Narrative, diversity, and teacher education

JoAnn Phillion\textsuperscript{a,\*}, F. Michael Connelly\textsuperscript{b,1}

\textsuperscript{a} Department of Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, BRNG, Room 4144, Purdue University, 100 N. University Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1446, USA

\textsuperscript{b} Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 10th Floor, North, 10-214, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V6

Abstract

This paper explores a narrative approach to diversity in teacher education. One story is presented, initially without context; as layers of context are added additional possible readings of the story are suggested. A second story is contrasted with the first by using a three-dimensional space—temporal, interactional and in-place—to provide context for the stories. Using the framework the stories are analyzed and a distinction is made between ‘teacher knowledge’ and ‘knowledge for teachers’. The resulting implications for teaching about diversity in preservice teacher education are explored.

\textcopyright{} 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story

The noisy period of time comes to an abrupt close. With no apparent instructions from Pam the children stand up from the carpet, go to the back of the room, and quickly remove things from the closet. They take their backpacks, coats, and lunch bags and line up in pairs at the front of the room. They push and shove each other; one girl says in a stage whisper “be quiet!” Gradually the line of students becomes quieter and quieter and quieter. When they are all quiet, when there is not a sound in the room, Pam tells them that they can go to physical education (PE) class.

Pam and I almost always eat our lunch during PE period on Wednesday. Today, on our way to heat Pam’s lunch, we walk past the office. We glance through the glass walls of the room and see two of Pam’s students. One is Tara, the other is Annette. Tara is crying, and Annette has her head down. Pam goes into the office and asks them what the problem is. They tell her that the PE teacher has sent them out of the gym. The reason that they have been sent out of the gym is that

\textsuperscript{a} The work discussed in the paper was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The school described in this study, Bay Street Community School, has been part of a 20-year research program. The overall history of the work is found in Connelly F. M., Phillion, J. & He, M. F. (2003). The teacher in this paper, Pam, was a participant in JoAnn Phillion’s research in Bay Street School (Phillion, 2002a–d). A version of this paper was presented as a keynote address for the MOFET Conference, Fourth International Conference on Teacher Education, Achva College, Israel, June 24, 2002.

\textsuperscript{\*} Corresponding author. Tel.: +1-765-494-2352.

E-mail addresses: phillion@purdue.edu (J. Phillion), mconnelly@oise.utoronto.ca (F.M. Connelly).

\textsuperscript{1} Tel.: +1-416-923-6641x2630

0742-051X/$ - see front matter \textcopyright{} 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.
Tara has accused Annette of stealing her Sailor Moon stickers.

Pam briskly tells the girls to come with her. She takes long strides down the hall towards the gym, the girls barely able to keep up. The door connecting the PE teacher’s office to the gym is locked. We leave and go down another hallway, through the boys’ gym, through a connecting door in the wall to the girls’ side of the gym. In the girl’s gym Pam walks up to the gym teacher. All the girls immediately stop dancing and stare. Pam and the PE teacher have a hurried conversation. I hear the names of the two girls. I hear the word steal, and I hear the word sticker. The PE teacher tells Pam that when she took the sticker book from Annette the remnants of Tara’s name was in it. She says the erased first name was covered with the name Annette. Annette stands accused of stealing stickers by the PE teacher and by Tara. Annette has said she did not steal them. The PE teacher sent them both to the office where we found them.

Pam says, “Come with me”. We leave the gym and go into the attached cramped, windowless, airless, office of the PE teacher. Pam closes the door. Pam, myself, and the two little girls stand in the center of the dimly lit room. The room smells strongly of PE class—old sweat, unwashed clothes, new rubber balls. There does not seem to be any air circulating; my heart seems to be beating faster and faster and faster. Pam turns to Annette. She says simply and calmly, “We are going to get to the bottom of this”. She talks to Annette and never once accuses her of stealing the stickers. “We are going to get to the bottom of this”, punctuates the conversation. Annette stands in the center of the room, her arms loosely at her sides, her head down. I think her head has been down since she has been in the office. She looks up only when she speaks to Pam. There is a strong sense of emotion building in the room, inexorably building higher and higher. I again notice the pungent smell of sweat in the room, yet this time it does not seem to be old sweat; rather it has the sharp, acrid odor of new sweat.

Pam turns to Tara and uses the same tone of voice—calm, gentle, yet forceful. Her words are evenly spaced. “We are going to get to the bottom of this.” Pam asks Tara why she brought the Sailor Moon stickers to school. Tara cries while she talks. Annette’s head is still down. Tara says she does not have any friends. She says she tries to make friends by showing them stickers. Tara stops crying; she stands straighter. She says that she had shown Annette the stickers the day before. Some girls told her that Annette had taken the stickers while they were changing and put them in her bag. Tara says that she asked Annette to look in her bag, but Annette refused.

The conversation continues. Pam repeats, firmly, yet with a tone of reassurance, “We are going to get to the bottom of this”. Pam calmly discusses friendship and how to interact in groups. She tells Tara she will help her, not with things like the stickers that they will deal with later, but with things like how to get along with a group. Tara again says she has never had any friends in the school, and she has been there since grade one. She says she does not have any friends anywhere. She says her mother has told her she can change schools next year. Annette looks up. Pam tells Tara that instead of trying to buy friends with stickers, she should see how she can be a friend. She says that instead of worrying about having a friend, she should try being a friend.

