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CONVERSATIONS IN COUNTERPOINT:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE LANDSCAPE
OF FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS AT A BOARD OF EDUCATION

by

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Canada

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ABSTRACT

This study discloses the impact of the social narrative between men and women on the educational system. Theoretically grounded in Clandinin and Connelly's landscape metaphor, it captures the complexity of the professional knowledge landscape of seven female administrators' lives during a period of political, economic and educational reform. The fundamental orientation of this thesis focusses on validating women's personal knowledge which is derived from their organizational experience in adult education.

As an administrator in Adult and Continuing Education, I did not fully comprehend the influence of the board of education's structure. Contradictory ways of thinking and behaving in this institutional setting made me question how gender affected women's foundational concepts about theories of human nature, epistemology and ontology in a patriarchal environment.

Over a two year period, I shared conversations with co-ordinators, principals and senior officials, individually or in a focus group. By naming the female experience, five feminist case studies were developed which offered us an opportunity to reconceptualize knowledge in organizations. Together, we began to construct a conscious sense of personal agency about our encounters with gender barriers.

As these stories of disempowerment were told, the changing social narrative unexpectedly altered the relationship among these accounts. It shifted from issues of gender equity and authority to a

theoretically analogous conflict between privileged day school teachers and marginalized Continuing Education instructors. Consequently, this work sketches an insider's view of adult education in transition, and its impact on the question of the fundamental purpose of a board of education. The most significant disclosure is the powerful commitment of these women in positions of responsibility, to the notions of equity, caring and community. By bringing gender to inquiry, their work narratives become valuable as a literature where women can read themselves into the narrative of administration and changing reforms. They expand the parameters of meaning in educational administration, as women's stories continue to modify the gendered construction of human experience.

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Chapter 1.   Introduction: catching the drift of the conversation

Through education we enter a cultural conversation, always

somewhere in the middle. There we find and form our understanding

of ourselves and our communities....Some are already fluent in the

language in which this conversation takes place....They easily find

their places in the world. But some never catch the drift of the

conversation....The conversation puts them in their places. (Pagano,

1990, p. xiv)

As a female administrator in Adult and Continuing Education, English as a Second Language

(ESL) and Native Languages programs, I am becoming fluent in organizational "doublespeak"

(Orwell, 1984). It's not that different in some respects from being an adult immigrant learning

English at the City Board of Education where I work. Whether we are women administrators or ESL

students, we come to terms with the following maxims about language (Stern, 1992):

- when we speak, people may not understand what we mean - even though we're using the

    same language;

- gender can work for or against having our voices heard;

- our perceived status will often determine the value of our knowledge to the listener;

- tone and register are often as important as content; and

- timing is everything regardless of what we have to say.

Both ESL adult learners and I are aware of the significance of the individual context of our

background knowledge (Allen, Swain, Harley & Cummins, 1990), a consolidation of previous

personal and professional experiences. We accept that background impinges directly on our present

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learning situation. In trying to learn a new language, we both view the future with the anticipation of being able to "catch the drift of the conversation". The impact can be the same for both of us. If we don't gain high proficiency in learning the language - English or organizational doublespeak - we won't function successfully in our respective landscapes. The conversation puts us in our places.

Chapter 2. Purpose: the professional knowledge landscape

In this study, I document the professional lives of seven female board of education administrators who are entering the middle of a cultural conversation - an emerging organizational conversation in a daily drama about relationships, institutional structures, and dramatic political and economic change during a period of educational reform. The purpose of this inquiry is to uncover the intricate nature of the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) where the personal and professional lives of these administrators intersect in adult education.

The professional knowledge landscape is considered to be a metaphorical notion "composed of relationships among people, places, and things" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 5); it is the total context which embodies the historical, political, social, cultural and professional connections in an educator's milieu. Through a dialogic relationship with practice, I inquire into the complexity of female administrators' knowledge - how it is shaped by the professional landscape in which we work. This thesis journey is a narrative process for bringing gender to inquiry in the context of a large learning organization (Schon, 1983; Senge 1990). It is a way to modify the gendered construction of human experience and to reconceptualize beliefs about knowledge (Frye, as cited in Monteath, 1993, p. 10). By contributing to the literature about women's experiences in administration, this study also becomes a vehicle to encourage our leadership and advocacy during a time of educational reform in adult education.

In this thesis, an "administrator" is defined generically and refers to managers, principals, program supervisors, and senior officials. These roles designate people in positions of responsibility who oversee staff and/or manage programs. As administrators, we examine our connection to self as woman and to the diverse educational community. An important part of this portrait addresses our experiences that result from decision-making during a time of restructuring, reduction and reform.

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Since the fundamental orientation of this thesis is directed towards the validation of women's personal knowledge as derived from experience, it offers a distinctive way to understand how female administrators evaluate foundational concepts such as theories of human nature, epistemology and ontology. The questions of how we are implicated in what we know and what we are compelled to do with our knowledge (Pagano, 1990) are shared narratively in terms of the professional knowledge landscape we conceptually inhabit. They give us, as female administrators, a focus for responsive and responsible action in the future - a kind of mutuality which builds a sense of self and a feeling of empowerment (Miller, 1984).

My approach endorses the assumption that a feminist methodology of social science requires "the recognition that personal involvement is more than dangerous bias - it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (Stanley & Wise, 1979, p. 58). Following this notion, this study discloses our strategic stories in dealing with organizational support and barriers. While still acknowledging experiences we have had in the past, we come to think differently about these events and relationships that shape the professional knowledge landscape. We begin to respect the distinctiveness of experience. We more clearly appreciate the person we were in the past, who we are now, and the person we have the opportunity to become in the future.

This feminized critique expands and ameliorates the conversational circle. It welcomes women not just as objects but also as subjects. It names the female experience and breaks the silence imposed on females by patriarchal institutions (Gold, 1994). In recognizing that personal experience gave rise to this inquiry, my intention is to endorse more androcentric administrative practices narratively within a larger textual system. It is not to make universally applicable statements about women administrators' experiences as part of the professional knowledge landscape. It is, instead, one step towards having women recognize and experience through narrative that "there is an intimate

and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (Dewey, 1938/1963, p. 20). My experience is that women don't often encounter this relationship. Consequently, the verisimilitude (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) I seek revolves around how administrators experience the lived stories they tell; not only how they happened in their organizational environment.

Chapter 3.   Background

3.1   the context of teacher knowledge research and narratives of experience

This inquiry arises from my professional experiences as a high school English and mathematics teacher, an ESL instructor, lead instructor and administrator in Adult and Continuing Education, and as a graduate student researcher. By adopting an agent - central perspective (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin, 1985; Craig, 1992), I have consolidated my own experience with the practice of seven women administrators as the contextual backdrop for my thesis. These feminist work narratives, both biographical and autobiographical, emerge as qualitative case studies in educational administration.

After participating for three years in a collaborative research project (Clandinin & Connelly, 1993-1996, SSHRC project), I positioned my thesis inquiry centrally within their concept of "Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). The foundation of this concept extends back to several fields of research. One aspect is the field of teacher thinking or teacher knowledge research. It was an emerging research area in the late 70's which focussed more closely on experience in the classroom and teachers' thought processes. In trying to understand teachers as knowers, Clandinin & Connelly (1995) cite the philosophical works of Schwab (1969), Dewey (1938), and others. Although they acknowledge the four commonplaces - subject matter, teacher, learner, milieu (Schwab, 1969) - as the main issues of curriculum discourse, they appear to be seeking a more holistic view of curriculum (Miller, 1993) that would not depend on the promotion of the learner's role to the detriment of the teacher's position.

Following this notion, the interpretation of the individual administrators' narratives of experience or research texts, is designed with the perception of their wholeness; that is, the balance that the narrativist pursues (Crites, 1975; Polkinghorne, 1988). Sustaining this dialectic between the whole and its parts is a demanding responsibility for researchers, similar to the dialectic framework

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wherein theory and practice are considered inseparable. These work narratives speak directly to the notion of personal practical knowledge and its foundation in experience. They reveal the fundamental unity Dewey (1938/1963) stresses between experience and education; how education or knowledge is seen as "development within, for, and by experience" (p. 28). Dewey (1916) discusses how an individual shapes and is shaped by experience: "We do something to the thing (the experience) and then it (the experience) does something to us in return" (p. 139). In aligning my thesis context within Dewey's conceptualization of experience, I probe the connection of experience to previous knowledge in order to understand how it informs present knowledge and experience. In turn, the impact of present knowledge on female administrators' knowing and advocacy for the future is shared.

Furthermore, Dewey's work (1934) offers a philosophical basis for the conceptualization of teachers' knowledge - and in turn, administrators' knowledge. He encourages a perception of knowledge as a process of knowing wherein knowledge could be both practical and personal and still subject to critique. He also discloses his disagreement with philosophers who perceive the practical and personal as a dichotomy and exclude these aspects in their understanding of knowledge. In "The Practical Character of Reality", he states:

If we suppose the traditions of philosophic discussion (were) wiped

out and philosophy starting afresh from the most active tendencies of

today - those striving in social life, in science, in literature, and in art

- one can hardly imagine any philosophic view springing up and

gaining credence, which did not give a large place, in its scheme of

things, to the practical and the personal, and to them without

employing disparaging terms, such as phenomenal, merely subjective,

and so on. Why, putting it mildly, should what gives tragedy, comedy,

and poignancy to life, be excluded from things? (Dewey, 1934 as

cited in McDermott 1981, p. 209)

3.2 personal practical knowledge

Connelly & Clandinin (1988) demonstrate their epistemological interest in the personal and the practical by creating the term "personal practical knowledge". In this thesis, personal practical knowledge is defined as being

> *in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and*
>
> *body, and in the person's future plans and actions....It is a particular*
>
> *way of reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to*
>
> *deal with the exigencies of a present situation* (Connelly & Clandinin,
>
> 1988, p. 25).

By extending this conceptual framework created by Clandinin and Connelly with relation to teachers' knowledge, I illustrate that the professional knowledge landscape where female administrators conceptually live, creates epistemological dilemmas that we understand narratively in terms of sacred, cover and secret stories (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995; Crites, 1971). These stories allow female administrators to give voice to the day to day responsibilities of doing their job in running a board of education - for "it is through the daily mundane and ordinary events that all leadership is exercised" (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995, p. 3). Consequently, I am guided in my inquiry to examine the complex intersection between administrators' personal and professional knowledge.

Crites (1971) suggests that teachers live within a sacred story of theory and practice which mould their experiences on the professional knowledge landscape (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Having initially encountered this term used in a narrative context through Crites' work, I began to identify its tangible existence within an organizational context. Through field texts, these sacred stories unfold during informal interviews - stories that were commonly touted as part of the system. This identification and their implications for the administrators surfaced as part of the narrative method we experienced, as participants and researcher, interpreting and reconstructing our stories.

3.3   personal practical knowledge and the professional knowledge landscape

The theoretical connection between personal practical knowledge and the professional knowledge landscape allows me to wander through this complicated educational milieu with intention - that is, an intention to expand the perimeters of meaning in educational administration through narrative inquiry. By engaging female administrators in shared inquiries of experience and in voicing ideas for ameliorating managerial practices, I unwrap their ambivalent attitudes towards change at the City Board of Education. For Connelly and Clandinin (1998) and Beattie (1995), the merging of these two particular storylines about teacher knowledge and teacher voice creates a third story of school reform. In a similar context, this thesis reflects the stories of female administrators poised to undergo reform in adult education. How educational reform will alter their experiences is currently just speculation - feelings already insinuated in anxious voices through their work narratives.

The many layers of plot lines from conversations with teachers and administrators led Clandinin and Connelly (1995) to the adoption of the intricate metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape. To understand the professional knowledge landscape narratively, it must be interpreted as a metaphor which is elastic and able to grow in different contexts. This study examines in detail how the professional knowledge landscape shapes effective managing: what we, as female administrators know; what knowledge is seen as vital for administrators; and who is authorized to construct knowledge about managing. An evolving vision of the professional knowledge landscape acknowledges it as both an intellectual and moral landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). This conceptual idea considers administrators' knowledge as developing from, and revealed by our experience as part of the changing organizational culture at a board of education. The professional knowledge landscape fits comfortably as the backdrop to the intersection of our personal and

professional stories, revealing how we are struggling through the burden of institutional restructuring and reform, precipitated by difficult political and economic times.

In describing the professional knowledge landscape, Connelly & Clandinin (1988; 1995) often use two metaphors, "funnel" and "conduit". These metaphors help me represent the social construction of female administrators' reality at the City Board of Education. They offer a way of picturing how administrators and teachers in the classroom come to know policies and procedures on their landscape. In constructing interpretive research texts, I recognized that some participants did not accept this analogy. Consequently, I inquire whether practitioners see a good fit between the language we use for theory, as researchers, and their own practice. In a natural response, personal metaphors emerge from the administrators' work narratives which alter their interpretation of the conceptual framework of the professional knowledge landscape. These contradictions facilitated my understanding of how we, as administrators, might influence or shape the context in which we work. It was also a way to understand the possibilities of influencing the course of change through shared knowledge and endorsement.

To develop the context for administrative knowledge, I examine the professional knowledge of individual female administrators, the organizational landscape at work and the means by which this landscape relates to Adult and Continuing and Education policy and educational research theory. Viewed in this way, the professional knowledge landscape is positioned at the interface of theory and practice in administrators' lives. This recognition opens the way to examining my thesis problem. The question, "How is administrative knowledge shaped by the professional knowledge context in which female administrators work?" emerges as a way of uncovering some of the gaps in feminist management literature. This direction is an avenue for contributing to the development of practical knowledge in the field of management and educational reform.

Chapter 4.   Methodology

4.1   overview of administrators' narratives

In this inquiry, a framework for qualitative case studies is developed around the contextual backdrop of the work narratives of seven women administrators (Chap. 5). In various roles and organizational relationships at the City Board of Education, the following levels of administrators are represented as participants: principal, co-ordinator, program supervisor and senior official. Each one was engaged in this collaborative research project primarily through two techniques for creating field texts - informal interviews and participant observation. The issues that surfaced from our discussions and my observation, shaped the way the narratives evolved. During the development of this research, some participant stories emerged from individual conversations over a few months, while others unfolded from a Conversation Focus Group which met periodically over a two year interval. In all cases, this qualitative study was designed so that the administrators could share the opportunity to directly benefit from their participation.

4.2   qualitative case study

During the initial development of my proposal, I selected qualitative research and narrative as the methodology and method that corresponded to my thesis question and how the problem was shaped. I had completed three years participating in collaborative research as part of the community at the Centre for Teacher Development (OISE/University of Toronto). While exploring the notion of "Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1993-1996, SSHRC project), I felt my thesis topic and my approach to its inquiry were clearly embedded in this concept and the accompanying narrative research method. In addition, my research situated itself quite naturally within a hermeneutic position (Gadamer, 1975) that depended on a personal and conceptual frame of reference. Personal experience methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) also reflected my style of sharing experiences with people in the workplace and offered an opportunity to eventually have an intensive description and interpretation of female administrators' lived experience in a large educational organization. However, choosing case study as the framework of my thesis was reached much later in my thinking. As part of an emergent process, specifically the result of designing pilot studies for graduate courses, the rationale for choosing a case study methodology became clearer.

I began to recognize that the focus of my investigation was identifiable within a natural bounded system (Smith as cited in Merriam, 1988); that is, the experiences of women administrators at a board of education in the adult education arena. Within this setting, case studies allowed me to describe the interaction of important features characteristic of this phenomenon in an intensive, rich manner without separating them from their context (Yin as cited in Merriam, 1988). Calling on anthropology, Geertz (1973) names this outcome "thick description" by which he signifies "interpreting the meaning of...demographic and descriptive data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep-seated attitudes and notions, and the like" (p. 119).

An example of this potential surfaced during our Focus Group Conversation when we began talking about the supposedly gender-neutral topic of Board budget allocation.

> *There's not as much money no matter what gender you are.*
> *(Participant 1)*
>
> *But it's like a mystery, isn't it? Like the Masons or something, trying to figure out where the money is and how it's allocated and how you get access to it. So whenever I need to know I go to Barb who is the woman principal representative on the budget committee and then she lets me know.... (Participant 2)*
>
> *When you call the men though, they don't have the answer either.*
> *(Participant 2)*
>
> *I think the mystery's deliberate. (Participant 3)*
>
> *In what sense? (Sheila)*
>
> *Well, I don't believe a budget has to be some kind of, you know, mysterious process. In fact,....it should be a very clear process. The fact [that] it isn't, always makes me wonder, because it raises issues of control and power...because I mean, "who does control those purse strings?". I often think you might find access to those mysteries if you were lined up in the men's washroom, you know, side by side with the comptroller. There may be ways that you can find out [budget] stuff but it may be very difficult for women to access.*
> *(Participant 3) (Chap. 5.9, Focus Group Conversation 1)*

The foregoing description of the Board's organizational norms gave me, as researcher, a strong sense of the deep-seated attitudes and behaviours regarding gender that were being communicated initially

around the budget story. Their casual interaction during this interview presented the opportunity for probing their expressed feminist perspective within the Focus Group dynamic.

As well, additional interpretation around other uncommonly recognized gender related topics within the same identified context are examined. Since case studies rely on inductive reasoning, this methodology also fits well with narrative method. That is to say, narrative encourages the storying and restorying of experiences such as those described above, while also furthering theories and hypotheses. It facilitates the interaction between the researcher and her participants in order to discover new relationships, concepts or understanding that emerge from the field texts, based in the context itself. In co-constructing research texts, we analysed the basis of their gender-driven complaints in a way that was meaningful to them.

In the end, this qualitative research, as expressed through case study, stresses the following features:

- to recognize that the "paramount objective is to understand the meaning of an experience" (Merriam, 1988, p. 16) - it should be heuristic and illuminating to the reader;

- "to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there...to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting..." (Patton as cited in Merriam, 1988, p.17) - it should be a particularistic process;

- to assume that "there are multiple realities - that the world is...a function of personal interaction and perception...a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring" (Merriam, 1988, p. 17) - it should take advantage of the possibility of depth.

Through this case study, I come to terms with how knowledge of female administrators is shaped by their professional knowledge context. By exploring the multiple realities of that particular

professional landscape at a board of education, I endeavour to contribute to the knowledge and validity inherent in women's voices in adult education. I show that feminist interviewing techniques are integral to the expression of women's voices through stories in qualitative case study research. In this context, interviewing is a technique or vehicle - that is, not a method - which helps us as researchers, articulate meaning within different qualitative methods.

Merriam (1988) views case study "reliability" and "validity" shortcomings as a means of empowering readers with more accountability. They are required to draw their own conclusions by placing the deep descriptions of the case study into the context of their own situations and possibly using the case study to develop their own hypotheses. This relationship with the reader was explored in terms of the criteria for quality used for narrative inquiry.

4.3   narrative inquiry

(a)   telling stories and narrative inquiry: historical background

The rationale for my using narrative inquiry focusses on its essential personal, social, feminist and temporal qualities. It assumes that truth is multiple and transient, always emerging, changing and holistic (Reason and Marshall, 1987, p. 113). These fundamental characteristics of narrative inquiry reveal themselves in the considerable history both inside and outside the field of education. Because it centres on human experience and its holistic nature, the social sciences are a natural area for narrative inquiry. Under the broad classification of narratology, research literature is accessible in history (Carr, 1986), psychology (Cole & Knowles, 1995), education (Heilbrun, 1988; Noddings, 1986), and theology (Crites, 1971). In addition, Polkinghorne (1988), Elbaz (1988), Connelly and Clandinin (1990), and Carter (1993) have contributed various outlines about the development of narrative inquiry in education.

Approximately twenty-five years ago, MacIntyre (as cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) characterized the narrative context of our self-understanding by stating that "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth" (p. 216). In a similar way, Johnson (1993) reminds us about the narrative structure of our lives in saying: "It is in sustained narratives, therefore, that we come closest to observing and participating in the reality of life as it is actually experienced and lived" (p. 196). Johnson's recognition of the essential connection between lived experiences and story is also reminiscent of Heilbrun's (1988) observation, that we are "liv[ing] our lives through texts" (p. 37). These descriptions illustrate some of the reasons why story is situated within a matrix of qualitative research. Its educational significance can be seen in life history, ethnography, narrative inquiry and phenomenology. Its general educational purpose is to "bring theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived" (Connelly & Clandinin,

1990, p. 3). Polkinghorne (1988) has recorded narrative educationally related studies as far back as the mid-1800's. At that time, "case history, biography, life history, life span development, Freudian psychoanalysis, and organizational consultation [were] represented in the educational literature" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2).

These stories cannot be categorized under paradigmatic knowledge (Bruner, 1985); instead they respond to ambiguity and dilemma. Because action with a variety of intentions is often complex and unpredictable, "story in its multiplicity of meanings, is a suitable form for expressing the knowledge that arises from action" (Carter, 1993, p. 7). One way to understand the meaning of the term, story, is to concentrate on the qualities that emerge through its use. In surveying the meaning of story in teaching and teacher education, Carter (1993) notes that Scholes (1982) defines a story in his literary studies, as a "telling or recounting of events" (p. 59) and emphasizes time, sequence, and continuity of subject matter in defining narrative. He remarks that narratives refer to events that have occurred outside of themselves and have an implicit or explicit observer to recount the events.

In addition, a story is seen as "a narrative with a certain very specific syntactic shape (beginning-middle-end or situation-transformation-situation) and with a subject matter which allows for or encourages the projection of human values upon this material" (Scholes, 1982, p. 206). As such, temporality and causality are central to this constructive process. But in evaluating the credibility of a story, a distinction should be made between the accuracy of the data and the plausibility of the plot. Although participants may agree that an event happened, the interpretations of the meaning of the event may vary. Iser (1976) and Culler (1981) also reveal that readers seek coherence and causal connections among these incidents and conventions as they construct for themselves, often retrospectively, the meaning or theme of the story. Consequently, Connelly & Clandinin (1990) caution researchers about imposing a connection between temporality and causality on the narrative. Polkinghorne (1995) reiterates a similar view by stating that "the evaluation of the

configurative analytic work of the researcher is based on the generated story's production of coherence among the situated, contextual, and particular elements of the data, that is, on its explanatory power (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and plausibility" (p. 20). The researcher's story should not only be useful; it should also be faithful to the actual historical happenings (Sass, 1992).

While people recognized that story in a literary sense consists of events, characters and settings arranged in a temporal sequence, implying both causality and significance, an interpretive shift in modern approaches to inquiry into teaching and teacher education began to occur in the 1980's. Martin (1986) remarks that story was now portrayed as a "mode of explanation necessary for an understanding of life" (p. 7). This new understanding of story as "capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal...redressed the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness" (Carter, 1993, p. 6). Egan (1986) suggests that school subject matter should be organized in story form, thereby adding a curricular interpretation. Elbaz's (1988) main focus is story in her review of teacher-thinking studies which uses a distinction between story as a methodological device and as methodology itself.

(b)   conducting narrative inquiry: research method

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) define narrative as "the making of meaning from personal experience via a process of reflection in which storytelling is the key element and in which metaphors and folk knowledge take their place" (p. 16). Personal practical knowledge is defined as "that body of connections and meanings, conscious or unconscious, that have arisen from experience (intimate, social, and traditional) and that are expressed in a person's practice" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 7; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). Pinar and Grumet (1976) view personal practical knowledge expressed through story more as autobiographical/biographical text. However, Connelly and Clandinin (1987) point out that method is the focus for autobiography and biography whereas the emphasis for them in narrative is on how people know classrooms through story. They also note that "time and place, plot and scene, work together to create the experiential quality of narrative" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). For my thesis, the emphasis is on oral stories, how as female administrators in adult education, we come to know our professional milieu - our physical, economic, cultural and relational environment, our past and current strategies of action, and our experiences which occasionally become models for the future. Our stories, which are essentially conversations, are told with an appreciation that

> *the more an organization depends for its survival on innovation and*
>
> *adaptation to a changing environment, the more essential its interest*
>
> *in organizational learning. On the other hand, formal organizations*
>
> *also have a powerful interest in the stability and predictability of*
>
> *organizational life* (Schon, 1983, p. 327).

Bureaucracies such as boards of education tend to frustrate an administrator's bid to move from an exclusive top-down ideology towards more consultative decision-making. Through our stories, I disclose whether women in our organization were willing and able to develop a closer

correspondence with a more reflective and collaborative model of management during changing economic times. If not, what other models of management did their experiences express?

Nevertheless, I am mindful that the fundamental responsibility of the narrativist is to share the participant's own story as the primary focus in gathering field texts.

> *Our initial task...is to listen to teachers' stories as they are told and lived out in practice. These are the teachers' stories of themselves as they engage with learners and subject matter within both the immediate and larger social, political and cultural milieux* (Eisner, 1988, p. 392).

My task, as researcher, is similar but situated in a different organizational context in adult education.

(c) **constructing the participant/researcher relationship:**

authority and authorship

The nature of this narrative inquiry into how administrative knowledge is shaped by the professional knowledge context in which we work, names the structured quality of experience to be investigated. It identifies the parameters for sharing stories and reconstructing experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Narrative method most closely reflects my world view of knowledge as socially constructed and acquired inductively through dialogue with participants. I conceive of knowledge as based in lived experience and dependent upon the interaction of the subjective individual with their external environment (Dewey, 1938).

In recognizing that valid inquiry rests on critical subjectivity, I am constantly aware of wearing my administrator's hat as a researcher. That is, by undertaking this inquiry "in my own backyard", I listen carefully to other female administrators' storied experience, acknowledging their full recognition of my context at the board of education. Together, through caring about our mutual situations as female administrators, we acknowledge our intersubjectivity. In this way, knowledge becomes personal in the sense that Polanyi (1958) suggests in talking about "knowing as an act of comprehension of the things known, an action that requires skill...Such is the personal participation of the knower in acts of understanding" (as cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 96). This type of sharing involves my coming to terms with their alternative perspectives and truly honouring the relationship of participants as collaborative researchers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Cole and Knowles, 1993).

During my first interview with Mary Lo, a female Chinese ESL Co-ordinator/Program Supervisor (Chap. 5.3), I was disappointed by the inappropriate revelation of my subjectivity during the following conversation:

So, did you sort of consider it a compliment when they said "You are like a

male supervisor"? (Sheila)

Well, yes. Because in Hong Kong the general impression is that

female supervisors are more difficult to handle. They like to deal with

male supervisors. (Mary)

What does that mean? What qualities did male supervisors have, for

example, that females didn't? (Sheila)

In my opinion, male supervisors are more determined...females

change their minds so often and also, a male supervisor is much more

objective. They deal with things, not people....[Colleagues] think

female supervisors are usually prejudiced.... (Mary)

[with great emphasis and wonderment] And you believe that?

(Sheila)

Although we became fully engaged in a collaborative process during this research project and

shared how we came to our different points of view, I had no right to show an apparent disbelief in

her sexist declaration. The impact of her milieu on her own identity and her perspective was clearly

quite different than mine, even though she now expressed her comfort as being part of the Canadian

mosaic. But our purpose was not to have equal involvement and similar perspectives in collaboration

"but rather, for negotiated and mutually agreed upon involvement" (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 486).

In spite of the fact that my participant didn't show a visible negative reaction to my response, I was

not "respecting, listening to, and giving attention to how the research act and process fit with the

everyday lived experiences of teachers..." (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 479) or in this case, female

administrator. Her comments reflected an attitude contrary to the City Board policy (City Board of

Education, 1990). But she didn't discuss whether she implemented this viewpoint when hiring instructors in Canada.

