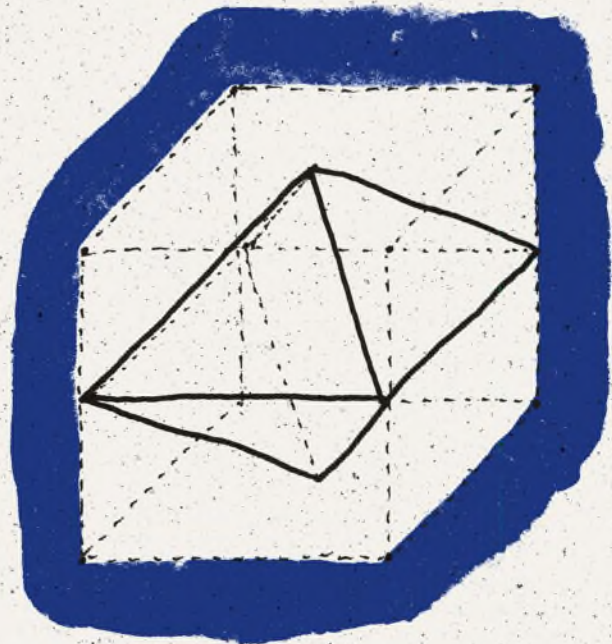
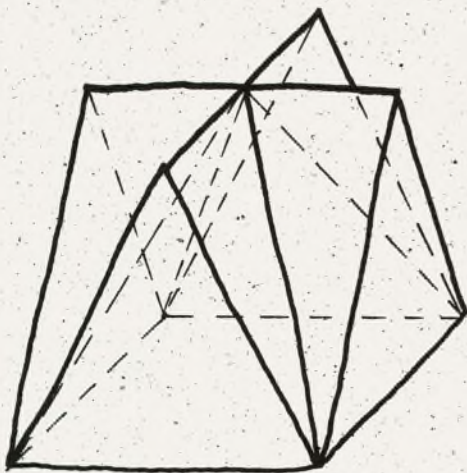
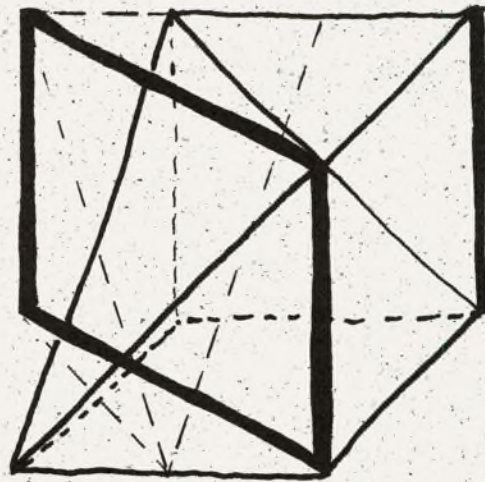
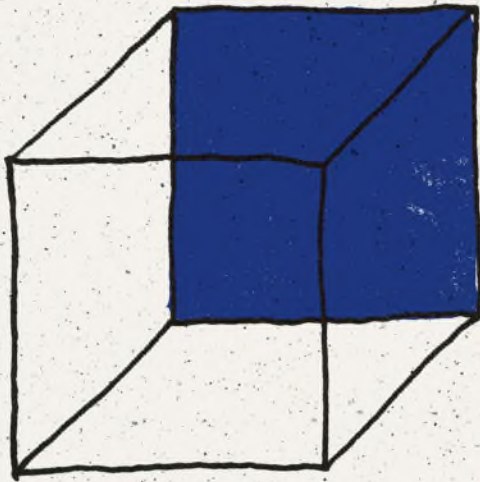


REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING



Winter 1998

Volume 4, Number 1

A Journal for the Helping Professions

REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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REFLECTIONS' purpose is to publish narratives, personal accounts that describe and explain the process of helping others and shaping social change over time. The journal seeks to build a literary tradition and a record of wisdom for critical study and fruitful discovery. It encourages stories that convey a sense of immediacy, portray practice across diverse populations and capture the range and variety of strategies and systems within the helping professions. Priority given to articles that provide new understanding of practice. The journal publishes stories of professional helpers such as ethicists, psychotherapists, community organizers, case and group workers, policy makers, family and child practitioners, health and mental health care providers; and educators, researchers, and administrators in the helping and academic professions.

REFLECTIONS' central theme is narrative inquiry of professional practice. It publishes personal accounts of professional action designed to aid and support human and social development. The stories have a literary presence, offer new perspectives on practice, and demonstrate the conceit of failure as well as success. The narrator explains the reasons for the action and freely identifies the mistakes made in the practice. The purpose of the narrative is not to demonstrate achievement; rather, it is to capture the experience.

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE: A narrative is a story worth telling. Narratives are personal stories that give readers a fresh perspective about the practice of change. Written in a temporal sequence and or within a thematic structure; narratives recount the helping process. Narratives are explored within a contextual frame and supply a rich textual description of the experience: they take into account time, place, action, persons, behavior and interaction. Narratives explain and describe events; results; conflicts; complicating actions; and how, why, and what was done. In narratives the writer evaluates the experience, whether or not there is a resolution, and explores the meaning of the experiences. Some narratives end with a coda, that is, a perspective on what occurred.

WRITING INSTRUCTIONS AND SUBMISSION: Manuscripts are peer reviewed. Articles appropriate to the journal's purpose are reviewed anonymously by members of the Executive and Editorial Board. Articles are accepted based on their contribution to practice knowledge. Publication decisions require about four months.

1. Authors are expected to use the most recent APA publication format.
2. The manuscript length depends upon the temporal sequence of the event.
3. Include on separate page a brief abstract written in the same style as the narrative.
4. Place identifying information such as name, affiliation, address, phone and fax only on cover page.
5. Send (3) printed double spaced hard copies of the manuscript to the editor.

Upon acceptance of the article for publication one (1) copy on disk in Rich Text Format (RTF) for IBM compatible or MAC and one(1) hard copy will be requested. Submission of narrative poetry and photography is encouraged.

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REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

VOLUME 3

WINTER 1998

NUMBER 1

STORIES OF TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING A SPECIAL ISSUE

GUEST EDITORS: SUSAN G. NUMMEDAL AND DIANE GILLESPIE

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Kate Brown, Creighton University, Occupational Therapy, Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions

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The journal people read!

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, LONG BEACH, CA



Dear Editor,

I have been thoroughly enjoying the editions of *Reflections* and have been so inspired as to include a creative writing or creative project assignment in my undergraduate field seminar class. Classes are purposely limited to no more than 12 for each section in order to enhance the collective and individual learning experience. As a person very interested in diversity, I am drawn to alternative ways of knowing and expression so I am eager to see what students will do with this assignment.

I have shared some of my poetry with other seminar students throughout the years as it is a way I have of touching them on a deeper more personal level. I have enclosed the poem, *Metamorphosis*, I penned especially for my students because when we work in small groups for two semesters, we enter into a much more intensely personal experience. It is my way of sending them on with support and care and to let them know what they and the experience meant for me. The original verse was written in the summer of 1993. I have received such an overwhelmingly positive response over the years that I wanted to find a way to share it with others. □

Dr. Nancie Palmer
(Is BSW Program Director,
Department of Social Work,
Washburn University.)

METAMORPHOSIS

By Nancie Palmer Ph.D. ACSW

ON A HOT AUGUST DAY WE GATHERED
A SEA OF FACES, FEARFUL, HOPEFUL

VENTURING INTO THE WORLD
OUT BEYOND THE PAGES AND PAPERS AND BOOKS

A JOURNEY TO ANOTHER PART OF THE DREAM
JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN

AN AWESOME UNDERTAKING
REACHING TO GROW TO BECOME

AND I
SEEING YOUR FEAR AND WONDER

FIND MYSELF SEARCHING FOR WAYS
TO BE WITH YOU IN YOUR JOURNEY

TO GUIDE YET NOT CONTROL
SUPPORT YET NOT SMOTHER

TO CHALLENGE YET NOT OVERWHELM
AND GIVE TO YOU WHAT I KNOW
YET NOT DIMINISH YOUR OWN WISDOM

TOGETHER
WE MET THE CHALLENGE
TOGETHER
WE WORKED
AND EXPLORED
AND SUFFERED
AND TRIUMPHED
AND LEARNED
AND GREW
AND TRANSFORMED

EACH BECOMING MORE YOUR OWN PERSON WITH YOUR
OWN DESTINY

EACH WITH AN ANCHORING AND CONNECTING POINT
THAT WILL NEVER BE LOST FOR IT IS NOW A PART OF YOU

TO BE A PART OF YOUR WORK
I AM GRATEFUL
TO BE A PART OF YOUR GROWTH
I AM SO PROUD
AND
TO BE A PART OF YOUR BECOMING
I WILL ALWAYS TREASURE

I WISH YOU WELL ON THE REST OF YOUR JOURNEY

Dear Editor,

In her narrative "Strengths Despite Constraints: Memoirs of Research in a Slum in Calcutta" (*Reflections*, Summer 1997), Dr. Banerjee writes about feeling bewildered when the story's main character, Raquella, "the most wretched among the slum's wretched," did not steal the author's prized video camera. Not having done so, Raquella compelled Dr. Banerjee to re-evaluate her "nascent and simplistic understanding that economic necessities drove behavior in the slum, and to question the validity of "dominant perspectives such as deficit and pathology, micro-economics, or Maslow's hierarchy of needs." Furthermore, Raquella's behavior inspired Dr. Banerjee to search for her inherent strengths despite her poverty, oppression and "otherness." In the author's eyes, then, Raquella became a woman who "did not want to be defined by her poverty."

Poverty has an adverse effect on biopsychosocial development and leads to behaviors that deviate from the "normal" and the expected. At the same time, poverty is only one among multiple variables which affect human behavior and it might be a natural inclination for poor clients to want to be defined by some other criterion than their poverty. Using my personal experience in a poor, socially cohesive community as a point of reference, I want to call attention to powerful, yet often overlooked beliefs and practices in some economically disadvantaged communities.

As an individual who has experienced poverty, not in an Indian slum but in a Greek village, not in a "culture of poverty" but in an environment in which poverty was the result of a ravaging civil war, I feel compelled to write in defense of Raquella and of all those whom Dr. Banerjee, along with the social work profession, places under the category of "the other." I do so while I acknowledge behavioral differences between the dwellers of an urban slum and the inhabitants of a farming community; between those who are born and live in poverty and those who experience fluctuating poverty. I also acknowledge the powerful influence of cultural expectations of human behavior and anticipate these differences to be manifested in the behaviors of Indian slum residents and Greek villagers. However, as "poverty is said to be similar rather than dissimilar in developed and developing countries," there is also evidence of similarities in codes of conduct and of defined consequences among poor, but culturally diverse communities.

It seems to me that on her way to "study the interplay of strengths and constraints in the lives of people living in a slum," Dr. Banerjee entered the slum of Dhobiatalla with the dangerously preconceived notion that poverty is associated with deviance and pathology. When Raquella returned with the video camera intact, the author asks "why was she such a fool?"

Individuals who have lived in an economically de-

pressed community would attest to the fact that poor communities have their norms for resident behavior, a "code of conduct," and that there are consequences for any deviation from them. In some poor communities, behavior which deviates from these norms can be stigmatizing behavior and the stigma might be transmitted transgenerationally.

In a social environment in which possession of material goods and membership into an "acceptable" social group are not available and access to them is not based necessarily on a person's capabilities, adherence to community norms of conduct can be one's way of securing social recognition and a self-efficacy and of safeguarding the family's honor. Defiance of societal expectations, then, may strip the individual of the sense of being human and may make their microsystem a social outcast.

A poor community's behavioral norms, value and belief systems might not be viewed by its indigenous residents strengths. Compliance with what is expected is the means that residents use to define and validate themselves. They use neither their poverty nor the myriad adversities it subjects them to as a justifiable reason for anti-social behavior. They, therefore, might become skeptical when a professional labels their expected acts as "strengths." Not only does this perplex them but it risks making them view the professional with suspicion and mistrust. A reversal process begins and in their minds, in-

sidiously, the professional becomes the "pathology."

When middle-class social workers find it difficult to establish therapeutic alliances with their poor and ethnically diverse clients, the reason might be the client's preconceived notions of the practitioner's "deviance" in combination with the latter's perception of the client whom they have already defined on the basis of socio-economic status. In these situations, the social worker is seen by the client as "the other."

When a group of American volunteers came to my war-torn village almost fifty years ago, the prospect of assistance during the reconstruction process excited the inhabitants. However, when the first day's work was over and the Americans asked that all the tools be locked-up for the night, the villagers felt offended. Never before had they seen a need to protect possessions from each other. An outsider, whom they had welcomed as a "big brother," saw them as less than trustworthy. From that moment on, this outsider would not be accepted unconditionally. This small incident, which I now view as the result of the helper's misperceptions of the impact of economic want on human behavior, permanently affected the relationship between the "workers" and their "clients." The project was completed and the villagers were deeply appreciative of the assistance. However, the sense of assault to their integrity remained and, to this day, a villager might still use the expression "thank you for not

being an American" when he/she borrows from a neighbor friend with no strings attached. At that time numerous jokes were made about the incident and, in retrospect, I find the villagers' capacity to bring humor into an experience that, in their minds, humiliated them was more of a demonstration of strength than the fact that they would not steal any tools and building materials.

Dr. Banerjee states that she had to monitor herself so that her American, middle-class orientation would not bias her interactions with the slum residents. However, when she finds herself thinking that maybe Raquella could have "run off with the camera, sold it and lived happily ever after" it seems to me that she is doing nothing else than allowing her orientation to prevail and she, therefore, proceeds to associate poverty with the inclination to commit theft. In addition, she asserts that it was probably the "understanding, acceptance and appreciation" that she showed Raquella that made the latter "reciprocate with good will." I, on the other hand, view Raquella's behavior as her way of maintaining a sense of integrity and self-respect and of protecting both herself and her children from possible communal ostracism and condemnation.

I agree with Dr. Banerjee when she is asking us to re-examine our preconceived notions of the "other." But I also believe that it is time that we acknowledge our clients' belief systems which may make them place us in the category of the "other."

We need a shift in paradigm, indeed. A shift to a paradigm what will help us define our poor clients in a more multifaceted, global way rather than by their poverty only. An approach to practice that will enable us to discover and acknowledge similarities and view differences not as strengths or pathologies but as behaviors which help preserve the poor clients sense of self-worth, integrity, dignity, respect and of community acceptance. □

Agathi Glezakos
(is a professor at California State University, Long Beach)

Editorial: An Invitation

by
Guest Editors,
Susan G. Nummedal
and Diane Gillespie

Susan D. Nummedal is Professor of Psychology at California State University Long Beach.

Diane Gillespie is Professor in the Goodrich Scholarship Program at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

We began this Special Issue with an invitation quite different from the one faculty so often receive. This was not an invitation to document teaching excellence, nor was it an invitation to tell an "institutionalized story," the "right story," the story that goes in a personnel file. Rather, it was an invitation to tell the story behind that story, the story of transformation that deepens understanding of the practice of teaching and learning. This is the story located in the web of connections among what is being taught, the sense of self, and the values that create the context for teaching and learning. This is the story about the most private world of teaching. This is a story seldom asked for. As a colleague recently noted, "It's not often that an institution asks who you are" (R. Brophy, personal communication, November 20, 1993).

As uncommon as this invitation might be, we believed there were faculty who had been waiting a long time for just this invitation. If the number of submissions for this Special Issue can be taken as an indication of this longing, then we were right. Still, to be invited is one thing; to tell the story is quite another.

As the "Call for Narratives" went out, so too calls--and e-mails--about narratives began to come in. Some asked, "Just what do you want? What do

you mean by teaching and learning stories?" These questions and the discussions that followed taught us yet again that narrative is not a scholarly form familiar to many. Indeed, some of the submissions "didn't fit" the Special Issue because they were not narratives. Rather, they were akin to Russell Baker's first draft of what was to become his powerful boyhood memoir, "Growing Up." Zinsser (1995) describes Baker's first attempt as a "reporters book." It provided the historical context of Baker's boyhood—in this case, the Depression—and reported the experiences of those who lived during that time, much as a professor might describe a classroom and the experiences of those within it. But, as Zinsser notes, "What [Baker] left out... was his mother and himself—in short, the story" (p. 13). And so, too, many of the manuscripts we received were about interesting teaching situations, ones we and the reviewers wanted to know more about—and so often even wanted to be a part of. But they were "reporters' books," not narratives. The story simply wasn't there.

Others did submit storied accounts, but as Diane Gillespie tells us in her article in this issue on writing narratives, these stories were still in the process of chewing themselves

out. To move from the deeply private to the public telling itself requires transformation or reinvention. To tell the past, as Zinsser (1995) puts it, is to become the editor of that past, "imposing a narrative pattern and an organizing idea on an unwieldy mass of half-remembered events" (p. 13). These submissions were still in the process of transformation, not yet ready for the telling. They were the first bites of what might well turn into a delectable feast. We are hopeful that some of them will appear in future issues of *Reflections*.

Moving from the private to the public telling requires something more. It requires great courage. As one of our storytellers said quite early in the process, "I feel so naked doing this. How will I feel if my story is rejected? Even more, how will I feel if it is accepted and placed before a community of strangers?" Parker Palmer (1990) reminds us that teaching itself is a courageous undertaking. Telling the story of teaching and learning takes no less courage. Our authors are most courageous. They tell stories that go beyond the "confessional," as one of our reviewers noted, to provide a reflective context, creating a shared space for inquiry with the reader. And as you, the reader, enter that space, you too are invited to dig deeply for the courage to engage in your own inquiry within that shared space. As Native-American novelist Leslie Marmon Silko (1977, p. 2) cautions:

*I will tell you something
about stories:
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.*

An essential tension in storytelling is self-disclosure, a theme woven throughout many of the stories told in this Special Issue. How much do I reveal about myself? Not only have we as teachers been reluctant to speak out about the private world of the classroom, but we have also been reluctant to speak out about ourselves within the classroom. In Elizabeth Young's "The Farming of a Verse," she writes, "Talking about myself in class felt like a leap into the dark, where I might be exposed and left hanging in the wind." And even though a recent study of teacher self-disclosure (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994) reported that it increased the level of student participation in classrooms, talking about personal experience can be a dangerous move. Neither students nor teachers have many good models and markers to guide the process.

Some of the stories move us beyond the self-consciousness of self-revelation, inviting us to think about when and how and for what purposes we tell our stories. As Judith Levin explores the telling and retelling of her story within different contexts, she finds ways to help her students tell their own stories—to connect their private experiences to their public voices. Clearly, she tells her story to do far more than simply increase student participation (Goldstein

& Benassi, 1994). By telling, she draws "students and their stories into the conversation called truth" (Palmer, 1990, p. 14).

Indeed, transformative teaching stories seem to be about classroom experiences for which there are no safe scripts; teachers find themselves engaged with students in authentic conversation. In stories such as Levin's, Holody's, Aaen's, DiBernard's, the "engagement" becomes transactional and fluid: the teacher becomes learner, the learner becomes teacher. This movement between teacher and learner disrupts the conventional "monologue" of the traditional classroom and forces dialogue. In his analysis of teachers in films, James Rhem states it this way: "... good teachers are not simply figures who facilitate transformation in others, but also figures willing to change in response to their experiences, figures who learn and often as unwillingly as their students."

