Articles

Storytelling as Pedagogy: An Unexpected Outcome of Narrative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the use of narrative research methods can serve as pedagogical strategies in preservice teacher education. In this study, we see the intersection of narrative inquiry and storytelling-as-pedagogy. The two often intersect, but rarely has that intersection been examined in a systematic manner. This study examines data collected as one ESL preservice teacher and one Bilingual preservice teacher were followed from their language arts methods class into student teaching and then their first year of teaching to see how they reflected on, questioned, and learned from their experiences. Incidents where narrative inquiry served as pedagogical tools were examined. Although storytelling-as-pedagogy was not a goal in this study, we found that it was an outcome of utilizing narrative inquiry as a methodology.

Narrative inquiry is widely recognized as a viable approach to conducting qualitative research. Narrative and storytelling have long been perceived as pedagogical tools. In this study, we see the intersection of narrative inquiry and storytelling-as-pedagogy. Although storytelling-as-pedagogy was not a

goal, we found that it was an outcome of utilizing narrative inquiry as a methodology in this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In education, stories or narratives have been used in two different ways: first, storytelling as a pedagogical strategy and second, narrative as a research method. As a pedagogical strategy, "teachers themselves [can] gain insights into their practices and set new directions for their ongoing professional development" (Wood, 2000, p. 426). While as a research method, it is important that "narrative inquiry must question the 'truth' status of teacher narratives and seek multiple critical (re)readings from a variety of analytic approaches" (Johnson, 2001, p. 199). The two often intersect, but rarely has that intersection been examined in a systematic manner.

The purpose of this article is to conduct such an examination—specifically, how the use of narrative research methods can also serve as pedagogical strategies in preservice teacher education to help teachers reflect on, question, and learn from their experiences. In the study, one ESL preservice teacher and one Bilingual preservice teacher were followed through their language arts and reading methods course, through student teaching and their first year of teaching. In this paper, we examine those segments of raw data that elicited storytelling from the participants. We address all three segments of data collection (i.e., the methods course, student teaching, and first year of teaching), but concentrate on those incidents in which participation in the narrative methods of this study also served as pedagogical practices. What follows is a brief review of the literature in two parts.

First, we focus on narrative or storytelling as a pedagogical strategy, that is, who has used it as such a strategy and how, and why storytelling is an appropriate pedagogical practice in preservice teacher education. Second, we examine the field of narrative research addressing issues such as what is narrative inquiry, who conducts this research, how they conduct it, and why it is particularly suited to the study of preservice teacher education. Following the review of the literature, we provide background information about the study including who the participants were, how they were chosen, and how and when data were collected, interpreted, and presented. Then, we describe the process by which we analyzed the data looking for those incidents in which the narrative inquiry also served as a pedagogical tool. We turn now to the review of the literature.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Storytelling as a Pedagogical Strategy

A story is a beautiful means of teaching religion, values, history, traditions, and customs; a creative method of introducing characters and places; an imaginative

way to instill hope and resourceful thinking. Stories help us understand who we are and show us what legacies to transmit to future generations. (Schram, 1994, p. 176)

Storytelling as a pedagogical strategy is not new or unique. According to Livo and Rietz (1986), "the telling of stories is an old practice, so old, in fact that it seems almost as natural as using oral language" (pp. 7–8). In aboriginal societies, "storytelling is a very important part of the educational process. It is through stories that customs and values are taught and shared" (Little Bear, 2000, p. 81). Stories are passed down from generation to generation; between men, women, and children and are often used to teach. Cleary and Peacock (1998) write that

In more traditional American Indian culture, stories are a medium through which children's theories of the world are, in part, constructed. Words are not seen as records but rather as reflections of events. The tradition of telling stories to teach American Indian philosophy, values, beliefs, and culture is still practiced. (p. 45)

While in conventional school settings, Egan (1988) has argued for the conceptualization of teaching as storytelling; "the story, then, is not just some casual entertainment; it reflects a basic and powerful form in which we make sense of the world and experience" (p. 2). Therefore, storytelling can be perceived as tangible when individual awareness advances storytelling into the educational content of the curriculum (Abrahamson, 1998). Yet, "stories are not just a means by which human beings make sense of the world around them" (Roney, 1994, p. 120), they are also the means by which social change is enacted:

The dominant group of society justifies its position with stock stories (Delgado, 1989, 1990; R. A. Williams, 1989). These stock stories construct realities in ways that legitimize power and position. Stories by people of color can counter the stories of the oppressor. Furthermore, the discussion between teller and listener can help overcome ethnocentrisms and the dysconscious way many scholars view and construct the world. (Tate, 1997, p. 220)

Interestingly, the use of story is not a new phenomenon in teacher education. In 1930, (what is now) the Bank Street College of Education instituted a progressive teacher education program in which storytelling was treated as a teaching tool (Grinberg, 2002, p. 1452). In reviewing the oral histories of the 1930 preservice teachers, Grinberg concluded that storytelling helped these prospective educators make connections between the children's lives and the classroom. More recently, Clark and Medina (2000) have described how the reading and writing of literacy narratives in preservice teacher education have increased their understandings of literacy, pedagogy, and multiculturalism. Specifically, they found that these narratives support teachers' (1) epistemological development, (2) critical and multicultural understandings of literacy, (3) connections between personal narratives and those of others, (4) personal connections to theory,

and (5) recognition of the partiality of their perspectives (p. 73). Additionally, these narratives helped "to disrupt preservice teachers' stereotyped conceptions of *others* and to interrupt the dominant, generalized discourse on minority students with particular stories" (p. 73).

