NARRATIVES OF A NOVICE EDUCATOR:
The Development of A Social Work Teacher

This article is the author's narrative of his initial development as a novice social work educator (i.e., the first four years of teaching). Through the life story lens, three interrelated aspects of faculty development are examined: (a) self-concept of being an educator; (b) relationship with students; and (c) relationship with faculty colleagues. The organizing theme of "a community of learners" interweaves personal and professional influences in order to provide one example of a teacher's internal culture.

by John A. Kayser

John A. Kayser, Ph.D. is Assiistant Professor, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver, Denver, CO

Author's Note

INTRODUCTION

The use of narratives — personal stories of individual experiences — has increased markedly in recent years in social work theory, research, and practice (Goldstein, 1992; Riesseman, 1993; Saleebey, 1993; Strickland, 1994). Narratives also have become prominent in other disciplines, particularly in the study of the teacher's thinking, culture, and behavior (Casey, 1993; Coles, 1989; Weiland, 1995). As Cortazzi (1994) observes: "Any real change in the curriculum is not likely to be carried through unless teachers' perceptions and experiences are taken into account" (p. 5). Most recently, teacher narratives have begun to emerge in social work as well (Ernst, 1995, Gitterman 1995, Graybeal, Moore, and Cohen, 1995). Through these narratives, social work educators have reflected upon and shared their personal knowledge of specific challenges they have faced over course of their teaching careers.

The purpose of this article is to contribute to this growing body of narrative literature in social work by sharing a first person account of the development of a social work educator. It is hoped that the personal stories of this author will stimulate other educators in social work to tell their own narratives. As the pool of such narratives increases, a larger sample may be obtained in studying social work educators' development.

TALES OF THE NOVICE EDUCATOR

This narrative is written as I begin my fifth year of teaching in a graduate school of social work. To borrow Perlman's (1989) phrasing, the preceding four years is a period long enough for "looking back" in reconstructing the prominent influences shaping my development as a novice teacher. At the same time, sharing a narrative with others is a way of "looking ahead" by way of making meaning out of diverse, multi-layered, sometimes contradictory life experiences.

This narrative examines three interrelated aspects of my personal and professional development over a four year period: (a) self-concept of being an educator; (b) relationship with students; and (c) relationship

with faculty colleagues. Each area represents different dimensions of a "community of learners," an evocative phrase used by the Dean in welcoming the assembly of faculty, staff, and incoming masters students at the start of each new academic year. This phrase struck an immediate, responsive chord, partly because it was not the way university learning usually has been described. The phrase itself is suggestive of the classic definition of a university as a "society of masters and scholars" (Haskins, 1957, p. 5). Over the course of subsequent hearings, I have reflected at length on its meanings. These reflections serve as a touchstone in exploring the parallels, continuities, and discontinuities between my classroom efforts to develop learning communities in certain courses and my own development as an educator.

Self-concept of being an educator

The strange case of emerging identity. Upon first hearing the Dean's call to join a community of learners, my internal response was amazement at the irony of having made a mid-life/mid-career shift to become a social work educator. It definitely was not a career opportunity I had envisioned. As I was introduced at the welcoming assembly — one of several new faculty joining the school that year — I remembered that fifteen years earlier (literally when walking out the door after completing the MSW) I said I would never go back for further education because "this two

years was hard enough." Reflecting on why I had done the opposite of this disavowal, the obvious (only partially correct) answer seemed to be that my career goals had shifted over the lengthy course of professional practice as a clinical social worker. When I finally began contemplating earning a Ph.D., I had envisioned it as a means to create a different future for myself — leaving open exactly what type of future would unfold. At the time, I was a social work clinician in a children's psychiatric treatment center, and entertained vaguely defined hopes that a Ph.D. might be a springboard leading to an administrative-research position in the same or similar setting.
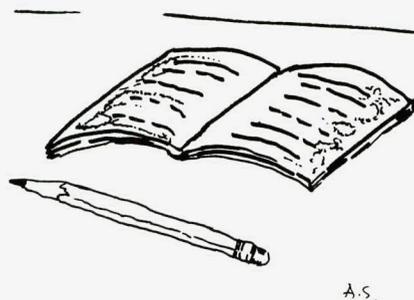

A.S.