In fact, the stories of Aaen, Holody, and DiBernard remind us that we must often fight off: the tendency to see students as passive, incapable of participation in authentic dialogue. Their narratives tell of the struggle to privilege student life experiences in the curriculum and the classroom. Richard Holoday, for example, wrestles with the perspectives and experiences of students of color, historically underrepresented in institutions of higher education. And Barbara DiBernard pushes against conventional frameworks of gender analysis, even within feminism

itself. Each story reveals the process of discovery, much akin to the one encountered with *matreshka*, the inlaid Russian dolls. At each contextual level, these authors explore the doll, and then when students raise new issues, they are willing to look inside and explore the next doll, even when its not the one expected. Along the way, they come to understand the necessity of being with their students long enough to know where and when to enter as an empowering agent and how to use their privilege as teachers in the service of their learning.

We invite you to join the community of teachers and learners that honors the connections between our practice and who we are. As Takaki (1993, p. 50) writes:

*In the telling and retelling
of their stories,
They create communities
of memory.*

We are hopeful that the stories of this Special Issue will enter the collective memory of all who read them. The authors of these stories have done quite bravely what Laurel Richardson (1990, p. 28) has urged:

They have used their skills and privileges to "give voice to those whose narratives have been excluded from the public domain and civic discourse. Writing collective stories enlists our sociological imagination as we convert private problems into public issues, thereby making collective identity, and collective solutions possible." □

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Telling Rape

"Telling Rape" describes my experiences with telling a personal story in my writing classes — my story of being a rape survivor. I begin the article by explaining the student-centered and feminist pedagogy that supports telling this story and then describe how I have told it in different contexts and with different consequences. I go into the first two tellings in some detail to show the kinds of issues and student responses that come up in classes and the learning I do about how and why I want to tell this story. Then I describe the effects of this teaching on my life when I join a sexual assault survivors group and learn more about the consequences of the rape for me and what telling it in classes represents for my recovery. I conclude by describing more briefly the experience of telling my story in two more classes, developing further a sense of the differences in each telling and the factors that contribute to positive outcomes for students and myself.

by
Judith Levin

Judith Levin teaches writing in the Department of English at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.



Anne and I were sharing one of our weekly lunches when she said, "It's really getting to bother me that there are things I can't write about in my classes." We were teaching assistants in English at a university where the composition faculty encouraged student-centered and feminist teaching. The composition courses we taught were built around students choosing their own writing subjects, which most often were about life experiences. In our department many composition teachers write along with their students and read their writing aloud, as students do, so we practice what we teach. Now Anne was feeling acutely a contradiction between our philosophy and practice, and we talked specifically about the taboo against teachers sharing anything in a classroom related to the whole realm of sexuality in our lives. As we talked I realized, in a way that felt like a bell going off in my head, that I had an important story to tell and I really wanted to tell it. In an instant something changed for me, a possibility

opened up, and I made a mental leap that led directly to a new practice: "coming out" in my classes as a survivor of rape.

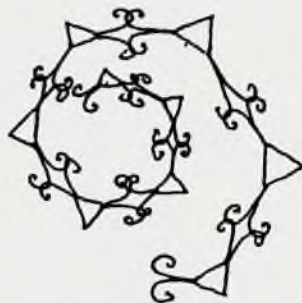
Why in the world would that be a good idea? I don't personally know anyone who's done it, but the logic for it is there in the underpinnings of my own and others' composition teaching. Participant-observation research I'd done in classrooms and interviewing students strongly suggested to me that when students are given a chance to bring themselves to their writing and discussion, two major concerns emerge for them: learning about themselves and connecting with others. I saw how harnessing a class to those felt needs energizes students and strengthens their language use because it becomes intrinsically compelling to stretch themselves, to reach for what they want to say. Engaging actively with language helps them move in a direction they really want to go. So I gear my teaching to what makes students want to write and talk.

In all my teaching strategies I work toward creating a safe space for students to explore whatever is on their minds. That includes knowing and accepting and respecting each other enough to share meaningful talk and writing about subjects that are controversial or sensitive for them. As I explain to students in my syllabus, "Reflecting on experience, processing it through writing, talking, and listening, gives us more from it, helps us discover and communicate our values, ideas, feelings, questions. This meaning making is a powerful form of learning. And we learn from each other, including how we're similar and different and what we think about that. This connected learning helps us tune in to others and ourselves and raises issues about how we relate to the world around us, from university to society to planet and our many locations and communities in between."

When Anne raised the issue of what stories we don't bring to our classes, I made a connection to a type of story that women students often feel they can't tell, and I realized that in my classroom I could help break silence for women about this story: the experience of rape. I knew from my own experience and from observation and reading that women often get responses that blame and shame them when they try to tell how they've been violated. And I'd

written papers about strengthening women's voices in the public sphere, where our experience has traditionally been underplayed or ignored until recent years with the explosion of feminist scholarship and activism. Returning in my forties to school for a Ph.D., I had been galvanized into a new career of writing and teaching by the discovery of my own voice on my own subjects.

During this time ideas in women's studies about the power of story were in the air, and I'd written a statement about purposes for women of telling and writing stories of our lives. **Private purposes**, I saw, were meaning making, increasing the sense of being the subjects of our own lives, hearing our own voices, and saying forbidden things ("historically women have been strongly discouraged from expressing certain kinds of feelings like anger, ambition, desire for power—so they go underground; we become more who we are when we say and hear the truth of our inner lives").



Public purposes included society's need to know what women's real experience is, increased connectedness and community, and connecting private meanings to social issues in working for social change. Anne and I had written a conference paper, "Feminists Teaching Men," about ways that we saw feminist teaching benefiting

male students, including their hunger for the kind of "real talk" about life experience that *Women's Ways of Knowing* found in women's relationships and in what the authors call connected knowing.

Within this context, telling my rape story seemed a powerful means of bringing to my students an awareness of ways that women are shamed and silenced, privately and publicly, when it comes to telling rape. Something fell into place for me as Anne and I asked what stories we wanted to explore in our classes that we felt we couldn't. I decided that with this story I could and would. And within a month, I did—and did again in the three following semesters, with different results each time. In this paper I tell the stories of these four tellings and what I make of them.

First Telling: Anger and Amnesia

The campus was buzzing—word was out that a national TV show was doing a program on sports and violence, and our school was on it. The university football team was incredibly successful, and feelings ran high—to be so dominant was intoxicating for hundreds of thousands of fans across the state.

When the show aired, I was at my friend Rene's house and not sure I wanted to watch because of the violence. Our football players had had considerable trouble with the law that year, and one was all over the news lately for beating up his

ex-girlfriend and ramming her head against a wall. We decided to watch because we knew our students would be talking about the show, and as feminists concerned with violence against women, we were interested in learning about connections between aggression on the field and off.

It turned out that one segment of the show focused on rape, including interviews with two young women who had filed rape charges against one of the football players, and their tearful statements registered as 100 percent true to me. I remember the player as a huge, paunchy-looking White student with a crewcut and an enormous neck, and although he looked nothing like the slight Black teenager who had raped me, I felt absolutely repulsed by the sight of him. I don't remember the details of how the women's accusations were handled legally, but I had the impression that he was basically free to do the same again. In some ways it doesn't matter what actually happened, I think now—what was relevant for my teaching was my visceral response to the issues he represented. The program also showed that the coach had talked with the ex-girlfriend who had been beaten by the other player before the police were able to see her, which we thought was out of line in terms of her interests. We had no big beef with the coach, but neither did we think that he cared as much about her experience as about his player. She did not appear on the program.

It was the player accused of

rape who especially chilled my blood. I remember feeling tremendous anger about his ability to rape, go free, and rape again just because he was a starter on a spectacular football team. I saw no reason to believe that he had learned anything from these experiences. And we had a sense that the two women who were interviewed ran risks, in our state, just to suggest on TV that he had done anything wrong. Even now I can feel my blood boil when I recall seeing him on the show. I am a pacifist, but I wanted to kill him. I never would kill anyone, nor would I support any violent punishment, but my anger was very present, and I can still feel it now. Rene and I talked long about the violence against women on this show and ways that women's stories are often muted. We wondered what would happen the next day when we went to our classes.

Sure enough, when I walked in my classroom the students were already in heated discussion about the show, and I decided to allow time to thrash through the issues it raised. As I later learned, Rene did the same, but our discussions evolved quite differently because of the way that we as teachers spoke.

In both of our classes the prevalent opinion was that our team was being picked on unfairly just because it was so successful and that the star player who beat up his ex-girlfriend deserved another chance to play because "everyone makes mistakes." In my class of 24 students, two women objected, say-

ing that not enough attention was going to the damage that violence and rape had done to the victims. A couple of men said that violent crimes should be punished severely no matter who did them. But the majority were outraged by the persecution of our team. The intensity of emotion was high, and I felt increasingly agitated as I listened, chiming in briefly now and then with my concerns. Then something happened that broke things wide open for me.

One student's voice stood out to me suddenly, as though just he and I were in the room. I don't know who it was, but I heard him say, in what sounded like an effort at humor, "Well I wouldn't know, I've never been raped." I heard myself respond loudly, "Well I *have* been raped, and I *do* know!" The flurry of words in the room continued to swirl for a moment while I collected my thoughts, and then I said, "Wait, let me go back to what I just said and explain it, so you don't wonder what that was all about." As soon as I said that they stopped and got silent, and I remember thinking, "That did bother them. It's important that I come back to it."

So I did, but I've wracked my brain and I don't remember what I said. In my memory it remains a blur (like the rape itself). I know I talked about my experience of being raped for a fairly long time, maybe 10 or 15 minutes. I would have told how in 1970, when I was 26, in my first year of marriage, and living in Berkeley, California, a Black teenager walked along with me from the bus stop, mak-

ing small talk, and I didn't try to get away, not wanting to act out of stereotypes, and not believing anything bad could happen to me. He was small, and I thought if he gave me any trouble I'd just push him away. Instead, when we got to my apartment he easily pushed his way in. When I realized what was happening, I fought back and learned quickly that that didn't work—he was much stronger than I. He said if I did that again he'd kill me, and I believed him—I thought he had a knife and if I angered him he might use it. Thinking fast how to save myself, I figured that he wanted to feel he had control over me, and I played to that, submitting and saying "yes" when he said, "You want this don't you?" I hoped he'd decide then that he'd gotten what he came for and leave, and he did, pulling out the phone and putting me in the bathroom before he ran out.

I stood there shaking for maybe 15 minutes, fearing the rapist would return, until my husband came home from a jaunt with our dog. We were both at a loss, completely at sea about how to respond to this. I think now I was in shock. We went out for dinner an hour or two later with two friends, and I told them almost casually, "You won't believe what happened to me today." They persuaded me to go to the police, who berated me for waiting so long (about six hours) to report the rape and were completely insensitive to the state I was in. They did catch the rapist, who had subsequently attacked two

other women. I was the only one who showed up to testify, and the prosecutor warned me that my conduct would be on trial and I should lie about agreeing with the rapist when he said I "wanted it." But the public defender didn't mount any kind of defense, and the rapist was convicted. (I have since learned how "lucky" I am: only one percent of rapists are caught and taken out of circulation, which probably helped lessen my fear about the future.)

My husband and I didn't speak of this again for many years, and even then without appropriate feeling. At the time he seemed to concentrate on feeling that he and his home were violated and that I had not done enough to head off this attack. There was reality in those reactions, but hurtfulness too, and we never talked our feelings through. The two male friends I'd told never spoke of the rape again either, no doubt waiting for my cue, and I told no one else for four years, until we moved to another state. Everything went underground, unprocessed and unresolved. I didn't know any better and neither did anyone around me, even the therapist I began seeing months later about things that were going wrong in my marriage, ways my husband and I didn't connect.

This would have been the bare bones of my story. I don't remember if or how I linked it to the TV show or related it to any relevant context, though I think I must have made a stab at that. Perhaps I talked about the ways that women who have

suffered sexual assault are silenced by people around them who are shocked and disgusted. Maybe I talked about how this crime is drastically underreported because of women's experience of being disbelieved and blamed by the criminal justice system. I might have said that this is a piece of women's experience that the whole culture conspires to suppress. Or maybe I didn't say any of this, or said something else. I don't remember if the discussion continued or if this shut it down, or what happened for the rest of the class period. I know things got very quiet while I spoke, and the next part I remember is rushing to my adviser's office and telling her breathlessly what I'd done and asking what she thought of it. She said it was probably a good thing, and I left feeling that I probably hadn't done actual harm.

When I asked Rene and Anne, in our writing group, to help me reconstruct this telling so I could write about it, they both remembered that it was "rough." Rene said I compared notes with her. Her students had talked at length, and finally several asked her what she thought. She responded that in a sense it was true that our team was being picked on, but that's what comes with success, and if our team has these kinds of problems, whether they're picked on or not, they should get their house in order. She felt good about her response—she acknowledged the students' concerns and calmly expressed her differences, helping them take in an alternate point of

view. I, on the other hand, was worried.

I felt I'd blurted out my story without a clear sense of what to do with it. I wondered if I'd been irresponsible and what students had taken away from our discussion. I decided it might help to check back with them and get a sense of what they were thinking, so at the next class I asked, "What was that like for you? Do you have concerns about what I said?" A leader of the "opposition," whom I liked and who had been a glamorous, often injured, and totally committed high school football player, said good-naturedly, "No problem, 'nuff said." I looked around, asked again, the students didn't seem upset, and no one responded. So we moved on. We were only a week away from the end of the semester, so I didn't have a chance to learn more about how the students had reacted to my story in the course of other exchanges with them individually or as a group.

Looking back, I make a connection now that I didn't see at the time. In that class, besides the football player (who only gave up the sport after 20 concussions), there was a woman student who had told the story of being injured somehow and carrying on for months before going to a doctor and learning that she had broken a rib. She was proud of her stoicism. This was a class in which we were reading an autobiography, *The Me in the Mirror*, about a severely disabled woman, and the students' resistance to the idea of disability surprised me by its

virulence—they did not like *at all* the idea of being physically vulnerable. And not only that, we were working with issues of homosexuality, because the author of the book was lesbian, and I had brought in as a speaker a man who had a spinal cord injury and who talked about being gay. The only issue besides disability that I'd seen many students so reflexively repel was homosexuality. What must they have made of my story of being raped in light of the disability and sexuality issues we'd been wrestling with? I shudder to think, and I wish I'd found a good way to ask.

I came away from the experience of telling my rape story in class feeling that I'd made a breakthrough, but I didn't know what it meant. I felt that I'd done something important but unformed, unclear, with its main importance more for me than for the students. Although this was difficult and disconcerting, I didn't conclude that I should stop telling my story. Rather, I wanted to tell it better.

Second telling: Composure and Focus

I told my rape story again the next semester, and the cir-



cumstances and my approach made it a different experience for me and I think for the class. The immediately triggering event was the upset and angry responses of several women students in my writing class to a literature class they'd had the day before, when they felt that the teacher pushed feminism on them and wouldn't let up. I knew the teacher and sympathized with her wholeheartedly. I said, after listening a while, "I'm a feminist too, and I hope that comes through in this class." The students said yes, but I didn't make *everything* about feminism. I had mixed feelings—I was glad they could see my feminism and didn't close down in response to it, but I didn't want to participate in a comparison that cast me as a good feminist (not strident) and my friend as a bad feminist, and I wondered if students felt they could just ignore feminist ideas in my class. This discussion wasn't a full-blown one, rather one that let off steam before we began the day's agenda. I listened mostly, making brief comments several times, and was left feeling inconclusive about our conversation.

In my second class that day the same issue came up, this time in an open journal—a writing that each student does once in the semester about an issue they'd like the class to discuss. Another woman student wrote about the same literature class, saying that feminism is going too far now and she thinks it's overdone. I felt strongly that I didn't want to let that go, and I waited for an opening to present



itself. Finally, about two-thirds of the way through the discussion, I quit waiting and raised the issue of women's constant undercurrent of anxiety if they're out alone or in any situation that makes them vulnerable to attack. This seemed to touch a nerve for the women who had been silent or agreeing that feminism had gone too far, and we talked some about fears we carried with us. I saw this as a natural entry point for telling my rape story as a personal example of how feminism has made a huge difference for women since the silence I experienced in 1970, when there were no hot lines, rape crisis centers, support groups, advocacy with the police, or public information that I knew of about rape.

Again, as in the semester before, I spoke for about 10 minutes, but this time I was composed, spoke naturally, had my wits about me. The context was quite different—we were dealing with a controversial subject I felt strongly about, but I didn't feel overwhelmed by their resistance or threatened by it, as though all women's lives were on the line if I didn't speak up

powerfully and carry the day. That particular day an unusual number of people, about eight, were absent, leaving only fourteen students, so I suggested that we make a tighter circle and said we'd be an "intimate crowd." It felt to me as if we really were in *conversation*, all just a few feet from each other. I remember making an active effort to relate my experience to the open journal explicitly, to make connections to the larger issue.

I focused in particular on the issue of shame—the unfairness of women feeling *shamed* by the violation that was done *to* them. I think I asked the class to think with me about whether that was true and, if so, why. I told them my experience of telling no friends or family after the day of the rape and questioned why I had denied myself their support. I talked about how angry I was that the police and the prosecutor and even my husband blamed me for making bad choices and seemed to think this was my fault, and that this is now seen as blaming the victim. I said I thought I'd underestimated the impact of the rape on my life and that in the few settings where a woman might tell her story, the police and court systems consistently underplay the traumatic effects on the rape victim, and even my therapist had no clue about what kind of help I needed or even that I needed help at all. These ideas didn't come out as neatly and coherently as I've laid them out here, but I made the effort with a clearer head and probably covered most of this territory as I

talked.

The students listened silently and intently. The first person to speak was James, a large, muscular African-American man (one of three students of color in the class) in his mid-twenties, which made him about five years older than the other students. James said that women shouldn't put themselves in situations where they could be hurt, and if they did and got hurt, it was their own fault. My heart sank—how could he miss the point so badly and create exactly the trap I had tried to expose? And I felt hurt personally, because I had put a lot of time into helping James with his writing and responding to all of his concerns about the class. I guess I expected some special responsiveness from him in return.

Thinking about it now, I can see why James might have been responding out of his own life experience more than insensitivity to mine. He was extremely mistrustful in general, and I couldn't blame him for not wanting to open himself up to who knows what from this class of often conservative white males who were going back to their farms. At the same time, at this point in the semester, about halfway through, we had all gotten to know each other well enough to gauge how others might respond, and experience with past classes as well as this one suggested to me that James would get a respectful hearing and could gain from sharing more of his opinions and life experience, and he had begun to do that. But here his

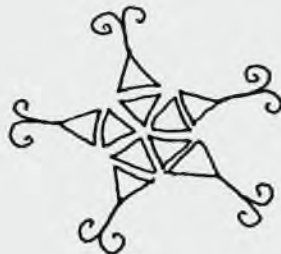
defenses were back up.

Maybe James was saying to me, in effect, "life has taught me that it doesn't pay to ever leave yourself open to being hurt; you need to protect yourself at all costs." Among other things, as I knew from a paper he'd written but not shared with the class, James had gone from weighing 300 pounds and being ignored and lonely to 200 pounds of solid muscle, and he looked plenty formidable. I think it's quite likely that he had been hurt too in ways he never wanted to visit again. At the time, though, I was mad. But I didn't respond, figuring this was a time to listen to the students' responses. I waited to see if the others would take James's cue.

This class had many more men than women when full strength, and that day we had eleven men to only three women. The students talked about issues of fear and risk, and one of the men asked if the women would be afraid if they saw James coming down a dark street toward them. There was a silence until the other African-American in the class, Tyrone, said, "Hell, I'd be afraid of James!" It's hard for me to picture how this question came up without being offensive to black men, but what I remember is Tyrone's spontaneous response, which punctured a stereotype and brought laughter all around. Only Tyrone could have saved that moment for us, as we found ourselves staring racism as well as sexism in the face.