Other researchers (Barone, 2000, 2001; Cooper, 1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994) have argued that it is through storytelling that preservice/novice teachers engage in transformative pedagogical work; however, according to Barone (2000), this is exceptionally difficult for public school teachers because of the limited time and resources present in most public school settings. He writes:

I envision a day when this privilege [of story sharing] will be extended to empowered school people working in dramatically restructured educational settings. Meanwhile, however, I want to insist that to be worthy of our privileges, we educational academics produce stories that promote two particular kinds of activities. The first is the introduction to each other of school people (especially teachers to their students) who are locked within the present system of schooling, enabling them to hear, if you will, each other's heartbeats. The second is inquiry into how schools may be transformed so that people who live there no longer need to be introduced to each other by external intermediaries such as educationists. (pp. 191–192)

Conle (2003) discusses the use of narrative as curricula in the education of preservice teachers, stating,

". . . the purpose of such narrative curricula is to serve in the field of teacher development and in certain forms of moral education. . . . It encompasses not only what is explicitly learned but also what is learned practically, at a more tacit level, touching not only on the intellect, but the moral, practical, imaginative realm." (p. 3)

Throughout this study, the participants were presented with an opportunity to tell, deconstruct, and learn from their own personal stories. In this way, "narrative inquiry activities" became "curricular activities" (Conle, 2003) as participants reflected on and then questioned their lived experiences as new teachers in research settings.

Narrative Inquiry Methods

Narratives are about people acting in a setting, and the happenings that befall them must be relevant to their intentional sates while so engaged—to their beliefs, desires, theories, values and so on. (Bruner, 1991, p. 7)

Barone (2000) has traced the prominent publicity of educational storytelling as a form of narrative inquiry. Likewise, this is also present in the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1987, 1988; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1994). For Connelly and Clandinin (1994), "life is a story that we live," and

it is through the telling and retelling of those stories that we make meaning and come to understand the stories of others (pp. 149–150). Drawing on the work of Elbaz (1983), they advocate research methods in which teachers construct a life line that chronicles personal and professional events, including dates and feelings in order to move into the telling and retelling of their stories. Through this process of reflection, making connections between past and present events and speculating about future implications, teachers will experience awakenings (new ways of telling stories) and quite possibly transformations (reliving stories with changed actions). Engaging in this type of research, the researcher aims to understand and support teacher development through a reframing of the past, present, and future of the teacher through the teacher's own perspectives and understandings. In particular, "narrative inquiry in education examines growing problems in schools from multiple perspectives. . . . When we understand circumstances, events, or conflicts from other peoples' perspectives, we can identify and implement better strategies for addressing these problems" (Larson, 1997, p. 455). The underpinnings of Larson's statement are the frameworks documented by Carter and Doyle.

There are five frameworks identified by Carter and Doyle (1996) that are grounded in biographical and autobiographical perspectives, which involve telling and sharing stories:

1. Curerre—an autobiographical method of generating and reading autobiographical texts in order to get at preservice teachers' understandings and meanings
2. Narrative inquiry of personal practical knowledge—the researcher and participant collect observations, journal writing, conversations, and documents, and mutually construct a narrative
3. Collaborative autobiography—participants in a group setting generate autobiographies of previous, current, and predicted future experiences. The researcher and the participants examine autobiographies for themes and patterns, then they merge their perspectives in a final report
4. Personal histories—participants construct personal accounts at the request of the researcher
5. Critical perspectives on life stories—participants create personal histories that are examined by the researcher and participant in light of the larger political and ideological context

Additionally, Carter and Doyle highlight that teaching is deeply personal, understandings are profoundly systematic and theoretical, learning to teach is a negotiated process, and mastery in teaching takes a long time. Narratives also play an important role in teachers' pedagogic development and career (Conle, 2003; Cortazzi, 1993). Says Conle (2003), "The narratives available to us delimits our areas of choice. It is the narrative reper-

toire of our imagination that helps us distinguish the world we live in from the world we want to live in" (p. 4).

In narrative inquiry, the process of data analysis involves synthesizing the data into an explanation that requires recursive movements from the data to the emerging plot, always testing the story with the database (Polkinghorne, 1995). In looking for consistency between the emerging plot and the database, one is not seeking a literal account of history, but rather the fiction that is a faithful representation of the participants' lives as they see them (Polkinghorne, 1995). However, do the participants themselves believe that they have been represented in a faithful way? Collaboration is key to this process, and it is this collaboration that holds the most potential for the dual roles of narrative inquiry as a pedagogical strategy.

