

## FORUM

In this section two university researchers and one teacher researcher engage in a dialogue about the possibilities of including teacher research in our academic journals. Clandinin suggests, in her opening comments, that we have much to learn from listening to teachers' accounts of their practices as we begin to create collaborative agendas for educational research shared with teachers. Black responds by inviting readers to imagine the possibilities that would be created by engaging in new relationships between researchers and teachers where there is an ongoing conversation that would reconfigure our work as teachers and researchers. Milburn responds by asking questions about the nature of teachers' accounts of their practices, about the criteria needed to judge the worth of teachers' stories, and about the validity of teachers' stories. Finally, Clandinin responds by wondering about the possibilities for written conversations between teachers and researchers.

Dans cette section, des chercheurs, deux universitaires et un enseignant, se questionnent et échangent sur la possibilité d'inclure dans nos revues académiques des recherches faites par des enseignants. Dans ses commentaires préliminaires, Clandinin soutient que nous (les universitaires) avons beaucoup à retirer des recherches qui font état des pratiques des enseignants. De plus, elle souligne (Clandinin) que cela s'inscrit dans un cadre qui tiendra davantage compte de notre collaboration avec les enseignants au niveau de la recherche en éducation. Black répond à cela en invitant les lecteurs à imaginer tout ce qui serait possible si nous acceptions de créer de nouveaux liens entre universitaires et enseignants en considérant que notre travail consiste avant tout à enseigner et à faire de la recherche. A son tour, Milburn soulève des questions sur la nature des recherches des enseignants, sur les critères utilisés pour les évaluer et sur leur validité. Enfin, Clandinin se demande s'il serait possible d'établir des "conversations écrites" entre enseignants et chercheurs.

## Creating Spaces for Teachers' Voices

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There are children with whom I don't seem to connect for days, or even weeks at a time. I see them and talk to them, but not in any meaningful way and not enough to "hear them." It occurred to me that we, as adults, get to know each

other and understand each other by socializing. I think I see journals as a way of "socializing" with our students. In the journals students will be able to "talk" to us about things that are important to *them* rather than what we consider important. It will, I think, allow us to know our students better and perhaps allow them to know us in a different way.

So begins a journal entry by Angela Barritt, a student teacher. In an ongoing journal dialogue with her cooperating teacher, Kerry Black, Angela is beginning to figure out what it means to work with children. In this entry, Angela wonders about her feelings of disconnection from children, her sense of being disengaged from their stories, from how they are making sense of their worlds. It is a matter of serious concern to her. She looks to her own experiences as an adult to see how she makes connections with others and realizes that she does this through what she calls socializing. She now has a way of thinking about the purposes served by the journals she and Kerry keep with the children. They are, she sees, a way to establish connections that allow the children's knowing to become apparent.

The above is only a fragment of a year long journal dialogue. It provides a glimpse, however, into Angela's struggle to come to know herself as a curriculum maker in the classroom. We see Angela's attempts to make sense of her work with children, not as the transmitter or implementor of a curriculum and objectives, but as someone engaged with her own and children's lives over time. She is, as Duckworth notes, engaged in "a process of engaging learners in trying to make sense" (Duckworth, 1986, p. 494). It is a process in which both her own story and each child's story must have an opportunity to be heard. In Angela's journal entry we begin to understand how she is making sense of her work with children. This fragment is part of Angela's narrative of experience, a part that allows us a glance into the many stories that form her personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

Angela's story is as unique as she is as a person. She is just beginning to figure out what it means to be a curriculum maker, to live out her story with Kerry and with the children in their classroom. They were, as we have said elsewhere, "living out their intersecting lives with a combination of shared and independent story lines, all of which impinge on the curriculum constructed in the unfolding classroom story" (Clandinin & Connelly, in press).

But what, researchers may ask, does Angela's story have to offer the educational research literature? What can teachers' stories offer to our knowledge of how curriculum is made and lived out in classrooms? I and others have responded to those questions by drawing attention to how teachers' accounts add another dimension to our understanding of the complexities of practice (Eisner, 1988). Further, teachers' stories are powerful means in helping each of us reflect on our own teaching practices. The invitational quality of

others' stories allows us new insights and new possibilities for living out our teaching stories differently. For these reasons alone, we should begin to make spaces in our research journals for teachers' stories for it is in our journals that we both add to our understanding of practice and encourage change in practice.

More importantly, however, I believe that learning to listen to teachers' stories is a way of beginning to share with teachers the work of educational research. We see a place for teachers' stories alongside researchers' accounts in order that voices from both theory and practice can be heard. This would, perhaps, be a first step in creating a collaborative agenda for educational research shared with teachers.

Eventually I imagine researchers and teachers engaging in shared work in classrooms and schools in order that the research accounts that are constructed have spaces for the voices of children, researchers, and teachers. But we must begin with making spaces for teachers' stories so we can begin to create a literature that records these stories. We can then begin to construct methods of working with current and prospective teachers and researchers to educate them to the imaginative possibilities of reading this literature.