Another comment that

stands out to me came from a thoughtful, intelligent, and extremely capable young woman, liked and respected by the farmers, who said she would rather be killed than raped. I wish we'd talked more about that. The other two women explained to the men how they felt when they had to walk outside alone at night, and this brought a turnaround for the young woman who had written the open journal—she agreed that women do carry a burden that men don't, and like the other women she got angry when the discussion came back to male contentions that the women should be more careful and always stay out of harm's way—"So are you saying we should just stay inside?!" one of the women shot back. It was a great moment for me to see the women work to articulate why that was a raw deal for women and why the focus needed to be on changing what *men* did. Altogether, thirteen out of the fourteen students spoke that day, a record for us. I felt something was happening, that it might



start new thoughts that could make a difference at some time for both women and men.

After class James walked with me to my office to pick up

a form he needed, and I asked how he thought people felt about hearing my story. He said the students looked uncomfortable, but he thought it gave a human face to a social issue and that it was appropriate. Then he turned to look at posters I had on my door and said, "You're a feminist, aren't you?" He said the class was getting interesting to him, and he smiled at his thought that other students were noticing he'd joined the class more and were probably shocked at things he said. He told me he could have gotten a medical excuse to skip the last class but decided to come anyway because he didn't want to miss the discussions. By the end of the semester, about seven weeks later, James told his personally sensitive story about losing a hundred pounds, complete with pictures of then and now, and the class responded with interest and respect for this achievement. And he wrote our last open journal, asking the class to help him with his own stereotypes about farmers and small-town people. This writing stimulated eloquent responses from several of the farmers—a highlight of the semester for me and for them. When I wrote a recommendation for James to a slew of law schools a year later, I included the story of his calling forth these important statements.

Although I couldn't be sure that anyone in this class would think differently about women and rape because of our discussion, I did notice that around this time the class moved into a new key. The students dis-

cussed their subjects increasingly vocally, almost everyone talked, they addressed each other and not just me, and they wrote more powerful papers. Two women wrote about eating disorders that they were in the midst of, and three students wrote about their serious depressions—all very significant writings for them. At the end of the semester, one student wrote that as a graduating senior he'd been coasting through, but it became important to him to take advantage of the opportunity in this class to do something real and important with his writing. In the next paper after our discussion, he wrote about a breakdown in his first year of college that had haunted him as a terrible failure, but in writing the paper he realized for himself that what people had been telling him ever since then was true: this wasn't weakness and it wasn't his fault. He was able to claim this experience as part of who he is—just as I was claiming my experience of rape as part of who I am.

Meanwhile, back to the day of the second telling. The afternoon after our conversation in class, I saw my counselor, Gail, at the University Health Center. I said I'd told my rape story in class, and she said I hadn't told it to her, so I started to outline it and soon tears came forth. I told the whole story more graphically, cried a lot, and experienced it emotionally much more than when I told it in class. I did feel emotional about that experience too, but I was able to channel that intensity into a keen focus on the needs and

welfare of my students; the telling to Gail was different—all about me, no restraint. She suggested that I stick with this subject and not let it go after one telling, as I had always done before. I remembered that two friends of mine had attended a sexual assault survivors group at the YWCA just a year earlier, working through rapes they had experienced half their lifetimes before. With Gail's encouragement I signed up for a tour with the group at the Y. I thought it was time to figure out more fully and systematically what telling my students this story was about and what effects the rape had had and perhaps was still having on my life. I had come to feel that telling "my rape story" was a complex act, with some elements that were con-



scious and some that still were more out of reach.

Telling Out of School: The Sexual Assault Survivors Group

I went to weekly meetings of the YWCA group for two and a half months that summer and

came to realizations that I am still taking in even as I write, almost a year later. Melissa Kopplin, facilitator of the group, suggested that I had experienced two kinds of violation: the rape itself and the response of the few people I told afterwards. I see now that it was this second violation that I was working with for myself and my students.

It was always clear in my mind that my only fault was being naive and that I may have averted more damage by thinking quickly and psyching out the rapist. I thought I'd handled it well once I realized what was happening, but I was defensive about this conclusion because of the silence following the rape. And I questioned how much it had affected me, because it could have been so much worse, it was only one event, its emotional element was so elusive for me, and it didn't stir any ongoing response from the few people I'd told—husband, two friends, and therapist. It seemed to stand apart from my life. And yet, I think I also concluded at the time, and for some years after, that it was so bad it was unspeakable. But why unspeakable—did that mean I was bad? The question sounds childish, but maybe that's the way emotional thinking goes in a "don't ask, don't tell" situation without any support or any connection with others in the same boat. I thought I might be making too big a thing of it when I did tell my story, just trying to get attention. Ah—when I write that, the sadness in it comes home.

Only just now, as I sort

through in writing what might be going on, do I see more clearly and fully that a major knowledge I gained from this group, where others who had been raped much more recently were extremely emotional about it, was the recognition that what had happened to me must have been horrible. I've only had this kind of knowledge in the times when I could bring the story out enough to reach the feelings that were underneath or behind or wrapped up in it. Without the story, there were effectively no feelings—or none that I was aware of, though I must have been acting out of the underground feelings many times when I didn't know it. But the kind of extensive telling, intensive focus, and supportive listening that could bring the feelings up usually occurred at widely spaced times and only once with each person I told in that way. It has been hard for me to hold onto this recognition in between those times.

This experience with the rape story calls to mind a paper I wrote several years ago in a class I taught that I called, "Am I Jewish?" In a sense, I am writing here a paper that could be called, "Was I Raped?" Of course I am Jewish and I was raped, but to *claim* these aspects of my experience as truly part of me seems to be difficult, fraught with the experience of invalidation that these subjects carry in my life. I concluded in the Jewish paper that I *knew* I really connected with my Jewishness when I could experience "the truth of feeling." Thinking wasn't enough; it wasn't con-



vincing on these subjects when the power of feeling was in question, seeming just beyond my grasp.

There is a way that in my first telling of the rape story in school I *felt* the reality of my experience so strongly—because of the TV show, the discussion, and the strangeness of telling it in this new setting—that I couldn't *think* it through, or at least I don't remember the thinking that I must have done. It occurs to me now that perhaps I needed to experience that emotion to be able to do anything with my story for my students. Maybe I needed to experience how real this is for me, how it isn't just a tool for raising consciousness—it's a human story with powerful emotion. Maybe that's one big reason that we need stories, for both the listener and the teller to reach "the truth of feeling."

Perhaps it was when I was able to believe in this truth more, without having to feel it so intensively, that I felt ready to leave the group at the YWCA. I talked with Melissa, and she and I reviewed the stages of recovery from rape and the significant work I had done in each one

over the years. She observed that the strong feelings I was having now didn't necessarily mean that I had a well of grief that had been dammed up inside. Rather, I seemed to be re-visiting the pain for a time in order to learn what it had to tell me now, what I needed to know, say, do to move forward. She saw me as not a victim—one who is stuck in what happened to her—but a survivor, who learns the lessons that the experience has for her, recognizes that the experience changed her, and takes action that is empowering and helps her use what she's learned. I was doing what came next: connecting my private experience with what needed to be done in the world. And I had learned much in these first two tellings about how to do that.

More Tellings: Past and Future

A quick glance at the third and fourth tellings will show some circumstances that maximized student learning through telling and hearing their own stories. The third telling, in the next semester, worked beautifully in response to a student's open journal on being raped herself. Sandra pretty much said it all, and my contribution was to describe very briefly what had happened to me and mainly what I had learned in the group at the Y, including an understanding of why my husband responded as he did and the need we both had for help in making our way through this dark minefield of unexpressed

emotion. Our discussion generated important and never-told stories by two other students (one of them a young man), and Sandra both wrote and told me she was thrilled by the students' support and what she learned in our discussion. Among the responses the students wrote to her after the discussion was one from another male student, who said he'd been beaten by his father throughout his childhood. Some weeks later we discussed that subject, with more stories, in response to a student's open journal, which may have been evoked by Sandra's open journal. This was the most satisfying telling in a classroom for me of my own story, and I think it was relevant and useful for the students.

The fourth and so far most recent telling, in the following semester, was also generated by a student, Jennifer, who in this case wrote a detailed paper about being raped by her boyfriend when she had just turned sixteen. In this case I decided to tell my story to her in a written response to her paper but not in general discussion. She wrote the story in the seventh week of the semester and asked if I thought she should read it aloud when the other students read their papers. I said I didn't think the class was ready—I felt, but didn't say, that the discussions we'd had so far made me feel concerned that she would get invalidating responses that blamed her for putting herself in a position to be raped. I had returned myself, in two discussions about related subjects in this class, to a place of intense

emotion where I didn't feel safe to tell my own story. But when Jennifer told me in the fourteenth week that she wanted to read her paper then, I said it was a good idea—I felt much better about it because the class had come together, showing by now considerable mutual acceptance and respect. Jennifer did read the paper, which had a powerful impact because the story was so fully told, and the class responded extremely warmly and supportively. Although this was a reading aloud rather than a discussion, several students volunteered admiration of her courage in telling this story, and it was an enormous weight off Jennifer's shoulders to be able to share it—she wrote later that it lightened her heart. On the last day of the semester, two weeks after she read her paper, Jennifer thanked the class for listening to her story, saying that their response meant a lot to her and she didn't think she could have told this to any other group. My hope is that in the future she will be able to bring her story to light more than she has, that she will have a good sense of when it's safe to do that, and that this telling in a classroom community will help her continue the complex process of healing.

So where am I now with telling my own rape story in school? The short version of my response is that I feel free to tell it or not, depending on the circumstances. Probably the ideal context is another student's story or a student's open journal on a closely related subject—I think it works best if it follows the students' lead. But I will tell

it in other circumstances if I think that's the best way to open up students' responses to violence against women or to other feminist issues. I think I will be able to do this in a thoughtful way that focuses on the learning and welfare of my students.

I see the kind of class where such stories can be told as ideally a place where silenced groups and individuals can go from private to semi-public expression of what is important to them. This is a place to practice, with some twenty others, speaking up and being heard. It may be a place of more diversity than students experience in their friendship groups. It may be about bridging differences—not gliding over them but connecting through their mutually heard expressions. When this communal exploring develops, the classroom can be a place for what is called in India *satyagraha*, the principle that we grow in speaking the truth. Two conditions for this growth are finding an audience that will let us do that and being the audience for others. Teaching tells me that we all need to both tell and hear the stories that change our lives in order to make that change transformative—for ourselves, for others, and for the world we live in. □

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Encounters with Privilege and Multiculturalism

A middle-aged, White male college professor teaches social work to students from multicultural backgrounds. The meaning and assumptions of privilege are examined by exploring diversity in every class. Just as social work practitioners "start where the client is," this social work educator "starts where the student is" and learns that variation and difference are the core of humanity.

by
Richard Holody

Richard Holody, DSW, is an Assistant Professor of Social Work, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Lehman College (CUNY), Bronx, NY.

After almost two decades of child welfare practice in both public and private agencies, I now teach baccalaureate level social work at an urban college. There is a chapter in the course outline for the social work practice sequence which, following the textbook (Compton & Galaway, 1994), is entitled "Practice Across Difference." There, I tell my students this story:

As a foster care supervisor, I am entering a courtroom to testify in a proceeding, initiated by me, that seeks to terminate the legal parental rights of two people in order that their son may be "freed" to be adopted by another family. That's my job: to act in the best interests of the child. And to this point, I and my worker and my agency have done all that can be reasonably and professionally expected to provide rehabilitative services to the birth parents of the child. Those efforts brought no observable change in the functioning of the parents. So I will now, and with confidence, testify that the agency made reasonable and diligent efforts to reunite the family and has no alternative but to

seek the remedy of termination and adoption.

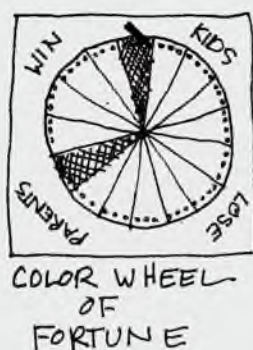
Taking the stand, I notice that the other people in the courtroom are my agency's attorney, the child's legal guardian, separate lawyers for each of the parents, a court reporter, a bailiff, and the judge. All are white; all but two of the attorneys are male. I am a white male.

The parents, neither of whom are present, are African-American and Puerto Rican, respectively.

I then ask my class to discuss this vignette and seek to reconcile what may seem to be competing truths: the reality of the parents' inability to care for their child and the demographic description of the legal proceeding.

Well into the semester, I have gained a measure of trust from my class. They accept my description of the parents' inability to provide satisfactory care for their children as accurate.

But my class is uncomfortable leaving matters there, letting the wheels of justice turn inexorably toward the inevitable conclusion of the adoption of the child by another family. They are briefly assured when



they learn that the adoptive family is demographically approximate (African-American and Dominican) to the child's family of origin. But one student, frightened by the phrase "termination of parental rights," maintains that "there's just something wrong" about what is happening in this story. Her classmates agree.

Unlike in court, in the classroom I am the only White male. There is a White female student, but the others are African-American, Caribbean-American, Puerto Rican, and immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Jamaica. Even the White female student is an immigrant from Ireland. In this evening course, the students are mostly in their 30's, have jobs and families, and for the most part have been recipients of the social service delivery system they seek to enter as generalist practitioners. They are serious, about their studies and their commitment to professional helping. After considerable discussion, including no small amount of student self-disclosure about encounters with police, lawyers, child protective service workers, and others, one student asks, "So, what

is the point of the story?" I took that to mean, what should I learn from the case vignette that will, a) help me get a good grade in this course, and b) better prepare me to be a practitioner in the real world?

In both the courtroom and in the class, I represent privilege in a multicultural world. My testimony, because I am authorized to speak for the agency, will — did — lead to the termination of parental rights. My answer, because I was hired to teach this course, will — does — command attention.

I struggle in my response. The points *are*, I say, first, that the story is true, that is, it describes an unsatisfying and conflictual reality they too will face as practitioners; second, that whatever societal injustices, historical and contemporary, deprived the parents of access to resources and opportunity, the social worker's job in this case is clearly defined: to testify in behalf of the best interests of the child; and third, that the world of the justice system is not the world of the social service system and when social workers are testifying in a court, we "play by their rules": court testimony must be certain even when we know that the truth of case activity may be ambiguous. The students take notes, silently. Perhaps they are as dissatisfied with the answer as I am.

I thought long and hard about teaching that class after I left it — in ways that I hadn't thought about my teaching before. I thought about what I could have done differently. I

could have helped the class critically examine the socio-cultural construction of the terms "parental inability" and "best interests of the child." More importantly, I could have clarified that the lessons that I derived from the vignette constitute *my* truth. When in the following semester another student asks, "What is the point?" I need to reject the implicit ascription of privilege and respond, "Let us together search for answers."

Such strategizing about how the class could have gone brought me face to face with why I had changed careers, why I had left child welfare practice to become a teacher. Some motivations are obvious: new challenge, different professional lifestyle, the coincidence of opportunity and desire, the feeling of "I think my practice has given me something to share." What I am learning from my students is that teaching satisfies another motivation: it provides a chance to reflect, to scorn easy answers, to learn. The diversity of my student population demands that the understanding of social work that satisfies me must be subjected to a permanent process of re-examination, like turning a kaleidoscope again and again, challenging the viewer, each viewer, to see that change *is* reality. In practice, I guard against privilege by "starting where the client is." I must now learn to "start where the students are," not only to help them to a new level of academic accomplishment and professional grounding, but to explore together the meaning of social work.

Encounters

The very existence of institutionalized education raises the issue of privilege, from the distribution of a course outline telling the students what will be studied (and by implication, what will not) through the "testing" of students (to determine if they have learned what teachers have decided they are to learn). My privileged role as teacher was questioned in one of my first teaching assignments, a course about the historical development of social welfare services in this country. Many students, including, but not exclusively, immigrant students, are barely aware of the broad outlines of U. S. history. They don't just confuse Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt; they are genuinely surprised to hear about the Civil War and Reconstruction Era, about discrimination against the Irish and other European immigrants, and about the Great Depression. It is a "content" — not "process" — driven course, with a consequent emphasis on "what happened when."

"On the test, do you want us to give you what you said in class and what the book says? Or can we give our own opinions?" This question has been asked in each of the seven semesters I've taught the course. I first thought, there is no "opinion" about who founded the Children's Aid Society, or when the settlement house movement was prominent in this country, or that there were two New Deals.

But the persistence of the question made me realize: there is an opinion as to who thinks these questions, as opposed to others, are important. I think that they are, because that is what I was taught; that is my understanding of the development of social welfare services in the United States. If I taught from Abramowitz (1988) or Gordon (1994), I would think other names, dates, trends, and dynamics were important, and my tests would look quite different. And I remember that when I taught from Jansson (1988), my tests *were* different than when I teach from Trattner (1992). The line between historical fact and opinion blurs.

I have now added a new essay question to the final examination. "Discuss the title of the textbook, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*." I tell the students this question a week before the test and add that there is no specific answer I am looking for, no "right" answer, other than the essay must be grounded in specific material from the text and classroom discussions. Some students begin their essay by saying, "I'm not sure if this is what you want, but . . ." A few others reveal a deep anger at the abuses of the modern welfare state in the United States: "The title shows how it was better when we did not help the unworthy poor."

The majority of students, however, write essays about the persistence of poverty and the changing role of government in aiding the poor and disadvantaged. Or they write about the peculiar American circum-

stances — great wealth, constitutional freedom, complex system of government — and how they combine to structure the current welfare delivery system. One gives a cogent argument, supported by historical references, for the "lie" of a welfare state in a country so scarred by racism and sexism.

My answer to the persistent question is now: "I want an answer that is thoughtful and reflects what you have learned in this course. I need to know what you think, and what you think includes what you know and how you know it, and what you believe and why you believe it." It is an answer that I hope liberates us, if only a little, from the conceit that their role is only to anticipate what privilege dictates "the right answer" to be. They are learning to develop their own points of view, drawing selectively on materials from the course to support it.

In teaching them to develop their own views, I have often used analogies to help them consider different views and deepen their understanding of complex issues. For example, in teaching the course entitled "Human Behavior and the Social Environment," I lead discussions about parenting—what works and what doesn't. Inevitably we confront corporal punishment: Is it effective? Does potential long-term harm (unresolved conflicted feelings toward the punishing parent) outweigh the possible good (short-term change in the behavior of the child)? Is spanking the expression of a frustrated parent or a legitimate attempt to de-

crease unwanted behavior? Many students have shared that they were "whupped" and they learned to respect their parents as a result. Many of *these* students were raised outside of the United States and before passage of American laws concerning the definition, reporting, and investigation of child abuse.

My students have always been suspicious of statutory definitions of child abuse and neglect. Child rearing, they argue, is *culturally determined*. To label one set of parental practices as abusive or neglectful is to impose one culture over another. This position has some support in the social work literature on multiculturalism: "Fundamentally, multiculturalism presents a paradigm that . . . incorporates the existence of *equivalent cultural realities* within society" (K. H. Gould, 1996, p. 37, emphasis added). When I first taught the course, I would respond:

"Suppose you grew up in a country where there was no speed limit on the highways. Then you moved to the United States, drove 75 miles an hour on the highway, and were stopped by the police. Do you think it would be an acceptable defense to the charge of speeding to say that in your country it is acceptable to speed?"