There is no apparent resolution at this time. Annette and Tara are sent to join the remaining portion of the PE class. The accusation of the PE teacher and Tara that Annette has stolen the Sailor Moon stickers hangs in the air. Yet, that was not the focus of Pam’s conversation with the two girls. The focus was not on naming names, laying blame, deciding fates. The focus was on friendship and the meaning of friendship. The focus was on getting to the bottom of things.

2. Readings of the story

What do you make of this story? Is it a story of teacher resistance to administration, as Pam pulls the students out of the principal’s office? Is it a story of collaboration, or perhaps the opposite, among teachers? Is it a story about friendships and relationships among children? Is it a story about ethics and discipline? Each of these readings are
possibilities and the story could, with appropriate context, be followed up along any one of these queries. In this paper, we argue that the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story, though it may be read in all these ways, is, for us, a story of narrative, diversity, and teacher education. We make it a story of teacher education by showing what is at issue with respect to narrative and diversity, and by asking what it is that Pam does and how we may educate teachers to enter into complex multicultural school and student life.

Issues such as these are being explored in different places throughout the world as student populations become increasingly diverse, and as policy makers become more aware of the diversity of their populations. These issues are complicated by public concerns for teacher and student standards and accountability in teacher education. (see, e.g., Placier, Walker, & Foster, 2002). We believe it is important to retain a focus on the experience of educating for diversity amidst these concerns. This paper is part of an international body of work that uses narrative to explore these issues, for example, Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard (1993); Conle et al. (2000), Craig & Olson (2001); Elbaz–Luwisch & Kalekin-Fishman (2004), and Huber & Whelan (1999).

Returning to the story, we note that field texts on which the story is based were recorded by JoAnn Phillion in 1998 during a 2-year in-classroom study of multicultural teaching and learning (Phillion, 2002a–d). The teacher in the story, Pam, originally from the Caribbean, had been teaching in the school for over 15 years. The school was Bay Street Community School, a diverse inner-city school in Toronto, Canada. The students in Pam’s class were from 12 different countries. Tara, the accuser, was bi-racial and identified as Black; Annette, the accused, was Black. Tara, who lived in public housing across the street from the school, was a child who seldom came to school and who could never keep up with her class work. Annette’s sister, according to Pam, had become a gang member. Annette’s family was headed by a single parent mother and Annette often had responsibility for three younger siblings.

Concern for the Black community and how it fit into the rest of society has been a longstanding issue in Toronto. As this paper was being written the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation sponsored a forum on violence in the Black youth community (CBC Radio 1, 2002). At the forum, spokespersons for the Black community reiterated an often-heard charge that Black youth tend to be singled out by individuals, and groups in authority, such as the police. Partially in response to these and related matters various board policies and school practices were developed. For instance, at the time the story took place, Bay Street Community School, under the auspices of the Board of Education’s Heritage Languages Program, offered Black Studies, not as a language but as a cultural topic.

With this context, added possibilities and additional readings of the story emerge. One new reading is that it is a story of school age members of an underachieving Black community whose achievement levels are compounded by the problems of single parenthood and poverty. From this point of view the story could become a story of racism and/or a story of socioeconomic status. The fact that the PE teacher was White, and was the person who originally sent the girls to the office, might tie into this reading of the story.

Another new reading of this story, made possible by the added contextual description, focuses on teacher qualities. Pam, herself Black, the story might go, was inappropriately lenient towards a Black child and, what might be considered even worse, was tolerant of theft, in opposition to one of the staple values of a democratic society. Another shift in the reading, still focused on the teacher, might see Pam as sensitive to children of color and demonstrating the need for Black teachers as role models in children’s education.

By providing readers with selected contextual information, different readings of the story are made possible. As a reader of this story which one of the readings do you think is most appropriate? Perhaps you have yet another reading in mind? For purposes of this paper, it is more important to rephrase the question from the point of view of student teachers: Would the story, along with the context so far given, be suitable for a preservice teacher education class?
We will show that even though the provided context dramatically expands the possible readings of the story, it is still, nevertheless, inappropriate, even irresponsible, to read one or another theme out of the story. There is a parallel, we believe, between our effort as researchers writing for an audience of teacher educators, and teacher educators preparing their own students for classroom situations like Pam’s. Just as preservice teachers often rush to judgment based on classroom situations, actual or hypothetical, readers may do the same. There is a parallel responsibility on behalf of researchers writing for audiences to that of teacher educators teaching novice teachers. Everything we have to say in this regard depends on our understanding of what it is that Pam was doing in the PE teacher’s inner office.

