

## Telling Teaching Stories

By F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin

It is April 1959, I'm standing at the railing of the "Batory's" upper deck, and I feel that my life is ending. I'm looking out at the crowd that has gathered on the shore to see the ship's departure from Gdynia—a crowd that, all of a sudden, is irrevocably on the other side—and I want to break out, run back, run toward the familiar excitement, the waving hands, the exclamations. We can't be leaving all this behind—but we are. I am thirteen years old, and we are emigrating. It's a notion of such crushing, definitive finality that to me it might as well mean the end of the world.

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My sister, four years younger than I, is clutching my hand wordlessly; she hardly understands where we are, or what is happening to us. My parents are highly agitated; they had just been put through a body search by the customs police, probably as the farewell gesture of anti-Jewish harassment.

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"Communism is a political philosophy based on the idea that there is no private property and everything should be shared equally between everybody," the teacher tells the class of ninth-graders.

"But isn't Communism evil?" somebody asks. "Don't they kill people over there?"

Mr. Jones—he has a kindly, square face and a crew cut that looks like it's made of horsehair—then has an inspiration. He turns to me and asks me to

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describe what life in a Communist country is really like.

Really like? Really, I've never seen Communism walking down the street. Really, there is life there, water, colors, even happiness. Yes, even happiness. People live their lives. How to explain? In my classmates' minds I sense a vision of a dark, Plutonian realm in which a spectral citizenry walks bent under the yoke of oppression. The very word "Communism" seems to send a frisson up their spines, as if they were in a horror movie; it's the demonic unknown. Doesn't everyone there walk bent under the yoke of oppression? There is no freedom there!

Yes, there is, I tell them, becoming vehement in my frustration. More so than here, maybe. Politics is one thing, but what good is freedom if you behave like a conformist, if you don't laugh or cry when you want to? My outburst is greeted with stares not so much of hostility as of incomprehension. What odd ideas this foreign student has! The teacher, who is obviously delighted by what I say—he has found an ally in his battle against provincial priggishness—attempts to get some discussion going. Then he interrupts himself and asks whether everyone in the class knows where Poland is. There are negative shakes of the head. No, not everyone does. He points it out on the map, to which the students turn with a dutiful indifference. Obviously, most of them will forget this small square on the map, wedged in between larger blocks of other colors, by tomorrow. "Is Poland a part of Russia?" some especially inquisitive soul asks. Ah—now I understand. There is no point in my getting so excited. Of course, I will not convince these teenagers in this Vancouver classroom that Poland is the center of the universe rather than a gray patch of land inhabited by ghosts. It is I who will have to learn how to live with a double vision. Until now, Poland has covered an area in my head coeval with the dimensions of reality, and all other places on the globe have been measured by their distance from it. Now, simultaneously, I see it as my classmates do—a distant spot, somewhere on the peripheries of the imagination, crowded together with countless other hard-to-remember places of equal insignificance. The reference points inside my head are beginning to do a flickering dance. I suppose this is the most palpable meaning of displacement. I have been dislocated from my own center of the world, and that world has been shifted away from my center. There is no longer a straight axis anchoring my imagination; it begins to oscillate, and I rotate around it unsteadily. (Hoffman, 1989, 2, 131-132)

This story and others like it are important to the way we think about teacher education, both pre-service and professional development. In our work we read stories of people's lives, lives of disruption and lives of humble straightforwardness. We study people's lives, teachers', students', and childrens' lives. In our courses we tell stories of our lives both in and out of the classroom, in and out of school. We tell stories of the professional and stories of the personal. Stories such as this are both our leisure reading, our research, our teaching, and our continuing teacher education. Our purpose in this paper is to illustrate how these kinds of matters are central to teacher education, to teacher development, and to the improvement of schools.