This analogy always "worked"; students saw that in any society there are standards of conduct and behavior, and that being raised in a different society does not excuse devia-

tion from the standards in the place where you are. It is not that one argument is privileged, but rather a recognition of the need for common standards, based on new knowledge (e.g., the reality of the Battered Child Syndrome as a recognized diagnosis) and the (presumably) cross-cultural value of the right of every child to be free from physical harm.

Recently, however, one student noted, "Of course, the police don't arrest *everyone* for speeding." The class knew what she meant: laws are enforced differentially, prejudicially. My analogy revealed more than I thought.

Later, I wondered how I could have made such a silly mistake. I realized that while I was trying to force the students to look at only the one aspect of the issue that concerned me, the student said, in effect, "Let's keep looking at the whole pic-



ture." I made the mistake Maluccio (1991) warned against: I gave only "intellectual acknowledgment" to the social, class, and ethnic construction of the problem of child abuse and

ignored the ethical imperative to fight "conditions of racism and oppression" (p. 608). This is a "mistake" of privilege that turns teaching into a game of "gotcha."

I now see that class discussions of social welfare policy formulation, such as child abuse legislation, must include—considering that society's struggle for consensus does not end with passage of legislation but continues through implementation and enforcement, stages that can reveal the hidden preconceptions and value preferences that lie behind even seemingly non-controversial laws. The students' questioning of the cultural assumptions behind statutory definitions of child abuse reveals, in Giddens's (1979) words, how "domination [by the privileged] is concealed as domination . . . [and] the need to sustain legitimacy [occurs] through the claim to represent the interests of the community as a whole" (p. 193).

Perhaps we stray too far afield in this baccalaureate-level class. In any case my students do not appear interested in critiquing privilege *per se*. They accept the need to draw somewhere a line that prevents bodily harm to children, but that seems less interesting to them than the stories, from the diverse cultural backgrounds of their fellow students, of the variety of ways of raising children. As I listen to their discussion, I realize not only how much students learn from each other but how fundamental is process to both education and practice. Privilege provides predeter-



mined answers; multiculturalism allows for exploration of complexity.

I also have used analogies to clarify values in social welfare policy. In discussing the rationale for proving eligibility, for example, we considered that scarce resources require a method of assuring that they are dispensed only to those who are most needy and that the American value of "rugged individualism" requires the separation of the "worthy" from the "non-worthy" poor. Inevitably, we must confront the issue of fraud. "I see this woman all the time," one student said, "cashing her welfare check and I know she works!" Others in the class agreed this is outrageous. I would ask if they are as upset by middle-class income tax fraud. Some would say "yes," but clearly without the same level of anger.

So, my analogy: "What's different about poor people cheating from, say, the notion of Donald Trump fudging his income tax deductions? Surely the poor person needs whatever extra can be obtained, whereas we can be sure that Trump's lifestyle would be little changed

What does that cheating say about *us* who live in the same housing projects, shop in the same bodegas, maybe even are in receipt of public assistance or food stamps too?"

Upon reflection, I have wondered if the contrasting verbs — "cheating" vs. "fudging"— unintentionally undermined the analogy. Perhaps my choice of verbs also reflected my privileged status: a White middle class male has more opportunity to cheat on his income tax returns than to fudge on his application for public assistance.

The more critical lesson, I now believe, is for me to understand the source of the students' anger. They are, in a way, "more American" than I am. They believe in the values of industry, struggle, commitment, responsibility, and community. Yes, they believe that hard work provides its own reward, but also should provide more than indolence and deception. It does matter that their neighbor cheats. It matters to them personally and it matters to the soul of the community in which they live. Their proximity to the cheating heightens their concern

if he paid more to the government."

My students again agree. And yet: "Don't you understand? We *see* the welfare cheating! It's done by our neighbors!

and inflames their response. Isolated from their struggles, I can blithely say, "Oh well, to cheat is human." For people who live in housing projects, utilize underfunded municipal services, and struggle against the oppression and injustice, these values matter in a way I have not experienced. I can only learn from them, accepting their challenge to probe deeper into the biases to which my privilege blinds me.

The incident from social welfare policy may also illustrate how analysis will differ when the behavior under study reflects one's own community, when the "other" is in fact us. In my practice class, I look for a way to help my students to confront a culture unlike their own as the basis for their term paper assignment, a biopsychosocial assessment. This was not an easy task, given the many nationalities represented in class. I decided on the New Zealand film, *Once Were Warriors*.

My students had likely not seen the film, and almost certainly have never had encounters with contemporary Maori culture. The film portrays, in brutally realistic scenes, wife battering, rape, suicide, and alcohol-driven violence. It concludes with the hero, Beth, finding the hope and strength in her Maori culture to defend herself and her children. The film's harsh language and raw depictions require that I alert the class beforehand to the film's intensity and that some time is spent after to process their reactions.

Well, what do you think,

I ask when the lights were turned on. "It was like seeing scenes from my childhood," an African-American man stated. A woman from Jamaica commented on the influence of reggae on contemporary music in New Zealand. A Latino man, struggling with his own recovery from substance dependency and past criminal acts, quietly said, "Too close to home, man. Too many things I've seen. Too many things I've done." Some students planned to meet to watch the film again, together. An older African-American woman planned to buy the tape: "This film must be seen by groups in my church to understand what drinking and violence is all about."

I was moved beyond all expectation by the commonality of human experience; by how my students could see themselves in others even through the barriers of unfamiliar culture. I realized that again I had revealed my privilege. I had set up the Maori as "the other," as certainly they were for me when I first viewed the film. But my students, even when admitting they could not understand all of the Maori historical and cultural references, saw the Maori as themselves.

The challenge of exploring the meaning of culture did not end with that classroom epiphany. Perhaps my students simply ignored the differences between themselves and the fictional family, seeking only to identify what was common or familiar because that was easier

to do. Or perhaps their identification with the family derived from the parallel oppressions experienced by the urban Maori and themselves in their lives in the city. I don't know.

Final Thought

The paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould (1996) wrote that the "deepest meaning of the Darwinian revolution" is "to understand variation itself as irreducible, as 'real' in the sense of 'what the world is made of'" (p. 3). He argued that we misunderstand variation in nature because we prefer to understand evolution as progress towards something — an ideal, an essence, greater complexity, a higher average — because "we crave progress as our best hope for retaining human arrogance in an evolutionary world" (p. 29). We can only understand the natural world we live in when we consider the totality of nature, e.g., the dominant existence of bacteria, and not simply extract for consideration and approval the development of one species, *Homo Sapiens*.

Though Gould is careful to distinguish natural evolution from social and cultural change (pp. 217-230), I think an analogy is possible: the deepest meaning of human life is variation, diversity of experience not the preference of privilege. Effective social work, both in practice and in education, requires constant challenging of privilege and exploration of difference. □

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An Open Letter to Those Who “Tricked” Us on Halloween

Sometimes, outside the classroom and in moments we least expect, we are put to the test as teachers. A faculty member at a large research university in the Midwest tells the tale of one such “teaching moment” — a potentially terrifying moment — on the doorstep of her home.

By
S. Holly Stocking

S. Holly Stocking, Ph.D., teaches in the School of Journalism at Indiana University in Bloomington.

My husband and I teach at a large research university in the Midwest. He runs rats in mazes; I teach science writing. On a recent Halloween night, just after putting our youngest to bed, more than a dozen masked adults showed up on our doorstep. The animal rights protest that unfolded over the next hour and a half challenged us in deeply emotional ways, and tested our aspirations for ourselves as teachers and human beings. In the aftermath of the incident, I worked in the best way I know — through writing — to make sense of what we had done, and why. These efforts resulted in an open letter to the protesters, which was distributed over the Internet by an

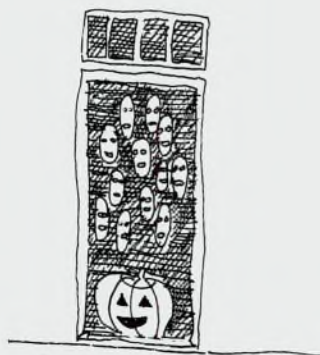
interested student journalist. That open letter led, in turn, to a surprising email response from one of the tricksters. I share this correspondence in the hopes that it will provoke other teachers and students, in similar challenging moments, to search for much needed understanding.

An Open Letter to Those Who “Tricked” Us on Halloween [As sent over the Internet]

You know who you are. Late Halloween night, as one child slept and the other was readying for bed, more than a dozen of you, disguised as trick-or-treaters in ski masks, with a few goblins sprinkled in, planted yourselves at our front door.

“We know where you live,” your blunt-voiced leader intoned, eyeing us ominously. “Murder slavery....greed....” hissed others. One of you, a short woman, dark, with the hint of a New York accent, alternately pelted us with outrage and wept. A taller woman, slim and blue eyed, chanted over and over that this butchery had to stop.

Realizing that you were animal rights activists come to protest my husband’s research with rats, we had to make an instant calculation, and we reacted, instinctively, as teachers.



We did not order you off our property or slam the door in your faces. We did not raise our voices. Instead, guessing that most of you were students, and struggling within ourselves for patience, we listened.

In the days since, friends and acquaintances have expressed their outrage at your tactics and their incredulity that we would treat you with any patience at all. We have been lectured by friends and students alike: What you did, they charge, was deceptive, invasive and cowardly, pure and simple — a tactic no different from those of bigoted hate groups and thugs. If you had been interested in anything other than intimidation and harassment, you would have removed your masks and come in when we invited you, or you would have talked with my husband at his office. Most of the well-meaning people to whom we have told this tale are certain they personally would have slammed the door in your faces! So why didn't we?

It is a question we have thought about more than once since this happened. Were we naive? Did you succeed in intimidating us? Or was something else going on?

Pondering these questions, and thinking about those of you who stood before us, we can never be certain. But we do believe that we assessed the situation accurately. Despite the angry eyes and slogans, we sensed you did not pose any immediate threat to us, and in these circumstances at least, listening and talking, and struggling to see you as human beings under your masks, seemed preferable to invec-

tive.

More importantly, both my husband and I remember our own protests during another era, and aspire to be the kind of teachers we would have wanted as we were working to find and express our values. Both of us believe that universities are or ought to be places where people can engage in robust discussion and debate. We believe we have a responsibility to listen to what others have to say, and try to understand it. And we each believe that as university teachers, we have a responsibility to stand up calmly and openly for what we believe to be the truth, even if occasionally those we find ourselves teaching can't or won't.

Clearly, it is not our responsibility to offer ourselves to be harassed, particularly at home, where we feel most vulnerable. But as one friend who sympathizes with our actions pointed out to me, this encounter outside our house — though unpleasant and ethically dubious — had the potential to be what some of us in the teaching profession like to call a "teaching moment," one of those uncommon moments, often outside the classroom, in life, when the potential for real learning suddenly presents itself. And in an instant's calculation, that is what we decided it was.

Hearing you out during the hour or so that you stood before us in the chilly night air, we were astonished by the extent of the need for learning. None of you knew what my husband does in his research; you knew he had brought research dollars into the university, but you had never read a paper describing his work; you assumed, wrongly, that the rats he uses in his research are in pain; you believed,

wrongly again, that his work has no useful implications, or if it does that it would be possible to substitute computer models for the rats' behavior; you seemed to believe, too, that animals never make good models for people. And so both of us, teachers who have trained ourselves to listen to peoples' arguments and opinions, worked gingerly but diligently to counter the errors, the partial knowledge, and ignorance built into so many of the questions and accusations.

Did you actually learn some things from us in this "moment"? Probably not. But who can say? And what would you have learned if we had not engaged our teaching selves, if we had called you names, and slammed the doors on you instead?

As for ourselves, teachers are not the only ones who teach (and will teach) during such moments. Those we try to teach always are *our* teachers too. And in this case those of you who appeared on our doorstep taught us several things:

You taught us the immensity of the gap in knowledge and values between scientists who work with animals and the subset of animal rights activists, including yourselves, who are willing to resort to bullying tactics. You taught us that all animal researchers, but particularly those who fail to appreciate and address the size of this gap, and the implications, are vulnerable. You taught us that continuing openness in the face of such vulnerability requires courage because we can not always know for certain if impassioned individuals among you will hurl more than slurs and accusations. But most tellingly, in ways you surely never intended,

you reminded us of the importance — and emotional challenges — of striving for respect and compassion for *all* of God's creatures, including one another.

—S. Holly Stocking
Associate Professor of Journalism
Indiana University-Bloomington

I learned a valuable lesson that somehow in my exuberance to save and respect animals I had forgotten my core belief to treat *all* living things with compassion and respect. My humblest apologies.

—Name withheld at the author's request



A Response from One of the "Tricksters"

[Received via email the day after the open letter was sent]

I would like to apologize for my own actions in the intrusive visit to your home. I like to think of myself as a Buddhist and I strive for compassion towards all living things. I was embarrassed and humbled by the way you and your husband courageously confronted a group of angry, young masked activists and turned the confrontation into an open, civil debate.

I have expressed my feelings about this to the other activists and we are all committed to non-violence; unfortunately, some of us do not consider intimidation to be a form of violence. The students in our group have a great love for animals and they tend to distrust those in authority, so at times they are misguided, but they mean well. They are just frustrated at a system that seems oblivious to change. They are impatient and impetuous but they live by their ideals; they just have problems accepting the fact that others can't see what they see. They think that things will change overnight and that all creatures will be free of man's inhumanity to man and our fellow inhabitants of earth. I thank you for being patient with us...

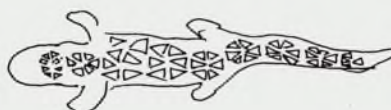
"The Farming of a Verse": Self-Disclosure in the Classroom

Most faculty can recall all too easily moments of unplanned self-revelation in the classroom and the feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability that accompanied these moments. This narrative explores the author's experiences with self-disclosure in the classroom and how these experiences have transformed her and her students.

by
Elizabeth V. Young

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When I had been teaching for two years, one of the graduate students in my seminar gave me a Christmas card thanking me for the class and offering a little unsolicited advice. "Share more of your personal experience," she wrote. "The two times you did I learned more than I learned the rest of the semester." My first response was to shudder, both at her assessment of the course and at the memory of my unplanned outbursts of self-revelation.



Still, the advice stayed with me, though I continued to enact the professorial role that had been modeled by my teachers: as a professor one was aggressively well-informed, up-to-date on other people's ideas, and able to guide students through a complex pattern of abstract concepts to arrive at a degree that granted them the authority to guide their students through similar patterns in the same fashion. Good students, the ones who completed their

degrees, were safe students: they understood the rules of impersonal professionalism, abided by them conscientiously, and if they ever rebelled, they did so in private, out of the classroom and away from their word processors. I had been such a good student that I had never said anything self-revealing in class. Yet now, as a professor, I found myself doing just that. I felt frightened, both by the revelations themselves and by the ways they occurred. It was as if another force resided in me, one that was determined to bring forth these personal stories in spite of my best efforts to contain them. Adding to my alarm was the fact that my students were demanding more. Clearly they wanted something human, solid, and relevant in their education.

I had been given an assignment: I was being asked to use my personal experience to communicate more significantly with my students. I wanted to learn to be less fearful about doing so. I needed to think more about the stories I might tell that would help the students understand and apply concepts in the humanities curriculum to their concrete lives, and help the students tell their own stories as well. The challenge tumbled

around in my brain: I find that pedagogy, like other creative work, benefits from half-conscious mulling, and I knew I'd find myself in a situation that required me to act on the mulling all too soon.

And so the first day of the next semester found me walking to class with my usual first-day nerves—heart pounding in my shoulders, my neck, my ears, and my scalp. I was cool, though, prepared and experienced enough to know that the tension

would dissipate once I got into class and exerted my authority by going over the syllabus. But when I walked into the classroom and started to talk,

my voice cracked. Who was cool? My opening speech vanished, I dropped thirty copies of the syllabus on the floor, and I saw the semester looming ahead: Dr. Incompetent trying to recover her students' respect.

So I did what many teachers do when non-plussed: I began to chatter. And the result was another outburst: "I can't believe I still get nervous the first day of class. I guess we all do. I remember—" and suddenly a shower of memories cooled me off — "I remember my Shakespeare professor, a terrific teacher who had been teaching the same course for twenty years, telling me that he was *always* nervous the first day, and that he had decided that

was just the way it was going to be. So he'd walk into class and with his incredibly smooth Cary Grant voice, read the opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, getting us in the mood for the drama and giving himself a chance to breathe. Oh, and then there was the department chair in my graduate program. The first year I was a Teaching Assistant he came to our teacher training the day before classes began to encourage us and make us confident teachers. He was a really popular

professor, very nice and smart and famous, and his encouragement went like this: 'Let me just tell you,' he said, 'your first day is going to be nerve-racking, but it's going to be better than my first day of teaching.' He hung

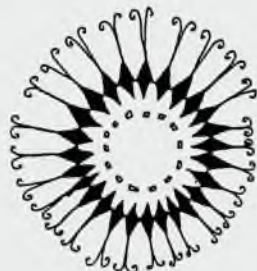
fire, and we waited eagerly, remembering that he had just won the university's outstanding professor award. He grinned at us and said, 'On my first day of class, I walked in, looked at all the students—and threw up.'" My class broke into laughter and I felt at ease, continuing my introduction to the course with confidence.

Still, as I reviewed the day, doubts about my confession of nervousness lingered. I wondered about the ways in which this kind of disclosure might affect the students. Would they think I was incompetent? Would they think the class was lightweight and therefore not take it seriously? Or could my admission of fear possibly en-

able my students to engage in the material of the course more fully? The memory of my Shakespeare professor brought forth memories of other teachers who had shared significant personal experiences. I realized that by telling stories of their own experiences, my mentors had given me a model of professional confession that I wanted to emulate, but couldn't quite achieve. Their stories, I realized, were always about their successful liberation from fear.

There was Donald Paterson, the gruff professor of music who directed the Sage Chapel Choir at Cornell when I was an undergraduate. He talked in a terrifying bark, and when I had to go to his office to audition for a small group performance, I was afraid I would collapse in tears before I sang even one note. At last it was my turn, and he called me in and asked me to sing a few scales. I had no air; my voice was flat and weak. "That's it," I thought, bracing myself. "He's not only going to say I can't be in the small choir, but that really I shouldn't be in the big one either, that my flat voice makes the second soprano section sound bad."

But instead Professor Paterson sat down on the piano bench and began to talk. "I remember when I was a graduate student and had to give my final recital. To me, everything rested on this one performance. I thought that if I played well, I'd graduate with honors and get a good job; if I played poorly, I would not only be humiliated, I would probably not get any job



at all." He smiled at the absurdity of his fear. "But I had to give the recital, so I put on my tuxedo and read through the music one more time (we had to play from memory, of course) and walked out on stage. The stage was lit, but the seats were dark, and I couldn't see anyone, not the professors who would judge me nor my friends who would applaud me—no one, just darkness. I sat down at the piano, took a deep breath, and jumped out of my skin when a voice called out of the darkness, 'No mistakes!'"

A horrified laugh burst out of me, taking my nervousness with it. "Mad as hell," Paterson continued, "I played the best I've ever played in my life. And I vowed that I was never going to inflict such agonizing pressure on any of my students." He turned to me. "Want to try those scales again?" That story opening up my lungs, I sang the best I've ever sung.

