



## Learning to Live New Stories of Practice: Restorying Teacher Education

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*I am a former elementary school teacher, school counselor, school psychologist, and consultant. I have worked with teachers in schools for many years in ways that allow teachers to value their own practical knowledge. It was my work in the schools with teachers and children that encouraged me to pursue my doctoral studies at the University of Toronto with Michael Connelly. At that time I became familiar with the work of curriculum theorists such as Joseph Schwab, Maxine Green, Elliott Eisner and Philip Jackson. My early work with Michael Connelly was in the area of developing ways of understanding curriculum practice as expression of teachers' personal practical knowledge. Later, when I worked as an assistant professor at the University of Calgary in the Early Childhood Education program, I began to explore the issues of learning to teach from a practical knowledge and narrative perspective.*

*On returning to the University of Alberta in 1990, I began work on establishing a center for research that would encourage collaborative work between teachers, university teachers, student teachers and other practitioners. This interest in collaboration and what it means to extend the boundaries of how we have traditionally thought of research, has become an important focus. My recent writing with Michael Connelly and with Pat Hogan, Annie Davies and Barbara Kennard have focused on narratives of experience, collaboration, and what it means to learn to teach. Books include: *Classroom Practice: Teachers images in action* (1986), *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of experience* (1988) and *Learning to Teach: Teaching to Learn Stories of collaboration in teacher education* (in press). A further book co-authored with Michael Connelly entitled *Narrative and Education* is in preparation.*

I felt the tears spring to my eyes as I heard Carol Gilligan (1990) tell a story of a young girl, a story that sounded much like one I could tell. It was, for me, a telling of my story, a story lived out but not told: a young girl silenced by the power of the cultural myth that we live out in our Western society, a myth within which perfection is defined for women and girls as a particular kind of physical, social, and emotional perfection. It is a view that holds that girls are to be surrounded by friends in order to match the image of perfection held up by our society. Their thoughts too are to be beautiful, thoughts without anger, without conflict, without negative emotions toward people.

As she spoke, my story came flooding back. I remembered myself in the Grade 7 classroom of Mr. Cymbal. It was lunchtime. I was there with a small group of friends, girls with whom I had played in elementary school, girls with whom I had shared happiness and sadness, anger and fear. The conversation was about another of our friends and our thoughts about some action she was taking. The action is forgotten. It will not come back but my words do. "We should tell her that we don't like what she is doing." My friends said, "No, that wouldn't be nice." And moments later when she appeared, no one mentioned it. I remember now a sense of puzzlement, but I knew then that it would not be the popular or socially right thing to do to continue to speak out, to give voice to my concerns. The incident has remained, tucked neatly away, a story not given voice.

As I heard Gilligan (1990) speak about young girls and resistance and loss of voice, my story came back. Gilligan, Lyons, and Hanmer (1990) spoke of adolescence as "an especially critical time in women's development because it poses a problem of connection that is not easily resolved. As the river of a young girl's life flows into the sea of Western culture, she is in danger of drowning or disappearing. To take on the problem of appearance, which is the problem of her development and to connect her life with history on a cultural scale, she must enter—and by entering disrupt—a tradition in which 'human' has for the most part meant male" (p. 4). These words, spoken in that crowded conference ballroom, allowed me to begin to explore my own story of beginning to lose voice, of beginning to learn to know myself in silence, of drowning and disappearing. Gilligan's words about how Western culture excluded young girls' and womens' stories reminded me that the story given back to me in junior and senior high school by friends and teachers was one in which young girls were to be "perfect," without bad thoughts, with no voice for their experience but silence when their thoughts were negative. I learned to live out that story that silenced possibility for giving voice to my experience.