### **Where We're Coming From**

In our work (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) we focus on the place of teachers' and students' lives in education. This focus is founded on our own knowledge of practice, in our knowledge that teachers are the single most important force in school improvement. While this seems simple enough, practices in educational reform and school improvement often seem founded on a different view of practice. In a chapter for the American Educational Research Association's *Handbook of Research on Curriculum* (Jackson, 1991), we reviewed the history of the place of teachers in curriculum development and school reform. Both historically and currently, teachers have been viewed as in a conduit, their purposes flowing down to them from others. One reading of this literature is to understand that teachers have not been viewed as creative, independent agents of their own, as people who are composing lives that make a difference and that those differences are important in children's learning. When governments and boards of education pour money and energy into the improvement of schooling, they traditionally pour money into curriculum development or into new government or board policies, such as the current push for school restructuring. From our knowing of schooling, this money and energy is misdirected. We believe teachers more than policy change, curriculum development, or school reorganization make the difference.

### ***Four Assumptions***

We believe that if we want to understand stability and change in the schools, if we want to improve education, we need to understand and support teacher development. In order to make sense of teacher and student development, we focus on the lives of students and teachers and make a number of assumptions about teacher education.

Our first assumption is that teacher education is lifelong. Too often, teacher education is thought of as preservice teacher education. We see teacher education as ongoing throughout life. We continue to educate ourselves as teachers in our classrooms and in our lives as a whole. A second assumption we make is that to think about teacher education is to think about a life line, a life history. When we think about teacher education, we do not focus only on what is happening at this moment. We think about it historically, that is, what led up to it, as well as what is in the future. The past, the present, and the future are always in mind as we think about teachers, teaching, and teacher education. A third assumption is that teaching is an educative relationship among people. It is not only a role conferred by government or by accreditation bodies. Teachers are found in many places, not only in classrooms. The conferring of a teaching certificate is not the thing that makes a teacher. A fourth assumption is that teacher education is a continuum. This assumption is related to the first assumption, that is, that teacher education is lifelong and ongoing.

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Preservice, induction into the profession, and service are all part of the continuum of teacher education.

### *Two Metaphors of Teacher Education*

For those of us who work in teacher education programs, we take for granted a curriculum of teacher education composed of courses from the discipline areas such as history or biology, courses from the foundation areas such as educational psychology and philosophy, courses on school organization, curriculum and instruction courses in various school curriculum subject matter areas, and some practicum experiences. We take for granted that a curriculum of teacher education is built around research and theories of teaching, around various school curriculum subject matter areas, around school organization, as well as what we might call the professional knowledge context of teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990) and, perhaps, the wisdom of practice.

For most of us in Canada, this has been the teacher education curriculum with only minor revisions and variations since the preparation of teachers became part of the universities. We have a flash of recognition when Schön describes the professional education curriculum which first offers “the relevant basic science, then the relevant applied science, and finally a practicum in which students are presumed to learn to apply research-based knowledge to the problems of everyday practice” (Schön, 1987, 8). For many of us, Schön’s description gives the broad outline of what we know as the preservice teacher education curriculum.

**Teacher Education as Injection.** One way of thinking about the curriculum of teacher education is to see it as a kind of injection curriculum. We see, for example, that student teachers come to their teacher education programs with lifetimes of experience. They begin teacher education after having lived for 20 or more years. Furthermore, they continue to live, to story and restore their narratives of experience as they participate in the teacher education program. However, the curriculum of teacher education too often appears to ignore the lives of the prospective teachers. Rather, the curriculum seems to be structured around an implicit metaphor of teacher education as an injection.

The first injection is an injection of knowledge and skills into the teachers while they take the basic arts and science courses, the foundation courses, and the curriculum courses at the university. They are then sent out to schools and classrooms for a practicum experience. Often this seems to be a separate kind of injection, an injection that combines their experience of teaching in practicum with the wisdom of the teachers with whom they work. After this experience, they engage in practice with occasional “booster” shots of inservice or professional development teacher education to fortify the earlier injection administered during preservice teacher education. This is a too simplistic representation of what is going on, but it gives a sense of how, too often, teacher education is experienced by student

teachers and teacher educators.

**Teacher Education as Reconstruction.** As we consider teacher education from a narrative perspective, we see reconstruction as a more appropriate metaphor of teacher education. This metaphor is an attempt to come to grips with the idea that education is not linear, moving forward step by step. Rather, education is more a process of rethinking and rebuilding the past. The significance of this metaphor is that at every moment in our lives, whether we are in class or not, our entire person is there: our past is there. We cannot shake our pasts. Eva Hoffman cannot shake the 13 years of her life growing up in Poland. She cannot shake her feelings of uprootedness as she stood at the railing of the boat leaving Gdynia. She cannot shake the oscillation of the axis anchoring her imagination as she suddenly saw Poland as a grey patch on the map rather than the center of the universe. Our views on this owe much to the influence of Dewey (1938), who saw education as the reconstruction of experience. We view teacher education in this reconstructed way.