Eventually, certain aspects of this career path were achieved (albeit in a different setting) as I became a social work administrator in a church affiliated, nonprofit mental health organization. Although I derived great personal and professional satisfaction from this work, there remained considerable anxiety about whether employment would be possible over the long run, due to continued employee lay-offs (Kayser & Garrison, in press). Unexpectedly, as I neared completion of my doctoral

degree, the prospect of obtaining a tenure-track faculty position emerged. This position was attractive in offering the promise of career stability and permanence.

Another influence in this career shift occurred concomitantly with the above events. Imperceptibly, over the very long course of my doctoral education, a deep-seated hunger for knowledge had been awakened and nourished. Amazingly, I still maintained a love of discovery and creativity throughout many trials and frustrations of the dissertation phase. Indeed, in moments of fantasy I imagined myself as the research apprentice to Sherlock Holmes, learning how to look for observable clues and to reason according to the dictates of logic. As graduation finally neared, it felt anticlimactic! More than once, I said to myself: "Is that all there is?" I was reluctant to give up the structure and process of learning in an academic setting. The prospect of not having further opportunities to "solve the mystery" was indeed dismaying. Yet several mentors, within and outside the doctoral program, were supportive of my exploring a new career direction — apparently seeing potential in me that I could not yet discern.

Thus, all of these lived experiences — a gradual career goals shift, the presence of obstacles in continuing along one career pathway, security and economic needs (e.g., stable employment), a felt need for discovery, creativity, and risk-taking, and the support of mentors — ultimately coalesced

into the impetus to embark on the unknown, to apply for a tenure-track assistant professor position in a graduate school of social work. As Holmes would say, "the game's afoot!"
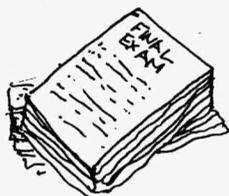
Content and process teaching. Thinking back on my first four years of teaching, my self-image as an educator shifted numerous times. Sometimes, I have seen myself as a teacher of course content; yet at other times as a teacher (or facilitator) of a learning process. Obviously, these are not mutually exclusive educator roles. Often, the specific course (e.g., research as compared to direct practice) and the specific needs of a given class of students dictates how strongly a particular role is emphasized, both week to week and over the course of a term. It is also true that these shifts reflect my own uncertainty about what an educator's role should be in graduate education and/or contradictions (yet to fully reconciled) about what type of social work educator I want to become.

I initially began, with great enthusiasm and energy, as a teacher of course content. Particularly in my first year, I was preoccupied with reading textbooks and resource material, drafting syllabi, and learning the course content. (In hindsight, I see this as the first of many initiations into a community of learners. In effect, I was immersing myself into the existing body and traditions of knowledge generated by other learner/scholars, who themselves were members of learning communities.) Expecting myself to become an instant "expert," I wrote out meticulous outlines from which to lecture; at one point, I went so far as write marginal notes to myself regarding the amount of time I planned to allow on each topic! I also attended a workshop on college teaching given by a professor from educational psychology, who stressed the importance of developing clear behavioral learning objectives in each course, so that educational outcomes could be measured. This view reinforced my own clinical practice experience that specific competencies, skills, and knowledge had to be acquired in order to practice competently. Thus I assumed that my job was to teach course content and to make sure that students were held accountable for acquiring this knowledge. The initial response from students to this approach seemed positive. Their expectation of an educator appeared to parallel my own — they wanted course content delivered by an expert.

As my first year of teaching neared to a close, however, I experienced the first of many subsequent sudden shifts in my self-image as educator — away from being a teacher of content to one who focused on facilitating a learning process. This shift resulted from an unexpected negative reaction from students taking a required first year course on human behavior theories in direct practice. As a member of the "new faculty group" teaching this course, my colleagues and I decided to depart markedly from the norms in our school about how students' learning had been evaluated. Rather than assigning the customary mid-term and final papers, we chose to give students weekly mini-quizzes on their assigned readings, along with a comprehensive multiple choice final exam. Our rationale was that graded exams would hold students accountable in a more rigorous manner for the reading and lecture material. However, while a few students perceived these changes as a learning challenge to be mastered, many more apparently felt considerable anger. Choosing to express their feelings indirectly, a group of students on final exam day ordered pizzas from several different companies to be delivered every hour to one of the instructors, both at the office and at home.