Nevertheless, I was intruding on our relationship by trying to shape her stories to fit my expectations. In this relationship, she was a participant, not a Board employee who needed training. It was beneficial to remind myself that the working title of my thesis was "Conversations in Counterpoint" not "Conversations in Harmony". Since this experience, I have worked diligently on being more aware of my subjectivity. I have developed a greater appreciation of all the participants' differing world views represented by their stories through their own lens. It is my continuing responsibility as researcher to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992) in understanding my own professional knowledge landscape.

In adhering to narrative method described above, the researcher enters into a collaborative relationship so that both voices are heard in the co-construction of text - the participant not only tells the story but takes part in the mutual reconstruction of the field notes as they become research texts. As a result, the identity of the individual as participant is constructed narratively and therefore is disclosed as multiformed and altering according to shifting conditions and temporal changes (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995). With this in mind, I explore how our identity as female administrators, shapes our philosophical thought and our epistemology. Taylor (1989) maintains that knowing one's place in the array of relationships in the workplace helps to create our moral identity; this in turn, gives us faith in our actions. My study addresses the participants' sense of self and morality through their past and current professional experiences as female leaders by including issues of responsibility and caring (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1984). This particular emphasis reflects a meaningful aspect of my own role as ESL administrator in a large educational organization. Crites (1971) reminds us that

Our sense of personal identity depends on the continuity of

experience through time, a continuity bridging even the cleft between

remembered past and projected future...our sense of ourselves is at

every moment to some extent integrated into a single story (p. 302).

Looking at identity from both a narrative and an epistemological perspective helps me more clearly understand its intersection and impact on the professional knowledge landscape of female administrators.

It is apparent that an outsider position can be preferable at certain stages of inquiry. This might help a researcher gain access to what a participant really thinks as opposed to what she feels she is expected to say by a researcher/colleague. Through this brief experience of tension with Mary Lo, I inferred that an insider can sometimes silence the participant in unexpected ways. As a researcher conducting narrative inquiry, I consider the disclosure of both the positive and negative aspects of my thesis journey, especially with regard to developing collaborative research relationships, an integral and sometimes painful part of my narrative. In the end, it assists my coming to terms with my own identity as woman, colleague, administrator and researcher.

In this research study, I try to assume the role of learner so that I can be more of the listener than the authority (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). While being an experienced insider in my own backyard in one sense, I am still a novice in terms of some my participants' knowledge of the Board's system from the central office. Their diverse practices and responsibilities as principals, co-ordinators, program supervisors and senior officials widen the lens through which I interpret and represent the meaning of our daily roles as female administrators in the adult education system.

Although I maintain the centrality of the researcher's experience in narrative inquiry, I also remain cognizant of my insider/outsider status. As an essential requirement prior to undertaking this research process, I saw the need to look back at my own narrative, storied in a Foundations of

Curriculum course,which provided a process for reconstructing my experiences. As an administrator on site at the City Board of Education, I have found negotiating entry to participants' lives and stories relatively easy and reinforcing during the pilot studies. As an insider, most negotiations were based on previous inter-personal relationships as colleagues or as part of an extended workplace network with these colleagues. As long as confidentiality and collaboration were assured, participation was generally viewed enthusiastically. It was viewed as a chance to support another colleague as well as an opportunity to contribute to the scholarship of women in educational administration. Paradoxically, this comfort and openness sometimes produced stories which participants eventually felt bound to withdraw - they felt that their "truth" could be potentially harmful when written on a page.

In developing my thesis, the notions of equity of expertise (Hunt, 1992) and negotiation of intentions for both researcher and participant in narrative inquiry match my working style as female administrator most closely. Our knowledge may be different but equal. In turn, the use of story as reflective practice through informal interviews points "to a vision of professionals as agents of society's reflective conversation with its situation, agents who engage in cooperative inquiry within a framework of institutionalized contention" (Schon, 1983, p. 353). This spirit of mutually shared intentions is both psychologically and philosophically of ultimate importance not only in the beginning when negotiating entry but throughout the research relationship. Although the written consent form is recognized as the formal acknowledgement of mutual commitment, it is the ongoing rapport, the relationality between the participants and myself as co-researchers that validates our relationship and permits the ongoing reconstruction of text. As a result of two interviews (1996) completed during a methodology course, the issue of representing "truthfulness" kept surfacing. Interviewing "up" or "down" in an organization (Chap. 5.4; 5.6; 5.10)was identified as significant methodologically for its differing implications during the creation of both field and research texts

(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Questions about the preparation for the interview, the types of questions considered appropriate, the developing relationship during the reconstruction of text as well as the ethical considerations around confidentiality and boundaries are discussed in chapters 5.3 and 6.5.

Narrative inquiry uses a variety of techniques to create field texts. This study focuses on the participant's "relational knowing" (Belenky et al., 1986) inherent in the story-telling. Nevertheless, researchers using story must keep aware of subjectivity and rapport. In sharing a story in the field or writing research text, the researcher and participant both need to work in an environment of acceptance and trust in order to represent the meaning of the experience they intend. By recognizing the reflexive nature of this type of research, researchers share the social world they are studying. "We must work with what knowledge we have, while recognizing that it may be erroneous and subjecting it to systematic inquiry where doubt seems justified" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992, p. 15).

In narrative inquiry, using a direct way through story, we impose a narrative order on life which clarifies the differences among a life-as-lived, a life-as-experienced and a life-as-told (Bruner, 1987). The field and research texts are expected to reflect on each individual's experience since narrative studies reflect "the way humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2). Here, in narrative, the term "field text" instead of data is used because it inherently has the quality of story to it. Ultimately, when using narrative inquiry, I must be aware that "a life history, or self-story...is still a story, a representation of a life at a given moment rather than the life itself" (Sandelowski, 1991, p. 163).

(d)   establishing standards of quality: emerging criteria

In illustrating the notion that the language of narrative criteria must not be forced into a language created for other research methods, Connelly & Clandinin (1990) point out the example in anthropology, in which Van Maanen (1988) proposed the use of "apparency" and "verisimilitude" instead of "reliability" and "validity" as criteria of value in qualitative research. He rejected those positivist concepts as not corresponding to the paradigm shift to interpretive research. Similarly, Guba & Lincoln (1989) equated "reliability" with "dependability" and "internal validity" with "credibility". They also chose "confirmability" instead of "objectivity". Their suggestions promoted the idea that as the researcher reconstructs the narrative with participants, the method should be seen as straightforward and candid, as well as having the appearance of truth and probability. Guba & Lincoln (1981) also pioneered the term "trustworthiness" as a criterion for judging "adequacy"; while in a similar vein, one of Polkinghorne's guidelines "for judging the adequacy of a narrative analysis [was] whether it [made] the generation of the researched occurrence plausible and understandable." (1995, p. 18). He directed the narrative researcher to bring together the different parts of the story into a meaningful explanation of the participant's responses and actions. However, like Bruner (1990), he also fostered the notion of making a story somewhat ambiguous, open to different intentional circumstances. Assessing validity as an interpretive act, Bruner preferred the term "plausibility" to denote a subjective view of knowledge and reality.

Guba & Lincoln (1989) also replaced the idea of "generalization" with "transferability". By paying attention to details which make the narrative come to life through the reader's reconstruction, this term appeared to offer an opportunity for narrativists to assess the "authenticity" (Tannen, 1988, p. 81) and "the invitational quality of the manuscript" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8).

In developing additional criteria for narrative, Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) talked about "fidelity" as

> *an obligation towards preserving the bonds between the teller and the*
>
> *receiver by honoring the self-report of the teller and the obligation*
>
> *of the original teller to be as honest as possible in the telling. The*
>
> *judgement of fidelity depends on at least two people and is*
>
> *established through the perspectives of at least these parties*
>
> *referenced by "vows", "obligations" or "duties". I characterize this*
>
> *bond as the "betweenness" of the situation.* (p. 28)

The struggle to grasp the intended meanings of these emerging criteria, and then to realize their intentions, creates a profound responsibility for the narrative writer. As a narrativist, I seriously accepted this challenge.

4.4   feminist perspective

The question of difference is one with the question of identity. It is becoming the critical question for feminist theorizing in all the disciplines including social science research methods as feminists begin to question and challenge the implicit male perspective of the dominant paradigms, methodological structures, and the theoretical assumptions of the various disciplines (Bolough, 1984, p. 388).

DuBois (as cited in Edson, 1988, p. 4) gives a strict definition of feminist scholarship as research that has a "recognizable feminist analytical perspective on the oppression and liberation of women" (endnote 13). But the author later offers a broader interpretation within the confines of feminist scholarship research which addresses "the complex reality of women's experience and situation" and which is committed to working "on women's behalf." British sociologist Liz Stanley states that "feminist research is absolutely and centrally 'research by women' because [she] sees a direct relationship between 'feminist consciousness' and feminism." (as cited in Reinharz, 1992, p. 3). Belenky and colleagues (1986) discuss women's ways of knowing, rather than being a "woman's way of knowing", or a "feminist way of doing research". However, I locate this study within Reinharz's position which opens feminist research to a multitude of feminist research voices. She maintains that different classifications of feminists have used all existing methods and have invented some new ones as well. Instead of orthodoxy, feminist research practices can be recognized as a plurality (Reinharz, 1992).

Story in contemporary research on teaching and teacher education is based on the belief that story represents a way of knowing and thinking that is suited to clarifying the issues with which we deal (Carter, 1993). In looking through the eyes of feminist research, Stanley & Wise (1983) note that the alternative to conventional theorizing should be "concerned with going back into 'the

subjective' in order to explicate, in order to examine in detail exactly what this experience is" (p.84). They want us as researchers, to listen more carefully to participants' stories and to take more seriously what people have to tell us about their lives. The feminist perspective, therefore, should be concerned with developing new criteria for what counts as "knowledge" (Belenky et al., 1986; Carter, 1993). This stance would involve a dismissal of conventional and sexist ways of construing social reality through the following sets of interlinked dichotomies:

> *few, it appears, have questioned our polarization of reason/emotion,*
>
> *objectivity/subjectivity, reality/phantasy, hard/soft data and examined*
>
> *them for links with our polarization of male/female. Yet within the*
>
> *dogma of science it would seem that reason, objectivity, reality - and*
>
> *male - occupy high status positions* (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p. 4).

Stanley and Wise (1979) concur that feminist research is fundamentally involved with, and derives from, the nature of feminist consciousness - this, in turn, means seeing reality differently as expressed through story.

While collecting field-texts, I considered the way Belenky and her colleagues (1986) seemed to be bringing gender to inquiry. Were they in fact, "reifying the dualisms they were meant to correct"? (Monteath, 1993, pp. 11- 12). Monteath, who identifies herself as a postmodern feminist, suggests that Belenky's group seems to reflect a deeply sexist society in their expression of knowledge. She wonders if these cultural feminists have succumbed to a homocentric dualistic concept of knowledge in their humanism. That is, in terms of feminist research, the question arises about whether we should be examining if women's ways of knowing are as good or better than men's ways of knowing. The stories themselves reveal a continuum of responses from women.

Anti-positivists reject the usefulness of a search for universal laws or a single " truth" and argue that the social world must be understood subjectively through the views of the individuals

under study (Burrell & Morgan as cited in Reynolds & Young, 1995). Harding (1983) declares that what is needed is a feminist epistemology which acknowledges women's experience and rejects the claims of the universality of male experience. Such an epistemology would be "able to understand sex/gender as an organic social variable which has become visible to us only because of changes in historical social relations [and which is] sensitive to the differences as well as the commonalities of women's labour class, culture and race divisions" (Harding as cited in Reynolds & Young, 1995, p. 10). In addition to these categorizations of epistemology, we must question the underpinnings used for knowledge claims in the study of organizations and the methods used to advance such claims. Reynolds and Young also agree that "one challenge for feminists is how to develop views of that meaning - making which are not limited by the tools provided in traditional social science, a field in which men have traditionally dominated the act of naming" (p. 11) within existing social structures.

The commitment to understanding the complexity of women's reality and the desire to represent some of their voices are two components which guided my research study. Whereas many feminist studies document the dilemma of women through a lens which maintains them as oppressed victims of a patriarchal society, my narrative account portrays an alternative image: women actively recognizing and confronting these same realities as administrators with a conscious sense of personal agency (Edson, 1988, p. 5). In a sense, I demonstrate how we, as female administrators, are trying to make explicit choices through advocacy and interaction within the existing structure.

I am not proposing a specific definition of feminism at this time, other than generally accepted tenets that allow the diversity of expression from both participants' and researcher's voices. Therefore, my perspective resonates most closely with Reinharz's (1992) first definition of feminist research methods as "methods used in research projects by people who identify themselves as feminist or as part of the women's movement" (p. 6). She explains that this simple definition of self-

identification deliberately bypasses the danger of applying a one-sided definition to all feminists. This approach rejects the notion of a transcendent authority that decides what constitutes "feminist", consistent with the anti - hierarchical nature of many feminist organizations and feminist spirit. It recognizes that there are traditional differences expressed among liberal, radical and socialist/Marxist feminists. In addition, differences in definition are revealed by people from different gender, classes, races, generations and sexual orientations. Academic and activist feminists differ as well.

If we accept that schools reflect society, then it should be possible to begin creating change from within our educational system (Dewey, 1938). I adhere to the feminist belief that being male or female should not alter any individual's access to, experiences within or consequences from, education. A feminist critique of our educational system allows us to see inequities based on gender, even when such inequities may also include race, ethnicity, or other factors as well as gender (Reynolds & Young, 1995). The combination of qualitative interview techniques from a feminist perspective both in framework and approach (Oakley, 1981) allow a meaningful narrative to be constructed. For example, when conducting the initial group interview conversation with female managers (see Chap. 5.10), field texts provided an opportunity for critical interpretation of systemic sexist behaviour. They dramatized the organizational discrimination that women experience on their professional landscape.

I approach this research as a female administrator who is part of an ESL and Native Languages Program in the Adult and Continuing Education Department of a large educational organization. I assume that the hierarchy at the City Board of Education is an enduring reflection of schools and society in general. As such, principals will have greater authority than teachers, and superintendents greater authority than administrators and principals. Furthermore, I assume that being part of the Continuing Education Department continues to locate our adult programs in a marginal position, with relation to the elementary and secondary school panels (Ontario Ministry of

Education, 1994, Education Act). To accurately contextualize this landscape, I acknowledge that, historically, the City Board has always voluntarily taken responsibility for adult education for immigrants as an additional mandate in servicing the surrounding multicultural communities. This provision was never legislated by the Ministry of Education and in turn, was not often energetically implemented by other boards of education. This practice by the City Board, begun over 100 years ago, reflects an organizational and philosophical commitment to lifelong learning.

Nevertheless, the reduction and reform driven by the lack of adequate funding from government affect this voluntary mandate. I continue to live a paradoxical reality within the current anti-adult education provincial framework; that is, our ESL program which delivers language and orientation services to adult immigrant communities is constantly being re-evaluated to justify its credibility and usefulness, especially by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. Consequently, in spite of the strong equity program driven by policy (City Board of Education, 1990), adult immigrants generally do not seem to experience equal access to programs that meet their needs at all boards of education. This is because of their position relative to the organizational hierarchy and established dichotomies - men/women, principals/teachers, elementary and secondary/adult & continuing education program delivery, designated credit subjects/non-credit ESL. Especially in changing economic and political times, adult ESL programming is being looked at through a reduction and restructuring lens which has recently been labelled euphemistically, a lens for effectiveness and efficiency (City Board of Education, March, 1996, Continuing Education Committee minutes). This can easily translate into an establishment review of the Adult and Continuing Education Department which generally strengthens the terms of a board of education's primary responsibility to children. The adult programs begin to lose their significance in appropriateness and effectiveness because of the changing economic circumstances for society as a whole.

A personal journal entry (1996) locates a story of mine on this vacillating professional landscape; it reveals how marginality surfaces in everyday matters. I relate the story about a monthly meeting of trustees at the City Board. The superintendent announced that, upon the retirement of the administrator from the west ESL Centre, I would be taking over both her responsibilities and mine from the east ESL Centre as one position. No additional remuneration is mentioned. The report was accepted without comment. When the superintendent announced that the male vice-principal of Continuing Education was being promoted to principal, congratulations were formally extended by the Chair. Additional remuneration was routine.

Seen through the lens of a female administrator, this incident could be just another subtle reminder of the lack of confirmation for women on the professional landscape where I work. Nothing intentional - simply routine. More likely, it was not a gender issue at all; but instead a question of role definition - a contemporary microcosm of the Board's educational hierarchy. The contrasting dualities seem to mimic the established dichotomies mentioned previously. This brief experience revealed that even within Continuing Education, class distinctions are apparent between principals and administrators, regardless of the similarity of their qualifications and administrative functions. This status differentiation characterizes the historical relationship in terminology and reimbursement for positions related to children's and adults' education. "The conversation puts them in their places." (Pagano, 1990, p. xiv).

Yet this account in the educational Board game was in direct contrast to the current day to day planning I was experiencing. In fact, at a later date, upon my request, senior officials did agree to a temporary allowance as remuneration for the additional responsibility of my new job. A kind of recognition. As the City Board was taking a new look at adult education, a personal journal entry three days later showed the paradox:

Ruth, a senior official, is regularly inviting administrators like myself, to join principals to create a holistic vision of adult education in the future. A meeting of secondary and adult panels trying to meet the needs of the same adult student population! For the first time in 11 years, administrators are being brought in to inform principals about our area of expertise - current practice in Adult ESL Continuing Education courses at the federal and provincial levels. She is, in fact, paying attention to who has the knowledge for certain areas of discussion, not what traditional position or gender they hold in the organization. Adult ESL administrators are being listened to as professionals with another vision of adult education - it could probably be combined with the principals' existing models.

Sometimes it's difficult to unravel the complex dimensions of our marginality - where do the gender issues separate from or meet the systemic organizational ones? Perhaps we have to delve more deeply into the question of diversity (Personal journal, October 5, 1996).

According to Reynolds and Young (1995) we need to promote the development of a variety of feminist frameworks. They should be used to tell the story of these experiences in administration and leadership in educational organizations. My thesis aims to address three of their identified categories for inquiry in a modified way: women administrators as focus; barriers, supports and strategies for women administrators; and reconstructing the discourse of educational administration (p. 13). That is, by monitoring patterns of participation of women in decision-making roles at a board of education and the differential participation in less official leadership capacities, I explore how gender can be a factor in administrative and leadership consequences and practices. In this way, I situate personal

narratives of women in roles as principals, program supervisors and senior officials, within historical contexts. This approach helps in understanding the meanings people construct out of the professional landscape they inhabit. It identifies how barriers and support for women change over time - how "survival strategies within specific historical social contexts" are being used (Reynolds & Young, 1995).

Feminism, as implemented in my research is a perspective, not a method. Reinharz (1992) states that because there are so many definitions of feminism, it follows that there must be multiple perspectives on social science research methods. As a feminist researcher, I see myself as poised at the intersection of feminism which supplies the perspective and the disciplines which supply the method.

Chapter 5. The Work Narratives of Women Administrators: conversations in counterpoint

5.1   constructing stories together

While composing this central chapter of administrators' work narratives, I shared several conversations with one or more participants for various periods of time. Mary Lo and I met to talk both at my office and home during a two month interval for Chapter 5.3. We reconstructed her narrative as a woman who eventually plays the competing administrative roles in adult ESL programs as a co-ordinator for a Chinese community agency and a program supervisor for the City Board of Education. For Chapter 5.5, I interviewed senior officials Ruth Walker and Patricia Daly separately on a number of occasions. However, their stories as women in positions of responsibility intertwined to form a single narrative. Their story addresses the need for women to trust intuition and to adhere to strong values of equity and community during times of rapid change in adult education.

Chapter 5.7 is an administrator's narrative whose story was told quite unexpectedly. Although I had the opportunity to observe and speak with Beth Morris as a participant on a regular basis through routine work at the City Board, it was after one particularly intense conversation that I sought further consent to reconstruct her story. It addresses one woman's reality in terms of sexual preference - a gender topic often hidden from discussion in the arena of educational administration research.

Chapters 5.9 and 5.11 evolved from Focus Group Conversations held with five to seven female administrators over two years. For the first year, the same five women in middle and senior management participated in this group. During the second year, two senior officials expressed genuine interest in being part of my thesis inquiry. Both of them were more familiar with the people in the Focus Group than I was, although I personally was not at liberty to disclose the names of the group members. After I approached the original members with the opportunity to widen the scope of our group, these two new participants were invited to join us for several conversations. In an effort

to retain greater confidentiality for this growing group of organizationally visible women, I fictionalized sections of the research text (Oakley, 1992) by creating composite personae (He, 1998; Hollowell, 1977) as participants in the Focus Group. Through this methodology, the administrators seemed to understand my caring for them and to allow greater connection and openness to unfold. Chapter 5.9 centres more on the group's past and immediate experiences with barriers and support to their being women at the City Board. In Chapter 5.11, their voices reveal ambivalence about the future - anxiety about educational reform in the Adult and Continuing Education arena. They express both a hopefulness and a concern about whether women administrators will have the opportunity to choose a different way to respond to changes.

5.2 re-interpreting our understanding

...a compelling narrative, offering a storyteller's moral imagination

vigorously at work, can enable any of us to learn by example, to take

to heart what is, really, a gift of grace. (Coles, 1989, p. 191)

As methodological and related ethical issues developed from the individual and collective

stories of the administrators' experience, a particular research design emerged: following the

reconstruction of each administrator's narrative, the next section became my personal reflective

discussion with readers. Generally, the participants, themselves, chose not to contribute to these

"Reflections" sections. Only Beth Morris expressed a desire and willingness to participate more

intensely in the reconstruction of her narrative and our reflections. Consequently, my thesis journey

as researcher and City Board administrator became a central focus in these companion sections.

Sharing the participants' biographies and sketching my autobiographical deliberations,

shaped the way these sections evolved and affected our subsequent interpretation and reconstruction

of each story as part of our professional knowledge landscape. The conversations as a whole formed

a kind of counterpoint to each other, revealing a number of themes which may or may not have been

expressed in opposition but were, in fact, interacting with each other. The contrapuntal action of

these various themes was partially resolved into a harmonic whole by the participants' consensual

decision to maintain currently expressed feminist values and to do the best with what could be

changed. This format provided me with a vehicle through which to develop a particular picture of

contemporary feminist ideas and narrative research methods in the social science research arena.

Methodologically, in terms of researcher/participant collaboration, I acknowledged Oakley's

(1981) description of feminism as a distinct value orientation in terms of relationships and research

method. Combining this idea with Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) conceptualization of narrative

as phenomenon (storied lives) and narrative as method (telling stories), I characterized the

experiences we revealed through stories from a feminist perspective. In adhering to this perspective, I worked at maintaining the balance of the researcher/participant relationship; that is, I cared about the feelings of participants regarding interviewing, by noting our roles in these activities as well as attending to the quality of the participant/researcher interaction (Oakley, 1981). Consequently, this research was designed so that the administrators could also experience a personal benefit from their participation.

By recognizing that narrative inquiry helps us identify who we are as researchers through our multiple voices - participant and researcher alike, we adopted certain roles in using story in a board of education organizational setting. This reflected the purpose of the research, the nature of the setting, and our own orientation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). "In the process of beginning to live the shared story of narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). Historically, this citation highlights the critical need, during all aspects of narrative inquiry, for the development of the mutual construction of the research relationship. The relationships that I had previous to this inquiry in my workplace influenced the voice through which I was heard and the way I initially heard the participants. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) remind us that previous experiences with settings or people can set up expectations for certain types of interactions that will constrain effective data collection (p. 22). I tried to communicate this intricacy of the "multiple I's" they describe which reflect the diverse ways we have of knowing. Over time and reflection, each relationship evolved differently and expressed its meaning in distinctive ways through their work narratives.

Pilot studies I undertook during graduate courses alluded to the variety of issues regarding the participant/researcher relationship and research texts that would require deliberation and resolution during my research. In the sections titled "Reflections", the following methodological and ethical areas were offered to the reader and researchers alike for consideration: the

participant/researcher relationship, power and disclosure, text representation and emerging criteria

for evaluating narrative inquiry.

5.3   Mary Lo

With just two weeks notice, she unexpectedly said good-bye to the Chinese community agency where her Canadian work experience began. Her transition from supervising English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in a Chinese social service agency to the multicultural City Board of Education was now complete. The change reflected a separation from the familiarity of her cultural landscape. It also disclosed a kind of homecoming in a professional sense. "In Hong Kong, a board of education is definitely professional". (Mary)

This administrator's story opens with Mary Lo, a principal inspector from Hong Kong, emigrating to Toronto with her young family in 1990. Her husband had yearned to return to Canada where he had enjoyed his university years and she wanted to escape the pressures of her high-powered job without losing face. Somewhat unsure of her new environment in Canada, she tries to reduce the complex transition of culture, race, and language by seeking and getting work in a Chinese social service agency. In delivering language and Citizenship classes to its Chinese clientele, this community agency co-sponsors language programs with qualified instructors and lead instructors hired by the City Board. As an ESL agency co-ordinator, Mary's main task in this setting is to oversee all aspects of the adult ESL and Citizenship programs for Chinese adults in co-operation with the board of education's lead instructor. In addition, she acts as a liaison - with the Chinese community, with the ESL instructors, and with the major funders from three levels of government (boards of education, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Citizenship and Immigration Canada).

Within four years of arriving in Toronto, Mary adds a part-time Sunday job with the City Board as a program supervisor of Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes - easily assuming dual administrative roles in the community and board organizational cultures. But in the last few years, dramatic reorganization in the social service agency caused by economic restraints and unanticipated personnel changes, forces a decision that surprises both her colleagues

and instructors. Without discussion, Mary leaves the agency to work exclusively for the Board - her own familiar cultural community had become a landscape of tensions!

The story of what draws a young New Canadian woman from her inclusive working environment in a Chinese community agency to a large multicultural educational organization depicts both expected themes and surprising counterpoints. Why would Mary have seen herself working again in an educational bureaucracy as a kind of homecoming when restructuring and reduction were dominant themes? To try to understand the context for her decision, it helps to frame a picture of what was familiar in her personal and professional background as daughter, mother, teacher and supervisor of instructors. Within this framework, we can represent her connection with adult education in a large educational institution that links both ideologically and operationally with the surrounding community. We will be able to explore how her identity as a female administrator shaped her philosophical thought and epistemology in making this significant change in her professional knowledge landscape.

As a child, Mary grew up in a middle class Chinese family in Hong Kong. Her parents' most profound value for her, her brother and sister was for them to be highly educated. As university graduates, all the children eventually assumed managerial positions with their parents' discernible support. At a young age, Mary became the principal inspector in the Department of Education, supervising twenty-two people.

In her own words, she reflects on her father's advice while caring for her son and daughter in Canada.

> *My two kids are doing very well in their study and I think I have the*
>
> *same goal as my father. I insisted that they receive good education,*
>
> *have their own career in the future, and I did give them a lot of*
>
> *guidance.* (Mary)

She clearly relegates the role of working hard to support the family to her mother but all other aspects were taken care of by her father. Interestingly, Mary recognizes the role reversal in her current nuclear family by openly indicating that now she is playing the role of her father and her husband is playing the role of her mother. Using the identical words to describe her husband as she previously did for her mother, she remarks, "He just works hard to support the family and all the other things he just lets me take care of it". Mary analyses this situation in terms of their different economic and educational circumstances during childhood. Although her husband also became a teacher, she feels his coming from a poor Chinese family with eight brothers and sisters forced them to work very hard and to look after themselves - a no frills version of life. She surmises that their upbringing has affected how they think a great deal, especially in their attitude of how to look after their kids.