It is important to note that a faithful representation does not necessarily equate with a literal representation—for how would a literal representation be determined given that there are as many perspectives as there are researchers and participants? Rather, a faithful representation is what Tim O'Brien, Vietnam veteran and author of *The Things They Carried* (1990) might call the "story-truth," whereas a literal representation he might refer to as the "happening-truth." O'Brien uses the distinction between happening-truth and story-truth to explain how he strives to make the Vietnam experience present and real for the reader through narrative construction. This distinction, we believe, is a useful one in understanding academic narrative constructions:

I want you to know why story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth. Here is the happening-truth. I was once a soldier. There were many bodies, real bodies with real faces, but I was young then and I was afraid to look. And now, twenty years later, I'm left with faceless responsibility and faceless grief.
Here is the story-truth. He was a slim, dead, almost dainty young man of about twenty. He lay in the center of a red clay trail near the village of My Khe. His jaw was in his throat. His one eye was shut, the other eye was a star shaped hole. I killed him. What stories can do, I guess, is make things present. (O'Brien, 1990, pp. 179–180)

In asking the participants to read, edit, and otherwise collaborate on the construction of their own personal stories, a researcher seeks to make their lives present. Ultimately, it is this type of procedure and discourse between participants and researcher that is most vital for the narrative to succeed. Larson (1997) substantiates this position by emphasizing that "failing to engage in deliberative dialogue and inquiry, researchers put themselves at greater risk of not seeing, not understanding, and misinterpreting people whose lives and life experiences differ from their own" (p. 459). This to-and-fro movement between researchers and participants as they work to make sense of the data and construct the story-truth is best described by Polkinghorne (1995):

[Narrative analysis] requires testing the beginning attempts at emplotment with the database. If major events or actions described in the data conflict with or contradict

the emerging plot idea, the idea needs to be adapted to better fit or make sense of the elements and their relationships. . . . The creation of a text involves the to-and-fro movement from parts to whole that is involved in comprehending a finished text. (p. 16)

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Participants

Leslie met our two participants, Carmen and Paul, in the fall of 1998 when they enrolled in the ESL/Bilingual reading and language arts methods course for which she was the instructor. Of the 35 students in that course, Leslie invited Carmen from the ESL cohort to participate in the study because she is a Mexican American who did not speak Spanish. Leslie thought that her particular ethnic and cultural background might have a strong impact on how Carmen approached literacy/biliteracy with second-language learners, and was curious as to whether the class would have any impact on that.

Leslie also chose Paul from the Bilingual cohort because he is a bilingual Mexican American. Additionally, Paul seemed willing to question what was going on in class. Also, he was male and somewhat older (40 as opposed to early or mid-20s) than most of the students in the class.

It is relevant to note that Leslie comes from a white, middle-class background. She was born and raised in the South, is bilingual English-Spanish, and spent three years living and working in South America.

Data Collection and Analysis.   With the permission of Carmen and Paul, Leslie collected copies of all their writings, which included written weekly reflections about assigned readings in the university course, a philosophical statement about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse children, a miscue analysis, and a variety of field placement written observations and reflections. During the university course, Leslie took field notes on the content and interactions of Carmen and Paul in large and small groups and conducted semistructured interviews to elicit what they knew about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse children as well as what they were learning.

Carmen and Paul were also observed in their student teaching classrooms and in their own classrooms during their first year of teaching. Following each observation, Leslie asked Carmen and Paul to describe what happened in the classroom, why they thought it happened, how they felt about it, how it related to what had been discussed in the methods course, and whether it was a practice that they would continue in their own classrooms. These questions were not a rigid pattern, and were often abandoned to follow the line of thinking and/or questioning raised by the participant.

The Written Report

Leslie used all of the evidence to reconstruct a narrative account of the process through which Carmen and Paul became first-year teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse children. These narrative constructions were derived from Carmen's and Paul's perspectives in a collaborative process in which Leslie presented ongoing drafts to Carmen and Paul for review. Further dialogue and revisions followed, all according to the approval of each participant. Their narratives strongly suggested that perhaps all preservice/novice teachers need a place to share their stories about public education and identify what their common experiences said about teaching and education. Their narratives also suggested that they needed the opportunity to create what Linda Christensen (2000) calls the collective text in which they realize they are not alone and that their experiences are not isolated events. Leslie believed that it is through collective text that preservice/novice teachers could come to understand and question the knowledge, experience, agency, and courage necessary to be teachers of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse children. What follows is a reexamination of both the raw data and the narrative constructions to highlight the intersection of narrative inquiry with new pedagogical understandings.

