researchers, and as colleagues.

It was in the somewhat daunting climate of higher education that four of
us (Laurice, Katie, Connie, and Mary Ellen) joined the Department of
Teacher Education at the University of Dayton (UD) in the fall of 1997 as
tenure-track assistant professors. Shauna had been an assistant professor at
UD since 1993 but was the only non-tenured faculty member in our department until four more of us joined UD. Early in the fall of 1997, Shauna
offered to mentor us in the undergraduate advising process.

During our first gathering, we recognized the need to come together on a
regular basis to discuss and demystify the many responsibilities and requirements that full-time faculty face. The University of Dayton is a comprehensive university, and we experienced early in that first year the pressures to
perform in the areas of teaching, research, and service. Immediately following our initial gathering, the idea to form a writing support group emerged.
We named the group the Writing-Writers' Support Group (WWSG). The
name reflects how each member of the group perceived the purpose and benefits of the group. Some of us saw the group as a safety net in that perilous
and difficult first year at the university; hence, Writers' Support Group. Some
of us saw the group as a place to refine ideas and manuscripts for publication;
hence, Writing Support Group. Pat Grogan attended the first meeting of the
WWSG, but chose not to participate at that time because she was in the final
stages of her dissertation. The initial group membership included Connie,
Shauna, Mary Ellen, Laurice, and Katie.

In that first conversation, we saw the potential for research and publication in studying our group process. We decided to audiotape and videotape
our sessions, and the chair of our department provided funds for tapes and
transcriptions. We met approximately twice a month that year. The first meet-

ing focused on establishing norms for our group. Those norms included trust, confidentiality, topics, and timelines for feedback. Subsequent meetings focused primarily on our writing. The purpose of the sessions was to provide suggestions for improving the conceptual and technical aspects of a manuscript. Members did not feel compelled to bring written pieces to every meeting, but did recognize the importance of attending regularly to support each other.

Although we began the sessions by discussing our writing, the conversations soon included other topics. As new faculty members in the Department of Teacher Education, we felt the need to talk in a safe space about other pressing issues such as program development, the challenges of school-based partnerships, and the inequities of workload. These meetings became a forum for brainstorming proactive solutions to the daily dilemmas of the department. For example, some faculty had been trying to restructure the graduate research sequence for some time, and our group members brainstormed ideas that were taken to the committee and eventually adopted by the department. Our first year was a year of supporting each other in scholarship and in spirit. Our gatherings provided a means through which our fears and hopes as well as our efforts in scholarship and teaching were unpacked and reframed in ways that enabled us to adapt to and even to influence the culture.

In the second year, we began to earnestly engage in the self-study of our group process. The concept of self-study as an integral aspect of personal growth among faculty is not new. In fact, a special interest group of the American Educational Research Association, Self-Study of Educational Practices, has been devoted to that line of inquiry. Scholars engaged in self-study acknowledge that sharing stories while growing in the profession can be a powerful medium through which others can learn (Carter, 1993; Neumann & Peterson, 1997; Pinnegar, 1996). Zeichner (1999) and Carson (1997) suggest that self-study has become a particularly valuable tool for teacher educators, guiding us to "decenter the self" and elucidating the divided self: "a subjectivity formed in relation to others and…only partially transparent to itself" (Carson, p. 86). Zeichner (1999) suggests that self-study takes a variety of forms, encompassing life history and autobiography. All forms, according to Zeichner, focus on how personal and professional lives connect, bridging the gap, for teacher educators, between what we profess to believe and what we actually practice. Maher (1991) also suggests that examining our own stories not only changes our practice but also enables us to elaborate a theory about that practice. Our self-study emphasized our individual experiences as members of this group. We explored narrative as a research medium and found, like other scholars, that telling our stories is integral to understanding ourselves and our practice (Adams, Bowman, Joseph, Kinnucan-Welsch, & Seery, 1998; Kinnucan-Welsch, Seery, Adams, Bowman, & Joseph, 2000)

In the midst of our self-study, UD launched a sesquicentennial celebration that brought a level of heightened consciousness of the Marianist tradition to the university community. In a letter to the University of Dayton community, Brother Raymond Fitz, university president, asked the members of the university to consider the following:

> As we talk about our Catholic and Marianist character during our sesquicentennial conversation, we will need to reflect upon and inquire into three very important dimensions of UD's character:
> • Narratives and Symbols that give us a shared sense of meaning, a common understanding of our purposes, and a shared sense of "who we are,"
> • Beliefs and Principles that summarize how "we see the world" and "what we value,"
> • Norms and Practices that describe expectations we have of one another and behaviors we have that embody our beliefs and principles. (Fitz, 1999, p. 2)

SELF-STUDY METHOD

As the university engaged in its sesquicentennial conversation, the WWSG began its third year. The focus of our self-study shifted from the individual to the group within the context of a Marianist institution. Specifically, we were interested in examining ourselves as a group as well as examining our group process through a Marianist lens.

The document *Characteristics of a Marianist University* provided us with a specific framework (Wesselkamper et al., 1999) and put forth a "thoughtful articulation that each of the three universities can discuss and then apply in the light of the uniqueness of its own campus community" (p. 5). It seemed reasonable, then, that if we were to attempt to understand the resonance between ourselves as a women's writing-writers' support group and this Marianist university, we should become familiar with the tenets of the document and examine our group practice using these tenets as a lens.

Three questions guided our self-study:

- How does the formation of the Writing-Writers' Support Group fit with the mission and characteristics of a Marianist university?
- In what areas of our work together has the group found congruence with the characteristics of a Marianist university?
- In what areas has our work been different and not congruent with the characteristics of a Marianist university?

At this point in our self-study Pat Grogan rejoined the group. In the beginning of our third year, she joined the faculty as a full-time, tenure-track, assistant professor. The fact that we were studying our group process in the

light of the Marianist lens afforded the opportunity to ask Pat to be a nonparticipant observer of the process by viewing the videotapes. We decided to review the videotapes from the October and November 1997 and January, February, and March 1998 meetings for our self-study. The tapes we chose were a representative sample of the meetings from the first year.

We constructed a framework of categories based upon the five characteristics of a Marianist University (Wesselkamper et al., 1999). The characteristics and codes we designated for our study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Characteristics of a Marianist University and Corresponding Codes

Code A: Marianist universities educate for formation in faith.

Code B: Marianist universities provide an excellent education.

Code C: Marianist universities educate in family spirit.

Code D: Marianist universities educate for service, justice, and peace.

Code E: Marianist universities educate for adaptation and change.

We created a coding sheet with categories and specific qualities and definitions associated with each characteristic. Paragraph numbers corresponding to the definitions and qualities drawn directly from the *Characteristics of a Marianist University* document (Wesselkamper et al., 1999) were also included on this sheet (see Appendix). Each member of the group chose one videotape to review and code using the five characteristics as the coding scheme. Pat, acting as the independent observer, coded the same tape that Katie coded.

The group members coded each conversational interaction with a letter representing a characteristic. To preserve the richness of the exchanges, we chose exemplars in the form of direct quotes. We also decided that each member should make notations about patterns that were evident in the data, (i.e., noting what characteristics were coded most and least often). For our purposes, conversational interactions were defined as clusters of dialogue rather than individual conversational interchanges or specific comments. We were not attempting to analyze our discourse, but rather to analyze the patterns of our conversational exchanges through the perspective of the five characteristics. Pat, however, approached this process differently. Because she had not been part of these conversations, she participated by viewing the tape without any prescribed framework. She felt she needed to view the tape just to get a sense of the experience. As she commented during our research meetings, "I was looking for what would come out of it and to describe the dynamics. I needed to ask 'What is going on here?'"

THE WRITING SUPPORT GROUP
THROUGH A MARIANIST LENS

The process of analyzing our conversations using the five characteristics as codes was quite revealing. First, we came to understand that certain Marianist university characteristics were not discrete, but tended to overlap in meaning. For example, Characteristic D (Marianist universities educate for service, justice, and peace) has much in common with Characteristic E (Marianist universities educate for adaptation and change).

One instance of the overlap between Characteristics D and E occurred during our March 1998 meeting. In one of the conversations, Connie expressed concern about student teacher placements that are in mostly suburban and Catholic schools. Connie said, "[The settings] are not representative of the real world."