In describing her background as a middle child, she begins to explain her drive to do well in school.

> *My brother is older than me and I have a younger sister. So, you know, in a Chinese family, the son always gets the attention, and also the youngest one always gets the attention. I got very little attention unless I was doing extremely outstanding....I remember every time I get attention twice a year when I get my report card. It was so outstanding and my parents would be so happy. They praise me; they buy me gifts....But for the rest of the year my brother and my sister get the rest of the attention. So I have to try and make a decision by myself - to be outstanding in order to get attention.* (Mary)

Knowing her place and the competitive rivalries involved in her birth family helped Mary to create her sense of moral identity. That is, she came to regard being outstanding as something intrinsically

good. Even though she adhered to this value initially in order to get attention, she turned a dissonant beginning into a resonant experience. This perspective would affect her future relationships and actions in the workplace.

At home, most of the time it was work and school. Almost the only time Mary got together with her relatives was during the Chinese New Year. She explains the different values that she grew up with in regard to familial and working relationships and those she sees daily in Canada.

> *Well, Chinese people they are not like the Westerners. You show your*
> *emotions by hugging, kissing, things like that. We keep it all inside*
> *us; but still we are very concerned about our family members, our*
> *relatives. Whenever we hear news that someone is sick or in hospital,*
> *we will go and visit them. Things like that, but we don't express it like*
> *the Westerners do....*
>
> *Like, if I compare my years here and my years in Hong Kong - we are*
> *expressing it more overtly here. Even in Hong Kong, when I'm back*
> *from work, my kids would say, "Hi Mom!"; but now my daughter will*
> *hug me. "Oh Mommy, I miss you so much", things like that. You*
> *know, probably we are affected by people around us....It's good.*
> *Actually it's good. Yea. (Mary)*

But this connection within her family is not necessarily reflected in close working relationships. In touching on the intersection between her personal and professional life, she recalls that as a youngster, she had a very stubborn character and preferred to work on her own. She wanted to manage her own things rather than manage things for other people.

So, if I'm a teacher, then I manage the classroom. I don't like to work

with other people, just my students. This is one major reason I don't

want to be a social worker, for sure. (Mary)

But after four years of teaching for the Department of Education, Mary was selected to work

in educational television. It seemed that a transformation came with her maturity.

...then I realized that I could do so many other things other than

teaching. Actually, if you are working in a T.V. station, you have to

co-operate with a lot of people. And I found that I could do that.

(Mary)

This self-knowledge helped Mary deal with her job as a manager in her 30's, supervising

twenty-two people, both men and women in their 40's and 50's. She remembers defining what was

difficult about her responsibilities and her fear.

I found that the task itself is not as difficult as handling all those

interpersonal things among those people....Some people had been in

the department for many years. Promotion is based on performance.

And I had one colleague who actually was my class-mate in the

university. And she was under me! And I was so scared at the very

beginning because of all these relationships and things like that.

(Mary)

These experiences led to Mary's own conceptualization of an administrator. Her primary

concern was to be sincere and frank. She rejected the idea that power should come from withholding

knowledge from subordinates, although she accepted that policies in the planning stages might not

be discussed. She also addressed the issue of staff disagreement with policy. She identified the

confusion often experienced by the ESL instructors when the information such as standard procedures comes down the funnel through the conduit without sufficient explanation.

Sometimes people at a lower rank are not so clear about the policy or the rationale and things like that. You have to tell them. [For example], I will ask the teacher why she thinks that field trips [set out in standard procedures] are of no value and try to listen to her first. And then, secondly I would try to find out from her students whether they would like to go for this field trip or not. [If they did,] I would try to convince the teacher to go. I would do anything to try to meet the needs of the learner. This is the most important thing for the teacher. This is the policy of the Board....After I tried my best to provide a rationale and still the teacher is not convinced - so I don't think I have the ability to handle it anymore. I seek help from someone higher up. (Mary)

There is much clarity in Mary's knowledge that the learning and life skill needs of the adult learners supersede the needs of the instructor. This tacit knowing (Polanyi, 1966) identifies a moral purpose for Mary in dealing with learners. It had evolved gradually from years of teaching. In her mind, the role of the educator is defined in terms of a student-centred philosophy which not only emanates from Board policy, but also expresses itself in her actions and in the daily adult ESL curriculum. She is willing to discuss policy issues but she won't agree to ignore them in order to support an instructor. She interprets her role as manager in two settings: first as an ESL co-ordinator representing the policies of a community centre, and secondly, as a program supervisor representing the policies of a hierarchical board of education.

However, she also expresses her vision of an ideal working environment - it is one in which colleagues trust each other. In spite of her loyalty to the community agency as an ESL co-ordinator, Mary usually maintains a balanced perspective between community and board of education landscapes. She remembers overhearing instructors teaching at the community location saying that the lead instructors from the City Board want to close their classes. She explained to the instructors that closure of classes was not a Board priority - keeping language classes open as a service to the community was everyone's priority. At the same time, money was not being poured into poorly attended classes. This seeming contradiction reflected the struggle everyone was experiencing under economic restraints.

Mary feels that often there is no trust in the lead instructor. Since funding for co-sponsored ESL classes is based on student attendance, she reports that instructors think lead instructors simply want to kill his or her class. So in addition to developing mutual trust between a supervisor and a subordinate, Mary makes a visible effort to promote good communication among all stakeholders. She explains that she tries to let instructors know as much information as possible whether she is acting as community ESL co-ordinator or Board program supervisor - as much as the policy or environment permits. However, for those instructors that she can't see as often, she still senses a little mistrust.

Mary thinks it's not so difficult to create a humanistic and collaborative environment. She sees the other side's point of view, not only her own; and being collaborative is viewed as always being willing to discuss and negotiate with subordinates (Christiansen, Goulet, Krentz & Maeers, 1997). Overall, she supports an integrated notion in which she tries to make everyone know that "we are part of the same program, not whether you are a subordinate or the supervisor. Only by working together, the program, the policy or the plan will work". (Mary)

In Mary's retelling of this story, she maintains that as a supervisor dealing with various important issues, she does not consciously distinguish between male or female instructors.

> *No matter whether I am treating my subordinate or my boss I never*
>
> *take into consideration gender - whether it is male or female.* (Mary)

But with reference to herself, she feels that in Hong Kong, people who worked with her always treated her like a male rather than a female because of her management style. She was "so determined" and would never say "I can't lift this heavy thing". She voiced her pleasure in being like a male supervisor for

> *"in Hong Kong, the general impression is that female supervisors are*
>
> *more difficult to handle. They like to deal with male supervisors....In*
>
> *their opinion, male supervisors are more determined. Females*
>
> *change their mind so often. And also, a male supervisor is much more*
>
> *objective; they deal with things rather than with people. But a female*
>
> *supervisor, they think they are usually prejudiced. You know, when*
>
> *they like you, they like you in all aspects, in all situations; but if they*
>
> *don't like you, you're no good in any way.* (Mary)

Mary admits to adhering to a similar bias, partly because of her experience with her first female supervisor in Hong Kong. She retells the story emphasizing that before her supervisor succumbed to the office gossip about Mary, she liked Mary very much. She even complimented her on the confidence she displayed in the recruitment interview. However, later her supervisor's treatment of her was very different. Mary continues to believe that most female administrators behave in this contradictory and volatile fashion and she tries not to be like that. However, at this moment, she doesn't readily recognize the philosophical contradiction to her previous expression about lack of attention to gender differences. In trying to support the plausibility of her attitude, she

separates herself out, her new female executive director as well as a couple of female administrators from the Board in describing their leadership styles.

> *Frankly speaking, in my opinion you [the researcher as administrator] are what people in Hong Kong would say, behaving like a male manager. You know, very decisive....We are the exceptions [to the way most female managers behave].* (Mary)

She further entrenches her remarks by adding that in her experience in Canada, women experience few barriers to their development and advancement:

> *First of all, I don't think men and women should be equal in all aspects, It's no fun. You know, here people are talking about employment equity, pay equity - saying that women are not taking such high positions, getting such high pay as men. But what I see, is that a lot of the [provincial and federal] ministers are ladies...Now I don't know about the past, but in these few years, you know...so things are actually changing....*
>
> *I have not felt unequally treated because of gender or race. When Bob Rae was the Premier of Ontario, he was working on pay equity. I received several pay cheques extra...but I don't really have much experience about the discrepancy for men and women doing the same job.* (Mary)

Even when Mary acknowledges that the extra cheques were the provincial government's way of equalizing pay for jobs of similar value for men and women, she does not accept that this situation necessarily exists in Canadian society. Although she admits there are supposedly statistics and discrepancies in pay scales based on gender, she won't believe it until she personally sees the

statistics. Her main rationale, as she relates this scenario, is connected to her own value system. She strongly regards "job satisfaction as much, much more important" (Mary) than her wages. So she doesn't get concerned about how much money she's making in comparison with somebody doing a similar job. Her interest is that if she gets a lot of satisfaction from the job she is doing, then she will be happy to stay with that job. Even if the pay is inequitable.

Although she is not quite sure of the definition, she is pretty certain she would not consider herself a feminist.

> *[In trying to get a position at the board of education], I think what really matters is your background, and also your related experience as well as your performance during the interview. Though selection was based on all these, not on whether you are a man or a woman. I think [as an administrator], I will use other factors rather than equity as the deciding factor in hiring people. If everything being equal among the candidates, then I would take equity into consideration. Otherwise, I would pick the one that meets my more important criteria - like past work experience, good references, performance during the interview, things like that. (Mary)*

There is a confusion here with the rationale that an emphasis on gender excludes other important and interconnected identities of self. Mary doesn't address the question of equity as an achieved integration - to her all aspects of equity are a separate issue. In contrast, in Hollingsworth and Miller (1994), gender is regarded "as the first facet to catch her attention about her own differences". (pp. 127-128). She acknowledges the links between the multiple identities of gender, race, class, age, and sexual identities. Mary persists in her world view that equity is not part of a

larger whole which consciously impinges on her professional life. She feels more comfortable with traditional, hierarchical norms than with the diversity of a contemporary holistic picture.

In the next breath, Mary expresses her continuing preference in Hong Kong for certain types of employees:

> *And I like to supervise unmarried female workers or male workers.*
>
> *You know, all those female married workers, they always call home,*
>
> *like three to four times a day, asking about the baby, asking about*
>
> *whether the food has been prepared or not. If you have a very*
>
> *reliable maid or somebody who is reliable at home, you don't have*
>
> *to call so often. This is one thing I don't like. So if there are two*
>
> *candidates, right, equally good but one is married and the other is*
>
> *not, [I would choose the unmarried one]...[In Canada], the*
>
> *instructors don't call during class time....For my husband's family*
>
> *and my own family, no news is good news. So if the phone rings at an*
>
> *odd time, we will say that hopefully nothing bad has happened.*
>
> (Mary)

Mary envisages her supervisory position both in the community and at the Board as one is which you must try to be fair to everybody - "at least every person can see that you're trying to be fair, and that's very important". Perception, she feels, is very significant in getting the support of her staff. She expresses her desire to avoid a lot of uneasiness, especially competition among other people. The managerial skill that she has tried to emulate from her professional experience is one of authority - but modified to suit the community climate. She knows that the Chinese immigrant clientele who come to her centre feel the friendly atmosphere of the agency. She takes her responsibility to provide a useful service to the learners very seriously. Nevertheless, Mary has

modified her style with the instructors to suit the change from a bureaucratic department of education in Hong Kong to a community social service agency and a community oriented board of education in Canada.

> *First of all, I use my usual style - be frank with the teacher....Maybe I will try to modify a little bit the way I talk....Sometimes I'm being too strict, you know, too frank with my subordinates...I still like to be systematic. [In terms of relationships with staff,] if it's during office hours I would say we will sit down to business. After office hours, if I can get along with that person, we will become friends.*
>
> *You know, in terms of fairness, for education opportunities and things like that, [in my birth family], we are all equal. But I think my parents are not very fair. They treat me and my younger sister quite differently - partly because it's cultural, partly because when we were both young, I was an ugly duckling and my sister was so pretty and cute. This is another reason, you know. My brother being the only son - so of course, culturally his treatment is different. And so, I think that since then I want to have, to get, fair treatment from other people. I try to treat people in a fair way. It's not because of culture, I don't think. It's because of my upbringing.* (Mary)

In responding to her difficult experiences in trying to get attention from her parents, Mary has translated her own desire for fairness and recognition into both her own family and the workplace. She tells the story of her elderly parents emigrating to Canada to live near her because they now say that she is the one who treats them best. She feels that she promised herself to try to be fair to everyone and "right to now, I think I'm keeping this promise".

Mary clarifies how her familiar community landscape allows her to meet her own expectations of fairness. She feels that in dealing with Chinese instructors, she has confidence in how best to deal with them. But if they are from some other ethnic group, she surmises they would have different cultural practices (Conle, 1993). An incident she remembers clearly is when a Chinese ESL instructor made two adult students from a "Canadian" ESL instructor's class take their coffee out of the classroom during break time. When the Canadian instructor heard the students' complaints, she was annoyed. She felt she should have been given the information about her students' infraction of school rules and she would have spoken to them. As she said to the Chinese instructor "If my students have a problem - according to our culture - let me take care of it!" The Chinese instructor was furious; she had never heard things like that.

Mary tried to act as mediator, delicately balancing the self-esteem of both instructors.

> *First of all I have to find out whether it is true in the Canadian*
>
> *system, you don't talk to the student directly; that you have to talk to*
>
> *the class teacher and then let the class teacher talk to the students.*
>
> *Secondly, I have to be very tactful in talking to these two teachers. If*
>
> *I protect the Chinese teacher, then the other teacher will think I am*
>
> *protecting my own ethnic group. Right? To me in my community*
>
> *work, all the students and 99% of all the teachers belong to my same*
>
> *ethnic group. That means that we have culturally the same values....I*
>
> *can talk to them very straight forward, you know. Things are like this*
>
> *and this is the way we handle them. These are my suggestions. But*
>
> *with [Canadian] teachers I have to be more tactful because it is true*
>
> *there is something about their culture that I don't know. I have to be*
>
> *very cautious about that. (Mary)*

In this scenario, it seems that Mary's strongest identification with the instructors teaching in the community agency and at the Board, is her ethnicity, not her position of authority. Her security lies in her knowledge of cultural mores which she shares with the Chinese instructors. She senses that although she has a goal in mind to work in a multi-ethnic environment, at the moment she feels she needs to proceed prudently with Canadian instructors in order to retain her desire to be fair to all staff. She wants to reassure herself of the cultural norms of the dominant groups outside her milieu.

As a researcher who is an "outsider" to her landscape, I listen to Mary explain her situation. She points out that new immigrants, unless they are extremely confident, might feel a little bit intimidated to work in a multi-ethnic environment. That's why a lot of new immigrants have their first job in a community agency, in a setting of their ethnic background. It gives them a lot of confidence and also gives them time to learn about Canadian culture and the culture of other ethnic groups. She thinks this is good. It is also the way she "started up in Canada".

Through this part-time job as program supervisor at the City Board, Mary feels she has learned a lot. She thinks she now has confidence to get another job in a multi-cultural setting whereas thinking back five years ago, she "definitely did not have the confidence".

However, in spite of the expressed comfort in her own cultural environment in the social service agency, she also faces her growing uneasiness in the community landscape. Like everyone else, she is affected by agency personnel changes due to reduction and restructuring. With a new female executive director, she experiences a number of contradictions. She doesn't sense the confidence, the fairness, or the familial atmosphere that the former older male director had displayed. Although she always had to deal through her manager in order to relate any business to the executive director, she still felt he had a family style, "like our father, you know, rather than our boss". He chose

a different way to deal with different people. Like when he's dealing

with me because he knows that I always like to make suggestions and

I like to make decisions and things like that - so he likes to ask for my

opinion. But for some other people, he will just say, "Do it this way,

no other alternative. I just want you to do it this way"....I think

sometimes it's a little bit unfair...And that wasn't based on gender but

on the perceived work ability [of the staff]. (Mary)

But now Mary feels she is asked to do tasks without adequate support or the spirit of fairness. When she asks for help in terms of suggestions from the executive director, the director counters with "I asked you for your suggestion. Why do you ask me for mine?" Mary does not respond out loud. However, she acknowledges her feeling of exclusion and her desire for more direction as part of a team. On the other hand, there is no particular willingness on her part to empathize with the current challenges for the new director - just a need to have some acceptable solutions for overseeing language classes in a poor economic environment.

I did give the new executive director a [budget] proposal which I

think is not realistic at all. Because if we are going to charge ESL

students $10.00 per month, we can almost balance the budget. [But]

our enrolment will have a very ,very, drastic drop! (Mary)

The fact that charging fees to students for a Board co-sponsored ESL program in a community setting is contrary to Board policy does not impinge on Mary's financial proposal when she is wearing an agency hat. She is aware that she wouldn't consider that strategy with her supervisory position at the City Board program. Yet here, even though she knows that the Board policy must also be followed in co-sponsored programs, she moves out of the conduit and suggests an unacceptable approach to her superordinate. When we revisited this discrepant situation, Mary

talked more about her deeper feelings about her female administrator's relationship with staff than about policy and procedures.

> *First of all, she [the executive director] always told us the Board [of Directors] asked her to do this, to do that. We never know if it's the Board's idea or her own idea because she's the only one from the agency that attended the Board meeting. Actually our President has mentioned that another colleague should come along to attend the Board meeting, to share her workload, but we were never invited....I don't know for what reason. All we get is simply the idea that she didn't want us to know too much. She wants to be the person who knows the most....If I were her, I will be more open. As far as the budget is concerned, I think as a team leader. And as a responsible team leader who has been in the agency for three or four years, I can know a little bit more in order to help her in the planning. I will never say to my colleague, "This is not good enough; do it again". I will try, you know, to give some guidance or let them know a little more about what I am thinking or what I want. We have no direction whatsoever.* (Mary)

Mary's frustration is tangible. She responds to the tension by conceding that both she and the executive director are "making an effort to soften themselves a little bit". The reality she faces is that her manager is now the Executive Director and the resulting vacancy will not be filled. As commonly experienced in this atmosphere of economic restraint in community agencies and boards of education, when staff are promoted to new positions, no replacement is sought. Consequently middle managers are forced into a position where additional responsibilities must be shared and little

recognition by their superordinates is given in financial or psychological terms. In addition, no particular orientation or training is provided after selection, mostly because of minimal resources. On the other hand, to further exacerbate this situation, staff seem to have no patience for a leader to evolve. Their expectations for their new boss to lead flawlessly are immediate - perhaps to quell an employee's anxiety or perhaps to test the boss' mettle. One moment you're a manager, the next an executive director!

In our agency's case, her position has changed. We expect some changes in her style, but we disagree whether she is playing the role of executive director but not assuming the responsibilities of [the most senior] manager, you know....But being the [most senior] manager, you supervise us, you give us directions; but at the same time you should assume the responsibility appropriate to [the most senior] manager, like making decisions, like making suggestions and things like that. Right? This is our expectation of her....Actually, I get along very well the executive director, you know, because we have the same mentality, our style is more or less the same...It's simply because maybe I have been a manager and assumed more responsibility than she does - maybe my expectation is not yet satisfied at this moment. (Mary)

These issues apparently remained unresolved within the agency. Interestingly, although "outsiders" attended a significant number of community agency events in co-operation with the City Board, not one agency staff member alluded to the internal difficulties - not even to a familiar Board lead instructor in the same co-sponsored program. The silence of these professional women seem rooted in deep-seated cultural values - an adherence to responsible work ethics in the community

landscape which disallows making private conflicts public. Their secret stories wouldn't be shared. The boundaries of private insider information were still clearly marked within shifting professional knowledge landscapes.

In spite of her increasing dissatisfaction, Mary continues to take her responsibilities seriously. She talks about how she encourages her own children to try to be dependable and not leave everything to other people, not blaming other people for the consequences. In the workplace she expects instructors to take similar responsibility. She can clearly separate her obligations to the myriad forces on her as community ESL co-ordinator and Board program supervisor and models this behaviour for her instructors.

> *Like LINC [Language Instruction for Newcomers], I would say is*
>
> *result oriented. You have to promote students and they [federal*
>
> *government funders] look at your success rate. So if the teachers are*
>
> *trying to hold students to themselves, always saying that they are not*
>
> *ready for promotion, I would try to explain to them....In the yearly*
>
> *report, at the end of the contract year, I have to show the funder the*
>
> *success rate of their class and they have a certain expectation. If it is*
>
> *below their expectation, there might be a termination of the contract*
>
> *for the coming year....My priority will be the students and the funder.*
>
> (Mary)

When she discusses how her attention as an administrator is directed towards staff and clientele as well as diverse tasks at work, she is aware how reminiscent this behaviour is of her personal life.

> *And at home too. I am always divided between my daughter and my*
>
> *son. My daughter is very attention seeking; my son is kind of very*

independent; but sometimes he needs advice from me for his

homework. He sometimes comes to me saying, "I need this. Can you

go back tomorrow and make me a photocopy or find some

information for me?" It's all divided and then, my parents. It's tax

return time....I am always the one. (Mary)

Mary doesn't think that the handling of the varied tasks and the responsibility for a variety

of family members is a matter of gender. She feels it is the role you assume yourself.

Like at home, I know that my husband is the "I couldn't care less

type" so I assume a lot of responsibilities....I don't really like it, but

I don't think I have any choice. (Mary)

In returning to the topic of monitoring the enrollment of ESL programs, Mary shares her

opinion that conflicting circumstances such as implementing relevant curriculum versus keeping up

the class student attendance are so unlike the typical elementary or secondary school enrollment and

funding difficulties. In Continuing Education, adult ESL, especially when financial support comes

from the federal and provincial governments, the day to day pressure on instructors to monitor their

enrollment numbers so that the class can continue to exist may be in direct contradiction to the effort

required to teach learners successfully. The sacred story - the one which is easily mimicked by

instructors- suggests that a student-centred framework bests suits our learners' needs. But with an

acute awareness of our marginality, the instructors' concentration on the task at hand becomes

scattered and they feel ambivalent about promoting ESL students to the next proficiency level for

many practical reasons.

As community ESL co-ordinator and Board program supervisor, Mary feels that the

instructors' expectation is for her to help keep their classes going. But she also feels obliged to let

them know if they are not doing their part in keeping up the enrollment. She feels she is not only

trying to please the funder, but is trying to keep the instructors' jobs. However ESL instructors in a variety of community/Board programs see the students in a different way. Although they do appreciate the need to adhere to funders' guidelines, their connection is centrally located in their students' needs. An instructor at another nearby co-sponsoring agency expresses this relationship in a compelling manner:

> *At one point I had a student coming to my class whose English was better than all the other students, and in fact, shouldn't really have been in my class. This is a thing that happens in adult education, because of essentially multi-level classes. So that was the first time it happened. My ESL class was a much more communicative sort of class than any of the other ones going on in the school, and so she didn't want to move. ...I guess...I should probably learn to be a little stricter and I guess sort of force people out the door. But you know you sometimes get these situations where they wouldn't go and they plead.*

> *I think that what happens is that students have more than just educational needs. And they come to a class; they become somehow or other a close friend; they have a bond. Maybe a woman who is 65 years old or something who you know starts crying because she can't come to your class and this is very hard... particularly if you feel that the student is getting something from the experience. I think my gut feeling is that it's better to let them stay because of the fact that adults have such a wide range of needs, particularly when they're adapting to a new society. I think the emotional needs are quite*

strong. So that's one of the things that I think about sometimes.

(Clandinin & Connelly, SSHRC project, 1993-1996)

This particular instructor story discloses some of the tensions that are forced both on the community co-ordinator and Board supervisor by being squeezed in the middle. The need to balance their reduced budgets pitted against the needs of the instructors and learners creates paradoxical moments in their instructors - moments of resentment caused by lack of recognition for innovative teaching initiatives.

Mary reports how the community ESL co-ordinators sometimes experience a feeling of exclusion or separation from the Board. Just as instructors feel that the agencies and the boards of education sometimes want more commitment than they feel is justified without the obligation of remuneration, so the community co-ordinators feel the Board wants more commitment to collaboration than the obligation for sharing decisions.

She labouriously describes how the community ESL co-ordinators are invited every year to a meeting about budget cuts because the Board apparently wants to hear the agency point of view. She thinks the Board just listens to their opinion but really does not involve them in decision-making. She points out that their side of the partnership could be given more power - for example, by sending them questionnaires to collect their opinions. It isn't necessary to meet all of them face-to-face. What the community agencies feel is that they are always involved in the very beginning, but at the very end, they are rarely consulted. They contend that decisions that are made are usually not explained to them with reference to the suggestions they made. From this point of view, Mary thinks the Board can do a little bit more.

I'm not sure if my judgement is a fair one or not because I don't have

a lot of opportunity to really see how the Board operates in all

aspects. What I often hear is "this is the senior staff's decision" so it

gives me a sense that very often Board policies are top down....Even

at the lead instructor level, I have a sense that they are not having a

lot of power in the decision-making. Most of the time they are waiting

for a decision from their administrators....Where it is possible,

decisions should be made in consultation with all the parties

concerned and the final decision should be made known to all the

partners and the rationale behind it. It is true that now we are

involved as a community but only at the initial stage. As the process

goes on, we more or less fade out. Is that true? (Mary)

The description appears to be accurate to the researcher. I am being asked directly to shift my role to Board administrator. The Board rationale is unclear. What is clear is that while the relationship between the community centre and the board of education benefits all sides - students, instructors, leads, and co-ordinators - there is a power discrepancy which agencies would like to change. For the past ten years, there have been discussions and some agreed upon tenets about how the community and the Board could be more collaborative in their relationship and more willing to share in their decision-making. But the organizational philosophy of the Board with regard to community participation seems to manifest itself mostly in the service provided to adult learners - it is not exercised in terms of granting equal authority to the community agencies. The agencies don't easily accept this imbalance of power as legally enshrined. To them, accountability and funding issues seem to be the driving forces behind this retention of power. Mary concedes that this chronic facade of consultation is a sore spot in the community.

But for now, Mary has made a dramatic career decision fulfilling a goal she set four short years ago. She has completed a professional transition as a manager. She has moved once more to work exclusively for a large educational bureaucracy - the City Board of Education, and has walked

away from immersion in her own cultural community to a multicultural environment. Her identity is secure in its transformation. How her administrative knowledge shaped by the community landscape will intrude on her new experiences at the board of education will tell another story.