My first response was to be hurt and upset. None of the students had brought their concerns — either as a group or individually — directly to me or the other instructors. However, as the narcissistic injury to my teacher self-image subsided, I began to reflect on what lesson I had been forcibly taught. Simply imposing expectations on students (no matter how much it made sense to the instructors) as a means of mastering content,

was not going to work. I realized both that I needed to attend to the process of learning as it unfolded in the class, and that students needed "to go beyond head knowledge" (as I now sardonically termed course content). These elements had been missing in this bold, but apparently misguided experiment. As my first year of teaching ended, I felt determined not to repeat this mistake again.

Beginning in my second year of teaching (when in fact I knew the content in much greater depth), I gave far greater attention to the process of teaching and learning. Intuitively, I began drawing on previous teaching models with which I had some prior experience, particularly my earlier work as a field instructor in supervising students' clinical practica. Thus, I began to emphasize the development of a learning alliance between myself as instructor and students in the class. (This was not yet a communal perspective on learning, which emerged only later. At this point, I was very much focused on individual learners within each given course.)

Nonetheless, this shift resulted in several changes. For example I began using assigned readings as the point of departure for the class, rather than as the focus of a lecture. Also, I explicitly acknowledged in class that students had different learning styles. Since not every student felt comfortable with speaking out in class — which was true of me as a student — I began to vary the format each session so that there would be a balance between receptive modes of learning (e.g., listening to didactic content, watching video tapes, etc.) and active modes (e.g., small group exercises, experiential role plays, etc.). I also began to encourage students to value asking questions as much as obtaining answers and, above all, to enjoy their learning journey.

Perhaps most importantly, I began to view teaching not simply as transmitting content but as attempting to embody the content, an idea suggested by a colleague (Metz, 1993, 1994). For instance, in the third year of teaching, I began to model specific components of clinical practice, particularly the

professional use of self, in courses such as Direct Social Work Practice and Assessment and Interventions With Children. At first, using personal disclosure for teaching purposes seemed uncomfortably daring. Although behavioral theory had made some inroads, the bulk of my clinical training had been grounded in psychodynamic theory and thus, I initially assumed (probably as part of the mystique of being an expert) that the principles of therapist nondisclosure and neutrality also must apply to educators. I did observe that students often were more attentive when I risked sharing pieces of personal practice wisdom. Sharing how I had learned to use my own self-reflections (e.g., attending to the feelings evoked during interactions with clients) as a guide to direct the subsequent course of the work appeared as a powerful stimulus for students in reflecting on their interactions with clients. In turn, this helped students recognize and make productive use of the "active mistakes" occurring as a normal part of their professional development (Shulman, 1993).

At the present time, although I have become much more comfortable in the classroom, I still struggle with balancing content and process teaching. I realize that there is no such thing as the "perfect" teaching approach, right for all students for all time. Yet, as much as I have come to value facilitating a learning process, it has become increasingly difficult to evaluate students by process alone. This dilemma is apparent

A.S.
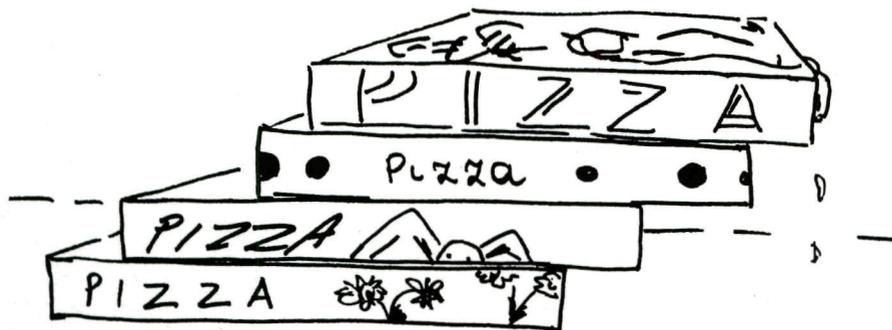
with regards to assessing both students' mastery of individual course content and their overall mastery of the skills, knowledge, and values needed for self-directed professional practice. These dilemmas also have been manifest in other areas.