A metaphor of reconstruction allows us to think of teachers' and student teachers' lives as central to the curriculum of teacher education. From this perspective, we understand that student teachers bring with them their life stories, stories they have lived but rarely told in the sense of creating narrative texts that become a way of giving an account of their lives. It is a perspective that allows us to work with them to make sense of their teaching and learning as expressions of their personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), the experiential knowledge that is embodied in them as persons and is enacted in their classroom practices and in their lives. It is knowing that comes out of their pasts and finds expression in the present situations in which they find themselves. It is a perspective that acknowledges that student teachers are writing their lives as knowing people (Heilbrun, 1988). This narrative perspective insists we acknowledge the need to give voice to their experiences.

*The Central Metaphors in Our Work*

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) write that metaphors are found in our speech, in our actions, and in the lives we construct around them. They write "that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p. 3). Our metaphors of teachers and teacher education permeate this paper. We will attempt to summarize them.

The first metaphor is that life is a story we live. We think of life almost as one thinks of a work of fiction: we have one or many plot lines; we are a character in our own stories; others become characters in our stories; we live our stories in cultural and social settings that shape the stories we live and tell; we are gendered characters; we are characters in other's stories. Thinking of life as a story is a powerful way to imagine who we are, where we have been, and where we are going. In our view,

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people live lives and tell stories of those lives, and people are characters in their own and others' life stories. This is a consequence of viewing life as a story. We live stories. When we talk to others about ourselves we tell life stories. Biography and autobiography are the formal fields of inquiry most closely connected with this.

The second metaphor, borrowed from Dewey (1938), is that education equals growth equals inquiry. The idea is that education is not something done to people, but it is something that people do to themselves, and in so doing they grow—that is, they are educated. They do this not through passivity, but by engaging in situations, by taking charge of their inquiry. A third metaphor is that people make meaning of their lives through story. In the metaphors we live by, we make meaning through the telling of stories. It is story that confers meaning. It is in the stories of ourselves that we tell ourselves and tell others that we make and re-make meaning.

Our fourth metaphor is that if a teacher understands (can tell) the story of her own education, she will better understand (tell the stories of) her students' education. Eva Hoffman wanted to tell the story of herself as a Polish immigrant to Canada and all that meant for her. In so doing, she better understands not only herself but others who have had experiences similar to, or different from, hers. It is a respect for those life stories that makes the difference. We, as teachers, need to be able to tell our stories not only for ourselves but so that we will understand the power of story in the lives of the students we teach.

The fifth and sixth metaphors concern teacher education directly. Our fifth metaphor is that teacher education is a process of learning to tell and retell educational stories of teachers and students. Our sixth metaphor is that teacher education is a sustained conversation in which we need many responses to our stories in order to be able to tell and retell them with added possibility. Conversations with theory, research, social conditions, different cultural groups, other teachers, students, teacher educators, and children allow for a response-filled environment and encourage more mindful retellings. These tellings and retellings are education.

These metaphors find expression in our practices of teaching and teacher education. What we are learning to do when we educate ourselves is learning to tell and retell our stories and learning to tell and retell the stories of our students. We do this in our research, in our teaching, in our lives. Telling, retelling and responding to stories is at the heart of our work.

### **Characterizing Our Metaphors, Our Stories**

We have come to realize that the most important things in our lives, what we value most, have equal power for hurt or for healing. A charismatic leader may lead for good or for evil. A deep and fulfilling love of a person has the potential for the greatest heartache. The more important and powerful something is to us, the riskier and more dangerous it may be to our being.

*As Prisons*

Thus, when we think about lives, teachers' and students' lives, as the basis for thinking about teacher education, we tread a fine line between a potential for good in education and a potential for harm. Our use of the term prisons is borrowed from Britzman (1986, 1989), who writes of the prisons of our biographies. She draws our attention to the ways our lives give us freedom and creativity but also lock us in and limit our horizons of knowing. Our lives are both our source of imaginative possibility and the prisons for our habits. We see at least three kinds of prisons.