This story became my lived story until, angered by the educational structure years later, I began to find voice to tell of my experiences. I became aware, I think, of the conventional quest plot designed for men when I found myself blocked from living it out as I had imagined. Heilbrun (1989) writes about "a phenomenon evident in the lives of accomplished women who live in a storyless time and are either trapped in, or have wasted energy opposing the only narrative available to them ... for women who wish to live a quest plot, as men's stories allow, indeed encourage them to do so, some event must be invented to transform their lives, all unconsciously, apparently 'accidentally,' from a conventional to an eccentric story" (p. 48). And when the conventional quest plot was blocked, I began to become angry, to hear my voice again as I had in my childhood and to imagine other possibilities.

Gilligan (1990) in her research sees adolescence as the time at which young girls are caught in what becomes a dilemma for them and for women, that is, "was it better to respond to others and abandon themselves or to respond to themselves and abandon others? The hopelessness of this question marked an impasse in female development, a point where the desire for relationship was sacrificed for the sake of goodness or for survival" (Gilligan et al, 1990, p. 9). My anger at being blocked in the traditional male quest story marked the time at which I began to be aware of the dilemma to which Gilligan makes reference. I was able to name the dilemma our culture and institutions posed for women, that is, how to include both oneself and others. As I realized this dilemma in my own story, I, like Gilligan, began to wonder about the role of education in this crisis.

My work in an alternative program in teacher education, an exploration of teacher education as narrative inquiry, offered new ways of thinking about my story as a teacher educator and as a woman working with other women. We wanted, in our program, to explore the ways in which university teachers, student teachers, and cooperating teachers live out their lives in schools. Questions about how we learn to tell our stories and then to retell them in our practices guided the central story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Our task was to learn to see ourselves as knowing persons, as persons whose knowing is expressed in our practices and embodied in us (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). We were all engaged in becoming attuned to hearing our own stories as they were lived out in our practices, to hearing others' stories as they were lived out in their work, and in hearing our own stories as they were given back by other participants in the program in order that we might all see possibility for new stories of classroom practice and teacher education. We knew, as we lived out those practices in this new program, we would be learning to live new stories.

And so my story as I had lived it out as a teacher educator was one I was trying to speak of, trying to learn how to give voice to the knowing, to the new stories, to the sense in which I now saw my story as having been bounded by cultural horizons of knowing. And so I came to Gilligan's session with a wordlessness I had not felt for some time. I had been aware of my own story of being a young woman as I read the papers of the young women who were our students. They had written papers in which they came to understand their stories as they were learning to live them out in practice. Their stories were of the children in their classrooms. Many wrote, as Fix (in press) did, of children such as Shawn and Tyler, two children in her class. She wrote about her work with Shawn in math seeing the connections between her story and his in these words. "I smile to myself, aware of the classroom once again. It was good to explain patterns to Shawn. Maybe my connections are not his, but if I do not share mine, perhaps he will not recognize his own" (p. 66). Jean's words in which she emphasized the importance of making connections between

her own story and the child's story and of sharing those connections in dialogue with the child highlighted for me a similar connection between my story and the story of the young women in our program.

Many of their stories were stories of struggle as they tried to learn to live new stories of teaching and learning where they were teachers in relation to children. As they lived out and wrote their stories, they saw their stories in the stories of the children. I heard in these young women's papers their struggle to hear their voices, to be aware of themselves as knowing people rather than as receivers of knowing. They had begun to question the view that all knowledge "originates outside of the self" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 48). As they began to question, they were trying to hear not only their own stories but the stories being lived and told by the children with whom they worked.

In our work as teacher educators we were attempting to construct situations that would allow university teachers, cooperating teachers, and student teachers to establish relationships that would provide all of us with "experiences of mutuality, equality, and reciprocity" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 38). We wanted these relationships to allow possibility for each of us to disentangle our own voices from the voices of others. "It is from just such relationships that women seem to emerge with a powerful sense of their own capacities for knowing" (p. 38).

