

## **Researching Teaching: Learning From Each Other's Stories**

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In this paper I give a narrative account of my experiences of struggling as a researcher working with two kindergarten teachers. I describe how the research was shaped by my own search for what it means to be a teacher. I tell how working with Michael and Carol helped me name the conflicts I had experienced in my own teaching, conflicts which were reflected in the research process, as dilemmas. I also show how paying close attention to other people's lived stories can help teachers explore their own lived stories of their teaching.

Dans cet article je dresse un compte-rendu narratif de mon parcours tortueux comme chercheur travaillant avec deux enseignants de maternelle. Je décris comment la recherche était construite autour de ma propre quête quant à ce que signifie être enseignant. Je montre comment le fait de travailler avec Michael et Carol m'a aidé à identifier les conflits que j'avais rencontrés dans mon propre enseignement, conflits qui se trouvaient transcrits dans le processus de recherche, en tant que dilemmes. Je montre également comment le fait de prêter une attention rapprochée aux histoires de vie d'autres personnes peut aider les enseignants à explorer leurs propres histoires professionnelles.

A Research career is unmistakably a reflection of the person that he or she has been. Of all the possibilities, one raises only certain questions. (Brimfield, Roderick, & Yamamoto, 1983, p. 15)

This paper is about the process of my research, a narrative inquiry with Carol and Michael (Dhamborvorn, 1994a), two kindergarten teachers in two different schools. I have described some of the results of my research elsewhere (Dhamborvorn, 1993a; Dhamborvorn, 1993b; Dhamborvorn, 1994b). Here I describe the research process of telling and retelling my teaching stories to search for narrative beginnings for my research questions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I show how my research was situated within

my own narratives of experience as well as those of Michael and Carol. As I lived this narrative inquiry within their classrooms, I was able to name conflicts in teaching as dilemmas. I conclude by describing how this research helped Carol, Michael, and me understand the nature of our teaching.

### *Narrative Beginnings*

Life is worth living. Not because there is nothing else, but because of what we each may give one another; pain, joy, anguish, peace. It's not an easy journey. You may even call it an adventure. It doesn't matter about the problems, the contradictions. In our hearts we understand everything. We understand it's the struggle that counts. (Oakley, 1992, p. 204)

I felt overwhelmed as I read Ann Oakley's words in *Taking it Like a Woman* (1992). Her words called forth my own stories as a young girl, a girl who was full of conflict, anger, fear, and hesitation as I lived through my stories. As a girl, I had not expressed my feelings to anyone. I did not want to destroy my image of myself as a *brave, nice, and perfect* girl. I did not want to disappoint my family, teachers, and friends. I learned to silence myself and tell only good stories, stories without conflict, fear, and anger, stories of a perfect girl.

When I became a kindergarten teacher, I tried to continue to live a story of being perfect, only now I was a perfect teacher: a teacher who wanted to fit within the educational system, a teacher without conflicts. However, I now found it was harder to live out other people's stories, stories of being perfect rather than my own stories.

I remember while I was teaching, I was sometimes very frustrated because I could not do what I wanted to do. There were many voices demanding me to do different things to my students. Most of the parents wanted me to push their children to learn to read and write. The principal and a group of faculty who planned the curriculum of the school expected me to emphasize readiness more than reading and writing. The school exams, however, dealt mostly with reading, writing, and spelling. I sometimes felt overwhelmed and began to act like a machine, trying to please all of the people around me. Greene (1973) indicates there are four different ways for teachers who feel overwhelmed by a discordant clamor of voices to act in their teaching. At one extreme, the voices thrust the teachers back into "reliance on precedent; defensively, the teachers may become an automaton" (p. 183). This was the extreme I chose. At the other extreme, the voices may cause the teachers to feel deep disquietude. The teachers may realize, as

never before, that they are responsible for their moral choices, that "with dissonance afflicting them and no one to turn to for a resolution - they are dreadfully free" (p. 183). Or more moderately, the teachers may decide to follow the behavioral scientists with the hope that their theories will give them a sense of direction. Or they may decide, as Carl Bereiter (cited in Greene, 1973) said, that the school is no place for humanistic teaching or face-to-face encounters, no place for the pursuit of values, and that they will concentrate on teaching skills.