She went on to share an example of a UD graduate student working in a low-income school district. She commented,

> This student does not like her students and is considering leaving. Many of the student teachers in [this district] don't know how to relate to the general students. They have had private education prior to coming to UD and then the UD experience does not prepare them well to teach [students coming from settings unlike theirs]…they may not even like them. We should be giving our students urban experiences where they have the opportunity for multicultural experiences. (Videotape, March, 1998)

Laurice followed Connie's comments with her experiences as an undergraduate in Teacher Education at the University of Dayton. She described her experience of working with urban children as "culture shock." The group then went on to discuss how we could better prepare our students for urban school experiences. When we reviewed our coding notes, we realized that the overlap in Characteristics D and E made sense, since educating ourselves and students to address the needs of the poor and marginalized (Characteristic D, paragraph 42) has much in common with the notion that we educate to live "authentically in a pluralistic society" (Wesselkamper et al., 1999, p. 23).

We also saw that four of the five characteristics were coded in all tapes by all of us, but one characteristic (Characteristic A: Marianists universities educate for formation in faith) was represented by only one member. Laurice coded an interaction about the suicide of Mary Ellen's son's friend as both Characteristic C (Marianist universities educate in family spirit) and Characteristic A (Marianist universities educate for formation in faith). She had the following reflection about the interaction:

> I saw this as both formation of faith and family spirit because we allowed Mary Ellen to express her feelings about the tragic death of someone. No

one interrupted and said "OK, let's get to the task at hand," but instead we offered condolences and allowed Mary Ellen to talk about the ordeal. Death is very much a part of the Catholic faith and is very much what families deal with together. The suffering that…Mary Ellen's son's friend and he himself experienced connects us to Mary and Christ. Mary witnessed the crucifixion of her son. (Written reflection, November 1999)

Characteristic B (Marianist universities provide an excellent education) was coded several times in each tape. During a November conversation, Mary Ellen's comments reflected this characteristic. She said,

> Back to that issue of graduating master's level students, as well as undergraduates,…that are true leaders in their field. You know, I don't hear that spoken enough. What are we doing to produce the state leaders? Can they go to Columbus and meet with any group? Is that our stand, and what does it take [to reach it]? (Videotape, November, 1997)

Again in January, the group engaged in a similar conversation about excellence in education (Characteristic B). Here we were reflecting on the important qualities of a graduate program in teacher education:

> What should a graduate program look like from day one when students come in?… You almost need a common philosophy…. The Early Childhood Program will be a place where that can take place…. I see this evolving within the education-inservice culture and that is that a graduate education is a series of workshops…. Is this the university's mission [to provide a series of workshops]? (Videotape, January, 1998)

Characteristic E (Marianist universities educate for adaptation and change) was also evident across all tapes. The following exchange during the November 1997 meeting reflected group members' concerns about the programs in Teacher Education meeting the challenges of the future, especially those of the University's *Vision 2005* statement:

> *Connie*: At the meeting you guys did a wonderful job with the presentation. That baby [the Early Childhood Program] should go to the State Department.
> *Shauna*: The faculty may not be aware of the paradigm shifts that need to be made.
> *Katie*: This is a major component of our Teacher Education program…. This is part of combating traditional notions that the early childhood professional [is not even a certificated individual].
> *Mary Ellen*: Dayton [the University] has never had an Early Childhood Program. They've had a tack-on group of courses.
> *Katie*: People are receptive to hearing this. The school of the future is going to be a full-service agency.

Mary Ellen: Talk about [Vision] 2005! Let me tell you, there was such a good match.

In another example of Code E, Shauna noted after reviewing the January videotape that the group engaged in a lengthy conversation about Laurice's study on word boxes, an instructional strategy for early literacy learners. Not only did this discussion result in some very constructive recommendations for how Laurice might improve her article, but the group also developed a better understanding of this intervention for struggling readers. Shauna told the members that what she found to be particularly noteworthy, however, was the subsequent conversation in which Laurice expressed her surprise that many currently practicing special educators did not have strategies to help struggling readers. Mary Ellen took this opportunity to explain the major paradigm shift that is driving the field of early childhood special education. She explained that the field of special education had "come out of strictly behaviorist models" and that the professional organizations of special education and early childhood had jointly released a statement on developmentally appropriate practice. The shift from a behaviorist to a constructivist paradigm must be understood if we are to meet the new challenges in the field of education. The Writing-Writers' Support Group, in this instance, served as a safe forum for the members to come to understand the changes in the field of education and, in doing so, address the university's mission to educate for adaptation and change.