We want to show that Pam has a way of entering the children’s lives, and of reading situations such as that brought forward in the story, in terms of life context. What is the context? The context is complicated, one tier layered on another. So far we have provided only a partial contextual snapshot of the school, Pam and the children. We now want to say more about the Canadian milieu, the school and its community and board of education, and Pam and the children. Somewhat paradoxically, to make our case about Pam and the education of teachers, we need to say much more about context. We have already seen that context is crucial to meaning making. In answer to the question of what readings of the story are most appropriate we need to place it in a narrative context by which we mean thinking of the story temporally, in interaction and in place. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), building on Dewey (1938), refer to this as a three-dimensional space of narrative inquiry. In this paper, we will show that an exploration of this narrative context enriches our understanding of children’s lives and events as they unfold in classrooms and schools.

Thinking of the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story as positioned in the matrix of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space enriches the interpretive potential of the story but also reduces the certainty of any particular reading of the story. Decontextualized, Pam’s task would seem to be a simple one of deciding whether or not a theft had occurred and, if it had, of meting out appropriate punishment. But the more we know about the context, the less certainty we have that this is Pam’s appropriate task. There is a kind of irony in the fact that knowledge and certainty are inversely related. It is important to notice that these points about context and certainty apply more forcefully to Pam because she is in the situation, than to readers of the story. A new teacher to the school, perhaps a novice teacher, might well see the task as a simple one of dealing with theft. But Pam, with a rich array of contextual knowledge, sees the task differently and acts accordingly.

3. The three dimensional narrative inquiry space

We now want to step back and provide narrative inquiry context—temporal, interactional and in place. We will draw on other writings relevant to this discussion (Connelly, Phillion, & He, 2003; Phillion, 2002a). Bay Street Community School is an inner-city, multicultural school. The school’s diversity is reflective of the diversity in Toronto and in Canada. In 2001, 265 students from 39 countries out of a school population of

---

2 The exploration of context for the understanding of knowledge, in particular teacher knowledge, is primarily the domain of sociology. Well-known work by Lortie (1975) and Sarason (1993), for example, provide a rich understanding of the range of matters that come under the heading of context. This paper on Pam’s practice constitutes a detailed working out of context as it bears on the particulars of school life. Thus, while work such as Lortie’s and Sarason’s yields theoretical and generalizable accounts of context, our work is aimed at the particularities of context and their bearing on specific actions. There are, of course, on topics as broad as the one under consideration in this paper, a wide range of views, theoretical structures and programs of research. Teacher identity is one highly relevant line of thought informed by, among others, socio-cultural studies such as that of Wertsch (1985) or, more directly in teacher knowledge by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) and He (1999). Rather than provide a comprehensive literature review of all the relevant associated work, for this paper we draw attention to Fenstermacher’s (1994) review of the literature on teacher knowledge in which he identified Connelly and Clandinin’s work as representing one of three major lines of research in the area. We position this work on Pam within that line of research thereby bounding the directly relevant literature.
731 students were born outside of Canada; 75% of these students had immigrated to Canada in the last 5 years (Chan & Fenton, 2002). According to Toronto District School Board figures (Toronto District School Board School Profile, 2001) slightly more than two-thirds of the students at the school come from homes with a primary language other than English. This school diversity translates into diverse classrooms. Pam’s grade 4/5 classroom in 1998 had students from 12 different countries. At the time of the survey room #42, a grade 7 classroom, where Elaine Chan is conducting her research, had 38 students from 12 countries speaking 13 first languages.

Pam’s diverse classroom is linked to a history going back to the formation of the school. Bay Street Community School has been educating refugee, immigrant, ESL and low socioeconomic children for over 125 years (Cochrane, 1950; Phillion, 2002a). The first principal’s diaries make reference to the education of central European immigrants. Canada is a comparatively young nation and, with the exception of First Nations people, everyone in Canada is, by most, considered of immigrant ancestry. From the time the school was established the community surrounding Bay Street Community School has been a settlement site for the successive waves of new Canadians.

Canada was the first country to acknowledge its immigrant, multicultural, character in official policy (Moodley, 1995). In 1972 there was a multicultural policy; in 1989 a Multicultural Act made multiculturalism an official policy of the country. The Prime Minister, in introducing the Act, wrote “[Multiculturalism] can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all” (Minister of State, Multiculturalism, 1978, 45–46 as cited by Isajiw, 1999, p. 245). In a recent rendition of this policy, in a federal government statement on what is multiculturalism, it is written that “Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. … Multiculturalism is a relationship between Canada and the Canadian people.” (Canadian Heritage Multicultural web site, 2002).

4. Pam in context—what does she know?

Let us briefly summarize the elements and significance of this brief sketch of the narrative inquiry space inhabited by Pam as a teacher in Bay Street Community School. When Pam collected the two girls from the principal’s office and marched them to the PE room she did so in the midst of a complex life unfolding in what we are calling a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. She did not act de novo as if the incident arose then and there and was to be dealt with in its own terms but, rather, came to the situation with a knowledge born of historical, interactional and in-place context. John Dewey (1938) made the point that experience was on a continuum; that every experience grew out of prior experience and led to future experience. No experience, he might have said, could be imagined in isolation but only, for him, in temporal and interactional context. By interaction he meant exchanges taking place with the environment.