Gilligan (1990) reminded me, as had others before her (Grumet, 1988), that young women in their silence have learned to take everything they really care about out of their relationships with knowledge, with institutions. I had known this before but because I had been reading these young women's papers for weeks now, I had been touched. Gilligan's words gave me new ways of making sense. Her words also helped me see my own story more clearly and to mark the moments when I too had learned to take what I cared about out of my relationships with institutions, when I began to live my story as one of received knower.

Gilligan began to give me possibilities for talking about how I was making sense of both the young women's stories and my story as I responded to them. Her words created spaces for me to begin to tell my story of the work with these young women.

I think of Lynn, a young woman who has struggled to trust us enough to look at herself, to look at herself as a knowing person. Lynn too has lived the cultural myth that I lived, the myth of perfection, of trying to live up to what parents, teachers, society saw as how women should be. Beautiful to look at, bright but not too bright, hardworking but caring of others, and without bad thoughts. She had learned to be what Belenky et al. (1986) would call a received knower within our institutions. She knew how to reflect back to us what we had said, what the textbooks said. I saw Lynn as living out a story of my story. She too had given up her voice, her acknowledgment of her knowing. And she had not yet learned to allow us,

those who belonged to the institution, to hear her voice, her story. We wondered if we could find ways to help her begin to trust us as women, as teachers, and not as living out the institutional story.

I thought of Hedy, another of our students. She too had learned to be a received knower, to give back to her teachers and professors the stories they wanted to hear: the stories of theory, of their words, of their silences, of their omissions. Hedy began to wonder, to speak, to tell her story, and as she spoke and wrote her life, she gave back our stories.

These stories and others came to me as I sat with the tears running down my cheeks in the session, and I began to understand the possibility for restorying when our stories as women are given back, of the possibility of new stories we have when others allow us to hear their stories. I speak particularly of my experience as a female teacher with young women learning to be teachers. I sensed, as Gilligan spoke, that what we were trying to do was to allow these young women to tell other stories, not the stories they had been taught to live and tell by our culture and institutions. I came to understand our work in teacher education as, in part, a way of authorizing their own knowing that had, for some, been denied. It was an awakening of their voices that had been silenced or sent underground at "the edge of adolescence" (Gilligan, 1990).

I knew that learning to listen to these young women's stories had helped me to see my own story better. I heard in their stories of learning to be teachers that they were learning to hear themselves speak, struggling to look at themselves as knowing persons, as people with stories that they were living and telling. And I heard in their stories the struggles to speak after years of not speaking with their voices but giving back the voices of teachers, of theory, of the institutions. Through their stories, I saw a way of telling my own story with new insight. It allowed me the possibility of restorying my own story and my way of working as a teacher educator. I understood the ways in which I had been silenced, had learned not to listen to my voice and the years in which I lived out the cultural myth of woman.

As we worked together in the program, teachers and learners all of us, storylivers and storytellers, I came again to understand that I needed to look with others in order to see the ways in which I had lived out my stories. Collaboration seemed very important to learning to live and tell new stories. Initially, I needed to sense a space, a gap, a place where perhaps my words might be heard. I had come to feel anger at having been silenced for a long time, at having not found those spaces into which to tell my story. Heilbrun (1989) speaks of the obstacles women face as they speak their anger. "The first was the ridicule, misery and anxiety the patriarchy holds in store for those who express their anger about the enforced destiny of women" (p. 125). And so I came to understand I needed to feel safe enough to speak those words, to feel that anger, to feel the possibility of being heard. That was partially what I sensed. Once

having spoken, I needed to know that my story had been heard. But even more this year I have learned that someone needs to give back my story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985). I needed to be "looking on with someone" (Kosik & Kennard, in press) so they could help me see what I had said and could give back the story in order that I might see new possibility in what I had told and lived. I needed to find a space to say the story, to have the story heard, and then to be with someone who could give the story back, someone who could offer me a response of possibility of living and telling a different story. As I thought about my own restorying, I saw new possibilities for working in teacher education. I saw new possibilities both for the substance and method for giving back female student teachers' stories.