5.4 Mary Lo: reflections

(a) participant/researcher relationship

Throughout this qualitative case study, I was guided by Mary Lo's experiences - first, as a community centre ESL co-ordinator and secondly, as a board of education LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program supervisor. Since the nature of this narrative inquiry was shaped by the construction of administrative knowledge on the professional knowledge landscape, her story was embedded in the multi-faceted landscape of community - a familiar ethnic community of Chinese learners and staff, a multicultural educational community of board of education personnel, and a multicultural community of social service agency ESL co-ordinators. This context named the structured quality of experience to be investigated. In addition, this professional knowledge landscape of diverse relationships and organizational structures established her parameters as a participant sharing stories and reconstructing her experiences within this narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

If we accept that narrative shares with life history the "need for equitable, mutually educative and authentically collaborative research" (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 491) and the need for "attending to ethical and political issues in researching the personal" (Cole, 1994, p. 5) (cf. Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), we must first examine and understand our assumptions about this mode of inquiry. My hermeneutical responsibility was to discover the appropriate methods through which Mary's background and comprehension of the phenomenon being researched - the experiences of female administrators- could serve as a bridge or access for educating and interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon. With the assumption that narrative method reflects knowledge as socially constructed and acquired inductively through dialogue with participants, I engaged her in several conversational feminist interviews (Oakley, 1981), both at the Board where she worked on Sundays as a program supervisor of LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) classes and at my home.

Since my fundamental perspective was towards the validation of personal knowledge of women administrators as derived from experience, I wanted to distance myself from traditional objective interviewing practices. Instead of rejecting social interaction between Mary and myself as having no personal meaning, I wanted to capture the quality of the researcher/participant interaction, our social/personal characteristics and our feelings about each other (Oakley, 1981). Although Mary had no reporting relationship to me, we had kept a connection over the past few years with our relationship to adult ESL programming.

Consequently, I endorsed the following assumption: a feminist methodology of social science required "the recognition that personal involvement is more than dangerous bias - it is the condition under which people come to know each other and admit others into their lives" (Stanley and Wise, 1979, p. 58). Over time, the participants and I shared many of our assumptions as we came to know ourselves and each other in a different way. I had known Mary Lo for three years, from our co-sponsoring relationship between the Chinese social service agency and the Board. Initially, I saw her as a capable community representative who provided Chinese immigrant clientele and space for our ESL classes; she viewed me as a credible, educational funder who looked after paying ESL instructors, supervision and learning materials. A well-matched working partnership between language needs and program delivery. However, in the last year, on Sundays, Mary undertook a federally funded ESL Program Supervisor position with the City Board. Coincidentally, it was physically located within my adult ESL milieu at Andrew Stephen School. As a result, when I went to the office on week-ends to work on my thesis, we often chatted about a number of things, developing a personal connection along with an already positive professional association.

A few guiding questions for our initial interview were prepared with a sense of excitement and knowledge that we would be sharing experiences as colleagues on an equal footing. Taking a personal perspective from some distance, I recognized that it was my responsibility as researcher to

make the environment as comfortable as possible. However, occasionally, during the interviews, Mary's language revealed a certain distance between us. She lapsed into "you", the powerful board of education with the money and "we", the subordinate agency in the community who didn't have a strong voice in this domain. It was clear that my administrator's hat was not tossed too far away (Musella, 1992) at least in Mary's mind partly because of the interviewing context - both subject area and interviewing locale. It was made obvious once more that the presence and influence of the interviewer had to be taken into account in the analysis and interpretation of the participant's story (Mishler, 1991, p. 96). Consequently, to enhance the credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) of this narrative inquiry, I had to constantly be attuned to critical subjectivity.

Although Mary was interested in the topic of female leadership, she was more interested in how I would combine her personal and professional stories to fit with others in a similar manager's position. She considered her job at the Board as evidence of her integration into the mainstream, a step away from the shelter and ease of being immersed in her own cultural and racial milieu. She expressed her readiness to test her knowledge and abilities in a multicultural landscape, though predominantly white and "Canadian". Mary always seemed interested in the fact that as a woman, mother and administrator, I still had the time and interest to attend graduate school. It seemed to fit her own way of thinking about what women could accomplish; she also believed in the drive to express our potential in a variety of domains. In fact, through the interviews, we found out that we seemed to share many values with regard to education, family and work. But she definitely didn't regard these perspectives as feminist. We noticed many similarities across cultures in our world views - in our case, Chinese and Jewish (Feuerverger, 1986). On further discussion, we both felt the greater moral authority for our lives came from our families and culture, and not our religion. In reviewing all these values, it was difficult for me as a woman to understand the counterpoint of

Mary's ambition and commitment to family and work and her categorical denial that she was a feminist.

Nevertheless, more than once, she expressed that the opportunity to contribute to the field of education was very important. The relationship and knowledge we were sharing were more important to her than my particular orientation. To work together was an opportunity we both looked forward to as colleagues. In the end she was also expressing her confidence in our commitment to re-tell her stories in a trustworthy manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

In terms of story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), I wanted to better understand the tensions experienced by a female manager who had a foot in two camps - a community agency and a board of education. Having participated with community agencies for several years, I was already aware of some of the divergent and advocacy views of Mary's agency. My use of a narrative research method was supported by a conception of knowledge as based in lived experience and dependent upon the interaction of the subjective individual with their external environment (Dewey, 1938). With Mary's experience, the complementary belief that meaning or knowledge is narratively constructed through the telling and the re-telling of experience underlay my assumption that the understanding of her stories would come from the interpretation of text. This interrelationship, described throughout the beginning of this chapter - the direct conscious description of experience and the underlying dynamics or structures that account for experience - provided a central meaning and unity that enabled me as researcher to grasp the substance of Mary's experience.

On the other hand, what developed methodologically during our informal conversations, was quite different from my initial expectation. The storied political tug-of-war between community agency and board of education agendas in the adult ESL landscape maintained a significant presence in Mary's narrative, as I had anticipated. However, in terms of narrative method, that strand receded into the background as one of the main frameworks shaping Mary's story. From a narrativist point

of view, critical questions around the evolving participant/researcher relationship moved to centre stage. In the end, the most significant ideas that captured my attention during the reconstruction of Mary's chapter were issues of truth and deception as expressed through the ambiguity of our roles and the matter of text representation.

I was aware that in Mary's eyes, I was probably still wearing my administrator's hat as researcher (Musella, 1992). By undertaking this narrative inquiry in my own backyard, I had to acknowledge this recognition of my context at the City Board as well as Mary's dual context in the community and at the Board. By discussing our mutual situations as female administrators and caring about our working together, we admitted our intersubjectivity. In this way, knowledge became more personal in the sense that Polanyi (1958) suggested in talking about "knowing as an act of comprehension of the things known, an action that requires skill...Such is the personal participation of the knower in acts of understanding" (p. vii as cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 96). This type of sharing involved my coming to terms with her alternative perspectives and truly honouring the relationship of participant as collaborative researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Cole and Knowles, 1993).

Nevertheless, in our initial conversation, I was disappointed by my Pavlovian response to Mary's sexist remarks. During an early interview (1996) with her as an ESL Co-ordinator/Program Supervisor, the following interaction took place:

> *So, did you sort of consider it a compliment when they said "You are*
>
> *like a male supervisor"?* (Sheila)
>
> *Well, yes. Because in Hong Kong the general impression is that*
>
> *female supervisors are more difficult to handle. They like to deal with*
>
> *male supervisors.* (Mary Lo)

What does that mean? What qualities did male supervisors have, for

example, that females didn't? (Sheila)

In my opinion, male supervisors are more determined...females

change their minds so often and also, a male supervisor is much more

objective. They deal with things, not people....[Colleagues] think

female supervisors are usually prejudiced.... (Mary Lo)

[with great emphasis and disbelief] And you believe that? (Sheila)

Although we gradually became engaged in a collaborative relationship during this research

and continued to share how we came to our different points of view, it was inappropriate in my role

as researcher to express disbelief and implied disapproval of her sexist declaration. I recognized that

I had the right and perhaps the obligation to search for and to understand the sources of her attitude;

I didn't have the right to make personal judgements.

It was apparent that the cultural values of her personal and professional landscapes were quite

different than mine. But our purpose during these interviews was not to have equal involvement and

similar perspectives in collaboration "but rather, for negotiated and mutually agreed upon

involvement" (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 486). In spite of the fact that Mary didn't show a visible

negative reaction to my improper response, the interaction suggested that I had not been adequately

"respecting, listening to, and giving attention to how the research act and process fit with the

everyday lived experiences" (Cole & Knowles, p. 479). It should not have been important that

Mary's comments were contrary to Board hiring policy (City Board of Education, 1990). I was

intruding on our relationship by trying to shape her stories to fit my expectations as a Board

administrator. But in this relationship, she was a participant, not a Board employee who needed

training. It would have been beneficial to remind myself of the working title of my thesis

"Conversations in Counterpoint", not "Conversations in Harmony".

Consequently, in future conversations, I worked diligently on being more aware of my subjectivity. I needed to better understand Mary's world view represented by her stories and seen through her own lens. It was my responsibility as researcher to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992) in my own professional knowledge landscape. This event made me think that a researcher positioned as outsider was preferable at certain stages of inquiry. It would have helped me to distance myself somewhat from Mary's remarks. I might have gained access to what she really thought as opposed to what she felt she was now expected to say. Through this brief initial research experience, it became obvious that as a researcher on the inside, my reaction sometimes silenced the participant in unexpected uneducative ways.

This disclosure of my faltering attempt to sensitively and effectively carry on an informal feminist interview, became an integral and sometimes uncomfortable part of my own narrative. I needed to hone my interviewing skills. I found that this gap resonated deeply with advice Coles (1989) received as a resident psychiatrist. He wrote:

> *...but on that fast-darkening winter afternoon, I was urged to let each*
>
> *patient be a teacher: hearing themselves teach you, through their*
>
> *narration, the patients will learn the lessons a good instructor learns*
>
> *only when he becomes a willing student, eager to be taught* (p. 22).

I had to consciously submit myself to this transformation. This was a relationship I sought; it was a way of "connected knowing"(Belenky et al., 1986); it was a way of coming to know Mary's story and giving her voice. I was determined to try - I just wasn't sure I was equal to the task of being Coles' "willing student". The complexity of the problem of multiple "I's" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) reminded me of the plurivocal nature of writing narratively (Barniah, 1989). It was important to identify for myself and to explain to Mary and the reader, whose voice was speaking at different moments in the text. In the end, the variety of roles I continued to play throughout my research,

assisted my coming to terms with my own identity as woman, administrator and researcher. It highlighted the ambiguity of the qualitative researcher's roles as one of the more difficult anticipated barriers to interpreting the meaning of participants' responses. It was a reminder that working in my own professional landscape, required me to continuously clarify my multi-faceted role as researcher, not only to be true to myself, but to represent the research relationship as faithfully as possible.

This quality of fidelity (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) depends on at least two people as seen through their perspectives. For example, when Mary visited me at home the first time, I was touched by her thoughtfulness in bringing me a flowering plant. Wasn't I the one who wanted to show my appreciation for the moments we were sharing for my thesis? I became acutely aware of our emerging personal relationship - not only because we shared some of each other's experience as female managers, but also because we would have an opportunity to become closer colleagues. By the end of our research collaboration, her workplace context had changed from the community landscape to a totally Board milieu. We were beginning to share a common organizational lens as female administrators on the same professional knowledge landscape. The intersection of both personal and professional landscapes was constantly emerging and intertwining, thereby affecting the reconstruction of her narrative.

Representing truthfulness (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) emerged in another narrative context. For example, Mary's organizational status relative to my position as ESL administrator surfaced as having an effect on the interviewing situation. Later in my research, I identified interviewing up or down in an organization (see "ladder chats", p. 101) as significant methodologically for its differing implications during the creation of both field and research texts. Questions about the preparation for the interview, the types of questions considered appropriate, and the developing relationship during the reconstruction of text needed further exploration and interpretation. As well, ethical considerations around confidentiality and boundaries for gathering

field notes became important issues. Although Mary did not report directly to me, she seemed to communicate a vulnerability in terms of my formal authority over the ESL programs located in her co-sponsoring agency. She never discussed this power differential in any detail. Nevertheless, her story which advocates for agencies wanting more forthright consultation and decision-making control with the Board represented an acknowledgment of some difference.

In addition, since other staff from Mary's social service centre had shared their concerns with me over recent conflicts within their community organization, I felt quite comfortable as researcher, asking Mary questions about these relationships. Only now on reflection, do I consciously recognize the pattern of comfort or reassurance that accompanies a person in a position of authority who becomes a researcher. My negotiation of entry both with Mary and her colleagues was greatly facilitated by our previous relationships on our professional landscape. The agency members and Mary expressed their trust in me by revealing their internal difficulties. If I had not been an administrator that shared many experiences with them over the years, I probably wouldn't have had access to their secret and sacred stories (Crites, 1971).

However, even when I felt totally immersed mentally and psychologically in the role of researcher - "a willing student" in Coles' (1989) terms - Mary regularly behaved and made remarks that revealed that the roles of researcher/administrator continued to overlap and intrude upon our relationship. With mixed emotions, she seemed to view our conversations as an opportunity to express the depth of her frustration in the community landscape. Would I hold a different professional image of her after hearing the secret agency stories? Was it safe to openly express the "betweenness" (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) between herself and the community environment? This betweenness of the situation "refers not only to the intersubjective bond between the original teller and the narrative inquirer but also to the perceived interaction of the original teller and the context of the narrative." (p. 28) The most obvious confirmation of the ambiguity of our roles and the

question of truthfulness was in Mary's asking if I agreed with parts of her story - her meaning associated with the description and analysis of events in her professional life. Also, the repetitive language "You know? You know?" appeared to be a rhetorical device to engage my approval.

As a participant, Mary did not seem to accept that my judgement of her story was neither desirable nor relevant as a narrative researcher. I was trying to better understand her interpretation of her workplace domain. There seemed to be two issues here: one was Mary's desire to gain my approval as an empathetic and informed listener; the second was to give her adequate time to assess if "her story" was resonating with my unspoken expectations. It seemed that it was difficult for her, as a participant with a positivist perspective, to understand that the meaning she personally derived from her experiences as a female manager was all the "plausibility" (Bruner, 1990) and "authenticity" (Tannen, 1988) I wanted or could expect as a narrativist. I reassured her that her narrative, by its sheer fidelity to her experience, would resonate with other readers.

Sometimes the dialectical concepts of truth and deception expressed themselves through barriers to developing an equitable relationship. For example, were the stories gathered more truthful when I inquired about current volatile issues in Mary's environment? I had access to them by virtue of my other relationships there. Was it ethically sound to bring up knowledge gained from other relationships in Mary's professional landscape? As a researcher/administrator, would I have asked a Board superintendent similar sensitive questions about relationships organizationally? These questions required serious ethical consideration for they impinged directly on our relationship. In the end, I answered them by being totally candid with Mary. I revealed the sources of my information about her milieu while still being respectful of the confidentiality of her other colleagues. It was at this time, in the co-construction of text and screening of hot issues, that we more tangibly entered into the roles of co-researchers.

In a previous dialogue journal, a lead instructor once touched on the question of a similar research relationship with me with respect to our mutual professional knowledge landscape. He expressed the apprehension that if he told me too many insider or secret stories as a researcher, he might in his own eyes, feel like a "boot-licker" (Clandinin & Connelly, SSHRC project, 1993-1996), trying to gain my favour. Mary reiterated a similar concern in her repeating that she was participating in my research for personal, not professional reasons. Initially, this remark did seem rather ambiguous considering the content area of my thesis. But if we define teachers' knowledge in a broad sense, to include educators' knowledge in general, as "that body of convictions and meanings, conscious and unconscious, that have arisen from experience (intimate, social, and traditional) and that are expressed in a person's practice" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 7), we can appreciate Mary's ambivalence in sharing her personal practical knowledge with a researcher from the Board. For Mary, her silent declaration of separation from the researcher confirmed an earlier expressed value of loyalty. She did not want to gossip about the community centre - the Chinese social service agency did indeed fulfil her needs at one time and its secrets were safe.

In dealing with Mary, a participant who shared a professional relationship with several of the same people as I did, I found the sorting out of secret and sacred stories (Crites, 1971) a challenge. Part of the difficulty was that we formed part of each other's stories. We were representative of two different organizational structures with different mandates, but with a strong inter-relationship through the delivery of ESL classes. While the Board adhered to the sacred story of "the universality and taken-for-grantedness of the supremacy of theory over practice" (Crites as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 8) in ESL teacher training, the community agency expressed the mandate of fulfilling primary employment and social service needs of the learners before educational ones. As an ESL co-ordinator, Mary was expected to recognize and balance these contrasting epistemological positions. In her story, she would often reaffirm her connection with the Chinese learners, in direct

opposition to maintaining the required student attendance numbers sent down the funnel as Board policy. This discrepancy driven by increasing government budget cuts became concomitantly larger. As the instructor's vignette suggests in Mary's story, keeping one's teaching goals in perspective was difficult in this restrictive environment.

From my research vantage point, I was forever monitoring whether participants could forget my formal role at the Board and genuinely disclose their perception of reality. Could I honestly step out of the role as administrator in my own mind? It seemed that sharing openly depended on perceived equity - I wasn't sure it was attainable in some aspects. Later, during my research activity, when I was interviewing up organizationally with senior officials at the Board (Chap. 5.5) or interviewing down with other managers (Chap. 5.3), I recognized the improbability of equity between the researcher and participant, especially when we worked in a common milieu. I was constantly aware of our relative positions in the organization. This was true even though the senior officials were friendlier and more candid in our informal conversations than on a usual working basis. In a similar way, I psychologically felt empathetic towards the program supervisor as participant. Our intersubjectivity was evident in a number of ways - language, questions, content and even the physical locations of the interviews. But was this just lack of organizational equity that was creating a barrier? Could there be an equity of minds or consciousness - an equity born out of the willingness to self-forget? (McClintock in Keller, 1983, p. 117). At this time, Mary and I had to agree that the idea of eliminating bias was "a misguided illusion whose effect is to guarantee the irrelevance of the research" (Hunt, 1992, p. 116).

On the other hand, equity could be regarded from the following perspective. Heshusius (1994) suggested that becoming aware of and resolving unequal power relations in research must happen, in the first instance, through knowing as a mode of access; egocentric concerns are temporarily released and the idea of distance, its management and control is relinquished. As

researcher, it was disappointing to recognize that, at least with Mary, it did not seem possible to enter "a participatory mode of consciousness". I didn't seem able "to temporarily let go of all preoccupation with self and move into a state of complete attention." (Heshusius, p. 17) The notions of connected knowing (Belenky et al. 1986), knowing as caring (Noddings, 1984) and tacit knowing (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4) could be viewed as moving toward participatory consciousness; but monitoring subjectivity seemed to be interfering with my effort to immerse myself into Mary's story. I was beginning to feel like the researcher whom Heshusius describes as too engaged with trying to methodologize and cope with the self's selves. He was promoting a more holistic understanding of reality as mutually evolving (Bateson, 1972). But when knowing is seen as rule bound, as managing distance between self and other, the desire for unity isn't present. I wanted to try to let go of some of the "procedural subjectivity" (Heshusius, 1994; Eisner, 1992; Barone, 1992); I wanted to better immerse myself in practising participatory consciousness. Participatory consciousness

> *does not refer to activity as such, or to verbal experience, nor does it*
>
> *refer to methodology or methodological strategies....Rather, it refers*
>
> *to a mode of consciousness, a way of being in the world, that is*
>
> *characterized by what Schachtel (1959) calls "allocentric"*
>
> *knowing...a way of knowing that is concerned with both "the totality*
>
> *of the act of interest" and with the "participation of the total person"*
>
> *(of the knower) (p. 225)....Allocentric knowing requires a "total*
>
> *turning to" other (p. 225), which leads not to a loss of self but to a*
>
> *heightened feeling of aliveness and awareness.* (Schachtel as cited in
>
> Heshusius, 1994, p. 16)

If I was having difficulty attaining this desirable frame of mind at the moment with Mary, I was hoping that I could try again with the female administrators in our conversation group. The

caring and connection were apparent - the self-forgetfulness on my part as researcher remained a challenge!

(b)   text representation

Mary became quite concerned with my implied representation of her as a typical ESL co-ordinator since she saw herself as being different than other female agency co-ordinators. The main reason for her contrasting perspective was her past experience working in an educational bureaucracy in Hong Kong. Her administrative knowledge was shaped by her experiences working as a civil servant and manager of several teachers in a large governmental organization. Consequently she believed that her story was not necessarily valid for other managers in the community who had never known another landscape. While acknowledging that the City Board had the controlling hand in making decisions about the delivery of co-sponsored adult ESL classes, it appeared that she understood more than others, about the dynamics of working within and outside a hierarchical organization. The metaphors of the funnel and the conduit (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) representing the movement of policies in and outside the ESL classroom from senior management, resonated with her experience and were comfortably accepted. She didn't expect decision by consensual consultation from a board of education. Some of her less experienced colleagues in the community agencies did. In her professional knowledge landscape, she expected representatives of a board of education and the communities to collaborate and to share any feedback after decision-making. The other co-ordinators made the following sacred story tacitly clear to Mary: allegiance to one's social service agency in a political sense was very important to their being able to acquire more power in relationship to the City Board. Perhaps that was why Mary sometimes felt like an outsider working from within!

This conflicting sense of identity Mary expressed in terms of the Board and the community begs the question of whether an individual case study is or could be representative or not. Merriam

(1988) reminds us that qualitative case studies are characterized by the discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understanding. Generalizations and hypotheses evident in traditional research, are not deduced from the data. Instead the uniqueness of a case study rests more in the questions asked and their relationship to the end product - the participant's narrative. Similar to Blumenfeld-Jones (1995), Stake (as cited in Merriam, 1988) reminds us that it is the reader who "participates in extending generalization to reference populations" (pp. 35-36). The researcher presents the meaning she interprets along with her participant - it is up to the reader, in an analogical way, to decide if the situation fits other particular circumstances. Mary's story did not have to be representative of a large group of female administrators. Instead, it is a case study of one ESL co-ordinator/program supervisor. As a researcher, I was exploring how she made sense of her life as a female administrator in two different educational environments; how she interpreted her experiences; and how she structured her social world. Meaning would be mediated by our co-construction of text. The generalizing qualities (were) not so much located in Truth, as in their ability to refine perception and deepen conversation (Rorty, 1979) during our interviews.

By using this "interpretation in context" (Cronbach as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 123), the case study design was well-suited to our community and board of education landscapes. It was impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables - the elements shaping the administrative knowledge of female administrators - from their context (Yin as cited in Merriam, 1988). I discussed the notion of multiple realities with Mary. It seemed important for her to understand my philosophic framework- that I was looking at the world as a function of personal interaction and perception - a subjective perspective based on our beliefs. I emphasized that one of the most important notions in qualitative research is to understand the meaning of an experience within a bounded context - in this instance, the community and the large organizational context. We were trying to understand how all the parts could work together holistically.

It is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of

a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is

an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may

happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that

setting...and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully

to others who are interested in that setting....The analysis strives for

depth of understanding. (Patton as cited in Merriam, 1988, p.1)

On the other hand, to my surprise, Mary was quite adamant that she should not participate in the "research story"or the "Reflections" section of her narrative. That text representation was totally from a researcher's perspective. In her coming to terms with the narrative research process, she wanted to read the transcriptions of our conversations as well as discuss the interpretation of her story in the first part of "her" chapter. For example, after our first collaboration, she felt that the reconstructed story reflected her experiences in a profound way. As researcher, my initial hesitancy and anxiety about showing Mary my own understanding and expression of her stories, dissipated with her resonance - at least for this occasion. But in terms of the research text, I was unsure of how to react to this participant's perspective. She explained that she felt more comfortable with the research story or "Reflections" acting as my autobiography - my analysis of the research journey and my interpretation of the meanings embedded in her experiences as a female administrator. Partly because of the development of closer personal ties during our collaboration and partly because I felt an ethical obligation as a qualitative researcher to share any information that impinged on my participant, I asked Mary to give me time to sort out this aspect of our relationship.

I believe that in adhering to narrative method, the researcher enters into a collaborative relationship so that both voices are heard in the co-construction of text - the participant not only tells the story but takes part in the mutual reconstruction of the field notes as they become research texts.

As a result, the identity of the individual as participant is constructed narratively and therefore is disclosed as multifaceted and transforming according to shifting conditions and temporal changes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Her willingness to give me "carte blanche" for the research story - total freedom to write from a researcher's point of view- created a tension with my original concept of the researcher and participant as co-researchers in collaboration. In terms of maintaining an equitable relationship, I began to see this situation as evolving into another chance for "respecting, listening to, and giving attention to how the research act and process fit with everyday lived experiences" (Coles & Knowles, 1993, p. 486). In the end, Mary chose to avoid the disclosure of the interpretive research text I had constructed about her narrative. I respected her decision.

The interview situation described above brings to mind notions of plausibility and fidelity. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain that "A plausible account is one that tends to ring true" (p.8). Mary's initial reaction to our reconstructed account of her narrative - "It's me! That's really me!"- strongly suggested that it manifested that quality for her. In the future, readers will make their own judgement. Similarly, as a measure for practising and evaluating narrative, Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) observes that fidelity "dialectically conjoins notions of objective truth...and subjective interpretation ...(p. 26). He contrasts the concepts of truth, as what actually happens in a situation and fidelity, as what it means to the story teller. Fidelity, therefore, becomes subjective as opposed to an objective reality. In recognition that narrative inquiry has a moral dimension - that is, the participant tells her story to the researcher, fully trusting that her value and dignity will be respected - I felt compelled to preserve this valuable relationship by periodically readjusting my lens in Mary's direction. In the example cited above, Mary was describing her work and her rationale for her beliefs about male and female managers and teachers. As researcher, I was committed to accept her interpretation; in my inexperience, I exercised more subjectivity than was desirable in reconstructing the meaning of her experience.

Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) writes about the other side of fidelity that addresses the precision of reproducing details (cf. authenticity, Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In research notes for example, he connects it with maintaining the relationship of the teller - the participant - and the receiver - both the researcher and the reader of the research. As noted above, after reading the reconstruction of her narrative, Mary reacted in such a positive straight forward manner. In terms of our emerging relationship, it confirmed that "truth for fidelity is simultaneously factual (that is, reasonably accurate) and a function of perspective (meaningful)" (p. 27). It remains to be seen whether Mary's story resonates with other readers.

5.5   Ruth Walker and Patricia Daly

Like most communities, the adult education community reflects its organic character. Over the past ten years, many changes have taken place on the professional knowledge landscape of the Adult and Continuing Education Department of the City Board of Education. Currently, metaphors of educators "teetering on the brink" and observing that "the ground is shifting", help to focus attention on the stories of female administrators as they talk in a dispirited way about their current experiences on the adult education landscape. The landscape is constantly changing in a direction that forces them to look with different eyes at the marginality of Continuing Education in the regular school system and of women educators in a large board of education.

On the one hand, it seems to be a black and white snapshot without relief. Two female administrators share this prediction:

> *Next election we'll be voting for a megacity, and for some people to*
>
> *run a mega-board, probably....It isn't rocket science to see a parallel*
>
> *vision for education!...the first consequence of it will be a massive*
>
> *upheaval of emotion and angst!* (Pat)

However, simultaneously, other stories are being created by senior officials about the fluctuating nature of adult education in the school system as it responds to changes in the surrounding local community and in the municipal and provincial governments of the day. The similarities and contradictions in their perspectives stand out against this backdrop of change to produce a variety of endings to emerging work narratives about women in adult education.