Relationship with students

Developing relationships with students has accompanied my struggle to blend teaching styles. Sometimes, these relationships have been in harmony with my self-concept as a teacher, other times a counterpoint to the current dominant image. These relationships have progressed through several overlapping phases, each with their own polarity.

Serious vs. playful. Perhaps to counter how terribly serious social work is as a subject to teach, I often surprised myself by being humorous. The first public example of this occurred at the start of my second year — again at the welcoming assembly for incoming students. The Dean was introduced first, and his fluency in several languages, including classical Latin, had been noted. Then individual faculty members stood up to be introduced. When my turn came, I first described (in the serious fashion of my colleagues)

what my "teaching areas and research interests" were. Then, tongue in cheek, I identified myself as another Latin scholar on faculty, and proceeded to "conjugate" from an old rock 'n roll refrain: "do wa didy, didy dum, didy do." (What possessed me to take this risk I do not know, other than a spontaneous impulse to discharge the anxiety pent-up at having to wait my turn to speak.) Nonetheless, it lightened the moment considerably, with laughter shared by the Dean, faculty, and students.

Thus emboldened, I have used self-depreciating humor effectively to poke fun at myself and/or to tell students not to take graduate school so seriously! (A distinct contradiction to the overly serious "expert" who needed to deliver course content.) Over the years, I have found that most students appreciate the dry humor, and that I am perceived as a real person. Being playful has helped me determine whether I was liked and accepted by students, which is important to a novice in gaining some initial confidence about the teaching process. More importantly, being humorous has preserved the type of foolishness that often attends and foreshadows the process of discovery (Spencer-Brown, 1979). Thus, humor has been an vital source of creativity and self-care, helping maintain perspective and objectivity in times of travail. For example, as a result of the conflict with students in the course mentioned earlier, I wrote a parody about the teaching process which I submitted to mental health

humor periodical (Kayser, 1993). Although not accepted for publication, writing the manuscript reinforced a sense of freedom and experimentation about the teaching and learning process.
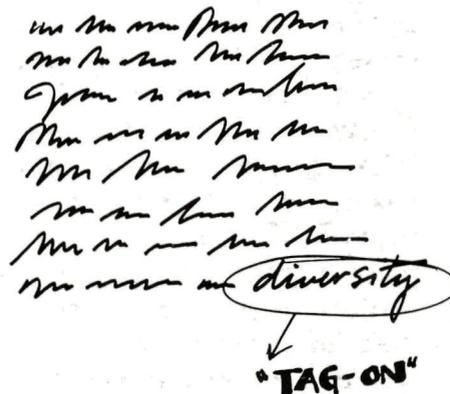
Polarized vs. inclusive. Throughout the beginning years of teaching, I have had many interactions and conversations with students about how to teach and practice the valuing of human diversity. Among the more memorable exchanges have been the following: A Native American student who challenged (accurately) that I had "tagged on the diversity content at the tail end of the course." A lesbian student who walked out of class after becoming incensed with a fundamentalist Christian classmate when the latter was complaining that she was the more oppressed because religious views were "excluded and suppressed" by the school. An older Latina student (who had experienced multiple forms of oppression because of her ethnicity, gender, and sexual

orientation) issued a blanket indictment of all the White students present in the class (as well as the entire faculty) "for talking a good game about diversity, but not practicing it." A White student who said that she did not like to think about the hatred and oppression felt by people of color because "it makes me feel bad." A group of racially-mixed male students who complained that they were "sick and tired of all the male-bashing that goes on in this school." A group composed of predominately White female students who, in reflecting on their first year in the program, suddenly were confronted with the lived experience of their diversity (e.g., differing in age, economic status, political views, religious beliefs, feelings about graduate school, etc.) as they struggled to hear each other's points of view while still maintaining relationships with respect.