The first prison is our school experience, that is, our personal myths and stories. For almost all of us, school is a taken-for-granted part of our experience. We grow up, have expectations of school, go to school, learn to think about school in certain ways, go to faculties of education whose professors have been in schools like us, and move into a professional life with other teachers who have the same school experience and who have been through this same process. Our school experience can be a closed system, a prison out of which it is hard to break. But school experience is also central to the imaginative freedom to view different possibilities. It is both prison and source of freedom.

A second prison is the cultural myths and stories of education. By this we mean that there are views of schooling in society so profoundly embedded in the popular imagination that a different view seems all but impossible. In most of the English-speaking world, the words "school" and "education" conjure up barren-looking buildings, rows of students in desks, a stern teacher at the front of the classroom. There is a cultural myth that school will lead to work, that is, there is a transition from one to another. These myths exist and they lock us in, but they also offer us the possibility of imagining how schooling might be otherwise.

A third prison is the prison of biography. Like Eva Hoffman, all of us have stories of ourselves as individuals and as persons that we tell to ourselves and others. These stories are given back to us by our friends and others. All of these stories of ourselves interact dramatically with how and what we do in the classroom. In a recent review of the literature (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991), we found that frequently reformers blame teachers for not carrying out the reformers' intentions in classrooms. Almost all reformers had in place mechanisms to prevent teachers' biographies from making a difference, that is, ways to prevent teachers' stories of themselves from influencing and modifying the developers' grand schemes for reform. From our perspective, instead of denigrating our biographies of ourselves, we, as teachers, need to acknowledge that our lives and our stories of our lives are important. We need to imagine possibilities in our own and our students' lives that will change what others see as a prison into the potential for other futures.

*As Ways of Thinking About Escaping the Prisons*

The very things that are our prisons are also our hope for education, for inquiry,

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for growth. As we work with students, teachers, and others, we have tried to think about constructing and reconstructing our lives. One way of thinking about this is to see that we live our lives, tell and write our lives, retell and rewrite our lives, and attempt to live those retold lives. Heilbrun (1988) writes about women telling and writing their lives and attempting to retell and relive their lives with added possibility. She notes that even in the writing and telling of our lives there is a retelling. Crites (1971) says something similar about sacred stories that, in being retold generation after generation, change even though they maintain a common core. We see that it is through the rewriting and retelling, that we begin to transform ourselves and see new possibilities.

### *As Ways of Working with Teachers: Telling And Retelling Stories*

In our work with teachers in university classrooms and in schools, we often begin with various tellings and retellings of our life chronicles. We share our own chronicles and ask teachers to construct theirs. We ask them to construct a life-line, a chronicle of personal and professional events, to record the dates, to try to remember the emotions they felt at these times. These chronicles become a way of moving into telling stories and then into retelling stories. In the following story, we try to give some sense of how we engage in story telling and retelling.

One of Clandinin's closest colleagues is Pat Hogan, a grade one teacher in an inner city school. Hogan often tells Clandinin stories of how she is making sense of her work with the young children who are in her class. Most of her children are non-native speakers of English and many of them are very new to Canada. Many of them transfer in part way through the year at the time they arrive in Canada. They often transfer out to another school before very many months when their families find more permanent housing.

Shortly before the Christmas break, Clandinin was in Hogan's classroom and met Pedro. Hogan told a story of Pedro as she tried to make sense of an occurrence from the day before. Pedro was new to Canada, new to the school, and English was not his first language. He was very uncertain in Hogan's classroom. His father stayed with him for at least part of his first few days. Both Hogan and Pedro's dad wanted him to learn to be comfortable. Hogan thought about this in terms of helping Pedro find his place. For Hogan this concern for place is connected to her way of knowing teaching, it is connected to a concern for place and voice for herself, for other teachers, and for children.