Patricia Daly, a senior official, conveys with regret, that "the bigger picture is being driven by the duly elected representatives of the damned people....These bozos are doing what they were elected to do" (Pat). On this level, Pat is persuaded by the argument that in a democracy, it's appropriate for our elected representatives to have a major role in policy development. She would

subscribe to the metaphor of the funnel (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) which City Board trustees seemingly use to pour different policies into the classrooms in schools and various departments. She accepts that staff - and she includes her past professional performance in this remark - tend to run around making very unpleasant noises about "top down" stuff that never gets implemented. But, from where she now sits near the very top of this educational organization, she admits there is an important role for the elected representatives in having something to say about what staff are paid to do. However, when reflecting on the baldness of these statements, she circles back around to the ideal policy development as

> *being some way of balancing the policy impetus from the duly elected*
>
> *representatives of the people with the realities of those in schools,*
>
> *classrooms and administrative offices - staff who actually have to*
>
> *carry the stuff out, having a voice in shaping that policy development.*
>
> (Pat)

As the elder of two sisters in a European family where her father became a principal and her mother stayed at home, Pat did not readily identify any gender issues during her youth.

> *...the expectation was always that we would finish our education, get*
>
> *careers and get on with our world....It was just not debatable...only*
>
> *then was it sensible to think about getting a marriage partner....Most*
>
> *of my girlfriends married; I did not.* (Pat)

And so with the big boom in teaching in the mid-sixties and knowing one person in Toronto, Pat took the adventurous step to teach one year in a foreign country, Canada. She stayed here at the City Board for over thirty years.

Now, in her capacity as senior official, Pat accepts that some executive colleagues acknowledge the need for the flow of policy development in both directions. At the City Board, there

is a long history - at least twenty years - of developing policies centrally, sometimes driven by the administrative arm, much more often driven by the political arm. This has been recognized as really strenuous central policy development! Sometimes efforts have been made to get that voice from the bottom, up. Pat assesses the City Board in terms of where people sit in the system and what they've done:

> *I think you can make the full range of cases [with regard to policy*
>
> *development] that often we're very top down, and we're not bad at*
>
> *balance [some of the time]. I don't think you could ever make the*
>
> *case in our system that we are bottom up.* (Pat)

Another senior official, Ruth Walker, disagrees. Overlapping in family roles and work values with Pat Daly, Ruth was born in a rural area in Canada. Here, too, it was conventional wisdom for girls to grow up to be a teacher or a nurse. Her parents were proud of her intelligence, displayed through her ability to read and write at an early age - eventually it seemed they were boasting that it happened at "three days of age" (Ruth)! But it never occurred to them that there was any need for other career choices for their daughter. Although her Mom didn't actually work outside the home, she had all sorts of weird and wonderful ideas about what she would like to do. Ruth imagines that between this creative energy and the strong work ethic of her determined father as a school principal, she followed a non-traditional route to her present position as senior official at the City Board of Education.

Ruth likes to spend some of her free time watching the dynamics of parliamentarians in action on television. Seeing policy development in the Legislative Assembly reminds her that "policies in a democracy, never start at the top. They're always a response to some grass-roots pressure" (Ruth). When she examines adult education in particular, she points out that the fact that

the City Board provides Continuing Education, is a response to public demand because there is no legislation to support it.

> *So when the funding dries up, the first thing you have to do is to meet the legislative requirements....Everything we do in Continuing Education is a response to public demand...our school board can do absolutely zero...it is probably the most grass-roots of all initiatives. And it's only the commitment of our trustees that keeps it alive, because they're the ones that vote...if our Director wasn't committed, if we weren't committed, it wouldn't happen. (Ruth)*

Ruth does not buy into the metaphorical notion of policy development taking place at the top, and being funnelled down through the conduit on the way to implementation in the classroom. She, along with our Conversation Focus Group, finds this concept insufficiently complex for their experience with the multitude of information pieces and relationships going back and forth on the landscape. She appreciates that it's really difficult for the instructor in the classroom to understand that there's no politician in the world who would actually push through a policy that didn't have political support. But Ruth believes that is the reality she lives on the professional landscape.

These issues about knowledge and power, authority and relationship, impinge directly on the balance between the individual and the community. Difficult and broad ethical questions become important as these administrators try to understand how they are connected to what they know. As feminists, they wonder about what kind of action is dictated by their knowledge. They consider adult education important for society as a whole; not only for the interaction of parents and grandparents with children but also because in delivering adult ESL and literacy classes, adults can contribute their skills back to the stability of the community. Ruth believes, in a deep philosophical way, that they need to re-investigate what the purpose of the school board is. Since the City Board has expressed

its commitment to adult education through its director many times, they have to reduce the tension caused by feelings of territoriality between the regular secondary school system which leads some adults to high school credits, and continuing education which permits the flexibility of a non-credit format for adults. Part of the tension, Ruth surmises, is due to lack of information.

She recalls how throughout her career, she has been committed to promoting policies that break down barriers - part of the reason she was attracted to the City Board. She well understands that this position allows more people to operate as strident advocates in environments which would drive some people crazy. But this tolerance generally allows her to work more effectively with ambiguity and to listen to more than one story - because everyone has their own story. Ruth senses that she tends to think differently than men who have held similar positions either in a board or a Ministry of Education setting along the way, especially with regard to the male-dominated areas of science and technology. For example, she perceives the male view as looking at technology as a tool; but at Paula Michelle Secondary School, she is eager to support its more progressive and less restricted perspective. She conceives of technology as much more than a tool - as a potential power to radically change our society.

In this non-traditional area for women, Ruth recognizes the Board's strong commitment. But she admits that as a female teacher, "it was very difficult to become a superintendent in the sense that it was never previously encouraged" (Ruth). She recalls that in a former work environment, she ran into unexpected problems as a woman. She expressed a strong work ethic which she had gained through osmosis from her workaholic father. She also put in much longer hours at work than was socially acceptable at her workplace. As a result she had to be very careful about this perceived negative behaviour amongst her male colleagues. She was compelled to almost hide the fact that she came in early or left late. Ruth was regarded by them as pushy and assertive, and in effect, upsetting the culture.

I'm sure things have changed a great deal now but at that time, there

were some very traditional people there who had a very strong sense

of the proper bureaucratic stream that one takes in one's career. But

I obviously wasn't traditional. Now that it has changed so radically,

those same people are still there. I can't imagine how they're coping

with it. It must be traumatic for them! (Ruth)

But for Ruth, this type of gender discrimination opened her eyes to a very strong male culture in the field of education. At that time, she couldn't let her feminist views show in order to operate successfully in this environment. She recognized that "One has to be more cautious"(Ruth). It was the main event in her career where she really did notice some of the barriers confronting women. She credits a feminist director with the foresight of posting a Special Requirement for a responsible position at the Ministry - the requirement of a commitment to gender equity for a curriculum appointment Ruth secured. Unfortunately, this outspoken director suffered professionally for vocally advocating equity through her feminist perspective. She never was willing to be part of "the old boys' network".

With a change in government to NDP, Ruth observed a radical policy shift in government which made a tremendous difference to the culture of the workplace. Policies, known variously as employment equity and equal opportunity were gaining prominence. It confirmed for Ruth, the conviction that despite the lip service given to employment equity - which was very loud at the City Board - there needed to be policies for people to change. "First of all, you change behaviours; then you change attitude". (Ruth)

Like Patricia Daly, Ruth wants to approach adult education at City Board in a different way. She believes that centrally, the co-ordinators and senior officials don't tend to value cultivating close relationships. She mentions that she doesn't think a day passes when she's walking with somebody

from the City Board, and meets another Board administrator. She naturally says, "By the way, do you know so and so" and they don't! She finds this situation which suggests a form of exclusivity, incredible! Compared to field offices, the central office tends to communicate only with the people they work with and at the end of the day, there's no time to communicate with anybody else. She wants to avoid this alienation and loneliness that has been openly expressed by other female senior officials (Chase, 1995) (Reinharz, 1992).

At this point in her changing landscape, Ruth is recommending that all segments of the Board look at the big picture in a comprehensive manner. She says that they could assess the needs of adult students in their community by looking at all the different ways in which they, as educators, serve them in our current system. They can start by bringing together administrators from a variety of panels - adult, secondary and alternative. The Board has a task force as well as the Metropolitan Board - but they have no idea what's happening around them. It's impossible to know whether they're going to be part of the municipal government structure along with welfare or whether they're going to have provincial pooling which is a very likely scenario. But irrespective of all those things, as a senior official, she is convinced that if they continue to move on and develop some representations of adult education delivery together, there's no reason to have to go strictly into a total Continuing Education model.

Consequently, Ruth has designed one way to respond to these dilemmas by collaboration of diverse interest groups. She knows very well that they have to come to grips with the fact that "salaries are the real issue" (Ruth). There is a lot of resistance to share ideas but she feels that, maybe if they got the chance to speak face to face, a more creative resolution could be found in a participatory way (Christiansen et al., 1997). For the last four months Ruth has invited a group of twenty administrators - managers, principals and superintendents - dealing with adult immigrants, to a forum where they are for the first time facing each other in a more equitable way. Her political

intention is to take this discussion to the Metropolitan Board. Her immediate practical intention is to find a way in which all players - secondary and Continuing Education, learners, staff, trustees and unions - get a chance to meet together to be heard in a consultation process about the delivery of adult education. She knows the barriers that may be present - a male manager who is gate-keeping by not attaching much significance to making connections with other adult educators at the City Board; another manager who doesn't encourage female administrators to attend these time-consuming but critical planning meetings; the collective bargaining process with the federation whose mandate is to protect its members' jobs; the principals who see their territory eroding. But Ruth is still hopeful:

> *So what we have to do is instead of sitting back and just letting it*
>
> *happen is to be proactive and try to develop some models. Because*
>
> *the bottom line is we're still a wealthy province; we're still going to*
>
> *have money. We should still be able to serve the needs of our*
>
> *people....But we may have to do it quite differently.* (Ruth)

Doing things differently seems to be a common theme right up to the Executive Offices. Pat talks about the intersection of personal and professional values. She stresses the importance of personal relationship when she wants a kind of thoughtful opinion about a work project from a woman who's not currently embedded in the educational arena:

> *I always run it by her....I always get the "more feeling" kind of*
>
> *perspective on it and I know that's what I'm getting from her. I think*
>
> *I have shifted over time though I'm still wired to get the task done.*
>
> *But I think I know enough, and I want enough, to hear and feel what*
>
> *other people have to say. Because it makes a difference to how well*
>
> *you can get the task done and so on....My way or the highway is not*

my style....To be seen as fair and willing to hear all sides - I think

that's a really important set of values. (Pat)

But at meetings of the Executive Committee that oversees the Board's business, where the men outnumber the women almost three to one, doing it differently by gender expresses itself sometimes through the use of language. Pat describes how she and the other female senior official actually have to laugh through their frustration about how some of the men, including "the very reasonable" male director, interrupt constantly. She says this absolutely male aggressive use of language drives her crazy. Before a newly promoted male senior official gets settled into this pattern too far, she wants to "get rid of this gender based piece that is absolutely infuriating" (Pat). It's palpable how silenced these capable and knowledgeable women feel.

At a meeting several months earlier, Pat had tried a moderate approach in trying to shape the men's inappropriate volume and use of language. But she reports that none of them took her seriously enough to try to modify their behaviour. Her latest strategy is to prepare the Director before the next meeting that she wants to point out this unacceptable behaviour with a much more definite and planned execution.

I think we're going to have to call them on it....First of all, we're

going to have to get them to agree that it's a problem. That'll take a

minute. But if we get agreement, then I think that those of us who

want to fix this, are going to have to be prepared to have the

unpleasant task of having to keep calling them on it, until they begin

to unlearn. I mean, it's an unconscious, mindless kind of behaviour.

It's not as if they decide "Oh, now I'm going to jump in or cut across

Pat or Ruth". They just do it! (Pat)

Pat expresses her hope and belief that the Director will consider her proposal as something worth looking at. She muses to herself that the two male senior officials who rarely interrupt people at Executive meetings are not part of "the old boys' network". She has firmly decided that this issue is about power - who's controlling the conversation; whose ideas are going to get heard. She has to do this task because she feels very deeply that it's a matter of principle and respect for others.

In this experience, the landscape seems to express itself as a place for epistemological and moral reconstructions. Pat began with an uncomfortable and unnamed response to some male behaviour in the meetings of the senior hierarchy - where she belonged, presumably, as an experienced, knowledgeable and respected member. Through reflection and a re-examination of her own professional principles, she felt compelled to take action. Trying to keep within the traditional boundaries of expected courteous behaviour, she had mentioned the inappropriateness of interrupting a colleague in a natural, conversational way during a meeting. It had absolutely no effect. Her next strategy was to continue to follow the unspoken organizational rule that if you have a contentious issue to table, you brief the Director beforehand. As a feminist, she hoped that he would validate her concern by his support. Her experience tells her that he is a reasonable man. Now she wants to take action.

Patricia Daly acknowledges that she, too, interrupts other speakers occasionally - but on a totally different basis. While she represents the men's interruptions as asserting their dominance over others on the professional landscape, our co-construction of her language shows she interrupts, at least in the more relaxed environment of a thesis conversation, in order to give support to the speaker "right; right" (Pat) or to show complete synchrony by finishing off the speaker's sentence in what would appear to be total agreement. One could ask whether the interrupting words of approval might also be an issue of control in getting the speaker to move on more quickly. Another query is whether some women learn that they can only be heard if they adapt their behaviour to what has often been

socially and professionally acceptable for men. Pat does not want this view to become her model for how she deals with the professional world.

When Patricia Daly is deciding how to approach her colleagues at the City Board, examining what she knows to be true and what she values as knowledge, she trusts her intuition very strongly. Her confidence in her own identity makes her feel when she's right and needs to stand up to a situation. She feels she never did anything that could be even remotely described as playing the game. She also sees herself as idiosyncratic. Pat feels that what she has to do and what she wants to do always has to be implemented in a way that feels OK and right for her. While working at the City Board, she describes a great deal of consonance between what she wanted to do and what the Board stood for - notwithstanding the very real existence of an "old boys' network". She clarifies her position by stating that this system, just because of its nature -its urban, progressive kind of milieu- has always had the room and the space for people who do their work well, and who don't grease the wheels with being part of the game. In the thirty-two years she's been with the Board, she thinks there always have been those people who have been able to march to their own drummer well enough to keep their own integrity and do what needed to be done. She truly believes that the stranglehold of "the old boys' network" is much less strong than it was ten to fifteen years ago.

Pat is aware that in her very senior role, people have certain assumptions about Patricia Daly "the position" as opposed to Patricia Daly, "the person".

> *I think I deal with that partly by living with it and partly by trying to*
>
> *be as informal as possible with the person in that setting, to try to*
>
> *break down that sense of position....I think I want to underscore what*
>
> *I said about trying to raise the informality of it and using a bit of*
>
> *humour....I recently dealt with a meeting of staff persons very*
>
> *informally in my office and tried to get someone - in fact I did get*

someone else to take a leadership role...and get me out of the center

of it, so that in fact, we could be as close as possible to being on an

even keel around our discussion. And actually looking back on

yesterday's meeting, I felt as if that was fairly successful - that in fact,

we were just a group of people dealing with a task. (Pat)

On the other hand, occasionally there are exceptional circumstances when her intuition and past experience as a female administrator create a difficult situation in terms of cooperation and collaboration. For example, her relationship with a powerful male comptroller often sets a context where Pat doesn't believe she is actually "getting the straight goods" (Pat). She filters everything he says at a meeting through a kind of double check; in the past, in her professional life, Pat often feels that the information offered primarily served his purposes. His behaviour mimics a "top-down" priority for all decisions. She thinks that in the environment he shares sometimes with Pat, he appears to be like the current provincial conservative government; he takes the least possible process road to achieve results.

This contradictory behaviour creates an extensive change in the picture at City Board. Generally, Pat and Ruth describe how the City board tries to get staff participating in program and curriculum issues like adult education delivery, in the midst of on-going decision-making and restructuring. Overall, however, as senior officials, they recognize that the overwhelming sense that the Director has, is that there will have to be a transition time and process for change. Everyone will have to realize that they can't get from here to whatever "there" is, in one giant step. It can't be done - to restructure and refinance and reresource. Although none of them knows what it looks like, Ruth and Pat agree with the Director that it's going to take several years to actually work this out. For the provincial Ministry of Education and Training to do anything that would be sort of cataclysmic would be obviously damaging to public education - which it may or may not care about - but

politically stupid from the City Board's perspective. But until they know what they're actually going to put around the structure and the financing, it's really hard to guess what "there" looks like!

In the end, both Ruth Walker and Patricia Daly see themselves as practical female administrators. They don't see any point in railing against something that can't be altered. But Pat makes their responsibility very clear:

> *I absolutely believe, that even in a time of great financial difficulty - in fact, I guess I might be pollyanna-...if we've got a robust set of values, which would include the issues of equity, that drive what we do and how we behave- then that's when they really become important around how we manage ourselves and the institution and the services to our people during those times of particular difficulty. ...I find it a waste of time and psychic energy to rail about things that are unalterable. And our reducing financial situation is unalterable. What is alterable is how we respond to it and how we mange it. We make the very, very best use of less and less and less. And I think that's where the energy needs to go....Our stated set of values during cutting, downsizing, reducing - whatever euphemism you want - has been based on a stated set of values - notions of equity, accountability and excellent curriculum....I think being a woman has a great deal to do with all of those things....Now I will claim [as a female administrator] to have had some hand in[this direction] - not alone, because the Director himself subscribes to this set of views. (Pat)*

For Pagano (1990) and Miller (1984), connection, community and attachment are essential to a feminist perspective. But connection and attachment are not claimed as inherently or exclusively

feminine. Senior colleagues at the City Board often express these notions in administrators' stories with respect to adult education, regardless of gender. Both Ruth Walker and Patricia Daly represent women who do not want power to oppress or silence other colleagues. The power they "seek is to speak women's voices, women's experiences" (Pagano, 1990, p. 14).

5.6   Ruth Walker and Patricia Daly: reflections

(a)   participant/researcher relationship

Ruth's and Pat's story characteristically exhibits how narrative method reflects a world view of knowledge as socially constructed and acquired inductively through dialogue with participants. In turn, it supports the conception of knowledge as based in lived experience and dependent upon the interaction of the subjective individual with their external environment (Dewey, 1938). When as researchers, we conceptualize interviews as forms of discourse, that is, as speech events whose structure and meaning is jointly produced by interviewers and interviewees (Mishler, 1991, p. 105), it becomes important to examine the question once more of the role of the interviewer in how a participant's story is told.

In preparing for and conducting these informal interviews with managers, I was constantly attending to cues about whether Ruth and Pat were responding to me as administrator or as researcher. Simultaneously, I also became aware how I was reformulating questions in response to their story "in terms of our reciprocal understandings as meanings emerged during the course" (Mishler, 1991, p. 105) of our conversations. That is, by undertaking this inquiry in my own backyard, I had to listen carefully to a variety of managers' storied experience - senior officials, principals and program supervisors. I had to acknowledge, with full recognition, our differing contexts and positions in the hierarchical structure at the City Board. Together, through caring about our mutual situations as female administrators (Oakley, 1981), we tried to acknowledge our intersubjectivity. In this way, knowledge became personal in the sense that Polanyi (1958) suggests; that is, in talking about "knowing as an act of comprehension of the things known, an action that requires skill....Such is the personal participation of the knower in acts of understanding" (p. vii in Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 96). This type of sharing involved my coming to terms with their

alternative perspectives and truly honouring the relationship of Ruth and Pat as collaborative researchers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Cole & Knowles, 1993).

In developing narrative inquiry, the notions of equity of expertise (Hunt, 1992) and negotiations of intentions for both researcher and participant complemented my daily working style as an administrator in the adult education arena. Ruth's and Pat's knowledge was different but equal. In turn, I recognized that the use of story as reflective practice through informal interviews led "to a vision of professionals as agents of society's reflective conversation with its situation, agents who engage in co-operative inquiry within a framework of institutionalized contention (Schon, 1983, p.353).

However, achieving and maintaining equitable status between "researcher" and "researched", as collaborators in the same venture became a methodological challenge. Having used narrative inquiry with a feminist interviewing perspective (Oakley, 1981; Fine, 1992) in a previous collaborative research project (Clandinin & Connelly, SSHRC project, 1993-1996), I anticipated and welcomed the possibility of an intersubjective relationship between Ruth and Pat, and myself. By participating in a common endeavour, "the negotiation of two [three] people's narrative unities" (Clandinin, 1988, p. 3) seemed a plausible expectation. However, sometimes my role at the Board seemed to sabotage my role as researcher with acknowledged insider status. My effort to "validate women's subjective experiences as women and as people" (Oakley, 1981, p. 30) was perceived through different perspectives depending on our organizational relationship. As a researcher and administrator who was conversing with managers in greater or lesser positions of authority, the intricacies of sharing narratives and reconstructing stories to accommodate each other's experiences presented some unexpected nuances in our developing research relationship.

(b)   ambiguity of roles

Initially, during the interviewing process, I believed that preparing for a series of conversations with senior officials like Ruth Walker and Pat Daly, would be quite similar to preparing for interviews with Mary Lo, a program supervisor. Each of these participants was invited to join my thesis venture after discussing my ongoing academic work during casual networking at City Board meetings. Ruth had also pursued a doctorate in education. They all knew me in a professional capacity and trusted me sufficiently to take part in my narrative research. After negotiating entry with them from this collegial position, I surmised that the process of gathering fieldnotes in both situations would mimic each other.

But the similarities did not readily appear. In the feminist research literature and in other qualitative research discussion, I had not discovered any acknowledgement of the divergent effects of a researcher interviewing colleagues like Ruth and Pat on different rungs of the organizational ladder. Case studies I examined, which were undertaken in the researchers' own back yard did not emphasize this occurrence, which I named "ladder chats". I defined "ladder chats" as informal conversations within an institution, which a researcher interprets with respect to the relative organizational positions of the speakers.

But beyond the fact that the participants such as Mary and the two senior officials all agreed to become involved with my thesis as their contribution to educational scholarship and as a kind of endorsement for what I was trying to achieve as an educator, the whole process of interaction during the interviewing, was distinctive in each case. Because of these differences, it became important to try to communicate the intricacy of the "multiple I's" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), which reflect the diverse ways we have of knowing. Despite my intention to foster an equitable and friendly climate, it became clear that this preferred atmosphere was not always present. Occasionally through either language or behaviour, we all maintained and inadvertently expressed the subjectivity (Cole, 1994)

of our relative relationships on the organizational landscape. Participating in a research project about gender issues in a common educational institution, was too close to home to ignore the hierarchy. It was going to be difficult in living the shared story of narrative inquiry, "to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices were heard" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). We had to trust each other to monitor how comfortable we felt asking particular questions or disclosing thoughtful replies. I sensed that there was a kind of respect between Ruth and Pat, and myself as researcher that did not allow intrusive questions or insider answers that would contribute to their narrative at someone's identifiable expense. Our history with each other at times made me feel as if the gathering of effective fieldnotes was being constrained out of courtesy. Would the participant's silence also have to be closely understood?

Much of the agenda for developing the researcher/participant relationship seemed to be set by the person who had more authority in the organization, not more information about doing research. It was exactly as the Chair of the Educational Administration Department of graduate school had said: "A boss can never remove his manager's hat with regard to his employees!" (Musella, 1992). Except for the possible sexism in that remark, it proved to be true.

For example, when I had completed my interviews with Mary Lo, I felt both an excitement and an apprehension in meeting my next participants, Pat Daly and Ruth Walker. Reflecting on my discussions with Mary, I had learned through trial and error that previously, I was too present as the researcher in our conversational exchange, sometimes drowning her ideas with too much preamble to a question. I sometimes used leading questions which imposed my view on a participant whose relative position to mine in the organization made her vulnerable to my influence. I also recalled that with another participant I hadn't set out my expectations regarding our developing relationship clearly enough. Consequently, she withdrew her shared stories later in the year, when I didn't have sufficient time to maintain our developing research relationship. And I knew I had to let the

participants carry more of the interview even if they seemed to be off topic. On reflection, fieldnotes were yielding unexpected meanings from offhand remarks or extended discourse.

I had chosen to conduct the informal interviews with Mary Lo in my office and in my home. Pat Daly and I talked in my office at her request. On the other hand, my conversations with Ruth Walker took place in her office at her request.There was no question in my mind at least, that the milieu would provide parameters to the area of questioning - it seemed that the personal and the professional landscapes would not intersect too easily in this domain. In these relationships, the "researched" was in control with regard to setting the limits on the quality of our interaction. I was always cognizant of their relative positions as senior officials, despite any effort they might have been making to erase that distance. In the end, as researcher, I followed their cues.

My experience with sharing Pat Daly's story as participant was brief and very straightforward - perhaps more formal than all the others since I knew her only by reputation. I had found her background interesting because in positions of responsibility at all levels of the organization, she had always been part of women's groups and strongly supported equity legislation. She had the same severe time constraints as Ruth Walker but was also much further removed from me organizationally. We had met face to face on the occasion of a large Citizenship ceremony when she had agreed to come to my ESL Centre to congratulate the New Canadians on behalf of the Director. She purposely arrived early at my office to meet the staff and to have a chat. By the end of our conversation, she had expressed interest in contributing to my thesis topic as a way of continuing her interest in equity and women's roles at the City Board. She immediately felt comfortable with the gender issues related to our workplace and free enough in her role to give tangible support to other women. In an unexpected move, Pat emphasized her commitment to feminist scholarship by later accepting an additional invitation to join the Conversation Focus Group.

The first conversation with Ruth Walker went well in terms of our getting to know one another a little more. Ruth was willing to openly trace her family stories with regard to values and roles and to connect those with her experiences as a working woman in the field of mathematics and technology. Her expressed connection to feminism, partly through her participation in a feminist journal, encouraged my willingness to probe some of the detail she revealed.

Between the first and second conversations, she sent out another signal regarding her interest in listening to women's voices, regardless of their position in our educational hierarchy. That is, with special attention at an initial meeting with her staff, she noticed that none of us - none of the female administrators - were speaking up unless addressed specifically. All our senior male managers took control by reporting directly to her as our senior official at this meeting. Ruth found this silence deafening! Hardly taking a breath, the next month she invited the same female administrators to share lunch with her - alone. Ruth couldn't shut us up for the whole hour and a half. The floodgates were now open to female managers who shared her deep concern about restructuring and reduction - from a program and people point of view, instead of just the numbers and dollars! We expressed our need to have senior officials let us in on the information - discouraging or not - before all was "fait accompli". Everyone needed to be part of the discourse on change - from the learner to the director. Even if as stakeholders, we didn't have the authority or the funding to make decisions, the opportunity to have our voices heard as part of the solution would validate our efforts to try to improve continuing low morale. This dialogue set a different tone to the rest of our thesis conversations - my trust in her was firmly established. I knew I could depend on both her knowledge and her ability to take action for marginalized groups, whether adult education, immigrants or women. I knew Ruth would respond very thoughtfully to my inquiry.

Strangely enough, after this positive experience between us, I had an unexpectedly difficult research event. On a holiday before our second conversation, I prepared for our interview with great

thoroughness and excitement. I arrived in Ruth's office ten minutes early - the day after landing back in Canada. On entering the room, the secretary looked up, somewhat surprised. "Oh, Sheila, Ruth wasn't sure this was the date to meet you. She's at an important meeting." Wires crossed! A total waste of my time! I wondered later on if this was a show of power or a lack of interest. Two more postponements followed although I learned to phone ahead for confirmation. As a researcher, I suddenly began to feel unsure about Ruth's commitment and my ability to represent her stories persuasively. I didn't understand the contradiction in her desire to be part of my inquiry and this behaviour.