It was not until years later when I had left my home country and had opportunities to reflect on my own stories that I became aware, I think, of my own voice. Little by little, I began to understand my own stories, to see my stories as containing my struggles of trying to become who I am as a girl, a woman, and a teacher. I came to an awareness that my stories of struggles, angers, and conflicts counted. No wonder I had been bored by living out others' stories of perfection.

As I journeyed with the two teachers in the research story, I found that there were many levels of reflection during the research process. The first part of my reflection began when I first met Carol. From observing her teaching and listening to her stories, I began to reflect on my own teaching and figure out my own research questions. The second part of my reflection began when I invited Carol and Michael to be participants in the research. In this paper, I give an account of my experience as a researcher and how the two levels of reflection help me understand my own teaching stories through their stories.

### *Beginning of the Research Process: First Reflection*

During my teaching in Thailand, I had asked myself about the nature of teaching and had wondered how I could stay fresh and alive in my teaching. When I became a more experienced teacher, I found my teaching boring and wanted to leave it. I decided to pursue my Master's Degree in order to find out what teaching was. I had been so filled with many theories about teaching and learning that I did not have the time or space to reflect on what teaching meant to me.

When I first met Carol, one of the teachers in the research, she was a part-time kindergarten teacher and a Master's student at a university. As I visited her classroom and observed her teaching, I became fascinated by the way she set up her class and by her style of teaching. I had many conversations with her and was surprised when she mentioned how her philosophy expressed itself in her teaching. As I listened to her, I questioned my own teaching philosophy. I began to think it would make a difference if I was aware of my philosophy when I taught. If I knew what I wanted most for

my children and myself, I would teach differently. I wondered what it was like for experienced teachers who were aware of their philosophies. How did they handle their teaching?

My relationship with Carol continued when she got a new teaching position at St. Peter's School. In September 1990, I was looking for a teacher with whom I could work on my pilot study. During that time, I was not sure what I intended to do for my research. I just wanted to observe in a classroom and hoped that I could get some ideas for my research from being in the classroom. Also as a stranger from another culture, and a person who did not speak English as my first language, I was consciously aware of my ability in communicating and understanding English. I wanted to try out research methodologies, to check my ability to take field notes, to check my ability in understanding a teacher's language and the classroom context, and to try my ability to offer meaningful interpretations of the data.

From spending two months in her classroom, Carol's story made me reflect again and again on my own story as a kindergarten teacher in Thailand. By reflecting on my own story, I began to realize the ways I had coped with conflicts in my teaching. At the same time, I began to be curious about how Carol would cope with her conflicts. I began to see similarities between her story and my story and realized both our stories included conflict. I felt that we both were trying to figure out ways to live through the conflicts in our stories. Working with Carol helped me figure out my own research questions because I saw my own stories reflected in hers. I began to be conscious of what I was doing and why I was doing some things which I had never realized before while I was teaching. I began to see reflection as a way of helping teachers understand themselves and learn to cope with their dilemmas in teaching (Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Lampert, 1985; Lyons, 1990). My research story began to focus on the dilemmas teachers of young children encounter and the ways they cope with their dilemmas.

The person who first came to mind when I thought about doing this research on dilemmas was Carol. By that time I had known Carol for two years and had conducted my pilot study in her classroom. While writing my research proposal, I invited her to be a part of my research story.

I met Michael, another teacher in the research, shortly after I began to write my research proposal. At that time Michael was teaching in a school where I had to observe and to provide activities for the children. He appeared as a young and energetic teacher. From our work and conversations, I learned that Michael trusted his own voice and had courage to take risks in his teaching and learning. He seemed to have faith in children and hope for the world. I was impressed with the ways he worked with young children and how

he cared for other people around him. I was also fascinated by the way he viewed the world. So, I invited him to be a part of the study.

It was important for me to get to know the two teachers before beginning the research because I wanted to work with teachers whom I admired and felt comfortable with, teachers whose lives were filled with caring and love for teaching.

### *The Research Story: Second Reflection*

I began my research story by joining Michael's and Carol's lives as a friend. Because Carol and Michael worked in different schools, we agreed I would come to visit each of their classrooms for two half-days per week from January 1992 until June 1992. As we journeyed in our research together, we shared our stories, our concerns and our expectations for the children in their classrooms. As we worked together, I took field notes, recorded our conversations, and kept a journal in which I recorded my feelings, actions, stories, mistakes, and reflections in the hope that the writing might lead me to a better understanding of Carol's and Michael's dilemmas and how they managed them. The more I reflected on my field notes, our conversations, and my journal entries, the more I realized that as Carol and Michael lived their dilemmas through their everyday teaching; I, as a researcher, lived my dilemmas through my inquiry. I began to be aware of the discontinuity of our lives as I listened to their stories and my stories. I saw my own life as stories that were continually restored as I tried to make sense of interruptions and changing circumstances (Hogan, Clandinin, Davies, Kennard, 1993).