My reaction to these encounters has changed over time. Initially, I felt great shame and inadequacy in being a novice. For example, I had no ready answer for the Native student about why I taught diversity in an "tag-on" way. In struggling to listen, however, I gradually began to see the course through her eyes. It became painfully clear that the curriculum emphasis on multi-cultural competence was discrepant from this student's (as well as others') experience of the learning process occurring within this particular class. In effect, the student experienced this discrepancy as one more

example of the cultural insensitivity by a person in a position of power and privilege, both by virtue of role (faculty instructor) as well as by race and gender (White and male).

More recently, I have felt that being a novice has given me tremendous freedom. Since I was not heavily invested in doing things a particular way, it has been relatively easy to experiment with different approaches. Thus, I have come to appreciate the direct feedback from students, even when uncomfortable to hear. At such times, I only felt thanks for the trust implied when students made the effort to communicate directly their concerns, since it seemed to express a faith that I could get past my own defensiveness and respond appropriately.

These experiences have helped me realize that building a community of learners must, of necessity, be an inclusive enterprise. This has been a tremendous challenge because, as noted above, not only do students carry into the classroom their previous life experience of diversity (ranging from those having few experiences with others-different-than-self to those having multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and even multi-national experiences), but also do they frequently become further polarized when attempting to articulate their perspectives. From each of these encounters, I have come away with a renewed commitment to teach both the content and process of diversity in a more integrated manner. I have tried, however, to avoid

falling into simplistic stereotypes or mindless political correctness. Rather, it has felt more honest to acknowledge that understanding others' diverse backgrounds, cultures, and personal experiences is a <u>life long process</u>, and that any course is only one small step on a much longer journey.

Sharing personal examples of my own struggles has helped. For example, I developed a teaching case out of earlier play therapy work with a nine-year old African-American girl, whose mother had died five years earlier. This child had presented several stories in which she assigned herself the role of "boss-master" while I was designated the "secretary-slave." I make it a point to tell students that in my eagerness to focus on this child's unconscious dynamics about losing a parent, I missed most of the ethnic, gender, and cross-cultural connotations in the case material.

In addition, sharing conversations and feedback I have received from other students about their learning experiences (including some of the incidents described above) has helped facilitate a more productive, less polarized dialogue in the class. Irrespective of students' race, gender, sexual orientation, language, or nationality, it seems one place most can relate to is the common universal human struggle in understanding self and other. With this process piece of learning as the starting point, building community has become easier. The sense of safety and trust students experience from this approach has

created greater receptivity to living as well as learning the value of human diversity.

As a result, I have experienced many more positive cross-cultural learning exchanges with students. For example, after one class session of Direct Social Work Practice, I received a telephone call from a young Latina student. In her early twenties, this student was extremely self-conscious of what she perceived as her lack of practice experience. She called to express her dread of making a mistake that might harm clients, a fear precipitated by the preceding class session involving a role play interview exercise, an activity which often heightens students' anxiety and vulnerability. She assumed that I also saw her as inept, and would therefore be either failing her in the course or recommending that she be counseled out of the program. I was frankly surprised as her self-perception, as I saw her actively engaged in the developmental task of learning not simply direct practice skills but, more importantly, of forming a professional social work identity. I told her this, and offered additional reassurance and support for her learning. As I shared stories about similar learning struggles I had experienced in my masters' education, and which I had observed in working with other students as well, she seemed relieved and became more patient with herself. By sharing a common struggle, a bridge of mutual understanding was formed with this student, which subsequently contributed to building the

larger community by spanning the cultural, gender, and sexual orientation differences that often exists between students and faculty.

Individual vs. communal. The course in which I have had the most extended experience in developing a community of learners — Assessment And Interventions With Children — is (not surprisingly) that in which I am the primary teacher. I have felt much greater freedom to experiment with "my" course, usually changing it in some fashion every time I teach it.

However, my first purposeful effort to build a community of learners did not begin until my third year of teaching. After hearing again the Dean's welcome of new students into a community of learners, I became sufficiently intrigued with the concept to see what I could do to bring it to reality. Thus, somewhat tentatively, I introduced a process exercise in the first session of the child course. The purpose was to help students develop "an empathic connection to their own childhood."