Finally, Characteristic C (Marianist universities educate in family spirit), occurred far more frequently than other characteristics across all tapes. The following excerpt from our conversation seems to be a strong example of this characteristic. We include the following dialogue to exemplify this category because it was Connie's first scholarly work presented to the group for input and critiquing, and it later won the Association of Teacher Educators Distinguished Research Award.

Katie: Do people have things to share this time, problems they need help with?
Connie: I have some...My paper that I presented with a friend of mine at MW (Midwestern Educational Research Association). I have a difficult time when it comes to writing the results section. You know, I don't know if it comes out clear, if it makes any sense or not. And what I would like to do is Xerox off copies and give to you guys, just the results section, and see if you would read through that and see if it makes sense.... When I read through this thing, I know what I am trying to say, but does anyone else?
Katie: Connie, do you want to tell us a little about the research to give us some background so that when we read the results we have a context for it?
Connie: OK.
Laurice: What was your research question?

Connie: The hypothesis is that students who went through a guided training on reflective teaching will be higher in the levels of reflection.

Katie: Have you targeted a journal for this?

Connie: No.

Katie: You know who I think would pick it up really well would be Action in Teacher Education, ATE's journal. I'm just talking off the top of my head, but it seems to me...

Connie: But like I said, I am very weak when it comes to doing the results section. I can do the data analysis and I can go through all that, but I just don't...not convincing enough.

Katie: You just don't attack it.

Laurice: Do you mean the discussion or just the results?

Connie subsequently distributed copies of the results section of her manuscript to the group members. She received specific feedback from several members and later said of this experience, "I could not have done it without this group's input." The qualities that exemplify this characteristic are the fostering of friendships and the communal dimension of research "encouraging faculty to think of themselves as members of a community of scholars" (Wesselkamper et al., 1999, p. 19).

In one of our conversations we turned to how we, as a collaborative group, could assist our cooperating teachers in the school field sites to understand the changing role of the university faculty person from direct supervisor of our student teachers, to one of liaison with the cooperating teacher. Our vision is that the cooperating teachers in the field become the primary mentors and take the lead in direct supervision of our university student teachers.

Katie: I want to go back to what you mentioned earlier. We need to get together. Once again this is politics and I don't want to step on anybody's toes, but we need to put together a good student teacher handbook and a training manual for cooperating teachers and what is expected of them when we pull them all in.

Connie: Well, it is the only way you are going to get supervising teachers...to really understand the overall picture.

Laurice: Now I hear the faculty are more like liaisons. That is what I heard.... In some sites, it is still very traditional....

Katie: ...we should not be in the business of promulgating that model in the way that we have seen it traditionally. We had a little discussion about that with the students.

The conversation continued, but moved in a somewhat different direction. The group explored the idea that, if we are to partner with field faculty, we need to consider core beliefs and values, not just from the university's perspective but from our partners' perspectives as well. At one point, Shauna stated, "I'm not of the mind-set that we go in and push our own agendas pro-

grammatically." Mary Ellen suggested, "We need to know theirs [core beliefs and values]. We need to talk together." The group then explored ideas about how we might elicit conversations with teachers to get at these core beliefs and values, and to look for congruence with the university.

The segments we have shared from our group conversations are just a minute slice of the rich interactions that sustained and enriched us as first-year tenure-track faculty. The next section represents our reflections on these conversations two years later.

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

The results of our self-study clearly showed that we in the Writing-Writers' Support Group were particularly focused on our own development as a family group. That is, we were most often aligned with Characteristic C: Marianist universities educate in family spirit. Other characteristics, especially B (Marianist universities provide an excellent education), D (Marianist universities educate for service, justice, and peace), and E (Marianist universities educate for adaptation and change), did occur, but fewer of our conversational interactions could be characterized by these traits. In order to uncover the reasons for this emphasis, we reflected on the general nature of the characteristics and then on our individual understanding about why the strong correlation with Characteristic C occurred.

