

2 INCLUDING OURSELVES: TEACHING, TRUST, IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

[The teacher's] questions were ones of identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 3)

A curious emotion stirred in Winston's heart. In front of him was an enemy who was trying to kill him: in front of him, also, was a human creature, in pain ... he... instinctively started forward to help her...as though he felt the pain in his own body. (George Orwell, 1949, *Nineteen eighty-four*, p. 57)

... an emptying out of relationships (Ball, 1999, p. 10).

Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin (1999) say that they use the phrase '*stories to live by* ... to refer to identity' (p. 4). This is an identity constructed and reported through narratives that link the person, knowledge, history and context of a teacher and their teaching. In this paper I use the idea of '*stories to live by*' to examine how our own stories as researchers and teachers may interact with the stories of others in and beyond our communities and society. I am interested in the effects on us of ideological contexts and practices that I believe are in conflict with notions of trust and of community. If the dominant story in our various societies is one of individualism and of distrust, then a critical issue becomes what is it that we are to be included in? What are we to identify with, beyond our own values and preferences?

James (1994) says that in the fragmented, individualised and globalised world of New Right liberal economics, the 'sociality of identity' is being lost (p. 3). In part, this is because the concept of a society is challenged, and replaced with the idea that only the 'personal and familial' (p. 3) has meaning. In this context, rather than recognising and valuing our dependencies and interdependencies, which would seem to be central to the notion of an inclusive society, the term dependent is constructed as involving a 'lesser person,' one who cannot, or will not, fend for themselves (James, 1994, p. 3). This position supports only limited connections between and amongst people in communities and societies. It stands in contrast to John Dewey's (1916) view that democracy and the ongoing development of co-operative democratic institutions requires social participation, which includes a sharing of ideas and experiences based on an education 'which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships' (p. 99). The disengaged individual has limited reason to identify with their wider society. The individual who identifies as connected with society has reason for engagement and participation.

Identity is a contested area that includes the idea that identity resides in the construction of differences, such as for gender or for gay or other minority groups (Zaretsky, 1994). Zaretsky notes Foucault as seeing identity as a construction of power discourses that exert control over us, assigning us to various groupings and making us who we are. This means that, for Foucault, identity is something for us to be liberated from. In this context, says Zaretsky (1994), the analysis of identity requires that we go beyond the subjective and interpersonal to consider identity in social, political and historical contexts. In that case it would seem important to examine notions of identity and difference in ways that foreground an uneven distribution of power and resources (Sleeter, 1993). This would acknowledge the complex interactions of the individual and their cultural, religious, social class, ideological and gendered senses of themselves (Kearney, 1998) that result in the 'multiple identities and identity choices that people make in practice' (Shakespeare, 1996, p. 109). Scheurich (1993), along with Fine and her colleagues (2000), reminds us of the enforced racialised identities that form and are sustained in racist societies, while in his analysis of 'whiteness' as a key issue of identity politics, Allen (2001) suggests that the predominant power of white identity expressed through an imposed global economic and military supremacy assigns an inferior identity to othered non-whites. This justifies the exploitation of their lands and labour in the 'structural dehumanisation of people of colour' (p. 482). For Grosz (1994), one response to such complexity is to work with both identity and difference in an ongoing discussion about the possibilities for new social relationships that may be negotiated from ethical and moral principles.

In addition to these various positions, there are those who see identity as a term describing who we think we are. In this context, Canadian reading researcher Frank Smith (1998) writes that 'the way we identify ourselves is at the core' of all learning because 'all learning pivots on who we think we are, and who we see ourselves as capable of becoming' (p. 11). Smith's claim might be understood when we make a decision that 'this has nothing to do with me.' We mean that the issue – economics, politics, gender, racism, disability – is of no interest to ourselves. It may be important to others, but we do not identify with it. If we have the power to exclude ourselves from participation in this issue, then we will not learn about it. The more that our social environment assigns us the power to disengage – for example, by an emphasis on the primacy of the individual – the less we need to contribute to and learn from dialogue with others. Smith (1998) refers to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning to suggest how much we would lose if we fail to learn with and from others, if we remove ourselves from what Vygotsky termed 'zone[s] of proximal development' within which 'we are helpless by ourselves but competent if we have assistance' (p. 85).

Skrtic (1995) writes of John Dewey's philosophy that it emphasises the ongoing construction and reconstruction of knowledge and social practices through 'dialogical discourse' (p. 46). This underlines the fundamental importance of education because it is through education that we 'are prepared to enter the conversation' (Skrtic, 1995, p. 46). Because we must learn to be democratic, says Skrtic, we

need to create institutional settings and practices 'in which democratic identities, values and communities are cultivated' (p. 47). Skrtic suggests that 'identity must be central to social policy because its opposite, alienation, threatens community itself' (p. 47).

In this chapter I suggest that, for some of us, alienation is evident in our workplaces and in other aspects of our lives. This is an alienation imposed by the creation of environments that are designed to limit human relationships to controlled and contractual interactions focused on achieving specific predetermined goals. I contrast such disengaged experiences with alternative stories that are about identifying with others, a 'participatory consciousness' (Heshusius, 1994, p. 16), that reflects care and trust. I refer to evidence from research but also to writings by journalists and others commenting on people and their experiences. The intention is not to equate journalism and selected individual comments with research (although good journalists, like good researchers, are concerned with veracity, honesty, and critical evaluation of their interpretive stories). Rather, I use media and other sources to suggest that particular experiences, ideas and values are evident in the societies that I am referring to in this writing. While there will also be alternative experiences, values, views and interpretations, I have chosen to attend to some particular issues for this chapter to suggest that they form a context for teaching and teachers. I quote from research and from media sources to include voices other than my own commenting on issues that are of concern to me.

LOSING THE PLOT

This is of course my story, although, as with all accounts, there is much that will not be told and I acknowledge that like all stories this one is 'interpretive and partial' (James, 2002, p. 172). The story begins with a group of researchers sitting in the sun in Norway and Julie Allan introducing the idea of 'identity.' At the time, 'Who am I' seemed a self-indulgent thought, unworthy of public discussion. I am a university teacher and I live and work with school and university teachers who claim a commitment to equity, justice and inclusion in education and society. In this context (and at my age) my 'identity' as a teacher should not be especially difficult to articulate and subject to interrogation and analysis. Yet as I thought about it I realised that for myself, and for some others I talk with, our teacher identities, our 'stories to live by,' in Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) terminology, are at this time difficult to tell to ourselves or others, conflicting, for example in being both assertive and uncertain about who we are, and involving significant distress.

In my analysis, teaching and research in New Zealand is undertaken in a context of technicist models of curriculum and assessment, of 'accountability,' of 'performance management,' and the surveillance and control that all this entails. This is part of an alienating environment for teachers whose version of professionalism emphasises the complexity of their work and their personal responsibilities to children, young people, parents and society. Further stresses occur when we apply for research grants or other resources, or report on our work to educational and social

Inclusion, Participation and Democracy: What is the Purpose?

Allan, J. (Ed.)

2003, X, 233 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4020-1264-8