After first allowing a brief period of individual work to recall significant childhood experiences, I asked students to break into small groups to share their reflections with each other. Following this, the students reconvened as an entire class to examine the themes which emerged. Through the ensuing discussion (which happily avoided the twin pitfalls of either romanticizing childhood or eliciting unplanned disclosure of painful memories), I discovered

the tremendous potential this exercise contained in forming a larger community of learners. Students' active participation had increased markedly, even for those usually more comfortable with silence. Furthermore, I noticed that students with diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and current professional interests were discovering commonalties in their past recollections as well as present conceptualizations about childhood.

To sustain this energy over the remainder of the course, I asked students to bring in a favorite toy, game, story, or

picture from their childhood to share in the next session. ("Show and Tell" comes to graduate school!) In addition, I asked them to use their individual reflections and group sharing as the basis for a subsequent written assignment on the child and family clients with whom they were working. At this point, the connection to content learning unfolded naturally. For example, when the class later examined ecological perspectives on the risk factors children currently are exposed to in America, as well as the accompanying concepts of resilience and strength, the metaphor of children's "broken communities" (e.g., families, neighborhoods, schools, as well as larger systems of social support) emerged as a direct extension of the work done in the first class session. As this metaphor developed further, the linkage between direct social work practice with child/family clients and social work's commitment to social justice and macro system intervention became more evident and meaningful . The final result in this class was most gratifying. The course had fostered an integration of personal and professional learning, both for individual students and the larger collective.

As my experience with this communal approach increased, I have attempted to move beyond the confines of each individual class of students, so as to extend the concept of a community of learners out over time and space. For example, now I frequently share with my

current class the clinical and research articles, case material, and videotapes about working with children which emerged from earlier classes. In addition, I encourage the current community to make their own unique contributions to the learning of subsequent students taking this course. When students realize that they are not simply taking a course but building the course itself over time, their investment substantially increased. For example, many students have sent me favorite articles, papers, prose, poems, stories, or life experiences about working with children, many of which I am able to incorporate into the course. Indeed, with some students I have come full cycle, helping them develop manuscripts for publication so that they in turn contribute to the body of existing knowledge. [See Anthony and Smith (1994).]

Reciprocal vs. hierarchical. From the preceding section, it should be apparent that as my teaching has matured over the past two years, I wanted my relationships with students to be more reciprocal in nature. That is, to emphasize that both teacher and student are adult learners, mutually engaged in the process of active discovery, and that we each bring an important base of knowledge and experience to the teaching-learning enterprise. By and large, this notion of a reciprocal learning alliance has been a good fit for the majority of students. Incorporating important social work values into the learning enterprise (e.g., acceptance,

mutual respect, individuation, self-determination) is the very core of what building a community of learners is all about.

Given these deeply held beliefs, then, one can imagine my extreme consternation in recently discovering that, perhaps, such a community of learners cannot be formed without the exercise of a gate keeping or boundary-setting function. (I confess that as a masters student, the very idea that faculty acted as "gatekeepers" frankly was repugnant. I saw it merely as an exercise in control — arbitrarily making students jump through meaningless hoops which had no relevance for practice. Now, as a faculty member, I have painfully discovered that such control may be both necessary and, in today's litigious climate, exceedingly difficult to achieve.) This past year, I have had several first-hand experiences with students which involved cases of academic dishonesty, blatant disregard for social work ethics in the classroom and field practice, and — most worrisome of all — incompetent, dangerous practice with clients. Sadly, I have come to realize that not all students admitted to graduate school have the capacity to participate in the social work profession. (I do not refer to intellectual ability primarily. Rather it is students' capacity for personal integrity — the openness and commitment to professional growth — which seems insufficient in too many cases.)

As a result, I now am in the most unlikely position of

advocating for a more hierarchical relationship with students, at least with those demonstrating significant problems in their ethical and professional conduct. This has very much the feeling of a novice's loss of innocence. I have learned that my most cherished beliefs and teaching practices, particularly those based on establishing reciprocal relationships and facilitating process learning, have severe weaknesses. To date, they have not proven effective either in enticing problematic students into joining a community of learners or, barring that outcome, in preventing their continuance in the program. Ironically, I am re-experiencing the old conflict — long thought resolved — of my first year of teaching (i.e., the struggle between content and process). The difference this time is that I am back on the side of wanting more content, accountability, and control over problematic students' educational journey in the program.