Each of the characteristics seems to honor a special constituency of the university. Characteristic A (Marianist universities educate for formation in faith), for example, honors the history and traditions of the Marianist men who settled in Dayton, Ohio in 1850. The mission to the Dayton area was an act of faith from which we continually benefit and which shapes our very ethos. Characteristic B (Marianist universities provide an excellent education) particularly honors our students and their families who come to us with very high expectations for the journey through university studies. Both Characteristic D (Marianist universities educate for service, justice, and peace) and Characteristic E (Marianist universities educate for adaptation and change) honor the wider community that is served by the University and its graduates, and keep us focused on dimensions of plurality and social justice. Characteristic C (Marianist universities educate in family spirit) may especially point us inwardly, as we attempt to operate, as faculty, staff and students, in ways that support each other in our daily work. In the end, all constituencies of the university need to be well served and fully honored.

Although this process has been one of connecting our lives as teacher educators to the *Characteristics of Marianist Universities* (Wesselkamper et al., 1999), we must also be mindful that we are connected to our profession as well. One can look beyond the *Characteristics of Marianist Universities* to the process of our self-study and ask how our experiences enhance the under-

standing of the process. How can we contribute to the evolving theory of self-study? Zeichner (1999) suggests that self-study is about bridging the gap between the personal and professional. The fact that we coded so many of the segments as pertaining to Characteristics B (excellent education) and C (family spirit) suggests that we as a group valued and connected the professional aspects of our lives as educators and the more caring side of our lives as women (Noddings, 1984).

Bateson (1989) reminds us that women learn from each other's biographies as we compose our lives like patchwork quilts. We shared both our personal and our professional lives in our conversations, and our self-study was an intersection of the two. Our purpose was what Carson (1997) suggests is the foundation of self-study, "decentering the self," and examining the self in the context of the safe space of our group. Connie, for example, often shared her experiences in urban schools in our conversations about how to better prepare our undergraduates for the challenges of urban education. Her stories contributed to her own decentering of self, through a juxtaposition of her previous life as a public school teacher and her current life as a teacher educator. Laurice's stories of her experiences as an undergraduate at the University of Dayton provided yet another context for our group to explore what it means to be a teacher educator in today's world after having formulated so much of self in the past. Viewing the tapes of our conversations has allowed all of us to decenter the self through the stories and biographies of friends and colleagues. Our individual identities contributed to the patchwork quilt of our group experience. The group took on a meaning apart from our individual identities and contributed to our personal and professional development as women and scholars.

We asked ourselves whether we should be troubled by our especially strong inward focus as a group. Why did this happen? Each of the participants in the self-study reflected about this question. Specifically, each of the participants in the self-study agreed to examine the question: Why do you think we, as a group, functioned most often as a family support group, (i.e., in Characteristic C)? Summaries of these reflections follow.

KATIE

It is clear that for all of our group members, first five and now six women struggling to define ourselves as individuals, women, and scholars in higher education, a sense of family spirit was intertwined in everything we were about those first years together. We have all spoken of that characteristic, and, in our group reflections, we can be seen nodding our heads and saying, "Yes, that's right. That's who we are." But that nodding and affirmation begs the deeper question of "Why?" If we were to look more deeply, beyond the phenomenon itself, into the essence of our group and into the essence of women as professional beings, some thoughts come to mind.

All of us as members of the Writing-Writers' Support Group are educators by profession. It has been suggested by many that education as a profession and schools as institutions should be infused with an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1984, 1992). From this perspective, one emphasizes the relationship with others that evolves through a practice of caring. This is supported by Noddings (1992), who explains that "caring, in both its natural and ethical senses, describes a certain kind of relation" (p. 91). Caring is seen as a kind of relation, the kind of relation that has at its very source and origin the sense of family spirit. It makes perfect sense, then, that as educators who believe in an ethic of caring in schools, we would transfer that ethic of caring to a culture of family spirit among our group members. Whatever the context, each member demonstrated the capacity to give caring attention to individual needs. It is in that vein that my characterization of the group as a Writing Support Group evolved as clearly as the Writers' Support Group.

MARY ELLEN

In order to address the question I felt the need to reflect on the multiple levels of functioning as a family that I saw in the group. We functioned as family in our taped group sessions. We also found ourselves functioning as family throughout our days (and nights), in smaller groups, on the telephone, and in chats in the hallways. We functioned as family as we discussed departmental meeting agendas. We functioned as family as each of us went through personal and professional crises. And, yes, we functioned as family when we disagreed.