One December afternoon shortly after Pedro's arrival, the fire alarm rang in the school. Pedro and the other children and teachers in the school were to file out of the school. This is a frightening occurrence for many children. It was especially so for Pedro. Pedro began to cry and could not be comforted. Finally Hogan took him down to the school office to put in a call to his dad. There was no recorded phone number for the dad in the office. Hogan tried to explain that to Pedro. Pedro was still not comforted. He took Hogan's hand and led her back to the classroom, to the house

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centre where the pay phone was. There was a phone directory. Pedro then told Hogan the name of the insurance company where he knew his father worked and insisted that she look up the number. The number was found, the call placed, and Pedro's father came.

Hogan told this story after she had written it in her journal. She wanted to talk about how it felt when something frightening happened when you were far from home in another country and you did not know the language. She was trying, in her telling and retelling, to figure out what it meant to be Pedro, to find a place and to learn to have a sense of voice. She thought about her own experience, but Pedro's experience was not her experience. She wondered what meaning Pedro brought with him. What story had he lived with bells and alarms and leaving the school. Pedro had come from a central American country often in political turmoil. As she talked and wrote we began to see the ways in which Pedro's experience of the fire alarm would have meaning brought from his experience in another country. What Hogan was engaged with in those tellings and retellings in her journal and with Clandinin was a process of reflection. As she told the story, she came to new insights into what it means to work with Pedro and with other children new to the country. In this process of reflection through storying she was learning new things about her own story of place and voice and about Pedro's story of learning to feel at home in her classroom.

This simple story is not out of the ordinary. It is, rather, the reverse. This is the humdrum, the day-by-day things out of which our schooling is made up. Yet this small incident is profound in many ways because it shows, as did Hoffman's story, the cultivations (as described below) and the prisons they create in how we live our everyday life. Here was the everyday school business of getting the children out of the school for a fire drill being confounded by a child's fear generated by living in another culture. Here also was a teacher who understood that children were more than obedient or disobedient, good listeners or bad ones. Hogan might have dismissed Pedro as simply a child who wouldn't follow orders or who wouldn't listen, but instead she thought of Pedro as a person living and telling his story, a story in which bells and alarms were frightening things that may have lead to arrests and imprisonments.

### *As Cultivations, Awakenings, and Transformations*

In our recent work (Clandinin & Connelly, in preparation), we have begun to think about our life stories in more educational terms. We recognized that living an educated life was an ongoing process. People's lives were composed over time, life stories were lived and told, relived and retold. Initially we saw this ongoing process as one of cultivation, a living and telling of our stories. Cultivation is what we often hear spoken of as education, that is, when someone acts intentionally upon someone else in order to change them, to prepare them for something. For us, this is a process in which someone else blends most fruitfully what is in the environment with what

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is in the person to be educated. This gives a partial sense of what we mean by cultivation. We also understand the process of cultivation as occurring when an individual, a group of individuals, an institution, or a culture acts upon a person. Cultivation is mostly found in the intentional work of schooling and in the unintentional lessons of play and other forms of daily life.

We do not wish to imply that the intentional work of schooling is necessarily undertaken without reflection. Nor do we wish to imply that those who act upon us outside of school in order to “cultivate” us do so without reflection upon their actions. What we want to suggest here is that the individual who acts upon the other can do so by more or less thoughtfully considering how their actions will be experienced by the other. For example, we can be cultivated by our parents or other cultural forces. Parents, for example, may structure opportunities for their child to attend ballet classes or symphony performances in order to cultivate their child’s appreciation for music or dance. Teachers may introduce their students to Shakespeare’s plays in order to cultivate their appreciation of drama. However, this process of cultivation can be undertaken with more or less reflection about how an individual is constructing her knowing as this cultivation is experienced. A parent may, for example, consider how a particular child’s experience in ballet classes shapes her experience as a girl in Western society. Or the teacher may consider how only instructing a child in Shakespeare’s work shapes her experience of modern drama. It is by being attentive to how each individual is undergoing the experience that we can be reflective about the ways the cultivation is shaping the horizons of the individual’s knowing.

However, when there is no reflection, or when the reflection no longer opens further possibilities, the boundaries of knowing are established. Therefore, in some ways, it is in the process of cultivation that a person’s horizons of knowing are constructed. These horizons of knowing shape the stories that we live and tell. The young girl in the ballet class may learn to live and tell a story of herself as needing to have a particular body image in order to be seen as beautiful in our society. It is through this process of cultivation that the bounds of culture, gender, and race become part of the invisible glass walls that bound our knowing.