I realized that my life as a person and a teacher did not stop as I began my research journey. I still lived, told, and retold my stories in the research. I was not only a researcher but also a participant in the research journey (Clandinin, 1992). My experiences with Carol and Michael prompted me to reflect on myself as a person, a learner, a teacher, and a researcher. The research journey became an opportunity to confront myself, to examine my ideas and beliefs in order to increase what I knew, to understand myself and my relationships to the world (Brimfield, Roderick, & Yamamoto, 1983). Kubie reminded me that self-knowledge was very important for me to grow as a teacher and as a researcher.

This is why it is impossible to produce scholars who in the true sense of the word are wise ... if they know nothing about themselves. Without self-knowledge in depth, the master of any field will be a child in human wisdom and human culture. (Kubie, cited in Brimfield, Roderick & Yamamoto, 1983, p. 1)

Kubie drew my attention to the importance of looking at my own stories at the same time as I tried to understand Carol's and Michael's stories. It was very

important for me to tell and retell my stories as well as the stories of our research process.

### *Learning Through Researching: Telling and Retelling a Story of Myself As a Researcher*

As I reflected on our work together, I realized that I, as a person, had developed a relationship with Carol and Michael in unique ways because of who they were, because of the time that we spent together, and because of the contexts of their classrooms. My relationship with Carol was different from my relationship with Michael. I brought my stories to each of their classrooms and my stories framed my relationships with each of them and the way I constructed their stories. I constructed their stories from what I heard, saw, experienced, and thought about as I worked with them in their classrooms (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I agreed with Coles (1989) that the stories I heard from the two teachers were to some considerable extent a function of who I was as I heard their stories.

As I reflected on my relationship with Carol, I realized that I brought my perspectives about her as a person and a teacher with me to her classroom which affected my relationship with her. Before beginning the study, Carol and I had known each other for two years. We talked about her educational philosophy, classroom practices, and children's stories. To me, Carol was a spiritual, sensitive, philosophical, and caring person. She was thoughtful and always reflected on her action with the children and her philosophy of education. She had high expectations of herself as a teacher. The more I reflected, the more I realized I developed many roles in my relationship with Carol. There were numerous moments when I saw Carol as my master teacher, my elder, somebody from whom I learned a lot about what teaching and learning should be in the classroom. Carol was my ideal teacher. From her teaching practice, she demonstrated for me what a good teacher was. Because of the story I had already constructed of Carol, I felt I interacted with her and constructed her stories in a different way from my work with Michael.

At the beginning of the study my relationship with Michael was more like a researcher/teacher relationship than a relationship between friends. Even though I had known him for two months before I began my research, I did not feel I knew him well. I tried to figure out who he was so that I could know him better. My relationship with Michael became more like one of friends as we worked together. Each morning when I went to Michael's classroom, I felt relaxed. Michael often made me feel comfortable by asking me to help in classroom activities. He made me feel more like a partner than a stranger. My relationship with him was open and honest. Some mornings Michael told me he was tired. Some days I told him I was tired. To me, Michael was not a

perfect teacher. He was more like a *real* teacher, the same as me. As I worked and talked with him we both knew some days were worse than other days. But as teachers, we knew we could get through them. Michael expressed himself,

I know there's going to be tough days. And so I don't get down over them. I go home and I say, "Oh! well, so, we had a tough day. What can we do to make it better?" (Dhamborvorn, 1994a, p. 197)

I began to be aware that I also saw my stories retold through Carol's and Michael's eyes. Michael's teaching reminded me of my first year of teaching, of being fresh, enthusiastic, and active about my teaching. That year I felt like a child who looked at things around me with wonder and inquiry. That year I was least worried about other people's voices. That year I listened most to my voice and to what I believed about teaching and learning. And best of all, it was during my first year of teaching that I loved teaching most. However, as I talked to Michael, I found he also had dilemmas to deal with in his teaching. But because Michael was an optimistic person, he could look at things with his positive eyes. In one of our conversations, Michael said, "There are so many things that I want to do but – I don't have to do them now. (laugh) I have a whole life time ahead of me" (Dhamborvorn, 1994a, p. 193).