I suppose I think of the answer to the question mostly in developmental terms. While I certainly had to function, day-by-day, in the classroom with the students and in the community creating partnerships, I was most focused on self-survival. This was such a new world to me and I was having some difficulty figuring it out. The university is a culture unto itself, with its own rules, ways of behaving, and ways of thinking. We all needed the support of the group during that first year to figure it out. I was the oldest in the group, but the least experienced. It is something akin to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, I think, and I could not go forward without having my basic needs met. I don't know if I would still be here if it had not been for the group and the family it has provided for me. I continually wonder, as I speak with colleagues in other higher education settings, why this family group structure does not occur more often in academia. I am so much more ready now to honor those other constituencies and I think my current work reflects that new ability. I now ask myself "How does anyone do it (the promotion, tenure and enculturation processes) without a 'family' group?"

LAURICE

I suspect the entire group coded family spirit most frequently because we bonded for the good of all, or should I say the survival of all. We dealt with survival at several levels. We were accountable to each other for our scholarship. For some meetings, we were all asked to bring writing for review. Some of us can credit successes in publication to those reviews and discussions. During the same meetings, we shared ideas about programs and those ideas were embraced and feedback given; and this enabled each of us to survive in the classroom. Our personal lives sometimes came into the picture, and difficult as well as happy news was shared and explored. The tapes depict warmth, sharing, and much debriefing about who we were and what we had to offer a Marianist university and what it had to offer us. We made time for each other, which is rarely seen in the culture of higher education. In the spirit of Marianist tradition, we became a community of scholars and friends who researched our own process. After the initial year, we shared our experiences with the larger community of scholars through publications and presentations at regional and national conferences.

SHAUNA

While I watched the video data, I was struck by the amount of time and energy that this group committed to fostering friendships. We spent much time attending to the quality of relationships among the women in our group. We attended to our need for truthful interactions and were proactive in troubleshooting potential barriers to friendship such as the order of authorship, missed meetings, and lack of follow-through.

As I look back on the data from two years ago, I listened to my own words and watched the dynamics of the interactions of our group. I was a third-year faculty member and I saw myself as having a clear purpose for the group, that of historian. At that time I was comfortable with this role, which included providing a context for the many questions that were asked as this group of new junior faculty struggled to understand the culture of the department, the School of Education, and the university. Now, as I reflect on the *Characteristics of Marianist Universities* document, I feel that this role as historian fits best into the Marianist characteristic of "educating in family spirit."

CONNIE

It came as no surprise to me that most of our coding was in the family category. I attribute this to three reasons: the nature of who we are, our values, and our philosophies. These three areas have helped us to develop a cohesive bond of support and friendship.

When looking at who we are, I see us as nurturers. This is one area that defines us as women and educators. So often women enter this profession (teaching) to nurture and help others in their quest to reach their potential. So often we hear the expression that I want to be a teacher so that I can change the world and make an impact on another's life. As women in higher education, we wanted to help and impact our profession.

The second contributing feature to this category was our beliefs and values. We value others' opinions and wanted to assist each other on this arduous road to tenure. We valued cooperation, support, and truth. We believed that what we were doing was the natural way to achieve success.

The third feature was our philosophies. As constructivists, we were making meaning of our new settings and environments and this was accomplished through conversation. Our exchanges were ones that encouraged and supported, but also took us beyond our zones of proximal development. We were accomplishing our task: publication through the socialization process in interaction. We were able to give support and make suggestions and work together in re-creating our environment and our meaning of our environment. These three areas have always surfaced and pulled us together on our road to tenure.

PAT

My role in this process was that of the outsider looking in, the nonparticipant observer. I asked the question "What's happening here?" Although I was originally part of the Writing-Writers' Support Group at its inception, I was unable to participate at that time because of the constraint of having to finish my dissertation. I very much regret this.

As I viewed the video of the March 3 meeting, two recurring themes emerged: respect and conflict. Although it is clear that each member came to the meeting with her own agenda, no one pushed for this. Instead, each member listened attentively to the others' ideas and concerns and supported whatever was on the table at the time. If the topic was engaging to all, the conversation lingered. If not, the topic was brought up, dealt with quickly, and moved on. At times there was consensus; other times there was disagreement. However, regardless of the feelings expressed by individual members, the group process remained respectful and supportive.