The concept of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as an idea useful in thinking about educational events is an extension or adaptation of this Deweyan theory of experience. It is not only that Pam had prior experience with the children, with the school and its policies, and with the community, but that she was in a particular place, Bay Street Community School, in a very particular place, the principal’s office and then the PE room; and it was not only her prior experiences with the two girls relative to the school policy, but the school policy relative to board policy and that, again, connected to a well-known and pervasive federal government policy of multiculturalism governing how diverse peoples live together. Thus, Pam entered the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story out of the experience of being a particular kind of democratic citizen in Canada and out of being a teacher in a particular school with a history of educating immigrants dating back to the last century. Not only that, but she was also in interaction with the school and its members. She taught the children, two-thirds of whom came from homes where English was not the mother tongue. At a more particular level Pam did not merely happen upon two children being disciplined...
in the principal’s office, a note that an observer or student teacher might make, but, rather, saw two girls from her own class; girls whose families she knew, whose histories she knew, whose patterns of education with which she was familiar, whose attitudes and habits she had experienced.

Thus, when we ask the question, “What was Pam doing in the PE teacher’s room?”; when we ask “What reading of the story is most appropriate?”; we need to imagine an historical, interactional and physical in-place world unfolding as part of Pam’s knowledge. Pam needs to be imagined as a person with an unfolding, multi-dimensional, sense of democratic social life and democratic multicultural educational purposes and policies channeled on what was, for her, an anomalous setting, two of her students in the principal’s office. Connelly and Clandinin (1985) have elsewhere written that a person’s personal practical knowledge, which comes to bear on any particular situation, is best imagined as crystallizing out of a matrix of personal practical knowledge. It is not as if Pam checked her knowledge base, ruled out possibilities, and included others, and then led the girls out of the principal’s office. Her decision crystallized instantly. Likewise, when, a few moments later, she took it upon herself to “get to the bottom of things” she had not laid out a careful agenda for herself; she had not checked the school’s figures on immigration; she probably could not have revealed, had she been asked, any of the statistical numbers available to we researchers in Bay Street Community School, yet the sense and meaning, and the feel, of these numbers crystallized and spilled forth in the actions that she took. Some might say Pam was acting spontaneously, and so she was. But she was not acting without knowledge. On the contrary, she was acting out of a knowledge base so complex, vast, historical and sweeping on the one hand, minute and detailed down to the level of particular assignments completed on the other hand. It would be impossible for a researcher, indeed it would be impossible for Pam, to tell us what that knowledge base was. The best we can do as researchers is imagine it as a three-dimensional narrative space and try to make what sense we can of what little we know of it.

So far, we have essentially made two key points about Pam’s actions in the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story. The first is that it would be inappropriate to view this as a simple story of theft and discipline. There is so much at stake that this matter virtually fades from our consideration, as it appears that it did from Pam’s. Secondly, we have made the case that Pam acted knowledgeably. Her actions were informed by a rich experiential context. She “knew” what she was doing. A third point that emerges from our analysis so far is that this is a story of diversity: it would be difficult, given Canadian multicultural society, and the multicultural policies and makeup of the school, not to think of this story as an educational story of diversity. The fact that the two girls were Black, that Pam was a Black teacher, and that she knew their history and issues surrounding the Black community in Toronto, only strengthens this point. But even if the girls had not been Black, it is almost impossible to imagine a development in Bay Street Community School, in Toronto, a city the United Nations calls the world’s most multicultural city, in a country with a multicultural policy, as not being a question of diversity at some level. Diversity is, as the Secretary of State’s office says, life in Canada (Canadian Heritage Multiculturalism web site, 2002).

Given this background our reading of the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story is that Pam saw a complex situation at work when she talked to the two girls. By getting to the bottom of the issue she was drawing on her knowledge of both girls. Tara, the accuser, who had few friends and used things like the Sailor Sticker Moon stickers as gifts to buy friends, and Annette with her sister’s gang membership and her acting as a surrogate parent for siblings. To sort out the situation in the most positive way, everything she felt and knew about these girls, and about education and life in Canada and their future life in it, were at work.

---

3 As Connelly and Clandinin imagine it, a person has a wealth of such personal practical knowledge. Different situations call forth different aspects of this knowledge which is brought to bear on specific situations. Connelly and Clandinin refer to this as a process of “crystallization” of personal practical knowledge.
The big question for teacher education remains. How do we educate teachers to work in complex situations of diversity? Throughout our analysis so far we have, several times, referred to possible actions by a novice teacher. A novice teacher passing the principal’s office might not even notice the girls. Were they to find themselves in a situation like Pam’s in the PE teacher’s office they would know nothing of the girls’ histories and, even if they had been told the statistics on immigration and school composition, and had studied the school’s policies, they could know little of how that played out in school and community life. What do we do to prepare teachers for such situations? To help us get at this question we present, in brief, one further story.