Carol and Michael also selected the stories they wanted to share with me. Their expectations of what I wanted to learn and to hear, and their decisions about what should be told, derived partly from their sense of who I was with them (Agar, 1980). As they shared their stories with me, they constructed and reconstructed their lives at the same time.

The first time I asked Carol to reflect on some of our stories, I was surprised that Carol changed some of her words. It was a dilemma for me. It made me think, to go back to our stories and to relisten to our conversations again and again in order to figure out how to manage the dilemma. I began to realize for the first time that both Carol and I are human beings who construct and reconstruct our stories all the time (Clandinin, 1992). Our stories of our lives had not stopped. They were going on and changing all the time as we tried to live and relive our stories. We were forever in pursuit of ourselves (Dewey, 1916). I also realized that Carol had different interpretations of her teaching stories at different times and in different contexts which led me to be aware that we, as human beings, had different ways of telling the same stories to different people. Our way of looking and interpreting things changed depending upon the circumstances and time (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg & Tarule, 1986). I realized the stories I asked Carol to reflect on from that day were already her past experiences. As Carol daily lived her life story, the time and the context changed. And also it changed the way Carol looked at her stories. Coles (1989) in *The Call of Stories* noted something similar when some of his students commented upon how a few years of life

and a different intellectual agenda affected their response to a particular story. In one of our conversations, I shared the story of my dilemma with Carol. She responded, "it wouldn't matter if you were here everyday for the whole day because every time I leave the school and go home, some experience would have altered my thinking somehow. It would have affected me" (Dhamborvorn, 1994a p. 179).

As I reflected more on our research stories, I realized that if another researcher came into the two teachers' classrooms, a different study would emerge depending upon who the researcher was and depending upon his or her relationship with the teachers. This reminded me of Schutz (1953) who wrote, "not only what an individual knows differs from what his neighbor knows, but also how both know the 'same' facts" (p. 14).

Schutz drew my attention to the importance of who we were in connection with the world. As human beings, each of us had her own ways of interpreting things around us. We constructed knowledge from our past experiences and from our interactions with the world.

I also began to see new ways to retell and relive my stories as I listened to Carol's and Michael's stories. I learned to shape and reshape my own life. Bateson (1989) helped me think about how we, both the researcher and the participants, share our stories as a way of composing our lives. She wrote,

The accounts as I heard them are themselves part of the process of composing lives. They are autobiographical, not biographical, shaped by each person's choice and selective memory and by the circumstances of our work together. No doubt they are shaped again by my own selections, resonating variously with my own experience. (p. 33)

Our stories were all changing because of our work together. Their stories were shaped again by my stories. I selected which of their stories I wanted to tell. My way of selecting stories depended on my understanding of their stories. For example, even though Michael often mentioned his dilemma with a school board, I did not choose that story to tell. Because I did not really understand his context, I did not feel I could tell the story well enough to capture his intentions.

I was aware that at the same time as I was doing research with the teachers, I was researching myself. My stories, as Clandinin (1992) mentioned, were lived, told, and retold in the research process. In one of my journal entries, I wrote,

"What is research? What does the word 'research' mean to me?" I began to see research more and more as an inquiry into myself as well as into the teachers .... I began to see how Carol's and Michael's stories integrated with my stories and became a new story, our research story. (Journal; February 6, 1992)

As I listened to the teachers' stories, I realized I listened to my stories at the same time. Like a photographer who came to know himself or herself through the pictures he or she took, I, as a researcher, came to understand myself and my teaching from listening to and working with the two teachers' stories. I learned that knowledge came not only from detachment but also from living in connection with myself and with other people, from being embedded in the conditions of life (Gilligan, 1982; Heilbrun, 1988). I sometimes imagined myself in the teachers' situations and it was through this research process that I began to see new possibilities for reliving my story of teaching. Bateson (1989), in *Composing a Life*, wrote that women understand their own lives through reading and listening to their friends' stories. She wrote,

Women today read and write biographies to gain perspective on their own lives. Each reading provokes a dialogue of comparison and recognition, a process of memory and articulation that makes one's own experience available as a lens of empathy. We gain even more from comparing notes and trying to understand the choices of our friends. When one has matured surrounded by implicit disparagement, the undiscovered self is an unexpected resource. Self knowledge is empowering. (p. 5)

As I learned about myself by immersing myself in the lives of the two teachers, I realized that my life "in its daily ordinariness, not in its labored cleverness, was worth attention" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 142).