But for us, the process of cultivation was only a partial account of what it means to live an educated life. Education is more interwoven with living and with the possibility of retelling and reliving our life stories. We understood, as we thought about our own lives and the lives of teachers and children with whom we engaged, that there was always the possibility of change and growth in an educated life. We began to listen closely to their stories and to ours, to be attentive to changing patterns and themes.

We made distinctions among living and telling our stories through cultivation **and** retelling our stories **and** reliving our stories. As part of our educative experiences, we do awaken to the possibility of retellings, to new ways of telling our stories. The horizons of our knowing shift and change as we awaken to new ways

of “seeing” our world, to different ways of seeing ourselves in relation to each other and to the world. We begin to retell our stories with new insights, in new ways.

But, for us, these retellings remained retellings. They were not yet relivings of our stories. We saw in our own stories and in other’s stories what we might describe as transformation, that is, a reliving of our stories with changed actions in our lives. Transformation is the process of living out these new ways of seeing in our stories.

One way of reading what we have written might be as a series of three stages, a linear progression through an educated life. This is not our intent, for we understand life as having a more seamless quality. We imagine as we try to give accounts of our own lives that we undergo cultivation, awakenings, and transformations throughout our lives. People’s lives are composed of many narrative unities, some of which, at any one time, may be thought of educationally in terms of cultivation, others in terms of awakening, and still others in terms of transformation. The horizons of our knowing shift and are reshaped as we retell and relive our stories and as we undergo new experiences. And as we retell one new story of ourselves, we see possibility for retelling other life stories. We may learn to tell new stories of ourselves as teachers and then to see ways to retell our stories as parents or as men or women.

We do imagine, however, that there are some situations that block the possibility for retelling and reliving our stories. Life gets in the way.

In Eva Hoffman’s story with which we began, we see the cultivations of her early life in Poland. Those cultivations became deeply embedded in her being. We also heard her tell of a moment of awakening when she looked at the map of Poland in her Vancouver classroom. And finally, the moments of awakening lead to transformations in her life. In her book, she tells of a life-long struggle to cope with living in exile and being a stranger. She concludes her book, in effect, by saying that she has been transformed but, in some ways, she is still “lost in translation.” As she thinks about how long it has taken, she writes “...perhaps I’ve had to gather enough knowledge of my new world to trust it, and enough affection for it to breathe life into it, to image it forth”. (Hoffman, 1989, 280)

### **Awakening to New Possibilities for A Teacher’s Life**

In a final story we wish to illustrate the ways in which we see the telling, retelling, and reliving of our stories as leading to change in our practices. It is a story of awakening (Clandinin & Connelly, in preparation) in a pre-service teacher’s story.

We turn to a letter written by Sherri Pearce, a preservice teacher. In it, she describes an experience of awakening to herself as a teacher. We begin with an excerpt from a recent letter and then go back to her earlier accounts of her teacher education, to illustrate this process of awakening, this process of becoming aware through living, telling, and retelling her stories.

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Pearce writes:

I saw kids in situations last year (in an alternative program in teacher education) that seriously affected them and, as a result, their schooling. At work at the Coop I see more and more kids hanging out in the store, as more and more housing becomes low rental. One boy with his mother and two brothers stopped me and said very loudly, “You know what? We’re poor!” I began to think that something is growing bigger. This is my neighborhood. When I grew up here, there was no such hardship evident. My elementary school library teacher told me last month what a tough place my old school had become because of low income housing kids. My interest is in what is being done in the schools for these kids... But I have a hard time figuring out the right questions to ask myself, before I can even begin to look for answers!!... Diane (a friend from the Alternative Program) and I were discussing this, this evening. We tossed around ideas like: a full-time psychologist and social worker in every school, but I feel there is an answer there, something obvious that I just can’t see, or quite put my finger on. Individual and equal education?? Well that’s going on one huge assumption—that the kids are equal to begin with. I’m not asking you for answers. I’m asking so that I can figure out the questions that need to be asked. How can these kids just be equal when they walk into the class? What can be done so that, to them, it doesn’t matter where or what they come from? To any of the kids. Of course we could wipe out violence and abuse, then we could solve the problem but these things are here now and so are the kids. Last year will stay with me forever. Through so many eyes, through yours (Clandinin) and Pat’s (Hogan, a university teacher) and Deb’s (Nettesheim, her cooperating teacher) and Diane’s, I saw a world of pain and questions that I never sought to answer because it had never occurred to me to ask.