And then I remembered the story one of my professors had told me about his mentor. When Yale was still a men's college, back in the 1960s, the emotional elements of everyday life were as likely to be ignored or aggressively vented as to be transformed into helpful or meaningful experiences. It was, therefore, with some shock that I learned from one of my professors, a Yale graduate, that the introductory Shakespeare class was one of the most popular courses on campus during the Vietnam War. "Why?" I asked. "Was it easy?" "No, not at all. It was because of Maynard Mack, the professor." I had met

Professor Mack, and thought he was very intelligent and witty, so I thought I saw why the young men had flocked to his course: New Critical interpretations of Shakespeare have a beautiful and satisfying precision, like mathematics. But that wasn't why the course was so popular, as it turned out. My teacher went on about his teacher: "Maynard was never afraid of feeling. When Lear saw Cordelia dead, Maynard made us see and hear and feel Lear's grief. When Cleopatra placed the asp on her breast, we all reached forward to try and save her and felt the sting of futility in the act. When Caliban described the music of the island, we listened to our world with different ears. And when Henry's soldiers fell at Agincourt, we wept for them and for all soldiers." And tears were in his eyes twenty years



later. "The class," he said, "was fondly called 'Tears at Two.'"

In graduate school I took a seminar with a preeminent professor. It was *fashionable* to take a course with this man, even if you weren't in his literary field, since you could then declare that you had studied with him and thereby claim intellectual status at any univer-

sity. The first day, our seminar was a little odd. We met briefly and talked about "To His Coy Mistress," a *carpe diem* poem that, true to convention, urges the addressee to seize the life she has and live it utterly, fully, recklessly even, because death lurks everywhere. After the discussion of the concept and the ramifications of "seizing the day," the professor asked us to meet at his home from then on, and that if we were ill, even with a cold, would we please not come to class as he was recovering from pneumonia and needed to avoid germs.

This was 1985, before such a request was a code recognized by us all. But as the semester progressed and our witty, loving, and intellectually demanding professor wasted away in front of us, one by one we realized that he was dying, fast, and that in the process of dying he was teaching English Renaissance Literature as specified on the syllabus, and also how to live bravely and generously. When he died, shortly after the semester ended, the funeral he had planned was a last gift, a final affirmation, a mass sung in Greek that led us beyond the words we could not understand to a plane of feeling—of grief turning into hope, and of loss becoming wisdom—that has made me able to value the weighty gift the dying leave the living.

These stories, all experienced and told by men, felt like gifts to me when I heard them as a student and when I recalled them years later. I believe that those professors really were free

of fear when they told their stories, and their courage inspired me. But while I wanted to tell similar stories—well, I was still afraid. Talking personally about myself in class felt like a leap into the dark, where I might be exposed and left hanging in the wind. Nevertheless, I kept finding myself taking that leap against my own will. I began to think that I needed to change my attitude, not my behavior.

My first effort toward that end was enacted in a course on English poetry. Every semester for several years, I made myself read a particular poem aloud to the class early in the term. I found it difficult to do and I did it because it was difficult—it seemed to me that poetry often expresses the emotions we don't dare articulate any other way, the deepest and most basic feelings. So, when I came to W. H. Auden's beautiful elegy for the poet William Butler Yeats, written at the beginning of the Second World War, I thought of "Tears at Two" and forced myself to permit myself to cry in class:

*Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;*

*With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;*

*In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how
to praise. (p.134)*

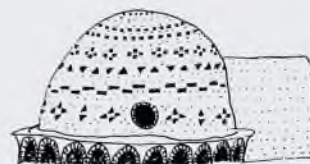
Semester after semester I felt embarrassed wiping away my tears and wondered if it was serving any purpose to show my emotion in class. But I believed it could be: Auden described the emotional and political power of poetry in words that apply to storytelling in the classroom as well. Stories can be voices that liberate us, they can transform conflict into knowledge, they can reveal strength.

Before reading the poem, I would always tell my students, "This poem gets me," which made the reading a self-conscious performance with a highly staged quality—a control that, I realized, was reassuring and made me feel safe. It was very similar to the model I had observed in the men who were my mentors. Thinking about staging a liberation from fear, I recalled the rest of that first day of the Shakespeare class years before. I had begun to tell stories deliberately. Having made the students laugh about the successful professor literally spilling his guts, I had been able to craft the segue: "And *that* always reminds me of the scene in Truffaut's *The Last Metro*, when Catherine Deneuve's character throws up right before walking on stage to give the performance of her life. All this is to say that performance is scary, and that nerves can turn into creative energy—and in this class, when you have to read aloud or act out a scene from one of the plays, you need to accept that nervousness and make it work for you, okay?"

With that idea in mind, I continue to struggle to become

less afraid, to be more personal; last semester in the poetry class, I was reading a poem called "Divorce," by David Mason. I had one more stanza to read when I felt my voice tremble and my eyes fill with tears. "You idiot!" part of my brain said to the other part. "Of course you are going to cry over this one, being in the midst of a divorce yourself!" I wobbled through to the end and immediately began to mock myself, telling the class, "Can you believe this? I didn't know I was going to blubber! Believe me, I don't *always* cry in class." On and on I went, apologizing for my display of feeling. I felt utterly exposed and naked and was covering up by knocking myself. The students were silent, some looking away from me in embarrassment, others looking at me with sympathy. I finished the class session without referring to the poem.

The next week I collected students' journals. One woman had written me a note: "I was scared of this class because I don't know anything about poetry. I told my friend about your crying in class the other day and he said you're the person to take the class with, since poetry moves you. And you do make it come alive, make me care about the feelings the poems express."



accomplished poet herself, stayed behind after class and said, "I'm glad you got choked up over that poem. We need to see that." Later in the semester she read a love poem by Pablo Neruda, first in Spanish and then in English. When she finished, the class sat motionless, silent, absorbing the love she had laid before us: Neruda's, hers, our own.

I think my sense of self-disclosure will always be marked by ambivalence, quite different from the model I saw when I was in college. That

model, the staged success story, is a very effective tool for encouraging students to try new and difficult things. But for me, the liberation-from-fear success story is only part of a bigger story: it's one of the numerous steps we need to make in our quest to understand ourselves and connect with other people. The further we go on the quest, the more we have to risk—and the closer we become.

When poems surprise me into such intense feeling that I cry, and I let people see my tears, I continue to feel afraid,

vulnerable. But showing my vulnerability seems to make other people willing and able to show theirs; when that happens in a classroom, my students and I experience the delicate wisdom of what it means to be human.

□

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GIVING STUDENT LEARNING CENTER STAGE

Transformational teaching and learning may become a process of evocation if the teaching-learning relationship begins in the students' own stories. Such a process is inductive, personal, and critical. I tell the story of my transformation from a kind-hearted, liberal, teacher-centered professor to a democratic, student-centered one. Three student stories describe how my individual work with graduate students writing theses continues to move me toward a more empowering pedagogy — one that gives student learning center stage.

**By
Laila Aaen**

Laila Aaen, Ph.D., is a faculty member in Human Development at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, CA.

Armed with the beliefs that learning could be transformational through mentorship, academic rigor, and feminist politics, I entered the teaching scene at Alverno College in 1974. I developed a course called Small Group Behavior and loaded it up with sophisticated reading from the Symbolic Interactionist tradition (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1970; Manis & Meltzer, 1972). Students reacted to the work load predictably, but I successfully defended it — at least throughout the first half of the course. Then came the mid-term — an extensive, take-home, short-essay exam. Claudia stood up to protest. She was furious not only with the work load but also with what seemed to her my mistrust of them: I was giving them a test. Her attack on me was deeply personal, yet at the same time it struck at the heart of what we had been reading about — constructing meaning from symbolic interaction. I thought:

"Did they not understand that this was their opportunity to integrate the work in the class? Did they not understand that I was held accountable for their learning

and that I needed to see more clearly what that learning was? Did they not understand that they were in an institution where assessment of learning was at the heart of the process so that we could send into the world confident, capable women who would compete with men on their own terms, advance in the power structure, and make room for more women?"

Before I could speak, Claudia was joined by several other students in what I experienced as an attack on me, and it was clear that she was indeed representing a substantial group of them.

I remember leaving the classroom feeling devastated but somehow knowing that there was more to this than met the eye. How we actually resolved the issue and went on are almost beyond my memory. I taught the course again. I did not make concessions in the work load because I intuitively knew that I needed to be true to my own mission to these women. I had gained so much from the demands placed on me by my own caring faculty members; they were my models in those early years of teaching. I

did not feel that I could teach a lesser course just because the students did not like the work load.

I could, however, make the structure of the course more explicit. I believed still in a cognitive, linear model of education; that is, if the students knew exactly what might happen, they would not get into a conflict with me. I thought maybe I had not been clear enough about the nature of the assessment in the class. So I informed the next group that there would be a substantial take-home exam in the middle of the class as well as at the end. But the same thing happened — a revolt of sorts in the middle of the class, although this time about a different issue. The third time I taught the class, I was able to get hold of the meta-principles at work: *The proof of the success of the class was in the students' revolt.* I began to see that the teaching of symbolic interactionism and construction



of meaning (which included assertiveness training), the Alverno teaching-learning-assessment process, and who I was as a feminist teacher, created a climate where the students could practice their newfound confidence.

Now I am cautious about interpreting student upset and revolt as an indication of suc-

cess, as that could be self-serving. However, I began to receive support for this interpretation. From the first revolution, Claudia wrote me a long letter three semesters later, thanking me for the opportunity to, for the first time, use her voice authentically. Diane from the second revolution wrote me yearly for nearly 10 years, and Cynthia from the third sought out all my classes and continued to work on understanding how to integrate her intuitive and emotional reactions to a situation with a more analytical understanding of that situation.

My experience with student revolt was a consistent pattern until a transformation occurred in my teaching. My pedagogy was very teacher centered, although it was interactive and experiential in some form. I had been influenced, while at Alverno, by Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, a hierarchical framework of knowledge. Bloom (1956) and Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964) reduce knowledge to cognitive and affective functions. I came to understand my students' revolutions as a form of affective development. That is, as they comprehended and applied content, they could take risks with external authority. Concomitantly, I learned that I could handle situations that used to scare me.

I began to understand that being safe was not the same as being comfortable. Conflict in classes was still uncomfortable, but I came to value that it was the real, rather than the artificial, fertilizer for development,

for the students and for me, and that some of the most important learning came from us walking through those uncomfortable times together. I could not at that time, however, write into a lesson plan "Week 6 — Revolution."

At Alverno, I was also introduced to a learning cycle frame-



work, one that challenges the linearity and epistemological reductionism embedded in Bloom's (1956) taxonomy. Kolb's (1984) four modes of learning—Abstract Conceptualization, Active Experimentation, Concrete Experience, and Reflective Observation—struck me as a more integrative model of learning. Alverno, based on Bloom's work, encouraged teachers to *begin* teaching with Abstract Conceptualization and then move to the more experiential aspects of the content. By definition, we worked *deductively*, moving from theory to experience. Still, when we worked from theory, we were by definition teacher-centered. I, the teacher, had the theory. They, the students, were to learn this theory from me.

When I moved to Pacific Oaks College, I learned from Jones's (1986) theory of experiential, constructivist learning for adults and studied educational implication of cultural dominance (Cooper, 1991; Darder, 1993; Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. task force, 1989). I also came "out" as a lesbian in

my life as a faculty member, an experience that moved my understanding of dominance and resistance to oppression from a theoretical to an experiential level. These events led me to transform the use of Kolb's cycle (1984) — to *start* my teaching in *Concrete Experience* and proceed through Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. By starting my teaching in *Concrete Experience*, I began to work *inductively*, moving from experience to theory. Such a seemingly small shift made the former teacher-centeredness of my work apparent. I had to construct new ways of thinking and teaching.

Experiential, constructivist learning has a long history at Pacific Oaks. In 1986, Elizabeth Jones, a Pacific Oaks faculty member, published *Teaching Adults*. In this and other books (e.g., Jones, 1993; Jones, 1995), she and other faculty at Pacific Oaks developed an experiential, interactive approach to teaching that is radical. Similar to Paulo Freire's liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 1973; 1995; 1997), Jones transforms the teacher as expert into the teacher as facilitator, midwife, consultant — where the learner engages in construction of her own learning through an emergent co-constructed curriculum. Students' stories became the core of my experiential pedagogy. Their stories situate the class in content, which allows them to interact with the content in ways that transform them and, often, transform the content — a true symbolic interactionist's dream.

Student Stories: Thesis Process as Transformation

I chose to practice my newly acquired understanding of pedagogy with individual students working on their thesis project in a thesis proposal preparation course. I wanted to test out the process of democratization and gain skills. The thesis chair role seemed an ideal place to begin. If I could make it work in the thesis setting, I would feel more confident turning over a whole classroom with more traditional content to an emergent, constructivist pedagogy. Elizabeth Jones refers to the student's story as a narrative thesis (personal communication) — the stories often have the original motivation for learning, and so, when those are tapped, they bring engagement and energy to the student as she learns. Our faculty does not recommend that all students do a narrative thesis. Such a recommendation is based on a dialogue between the student, the faculty chair, and the committee. Some students do not have enough "critical incidents" in their lives to warrant a thesis study, some are unwilling to share their life with the public in such a form, some are not able to reflect and build theory from their own life, and some have other interests that preclude a personal thesis.

As the faculty member who teaches more than 50 percent of the thesis preparation courses, I ask students to write what it is in their personal life experiences that has brought them to this

thesis project topic. They may include how their own family of origin or childhood relates to the topic as well as their own developmental processes and present-day life as people and professionals. I tell them that it is important that the thesis topic be connected to their lives as our philosophy at Pacific Oaks is that the construction of knowledge should have personal meaning and, more importantly, that we have an ethical responsibility to understand our own context and raise with ourselves the questions we intend to ask the participants in our study to help us explore. The beginning of transformation can almost always be seen in the development of the theses' Personal and Background/Problem statement.

I have chosen three students' stories to illustrate the transformation of student and teacher when learning starts with student experience.

Leslie's Story

Enrolled in a thesis development class offered over three full weekends four weeks apart, Leslie Pano (1997) began her thesis project during the first weekend by telling me privately that she was interested in exploring the cognitive development of bicultural children. She is third generation Japanese. I *invited* her rather than *challenged* her to write more about the personal and societal ties she had to the project. I wanted to be sensitive to the power difference between us not only as faculty and student but also as Euro-

pean-American (dominant culture) and Japanese-American (non-dominant culture). Because we have internalized different cultural rules, I feel insecure about the tension between the rules for interactions in dominant culture and those in non-dominant culture, and my interactions with Leslie always had, to me, a tentativeness to them as I knew that I, even in my own culture, can be perceived as too direct and directive.

Leslie then told me that what she really wanted to do was to share with her own generation of Japanese-Americans the secrets of the internment experience. Further questions from me led her to state that she needed to understand the gap in her parents' history, the years in the internment camp, and their experience with anti-Japanese racism that followed World War II.

She wanted me to be her thesis Chair. She provided me with my first experience of a narrative thesis — centered in the student's own story. It put my understanding of the tension between academic rigor and emergent curriculum to a test. How would I know the thesis was progressing appropriately when I did not have the traditional structure of a clear research question? If the thesis

was a personal, bicultural narrative, how could I guide Leslie in probing further into the Japanese culture because she felt excluded from an important historical part of it? How could I, a dominant-culture assertive white woman assist her in a culturally sensitive inquiry with first-generation Japanese people? These are still questions for me about cross-cultural work. But I trusted that I could scaffold deep personal learning. One of the more difficult insights from this work is that when a person of non-dominant culture tells me what would be helpful to her, even if it is as indirect as in Leslie's case, I have to be willing to support her within her own framework, that is, to move the center of the power relationships in the teaching-learning process (hooks, 1994).

Leslie came to the second weekend with another idea. "Maybe," she stated, "the question is not so much understanding the experience of that generation, but understanding what my own father has gone through, events that have shaped him and as a result shaped the relationship we have." I continued to help her connect the thesis project to her own need, and she uncovered her concern about a disconnection in her generation from the Japanese culture — maybe she needed a traditional Japanese teacher. "Go write," said I.

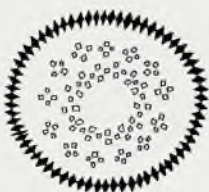
What I began to get in the mail was nontraditional writing. She began the project by reading ferociously and then placing her own experience within the

context of the readings. Her use of personal experiences was clearly an illustration of the theoretical principles she studied and it extended the conceptualizations.

Her continued writing led to yet another formulation. Maybe it was not the teacher she was searching for; maybe she already had the teachers. Could she do the thesis project about the transmission of culture from the grandmother in Japan, through the mother, first immigrant, to herself? By now, it was clear to me that this thesis had a life of its own and that my work was to be the midwife. But she tested me; I had not ever before worked with a thesis student who went through such changes.

I found myself drawing on my experiences as a mountaineer and backpacker. Leslie saw a ridge against the sky, and we thought it was the goal; however, when she reached that ridge, we could see the next ridge up and knew we both had another climb. Each climb up to a new shelf would give her (and then me) an expanded view of the territory below as well as a new "top."

Leslie continued to read, reflect, think, and write, and I read in bits and pieces. One month I would receive work in the literature review section, another month transcripts from interviews with another Sansei woman, and another month reflections on the discovery methodology we were employing. A clear picture was not yet emerging, and I told her that I did not want to make many suggestions



as she was meeting all our criteria for a thesis in an unusual way. I did not hear from her for nearly five months. Then, I got a large package with all her writing so far.

She wrote me, "I hope the Teacher has not given up on the Student," an intentional pun referring to the third thesis topic she had had. I read her work, and at the end, when she said that she was now seeing how this thesis had been about finding herself as a Japanese *Sansei* woman, I knew she was finished with the data gathering, which had consisted of her own life history, her life as related to the readings, interviews with other bicultural women, dialogues with her mother, and her mother's carrying of questions to the grandmother in Japan. She had transformed herself in the context of the thesis. She integrated her historical familial cultural context with her present day life in America.

This sort of thesis is a process of *theory-building*. Now I could help her place the writing into a more organized structure, something I did not dare do earlier for fear of disrupting *her* process with *my* structure. I practiced a different use of my power, both as a teacher and as a person of dominant culture in terms of race. This practice necessitated that I implement a way of teaching and learning that made room for a different expression of reality in the writing of the thesis project. For some, it is important to learn to fit into the dominant culture ways; for others, it is important to find who they are as bicultural people by working in their own cultural style of discourse.

I need to be willing to err on the side of the students' expressed desires after some exploration with them. That is, as dominant culture faculty, I continue to learn that *I* can better afford the discomfort of teaching by learning from the students what they need, even when I do not understand it clearly, than *they* can afford to be told once more that their needs are not going to be met. Leslie is going to be able to work with bicultural experiences, as a cultural broker for bicultural people as well as dominant culture people. Because she understands the issue of biculturality intimately, she is connected to the issue, and she has processed it in both an academic and a personal way through the thesis.

Lucy's Story

Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling major, Lucy Solomon (1997), came to the thesis class as a returning student who earlier got stuck in the thesis proposal process. A long time, successful re-evaluation counselor (see Jackins, 1973; 1982; 1994), she was struggling with developing her own thesis in the face of departmental pressure to conform to traditional psychological perspectives. Lucy is Hawai'ian-Okinawan and presented an excellent argument for the need for liberation from racism, classism, sexism, and ageism for parents. "In neglecting these issues," she claimed, "traditional therapies further oppress the powerless."

Lucy told me that she got stuck because she refused to spend her time defending and critiquing the traditional theories. *I listened*. I listened for the *energy* that is Lucy, for the developmental space, if you will, from which the thesis would emerge. I heard *her* in conversation with me and in her beginning writing. Sometimes, my job is to help students express the theory that they are clearly working out of.