Throughout the inquiry with the two teachers, I wondered how the research affected their lives. I understood how much the research affected me. I saw my growth as a person, a teacher, and a researcher. As a person, I began to be more aware of myself and to gain insight into others' perspectives. I realized that self was not only me. Self was both outside of me and inside of me. Cousins (1981) helped to reaffirm my discovery about self. He wrote,

We are more than the shadow of our substance, more than a self-contained and self-sealing entity. We come to life in others and are affected by their hurts or their needs or their moral splendor. When we deny this, we hammer at the essence of our own being. (p. 35)

Cousins drew my attention to the importance of seeing myself in connection with others and seeing others in connection with myself. It seemed to me that to deny others was to deny myself (Hill, A., personal communication, August 10, 1993). I live many stories within my one self. In a journal entry, I had reflected,

"Self" always has both sides. One is the world of "me." The other is the world of "others." We cannot separate two worlds from each other. They needed to go together. We couldn't live in the world without help from other people. I mean we really need each other both the people who are

the same as us and those who are different from us. "How can I be 'me' without 'you'?" It's you who makes me "alive" and stands at this point. I can't be "me" without "you." You are as important as "me." (Journal; July 7, 1992)

This also reminded me of the language I use in my everyday life and how it influenced my thoughts about people and about the world. In Thai language, there are many words that mean *I*, depending upon the relationship we have among people. For example, if I talk to my students, I use one specific *I*, different from the *I* which I use when I talk to my parents. I choose the *I* to use depending upon the person with whom I associate. In order to choose the *I*, I need to consider my relationship with her or him and to think about the connection we have with each other. In the English language I did not have a way to express my understanding of *I*.

### *Research as a Transformatory Process*

My work with Carol and Michael offered me new ways of thinking about teaching and the struggles I had as a teacher. As the three of us told and retold our teaching stories, I began to see possibility for living new stories of teaching and I realized how important it was for me to articulate the struggles we all experienced as we lived out our research stories.

When I first came to the classrooms of Carol and Michael, we began our work by sharing our stories. As a researcher, I felt I was an outsider but also an insider in their classrooms. As an insider, I shared their teaching stories by working with them in their classrooms. I learned from working and observing them in their classrooms not only as a researcher who wanted to be a part of their lives but also as a teacher who was always looking for ways to improve my teaching with young children. I got to know their children and shared the children's lives, an experience which helped me to make connections with their teaching. I began to understand my teaching and their teaching as I listened to the children's stories. After each school day was finished, we had conversations. Our conversations were not externally motivated as a part of the research methodology of the study (McKay, 1990). I believe our conversations occurred because of our desire to share our stories, to make sense of our own experiences, and to figure out ways to live with our dilemmas. Our conversations were based on the trust we had with each other when we tried to tell the stories that we had lived but not yet told (Connelly & Clandinin, forthcoming). Each of us shared our classroom stories, our struggles, our uncertainties, our dilemmas, and our concerns about our work with the children. In sharing our stories, we took turns as storyteller and as listener. As a researcher, I felt it was very important to be both teller and listener. It was important for us as we worked together to

develop a sense of caring, thoughtfulness, and sensitivity for each other. In our conversations, we responded and questioned each other with a sense of caring. At one time I questioned whether I should be both listener and teller in this research. I asked Carol and she said,

When you sensed that I wasn't answering fully or talking freely then you talked more until I jumped in. You're very good, Nophanet. You're really good at talking to. It was easy to talk with you. (Dhamborvorn, 1994a, p. 266)

In some situations, it was not necessary for us to say anything to each other about how we felt about a specific classroom event because we both seemed to feel in touch with each other. Words were not important. Empathic silence and body language were more significant than words themselves (Noddings, 1991). For example, when Carol told me about the death of a student in her school, I could not say anything. We looked at each other in silence but inside we both knew we cared for each other.