But neither explanation turned out to be the truth. Ruth continued to have conversations with me as time allowed. She had enormous responsibilities to carry out during this time of restraint and change and often was compelled to change plans at the last moment. She expressed her intention to continue our conversations though she sometimes would have to make additional arrangements. She was true to her word and went even further in both her personal and professional interaction with me. She became a primary agent, along with my own male boss, for getting financial recognition for my undertaking two jobs that were restructured, but not reduced, to one. She also went out of her way to include me in the adult education discourse which was pervading the province and shaping our landscape on a daily basis. And most unexpectedly, she showed an extraordinary sensitivity and personal acknowledgement of the loss of my Dad.

It struck me that we are all quite different in wanting to or being able to mix the personal and professional in our lives. Therefore, we have to listen to our participants and to reread our field texts together for reconstructing "plausible" stories. As researchers, we need to be open to "seeing" through a modified lens in order to see the connections. Even though I recognized that Ruth and I were not on the same organizational rung, we could easily be co-collaborators in reconstructing her feminist stories of experience (Fine, 1992). In the end, she also accepted an additional invitation to

join the Focus Group Conversation. Somehow this Conversation Group was gathering its own momentum by giving women a place to listen and to have their voices heard. As a researcher, I was energized by their voluntary commitment and enthusiasm.

5.7   Beth Morris

Our conversation started very naturally in the school parking lot on our way to lunch. Beth had been off sick for a while and returned as administrator, to a busy agenda about next year's staffing. In Adult and Continuing Education, I was occupied with managing new collective agreements for ESL instructors and lead instructors. Our paths hadn't crossed for weeks. As part of our collaboration for my thesis, I had been thinking about whether she had had time to read the field notes and story of our last thesis meeting. Now I had time to ask. We were going to treat ourselves to each other's company for an hour. As we approached my car, Beth began talking.

I like your mauve shirt. (Beth)

Thanks. I like it too. I actually bought it for Bob but he thinks it's too

feminine. (Sheila)

That's a colour for gays, you know. It expresses their feminine side.

(Beth)

No, I didn't. But then how was I supposed to know? (Sheila)

We both laughed and got into my car. (Beth/Sheila)

All of a sudden, my mind was racing. I had been trying to deal with the gaps in my research for weeks. Sexual orientation as part of gender text was an identified area of silence. Was I about to pursue this shared reference to gays as a possible entry into a discussion about sexual preference? Was I going to reveal the ethical dilemma I had been tossing around in my mind since our last meeting? I didn't want to intrude on my treasured relationship at the Board with Beth by asking personal questions that were none of my business; but I also wanted my thesis based in gender text to be as honest as possible. I could sense that Beth and I were going to have a very personal talk.

Questions continued to race through my head. Was a personal disclosure an opportunity for academic veracity? Where are the boundaries when the researcher is an insider of the organization

and the relationships being investigated? How completely should a researcher and participant share their professional knowledge landscape? Would Beth ever give me permission to publicize a meaningful exchange between friends and colleagues in the name of feminist scholarship? Was this a kind of test of the boundaries of my modified participant observation methodology? These questions were all substantial concerns that had to be dealt with in the "Reflections" section of my thesis.

I wasn't sure how to create an acceptable balance. I knew I wouldn't jeopardize our friendship at any cost. For several months, I had been feeling this gap about the implications of gender on the professional knowledge landscape of female managers. During our Focus Group conversations I had briefly brought up the area of sexual orientation along with other equity concerns of race, women and disability. Not one member chose to discuss it. I let the topic disappear.

Some time later, I approached Barb, both in her professional capacity in the Equal Opportunity Department and as a Focus Group member. Was sexual orientation too intrusive a topic to deal with in our Focus Group in order to satisfy an academic need for comprehensiveness? I admitted to her that no one in the group had ever discussed this area with me directly; but everyone in the group seemed to have given me signals, mostly through friendly bantering, that they were aware of each other's sexual preference. Barb immediately recognized the dilemma between the personal and the professional contexts. On a personal level, she knew that I would come to terms with this intimate information as part of my shared knowledge with any group member. On a research level, she questioned the need for intrusion:

> *Feminists don't usually talk about sexual preference with regard to*
>
> *their workplace environment. Who you're sleeping with is not an area*
>
> *up for discussion in that context. The language they use for this area*
>
> *is tossed in with all other equity issues.(Barb)*

I felt relieved. I didn't want to disturb my relationship with Beth, even though at this point I believed she had disclosed her sexual preference several times in our good-humoured encounters about my husband and her special friend. Barb then suggested that in our next Focus Group, I could return to a definition I had brought up previously about the distinction between gender and sex; or possibly return to a discussion of all the equity issues that impinge on female managers' landscapes. If the group got engaged in a discussion about sexual preferences at that time, then I could pursue it. If not, I should probably drop the topic. I respected Barb's advice since she had known the Focus Group participants longer.

The next day, I went to the graduate students' office to meet a narrative research colleague who was familiar with my work and whose opinion I respected. We talked at length about the ethical dilemma I was trying to resolve. Was it personal or was it professional? Friendship, work and research landscapes were weaving braids of knowledge that intersected at many points. When I mentioned that I was somewhat disturbed about my own discomfort in revisiting the topic of sexual orientation with the Focus Group, she immediately connected with that experience. "I've been working with a black teacher as a participant for months in her classroom. So far, I've never touched the issue of race!" (personal communication) We accepted intellectually that both these issues were part of their personal and professional identities as teachers and managers. The silence we were experiencing , both on the part of the participants and as researchers, was an area that needed further exploration in feminist research for its significance. Who was actively being silent and why? Whose rights to privileged knowledge may we, as researchers, be intruding on? Do the qualities of "truthfulness" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and "authenticity"(Tannen, 1988) lose their relevance and meaningfulness in a thesis that allows the silence to continue? Both my colleague and I decided that the silence experienced or imposed by researchers could be a forum for narrativists to discuss

once again. The barriers to disclosure in terms of equity issues was a rich area for inquiry. Examining the limits of the researcher's role required a fluid description.

As Beth and I rode to the restaurant, I immediately acknowledged that our talking about gays seemed to compel me to ask about her willingness to discuss sexual preference with regard to the conversation topics we had dealt with in our Focus Group. I was prepared for a rejection of disclosure. I felt it was nobody else's business. But Beth began approaching disclosure on two levels - personal disclosure between friends and professional disclosure for academic and public knowledge.

Unexpectedly, I was given carte blanche in terms of our personal relationship - permission to know such private details of her sexuality. I felt overwhelmed and honoured by the sense of trust and safety Beth implied. In terms of our research relationship, I would have to wait to collaborate on this story and its co-construction for a description of our emerging professional knowledge landscape.

In examining her work as an administrator, Beth conveyed that her sexual preference did not in fact impinge on her daily routine. It just never came up. In fact, she admitted that she never once thought about sexual orientation in our Focus Group discussions, even though it was mentioned twice and we had tried to define the distinction between gender and sex at the last meeting. However, on second thought, she remembered two occasions in previous workplaces, when she experienced some form of anxiety and possibly fear in dealing with her own sexuality in the school environment. One experience dealt with an overly zealous homophobic parent with a child in her school; she definitely did not want the City Board to pass legislation which would accommodate more than one lifestyle. With good advice from a colleague, Beth was advised against disclosure. It simply wasn't necessary. The other difficulty occurred when a female student self-disclosed a crush on her. It was not an issue of power and authority over a student but more a question of responsibility in terms of

the best guidance to deal with a vulnerable confession. In her own maturity, Beth suggested that the student discuss her feelings with an appropriate counsellor. She had accorded the student the same respect she would have wanted for herself in the same situation.

Although Beth surmised that the silence on sexual preference in the Conversation Focus Group could be a reflection of suppressed feelings in the workplace context, she agreed with Barb that sexual orientation is not a daily issue reflected in her relationships or activities at the Board. It's exactly the same with heterosexual relationships. At times, it can command our attention; mostly our attention is distracted by more relevant matters in the working environment.

Our conversation moved easily to other topics, mixed with our concern that we had shared a very garlicky bruschetta pizza with lots of goat cheese. "What am I going to do to cover this smelly garlic breath?" I quipped. "Have a beer. That'll take care of it!" she replied.

5.8   Beth Morris: reflections

(a)   participant/researcher relationship

"Sexual orientations are not a private matter that impacts only personal sexual practices, but are dimensions of subjectivity that infuse all human experience, including higher cognitive functions" (Honeychurch, 1996, p. 345). The silence experienced in the Conversation Focus Group when sexual preference in the workplace was brought up in the context of other equity issues compelled me to reflect on the rationale for this behaviour. I was aware that the City Board like all workplace settings, strongly influences levels of "outness" on the job (Garnets & Kimmel, 1991; Morgan& Brown, 1991); that is, the environment and geographic location act as significant determinants of self-disclosure, regardless of personal comfort with lesbian identity (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). The fact that the City Board has legislated strong equity policies and is situated in a large urban area, created the possibility of more tolerant attitudes as well as actual opportunities for supportive environments.

However, like many lesbians regardless of environment, Beth implies that she chooses to remain closeted at work (Gonsiorek, 1993) - unless there's a specific reason not to. Her identity management in her job as administrator does not seem to constantly occupy her mind in terms of self-disclosure of sexual orientation (cf. Gonsiorek, 1993). Her behaviour suggests that she understands that it is a consideration; she knows that sexual orientation draws upon both internal career development barriers (self-esteem) and those barriers that exist in the workplace (discrimination and harassment) (Fassinger, 1995). For Beth, most of the time, those barriers are not acute.

But Beth also wonders why no one in the Conversation Focus Group responded to my mentioning the subject of sexual preference among the other equity issues. We begin to talk about the term "silence" within a gender context. We discuss that with this emphasis, it can refer to a

situation in which people who perceive themselves as less powerful (i.e. women and minorities) than the dominant culture, tend not to participate in the public discourse (Gold, 1994). Beth flinches. She doesn't feel particularly powerless in the workplace, not able to enter this discourse; nor is she experiencing a silence of resistance - that is, deciding not to participate. A little later, she begins to consider the silence of denial - not realizing the existence of another discourse (Gold) In the end, Beth acknowledges that some friends have labelled her "repressed"; but she doesn't sense that as the rationale for her silence on sexual preference within the Conversation Focus Group. She maintains that it just doesn't seem relevant to her ongoing work as administrator. She doesn't think others see it as connected to her day to day work either.

Beth's candid remarks as a participant forced me to reexamine my assumptions as a feminist researcher. I accepted that all theories and methods of research presuppose a particular world view. But where was an opening for my participants' preferences? All theories and research methods determine the ways in which individuals experience and subsequently privilege particular knowledge and approaches over others. It then follows that the participants, the research methods, and the results of research inquiry are considered, interpreted and legitimized through selectively authorized epistemologies, methodologies and texts. With particular reference to sexuality, my initial assumptions did not offer a balanced view of the social world, thereby reinforcing the universality of my own heterosexual experience as researcher. Such dominant prejudices could thereby be mistaken for sexual knowledge as it relates to the workplace. Perhaps by relating Beth's account, this research may help to maintain the reality that research participants are embodied individuals with specific differing orientations.

It is in this context that we can see the parallel between the endeavours of queered research and feminist claims; not only for embodied objectivity, but for a community of inquirers who are "answerable for what we learn how to see" (Harraway, 1988, p. 53). As such, queer inquiry and

narrative inquiry from a feminist perspective are not value - free. Objectivity is about embodied beliefs and values that situate knowledge in cultural contexts such as the workplace, with recognized structures, and power relations (Honeychurch, 1996). In sharing Beth's experience, the relationship of her knowledge to truth is recognized. Narrative inquiry affords an opportunity to contribute to such inclusionary knowledge. In addition, it can encourage the affirmation of diverse identities and the relevant generation of knowledge. Telling and reconstructing stories offered the possibility of empowerment for my participants.

A related ethical dilemma that disturbed me as researcher was the lack of control over the response of the reader. Outside of the researcher, the findings of any research are meaningless without the reader's dialogical position. Reader subjectivities ultimately determine the construction of meaning and attribute value to any research. I was worried about whether I had sufficiently discussed the broad implications of consent and the role of the reader with Beth - especially now that she had revealed a very private story. I had intended to pursue this area of conflict in the public domain regarding my thesis research with several participants. But when Beth broke the silence with her disclosure, specific ethical dilemmas surfaced and needed to be addressed immediately.

(b)   text representation

Even though we had shared and co-constructed her story, it became obvious that "when the dynamic text appear[ed] in print, it cease[ed] to become dynamic and bec[a]me frozen...in many cases, in frozen texts, the dominant voice is that of the interpreter."(Thomas, 1992, p. 10). After analyzing my conversation with Beth, the frozen text that I produced centred around our relationship - the intense honesty and trust shared by colleagues at the intersection of the personal and professional. It exposed a difference in our assumptions about the relevance of sexual orientation to the work narrative of an administrator. I worried about authorship - particularly the authority to write about a colleague who belonged to a group to which I was not a member. Although I chose to only use her active voice at the beginning of her account, Beth expressed comfort in my overcoming possible dilemmas of representation. In our re-construction, several items in her story were deleted or expanded in order to avoid misrepresentation. Yet I still felt the burden of recognizing the act of writing as intentional, a demanding moral responsibility. I recalled the words "We can choose to write so that the voice of those we write about is respected, strong and true."(Richardson, 1990, p. 38) but I could not relinquish the responsibility of authorship (Geertz, 1988). Who would this authorship impact on?

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) discuss a newly created collaborative story as "a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participant...." (p. 12). I became aware of my own unspoken complicity in the threads of homophobia that continued to shape Beth's life. Was having her tell this story a small way of transforming us with respect to oppression at the City Board? I could palpably feel how accountable a researcher needs to be.

As researchers, we need to move beyond paternalistic notions of "giving" voice, towards a kind of unity with those who share their stories in the hope of creating individual and societal change. When I thought about the impact on the reader, Beth's story would be open to multiple

interpretations from various positions. For example, another lesbian administrator might see it as part of a collective story (Richardson, 1990). It might in fact contribute to her feeling less alone in her experience. But most of the readers would not be positioned that way. They would be afforded the opportunity to "raise questions about their practices, their ways of knowing....Readers need to be prepared to see the possible meanings there are in the story and, through this process, see other possibilities for telling their own stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, pp. 227-288). In this way, we could strengthen the possibilities for individual and collective restorying.

Richardson (1990) expresses a practical-ethical issue in deciding how we can use our skills: "As qualitative researchers, we can more easily write as situated, positioned authors, giving up, if we choose, our *authority* over the people we study, but not the responsibility of *authorship* over our texts" (pp. 27-28). This comment created more comfort with our relative positions as author and participant. At times, Beth had mentioned the therapeutic effect of sharing her ideas with me as a receptive audience. Scheurich (as cited in Donmoyer, 1995) speaks to the confirmation participants feel when disclosing their stories, an accomplishment which is potentially empowering in itself. Lenskyj (1991) suggests that people who hold advantaged positions can often more readily challenge the homophobia that silences and immobilizes many lesbian and gay people. Perhaps we were engaging in a mutually fair exchange as part of our professional knowledge landscape.

5.9   Focus Group Conversation 1

A week or so earlier my wife had urged me to "exchange stories"

with the children I was interviewing at the hospital; Dr. Ludwig had

agreed: "Why don't you chuck the word "interview", call yourself a

friend, call your exchanges "conversations"! (Coles, 1989, p. 32)

We had known each other professionally for several years- as principal, senior official, equity advisor or administrator. Half of us also enjoyed a personal relationship outside the workplace. This core Conversation Focus Group - Sybil, Barb, Judy and Lynne - were prepared to share stories of everyday practice as female managers at the City Board. With full consensus after our first get-together, I asked two other female senior officials, Pat and Ruth, to join our dialogue. Previously I had been working with research participants on an individual basis; now I was intrigued with the possibility of creating a conversation group, with the same explicit focus on gender text. From a feminist perspective, I wanted to understand how they saw the intersection of their personal and professional lives on the organizational landscape. As a context for our discussion, they were to keep in mind the response of the Board culture to their particular sexual identity; they were also to consider how that sexual identity was experienced, acknowledged, and owned by them as individuals (Pinar, et al.,1995).

Seemingly content with this modest effort to alleviate professional isolation (Reinharz, 1992), our Conversation Focus Group gathered around the warm brown antique table in Lynne's office at the end of the workday. Colourful pictures representing a variety of Lynne's experiences as principal and with her family, dotted the walls and table tops .While enjoying a light meal in the comfort of colleagues, Barb zeroed in on their most pressing concern:

Well, I don't believe a budget has to be some kind of ,you know,

mysterious process. In fact, I think it should probably be a very clear

process. The fact that it isn't, always makes me wonder because it

raises issues of power and control....I often think that maybe [if you

had] access to those mysteries you might find out if you were lined up

in the men's washroom, you know, side by side, with the comptroller.

There may be ways that you can find that stuff out; but it may be very

difficult for women to access. (Barb)

From the very beginning of our conversation, Barb framed the group's narrative with

metaphors that drew on sexual imagery and images of power. They portrayed hierarchies currently

controlled by men in charge of the money excluding women who were desperately trying to access

this knowledge in an acceptable manner. Grumet (1988) has argued that the asymmetry of child

rearing practices is intimately related to these different epistemologies. She as well as Kantner and

Millman (1975) point out that the curriculum or practice which large organizations often implement

reflects a masculine epistemology by emphasizing control, denying relationships and stressing

differentiation. To these female managers, the objectivist metaphor of "knowledge is power" rings

true.

Lynne jumps in with her twist on a similar story revealing that how the principals keep their

books hasn't changed particularly. She has been a principal for ten years with almost fifteen years

as an administrator. She is clear that the thing she knows least about is money. She knows the forms;

she knows where to look; she knows how to look. But she admits she doesn't pay a lot of attention

to it. She knows who the "money principals" are - people who are absolutely fascinated by it, and

can tell you anything and everything about the Board and school money. She throws out a rhetorical

question to the group:

So why should I know? Because I trust them, I will call them. And I

can tell you, when I started out, I went to the two [male] principals

that in my view [were seen] as coming up through the ranks and had

always been known as the money people in terms of school....They

each explained a different system they used and assured me that it

was the best. (Lynne)

Access to knowledge about budget maintenance to meet expressed school needs creates a formidable barrier to new female managers trying to take proper governance over their own budgets. But they express anger that in neither of the Principals' Courses at the Ministry [of Education and Training] or in Staff Development seminars was there ever anything said to them about money. Nobody seems to tell them about operations in the field.

The group members began to allude to how some of their familial experiences might have set the stage for their continuing struggle as women within the system. Barb recalls how she sees this secondary position of women repeated from the time she was a child. She feels she wasn't raised to be a manager. Her father was boss and her brother always had more privileges and free time than his three sisters. He was the favourite one, always called the "heir". In contrast, the girls waited on their father hand and foot. Feudal metaphors liberally pepper Barb's conversation. In a natural way, they were becoming part of the shared understanding of her family dynamics. She jokingly reminds herself that she used to manage the strawberry picking gang on their farm when she was twelve years old - an initial management experience, she supposes. But it was clear that she was raised to be a good daughter and to follow her parents' instructions. She wasn't raised to be an independent thinker.

But a split occurred in her training to be very conventional and to follow authority. She was taught that white people, the Canadians of British origin, were the norm and other people were kind of eccentric. The worst thing her family cautioned her about was marrying a Catholic. Barb tells this life history with tongue in cheek when she discloses another sequence. Apparently, it wasn't until

after she turned thirty that she found out that her Grandfather had not only been American," which was really bad", but also a Catholic. Barb doesn't think that those values have anything to do with the person she turned out to be.

The denial of connection between their families of origin and their current identities was a thread binding many of the group's narratives. Barb continued to describe a similar oppressive atmosphere from a later, more privileged context. She felt that her family was very schizophrenic. On the one hand, they were into kind of humiliating you and making you feel inferior. She remembers in Grade 8, when she was Head Girl and had to give a little speech in the auditorium. The only thing her father, a doctor, said afterwards was that it was too bad she had to wear glasses in order to give a speech.

> *That's the only thing he said. I mean, he was a real prick, you know.*
> *And my mother was a lot like that too....You were supposed to*
> *perform and do well and you were never praised....But they were*
> *supportive of a lot but they were sexist too...You were made to feel it*
> *would have been a happier household if we'd been boys rather than*
> *girls. I remember one comment my Father made was that he was*
> *surrounded by split-tails...he was the begetter of wenches....* (Barb)

The sexual and animal imagery were both vivid and insulting to his daughters. As an adult, Barb returns the disrespect in kind by name - calling. The euphemistic synecdoche used to coarsely call her father a body part somehow seems appropriate to us as listeners - a kind of joint female retaliation against an insensitive father. Paradoxically, Barb feels that because she grew up initially in a small community and then in a large city, her family did see itself as being quite liberal and progressive, ahead of its time. Yet there was this constant tension with the very typical gender role-

playing. Her mother waited on her father night and day. He never had to boil water for a cup of tea, never took the garbage out and never mowed the lawn. He had this harem around him.

Unconsciously at first, by trying to alter this demeaning landscape, Barb began supporting feminist ideas from Grade 7 or 8 through university. It explained her mother's difficult life with an unfaithful husband; it explained a lot of contradictions (Beattie, 1997). In fact, as an acknowledged "brainer" by other kids, Barb began to receive reinforcement from teachers who told her that she could do a lot of things. With her family not encouraging her independence or her ability to make decisions, she expresses surprise that she turned out as well as she has.

Lynne ,on the other hand, talks about being an only child. In her family, particularly through her adolescent years, she became aware of the strong women - especially her Grandmother on her mother's side, who played a strong role in the community and a grandfather who was been elected treasurer of the school board. But it was her grandmother in fact, who kept the books for him and did all the negotiations. "She ran the damn thing" (Lynne). Lynne also recalls strong women on her father's side and the kind of storytelling [about adventures] that had an impact on her and where she is today. She feels she inherited the gregariousness of men and women on both sides of the family. In a different way than Barb, Lynne sees her family as people who worked to empower the community and who shared all kinds of stories. She looks back now, in her own work and sees how her background helps in terms of setting boundaries, making decisions and empowering people.

However, Judy counterpoints this reassuring family story with her personal recall. She remembers her family's lack of support of her as a daughter and the values she has come to acknowledge. She feels that her parents wanted their children to achieve higher than they did - in fact she really never knew what her father thought. But she is clear that to the present day, her mother is never satisfied with anything - nothing is good enough.

I spent ten thousand dollars renovating my living room, new floors,

new drapes and new everything. And it was beautiful, still beautiful.

She came in and looked at it and she didn't say a word....She looked

out the dining-room window and said, "There's a hole in that eaves

trough." So I didn't learn a lot about self-esteem at home. That's

another reason I said I don't know how much my values have to do

[with my family of origin]. (Judy)

This repeated denial of connection with family values does not seem to leave room for the fact that these negative experiences might have sensitized them to feminist issues. They all were now directing energy towards equity in practice and gaining self-confidence beyond the conventional sex-role stereotyping. By participating in this conversation, they were acknowledging their multiple realities and landscapes which they knew as women; they were trying to understand how they could construct and reconstruct their worlds as part of the prevailing gender system.

The Conversation Focus Group moved on to talk about two different policies of the Board - restructuring and the sexual harassment policies. I asked them to respond to the use of a "funnel" metaphor (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) which envisions the movement of organizational policy, from the trustees, down to the departments, into the schools, and into the classroom. I was interested in where they placed themselves as managers in the conduit. They responded twofold: one, in response to the partial inadequacy of the metaphor for them as practitioners; and secondly, with a historical description of implementing the sexual harassment policy (City Board of Education, 1989).

The staff doesn't know anything about the upper administration of the

Board - it's like they were in the African Congo or something. (Judy)

Let's start with restructuring. In essence we were told to restructure,

but it took a number of us...two years...to even get my head around

what the hell was meant by it. (Lynne)

So your question about the conduit...[as a principal], you're sort of

in the middle. Out there are all these forces, and that's a very clean

model, the funnel. It's more like a snowstorm, I think, a few flakes

over here from the Ministry [of Education and Training], and then

there's the public and the newspapers, and there's the trustees, and

there's the one superintendent and another superintendent, and they

might have different views about things...all these influences are

thrown at you and then you decide what it means. (Judy)

I agree with Judy. I think the funnel is far too simple. If you want

another one, take five hundred funnels and have them all coming

through the keyhole here. (Lynne)

In focussing on the sexual harassment policy, in particular, an excitement and feeling of ownership emerged. Judy had a very strong connection with its development which began through a series of complaints from the non-teaching area and matrons - "declared female would-be caretakers"(Judy) - about the way they were being treated by their male bosses. The policy was written by a sub-committee, passed through the necessary legal hoops and presented to the Board. A male trustee screamed and yelled about his scepticism as a lawyer about this kind of legislation while a female trustee kept confusing the difference between a sexual harassment policy and an attitude which supported complaints about female employees serving coffee. They needed some kind of process and Barb, to her credit, was to take over this difficult situation.

Barb wryly remarks: "That is no understatement."

Lynne explains that it took ten years of largely the likes of the people around this conversation table and a few other female staff, to talk about a clear implementation process and to get the policy enacted.

> *We had a policy [now], but a policy isn't worth a damn unless you*
>
> *have a practice. And so to get the policy translated into a practice*
>
> *that could be outlined on paper and then to get people to say "This*
>
> *is for real, Gang" - in fact, there wasn't anything inclusive or*
>
> *collaborative or complicated. A group of [senior] people finally came*
>
> *to their senses and then said to the whole crowd, "Thou shalt!"*
>
> (Lynne)

This conception of policy being mandated to modify behaviour first and attitudes second, mirrored the way the landscape was shaped and expressed previously by the senior official, Ruth Walker. These women believe that in the 1990's, sexual harassment and discrimination are clearly defined in the Board. Those behaviours are generally known to be unacceptable at any kind of level. "You don't joke about it, you don't talk about it where anyone else can hear you, you think about it in your own bathroom." (Lynne) There is a sense that the Board recognized the importance and commitment of these female employees to having and implementing these policies. Eventually it responded to their advocacy and finally put teeth into policy that would affect the people who initiated relevant complaints.

However, currently, a major concern of the Conversation Focus Group lies in the leadership vacuum they see in the future. There is a recognition that the Board hasn't been hiring outside for a number of years. Although each of them can point to several people who would be exemplary in positions of responsibility, the young teachers seem to be resisting promotion.

I don't really know, but my hunch is that the younger ones have

actually figured out the quality of life picture. They seem to be

working out the balance of life. What kind of life do I want? Am I

prepared to start new teams and do such and such? They're saying

I have other choices to make. I cannot make that choice [of

leadership] because I don't have the time. (Lynne)

Judy resists this explanation. She remarks that she's had several people tell her that she's

made tremendous sacrifices to get where she is [as a principal]. Without hesitation, she refutes that

statement; she's actually quite happy. But she is concerned about leaving the field. She sees the

future as "tough and lean and mean and all that crap." She recognizes that employment equity and

equal opportunity and "collaborative this" and "consultative that", are going out because the bottom

line is now budget. The economy now blankets both political and administrative action. Part of the

struggle is that as principals, they're doing it against all odds. Nobody at the top of the organization

seems to value the inclusive relationship approach to doing anything anymore. They think you're a

flashback from a drug-crazed mind." (Lynne) She sees that women are looking after aging parents

and kids as well as doing their job at the same time. She worries that young women may begin to

think that it's no longer necessary to fight for their rights because they interpret the landscape as

equitable, safe and androgynous. They have benefitted from this group's advocacy.