I supported her in laying out her theory and did not find it audacious of her to think she knew that the psychological giants did not have re-evaluation counseling and, therefore, liberation to offer. Not an easy task. I sold her committee members on the idea that she needed to develop this work and they needed to walk with her. They did not want to support her in continuing to deepen her re-evaluation counseling skills; they wanted her to broaden her perspective, in spite of her clear insistence that she had examined other perspectives throughout her time at Pacific Oaks and found them wanting. I cared enough to find out what kind of experience and stature she carried in the re-evaluation counseling community and I wanted to see more of her work.

Her thesis is more traditional in format than Leslie's or the one I will speak about next. It has the traditional headings, and the data consist of excerpts from the taped three or four re-evaluation counseling sessions that she conducted with three parents. The object of these sessions was to help the parents let

go of their own unclear thinking about parenting from their own experiences and fear and begin to build a better relationship with their children through focused, attentive, special time.

When I read the final draft of the thesis, I realized that something was missing. In our quest to meet the traditional requirements, we had almost left Lucy, the person with whom we had started the thesis, out of the conclusion. It was more intuition than critical thinking that



made me ask her to write one more section called Lucy Revisited. When I received it, it was clear to me that without it, neither Lucy nor I would have known what a transformational experience the thesis had been. It prompted her to rewrite her introduction to the thesis to include in the Personal and Background statement the experience of being of Okinawan ancestry, how that had affected her parents and herself; and she addressed, at the end of the thesis, how she understood the thesis as a link in her developing commitment to assist the growth of teachers, parents, and adolescents. Reviewing the conclusion with me, she sobbed over her own experience of having needed a person like herself as she raised her own children.

Through her research, she forged a new relational link with her own mother, and she examined and rejected her growing pessimism that the liberation work was not enough and a little too late.

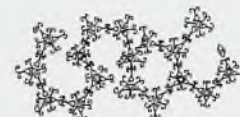
Sarah's Story

Sarah Theberge (1997) is a European-American woman who came to the weekend thesis development classes and told me that she wanted to use her thesis to develop a curriculum to include gay and lesbian parents of children in early childhood/primary grades. With Sarah, I used an approach that is fairly consistent for me when I wonder if I am working with a dominant culture member who wants to "do good" for non-dominant culture people; that is, I challenge them. They often have an enormous amount of personal work to do about the carrying of privilege and entitlement *before* they begin to understand the nondominant culture experience. So I asked her, "Why do you want to do that?" She told me that she had a son, now eight years old, who she was sure was gay. As a matter of fact, she had been sure since he was about five years old and had suspected prior to then. She described him, his play, his interests, his thinking in such detail that it was very clear she had a child with what may be called exceptionally atypical gender interests and behavior. So I said to her, "What do you *really* want to do your thesis on?" She tearfully said she needed to figure out what to do as a mother of a

probably gay child. We agreed that she could start simply by exploring the experience of being the mother of this child.

I worked on this thesis knowing that Sarah was not the only one with a personal issue at stake here; I did too. I have come to understand that the most significant social changes on behalf of non-dominant people come from dominant people acting as allies. Sarah was developing into an ally not just to her son but to gay and lesbian people. But the process was painful for Sarah. I had to challenge and support over and over again. A narrative thesis can be written *only* if the writer is willing and able to share the most intimate details of how the thinking, feeling, and acting process unfolds. Sarah was more private than we knew at the start. She dealt with feelings not by feeling them but by intellectualizing them. So when I received a draft of the thesis that was almost devoid of data (and affect), I sent it back with suggestions for data sources that had emerged in our conversations. I then received what she hoped would be the final draft. Since the draft was still skimpy on data, I pushed for more: "What happened? Tell me the story. Now, write it down. What was that like for you? How did you feel? Now, write that down."

Sarah has found, through



interviews with gay men and women, that the most important things to their healthy development as persons were supportive parents and good gay and lesbian role models. She has deepened an old friendship with a gay college instructor, and her committee member in the Northwest introduced her to two gay men with whom she is in regular correspondence. She also, after much directive prodding on my part, found her way to Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-Flag) and has taken responsibility for the Public Speaking Committee for the local chapter of the organization.

It was this step, joining P-Flag, and the final words in the writing she sent me that told me her thesis-as-development process was completed:

"I know that the issues that he is faced with are his own and that he will learn to deal with them as we all do. His issues, however, are perceived by me as a gift which has enriched me and will continue to in the circle of our lives. I used to look at Spenser and wonder what I might do to change him. Now I thank him for the change he has brought for me. No gift could be worth more."

Love and Care : The Other Dimension of Transformational Teaching-Learning

In looking back at the first experience of *revolt* in my class at Alverno, I now understand that the revolt was necessary

because I did not leave room for transformations *with* them; there was only room for transformation *for* them. Now, I spend a great deal of time with students assisting them in linking the personal, professional, and academic. Professionally, I am constantly challenged to defend this radical personal view of academic processes. "What about objectivity?" I am asked by my more traditional colleagues. "Why is it necessary to be so personal?" I also find that I need to share with the students how I perceive learning so that they can monitor their own growth and development. I have to be willing to feel and empathize as well as challenge through clear thinking. These are not skills I learned in any "how to teach college students" classes or workshops. All I can do is to make my pedagogy transparent, to share my thinking about the class and their learning experiences — a form of sharing power.

In a recent conversation with Elizabeth Jones about how my classes now seem to be on a different plane with regard to the emergence of a true learning community, she said, "I have come to be absolutely convinced that in order for true learning to take place, the students must take over the class." Now, this was my first experience of success at Alverno — a take-over that was revolutionary and somewhat, at the time, hostile in nature because I really did not have room for the students to take charge of their own learning. Still, they risked the revolution because, I think, they

sensed my caring. Now that there is room, there are transformational stories in all my classes for nearly all the students, mostly without the personal pain of an interpersonal confrontation or revolution and without the extraordinary courage it took for those early Alverno students to stand up to me, the teacher-authority. □

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Crossing the Road, or What's a Nice Lesbian Feminist Like You Doing in a Place Like This?

*This narrative follows the author's journey in teaching Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* and teaching about the death of Brandon Teena, a person born biologically female but who lived a chosen male identity and who was murdered in Nebraska for that choice. Through reading, class discussion, student journals, and especially events such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, speeches by transgender activists, and a rally in support of Brandon Teena, the author moves in her teaching from "add transgender and stir" to a conceptual framework which affects the way she sees everything. Her teaching transforms her.*

by
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Even when I am reluctant to follow, my teaching leads me to the places I need to go. One sunny day in the summer of 1994 I found myself leaving the grounds of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and crossing the county road to "Camp Trans," a camp of transgender people and their allies who were there to protest the Festival's exclusion of transsexual women. I was keenly aware of the wrist-band that a worker had put around my wrist when I entered the Festival, the sign that would also allow me back in. I didn't want to cross the road, to acknowledge the privilege that separated me from those who were on the other side, because I knew it would entail some deep and difficult changes, but my teaching compelled me.

The camp had been there the year before too, but I had ignored it. A sign read "Honk if you support Camp Trans," but I didn't honk or look. Aware of the controversy over transsexuals not being allowed into the Festival, I supported the producers' stance that only

"womyn-born-womyn" were allowed, excluding transsexual women. I had followed the debate in the national lesbian press, but I remained unmoved, sure in my identity politics that I knew what both "woman" and "lesbian" meant. I agreed with the argument that male to female transsexuals had been socialized as males, and therefore would still be male in some immutable way. But this year when we were in line waiting to enter the Festival, a woman handed me a flyer from Camp Trans which announced that both Leslie Feinberg and Minnie Bruce Pratt were going to be there, and I knew I would have to be there too.

A week after I returned from the Festival I would be teaching a new course I had designed, "20th Century Lesbian Writers." The final book on the syllabus was Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*. When I read the book for the first time, I was stunned beyond what I had expected. I found Feinberg's depiction of Jess' life as someone whom others could not definitively identify as male or female



powerful and moving. And I was chagrined to recognize some of my own views in those of the lesbian feminists who reject Jess and Theresa for being too butch and femme, who see them as imitating heterosexuality and thus not being worthy of inclusion in the lesbian feminist community. I felt it was important to teach the book, which challenged some of my long-held beliefs, and it was important for me to meet Leslie Feinberg.

I had learned much from reading and teaching the work of Minnie Bruce Pratt as well. I found her work so important that I had invited her to speak in Lincoln three years before; she had given a powerful reading and had provoked much thought among the people I knew. Since Minnie Bruce was a lesbian feminist who had helped me think about how a white woman could do anti-racist work, I knew that if she was thinking about transgender issues, I needed to think about them, and that she could help me see what it was I had to do.

I knew I had to visit Camp Trans if I were to teach *Stone Butch Blues* as responsibly as I could.

On the announced day, I walked out to Camp Trans,

about a mile walk from our campsite. I could have taken the festival shuttle, but it seemed important to walk. I took some of the less traveled paths through the woods. Some I hadn't been on for years, since my first days at the festival, and some I had never been on. I was very conscious of *leaving* the festival, *crossing* the dirt county road to enter Camp Trans. I was also aware that my wristband allowed me to re-enter the festival, while many of the women I met at Camp Trans wouldn't have that privilege. I felt awkward and a little nervous. People were sitting around a campfire eating breakfast, and offered me porridge. Some people introduced themselves or introduced other people to me. I spotted Minnie Bruce off talking with some folks, but was too shy to remind her that I had met her in Lincoln in 1991. Finally, after what seemed like a long time, people moved toward the workshop tent, and Minnie Bruce began to speak. She spoke of her new understanding of transgender and read from her upcoming book, *S/HE*. As with her lesbian and antiracist writing, she used a new lens to look back over her life, this time a transgender lens. In *S/HE*, Pratt writes of "the deep fear in the

larger culture, and therefore within ourselves, about sex and gender fluidity," that "every aspect of a person's gender expression and sex will not be consistently either masculine or feminine, man or woman" (pp. 20-21).

While Minnie Bruce was reading, I recognized Leslie Feinberg sitting in the audience. Several times she got up and left, returning a few minutes later. When Minnie Bruce was done, Leslie said, "I'm sorry to tell you this publicly, but we'll have to change our plane reservations and take another flight because we've been told we can enter the festival." She explained that several members of Camp Trans had been meeting with festival staff, and while at first they were told that transsexuals could not enter, later they were told that each woman entering the festival could decide if the "womyn-born-womyn" policy was applicable to her. So a number of women, including some transsexuals, were going to pay the fee and enter the festival. There was a great feeling of excitement, of herstory being made. I felt privileged to be there, but I still felt confused and not part of this community. What did it mean to me as a lesbian feminist to have transsexuals cross the road in the other direction and enter the festival?

When I returned home, my story of "crossing the road" to enter Camp Trans emerged as the most important part of the festival for me. I told the story over and over to friends, trying to find its meaning for myself as



well. I discussed it with friends who worked at the festival and firmly supported the producers' original stance. What for me was exciting and potentially life-changing for them was a betrayal. But I was unclear about many things. When I read that a pre-operative transsexual woman had entered the festival I also felt betrayed. Where would it stop? Could we have all-women gatherings anymore? If a penis wasn't the divider between man and woman, what was?

But I was also plunged immediately into my teaching, which included the first-time teaching of "20th Century Lesbian Writers." The reading list included two stories of transgender people, Feinberg's novel *Stone Butch Blues* and an in-depth journalistic story about the murder of Teena Brandon, a transgender person killed on December 31, 1993 in a rural farmhouse in Humboldt, Nebraska, about 100 miles from Lincoln, where I live and teach. (I use the name "Teena Brandon" and "she" to indicate my understanding at the time; soon I understood that out of respect for his chosen and lived identity, I should use "Brandon Teena" and "he.") In local newspaper articles Brandon was repeatedly described as a woman who "posed as a man" to date women in the local area. The two men suspected of the murder had raped Teena the week before, but although she reported the rape to the police and named her assailants, the two men had not been picked up. The sheriff's quotes make it

clear that he believed that anyone who would "lie" about her sex couldn't be trusted to tell the truth about other things. Sheriff Charles Laux stated: "What kind of person was she? The first few times we arrested her she was putting herself off as a guy. We were trying to figure out when she was telling the truth and when she wasn't" (Minkowitz, 1994, p. 25). The night of the rape these two men had pulled down Teena's pants in front of someone Brandon was dating, to show her that the person she was dating was a female, not a male.

As I began to realize but still not fully understand the importance of this event, I collected all of the articles about it which appeared in the local paper and those that began to appear in the national press. A *Village Voice* article quoted a student in a queer theory course at the University of Nebraska, where I teach. The student said they hadn't discussed Brandon's death in class; the writer of the article implicitly placed a negative judgment on the teacher for not doing so (Minkowitz, 1994, p. 28).

Meanwhile, local activists didn't organize around Brandon's death. There seemed to be some confusion even among ourselves over "what she was." People who knew Brandon claimed that she did not identify as a lesbian and didn't like lesbians. A man who knew Brandon in high school and who was at the time of the murders director of the campus Gay and Lesbian Resource Center stated, "She said she was disgusted by

lesbians, that she didn't think it was right.' He said Brandon told him, 'It's not okay for me to love women as a woman. I have to be a man if I'm going to love women'" (Minkowitz, 1994, p. 28). A January 4, 1994 article in the *Lincoln Journal* had the headline "Friend says victim planned sex change" and the sub-heading "Lincoln woman believes Brandon was killed for cross-dressing." In it, Jo Ann Fleming, who "took Brandon into her home for a few months in early 1992," told reporters: "Teena Brandon was a transsexual who had been encouraged by mental health experts to dress and live as a man in preparation for undergoing sex change surgery" (Stoddard & Duggan, 1994, p. 10). The alternate use of "cross-dresser" and "transsexual" in the headlines and the article, as if they are the same thing, shows confusion and a lack of knowledge among the media as well as local people. I knew of no group in Lincoln which considered Brandon part of them and which organized any actions against her death.

Two weeks later, however, on January 17, 1994, I received on email an article from the Workers World Service which gave a transgender analysis of Brandon's murder; the article quoted Leslie Feinberg saying: "This is the kind of terror and brutality that so many transgendered people, lesbians and gay men face in rural and urban areas. . . . It will take the strength of a united movement to push back the wave of violence and discrimination. And

that's just what we're building." At the time, I was impressed that national activists were paying attention to this Nebraska murder, but that was as far as my response went. I did not "get" the difference between the transgender analysis and the confused statements in the local papers. I did vow, though, that I would teach about Teena Brandon's murder in my Lesbian Writers class by using the *Village Voice* article and by having a student do a report on the local press coverage. My motives were mixed—I did not want my students quoted in a national publication saying we had ignored this transgender violence in our own back yard; yet I was also following my lesbian feminist principles that all oppression is connected and violence against one is violence against us all.

In the Lesbian Writers class, we tried to define "lesbian" the first class period and returned to those first-night definitions again and again throughout the class as the books we read complicated issues of identity and identification in ways we hadn't foreseen. During the semester, through our reading of *Stone Butch Blues* and the articles about Teena Brandon, we also grappled with what was for all of us a new concept, transgender identity, which challenged our most fundamental thinking about gender. The excerpts from students' final journals below, which are a reflection of our reading, class discussion, student journals, and my written responses to journals, show that we were

reaching out to an expanded vision of gender. (All student journal entries in this paper are used with author's permission.)

I was glad we explored this issue. . . . I also liked the idea that lesbians and transgendered people were not the same thing. Being transgendered like being lesbian is a far more complicated issue than object choice. Teena Brandon spoke of that—she loved women as a man would love women, not as a woman would love other women.

(Tami Davidson)

I am not about to attempt an unraveling of the multiple possibilities as to why, how, when, or where Brandon came to create the identity she lived by. This lack of understanding on my part represents my own limitations for imagining new ways of constructing one's identity. . . . Brandon's story testified that strict boundaries are still being drawn as to what one can be, how one can express oneself, and that those who push past these boundaries or speak out against them are in a situation of real personal jeopardy to the extreme of death.

(Thelma Ross)

Feinberg's characters suggest that broadening the definition of lesbian is not enough, that people exist who defy definition altogether. The whole process of defining is exclusionary, and in practice definitional structures tend to make people "unreal." The movement from (Radclyffe) Hall to Feinberg is a movement from

questioning aspects of dominant culture to questioning our entire understanding of reality.

(John Chapin)

Still, I am surprised in looking back to see that I could not yet make a paradigm shift myself. I would need more teaching, more discussion, more listening, more learning, and some experience with transgender people. Even after reading and teaching Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* and *Transgender Liberation*, discussing them in class, hearing Minnie Bruce Pratt speak, and meeting Leslie Feinberg, I referred to Teena Brandon by that name and as "she" rather than her chosen name ("Brandon Teena") and chosen identity as male. My teaching, including class discussions and student journals, had pushed me further, but I didn't know yet where I was going. Charlotte Bunch coined the phrase "add women and stir" for the most basic kind of curricular change regarding women (1970), which, as Ellen Messer-Davidow points out, leaves "the offending structures and underlying assumptions intact" (1985, p. 19). I can see that I was still in the "add transgender and stir" stage of teaching, not having assimilated a transgender point of view which would change my entire outlook.

The next semester, the spring of 1995, I taught *Stone Butch Blues*, *Transgender Liberation*, and two articles on Teena Brandon's murder—the *Village Voice* article and an article from *Playboy* (Jan. 1995)—in English

210B Gay and Lesbian Literature. One of the most heated aspects of the discussion of *Stone Butch Blues* was whether it was "right" for Jess to have sex with Annie with Annie believing that she was a man. Some of the students were adamant that this was deception, and that deception was always wrong. Many simply did not believe that any woman could be so "fooled": they felt that Feinberg had failed as a writer in creating a situation that was so patently unbelievable. Then we read the voyeuristic *Village Voice* and *Playboy* articles in which the authors report that even after it was "revealed" to them that their "boyfriend" was "actually" a woman, some of Brandon's girlfriends describe him as the best lover they ever had. A woman to whom he had been engaged was quoted as saying that "sex with Brandon was 'the best sex she ever had' and that '[h]e was a good lover'" (Minkowitz, 1994, p. 26). She also said, "'He told me how all his other girlfriends had treated him like crap when they found out, . . . and it made me really angry. I started thinking. What does it matter what a person is like physically? He was a man to me, and I'd never been happier in my life'" (Konigsberg, 1995, p. 196). We had a close-at-home case, a "real-life" scenario to challenge our dismissal of the world Feinberg created as "not real,"

creating some serious cognitive dissonance.

I myself didn't know how to think about Brandon. As a woman who came out into a strong lesbian feminist community, whose values were formed by that community, and who identifies as a lesbian feminist, I was uncomfortable with a woman who loved other women yet who rejected lesbian identity. And I didn't know enough about transsexuality to understand it as a reality for someone from Lincoln, Nebraska (Teena had been born and grew up in Lincoln). A "woman who posed as a man" was still a woman to me.

But Feinberg's pamphlet, *Transgender Liberation*, gave me and the students another way to consider Teena Brandon's gender: In a section entitled, "Gender: self-expression, not anatomy" (1992, p. 5). Feinberg states:

[T]here's nothing wrong with men who are considered "masculine" and women whose self-expression falls into the range of what is considered "feminine." The problem is that the many people who don't fit these nar-

row social constraints run a gamut of harassment and violence. . . . Many people think that all "masculine" women are lesbians and all "feminine" men are gay. That is a misunderstanding. Not

all lesbians and gay men are "cross"-gendered. Not all transgendered women and men are lesbian or gay. Trans-gendered people are mistakenly viewed as the cusp of the lesbian and gay community. In reality the two huge communities are like circles that only partially overlap. (1992, pp. 5-6)

Our discussion in this class began to deal more clearly with the concept of transgender identity. Feinberg's protagonist, Jess, and Teena Brandon were transgendered people. I had begun to "get" it with the second teaching of this material, learning from the material, class discussion, and student journals. I believe it is significant that the students from this class whose final journals are quoted below all connect *Stone Butch Blues* to some personal experience. This shows the benefits for me of teaching the same material in different classes. These students, while their thoughts are as sophisticated as those of the students in the previous higher level class, are not as abstract in their rendering of them, and connect with the protagonist of *Stone Butch Blues* in some personal way, which helped me connect as well.