Relationship with faculty colleagues

Only recently have I given serious thought to how the concept of a community of learners might extend to relationships with faculty colleagues, many of whom have influenced my development as a teacher. The same type of nonlinear development (Germain, 1994) of back and forth shifts are also apparent here as well.

Finding my voice. It comes as a shock to recall that during my first year, I was very inhibited in faculty meetings and other interactions with colleagues. At the time, I felt comfortable only when talking to faculty teaching sections of the same courses as I. Since I was hired in the same program from which I had graduated, I felt quite insecure about whether I had obtained a faculty position only as a second choice (or lower) candidate. As a result, I told myself to "lay low" in order to get the lay of the land, at least in publicly expressing my views and ideas.

Fortunately, the faculty did not reinforce this internalized self-disenfranchisement. The Associate Dean and several senior faculty devised a series of mentoring meetings for the new faculty group. These meetings served several purposes: to transmit the program's curriculum orientation of integrated social work; to provide a primer on faculty governance and collegiality; and to elicit from us stories about our own educational and professional journeys. (In effect, this was another of the invitations to join a community of learners.) These initial meetings served as the basis for the eventual development of a variety of relationships with other faculty (i.e., mentoring, collegial, and collaborative).

The Dean also was quite active in checking in periodically with the new faculty, offering support and (occasionally) blunt criticism. For example, at my first year-end performance review, I was pointedly told my silence in faculty meetings was problematic and I needed to start speaking up. This was the first time the thought occurred to me that a community of learners might also apply to the faculty, and that my own participation was required — not simply for curriculum development — but also for collegial governance in shaping the overall life and direction of the school.

"It takes a whole village to raise a child." At the end of my second year, a faculty colleague used this African proverb in her commencement address to graduating students. I could not help but apply the comment to my own ongoing musings about a community of learners: What should my role(s) be as a member of this village? [Interestingly, I realized that the university itself had begun addressing the same issue, as it re-examined the meaning of scholarship using Boyer's (1993) conceptualization of faculty as a "mosaic of talent."] One might say that — at this point — I have toured most of the village, having made several important discoveries along the way.

One discovery is much like the discovery of students mentioned earlier in the Assessment and Interventions with Children class. I have learned that faculty colleagues who differ from me in age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious traditions, years of teaching, curriculum expertise, research interest, and prior life experience often are those with whom I have the greatest mutuality of professional interests. A related discovery is that these colleagues also are fellow travelers on a common (and uncommon) journey. Most struggled with

similar issues in becoming learners, knowers, and educators. Listening to stories about their development as educators has been helpful in orienting me into the larger context and meanings of a community of learners. These individual and collective efforts of faculty members are ways that universities — as institutions — perpetuate, renew, and reinvent themselves over time. As much through educators' stories (i.e., discourse, debate, and reflections about the teaching enterprise) as through research and service, do faculties in fact become the embodiment of the classical definition of the university — a community of scholars.

CONCLUSION

Writing this narrative allowed me to reflect at length upon the question of the development of a novice educator. Through many twists, turns, back and forth shifts over the past four years, I have moved far beyond my entry point. This journey, still in the process of unfolding, allowed me to understand — personally and professionally — some of the larger dimensions (and yes, tensions) involved in establishing communities of learners.

Personal narratives are helpful in studying the development of teachers because they are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities are fashioned (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). As such, narratives serve an interpretive function, attempting to craft coherence and meaning out of the "raw data" of a person's multi-layered, sometimes contradictory lived experiences. These interpretations are selective, since there is more than one story in each person's life, and many versions to the same story (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). Individual narratives also contain the larger embedded stories of a particular historical time, geographic place, and external culture (Howard, 1991). Thus this narrative should be read both as the author's individual search for personal meaning and as part of the larger story currently being told within American society about the role and value of higher education. For example, this narrative is not only about teacher development, it also contains many contextual subtexts, including controversies over pedagogical theories, curriculum designs, teacher-student relationships, teaching human diversity, faculty collegiality, conflict, student participation, and professional accountability. As such, one teacher narrative touches on issues common to many educators, both within as well as outside of social work.