But to desert the political struggle is not a good idea, even though it's

extremely tempting to do it. People already feel so burdened. We'll

rue the day fighting [Premier] Mike Harris if we're all busy....There

is some notion of concern for the future, for when our backs are gone.

What is the effect on leadership? What will be the new role? If we

have any idea of how the new concept of leadership will emerge, then

how can we shape it to the advantage of women yet to come? (Lynne)

The emotion behind the warlike imagery spills over into the desire to fight the isolation of leadership positions and the need to maintain community (Pagano, 1990; Miller, 1984):

But I still think one of the things we have to do is that we need to tell

each other [about incidents and other experiences], seek advice, and

seek support. You see, sooner or later, someone in the street has to

say "The emperor has no clothes!"....Unfortunately the system closes

ranks at certain levels. Ultimately it's not us that can change that.

But at least we'll go to sleep knowing that we [released] the relevant

information [to future women in positions of responsibility]....We feel

a sense of immobility like we can't change this. But because we've

been in the war zone for a long time, maybe we can show support for

our community; maybe we can gain something uplifting about being

together. (Judy)

Slowly a small glimmer of hope begins to appear on their horizon. Lynne begins to talk about some things that bring women together - formal organizations like OWL and the Status of Women Committee - small numbers of women together that give them a safe secure environment. She recalls how they talk a lot about problems that they don't feel they can really talk about in their workplaces because they don't want to look weak or ignorant as principals and superintendents (Chase, 1995). Now she senses a need to have a series of smaller gatherings - whether it's networking or Focus Groups. Out of that they may get not only help as individuals and as managers but she thinks they might fulfil a collective purpose. If nothing else, they'd have a sense of synergy and they would create at least another forum for informal knowing.

Judy starts to express her concern about the identity of principals and other kinds of leaders in the future of education. She feels there's another whole shift about the power question. She asks the rhetorical questions: What is leadership? How is one a leader? Judy thinks they are all in the midst of another huge change in terms of leadership and how they actually think of that happening.

> *With the stroke of a pen, Snobelen [the Minister of Education and*
>
> *Training] has, and is about to change the hierarchy of education in*
>
> *this province. No more department heads, no more assistant*
>
> *department heads and right there, that wipes out a whole formal*
>
> *network of expressing leadership if we want to make a difference.*
>
> *And women consistently want to make a difference. .. But women are*
>
> *not applying for positions of responsibility and in fact, they're smart,*
>
> *because in another five years, they're not going to be there anyway.*
>
> *So how, as women, will we express our competence and our*
>
> *leadership to ourselves, to each other and to the system to make a*
>
> *difference?* (Judy)

Lynne joins in the conversation by revealing her feelings about participating in the Conversation Focus Group. She found that the last time we met at the table - and she was finding the same this evening - that it was very energizing. It reminded her that she wasn't crazy; or if she was, she wasn't alone in her craziness. She felt that all she had recently been thinking about, was being validated by her colleagues. During this process of narrative inquiry, Lynne truly senses her voice within her relationship with other female managers. For her, "the central event is the act of affirming or entering into someone's thinking or perceiving (Elbow, 1986, p. 289). She deeply expresses MacIntyre's remark (1981) that relationships are joined by "the narrative unities of our lives" (p. 281).

The Focus Conversation Group had turned its attention to the very core of the problem it was wrestling with - their identity being challenged by enormous changes in the landscape. How would female managers fit into an educational system as competent leaders if the rules of the game were constantly changing without them as significant stakeholders in mind? How could they preserve the cherished values of connection and community against an organizational culture immersed in budgets, bottom lines and bureaucracy?

Pat points out that teachers are graduating who have earned respect for a particular learner-centred and inclusive orientation to teaching; but what they have earned the respect for is gradually no longer being valued. Consequently the teachers are now having a crisis of confidence. They have no incentive to aspire to positions of responsibility. They will ultimately choose to follow a different road. Pat asks whether that goes back to questions about whose knowledge is valued and what knowledge was valued before?

It is within this atmosphere of bewilderment, faith, anger and sadness that we leave these female managers as they continue to voice their "ambiguous empowerment" (Chase, 1995), their conflicting experiences of control and compliance on the organizational landscape.

5.10   Focus Group Conversation 1: reflections

(a)   participant/researcher relationship

With the participants' permission, I eventually chose to carry out the participant observation

aspect of this inquiry as part of my autobiographical thesis journey; that is, through the naturally

evolving interaction I experienced with the manager-participants in my role as administrator in Adult

and Continuing Education. However, as researcher, I reacted immediately to an unanticipated

observation: in the context of our Conversation Focus Group, the managers were telling stories about

work experiences which mimicked various functions of narrative discourse in the workplace. Their

dialogue in both circumstances, was heavily laden with images of power, control, obedience,

knowledge, sex and conflict. From a feminist perspective, I saw a direct relationship between their

work narratives and Witten's observation (1993) that narrative discourse can fulfil several different

purposes in the development of obedience in the workplace. She explains that in the first instance,

narrative discourse can make "truth claims" about suitable behaviour and values that cannot be

proven. "Truth claims" are tacit arguments contained within speech acts that the propositions that

are spoken are true and morally correct (Habermas, 1979). Secondly, narrative discourse can also

impart values affecting problem definition. Colleagues sometimes become so familiar with

workplace jargon, that the intended meaning or expressed value needing understanding gets

camouflaged. Thirdly, it can also illustrate the rule of "anticipated reactions" (Witten, 1993, p. 112)

which circumvents tests of the status quo. That is, employees come to expect a certain response.

Therefore, they no longer try to change perceived negative aspects of their institutional environment.

In meeting with this Conversation Group, "truth claims" that were shared about the

workplace sometimes prevented me and even other participants from challenging their assertions.

For example, Judy's storytelling, expressed below, seemed to have such a strong cognitive and

psychological effect on us, that we were easily drawn into her vignette by its plausibility (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990):

> *When Lynne was talking about how her family and her personal [situation] impinges on her professional [life], I was thinking about when I was a single parent raising my daughter, and how that had an effect on my career in several ways. For instance, it delayed my getting into activities that would lead to promotions....The other thing that really affected me was the way I was treated. I remember going into the principal's office and saying, "My daughter's got the chicken pox", or I phoned him and said "My daughter's got the chicken pox so I'll be away". And he said, "Well, we'll see you tomorrow". And that showed a complete lack of knowledge or interest or sympathy or anything. I had to drive my daughter 75 miles to my mother's house so that she could mind her for a week while she had her chicken pox and then drive home. And there she was without her mother when she had the chicken pox. So as an administrator, when people come to me and say that their mother's sick - like it's not so much children now, my teachers all have sick parents or dying parents - so I'm very sympathetic to them. I don't say, "Well, so your mother's dying; well, I'll see you tomorrow". You know, I give them lots of sympathy and that has really affected me. So that's my own family history and raising a daughter by myself, that has affected how I treat people.*
> (Judy)

We are willing to believe her "truth claim" that during critical situations, the culture of a large educational institution can lack humanity. Certain linguistic features of her story compel our attention. She uses active voice and present tense for a dialogue in the past which help to create intensity and immediacy. By retelling the concrete details of her experience with the male principal parallel to her current behaviour as principal, the veracity of another episode of her evolving plot is disclosed (McLaughlin, 1984). In this story, by executing a "truth claim" with respect to his job, a male principal, shows little understanding about the relationship between work and personal obligations as a single parent. He just follows the rules. We nod our heads in agreement when Judy explains how she turned this principal's literal expression of authority into a positive personal value as manager. Her confidence and empathy in the future as principal were enhanced; she had been able to reject the principal's sacred story (Crites, 1971) that attendance in the workplace must adhere to Standard Procedures with no exceptions. Judy's convincing secret story for the Conversation Focus Group can be interpreted as portraying a female manager's way of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986); it reveals an epistemology which is committed to caring (Gilligan, 1982) through the sympathetic administration of bureaucratic directives In a masculine paradigm, this account may be interpreted as a cover story of overt disobedience in the workplace. Over time and reflection, these multiple interpretations of the text were accepted by the participants. The substantive link between Judy's experience and our construction of meaning was carefully negotiated.

The language of these work narratives suggests that "the special kinds of vocabulary in which narratives tend to be told - the names ideas are given- impart values in subtle ways" (Witten, 1993). This may also include metaphors and jargon (Edelman, 1971) and the special written format of documents which support the narrative being told. These combine to become abbreviated ways for people in positions of responsibility to communicate ideas for consideration and implementation. Once everyone accepts the familiar language, it is hard to uncover the assumptions from which the

language evolved. Therefore, the values shared through stories develop into a "group licensed way of seeing" (Kuhn, 1970), without understanding its roots. We listened as Lynne and Barb presented their side of the budget game at the City Board, couched in metaphors, mystery and unwritten expectations:

> *Historically, I don't think our Board was really run by directors...I*
>
> *mean, to be a Director of Education, you didn't have to be an*
>
> *intellectual guru. You had to be supreme at understanding the*
>
> *budget....You see, my problem is that I don't think that this Board has*
>
> *ever been run very well from a book-keeping standpoint. I think its*
>
> *book-keeping is absolutely horrendous...And now we have snake oil*
>
> *in amongst real lousy procedural things- so it's just making it slippier*
>
> *and slippier. Because in the first place it has never been very clear.*
>
> *But the difference is that you are never being told that [the book-*
>
> *keeping dilemma] is over control and that it's all organized....You get*
>
> *these pretty reports that just look like the state of the art financial*
>
> *statements and so on. And when you get down to them with a fine*
>
> *tooth comb, they are so riddled with flaws. It's unbelievable! And the*
>
> *real difficulty here is that knowledge and control have gone over to*
>
> *the snake oil salesperson.* (Lynne)

Barb agrees that there hasn't been an open Board budget process. It has been mystified with a great deal of power centralized away from the schools themselves. She talks about the shift of authority from the Director's to the Comptroller's office.

> *...the bad book-keeping and the mystification is now rampant. But*
>
> *we're given the illusion [that everything is well-organized]...it has*

become like smoke and mirrors...the problem emerges that cannot be

concealed so we look for another culprit. You better believe it. I

know. I've been hauled to the carpet to explain and give my analysis.

And I make darn sure I do an analysis and present something [in

their terms]...you know, there's never an apology....It's incredible

that a man like that has so much power at this Board that people all

over the place are cringing. (Barb)

In terms of the budget, these stories create a frame (Hackett, 1984). The listener hears that certain details of the budget are shared with specifically identified people in authority; other details are omitted from these managers that could offer them a possible way of changing or challenging the normative Board procedures. In this way, the frame or lens through which they are compelled to view the budget, acts as obstructions to the way Barb and her colleagues interpret their situation.

These managers think that researchers need to consider whether some of the divergence in the way men and women handle and distribute information is based on biological differences or not. Sybil believes that women are socialized differently than men; and therefore, to some extent the Conversation Focus Group can generalize a bit about it, the styles that men and women will use, their reflexes, unconscious reactions - a tendency more of some kind rather than another. Judy pipes in with her "truth claim" - her rendition of why female managers tend to behave differently than male colleagues. She doesn't think it's biological. She believes women are raised to think about other people and men are raised to think about themselves. She and Lynne support a kind of feminist perspective which assumes that if you live in a society where you are undervalued, you tend to develop certain responses that are survival; and one of those is desire to please.

And that's one of the biggest drawbacks, having that socialization -

if you are a woman administrator, if you're a woman manager or

woman administrator - that desire to please. And no matter how

many stand up and tell you, "Don't take the job to be loved; don't

take the job to satisfy" and all of the rest of it, that nevertheless still

continues to be probably one of the strong motivators. Well, I know

that is a problem. I try to make decisions on their merits, not on

whether I'll please people or not. But I'm always disappointed if

somebody is unhappy and I know there's nothing much I can do

about it.

If you watch people, if you listen to the men that I have worked with.

When I walk into their office, they say to me, "What is it that you

want?". When someone walks into my office when I'm in the same

place, I say to them, "And what can I do for you?" (Judy)

It appears that such narratives become "embodiments of anticipated reactions" (Witten, 1993, p. 112), helping to preserve a culture of compliance at the Board. In feeling powerless as a group to change the status quo, these women appreciate that they are in conflict with the current system of values but feel unable to successfully confront the Board on a continuing basis. Although their reasoning may or may not be accurate, they experience an inability to envision a successful protest. In reality, they may be institutionalizing limitations on their behaviour that they themselves have imposed. In their second narrative, we get a chance to see a more complete and complex vision of how they see themselves: as managers in the middle of the forum for rapidly changing adult education; and in their advocacy role in the next few years at the Board.

(b)   text representation

As these managers examined their changing landscape in this first series of Focus Group Conversations, they easily talked metaphorically. Their picturesque narratives revealed how they saw the shaping of their relationships and their milieu from a particular perspective. In fact, they were beginning to see how the landscape was also shaping them. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) emphasize that we cannot understand metaphors or have them suitably represented, apart from a person's experience. Metaphors are described as coherent and systematic, reflecting the most fundamental concepts and values in our culture. In a comparable way, Judy's and Lynne's stories express their concern metaphorically that their female colleagues, currently in leadership positions, may not fully and adequately communicate the true meaning of their earlier experiences. A careful reading of text reveals their methodical use of symbolic and literal language."We've been in the war zone for a long time" (Judy); "They think you're a flash-back from a drug-crazed mind" (Lynne). Unconsciously, through metaphor, the group tries to communicate previously unshared experiences with upcoming female managers.

In trying to respond to this type of communication of their concerns as administrators, I adapted the direction of my inquiry. I tried to get the participants to elaborate their own conceptual understanding of the professional knowledge landscape and its accompanying metaphors. I inquired whether they as practitioners, saw a good fit between the language we use, as researchers, for theory, and their practice within their own milieu. In particular, the use of the "funnel" and "conduit" in learning organizational literature (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) was discussed. As part of their narrative, they replied that these particular metaphors seemed to require enhancement - perhaps needing the suggestion of a wider opening at the top of the funnel. They thought that this might more adequately represent the barrage of information which needs to be funnelled down through an educational organization, as it affects the relationships on the landscape.

In addition, they noted that the literal definition of a funnel did not seem to allow the metaphor to include the political repercussions and public reactions which sometimes turn back and alter policy. One manager remembered an occasion, hearing deputations to the trustees at the City Board. They were personally delivered by adult ESL learners, one after the other, for five hours. The message clearly protested the closing of certain language classes for immigrants. Their compelling stories of need and commitment to learning English for survival in Canadian society postponed the implementation of policy. The learners' sense of lack of control or opportunity to be part of the decision-making was diminished by these actions.

Consequently, the managers felt that this important interaction would be difficult to apply to the imagery of the funnel. However, in rethinking this analysis, they recognized that this extended practical meaning for them probably went further than the original intention of researchers who use this metaphor. Through discussion, it became apparent that more than one metaphor could reflect the reality of policy implementation at different stages. Finally, the conversation group agreed that shifting metaphors were needed to appropriately portray the different aspects of their conceptual system of communication and relationships at the City Board.

5.11   Focus Group Conversation 2

As we enter this second dialogue with the Conversation Focus Group, we are looking at our professional "life as an improvisatory art...the ways we combine the familiar and unfamiliar components in response to new situations" (Bateson, 1989, p. 3; Diamond, Mullen & Beattie, 1995). We are searching our historical knowledge and background experience in adult education in order to uncover the intricate nature of the professional knowledge landscape we currently inhabit. Our stories tend to form a kind of puzzle that is connected to issues of gender, leadership and landscape. It appears that formulated answers are not necessarily forthcoming in the prevailing environment. Instead, this emerging organizational conversation continues to express the future of evolving relationships and institutional structures at the City Board; it also hints at difficult conflicts and questions arising from the dramatic political action and economic change which impel educational reform.

Together, we have developed into a conversational group of seven women - two adult day school principals, three senior officials, a co-ordinator and a Continuing Education administrator. Meeting comfortably this evening around a chestnut brown, antique table, everyone invited is here and on time. No one really seems interested in drinking or eating the snacks available. There is a subtle suggestion that we're having a clandestine meeting which we can't share with outsiders. If we don't consume any food, we can continue our traditional roles at home eating or preparing for supper without skipping a beat. No questions asked.

But our presence here, in the midst of such crowded daily schedules, expresses our desire to listen to other women in adult education and to have our own voices heard. Such willingness on the part of participants to give their time for intensive interviewing is often thought of as therapeutic or as a contribution to scholarship (Hughes, 1984, p.511). But they also bring some background expectancies. For example, by agreeing to particpate in my thesis, the Conversation Focus Group

was tacitly acknowledging that the content for the conversation already made sense of their experience. That so many high-status women with overloaded schedules were willing to offer their time "suggests the significance of shared background expectancies" (Chase, 1995, p. 15). Sharing the questions of how we are implicated in what we know and what we are compelled to do with our knowledge, was giving us, as female administrators, a focus for responsive and responsible action (Pagano, 1990) with respect to Continuing Education in the future.

In the first Group Conversation, the gender aspect of the lives of female managers fully engaged the participants in terms of policy and practice within their educational organization. But now, questions related to educational decision-making and leadership for day school and adult education were looming so large on the horizon. Political protests and strikes by teachers and principals were being proposed as a possibility by the federations. Consequently, the Focus Group's previous gender perpective took a step back to disclose other currently compelling observations. The marginality of women felt less acute, though somewhat parallel at the moment, to the marginality of adult education.

This shift in the landscape was openly articulated in the altered focus of our conversation. On the one hand, as a group, we expressed anxiety about the probable reduction in funding and the questionable future course of adult education. But we were also beginning to feel a sense of mutuality as women administrators - a sense of self and a feeling of empowerment (Miller, 1984) by working in a similar direction.

Well, I feel a little paranoia on this topic.....Um, when I think about

adult education, I think about my own context which is the adult day

school. And I think that Lynne's right, that people used to think of

adult education as taking Chinese cooking at night school for fun, or

going and getting your M. A. after you get your B. A. But adult

education, the way I see it, started partially as a literacy measure. I

know that the roots of my own school are like that. And then also it's

a way of coping with declining enrolment so you could fill up those

empty spaces and get government grants by filling them with adults.

And it became a way of saving schools. But it got beyond that

because it became a value in itself! (Judy)

This historical note is supported by the general consensus around the table that adult learners currently involved in Continuing Education firmly believe in its importance along with the concept of lifelong learning. A City Board report, 18 to 80: Continuing Education in the City, states that

the education of adults is a natural and a necessary continuation of

the learning and the developing process which begins formally in

kindergarten and continues throughout life....Adult Education may be

many things to many people. It has within its compass the ultimate in

human endeavour and wants nothing more than to teach people to

live more intelligently....Some have argued that the indelible mark of

our society is that it is educative. (Kidd, 1961, pp. 8-10).

Simply stated, Judy expresses the belief that adults deserve a chance. Historically, adult education became not just literacy but education for diploma. The idea came along that you didn't have to go to university when you were 19; you could go when you were 24 or 34. That has become a much more accepted idea. But Judy maintains that we're in a real dichotomy right now, because educators and many people in society have the view that, on the one hand, lifelong learning is important - that you get educated one step at a time. Then your career may change. From this perspective, adult education is seen as a great opportunity. Conversely, Judy surmises that the present provincial Conservative government and the Ministry of Education and Training in particular, are pushing the

old view that it's not a right - phrases like "you should have got it first time around"; "you were bad, so you're not going to get another chance"; "the public shouldn't pay for it"; "it's just a frill anyway like drama and art". She recognizes that this is a very outdated view; but it's come around to being the new view. It looks like the one that will predominate - although she's doing her best as principal, not to let that happen. She freely acknowledges that as a senior officer, Ruth's been very helpful on that front too.

In contrast to this situation, Ruth recalls her recent professional excursion overseas where she suddenly felt so at home. She thought that their educational policy was "brilliant - a framework for learning from birth to death." (Ruth) It was apparent how the traditionally disadvantaged women could now fit into the system. Ruth was overwhelmed by the kind of attention that was paid to honouring people who did not have the opportunities for traditional schooling. There were built in mechanisms acknowledging their training experiences.

> *This is the kind of thing, it seems to me, that we've had the opportunity as a province to do as part of a full review process. And we've totally missed it!....If you go to [City Board] schools like Laurence Harris Street, for example, and see the contributions that these adult students are making to the children in these schools...if you watch how working together and learning language, they are also learning tolerance for different cultures. It just makes sense to acknowledge that kind of commitment. I truly believe that we need to continue to fight for it! There are so many parts of our adult ed. program that we need to ensure we will retain. (Ruth)*

This vigorous confirmation of the value of both immigrants and adult education seduced me into a more participatory role as researcher. Instead of only drawing out their story at this point, I felt

compelled to introduce a stark snapshot of my daily reality as an ESL administrator in Continuing Education. It was positioned against these co-operative ideals of equity for all learners and lifelong learning from birth to death. In my core, I recognized the difference between our stories as managers. I was the only administrator here, exclusively from Continuing Education; they all were part of the day school system. It felt important to discuss how we did not completely share the same professional knowledge landscape.

I related how Sophie Kaftal, a secondary school principal, had recently sent a note to one of my Continuing Education lead instructors regarding the fall scheduling. After many years of having five adult non-credit ESL classes at her school in the late afternoon, she decided that these Continuing Education instructors would now have to leave - an alternative day school program was moving in. The lead instructor was distressed because no one was acknowledging a need to discuss such radical program changes. According to the caretaker, who was the only one from the school communicating with her on an ongoing basis, there were over two hundred and eighty rooms in that building. Could the principal possibly use all of them? We were solely interested in "after day school" space. It appeared that these adult ESL classes met all the criteria for their viability: they were the only program of its type in the community; they had a successful word-of-mouth reputation; the adult students kept full and regular attendance; and the instructors considered these jobs as their primary source of income.

As administrator, I felt a need to demonstrate support for my staff and learners. I also needed to better understand this sudden change of mind. I phoned the secondary school principal and immediately felt reassured when I recognized Sophie's voice. She was the principal from Robert Henry Secondary School that I had recently met and admired at our adult education restructuring meetings. I believed she would understand our situation in light of the fact that we wouldn't be interrupting any of her new programming. Initially I asked her why she felt the Continuing Education

classes had to move. Perhaps she didn't realize that our scheduling was outside of day school hours; that there was no other appropriate space to meet the needs of this particular immigrant community. Although she expressed some empathy, she was clear about three things: the alternative school was moving in during the day and did not want to share their space with anyone else in the evening; the OSSTF (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation) teachers did not feel any obligation to let Continuing Education instructors use their classrooms; and in her role as principal, her first loyalty was to her day school and the OSSTF members. Her classic remark was "You don't really expect me, Sheila, to direct an OSSTF teacher to share her room with Continuing Education". But I did. If Sophie was going to kick us out anyway, I felt I might as well make my point.

Ruth immediately reacted to this scenario. She recognized that there was a tremendous amount of sensitivity around the whole concept of differentiated staffing - especially when people were really concerned about their jobs. She described them as "two solitudes where Continuing Education is one of the best kept secrets". Similarly, one after the other, each administrator had a tale to unfold about how as OSSTF teachers, they used to think like the teachers at Sophie's school; but now, as principals who still were part of OSSTF at the present time, and had responsibilities for adult day students, they better understood the situation. It was a political and structural dichotomy created by different affiliates and federations, individual salary schedules and deliberately separate position titles. Somehow this understanding did not measurably change the inequitable reality of experience on this adult education landscape. These issues would be an integral part of the conflict in the threatened political protest.

Nevertheless, there were some variations in attitude espoused by principals like Lynne.

I mean even three years ago when Sheila and I met again in this

building. It was upstairs/downstairs. Sheila [and Continuing

Education, Adult ESL] felt quite separated and kinda huffy about my

staff not speaking to hers - they wouldn't even look at the resources [Continuing Education] offered to them. They wouldn't even walk in the door....I have a real feeling for it because any of us who have worked in the Basic Level schools automatically knew what it was like, you know, to feel like the sixth or seventh finger, away out in left field, just not counted.

I mean politically and financially it's an issue right now - to be a Con. Ed. instructor or a day school teacher. But it goes back much further than that, Ruth, to [the stereotype of] those that can teach, teach; and those that can't, instruct. It was a very prevalent attitude and still is, in large groups.

You know, in this school we had all kinds of trouble between the night school people and the day school people until lo and behold we said as the administrators, "Why don't we have them face to face. You can argue and bitch about people who you don't know, are faceless, nameless critters. "They!" My Mother always said "they!" When we brought them together, we literally didn't have another complaint [laughter]. Well, I shouldn't say that - but at least they talked to one another [in a courteous way]. It's a [stereotypical] value that's very long standing in this Board.

And the only [other] thing that began to make a difference was when all the adults began to think about "I have to continue learning". And we continue to talk to kids about lifelong learning. We're just on the cusp of really making that impact on ourselves as adults. But in fact,

the wheel's coming back again to the other side or the dark side. I

think it's a real difficulty here. (Lynne)

As a senior official, Pat also agrees that it's a difficulty. She considers my illustration for

OSSTF a hard example - a kind of blatant example of fundamental class differences between and

among the various kinds of teaching and learning that goes on in the system as well as the diverse

kinds of learners. She deems that the best thing to do is to do the kind of specific thing that Lynne

had talked about; that is, for each of us to acknowledge that those differences do exist, in whatever

setting we are. Pat advises us to try to ameliorate those differences to the best extent that we can in

that particular setting.

Do what you did Sheila. Be assertive with your colleague and say:

"What about this kind of work?" I think - my own view is - that the

very best use of our energy is to support one another by talking about

that and acknowledging what it is. But then doing the very best we

can with whatever the particular set of circumstances we find

ourselves in at the present time. In my case, this middle school[where

I was previously principal], between one that was more advantaged

and one that was less - and yours in managing a Con Ed setting - and

with all the "we" and "they" stuff that goes on - and there are ways

to ameliorate them. You know, bringing the staffs together, as you

said Lynne, and so on; but, no magic wand that I know of or have

ever seen is going to cause that in any major way to go away. And

what this [provincial Conservative] government is mumbling about

is going to exacerbate those class differences. And I think the best

thing to do is sort of to get a good grip on the circumstances that we

find ourselves with and just work them through the best way that we

can. But we'll never come - I don't know the way to completely

overcome that. As OSSTF members - to be specific about that one-

become more entrenched in protecting their own bailiwick, then it

tends to further underscore those broadly characterized class

differences. But that's what they are. Aren't they? (Pat)

Having heard such a meaningful, historical account of the disparity between adult education and day school, I was prepared to retreat back into a more traditional role as researcher. I made one further supportive statement to the day school principals in front of me.

Having made those direct remarks about my pressing conflict with a

principal, I do very much appreciate both historically and presently,

the tension that is there. It isn't because I don't recognize it and don't

respect it. But I think, every once in a while, I need to help

Continuing Education hold the floor in the cultural conversation

about education. As a taxpayer, I continue to sense that adult

immigrants shouldn't have to fight for the right to share school space

in the community. (Sheila)

At this point Judy moved in with support of Sophie Kaftal. She felt badly because she's one of her best friends and she understands her situation completely, having worked there. She describes Sophie's responsibilities for the day school as her family. When Sophie goes to staff meetings, she sees the people in the day school; when she gets union grievances, they're from the OSSTF members in the day school. So if there's a dispute with the Continuing Education people who want to use the room at 4 pm and the day school teacher says, "That's my room; I want to stay in my room at 4!", Sophie will be hearing all day from this day school person, complaining. And she'll hear it at the

staff meeting and so on. There is a class issue, a Continuing Education and an OSSTF issue, and a political issue.