ANALYSIS

In order to seek out the intersection of narrative inquiry with changes in pedagogical understandings, Leslie invited Cathy and Charles to join her in analyzing the data. We read and reread the entire corpus of data to search for and investigate those segments of data collection that elicited storytelling from Carmen and Paul. Those segments included the literacy autobiography and formal interview conducted during the methods courses and the follow-up interviews conducted after each classroom visit during their student teaching and their first year of teaching. "Storytelling" included data from all sources (written autobiographies, formal interviews, follow-up interviews) that involved "temporal sequence, a plot, characters, a context, and . . . the sense of an ending" (Conle, 2003, p. 5).

In reading these data, we marked areas in which Carmen and Paul seemed to question, rethink, clarify, or even change their beliefs and understandings about teaching and learning, particularly focusing on change over time. We then compared that raw data with the narrative constructions, which were a part of the collaborative process between Leslie and Carmen and Paul, to check for additional insights that those stories might contain. We were looking specifically for evidence of the "narrative curricula" that Conle (2003) describes, instances in which participants exhibited what was "learned practically, at a more tacit level,

touching not only on the intellect, but the moral, practical, imaginative realm" (p. 3).

In the sections that follow, we provide examples of narrative curricula from each phase of data collection, the methods course, the student teaching and the first year of teaching. In each section, we begin with an excerpt of the narrative construction to provide the reader an overview of Carmen's and Paul's pedagogical understandings. This is followed by excerpts from the raw data that illustrate Carmen's and Paul's own storytelling in response to the narrative inquiry methods. Finally, we offer some concluding remarks.

The Methods Course

In the excerpt from the following narrative construction, Leslie convenes with a group of ESL and Bilingual students from her methods course. She has just told the group that she is in education for social change and social justice. The passage begins when one of the students interrupts Leslie to state his position.

"I'm not," interrupts Mark, "I'm not in education because I want social change. I just want kids to learn to read and write and to grow up and pay their taxes. I'm not against social change. I'm neutral."

"You cannot be neutral!" says Paul without turning to look at Mark. "In education you are either for social justice or against it, but you can never say that you are neutral to both arguments. If you are neutral you may not be advocating a social change, but you are supporting the status quo of our present education system. To me, being a Bilingual teacher automatically places me on the side for social justice. This is why I think a transactional learning environment is very important. Compared to when I was going to school when there was no Bilingual education and everything was taught in a traditional manner, what we've been learning about in this class offers us a chance to change all that. I see a transactional learning environment as a first step towards the empowerment of a once unacknowledged and silent majority, mainly minorities."

"So what does that mean?" asks Araceli. "You aren't going to teach kids phonics and how to take standardized tests? Don't you think that will empower minority kids too?"

"I'm not sure exactly how I'm going to do it. I still haven't seen a real transactional classroom in action. I'll probably use the basal readers and the teachers guides like training wheels to get me started. But I do know that I want kids to share what they know about their home and their culture. I do know that I won't swat them for talking in their home language, but instead I will encourage them to talk and write in whatever language that they can best use to describe their personal experiences. I do know that I won't use Sally, Dick, and Jane books, but I will use books that reflect the child's own culture as well as other multicultural literature. I do know that

I won't make kids sit in rows, but I will let them work in groups and talk to each other. And I'll let them help me plan our themes. Like I said, I'm not exactly sure how I'm going to work all this out, and I may have to use some of the teachers manuals as training wheels, but I do know that I won't be supporting the status quo of the present education system."

Several students start to speak at once. Leslie breaks in.

"This has really been a passionate discussion so far. I want to step in and refocus our discussion just a little bit. I opened up the discussion by saying that I am in education for social justice. Mark and Paul have both described what that means to them. Would anyone else like to take a shot at that? Carmen?"

Carmen nods and stands up to address the class, "As most of you know, I come from a family of teachers. My uncle has worked as a teacher and so has my mother. And most of you know I changed my major five times before entering into education."

Carmen laughs and the rest of the class joins her.

"But I think I have always known and my mom has always known that teaching is the place for me. Paul, my father had experiences like you when he went to school. There was no Bilingual ed and he got swatted for speaking Spanish and they changed his name from Jose to Joe. And because of all that, my parents didn't teach me Spanish when I was little and so I'm trying to learn it now. To be bilingual, what a blessing! So I think I'm like you, Paul, in that I am an advocate for social justice. I am definitely not neutral. Somebody has to fight for these kids. I thought I was going to come in here and just learn more fun ways to teach kids to read and write. I never knew that there was an alternative to the traditional approach. I think that if I had gone into student teaching after last semester, I would have just been a traditional teacher like my teachers—well, hopefully nicer. But now after this class, I have an alternative. I just wish that I could have seen Whole Language in action. I wish I could have seen a transaction teacher. I know this is my philosophy, but I really want to see how it is done. I agree with you, Paul, that I'm not exactly sure how I am going to do it, but I know that this is what I believe."