5. Vivian Paley—a parallel story

One of the few narrative accounts in the literature of teachers working out complex situations of diversity is Vivian Paley’s White Teacher (1979). Briefly, this book is an account of Paley’s work in a diverse kindergarten classroom in the University of Chicago Laboratory School. The key struggle for Paley is how to come to terms with who she is, a middle class Jewish woman, in relation to her Black students. She initially sees the Black girls, but not the White girls, as a group; it is only over time, learning more about their histories, family situations, and the context of their lives, that she comes to see them as individuals, within individual characteristics, as Pam does with Tara and Annette. Throughout the book Paley positions herself as an inquirer into, rather than a knower of, the children and their lives, and how who they are impacts on how they act in class. For instance, when a new student, Claire, comes to the class Paley is puzzled by Claire’s behavior. She writes, “What is this child about? Has she just come to this country? What language does she speak? French? Spanish? Has she ever been to school before? Even if I assumed she had just got off the plane, there were obviously factors other than language here. She did not seem to respond to non-verbal communication either” (p. 57). Again, she writes, “But what does it mean when a five year old does not how to pretend? … Is this a cultural difference or a peculiar trait of the Mireau family? Is it possible that Claire has not observed children at play? Could there be some retardation here?” (p. 59).

As her time with Claire unfolds, Paley describes how she meets the parents, and finds out about their history and about Claire’s history. She observes Claire, with minimal intervention, in every possible classroom situation, unstructured and structured. The puzzles continue though Paley develops certain convictions over time as her experience with Claire and her parents develop.

We bring the Paley story forward because, along with our account of Pam, it helps us get at the teacher education question. One response of how to teach teachers to become aware and sensitive participants in situations like Bay Street Community School would be to resort to socialization and modeling theory (Good & Brophy, 2000; Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Student teachers could read the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story, list the characteristics exhibited by Pam, and be taught, perhaps through mock teaching situations or videotaped micro teaching sessions (Allen & Ryan, 1969; Cruickshank, 1986; MacLeod, 1987) to respond in a similar way as Pam. But what of Paley as a model? Her situation is different—a situation of theft with two girls Pam knows well versus Paley’s attempts to understand a new child in the classroom. In addition, their approaches differ. Pam is business like and takes charge of the situation; Paley is more in the background interacting unobtrusively. Again, Paley’s characteristics could be listed and taught. But, for a novice teacher, learning these two sets of skilled responses might be more confusing than illuminating, particularly as students began their practice teaching sessions and realized that they never confronted identical situations to either Pam or Paley and, furthermore, that, as persons, they were neither Pam nor Paley, and found it difficult to role play one or the other. Magnify this by the infinite number of possible situations, and teacher characteristics and personalities that exist, and the difficulty of adopting a modeling approach becomes evident.
Furthermore, a deeper difficulty is that the modeling would be taught in a decontextualized way. Why did Pam act the way she did? Why did Paley? The why is a question of knowledge and knowing. Pam acts the way she does because of her personal practical knowledge crystallized out of her narrative space; likewise for Paley. It is clear that these are very different spaces, Pam in a downtown Toronto school and Paley in a university lab school, one in Canada, the other in the United States, one in the 1990s and one in the 1970s. Even the simple matter of what the schools are for, though common at the level of providing an education, differ dramatically. The “shape” of the educational space in an inner-city Toronto school is vastly different than the educational space of a university laboratory school catering mostly to a professional community. Education is still at stake and so, too, is diversity, but the differences are great and the knowledge that one might teach teachers for one setting is quite different than might be taught for another though, always, there are commonalities.

What could be taught? A student teacher entering either Pam’s situation or Paley’s might usefully be taught something of the literature on diversity, multiculturalism, and the research on teaching in diverse settings (e.g. Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000). Of course, that research, too, was done in a particular context and, in general, has less applicability than researchers are inclined to claim. Nevertheless, this caveat aside, we can imagine a somewhat common curriculum of teacher education for diversity.

At another level the curriculum would diverge. The immigration history and current multicultural status of Canada, as provided in this paper, for example, could be taught to Canadian students entering inner-city Canadian settings like Pam’s. This material would be of only modest value, more of general interest than useful, for students entering Paley’s situation. Here a parallel, but different, history and set of demographics might be taught. There is a great deal to be done in the curriculum for teachers for settings of diversity.

But Pam’s story makes clear that the crucial qualities she brought to the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story could not be taught; they grew out of her experience in a multicultural narrative space. Pam, in fact, tended to be dismissive of the things student teachers were taught about working with children in inner-city environments, and, in particular, she was especially dismissive of much of the teachings about Black children (Phillion, 2002a-d). She strongly believed in educating children to succeed competitively, on their own terms, in modern Canadian society. She disagreed with prevailing views of culturally sensitive teaching, as enacted in her school, that she believed patronized the children, particularly the Black children, and, ultimately, could put them at an achievement disadvantage. In bringing this forward our purpose is not to side with Pam’s view. Rather, we wish to point out that Pam’s actions grow more strongly out of her experience than anything else, in particular than anything she might be taught in a teacher education program. Though we do not have a similar detailed analysis of Paley available to us, asking the question of why Paley acted the way she did, and thinking of possible responses in terms of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, leads to possibilities similar to those brought forward for Pam. In fact, readers will notice that this is one way of interpreting the task Paley set for herself as she tried to understand who Claire was.