Stone Butch Blues had a large impact on me . . . this makes you look at how much of an impact and difference someone's born gender can make and how much that is looked at and how much it's looked down upon if you don't fit the stereotypes of your born



gender. And I can't even imagine what she went through—I've been called sir, or been mistaken for a boy a few times when I was younger and that was difficult enough, but having to go through that hate and pain everyday.

(Liz Dodds)

I think the most vivid image I will always carry with me is that of Jess being buried alive. That is the ultimate way to destruction; she felt as if she did not exist. I can't even imagine what it must be like. I know that I have felt like that but not in the intensity which Feinberg describes. [This student came to the U.S. from El Salvador 15 years ago, when she was about 5.] Reading *Zami* [by Audre Lorde] I had yet another chance to look at my own self perceptions and how I got to where I am now. I again, with pain, remembered how my family and I had to deny who we were in order to survive in the all-white Nebraska Panhandle. I do not blame myself anymore and I think that this comes from reading how Lorde can take the positive from all her experiences. Even the negative aspects of her relationships she claims as her own. This is certainly a work which I need to work through again. Jess goes through the same path of reconstructing herself as Lorde and [Connie] Panzarino go through. I saw the last dream she had as finally accepting her life, her being.

My assumption that labeling does not work, except for in a science lab, maintains its vibration. We are not science

experiments; we are human beings who could learn a lot from each other.

(Brenda Coto)

I had traveled some miles since crossing the road, but even after hearing Minnie Bruce Pratt and seeing Leslie Feinberg, teaching *Stone Butch Blues*, *Transgender Liberation*, and articles about Teena Brandon, I still had miles to go. Just after the semester was over, on May 14, 1995 (Mother's Day), a friend



and I drove to Kansas City to hear Leslie Feinberg, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Kate Bornstein (author of *Gender Outlaw*) speak about Teena Brandon. The next day they and other transgender activists from around the country were also going to hold a rally at the trial of John Lotter, one of the men accused of murdering Teena Brandon. It took me a long time to decide to go. I didn't make a commitment, in fact, until the day before. I'm sure it was the same kind of dynamic that I experienced about crossing the road to Camp Trans, not wanting to go but knowing I had to go.

On the ride to Kansas City, we talked about what we knew of Teena Brandon and both admitted that we were uncomfortable when transgender activists referred to Teena as

"Brandon" and "he." To me, Brandon might have been a transgendered person, but she was still a woman. I suppose I still believed, like the journalists, that she was a woman "posing as a man," although of course I would argue her right to do that. I can see now that in spite of some new understandings, I was still operating within an old paradigm.

When we arrived at the Unitarian Church in Kansas City, I felt keenly how mainstream I looked and felt very much in the minority. Many people were in black and many wore black t-shirts with "Transsexual Menace" emblazoned in red. Everyone there looked like a transsexual to me, although, of course, I had little experience of what "a transsexual" "looked like." Minnie Bruce Pratt greeted me warmly. She introduced me to many other people, including a male-to-female transsexual with a lesbian daughter in Lincoln. She clearly wanted all of us to connect, network, and work together. I felt flattered but still nervous. I did not know what my place was in this community.

The first speaker was Aphrodite Jones, who was writing a "true crime" book on Teena Brandon. She made sure to tell us that one of her previous books had been on the *New York Times* bestseller list. When she said, "Teena Brandon," there were immediate shouts from the audience, "Brandon Teena." She went on, "Brandon Teena, Teena Brandon, it's all the same." But clearly some members of the audience did not agree. She

pushed on, somewhat nervously. Soon Leslie Feinberg and Minnie Bruce Pratt left the stage. A couple of other people left the audience. I wondered if I should too, but I didn't know what to do. I was relieved when she finished.

Kate Bornstein spoke next. I had seen her book *Gender Outlaw* and knew she was a male to female transsexual. She spoke about how transgender people confuse other people, and people don't like to be confused. She stated that for her, a transgender person is someone from one gender who performs another gender, but she believes that we all perform gender all the time, some more consciously than others. Bornstein calls herself transgendered, not male or female, although she has found that she enjoys "playing a girl" most.

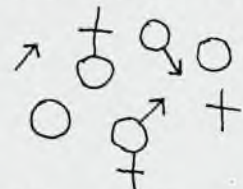
Bornstein stated that "man" and "woman" are assumed to be essential identities in our society. But she asked *how* those of us in the audience knew our gender identity, and guessed that few if any had had a chromosome check to find out (only one person had). She then asked a series of provocative questions—if one of us found her attractive, what would that make us? If we kissed her, what would that make us? If we made love with her, what would that make us? Lesbians and gays are not necessarily transgender, Bornstein stated. But she also pointed out that in the contemporary U.S. lesbians and gays do violate gender codes and transgress gender; this is often what we are persecuted

for. Therefore, gays, lesbians, transgender people, and transsexuals can work together in an inclusive movement. Bornstein believes that the time for identity politics has come and gone; it will not serve us anymore.

Minnie Bruce Pratt spoke of losing custody of her children because she was a lesbian as the defining event of her life, her introduction to the reality of oppression. She claims her place now in a gay and lesbian community but also in the gender community, not as an ally looking on and helping others, but as a part of that community. When she read from *S/HE* I felt much more connected than I did at Michigan. She spoke of the articles on Brandon which called her "she" and were obsessed with how she as a woman made love with other women while "masquerading" as a man as having stripped her of her identity as surely as did her two murderers when they pulled down her pants and forced the woman she was dating to look at her. The articles she was referring to were the articles I had read and discussed with my classes, but until this point I had not been able to really see Brandon Teena as a transgender person who had her identity denied by those who insisted she was a woman "posing" as a man or "masquerading" as a man. This was a profound change which would take me months to process.

Leslie Feinberg began her talk by directly addressing Aphrodite Jones' refusal to honor Brandon Teena's chosen identity. She stated that using

"Brandon" and "he" respects the identity that Brandon chose, lived, and died for. Feinberg spoke of transgender as an umbrella concept. For her "transgender" means to cross the boundary of the sex you were biologically born, to refuse to allow society's expectations for that sex to limit your expression of who you are. (It is also true that for some people sex is not biologically unambiguous at birth.) At this point, Feinberg pulled her wallet out of the back pocket of her pants and displayed her N.J. driver's license with "M" for "sex." She explained that if she is pulled over late at night on a highway for a broken taillight or other infraction, she is safer if her appearance appears to match the listed sex. She is subject to imprison-



ment and fine for having the "wrong" gender on her license, but she announces it publicly wherever she goes; if she is ever reported to the NJ authorities, she will make an issue out of it. However, to have the "wrong" gender on a passport is a felony, so she cannot travel internationally at this time. Feinberg challenged the audience to join transgender activists in the political work of removing the requirement for a box for "sex" from these legal documents. She compared it to the fight to remove race from legal documents and identity cards in a time when that was used for dis-

crimination. Feinberg stated her politics of inclusion as: "Tell me what your grievances are and I'll be the best fighter I can for you." She asked the same from me.

Feinberg then read the chapter "Not Just Passing" from her new book *Transgender Warriors*. Her point was that we can't just refract transgendered lives through one lens, either women's oppression or lesbian and gay oppression. Women have always "passed" as men, sometimes for economic survival or to be able to do something that only men could do, but not always. Sometimes they were lesbian, but sometimes they were not. She herself has passed most of her adult life to be able to survive and feed her family.

The day left me with a lot of new feelings and thoughts. I realized that when I first got there, I was trying to figure out who was who, who was male and who was female, who was a lesbian, who was transsexual. I thought about which bathroom people would use. I was aware of male to female transsexuals who seemed feminine and "looked like" women to me, and others who still looked like men. But I now thought of the young person killed in Nebraska as "Brandon" and his identity as male. I realized I was in a new space, but it would take me a while to really occupy it.

The next day my friend and I drove to Falls City for the demonstration outside the Richardson County courthouse at the trial of John Lotter. The announcement for the rally

states, "To raise consciousness about the failure of the sheriff to protect Brandon and the general and widespread devaluing of transgender, transsexual, and homosexual people and their rights." In "Why We're Here," a flier distributed at the demonstration, Riki Anne Wilchins states:

The murder of Brandon Teena was not an isolated incident, erupting in stark contrast upon an otherwise peaceful terrain of gender tolerance. Violence against genderqueer and trans-identified people happens, it happens regularly, *it will happen again*. Our bodies are the battleground where a war to regulate and control gender expression is increasingly being fought. We are the inevitable casualties in this bloody and unsought conflict.

We come here today to commemorate and press for freedom on behalf of *all* people who are gender oppressed. And by "gender oppressed," we do not just mean those specimens inevitably coralled in the binary zoo: the leatherqueens and faghags, the drag kings and drag queens, the stone butches and diesel dykes, the nellie queens and radical fairies, the transvestites and transsexuals, the crossdressers, leatherdykes and dykedaddies. But also for the 17 year-old midwestern cheerleader who dies from anorexia because "real women" are preternaturally thin. The Joe Sixpack who wraps his car around a

crowded schoolbus on his way home from the bar because "real men" are heavy drinkers. The aging body, crippled in an unnecessary hysterectomy because certain kinds of bodies simply don't matter as much. In fact, we are here today to press for freedom, not just for people like Brandon Teena and Marsha P. Johnson, who died for their expression of gender, but also for those who felt *impelled* and even *empowered* to kill to preserve regimes of gender: in short *until each and every one of us* is delivered from this most pernicious, divisive, and destructive of insanities.

On the back of the statement were the name eight of ea people who had been killed because of their expression of gender.

I recognized many people from the day before, but I still felt some dis-ease, not sure that I was willing to be seen by others as a part of this community, not sure that I wanted to be part of this community. We formed ourselves on the side of the courthouse along the main street and held signs with pictures of Brandon Teena, "In Memoriam." I found myself frightened to stand with a sign by the side of the road, but I did it. Many people slowed their cars down to look, some waved before they realized who we were, many stonily looked away after they realized, a few waved or honked in support, and a few shouted obscenities or threw things. In spite of my discom-

fort at being in a group in which I felt in the minority, everyone was caring and thoughtful and accepting of me. It was a warm day, and people circulated among us, making sure everyone had sunscreen, making sure people had enough to drink and were not becoming dehydrated.

At one point Kate Bornstein crossed the road so that we had people on both sides. She was dressed all in black leather, with knee-high boots, a leather vest, and a flamboyant hat. She's a wonderful, outgoing, gregarious person, and it made me feel good to see her there on that Nebraska street, smiling, waving, greeting all those who went by in their cars.

"IT'S NOT A GIRL
IT'S NOT A BOY
IT'S JUST A BABY"

After a while of standing along the street, we traded off to rest while others stood with the signs. On one break I talked to a male-to-female transsexual who was "in transition," that is, living as a woman in preparation for surgery. She was worried about whether she would be fired from her job because people were uncomfortable with her sex change. In a lesson I learn over and over again in my life, I found myself relating to her as an individual, feeling her worries and fears, instead of seeing a label or a category: "trans-

sexual." I knew that if I cared about this person as a person I needed to work within the transgender movement. It's what I work for in my teaching—to help myself and students come to care about people whose experiences are very different from ours and to become their allies.

Several months later, when I taught 20th Century Lesbian Writers for the second time, a graduate student, who had taken the course the first time, served as an intern, attending all classes, taking notes on discussion, reading student journals, and having regular discussions with me about what she observed. Interestingly, she felt that unlike the first course, this time the entire class was framed by a transgender analysis, from the first book, *The Well of Loneliness*, to *Stone Butch Blues* and the articles about Brandon Teena. Although we again defined "lesbian" the first night, we never took gender as a binary or a fixed category. We frequently discussed local and national transgender events as well. During the semester, John Lotter was sentenced to death for the murders of Brandon Teena, Lisa Lambert, and Phillip DeVine (two others staying at the same house with Brandon who were killed at the same time). The other murderer had already been sentenced to three life sentences. In addition, Aphrodite Jones' "true-crime" book, *All She Wanted*, was published. Even the article about it in the local paper had an insert headlined "Transsexual activists criticize

book's author" which quoted transgender activist Riki Anne Wilchins as saying: "The feeling in this community is Brandon died for the desire to be a man. . . . It's a matter of showing respect for a person's choice" (Duggan, 1996, p. 6A). The article reported on cancelled book signings in Lincoln because of fear of protests. In addition, a tasteless joke about Brandon Teena on Saturday Night Live was widely protested by the transgender community. We didn't wait to get to the transgender material at the end of the class; a transgender analysis infused all of our readings and discussion. For example, it seemed clear that today we could understand Stephen, the main character of *The Well of Loneliness*, as a transgender person.

Near the end of the semester, Minnie Bruce Pratt and Leslie Feinberg spoke at UNL. I had invited them in Kansas City the year before; now it was happening. With help from many others, I had organized the event, which included raising the money, arranging the publicity, ordering books for a bookselling and booksigning, making travel arrangements, and all the other things that need to be done for a successful event. Pratt and Feinberg spoke in the evening to an audience of about 300, consisting of many university students who had read their works, a few faculty, community members, and transgender activists. The evaluations and responses were overwhelmingly positive, including at least one person who

said it was the first time she had been in a place with people who looked like her. I felt like I no longer had to cross the road; I belonged on both sides.

It seems strange that so little of this teaching narrative takes place in the classroom. It tells me how much I need to be a learner in order to be a teacher. Of course, this is only one of many stories I could tell about making the conceptual shift that teaching *Stone Butch Blues* and transgender issues required of me. It also strikes me that here and in other instances in my 20-year teaching career, I found what I needed outside the academy, in lesbian and feminist events, workshops and festivals, community work, and activism. It seems important for me to tell this particular story because my university validates, by paying my way, only academic conferences where I am presenting my research to others. In telling this story I am also aware that my students are often ahead of me; their journals show that some of them could see the implications of our reading more quickly than I. Much of my learning takes place in the classroom and through activities associated with it, such as class discussions, responding to student journals, and student reports.

I find that I need to put myself in scary and uncomfortable situations to grow as a teacher. A thread that runs through this narrative is that I did things I dreaded and feared doing. I realize with humility that this is what I ask of my students all the time, and that they

almost universally respond with courage and faith. Like many others, I have found that transformative teaching means transforming myself. □

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When the Story Won't Write Itself

This article describes some of the "necessary complexities" in writing teaching stories and suggests a strategy for writers when they struggle to give shape and structure to experience. Using embodied images of the self—before and after the experience—the storyteller can better hone details of the situation so that they inform and support the thematic meanings of the story.

by
Diane Gillespie

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In the midst of reading and editing articles for this journal, I traveled to New Orleans to give a workshop. Gemma, my twelve-year-old daughter, accompanied me to do some sightseeing. One of our adventures was an early morning swamp tour. In an open-sided boat, we floated through the ever-opening waterways of the bayou. The green algae growing on the top of the muddy water licked the boat as our tour guide spun stories about the wildlife living beneath the algae and in the dense foliage on land. We could reach out and touch Spanish moss that hung down lace-like from the trees or yellow widow spiders dangling in their webs. Our tour guide had trained alligators to come out of their dens for marshmallows, and as we were waiting for a stubborn one to swim out, a large turtle poked up its head. The guide turned to us and said, "You know why turtles have no predators, don't you? Why they live to be 400-500 years old? If an animal swallows them, they don't die. They just eat their way out of their predators."

Many of the authors in this journal described their stories in just this way—as if the stories had eaten their way out of them. Elizabeth Young, for example, described her experi-

ence when she tells personal stories to her classes: "It was as if another force resided in me, one that was determined to bring forth these personal stories in spite of my best efforts to contain them." Our stories have a life force of their own, even though they are ours in a very intimate way. This sense of a story as embedded in, yet distinct from, the self creates tension in the telling.

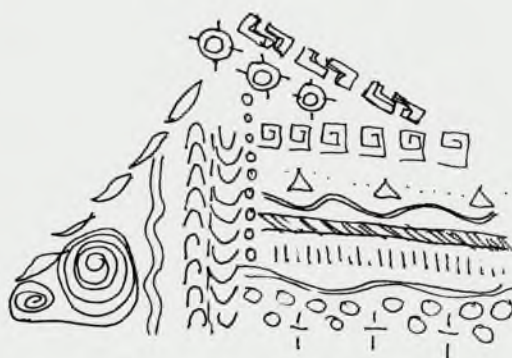
The tension between a story's intimacy and its separateness is no doubt the result of the tension in experience itself. John Dewey (1980) described "the having of experience" as holistic, a seamless engagement in the world. Yet one also reflects back on previous experiences for explanations about why things happened the way that they did. Donald Polkinghorne (1988) stated, "Narrative explanation comprehends patterns in actions and events that could not have been predicted in advance, and it does this by looking back over what has happened" (p. 116). This recognition of the unexpected in experience gives rise to our wanting to tell others.

Writing, even more than telling, requires one to reach back into lived experience and consciously pull it forward as if it were fully given again in all

its original sensory and bodily form. And, as one brings back the past, one does so for a purpose—and then the story becomes a separate entity, open for understanding by others. A well-written story nourishes the tension in the story as deeply personal and as independent as a three dimensional object that one studies as one turns it around. Even as one reaches back for details, one creates the interpretive frame—by establishing the beginning. The writer of a story thus represents and reconstructs the past to explain “how change from ‘beginning’ to ‘end’ takes place” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 117). Wanting to tell, telling, and telling again are interpretative and purposeful acts. Yet, even as the interpretive frame emerges, it cannot take the place of the original experience, or the story becomes lifeless, disconnected from experience and the self.

When writing stories, one often does not know the interpretive frame or even the motivation for telling about it in advance. This is especially true with teaching stories which are complicated by the multiple dimensions of time and place, number and kinds of students, and subject matter. In memory, the classroom feels more like thicket than well-pruned garden. In drawing out details from this underbrush of experience, the teacher confronts her motives and purposes for telling

the story—both for herself and her audience. Because teachers often tell or write stories for the purposes of reflective practice (as opposed to, say, writing fiction), the “understandings” one derives from experience are similar to those of scholars doing qualitative research. (For



helpful strategies in composing narrative in the qualitative research tradition, see Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1997; Hertz, 1997; Riessman, 1993; Richardson, 1990.)

Although the process of writing the story may be fraught with confusion and uncertainty, the publicly printed story must be coherent, the events significant. Polkinghorne (1988) defined narrative as:

The gathering together of events into a plot in which signification is given to the events as they relate to the theme of the story. The plot configures the events into a whole, and the events are

transformed from merely serial, independent happenings into meaningful happenings that contribute to the whole theme. (p. 142-143)

One often starts serially, only to discover surprise twists and turns thematically.

In the remainder of this essay, I describe a technique that I have used in the process of writing teaching narratives (Gillespie, 1992; Gillespie, 1996) when they won't easily write themselves. Rather than working from plot and theme, which an English teacher might suggest, I work from embodied images—one before “the experience” and one after. These images need to be dramatic, contextual, and thoughtful. They capture a way of being, with stu-

dents and subject matter in interaction. Having these two images helps me delineate the set of actions that were meaningful in the event.