As she begins her letter, Pearce reflects on having seen that children in her student teaching classroom had been affected by their out-of-school situations. She begins in a way that suggests she was not surprised by this. Her sense of surprise, the first glimmers of her awakening, become very apparent as she awakens to the many children around her who are growing up in poverty and dealing with a world different than the one she constructed. As she awakens to herself in the world, there is a sense of how the horizons of her knowing are being shifted, even as she writes the letter. In her letter, there is a sense of her struggle to retell, to find new plots around which to construct her story of herself, of children and of herself as a teacher of children. There is a remarkable sense in the letter that she does not want us to give her the answer. She no longer wants to be cultivated but wants to claim the authoring of her own retelling of her story through her writing. She was, as she sought her own sense of retelling her story, letting us know that she wanted to “authorize that perspective” and through retelling her story gain “an opportunity for her authorship (and authority) to be expressed” (Tappan & Brown, 1989, 193). Furthermore, in her expressed wish to awaken to writing her own retelling, she grasps an opportunity “to learn more from her experience—by claiming more authority and assuming more responsibility for her thoughts, feelings, actions” (Tappan & Brown, 1989,

193).

It is, as she writes her letter, that she begins to see the many shifting horizons, stories that, once acknowledged, shift other horizons, other boundaries. She sees in her awakening a world in which much is to be questioned, many of her stories open to retelling. Pearce's letter was reminiscent of Dillard's (1987) words:

I never wake, at first without recalling, chilled, all those other waking times, those similar stark views from similarly lighted precipices: dizzying precipices from which the distant, glittering world revealed itself as a brooding and separated scene—and so let slip a queer implication, that I myself was both observer and observable, and so a possible object of my own humming awareness (12).

Dillard's words are echoed in Pearce's letter as she writes "I saw a world of pain and questions that I never sought to answer because it has never occurred to me to ask." Pearce begins to awaken to who she is in the world, a prospective teacher who is both observing the world with "new" eyes and seeing who she is in the world, a new awareness of who she is and who she is in relation to children. As she underwent this awakening, she began to see herself in a world that asked questions of her, questions she had not been aware of before. As she engaged with children in school and with colleagues and with her own stories in her teacher education program and then looked around her world, she had a sense of knowing herself and the world as if she had awakened.

What we see happening in Pearce's letter is a sense of her awakening, her realization that she is authoring her own experience, writing her life as a teacher. However, perhaps more striking as she awakens, is her sense of seeing the world in new ways. What she had seen as smooth and nonproblematic, the taken-for-granted world of her lived and told stories, a world where all children are equal and cared for in the same way, now becomes full of questions. In her awakening, she struggles to retell a story of herself as a teacher in which she questions how schools and society more generally are appropriate situations for children. She explores possible ways to construct a retelling of her story that will help her make sense of education and her experience. She links her questioning, her awakening, to collaboration with Deb Nettesheim, with her university teachers and with her friends. Although she does not make explicit the link between her awakening and the children she has observed, there is a strong sense that they too have contributed to her unease, to her inquiry. As she awakens to her story of herself as teacher, she now questions not only the culture and institutions in which her stories are embedded but her own stories of growing up which had been unquestioned.

Pearce's told and retold story is yet to be lived out in her teaching practice. We imagine that the transformations in her lived story will be difficult ones, but we have a sense that her retold story will lead to significant change in her practices.

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## *Telling Teaching Stories*

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We began this paper by saying that we wanted to illustrate how teachers' and students' stories are central to teacher education and to the improvement of schools. We have tried to illustrate the ways in which the telling and writing, retelling and rewriting of teachers' and students' stories lead to awakenings and to transformations, to changes in our practices as teachers. We do not intend to convey that this is an easy process. We need to create spaces so teachers and students can begin to tell their stories and to have responses from many different voices in order to help them imagine new possible retellings. As we continue to work with teachers and students we also see the importance of working in more collaborative ways that we think offer the most possibility for all of us to transform our practices.

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