Where does this leave us? The idea of modeling, at least the version described here, has limited value. Still, we will show that there are features in each teacher’s performance that can be extracted for teacher education purposes and, though not directly taught, conditions could be created for the development of like possibilities. Second, it is possible to teach pre-service teachers useful things about diversity; but the most important things, the qualities revealed in Pam’s Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story and in Paley’s White Teacher cannot be taught.

6. Knowledge for teachers, teacher knowledge

We have said that underlying the Pam and Paley stories is a question of teacher knowledge. It is
what they know that counts and, yet, most of what counts cannot be taught directly. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) made a distinction between knowledge for teachers and teacher knowledge. There has been a great deal of writing on the knowledge base for teachers and on teacher testing to ensure that teachers hold that knowledge. This teachable knowledge is called "knowledge for teachers" by Connelly and Clandinin. Knowledge for teachers can be identified, put into a curriculum, taught so that it becomes an attribute of the teacher, and may be tested. Though we do not particularly support the notion of teacher testing it is obvious to us that teacher education programs, particularly in settings like Canada, need to provide a strong comprehensive knowledge base of Canadian society, global interaction and school curriculum and methodology. But when teachers take action in situations such as Pam’s they do not consult this knowledge base, indeed, they may know it only in the vaguest of ways, it having faded from memory, if it was ever there, and become integrated with who they are as teachers, integrated with their personal practical knowledge. This latter aspect, teacher’s personal practical knowledge, is what Connelly and Clandinin call “teacher knowledge”. They view this knowledge as having both personal and professional dimensions. The personal tends to refer to teachers’ own predispositions and the professional refers to their interactions with others and with the formal profession.

Connelly and Clandinin (2000) went on to develop a set of assumptions for teacher education programs concerned with teacher knowledge: “teacher education is life long”, “teacher education is a life line, a narrative history of life experience”; “teaching is an educative relationship among people”; and “teacher education is on a continuum”. They wrote that the basic question is “What do preservice teachers already know and how can we encourage them to reflect on this knowledge as it is expressed in practice?” and, drawing on other of their writing they wrote that “Understanding one’s own education is the basis for understanding how to educate others” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). We think of these as broad guidelines for a teacher education program aimed at diversity. Still, the question remains, what should we teach, or do, in a teacher education program for diversity? Let us return to Pam, backed by available insights from our reading of Paley, to identify some of the qualities at stake.

6.1. Pam’s and Paley’s teacher knowledge: narrative, diversity, and teacher education

In re-reading the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story one more time, now from the point of view of teacher education, complemented by a re-reading of Paley’s story, several key narrative features stand out. In this section we draw on these features to outline elements in a preservice teacher education curriculum for diversity.

6.2. Experiential knowledge of children, their families and family histories

When Pam walked past the windowed principal’s office her attention was riveted on the two girls. These were her girls, students in her class. As the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story unfolds Pam’s specific, personal, knowledge of the two girls is crucial. We cannot imagine the story unfolding as it did without this personal experiential knowledge. It is possible that Pam might have stopped and wondered about two Black girls in the office, but it is unlikely that she would have taken the action she did without them being “her girls”. Later, though her concern for Black children in general may have been in the background, her particular line of questioning about friendship depended entirely on her personal knowledge of Tara and Annette. The critical point to note is that no amount of research and knowledge about inner-city Black children could lead to the story as it unfolded. It depended on Pam’s personal experiential knowledge.

6.3. Experiential knowledge of the school

Anyone who has been a close participant observer in a school during a time of adminis-
As it may be possible to teach preschool teachers about inner-city Black children in a multicultural society, it is possible to teach about school structure, administration and management. But, just as it would be impossible to teach teachers how, specifically, to deal with situations like Pam’s, it is impossible to teach the particular dynamics of a particular school. When Pam responded to the sight of the two girls in the principal’s office she did so out of the context of that particular school and its stories.

Pam was a senior teacher with an established reputation among children, parents, other teachers and the administration. She was on the second floor of the school where the teachers held what they thought of as different views about education than teachers on the main floor. The school had a strong community-minded principal with a particular focus on bringing the school into the community and having the community participate in school matters. Pam had positioned herself as somewhat of a minor rebel in this context; someone with views of her own, somewhat at odds with working school policy. Among other things, she believed that children should not be sent to the office for discipline because, as she often told JoAnn, they do not know the children or the story. Thus, her response to the girls was not only building on her knowledge of them but on her personal knowledge of the school and who she was in it.

One of the lessons for teacher education is to understand something of the multitiered, interlayered, complex of considerations that go into taking action within a narrative space. Pam’s knowledge of the children from her class, and knowledge of their families and siblings, set within their home community, is only part of the explanatory story; so too is her knowledge of the school, its subtle stories of distinction, its administration, her place in it and so on. This complexity virtually defies observer ability to interpret with certainty, and it poses immense challenges for teacher education.