What moral or lesson does this narrative contain about the characteristics of a novice social work educator and the characteristics of a community of learners? Some preliminary thoughts are as follows:

The term novice implies not just newness or inexperience, but also a period of formation. Like the novitiate in religious orders, the apprenticeship in guilds, the junior faculty period prior to tenure in the professoriate, it is a time of testing. Some of its key characteristics seem to be: Seeing the teaching and learning process through fresh eyes, making naive discoveries about content new and old (i.e., already in the body of existing knowledge), and maintaining a sense of wonderment. It means letting go of control, making active mistakes, risking foolishness and play, overcoming internal and external obstacles, mentoring and being mentored. It means overcoming hurt and anger, and keeping the forces of cynicism, detachment, and burnout at bay. It means an uncertain journey, full of detours and false starts, as well as unexpected shortcuts and new pathways.

The term a community of learners also implies formation. It is brought about when teachers and students, administrators and faculties mutually share expertise, constructing knowledge rather than simply transmitting it. It means reciprocal relationships, valuing differences, and the willingness to be held accountable to self and other. It means forming a community to embody the content. Paradoxically, it also means increasing control, guarding the boundaries of the community so as to promote members' capacity for personal and professional integrity. It means feeling heartache and conflict when some are not allowed to remain. Above all, it means moving beyond the classroom, so that students are prepared to help clients transform and heal their own communities. □

REFERENCES

Anthony, I. & Smith, D. (1994). Adolescent fathers: A positive acknowledgment in the school setting. *Social Work in Education, 16,* 179-183.

Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate.* Princeton NJ: Carnegie Foundation.

Casey, K. (1993) *I answer with my life: Life histories of women teachers working for social change.* NY: Routledge.

Coles, R. (1989). *The call of stories: Teaching and the moral imagination.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Cortazzi, M. (1993). *Narrative analysis.* London: Falmer Press.

Ernst, T. (1995). A personal account of institutional sexism: Discrimination against women by women. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping,* 1(1), 32-34.

Germain, C. (1994). Emerging conceptions of family development over the life course. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 75,* 259-268.

Gitterman, A. (1995). Reflections about teaching and learning. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping,* 1(2), 9-18.

Goldstein, H. (1992). If social work hasn't made progress as a science, might it be an art? *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 73,* 48-55.

Graybeal, C., Moore, V., & Cohen, M. (1995). The transformation of a social work program: A narrative of liberation. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping,* 1(2), 56-65.

Haskins, C. H. (1957). *The rise of universities.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Howard, G. (1991). Culture tales: A narrative approach to thinking, cross-cultural psychology, and psychotherapy. *American Psychologist, 46,* 187-197.

Kayser, J. (1993). Radio city lecture hall: New teaching strategies for mental health educators. Unpublished manuscript.

Kayser, J. & Garrison, E. (in press). An independent employee newsletter in times of organizational crises: Maintaining management-staff communications. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health.*

Metz, P. K. (1993). Embodiment. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work, 8,* 230- 231.

Metz, P. K. (1994). *The tao of learning: Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching adapted for a new age.* Atlanta GA: Humanics New Age Press.

Perlman, H. H. (1989). *Looking back to see ahead.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Riesseman, C. K. (1993). Narrative analysis. *Qualitative Research Methods* (entire issue), 30, 1-79.

Rosenwald, G. C., & Ochberg, R. (eds.) (1992). *Storied lives: The cultured politics of self-understanding.* New Haven (CN): Yale University Press.

Saleebey, D. (1994) Culture, theory, and narrative: The intersections of meaning in practice. *Social Work, 39,* 351-359.

Shulman, L. (1992). *The skills of helping: Individuals, families, and groups* (3rd edition). Itasca IL: F.E. Peacock.

Spencer-Brown, G. (1979). *Law of forms.* NY: E.P. Dutton.

Strickland, L. (1994). Autobiographical interviewing and narrative analysis: An approach to psychosocial assessment. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 22,* 27-41.

Weiland, S. (1995). Life history and academic work: *The career of Professor G. The Narrative Study of Lives* (Vol. 3, pp. 59-99). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.