As we shared our teaching stories, we realized that new knowledge was created along the way. We gained more confidence in our knowing as teachers and learners. We felt our voices were heard. Both Carol and Michael found that talking to me after their teaching was helpful for them because it helped them reflect on their teaching stories. By reflecting on their teaching stories, both of them understood their teaching, why they did what they did. At the same time, it helped them figure out their future, what they would do to handle their teaching better. In my last meeting with Carol at her school, I asked her to reflect on my being in her classroom. Carol felt we were together in the classroom. I was not apart from her. She said,

I can't talk to my husband about what I've done the same way because he's not part of this classroom, because you shared this and journeyed with me. I count you as a valid source to reflect on myself through what you're saying, through what you saw, through your comments. (Dhamborvorn, 1994a, p. 189)

Michael also felt that the opportunities to share his stories with me helped him see his teaching more clearly. He could see his picture of teaching as a whole. Michael felt that when he was in his teaching, it was hard for him to see a whole picture of himself. He needed someone to ask him about his teaching. He said it made him think about his teaching and how he could improve his teaching (Journal; May 3, 1993).

In our journey together, we also shared our past experiences as children, students, and teachers. As we retold our past stories, we could see the connection between our pasts and our presents. We analyzed our pasts, related it to our presents and tried to figure out ways to live for the future. Personally, I felt I began to understand my story better by both retelling my

own story and listening to the two teachers' stories. As they shared their stories with me, I not only heard echoes of my story but also began to make sense of my own story (Clandinin, 1993). Reflection helped us to construct and reconstruct our educational philosophies so that our philosophies could fit with our contexts. Throughout our research journey, we saw our lives as always in composition, not finished. None of us had completed our stories. Instead, we were aware that we would keep changing depending on time and space. We found it was crucial for teachers to ask themselves over time about where they came from, what they were doing, and what they were going to do next. It is only now that we could see how sharing and responding to each other's stories helped us figure out how to live with our teaching dilemmas. We also felt that the process of articulating one's own philosophy was important in the sense that it helped us, as teachers, to be aware of what we wanted most in our teaching in that particular space and time. As persons, we were aware that in our lives, we could not get everything we wanted to. Therefore, in our teaching, we had to weigh what we wanted most and what was best for our children.

We viewed teaching as an ongoing inquiry and dilemmas were a part of the inquiry (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993). As teachers, we were aware that teaching was a hard job, full of dilemmas. There were a lot of days as I was teaching, I felt exhausted. Carol and Michael had similar experiences. There were some days they both felt tired and exhausted. Some days were tougher than other days. As we recognized this reality of teaching, it provided us with a space to come together and to share our struggles, our uncertainties, and our dilemmas. The questions we kept asking ourselves as we shared our stories were, "How could we make all those tough days better? and What did we learn from them?" The three of us viewed our teaching as an inquiry, an ongoing inquiry into both our lives and the children's lives (Clandinin, et al., 1993). Some days when we were in the middle of our teaching, we felt down. But as we looked back to our teaching as a whole, we still felt in our minds and bodies that our teaching was full of moments of wonder, of moments for inquiry. Teaching reflected life. When we looked at our lives in parts, we could see that there were both good days and bad days. But as we looked at our lives as wholes and tried to make sense of them, we realized that they were still good lives, worth living. In teaching, if we tried to imagine ourselves looking through our children's eyes, we could see the wonder of teaching and learning, of life, and of the world and we believed that this was what kept the three of us going back to our teaching.

At the end of the study, we shared many personal stories with each other. We became close friends. To me, one of the most important things I got from the research was friendship which would last longer than the research itself.

Even though our work together was over about a year ago, I still think of them whenever I go to observe a school for another project. They both still live and relive in my mind. My life as a researcher and as a person changed after I worked with them. I became a more thoughtful and caring person in my conversations with other people. I could look at things and listen to them through other people's eyes and ears. I could imagine what it was like for other people in specific situations by putting myself in their shoes. At the same time, I became more critical and reflective about myself and about the way I viewed the world. I became aware that the way I interpret the world is based on my previous experiences of it, my own personal experiences or those handed down to me by my parents or teachers (Schutz, 1953). I came to understand more about the multiple realities of teaching and of the world (Collins, 1974). Each individual constructed his or her own reality. As a person, a teacher, and a researcher, I came to Carol's and Michael's classrooms with my own realities, my own stories, just as they had theirs. Each of our realities was real. Through our conversation, we helped each other clarify, expand, share, confirm, and reflect on our realities. Most of all, we tried to remind each other that there were realities other than our own (McKay, 1990). From working with Carol and Michael, I learned when to talk and when to listen. Both of them offered me their lives as examples for my own life. I learned a lot about moral dilemmas from taking a closer look not only at my life but their lives as well. Most of all, by looking at their lives, I learned to shape and reshape my own.

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