Observing this group meeting, I was very much reminded of the conversations that take place around the family dinner table. One can bring up whatever, and the others are there to listen, support, and at times disagree. It's a safe place to be.

A FINAL THOUGHT

The Writing-Writers' Support came full circle in January 2000, when Pat joined our group in presenting our stories at the Qualitative Research Conference (QUIG) at the University of Georgia. We close with the poem she wrote for her presentation.

The Givens

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Listen . . .

Theoretical   Practical

Can we live with the givens?

Sameness   Diversity

Can we live with the givens?

Exclusive   Inclusive

Can we live with the givens?

Separate voices   Collected voices

Can we live with the givens?

Ideal   Reality

Can we live with the givens?

That's the important question.

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APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF *CHARACTERISTICS OF MARIANIST UNIVERSITIES: A RESOURCE PAPER*

A. Marianist universities educate for formation in faith. (p. 13)
This is further defined by:
1. Educating against the secular trend (par. 23)
2. Development of the relationship between faith and reason (par. 24)
3. Dialogue between faith and culture (par. 25)
4. Faith in the service of others: social awareness expressed through service (par. 26)

B. Marianist universities provide an excellent education: educate the whole person including their curricular and extracurricular experiences. (p.16)
This is further defined by:
1. Recognition of physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social qualities; linkage of theory and practice; provision of a liberal and professional education (par. 27)
2. Diverse faculty and students; acceptance of conflicting perspectives and diverse cultures (par. 28)
3. Faculty, staff, and administration who attend to formal and informal dimensions of education (par. 29)
4. Appropriate use of information technology for learning and enhancement of interaction between teachers and students (par. 30)
5. Study of the ambivalent achievements of technology and use to benefit whole human community (par. 31)
6. Local impact of the global world through technology (par. 32)
7. Oversight and complementarity of roles within the university, each work-ing to fulfill the mission. All levels collaborate to fulfill the mission. (par. 33)

C. Marianist Universities educate in family spirit: accepting each person with loving respect; community support for scholarship; friendship among facul-

ty, staff and students; participation in university governance. (p. 18)
This is further defined by:

1. Creation of a climate of acceptance. "Family spirit" means to love those in whose company we find ourselves. We have not chosen our members. (par. 34)

2. Fostering of friendships. "Family spirit" presumes an attention to the quality of relationships among the people of the community. We tend to the relationships between faculty and students and the communal dimension of research, encouraging faculty to think of themselves as a community of scholars rather than free agents. This relationship necessarily includes conflict, division, and human suffering. (pars. 36, 37)

3. Formation of collaborative processes and structures. In the mix of joy and sorrow, genuine communities can be formed. There is shared responsibility for decision making that meshes well with the American tradition of faculty governance. Effective collaboration requires good communication, clear lines of authority, just policies and respect for the principle of solidarity. There is a required commitment to the founding mission and vision of the religious community. (pars. 38, 39)

D. Marianist universities educate for service, justice, and peace: being deeply committed to common good, the poor, and the marginalized. (p. 20)
This is further defined by:

1. Promoting a sense of work as mission and being aware of ways work is and can be of service to others. (par. 40)

2. Education for justice and peace for the common good. The administration is guided by just policies and practice what they preach. Fairness in evaluation and compensation of members is ensured, as well as assignment of responsibilities. (par. 41)

3. Attention to the poor and marginalized: with scholarships, special concern for those with disabilities, as well as use of talents to develop neighborhoods. (par. 42)

4. Promotion of dignity, rights, and responsibilities of men and women. We work to eliminate gender inequity, becoming aware of history and the contemporary reality of gender inequity. We strive to eliminate it. (par. 43)

5. Working to integrate commitment to service, justice, and peace into the curriculum. (par. 44)

E. Marianist universities educate for adaptation and change. (p. 22)
This is further defined by:

1. Educating to shape the future: "new times call for new methods" (Chaminade) (par. 45)

2. Educating to live authentically in a pluralistic society. Skills for dialogue, consensus and teamwork depend on virtues of acceptance of others. Discipline is required for responsible, rigorous analysis and faithful dedication to a collaborative, honest, and hopeful search for truth. (par. 46)

3. Development of critical thinking skills in search for truth. We encourage conversation among disciplines with students and highlight roles of various disciplines to help to deepen our grasp of reality and understand our dependence on others. (par. 47)