6.4. Experiential knowledge of the community and society

Everything said so far applies, in general, to the community and to the Canadian society in which this story takes place. Bay Street Community School is considered to be an inner-city school judged by Canadian norms. Some, familiar with certain American city situations, might say that this school did not qualify as an inner-city school. Others, of course, might argue that the inner-city designation, in general, is inappropriate. Nevertheless, this is the common language applied to a school such as Bay Street Community School in Toronto, in Canada. Thus, even the designation is dependent on context. Pam had many years teaching in another school located not far away that, by Board of Education socio-economic indicators, was ranked as more economically needy and culturally diverse than was Bay Street Community School. This experience, combined with her own as a Black from the Caribbean immigrating to Canada, led her to view the school, and the children in it, as comparatively privileged. She held strong views about the need for children to succeed in society, and she often talked of the potential damage that too much school coddling could have on their future success. Thus, her knowledge of these children, in community context, within Canadian society as she understood it, led her always to press all of her children, not only the Black children, to achieve at levels she thought they could. We do not mean to suggest that she was a tyrant teacher intolerant of poor performance. On the contrary, as the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story shows, she very much wanted, always, to “get to the bottom of things” with a child’s behavior. Thus, Pam’s handling of the situation in the PE teacher’s room was part and parcel of her experience of the community, of Canadian society, and of children being educated in this, and like, communities in Canada.

The three dimensional narrative inquiry space, as experienced by Pam, crystallized in the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story. We cannot know the particular balance of any one aspect of the space that may have dominated the situation other than to say that the children, and her imagination of
them in the space now and in the future, guided by her experience of the space, was at work. Nor can we know what import theoretical knowledge of children, families, school, communities and societies, taught in preservice teacher education programs or in professional development workshops, had to play in the decision. In Pam’s case, this formal knowledge is almost entirely hidden from view and, in any event, is not available to us in this particular story. We can only imagine that formal knowledge would have played some role but would have been so submerged in Pam’s experiential knowledge of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space that to retrieve it would be difficult.

Readers interested in Paley’s story, perhaps those who have read the original, may wish to do a similar analysis as the above for Pam. Much is different. Pam, we are claiming, had the experiential knowledge; Paley did not, but her vast experience as a sensitive teacher, one that we think of as a narratively attuned teacher, led her to know, experientially, what she did not know and, so, her story unfolds as one of inquiry into a host of contextual matters that would help her “know” Claire in ways that Pam “knew” Tara and Annette. Some of the lessons for teacher education arise directly out of a comparison of these two narratively attuned teachers.

6.5. Narrative inquiry spirit

Pam’s repeated statement that “We are going to get to the bottom of this” sets the stage for how the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story unfolds and, we note, the same attitude sets the stage for Paley and her puzzles over the new student in her class, Claire. One teacher is getting to the bottom of a particular incident using her personal experiential knowledge of the children; the other teacher wonders who the child is and uses her experience as a teacher to guide her in a series of observations and inquiries. The critical quality at stake in both these stories is a spirit of inquiry. Given her knowledge of the children there is more of a sense of direction to the inquiry with Pam than there is with Paley. Paley’s story dramatizes features that we believe are critical for narrative inquirers of all sorts, whether researchers or teachers like Pam and Paley, and for teacher educators relative to their own students. The key is a sense of puzzlement and the attitude of getting to the bottom of things. “Knowing” in the usual sense of knowing this or that, or knowing how to do this or that, is held entirely at bay with Paley. She simply wonders, asks questions, explores the family and its history, and observes the child in interaction with other children and adults. At one point Paley watches Claire play a game that Paley thought the child did not understand. When asked how she knew how to play the game, the child beamed and said she had watched other children. So did Paley. Just as the child learned the game by close detailed observation, Paley learned about Claire by close detailed observation. The lessons are simple, but the consequences for teacher education for diversity are immense. Teachers often are taught to rail at the system, to spot racism, to look for injustice and to see it everywhere within the school system. Neither Pam nor Paley would have sympathy for the formal knowledge-filled, judgmental, attitude implied.