Participating in this course, Carmen and Paul reflected in writing on their own schooling and their own patterns of learning to help them understand how children become literate and biliterate. These reflections were often critical reflections in that they examined their own experiences with traditional classroom practices and identified the limiting impact that those practices had on them (Garcia, 1997). Their experiences were then juxtaposed with the transactional classroom practices in which they were participating as students and about which they were reading for ideas on possible classroom practices as future teachers. This juxtaposition created a dissonance between their childhood experiences and the transaction teaching practices of the ESL/Bilingual reading and language arts methods course, which served as an important challenge to traditional methods of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse children (Hollins, 1997). Yet, it was through their opportunities for storytelling (such as Carmen's, depicted above) that Carmen and Paul developed a meta-awareness of how

their pedagogical understandings had changed. That is, expressing their own stories within the dissonance of childhood experiences and new beliefs helped them understand explicitly their changing pedagogical understandings. In the following excerpt from an interview, Carmen articulates this meta-awareness:

L: Okay, so anyway, this class, you said, was the first time that you realized that there is not a formula?

C: Right.

L: Okay, can you say a little more about that?

C: Umm, well, the, the fact that you have to develop your philosophy and define your philosophy and say it to people in, in, a concise, intelligent way, I guess that made me think well, you know, hey, I, I don't really like the old traditional style and you know what could *I* do. And through the reading, well, this teacher did this and then this way and this way. And then going and doing my observation and saying you know they are really bad teachers and they are really good teachers and how it varied according to districts and the school. I think that . . . sort of . . . helped me to see that everyone has to bring their own teaching styles into it and you have to do what works for you. Umm. . . . And I guess, I guess maybe because I have a little bit of this prior knowledge from my mom and from the day care that when you got into the whole language, although I never really knew that it was like student centered, I didn't know any of that stuff [about whole language], I just *knew* it. And I was like, hey this makes sense.

L: So, so then, if you had gone into your student teaching last semester, like before you had this class, what do you think you would have done in the classroom?

C: Umm . . . I . . . I think I would have gone to the teaching stores and looked for books on teaching science and reading and math and um and doing reading but not make it as big part of my classroom. I think I would rely heavily on the student teacher or my placement teacher and not be as confident in my ability. I don't think that [now]. I feel now that this class is going to be a strength umm, to me, an individual, and to say this is my philosophy and this is the research that backs me and this is the data [that] backs me up, that I have. Um so I can go in there and I can take chances.

Although Carmen's developing philosophy was evident in other sources of data, this interview clearly depicts how Carmen's storytelling resulted in a meta-awareness of her newfound understandings. Using Conle's (2003) definition of storytelling (temporal sequence, a plot, characters, a context, and . . . the sense of an ending) we can see both how Carmen's interview data become "storytelling" as well as how they bring her to this meta-awareness: Carmen's "story" of how the preservice methods class (context) caused her (character) to look more critically at other classrooms (context) and classroom teachers (character) and to rethink teaching practices (plot) from her childhood experiences to current observations (temporal sequence) ultimately resulted in her critically redefining her own identity as a teacher (the sense of an ending).

This storytelling event is what Conle calls the "experiential story": ". . . the narrator is one of the characters in the story; the story is not intentionally fictional; and the major curricular function is tied to the act

of telling the story" (p. 7). Although this kind of pedagogical move was not the intent of the interview, it happened as a result of it, hence the intersection between narrative inquiry as a methodology and pedagogical strategy.

This was also true for Paul, as is evidenced in the following excerpt:

L: It seems to me that you are realizing what is really happening in bilingual classrooms and you don't like it.
P: Um I guess the thing that I, that I would like to clarify is . . . in, in, schools where they support bilingual education, it's, it's, um I guess it's that, anti, anti-bilingual atmosphere that I'm against. I'm curious because it makes it sound like I'm in education for [laughs] political purpose.
L: When I say "For Paul the course is a place to understand the political nature of bilingual education," what is it that you do or don't like about that?
P: For a while there, I thought, that you know, that I was going to be viewed or I was viewing myself as some sort of a political radical—taking advantage of an education system to be able portray, you know, a political agenda [laughs]. No, that conversation that we had that one day, um, you know, they did, I don't who did it, but someone did in a sense touch a nerve, because um
L: I think probably Mark touched a nerve.
P: Mark touched a nerve in a sense because I see that, um, I share your, your view that it is a social type of, social change is involved in education. And Arizona is going to be like a very, very crucial, gonna play a crucial role in the near future as to whether or not, you know, bilingual [education remains in Arizona]. To me I think, bilingual education is working, you know.

In this interview, Paul seems to be working through his identity as a teacher and his sense of teaching as a political act. He's negotiating his teaching context ("anti-bilingual atmosphere") with a new awareness of education as "a social type of, social change" and his articulated belief, "I think bilingual education is working, you know." Paul's interview indicates the curricular value of engaging in this type of research. As he tells the story of his changing beliefs, he is able to "distinguish the world [he] live[s] in from the world [he] want[s] to live in" (Conle, 2003, p. 4).

From these interview excerpts, Carmen and Paul indicate that the very act of participating in this study provided them the opportunities to tell their stories, reflect on their stories, and learn from their stories. We cannot say that Carmen and Paul would not have reached the same level of meta-awareness without participating in this study; however, we can say that their story sharing as a part of the study allowed them an opportunity to further clarify their own personal understandings.