The First Image: “Before the Experience”

Poet Richard Hugo (1979) stated that real or imagined things from experience “act as a set of stable knowns that sit outside the poem. They . . . serve as a base of operations for the poem. Sometimes they serve as stage setting” (p. 6). Like the poet, the story teller needs to make explicit the features or existential details of the situation. I use an image to get the “stable

knowns" out on the table—"here's what it was like and what I was like—then." This image helps me bring a fuzzy picture into focus.

Also in the first image, it is important to set up the situation so that the social agreements about classroom life that lie beneath the surface can be articulated. And often, the first image is of a situation that the story teller did not create. Take, for example, Judith Levin's story, "Telling Rape." Her "before" image is of herself as "a teacher who would not tell rape." Multiple social agreements, layered over time, inform this image—that the personal is not the academic, that knowledge is objective, not subjective, and so forth. Similarly, we learn in Barbara DiBernard's story that as a lesbian teacher, she was viscerally aware of the heterosexist frame of reference of university classrooms; but she was unaware of the ways her lesbian studies class had unwittingly preserved a bifurcated view of gender. Like Judith who could not tell rape, Barbara could not hear transgender.

Stylistically, one can start out with a clear "before" image of the teaching self and her context and explore the subtleties of the "after" image. And/or one can explore the subtleties of the self before the experience. Richard Holody's paper, for example, shows the continual push and pull of the "before" teacher who unwittingly demonstrates his class and gendered privilege by projecting "responses" onto his students with the "after" teacher who goes

back to democratize his classroom by determining "where his students are." And what makes his second image trustworthy is that he has found the logic of his students' intellectual commitments and builds from those. The "before" image must be real and clear to readers who can identify and imagine with the protagonist the dynamics of the problematized situation. (Would I tell a rape story? What do I know about transgender issues? What am I doing with my privileges?)

The Second Image: "After the Experience"

What kind of image of the teacher emerges after experience and reflection on that experience? If the story teller looks at the "after" image of herself as teacher, she can see how experience made her different—in action. Without an embodied image here, the story teller lapses into meaningless generalizations. So the author must demonstrate new action in an old context. In Judith Levin's article, the telling of the rape story does not cause the most profound transformation; the learning when and how to tell it does. Thus we see by the end, ironically, that she now chooses not to tell rape in a particular class. Similarly, in Laila Aaen's story, the before image of the teacher was of one who could not make room for students to take charge of their own learning. The second image is of a teacher who has made room for students to confront personal and social truths without taking unneces-

sary public risks.

Writing narratives is complex and tricky, and when the story is like the turtle, determined to gnaw its way out, getting stuck with the writing can be even more frustrating. I've found it useful in these moments to construct embodied images that capture what I was like before the transformative event and what I'm like after. The story itself is about the actions that caused change—a disturbance in the taken-for-granted, new perspectives on socially shared assumptions, an action that caught me off guard. When I have the images, I can then connect the actions that link them, bringing them together in a coherent way for a reader. It's not that I want stories to be neatly sewn up. To the contrary, a good story opens up my experience to others who may interpret it differently. As Robert Coles (1989) reminded us in *The Call of Stories*, "The beauty of a good story is its openness—the way you or I or anyone reading it can take it in, and use it for ourselves" (p. 47).

The gift that the stories in this issue give us is not the before and after images—although they are embedded in each—but the acts of transformation themselves, undertaken against deadening assumptions about teaching and learning and toward a vision of inclusive and democratic education that empowers both student and teacher. With stories of transformative teaching, we move collectively from survival toward liberation. □

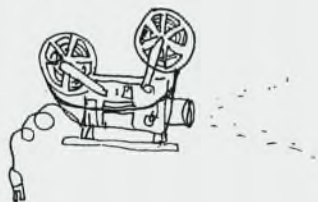
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Transformation and Teaching in the Movies

Do the stories we tell ourselves about teaching through the movies reflect anything significant about what teaching is really like? James Rhem argues that the stories movies tell reflect some of the most profound, indeed archetypal, truths of teaching and the subtleties of transformation for both teacher and student which teaching brings about.

by
James Rhem

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Almost everyone likes a happy ending even if it seems a tad implausible. Difficulties arise. We understand that. We expect that. But we like to see them worked out. Yet, as much as we like harmonious resolution, we also insist on change. Something must happen or seem to happen or we are not a happy culture. These two desires help explain the importance of the story in our lives. They also highlight the dilemma of education. We want new information, but we'd like it—new research findings, for example—to make sense and not rock the boat of what we thought we knew—at least not too much.

Over the long haul, understanding is the only thing likely to satisfy both our desire for "harmonious resolution" and our desire for "the new." Few vehicles of discourse serve our deep need for understanding better than the story, for the story continually reforms old knowledge in the light of new. And stories do this by persistently asking the same old, open questions that have preoccupied humankind from the beginning: What is "the good"? How do we "know"? What are we here for? Our new stories carry our old questions along with them and transform our understanding of

them within the present world. Things "happen" in stories, and the primary thing that happens is that our understanding of the world changes and keeps pace.

It is for understanding and challenge, not for information, that we read stories. Thus, to speak of "stories of transformation" is, to me, to speak of all stories, not just of stories in which someone or something changes (usually for the better).

I've come to this view of the story in an odd way—through the movies. Last year I prepared and gave a keynote address at the annual meeting of the POD Network on "The Teacher in the Movies." In it, I traced the view of "the teacher" found in the almost 60 years of film history from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939) to *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995). A doctorate in English Literature had prepared me to view the movies as stories. (Indeed, movies are not only one of America's most profound contributions to the arts, but also probably the most powerful mode of modern storytelling.) But I did not imagine how alive my understanding of the way stories work in our culture would become as a result of studying several dozen "teaching" films.

When we set out to tell a

story, we are participating in something much larger than ourselves; something with a larger history: more power, and greater importance. However modest our efforts, whether we are telling a bedtime story, recounting family history, or producing King Kong, we are releasing a work of imagination into the world. However new they seem to us, our efforts are the continuation of something very old. Almost inevitably they juggle archetypes, ideas we humans carry deep within us, and keel weights of stability in our navigation of new experience. Is there an archetype of "the teacher" in the way that there surely is of "the healer," "the advocate," and others? There seems to be. Ask yourself, "Who were the greatest teachers of all time?" For most people, a handful of names quickly comes to mind, and the list almost always includes Socrates and Jesus. These were the most frequently given names when I asked the question on the POD Listserv a few weeks before I spoke to that group. But the list of great teachers went on to include figures as humble as Mom and Dad.

To me, the confirmation that we carry an archetype of "the teacher" in our collective unconscious is almost as important as the characteristics of the archetype. We will argue endlessly in any one decade about what a teacher "ought" to be, but the fact that we keep coming back to the notion of the importance of teaching as a part of living is vitally important. It's not unimportant, of course, that

all of these archetypal figures have in common lives of complete, life-giving sacrifice, but I think they would all agree that the learning to which their lives were dedicated is much more important than the parts they played in it.

But that claim seems to leave me talking about learning more than teaching, doesn't it? Interestingly enough, the more one studies teaching, the more one comes to see that it really can't be understood apart from learning. Learning may occur without formal teaching, but the proof of real teaching lies in learning. Learning is primary. It's no mere trendy twist that many campuses are calling their faculty development units, centers for "learning and teaching" rather than "teaching and learning."

When we look at serious (if necessarily simplified) portrayals of the teacher, we can't avoid seeing this shift from teaching to learning; it's part of the archetypal story of teaching. It's what teaching is about, and it isn't a thing a teacher does to someone else. Transformation isn't sorcery; it's the unavoidable magic in lifelong learning. In the movies, good teachers are not simply figures who facilitate transformation in others, but also figures willing to change in response to their experience. Figures who learn, often as unwillingly as their students. Think about the two bookend figures in the history of movies about teaching—Mr. Chips and Mr. Holland. Setting aside, for the moment, the various forms of sentimentality and over-simpli-

fication in these films, why have they proven such popular and welcomed images of teaching? It's not the sentimentality. Both *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* and *Mr. Holland's Opus* are biographies, and in them, the central figure, the teacher, holds our attention and wins our sympathies because he is also, profoundly, a student. Within the context of a whole life story, we see the teacher learning, often openly, confessionally, and through the kinds of mistakes and misjudgments we might make.

Open learning stands as a reliable index of good teaching in movie portrayals. We don't find it in essentially bad teaching films like *The Paper Chase* (1973) or *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969), for example, but we do find it in good teaching films like *Stand and Deliver* (1987) *Educating Rita* (1983), *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *Apartment for Peggy* (1948). Learning is primary, and when the movies reflect that, we know they are being true to the archetype whatever else they may be saying about teaching.

Learning is the form of change most accurately described as transformation, as well as being the only meaningful evidence of good teaching.

If learning is central to the archetype of the teacher as seen in the movies, a consistent characteristic of the archetype's story centers on the struggle to balance the masculine and feminine, the animus and anima. We think of this as a very modern struggle, something we've just discovered. *Women's Ways of*

Knowing, to cite the most influential recent book, has (when paired with William Perry's 1970 study of Harvard males, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*) been popularly received as evidence that men and women think and "know" differently. It, together with the women's movement and a widespread discussion of diversity in general, has helped us remember that certainly we need at least these two fundamental perspectives to achieve a coherent understanding of our human experience. But the archetypal understanding of good teaching reflected in the movies has grasped this insight very firmly all along. In the movies, when the anima and animus are out of balance, the teaching is consistently flawed and the learning environment seriously compromised. When they are in balance, the opposite is true.

We can see all of this laid out very clearly in *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939). The movie (based on the James Hilton novella) tells Charles Chipping's story in one great flashback. As the film begins, "Mr. Chips," now 84, is running to convocation at the start of school. He's been ill, but he's never missed an opening convocation and doesn't want to miss this one. But he does. He arrives too late. His story, his life as a teacher, is over. But the story of a new teacher's life is just beginning. The headmaster introduces Chips to this new teacher, and they have a brief conversation in the courtyard of Brookfield School.

Chips offers only one

piece of advice. He tells the young teacher not to be afraid as he stands before his class. He reminds him that many have stood before where he will be standing. The young teacher, awed by the legendary Chips and eager to discover what he knows, says, "But surely in all these years you've found the secret [to good teaching]?" And Chips replies dreamily, "Oh, yes . . . but it took time, too much time, and I didn't 'find' it, you know. It was given to me."



Goodbye, Mr. Chips opens by dangling the bait before us. What is "the secret" and what does he mean it was "given" to him? To answer the question, the movie tells Chips's story, and it is a familiar story at first. Mr. Chipping starts off full of idealism and a desire to do well, but he lacks skill. He loses control of his classroom, and the headmaster has to step in and restore order. Counseling Mr. Chipping later, the headmaster tells him that "above all it takes authority, moral authority" to be a teacher. But he doesn't tell him what "moral authority" really means, and Chips doesn't really understand. He goes back and clamps down with strict discipline, keeping his students in for a special session that keeps the star cricket player from playing in an important match against a rival school. Brookfield loses

the cup and from the mouth of a distraught student who blurts out, "Perhaps you don't mind being hated." Chips learns that a teacher's authority isn't centered in the kind of power he's resorted to. He sees it immediately, and in a wonderful moment of open learning, he says to the class: "Boys, my judgment in the first instance was hasty and ill-advised... If I've lost your friendship, there's little else left that I value."

What?! Can Chips value the "friendship" of a bunch of schoolboys more than the Latin he's there to teach them? He seems to be saying as much, but we have to let the story unfold for Chips himself to learn just what he means.

Chips's teaching improves in the next ten to fifteen years, but he's passed over for a house master's appointment which he dearly wanted. To salve his wound, his colleague, the German teacher, prods him into getting out of his rut and coming along on a vacation to Switzerland. There at the center of the movie on a mountain top in the mist above the clouds, he meets Kathy (Greer Garson)—the woman he will marry, the woman who will give him the nickname "Chips," the woman who, by her example and through her effect on him, gives him the "secret" of good teaching. It's a symbolic meeting of anima and animus in every way and a juncture of complete renewal for Chips. He's feeling tired, defeated, middle-aged. She speaks of not being able to see how one could ever grow old "in a world that's ever-new."

The boys are the future, ever-present, fixing the teacher in a timeless and important role. Chips and Kathy laugh, giddy in the sense that it's all "positively heroic." "We're gods," she says.

It's only after they marry and Kathy begins inviting Chips's students over for Sunday tea that Chips softens into using his innate compassion—the thing that led him to affirm the importance of their "friendship"—as part of his teaching.



Even in a simple story like this, we see that becoming a good teacher is more complicated than acquiring some classroom management skills and getting in touch with one's feminine (or masculine?) side. One of the important lessons of "Mr. Chips" (a point he stresses at the beginning of the film) is that it takes a long time to become a really great teacher.

That point (again in company with an emphasis on the importance of balance between anima and animus in one's perspective) recurs in *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995).

In a way Mr. Holland is himself a very modern student. Unlike Mr. Chipping, who starts off full of dedication and eagerness, Mr. Holland doesn't want to be in this class at all. He doesn't want to be a teacher; he wants to be a composer. Teaching is his day job, not his career. This difference matters not at all because Chips and Holland (and perhaps all of us) follow similar patterns in learning. They learn

the important lessons the hard way, through loss and reconciliation. They have to give something up in order to grasp something larger. Chips loses Kathy (and their baby) in childbirth, but awakens on his deathbed to rebut the colleagues he overhears saying, "Too bad he never had any children of his own." "What's that you say?" he says. "You're wrong; I've had thousands of them."

In *Mr. Holland's* big, sappy ending, Mr. Holland learns that he's touched thousands of lives too, but he wouldn't have if his anima hadn't also led him to grasp an important lesson. Ironically, as in Chips's case, it's one he "knew" but didn't understand. The heart of Mr. Holland's story of transformative learning emerges in the scene that follows his wife, Iris, telling him they're going to have a baby. He doesn't react well to the news because it seems to throw a monkey wrench into his career plans, and Iris runs off to the bedroom in tears. Holland goes in to her and, getting a grip on his feelings, tells her a story. It's the story of his most important learning to date, his learning that music is all that he wants

to do in life. In a nutshell it's another story of his thinking that he hates something only to discover later that he loves it. In this case it's the music of jazz great John Coltrane. Holland tells Iris that assimilating the news that they're going to have a baby is like learning to listen to John Coltrane all over again, something so powerful and transforming that it will take him a long time. Indeed, when the baby, Cole, is born deaf, the deafness intensifies Holland's learning struggle. From Holland's point of view (one he carries in martyred silence), Cole is not just different, he's less than he should be. Cole is imperfect. He's a living reminder of Holland's life which he also sees as compromised, unable to live in music as he'd dreamed.

The Coltrane scene where Holland consoles his wife with the story of his learning to listen to jazz is like the scene where Chips declares to the boys that if he's lost their "friendship" there's little else left that he values. In that scene, Chips intuitively grasps that the importance of the bond of trust in the teaching and learning dynamic transcends the importance of specific subject matter. Here, Holland knows, but does not understand (and is not at peace with the fact), that the security of old formulations has to be abandoned in order to welcome the life of new ones. Moreover, new ones have to be welcomed or the vitality goes out of the process, whether it's the process of music or teaching or simply living.

Although Holland has



learned through Coltrane's music that there are different ways to hear and that vitality demands a quality of improvisation, he hasn't applied the lesson deeply enough in his own life. In the scene in which Holland begins to understand, the movie almost screams the lesson at us. Holland is walking home, weary in the knowledge that John Lennon, a voice of musical hope in his generation, has been killed. Cole is literally "tuning" a car engine in the garage. He places one end of a rod against the engine and the other against his ear to hear how it sounds. Seeing his father's dejection, he asks what's wrong, and Holland responds that he wouldn't understand. How could Cole understand since he couldn't have heard John Lennon's music? The reason Holland feels such sorrow has to do with all the meaning that transcended Lennon's melodies, and Cole angrily confronts Holland with

the knowledge that he has other ways of understanding that. He has seen it. He sees it now on his father's face.

In a sense the dance of anima and animus in *Mr. Holland's Opus* is carried out as a dialogue between sight and sound. Iris is a photographer. Her occupation underscores the meaning of her name and the way it symbolizes constant adjustment to new contexts. Right up until the point where he will no longer be allowed to do it due to the music program's having been eliminated, Holland's blind and probably misguided ambition keeps him from seeing that teaching is all he really wants to do. If the mawkish ending didn't distract us so powerfully, we would see that *Mr. Holland's Opus* is almost a tragedy. The thing that keeps it from being one is not his students' coming back to play his symphony so as to extol him as a wonderful teacher, but the fact

that he finally comes to understand and accept himself as a teacher. That has been his lesson, and it has taken him a lifetime to learn it.

Perhaps all the important lessons, all the important transformations, take a lifetime. It isn't easy work, fleshing out an archetype. And it isn't easy for teachers to accept what they already know: that the fundamental legacy they have to pass on is the burden of inquiry itself. Perhaps that's where Chips's "friendship" comes in. It's not just how we ask the questions, but why that gives meaning to the process. Finally, our stories always tell us that it is not what we know, but who we are that matters most. As teachers, that's what we have to give and that's what invests the transformations we unleash (and undergo) with a sense of purpose. What, if not our "moral authority," makes learning itself seem positive evidence of life's puzzling but persistent value? □

CALL FOR NARRATIVES SPECIAL ISSUE: "FORGIVENESS"

Reflections plans to publish a special issue on readers' experiences with "forgiveness." This topic has always been an important one in the human services because of the role it plays in the ways that we grow as human beings as well as the healing properties of forgiveness after an injury has occurred. Forgiveness is even a more central issue for human societies today for reasons to be discussed below. Its importance rests on several assumptions that we would like to explore:

1. Individuals cause harm to other individuals, sometimes intentionally and sometimes inadvertently. The person causing harm may suffer (such as feeling guilt) and this suffering can be alleviated when the person who is harmed forgives the perpetrator of the harm.

2. The person who is harmed may carry a burden of anger and resentment that only adds to the burden he or she already feels from the harm itself. Forgiving the person who has inflicted the harm can ease some of the burden, whether or not that person asks to be forgiven.

3. The person who has

inflicted the harm may not acknowledge any regret, whether or not this act was intentional. This lack of assuming responsibility can be a force that inhibits growth.

While the above statements relate to individuals, the issue of forgiveness can apply to organizations, communities, and even societies. Today we see the amazing examples of South Africa in which the process of forgiveness is taking place within the legal system and in relationship to acts of brutality that horrified us not long ago. We see the example of nations (such as Switzerland) being asked to take responsibility for wrongs inflicted decades ago. Will acts of such governments lead to forgiveness for the victims or their heirs? Will the terrors of genocide that are occurring now someday be referred to in terms of nations assuming responsibility for their acts and receiving forgiveness? What acts of assuming responsibility and being forgiven must occur for the United States to experience healing from the acts of proffession that have transpired against many groups?

These issues lead to many questions. Can forgiveness be offered even when the perpetrators do not ask for it? What are the experiences of people asking for and/or receiv-

ing forgiveness? What are the consequences of acts of forgiveness? What leads people to engage in giving or asking for forgiveness?

Reflections asks authors to submit their own narratives related to forgiveness, that might help to answer some of the above questions or those that are relevant to the assumptions we have stated. These acts might relate to individuals or larger systems. The persons involved might be professionals themselves or those whom they serve. Those who are forgiven might not have asked for it. Sometimes, forgiveness might be asked for but not granted.

The editor of this special issue is Charles Garvin, Professor of Social Work, The University of Michigan. Manuscripts are due March 1, 1998. He welcomes inquiries from persons interested in contributing something on this topic. His address is:

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