As we look back on our experiences of this year, we have wondered why both the young women and we ourselves as teacher educators have learned to speak, to hear the stories that we live out and that we are beginning to tell. What have we done as educators, as practitioners, to help these students learn to tell their stories into practice with children? We have no answers, but perhaps we can begin to speak tentatively about ways of storying the experience. We had made the spaces, listened, and stayed open to what they said in their writing, in their talk, in their lived practices. We stayed silent so they could speak. We made spaces for their voices. We gave them possibility. And we tried to tell our stories so they could hear our stories. We wanted them to hear female teachers speak of their experiences rather than the cultural myths. This telling and giving back of stories was a mutual process, for as we told our stories, they gave back our stories with new insights. We read writing; we shared our favorite books; we read and talked about theories and research that resonated with our knowing. We told our stories in the margins of their journals. And as we heard their tentative voices, we tried to let them know that we had heard. In our responses, as we gave back their stories, we asked wondering questions about the meanings they had for their stories.

We too had learned to see and tell our stories differently. Our stories were set within a conversation of caring (Noddings, 1986). As we wondered about their stories, they allowed us to see our stories in new ways in a mutual giving back of story. I learned to see new possibility in my story, in my knowing. Our lived and told stories came back reflected from children, from student teachers, from cooperating teachers. They were not always the stories that we wanted to hear but, because they came from within relationships we cared about, we listened and tried to make sense of them.

I was reminded that we need to nurture all these fragile voices, those of ourselves as practitioners, as women, as young women learning to tell their stories into practice. And we need to learn to tell our own stories as women and as practitioners that acknowledge our conflicts, our dilem-

mas, our struggles. For it is only in telling our own stories, stories that allow us to speak authentically of our experiences, that allow us to acknowledge the way we have made sense of the cultural story, that we can help create those spaces into which young women can move in order to begin to tell their stories. We need to provide another kind of role model, not ones of “niceness” nor ones of playing the system’s games, but models of collaboration with them as we join with them in a kind of resistance to being silenced.

This resistance must allow us to know our stories as acknowledging the dilemma of how to listen to both ourselves and to the cultural stories in which we are embedded. We must know and name the dilemma of how to care for ourselves as well as for others. We must learn to tell new stories of possibility in which, as Gilligan (1990) reminds us, we neither deny our difference in the name of equality by living out the male cultural story, nor do we deny self in the name of caring. Our new stories must be stories in which we find ways of knowing ourselves in which there is a rhythmic tension that enables us to change our knowing, our stories, as they are expressed in practice.

And so the questions I live as a teacher educator are reshaped again by the restorying I am beginning to tell and live out. I see again how important it is to give back to young female teachers their stories in ways Dewey (1938) would see as educative, that is, in ways that allow them possibility for growth, for different ways of telling their stories. And as I learn to hear my voice and then to still it so I can hear theirs and then to give voice to my stories as I give back theirs and they give back mine, I know we are all shaped in the process. Neither my stories nor the stories of the young women like Hedy and Lynn remain the same. And so I must acknowledge that in my work as a teacher educator I am trying to reshape the ways in which these young women will live out their lives both in and out of classrooms.

I shared this article with Lynn and we talked about how she sees herself as beginning to live out her story differently. That conversation reminded me with new force of the moral work of education and the moral part we play in reshaping our world and the ways we live within it.

As I wrote this article and thought about the stories I live out and tell as a teacher educator, Bateson’s (1989) view of women’s lives as not lives of quest after a single grail, but rather lives of what she calls “desperate improvisation” as we try to live out our lives as women with multiple beginnings and endings seems particularly important. I see new possibility in how I might tell my stories that point to changed future possibilities not previously imagined. I see new ways to live and tell my story, new beginnings in the many beginnings that have marked my life.

Note

This paper owes a great deal to the caring community of women, both students and teachers, who have given back my stories this year. They have enriched my life by their caring and their responses.

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