The Student Teaching

In this section of the study, Carmen's and Paul's student teaching experiences were portrayed as a series of first-person reflections which were written by Leslie with collaborative support and approval by Carmen and

Paul. These stories were elicited from Carmen and Paul through interviews, as well as from field notes from classroom observations and narratives were constructed from the data. Drafts of the narratives were given to Carmen and Paul who suggested revisions, and ultimately approved them as accurate descriptions of their experiences. In the following excerpt from the narrative construction on student teaching, Paul is reflecting on his student teaching day. His inner thoughts are denoted by underline.

> *"I'm tired of you!" Mr. Gonzalez, the other third grade teacher, shouts at Alfredo.*
> *"And I'm tired of your tactics! I know that you're playing around. I know that you're manipulating things around. I know that you are using Spanish for you to get to do whatever you want, and you're going to learn English!"*
> *Alfredo bends his head over his book and Mr. Gonzalez sits down with him, "Now READ!"*
> *Alfredo does not. He cannot read. The whole article is in English and he cannot read it. Paul is standing with one kid helping her read one particular section of the report she had done. He looks around the room at the children. All the children look at him to see what he is going to do. Paul wants to tell Mr. Gonzalez that Alfredo is monolingual Spanish and can't read in English yet, but Mr. Gonzalez is just too angry. So Paul just keeps reading very calmly with the one kid. And Mr. Gonzalez continues to try to read with Alfredo. He tries to make him read for about 5 to 10 minutes and then he stops.*
> *"You know Paul, part of the problem is that there is no. . . ." He pauses before he continues, "I wish that I could get a hold of some Bilingual materials that target these students who are still in the acquisition mode of English."*
> *Paul answers, "I know, Mr. Gonzalez."*
> *Mr. Gonzalez continues, "But the problem is, is that there isn't any."*
> *And Paul answers again, "I KNOW Mr. Gonzalez. I'm beginning to find out that there is nothing. I have yet to hear of any school in Phoenix that is able to provide a K–8 curriculum like they have in Tucson that is gradually going to create that transition environment for the students. That's why I sometimes feel like we're not just reinventing the wheel, we're starting from the ground trying to create something here."*
> *Mr. Gonzalez answers, "There is no reason or point to teach these kids in their native language because they're going to pass to the next grade, which will be fifth grade and there is going to be nothing but English. So what good is it? We have got to get them to speak English. We've got to get them to read and write English."*
> *Paul excuses himself to Mr. Gonzalez and walks out of the classroom. Once outside he gives an aggravated groan. <u>It seems that almost since the first day of my student teaching, I had been compromising my principles</u>, he thinks. <u>All those things I wrote about and talked about at ASU just don't seem to be happening in the real-life classroom.</u>*
> *Paul returns to his student teaching classroom and when he walks in Mrs. White is editing with a child at her desk. She says to the class, "Hands up, please. I have an announcement. Pricilla has written two pages with very little mistakes. As the author, I would like to ask her, after she has cleaned it up a little bit, to read it to the class."*

Paul looks at Mrs. White and Pricilla. This writers workshop bothers me, thinks Paul. Even though there are some similarities to what we talked about at ASU, there are a lot of differences. There are things that make me feel like I am compromising my principles. I remember that when I was writing in the reading and language arts class, basing my work on my own personal experience of elementary education, I had a very different view. Now, coming into the classroom, seeing what's here, sometimes I feel like I am siding with the very people, the group or the side of education, that I thought was in the wrong. Not because I agree with them, but because I am just being forced into that corner. It's like a river that's been running the same route for all these years and here I go jumping in and it's not going to shift its boundaries just because I jumped in the river.

Leslie's presence in their classrooms and her follow-up interviews provided Carmen and Paul the opportunity to reflect on their theoretical understandings and their practices. Leslie's presence and questioning also served to keep them aware of the contradictions between what they said they wanted to do when they were in the methods course and what they were actually doing during student teaching. Throughout his student teaching semester, Paul's story sharing illustrated how cognizant he was of just how much he was being forced to compromise his principles; how he was being forced to join the traditional transmission side of education in order to make certain that these students, "his kids," did not get judged unfairly by the standardized tests. Again, we are not trying to suggest that Paul would *not* have been aware of the contradictions between what he had said that he believed and what he was actually doing if he had not participated in this study. Rather, we do argue that his participation in the study facilitated his awareness of his own growing identity as a teacher within his classroom contexts, as is evidenced in the following interview transcript:

P: I know that what I wrote last semester [in the methods course] does not match what I am doing this semester. So, um, Leslie, um, do you, do you think I have compromised my principles?
L: In what way?
P: I haven't had a chance to look at my papers from what I wrote in the class, but I do know that when I was in the class writing and basing it on my personal experience of elementary education everything and then coming into the classroom now and seeing what's here, sometimes I feel like I am siding with the very people that I felt, or the group or the side of education was in the wrong. But I'm not siding with them because I agree with them, but because you are being forced into that corner. It's like a river that's been running the same route for all these years and here you go jumping in and it's not going to shift its boundaries just because you've jumped in the river. [laughs]
L: I don't think compromise is the word that I would use. Um, I would say that it has been a struggle because if you are aware of the things we talked about in class and you are aware that's not always what you can do in the classroom with Mrs. White. And so to me I know that you are struggling with the difference between

what you believe and what you're actually having to practice. And to me that is a struggle that we all have to go through.