I do not imagine this change will occur quickly or easily. There is a long history of silencing teachers' voices in educational research. We are beginning to see researchers' accounts of teachers' stories as teachers participate as co-researchers in studies. However, we rarely include teachers' stories, constructed and told by teachers, in the pages of our research journals. I believe, however, as we move to more collaborative agendas with teachers in curriculum, teacher education, school reform, and educational research, we must begin to create a literature of teachers' stories in spaces we create in our research journals.

## References

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## On Teachers' Voices in the Created Space

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I am impressed not only by the content of Clandinin's brief position paper but also by the metaphoric power of her prose. Current practices in educational research, she is saying, will be moved aside to create "space" for the authentic self-portrayal, the "voices," of real, classroom-based teachers. Producing new forms of educational literature, sharing experiences, reading stories infused with invitational quality, establishing connections with students, evoking different ways of reflecting on our experience, and so forth — these are appealing intentions that only the churlish (or jaded) would try to diminish. Clandinin's agenda is both innovative and optimistic.

The claims she makes in her comment are fully warranted in the very influential body of recent research on teachers' stories and personal knowledge to which she herself has made a major contribution. Given the impact of that research, all scholars in education are now much more cautious than heretofore in their assessments of the role of teachers' understandings in the depiction of classroom life and in the articulation of curricular knowledge. In consequence, we now provide for teachers' voices a room of their own in educational research and reporting that they previously had not been encouraged (or even permitted) to enter.

But, in this context, I am reminded that metaphors tend to be mischievous — their light shines fitfully, and the images they reveal are often misleading or deceptive. In particular, terms derived from other disciplines or discourses and applied to education need to be unravelled with great care.

Take, for example, the notion of teachers telling "stories" as part of the research agenda. In reading some of the educational research on which Clandinin's piece is based, I must confess that I find the metaphor troublesome. What exactly *is* a teacher's "story"? How does it differ from the traditional autobiography or biography, or from such recent inventions as "life cycle," "life structure," "life history," or "career history"? And what are the bounds of the teacher's story? Are there characteristics essential to such a story? Are there personal givens? Are there curricular givens? Are there approved (desired, suggested, recommended, required) topics? Are some subjects taboo? Are there approved discourses for a teacher's story? Are they largely anecdotal, or are there other approved (desired, hoped for) forms? Or does "anything go"? For

whom are teachers' stories intended? For private, personal use? For certain associates? For supervisors? For public display?

However one may respond to these questions (the existing research literature in the field does not give me as much guidance as I wish), the problems of evoking the personal voice of teachers are enormous. Teachers are no different than others; they may not reveal very much about themselves to themselves or others and they may omit important matters (or even deliberately deceive themselves or others). At this point, I am reminded of the late A.J.P. Taylor's comment on *A Prime Minister Remembers* — "shows how much a prime minister can forget." It requires no great stretch of the imagination to suggest topics — and significant ones at that — on which teachers will simply refuse to comment in any form. (I acknowledge that there are investigative procedures, used by both historians and sociologists — but not so frequently by education scholars as one might wish — to reduce the impact of this problem.)

And it is only very rarely — perhaps never — that stories appear in "raw" form. They are formed and shaped by the media in which they are cast or interpreted by the researcher. When stories are written (recorded, video-taped, filmed) and then published (shaped, revised, edited) by another person, that person inevitably leaves his or her mark on the content, structure, and form of the final account. I am not suggesting that this is a fault in the process that should be rooted out — I simply note here that it is an inevitable characteristic of the task of preparing a story for another's reading (or viewing). (Whether a story is an "authentic" account of classroom life is an interesting question, but not always an important one. One of the last questions I would ask in a study of *The Browning Version*, or the first two chapters of *Hard Times*, is whether or not the "account" is "authentic.")

The notion of an archive of teachers' stories is an interesting one that runs parallel to recent suggestions that qualitative studies of curricular phenomena ought to be collected with greater care and given greater prominence in educational journals. But collection assumes (to a greater or lesser extent) some form of selection (and publication certainly does). On what basis are some teachers' stories to be retained in an archive (or accepted for publication) and others scrapped (or rejected by appropriate journals)? Are some stories "better" than others? On what criteria? Are there standards that help us decide which stories are more professionally useful (for reflection? for personal improvement? for curricular improvement?) than others? In particular, what role do prose style and quality play in the critical process required in assessing the worth of teachers' stories?

Finally, a comment that I think is relevant to the notion of teachers' stories in educational research, although it takes my discussion beyond the points raised directly by Clandinin. If personal stories are to be used for professional "improvement" (in any number of ways), the part played by the researcher,

colleague, mentor, or professional supervisor becomes problematic (if not ominous). What happens to both the content and interpretation of a teacher's story if the second person (overtly or covertly) drags along an ideological baggage — political, social, or curricular? How is the teacher to be protected if the very process of story-interpretation becomes institutionalized? (I can foresee already in some jurisdictions the creation of an officially sanctioned professional development course on "the interpretation of teachers' stories.")