6.6. The more context we have, the more we know, the less certain we become

Earlier in the paper we made the point that there was a kind of irony associated with narrative inquiry and knowledge gained by thinking in terms of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. The more we know, the less certain we become. In a broad sense we might contrast novice teachers fresh from a teacher education program with Pam and Paley. We could imagine a rush to judgment and action by preservice and novice teachers if they found themselves in similar situations to Pam’s and Paley’s. Several possibilities for preservice teacher action were presented in the various readings of the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story. For Paley’s situation, letting the child, Claire, fend for herself until problems arose might have been a novice teacher’s response. Still another response, often made in the case of students new to a country, might have been to send the child for testing and possibly counseling (Cummins, 1996).
As researchers, we knew enough about Pam to be able to think about her actions in a complex way and, given our notion of the three-dimensional space we are left, even following several years of working with Pam, with uncertainty about what she did and, indeed, if she actually did the right thing. For all we know, Pam may also have doubts about her actions. Paley’s story is also one of uncertainty. She had a wealth of experience with children entering her class yet, with all of this knowledge, her attitude was one of puzzlement. One of the consequences for preservice teacher education comes in the contrast between Pam and Paley’s attitude of uncertainty and puzzlement and the widely held view that what preservice teachers value most in their classes is the availability of tips, rules of thumb, and teaching methods that will get them through their practical life. This is a contrast between knowing with some certainty what to do compared to an attitude of uncertainty and puzzlement when confronted with practical situations. The preservice teachers are searching for ‘knowledge for teachers’; they lack Pam and Paley’s ‘teacher knowledge’. There is a dilemma in these understandings for teacher education. Certainty goes down as experiential knowledge goes up. They are inversely related. Yet, Pam and Paley’s stories, and good common sense about teaching in general, leads us to value experiential knowledge. In fact, though it is somewhat provocative to say so in a teacher education setting, formal knowledge can have only limited value in preparing teachers for situations of multicultural diversity. But, we think it is possible to educate for an understanding of narrative context, an attitude of inquiry, and a habit of “getting to the bottom of things”. Still, this is no easy matter. Teacher educators who teach for teacher knowledge teach against the grain (Enns, 1993; Conle et al., 2000). It is not only modern accountability and knowledge for teachers and the testing of knowledge for teachers but, also, that the preservice teachers want answers and methods. They want to be certain. They want to know. In preservice teacher education, working towards habits of uncertainty and puzzlement needs to be undertaken with modest expectations. A teacher educator walks a fine line balancing ‘teacher knowledge’ with ‘knowledge for teachers’; ‘certainty’ with ‘puzzlement and doubt’, ‘knowing’ with ‘not knowing’.

6.7. Diversity pervades everything

Given the role of context in teachers’ personal practical knowledge, and the actions teachers take in situations such as Pam found herself in, the particular society in which one lives makes a difference. Canada is, as noted above, an immigrant nation, with the exception of First Nations people. When people speak of multicultural schools and multicultural communities there is a tendency to single them out and separate them from society as a whole. But the society is multicultural. Canadian life is multicultural life. Elsewhere we have written that democratic Canadian society is a society of diversity; it is a society where the word democracy implies, and is virtually a stand-in for, the word multicultural (Connelly, Pillion, & He, 2003). Given Canadian policy, democracy and multiculturalism are two sides of the same coin. Thus, when Pam responds to the two girls she found in the principal’s office she is living out her notion of Canadian democracy. Diversity permeates everything.

We make this point in the Canadian context not because we intend to wish it upon others but because it is consistent with our view of narrative knowing in context. Context, as we have demonstrated throughout, is a necessary frame for understanding specific, individual action. Everything we have to say is, in the end, like Pam’s knowledge of Tara and Annette, restricted, here, to Canadian society. The entire analysis of Pam’s classroom would have undoubtedly gone in somewhat different directions were we examining situations in South Chicago, inner-city London or in fact, any major city in the world. We do think, however, given the world, the movement of people back and forth, and the influence of events in one part of the world on the details of life in another, that the notion that diversity permeates everything has some general applicability.
Joining the flow of life: the teacher’s narrative task

Phillion & He (2004) wrote that in a narrative inquiry researchers join the flow of life. This notion is basic to our understanding of narrative inquiry and to our sense of what it is that student teachers need to be taught as a foundation. Narrative inquirers entering a school, like student teachers entering a school, need, as Connelly and Clandinin (2000) point out, to adopt a ‘look and see and wait and help’ attitude. Slowly, as they come to terms with the rhythm of school life and of the particular place in which they find themselves in the school, they begin to join in. In this process they are similar to someone traveling to a new country with a new society where they are well advised to go slowly, watch customs, check their own responses, observe and gradually begin to see where they might fit in (He, 2002a–c; Phillion, 2001).

Pam might be thought of as the ultimate traveler, one who had joined into the flow of life that swept through the principal’s office and the PE teacher’s room as the Sailor Moon Sticker Stealing Story unfolded. She was part of the life, perhaps, in a way that many teachers, for most circumstances, could never aspire to be. But the lesson is that she was part of that life. Paley was and was not part of Claire’s life. As a teacher with a new student they both shared the school life, Paley more experienced than Claire. Yet, Paley knew nothing of Claire’s life outside the school; indeed as her observations showed she tried to learn something about Claire’s life in the school. Paley made it a point, if not to join that life fully in the sense that Pam may have been said to have joined Tara and Annette’s life, to work toward understanding Claire’s life through an inquirer’s stance. Paley did not ask for check sheets on family history, cultural attributes and the like. She was an inquirer gaining her own experience and joining Claire’s life to the fullest extent possible.

Student teachers in diverse settings need to take the traveler’s inquiry stance and learn, as much as possible, to explore, through inquiry, the life before them. They need to explore the three-dimensional narrative space in which they will work. They need to understand something of the character and history of the community, the school, the parents and the children they teach. Some may, for some circumstances, eventually join this life in a full-blown sense, as did Pam, and others may, like Paley, the White teacher, join the life of a Black child with sufficient sensitivity and personal knowledge to be called an educator.

References


Chan, E., & Fenton, V. (February, 2002). ESL workgroup survey report. Report on the survey sponsored by the ESL workgroup in collaboration with the OISE/UT narrative and diversity research team. Toronto: Centre for Teacher Development, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.