P: And I think a lot has to do with when you show up at a school and you have teachers that have been in the field for so many years, like Mr. Gonzalez. They're not just going to embrace it. They need to see results and that's the only thing by which I can even begin to think how you can maybe impress people to maybe start changing you know their methods of educating children. But you know that is going to take time. It's not going to happen in a year.

At the end of their student teaching experience, both Carmen's and Paul's theoretical and pedagogical understandings of transaction teaching were in a very tenuous position. Although both had expressed an awareness of the political nature of teaching in their preservice methods course, neither was fully prepared for the resistance to transaction teaching they would face. Paul, more than Carmen, appeared to be on the verge of rejecting those understandings. Nevertheless through their story sharing, both held on to their understandings. Paul, in particular, held on to the idea that if he got enough experience in the profession and if he started to understand what was actually expected of children, then maybe he would be able to translate those understandings into the transaction teaching practices that he wrote about in his methods course. Thus, it was through his participation in the study that Paul experienced enhanced understandings, an outcome that was neither planned nor entirely expected.

The First Year of Teaching. Whereas in the previous section we highlighted Paul's experiences in his student teaching to illustrate the pedagogical nature of narrative inquiry, in this section we focus on Carmen's experiences during her first year of teaching. Unlike Paul, as a student teacher, Carmen, as a first year teacher, theoretically had more control over decision making in her own classroom, but still felt constrained by the influence of more experienced teachers.

"So should we get started with our language arts plan?" asks Sharon.

Carmen, Alma, and Veronica pull out their planners, papers, and pens as Sharon continues, "One of the things that we have to include is how we are going to teach spelling. Does anybody have any thoughts on that?"

Silence.

Carmen sits back and waits to see if anyone else is going to speak. She doesn't like to speak too quickly since she is just a first-year teacher and she has so much to learn. But I do have an idea about this, thinks Carmen. She looks around again. Alma and Veronica are reading Jennifer Foreman's sample language arts plan. Sharon is sitting back, waiting. Taking a quick breath and leaning forward, Carmen says, "I have an idea."

Alma and Veronica look up from their reading, and Sharon says, "OK."

"Well," Carmen pauses briefly before continuing. "Well, I was thinking that we could make spelling a part of our thematic units."

Alma and Veronica continue looking at Carmen, nodding as she talks, but Sharon gets very still and quiet. Carmen shifts a little and tries to explain her idea.

"Since we are focusing so much time on the thematic unit and since there are usually key words or terms that we want them to learn, I thought our spelling could come from that."

Sharon's face goes blank. She's still looking at Carmen, but Carmen can't seem to make eye contact. Carmen leans farther forward.

"I thought maybe we could even get the kids involved in choosing the words. We could decide as a class which words we want to focus on for spelling and those would become our spelling words."

Silence.

Carmen sits back. Nothing. No one is saying anything. She glances around the table. Sharon still has that blank, unblinking stare. Veronica and Alma are looking at their copies of the example plan. Carmen slides down in her chair and looks down at her hands.

"Well," Sharon says looking directly at Alma and then Veronica, "I think spelling is very important." She reaches into her backpack, pulls out a book, and drops it on the table in front of Carmen.

"I think that we have to teach children how to spell the high-frequency words. Lincoln has the lowest test scores in the district, and I think part of that is because we don't focus enough on teaching the basics, like sight words."

Alma nods, "I think spelling is very important too."

Outwardly, Carmen echoes Alma's actions and words, but inwardly she fights to swallow the lump in her throat and to smooth the knot in her stomach.

Sharon continues, "This book tells us which high-frequency words the kids should know by the end of third grade. I think one way that they could learn them is by giving them a spelling test every week. I think it prepares them for the SAT9s. And besides, they need to know that this is serious and that they are going to be graded on how well they do on the test."

Carmen nods along with Alma and Veronica, but she feels sick. <u>How much meaning can there be in memorizing words that the teacher has chosen</u>? Carmen wonders to herself. Later that week . . .

"Take your paper and find a place to sit. Remember, today is the spelling test."

"The spelling test! Awww man!" complains Victor.

"Don't worry, Victor; you're going to do great. You know these words."

Victor stomps to a table and slams his chair away from the table.

"Go ahead and write your name. Remember, these are the words that we practiced all week. These are the words that we sent home in the homework packet."

Ever since Alma and she had been meeting Sharon and Veronica for lunch on Saturdays and after school, spelling words had become a part of the homework packet. Just trying to keep track of what the children had done and hadn't done was becoming a nightmare, especially with all the other documentation she had to do.

"What if we don't know how to spell it?" calls out David, "Will we fail third grade if we can't spell?"

"NO!" answers Carmen. "At Lincoln, you know we don't give grades like that."
"So why do we have to take this stupid test?" asks Victor.
<u>*Good question*</u>*, thinks Carmen as she calls out the first word. After the test Carmen dismisses the class early for recess and then she walks to her desk and drops the spelling tests in the trash.* <u>*Alma may be giving the kids the spelling tests in Spanish, but I just can't do it in my class. It goes against everything I believe.*</u>

Although Carmen was a first-year teacher and ostensibly in control of her own classroom, she found herself "backed into a corner" and "compromising her principles" in much the same way that Paul experienced during his student teaching under direct control of his supervising teacher. Through her story sharing with Leslie, Carmen, like Paul, had the opportunity to reflect on what she was being compelled to do in her classroom and what she would really rather do instead as evidenced in the following interview segment.

C: I definitely like the fact that they are independent and that they're doing things on their own and I can move around to different groups. I guess I am just a little concerned with the spelling because I know there is one third grade teacher that gives spelling tests every week. Sometimes when I talk to her she makes me feel like I am not putting enough emphasis on spelling right. But I don't want to do the test. I mean it is just too much stress on them. I see them in their writing, I see them spelling the same words over and over again. So I was thinking of having them go through the writer's workshop and pulling out words that they see they are misspelling. But I don't, I don't want to do the testing. So spelling I feel like that is my weak area, but I just don't know what to do.
L: Well, what do you want to do?
C: I don't know. I don't know. We tried to do spelling and Alma REALLY focused on spelling. I did for a short time, but then I just left it alone because what I was doing wasn't working with the kids. And I have been thinking about my spelling and how I could test them or make sure that they know how to spell the word. It just doesn't seem like it would be beneficial to them. I mean I think that just writing, writing, writing, then their spelling will develop through that naturally.

According to Conle (2003), "the 'subject matter' . . . is the teacher-student's practical knowledge. It is not taught, but sought out, while the immediate focus is on making sense of lived events" (p. 5). Carmen sought out her own practical knowledge by making sense of her lived events through her story sharing with Leslie, articulating her experiences and her position (both in terms of her opinion and her sense of agency) in regard to those experiences.

Summary.   Becoming a teacher is a process situated in a multitude of social, cultural, political, and historical contexts. Edelsky (1996) pointed out that "people are *thoroughly* cultured and that choices are *thoroughly* historical (for instance, five hundred years ago, the options would have been different and so would the meaning of a constant option, like par-

enthood)" (p. 33). The choices that Carmen and Paul made were influ-
enced by their social, cultural, political, and historical contexts, which
included their participation in this study. As first-year teachers, the ques-
tions Carmen and Paul asked themselves and the awareness they had of
their teaching were in part a result of their opportunities to tell their stories
to a supportive and critical audience.

While Leslie did not purposefully embark on the study with pedagogical
aims in mind, the data provide warrant for what we see as pedagogical gains
that resulted from participating in a narrative inquiry. The study provided
an opportunity for Carmen and Paul to examine their growing teacher
identities within real-life contexts beyond the preservice methods class. By
participating in the study in which they were "co-inquirers and co-learners"
(Conle, 2003) with Leslie, Carmen and Paul continued to learn about their
own evolving classroom practice. As Conle (2003) states, ". . . there was an
informal teacher development curriculum enacted in such research activ-
ities" (p. 4).

Our collaborative analysis of the data indicates that Carmen and Paul
experienced new pedagogical understandings by participating in the study.
Specifically, the use of narrative inquiry served as a pedagogical strategy
to help Carmen and Paul reflect on, question, and learn from their
experiences.

FINAL THOUGHTS

When Leslie began her own work with preservice teachers, she wanted to
offer her methods students the opportunity to read and construct writerly
texts (Barthes, 1974); those fabrics of knowledge designed to question the
taken-for-granted understandings of teaching and schooling. Through our
careful examination of those texts, we argue that story sharing can be an
effective pedagogical strategy in teacher education. According to Finkel-
stein (1998):

Among the more engaging features of biographical study is its capacity to reveal the
ideological, economic, political, social, cultural crucibles within which a person
develops new ways of knowing, thinking, acting, and being. Through the revelation
of individual lives and circumstances, biographers can probe the sources of creativ-
ity, the origins of new sensibilities and the forming of original thought. (pp. 47–48)

We argue that the above applies equally well to narrative inquiry with
preservice and novice teachers. When preservice/novice teachers have
shared their stories with a critical instructor or researcher, they have the
potential to understand the traditional systems of power that dominate
teaching and schooling. Knowledge emerges through narrative when it is
used strategically and connected in an ongoing dialogic between "telling"

and "doing," between narrative, reflection, and praxis (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 172). Engaging in this ongoing dialogic through narrative inquiry turns storytelling into pedagogy allowing preservice and practicing teachers to problematize and change the nature of teaching and learning.

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