The administrators around the table clearly recognize this structural issue as a complicated one. Lynne tries to clarify the conflict in terms of values. She mimics Judy's and Pat's points that if you have a value which separates [organizational functions], then you have no process that supports both, that is equitable. And then you have a structure that separates the two into very clear and different hierarchies with entirely different titles and no bridging. Lynne thinks that's what we have today although we're supposed to serve all the people in the community.

At this point, the conversation circles back to Ruth's fundamental question, "What is the purpose of the school board?" Barb remembers talking with the Continuing Education department from the vantage point of the Equal Opportunity Office in the 80's. It did get more recognition then, especially in terms of lifelong learning projects and anti-racism education. We were certainly a richer board at the time and could readily meet the needs of a broader population. She sensed that one of the wonderful things in Continuing Education was that it had a lot of flexibility because no one seemed to care or be aware of what they did anyway (Marksbury, 1987). Barb hypothesizes that because of this Conservative government's financial situation, these issues are being undermined and are breaking out again. In trying to assess the meaning of this interchange, Judy expresses her conceptual interpretation in a gender metaphor:

> *The day school staff can be compared to the way men are traditionally treated in society; Con. Ed. are the women...but what we're afraid of is that everyone's going to be brought down to the low level [financially]. And so you get complaints from the privileged, in this case the OSSTF day school members that don't want to lose their privileges and be swallowed up by the*

> *disadvantaged - the lowest common denominator [Continuing*
>
> *Education], salary - wise. (Judy)*

Barb agrees that women work cheaper than men; immigrants work cheaper than Canadian born workers, and Continuing Education staff work cheaper than day school (Clark, 1958). Everyone understands that the provincial government's expressed agenda is to restrict the amount of money, especially for adult education. In Putting Students First: Ontario's Plan For Education Reform (1997) the amalgamation of boards of education (or the creation of a megaboard in Metro) is briefly described as follows:

> *On New Years' Day 1998, Ontario plans to move to a streamlined*
>
> *education system. That's when the 72 new district schools would take*
>
> *over from the existing 129 boards and when the number of school*
>
> *board politicians would be cut from 1900 to almost a third. (p. 7)*
>
> *...Money for education should be spent in the classroom....The new*
>
> *approach to funding is based on:...shifting more resources to learning*
>
> *and teaching in the classroom with a focus on young students and*
>
> *early success. (p. 6)*

In the five highlighted categories for funding, adult education and ESL for adults are not mentioned.

The City Board has already seen the reduction in funding from the provincial government to community agencies which co-sponsor our adult ESL programs (Chap. 5.3). In this changing political environment, it's difficult to find another board which still shares responsibilities with the different ethnic communities that it formally had extensive connection with. Does that mean that in the megaboard concept, community agencies will no longer play a role in adult ESL classes? They used to be the ones who attracted and provided most of our clientele. This September, adult ESL instructors are reporting the impact of these structural and economic changes in the educational

system and the more restricted immigration policy. Where do these adult immigrant learners really belong? Who should take responsibility for providing the access and service they need to contribute fully to their new home?

On these moral and epistemological fronts, Ruth looks at the amalgamation of boards of education and their responsibilities in two parts: what knowledge matters and whose knowledge the decision-makers listen to. She reminds the group of our tendency to value people and their knowledge in terms of their consistency with our own values and understandings. She personally felt very much at home coming to work with the City Board because of the set of values and understanding that was a part of a culture. But Judy interrupts by saying that currently it's a practical matter to survive. And to be successful, you may have to develop other values.

Pat presents the other side of the coin:

> *I think maybe, what we need to do is to hang on to our own values*
>
> *because presumably they serve us well. But in order to be able to do*
>
> *that, we need to know what the knowledge is. We need to be*
>
> *knowledgeable about the decision makers and the policy makers and*
>
> *so on. I mean to put it crudely, we need to know how the enemy is*
>
> *thinking - if, in fact, the enemy has a different set of values and a*
>
> *different perspective. Because only in knowing what that perspective*
>
> *is, are you then able to kind of strategize and figure out how to hang*
>
> *on to and to work with the [new] set of values - really your set of*
>
> *values but within a different context. (Pat)*

At this juncture, the group begins to think more specifically once more, in terms of gender. How can female administrators participate more productively in the transformation of this learning organization within their own set of values? Sybil has been sitting quietly listening to this point.

Like the rest of us, she doesn't want to pigeon-hole and stereotype administrative roles by gender. However, her experience at City Board, reveals

> *a more predominant trait among women, [seems] to be a willingness*
>
> *to reconsider a situation. [Like all administrators] they consider a*
>
> *situation from a set of facts and then come to a conclusion. But if they*
>
> *are confronted with additional facts or a different way of looking at*
>
> *it, they're more likely to be quite open to reconsidering or [looking*
>
> *at] another conclusion they could come to. A lot of my dealings with*
>
> *men, you know, once they've made a decision, that's that. There's no*
>
> *going back on it....But I'd like to think about that...because I've read*
>
> *about Margaret Thatcher and I'm now reading about Nelson*
>
> *Mandela's Walk to Freedom...* (Sybil)

The question of which style and values belong to men and which to women comes up again. They recognize that as a group, they're trying to separate out the nature and nurture conflict. They seem to be more concerned with who has a greater commitment to reconciliation as individuals rather than by gender. Judy describes her experience with the problem-solving of some male administrators. She perceives that "their decision becomes like a chip on their shoulder. It's their authority. And if you challenge it, then their whole persona is upset about it". She admits that if people argue with her [as principal] or challenge what she says or does, she may not like it but it doesn't threaten her. She experiences a parallel situation with her adult students:

> *...with adult students that are having fights...I really feel that there's*
>
> *a difference. The woman doesn't feel that if she changes her mind or*
>
> *if she considers another point of view or that she compromises, she*
>
> *doesn't feel that she's lost a terrible defeat. You're looking for the*

best situation, a solution - you want to make the most people happy.

You have the most workable outcome. But men have a sort of front

that they've got to keep up. They can't lose face. They've got to be

right. They have to have you follow their directions with no question.

Now, lots of men are not like that. They're not like that all the time.

But there is a different expectation [between women and men]. (Judy)

Sybil agrees that from her experiences as a senior official at the City Board, you have a gut feeling that there is a difference but it takes a fair bit of discussion and exploration to see if there are objective [criteria] between the two. She believes that

the thing you find out is that there is a predominant female style and

there's a predominant male style. But it's not the same as saying all

women administrators follow that style and all male administrators

follow the other style...there's a lot of crossover....For example,

Margaret Thatcher swallowed every male value that there is. (Sybil)

The contradictions that display themselves in the details of this discussion belie the tone that surrounds the Focus Group's particular interest. They have become less interested in labelling styles, masculine or feminine. From their positions of responsibility, they prefer to focus on expressing the qualities of certain styles that they support in policy implementation or try to emulate in decision - making in their own settings.

I mean the whole business of the rationalization at a mega level [in

Ontario] of all six Boards' policies, is going to be well...a mind

boggling task....But if we put that aside for the moment, it's going to

be an enormously important political task as to whose policies win

the day....Whether ours are the ones that win the day or whether

we're seen to be too radical - so far off the left end of the scale as to

be too far gone. And we get something very, very different. It's a

democracy, I guess, as Ruth was right to point out. We'll get who we

elect. Those twenty-two folks [political representatives] will either

pick up with enthusiasm our most progressive policies or they'll say

"How can we quickly get away from this sort of thing?" The

Conservative government already doesn't use the word "equity"; it

uses "anti-discrimination". (Pat)

Lynne also recognizes that the current Conservative provincial government doesn't like any of the "E" words - equity, economic policy and environment. She feels this is a style of politics which ignores process, collaboration and needs assessment for the diverse population in Ontario. "There's only one need here and that's a [financial] bottom line -that's his [Premier Harris's] balance. And that's the only thing driving us." (Lynne)

These words are so reminiscent of the first Focus Group Conversation we held two years ago. Perhaps we've come full circle with each narrative deeply embedded in the next. At that time, these female administrators were expressing their frustration at the top-down autocratic style of the male comptroller. The gender issue in their smaller daily organizational context was now being interwoven with their feeling of subservience as teachers and principals to the Conservative government. They were experiencing some of this disillusionment on a larger scale because of the new provincial implementation of prescriptive policy without process. Nested (Lyons, 1990) in these stories is the ongoing discrepancy between the status of day school teachers and Continuing Education instructors. Over time, we had formed an understanding of ourselves and our communities. But at the present time, we're not sure if we'll ever catch the drift of this changing cultural conversation about adult education (Pagano, 1990).

5.12   Focus Group Conversation 2: reflections

(a)   participant/researcher relationship

From a feminist researcher's perspective, I recognized that our roles within the Conversation

Focus Group were coalescing and differentiating at one and the same time (Conle, 1998). On the one

hand, the participants continued to be keen about being together, uncovering their experiences in

terms of the historical and existing marginality of adult education. They actually requested an

additional Focus Group meeting when I was in the midst of suggesting closure to their thesis

participation. They wanted to reflect more seriously on the impact female administrators might have

on Continuing Education's future. But they were also feeling burdened by the changing climate

created by the prevailing provincial Conservative government. They expressed that currently the

concept of amalgamated boards of education was a puzzle, replete with euphemisms - restructuring,

reducing, and reorganizing. This jargon was being interpreted as meaning that the policies would

have a devastating effect on adult education. The changes in funding would have an enormous

impact on the whole system.

Just ten years ago, the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities Project Report: For

Adults Only (1986), recognized that "the confluence of a wide variety of societal trends during the

past few decades [had] greatly increased participation in adult education"(as cited in City Board of

Education, 1991, p. 1). The City Board also summarized their point of view about adult and

continuing education:

> *These trends include structural changes in the economy and in the world of*
>
> *work, demographic shifts caused by low fertility rates, an aging baby-boom*
>
> *generation, increased levels of migration and immigration and the rapid*
>
> *emergence of an information-based, computer-assisted society. By virtue of*
>
> *the enormity of the economic, technological and social forces at work, these*

trends have and will continue to impact significantly on the provision of adult

continuing education programming for at least the next generation. (City

Board of Education, 1987, p. 2)

Within this context, the increasingly diverse nature of the City's population

had created a demand for Adult ESL programs that continues to grow

significantly. (City Board of Education, 1991, p. 1)

In recognizing the validity of these comments in the current competitive environment for

government funding between adult ESL credit and non-credit programs, I found myself, especially

at one identifiable moment, contributing openly to the Focus Group Conversation. Initially it felt like

I was behaving more like a participant than a researcher. The fact that over half the participants had

been principals in the day school at some time in their career created a certain bias from their own

context. My own candid account of currently dealing with an adult day school principal from the

position of a Continuing Education administrator released such a flood of personal and professional

reactions from each participant that it became a central story in the reconstruction of the Focus

Group's second narrative. Immediately I felt guilty. Had I transcended my role as researcher? Did

the retelling of that story signify a critical event in its representation? I wanted to believe in freeing

subjectivity as a narrativist (Heshusius, 1994), though I couldn't seem to let go completely.

The question of whether I was being too present and using my power as researcher in an

unacceptable way became a concern to me. In "The impact of a feminist perspective on research

methodologies", Driscoll and McFarland (1989) remind us that research methodology is examined

according to conceptual framework and techniques of data collection and analysis. They discuss

power/authority issues between researcher and participants and the contextualizing of the research

process, the researcher and the participants. It was reassuring to emulate some of their

recommendations. For example, they suggest that as researcher, I should be in direct contact with

the female administrators that I was studying; that there should be provision for feedback between them and myself; and that my own participation and experience should be a consciously used part of the research process. "A continual self-consciousness focussed on the research process itself should be part of the work" (Driscoll & McFarland, p. 189).

I revisited and reconstructed the interpretation of my participation many times - I wanted to understand its basis and justification through "a continual self-consciousness" (Driscoll & McFarland, 1989). Part of the feminist way of looking at narrative includes considering my research as part of my "real life" - not just an addition to my professional and academic contexts. Consequently, in the same way that there is often a recognized distance between theory and practice, the brief scenario I related to the participants exposed a gap between articulated institutional belief and a principal's practice.

On reflection, I could comfortably accept the blurring of roles during our group conversation. I was offering a true - to - life example which epitomized the disjunction between Board policy and practice with regard to equity and Continuing Education. Shaping part of the narrative with my participants helped to broaden the notion of shared discourse analysis in my research. In a corresponding example, Oakley (1981) cites her interaction with pregnant participants and her own similar experience. She realized quite early in her research that their discussions were less formal interviewing and more conversation-sharing. I was mimicking her description of how she nurtured the congruence between their experiences - she offered her opinion on a number of issues for discussion. All discordant parties were gaining in fluency during this conversation.

When comparing the reconstruction of the first and second group narratives, I noticed a difference linguistically in the represented distance between the participants and myself. In the first narrative, aside from acknowledging our physical proximity around the table, I quickly switched from using the first person plural to the third person singular or plural within the initial page to

denote my separateness from the group members. In part, this reflected my role at that moment in beginning to establish our relationship. As a researcher, I knew each member in the group less than they knew each other. Their comfort was in their connection to each other; my comfort was in their shared interest as female administrators, in my thesis area. I surmised that they did not see me, a Continuing Education administrator, as one of them in terms of their traditional day school status; they accepted me mostly in terms of being a colleague, a feminist and an adult educator, knowledgeable about ESL matters. But by the time we reconstructed the second narrative, the gap between our various understandings of the system seemed narrower. Consequently, I felt safe enough to cloud the distinction between researcher and participant by voluntarily offering my immediate Continuing Education experience for perusal.

I noted that at times, I felt very much the outsider in this milieu. The power or authority of the researcher did not ring true (Merriam, 1988; Mishler, 1991); it was I who felt less dominant. I was always trying to make the participants feel comfortable and not feel too challenged by my conflicting views as part of the Continuing Education panel. I thought they could offer their experiences with less self-monitoring in this atmosphere. On the one hand, Barb mentioned how she felt that the researcher was this historical god-like figure in research. Conversely, Lynne expressed how these conversation circles broke down the hierarchies between the participants and the researcher - that being together and talking helped us see our connections more clearly. Oakley (1981) talks about this self-consciousness of researchers, which substantiates the feelings of intellectual and psychological exhaustion as we continually monitor ourselves. But it also made me seriously question the unrestricted acceptance of the power differential between researcher and participants. My research experience disclosed that narrative encourages an interactive methodology between the two roles. This can often strip some of these differences away and enhance the

similarities between them. In this way, every relationship can be measured on its own terms for there seems to be an ebb and flow of potential understanding and misunderstanding.

While one participant didn't notice any particular change when I told my own story, others saw it as out of the usual pattern but part of the conversation. Lynne described my participation as "unexpected but welcome - moving from the collective to the particular, creating a new balloon or pathway - a here and now case study which demonstrated what the group had been talking about". She described the situation as the researcher initially telling her own story through her questions "but one of the first times where in fact the example was really your own" (Lynne). It established a certain kind of verisimilitude (Van Maanen, 1988) to the stories already presented from a different perspective.

(b)   text representation

Judy's metaphorical comparison of adult day school teachers being treated like men in our society and Continuing Education instructors regarded as disadvantaged women underscored Pat's dialogue about values and the marginality of Continuing Education. As indicated in our narrative, Pat considered my illustration about the OSSTF teachers and principal in a secondary school "a hard example - a kind of blatant example of fundamental class differences between and among the various kinds of teaching and learning that goes on in the system as well as the diverse kinds of learners" (Pat). Another small example in which

> *the issue of dominance of daytime programs asserts itself to*
>
> *strengthen the impression that many Adult ESL instructors and*
>
> *learners have (that they and their programs are marginal to the*
>
> *interests and concerns of the system) is related to the cancellation of*
>
> *permits [for non-credit adult ESL] for [credit program] classroom*
>
> *use.* (City Board of Education, 1991, p. 50)

To avoid the continuation of such experiences of territoriality and in order to move ahead, Pat felt that we had to cling to our personal good values and fit them into the system the best way we knew how. The vigilance we needed was to "know how the enemy was thinking". (Pat)

As a result of these conversations, I scanned some City Board documents and educational administration literature to find analogous descriptions of Adult and Continuing Education from the past and to discover the emerging nature of adult education. I questioned how the diverse and changing perspectives could be presented textually in a truthful and plausible narrative. There appeared to be an absence of change within a changing landscape. For example, researchers at the City Board cite the fact that "[i]n 1993, the City Board of Education will celebrate 100 years of providing English as a Second Language to the residents of [the City]." (City Board of Education,

June, 1991). This celebration reaches back into the City Board minutes (April 6, 1893) when the Board approved

> *[t]hat the request of Messrs. Stark, Reynolds, and Sutherland be*
>
> *granted, for the use of a school room two days per week in Elizabeth*
>
> *St. School, for the purpose of teaching Italians and other Foreigners*
>
> *the English Language.* (p. 45)

This was a second try for adult education. After an attempt had been made by the City Board (October, 1855) to initiate a Night School for young men who could only study after working hours, the attendance had seriously declined. The Standing Committee on School Management was asked to report on the expediency of re-opening the school for the winter of 1860-61. It was clear that as an educational experiment, the results of the Evening School were not satisfactory. The night school was closed (February, 1861). But the second experiment with adult night school was a success in 1880, leading to English in the Workplace programs when the Board approved "the request of the Massey manufacturing company to establish a Night School in connection with their employees" (Vance & McGrath, 1987).

These archival records support the notion that, originally, the City Board took the initiative to establish an evening class in a Continuing Education format for adult immigrants over 100 years ago. This functional and seemingly innocuous event eventually emerged as the beginning of a tenuous relationship that reveals itself within the interwoven nature of education - within the community, learners, parents, teachers, schools, municipal boards of education, and the provincial Ministry of Education and Training. Since the trustees recognized that the funding, structures, core values and goals of boards of education were developed to meet the needs of children, they had to use other strategies to expand their services to the broader adult community. Consequently, certain jurisdictions, like the City Board, took on more responsibilities.

Provincial legislation and funding came much later. On June 22, 1961, the Board agreed to begin training of unemployed persons under the Technical and Vocational Training Agreement which provided for joint federal and provincial funding." On December 2,1965, the Board recognized the current and future expansion in adult education by approving the creation of a new Assistant Superintendent position to plan for and supervise the adult education programme of the Board..." (Vance & McGrath, 1987), exclusive of the programs conducted under the previous Training Agreement.

However, in spite of the increasing needs in adult education, adequate funding from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training is not currently available. Acknowledging that the Ministry has never covered the full cost of delivering Adult and Continuing Education programs, some boards, up until 1998, had been making up the additional resources through a rich tax base. This option is no longer possible. The Ministry is working with envelopes of funding with specific allocations decided centrally. Therefore, the way the funding is structured will determine the decisions at a local level. While previously boards of education could also acquire additional funding locally for Adult and Continuing Education programs by using some money from other richer programs, now the prescriptive designation of the Ministry will strip away any power with respect to the allocation of regional funding. The dilemma again rests with the question. "What is the purpose of the school board?" The funding and the adult education legislation will continue to drive the organizational structures and the perceptions of Continuing Education.

In a similar way, in <u>Adult Education in Transition: A Study of Institutional Insecurity</u>, Clark (1956; 1958) characterizes the nature of adult education in North America in a way which is parallel and comparable to the existing model described by the participants at the City Board. Thirty years later, Marksbury (1987), in <u>Marginal Dwellers: A Positive Role for Continuing Education</u> also echoes the very words currently shared in the 90's by the work narratives of the women

administrators. I tried to balance the rhetoric that was popular then and the dialogue of the participants in their Focus Group Conversations.

In terms of organizational structure, Clark (1958), Marksbury (1987), and the administrators' stories (1995-97) all point out in their own way, this conspicuous observation with regard to legislation - "the aims and programs [of Adult and Continuing education] are not integrally related to the core tasks of the parent organization" (Clark, 1958, p. 1). Marksbury concurs by stating that "by definition, being a marginal dweller brings about prescribed social and organizational dislocation" (p. 2). In the Focus Group narrative, Barb, as a secondary school principal, was also very direct when she said that " [v]alues in the Board with regard to secondary and adult education mirror OSSTF first and then, Continuing Education" (Chap. 5.11). Clark saw that "within adult education, both programs and educators are, in a word, marginal" (1958, p. 1) and noted that "organizational marginality provides a basic source of insecurity" (1956, p. 60). Ruth, a senior official, regretted the persistent presence of "differentiated staffing" while Lynne, a principal, commented on "the faceless, nameless critters of Continuing Education". It is clear that the moral dilemma about who should take responsibility for the education of adults in our community cannot be easily solved on this professional landscape - especially with reference to the survival needs of adult immigrants.

About a month after our last Focus Group Conversation, I wanted to share these comparisons about Adult and Continuing Education for their significance and plausibility. But our customary professional landscape halted abruptly! The day school teachers were calling a political protest (teachers' term) and an illegal strike (Ontario provincial government's term) against proposed legislation from Premier Harris' Conservative Government (October 27, 1997). They were protesting Education Bill 160 (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1997) which included the shifting of decision - making power from the local school boards to the Cabinet of the provincial government. The ensuing letter from the Director of the City Board of Education spoke directly to

the effect of the strike on Continuing Education instructors and learners: "Continuing Education programs will be suspended" (October 23, 1997).

Even though these instructors were not on strike, the Director sent this note regarding work stoppage for all Continuing Education classes. The teachers and the instructors were treated separately but were affected by each other. Why was there no consultation between Continuing Education and teachers before the strike? Or was there? I was trying to figure out what was really going on. The systems seemed so interwoven that it was difficult to separate any cause and effect relationships. It appeared that initially, on the advice of the senior officials involved with adult education, the Director made the decision to suspend the Continuing Education programs because some of their programming takes place in schools (senior official, personal communication, December, 1997). Considering that the schools were closed because of the teachers' work stoppage, these locations would not be available. It was also felt that if some unions supported the teachers, the information to the public regarding the availability of Continuing Education instruction would be sporadic and unreliable. In addition, the same reason was given for keeping the adult classes outside of school locations closed.

However, from the very beginning, the intention of the Board was to reimburse all staff who did not go on strike, who made up their lost working hours. But the following question still arises: Why were the Continuing Education instructors so silent when in the end they would be more affected than the teachers if anticipated government decisions about adult ESL went through? Didn't they know what was happening? It is here once again that the hypersensitivity of marginal dwellers is noticed along with the actual inter-connectedness of the system itself.

The continuing education unit seeks the prestige and status of the

academic sector yet it must address itself to the demands of the

market. Being market driven usually works counter to the more

conservative and status quo orientation of the academic sector.

(Marksbury, 1987, p. 3)

In the end, the unions that represented Continuing Education instructors and lead instructors did not compel their members to march on the picket lines in a common public voice of support for the teachers. Somehow their unions felt individual conscience was the appropriate guide to the question of support. But their members could collect their wages in the meantime. It was apparent that Continuing Education instructors did not fully comprehend the nestedness of the educational system -neither legally in intention or through practice. They didn't appreciate how much extra the City Board spent on Continuing Education in order to keep it viable. If Bill 160 was passed by the provincial government, then the Board would no longer have the power to move funding around in the system to support adult education in the same way it had in the last 100 years.

On the other hand, the thesis participants revealed their own particular consciousness of the interwoven nature of the provincial government legislation and the municipal board of education policy throughout their dialogue. Because future City Board policies would continue to be closely tied in with the prevailing government's agenda, certain policies would demand different levels of urgency: equal opportunity, emanating from Barb's department was no longer expected to be perceived as a burning issue - equity would be considered only with regard to curriculum; adult education and ESL funding would be dramatically reduced to Lynne's, Judy's and my areas; it would no longer be financially feasible for ethnic settlement agencies like Mary Lo's Chinese community agency to participate in the same way as co-sponsors with the City Board in the delivery of adult ESL programs.

In addition, the linkage between the Ministry of Education and Training and the teachers in boards of education is even more conspicuous as part of the political protest. It was partly initiated by the Conservative government declaration that "non-certificated" instructors - people who don't

have a teaching certificate but have teaching duties - would replace "teachers' in the classroom. In its reports last August (1997), the provincial Education Improvement Commission suggested a more systematic use of non-teachers with specific skills to work alongside certified teachers in fields like the arts, physical education and guidance (The Toronto Star, October 30, 1997, p. A22). Regardless of conditions, the differentiated status between Continuing Education and day school was clearly being reflected and exacerbated on a daily basis.

After enduring two weeks of protest and a return to the classrooms without a resolution, I began to acknowledge aspects of Continuing Education that were not previously clear in beginning my thesis journey. Originally, Continuing Education was initiated and documented over one hundred years ago (City Board, 1991) to supplement the fundamental purpose of boards of education which is to educate children. Continuing Education was considered an economical way to provide additional services to constituents, primarily adults, after the school day and to make more effective use of the school buildings. There was never any intention to use certified teachers nor to pay wages equal to teachers. Qualified instructors, as opposed to certified teachers, was an alternative type of staffing at less cost. The conceptual comparison of Continuing Education as female and day school as male breaks down here somewhat because the original goals for the Continuing Education agenda was never that it should be equal to the day school's - just different. Not disadvantaged, just different. Nevertheless, by funding this department with less financial and human resources, it became metaphorically and functionally disadvantaged like women in society.

The question still remains, however, that if the purpose of Continuing Education which has instructors teaching adults is quite different than that of the day school which has teachers dealing with children or adults wanting a high school diploma, why is the differentiated status arbitrarily creating a select group of teachers in the day school? Their tasks, outcomes and clientele were not meant to match Continuing Education. On the surface it appears that the two camps could be valued

for different reasons. Even Pat Daly, as senior official, thinks that perhaps the idea of partnership and collaboration around subject areas such as ESL could move the concept of partnership between adult and children's credit day school programs and Continuing Education into an attitude of action, particularly in the area of curriculum. It has the potential of creating a community which shares resources, both human and pedagogical.

But, somehow, in a hesitant manner, I have come to this disturbing observation. For me as researcher, it is the uncovering of a secret story (Crites, 1971). I believed that most of the adult immigrants in adult day schools were actually trying to receive a high school diploma in order to continue pursuing their education and career in Canada. But, in daily conversations, ESL teachers, only tell that sacred story to some outsiders. To me, as I sit on the periphery, they admit the adult day school's secret story: that most adult ESL students in the day school already have secondary school and post-secondary school qualifications from their own countries. They actually require only English proficiency. But the adult day school principals feel that they do a good job of enhancing their learners' possibilities for joining the workforce and contributing positively to society. Accordingly, in recalling the Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 36 (1990) to all Directors of Education, I noted that the funding policy on adult basic education was clarified:

> *Audits of enrolments have revealed that it is necessary to clarify*
>
> *present policy on the funding of components of ABE [Adult Basic*
>
> *Education]. This clarification is required because the distinction is*
>
> *becoming increasingly blurred between non-credit courses in English*
>
> *as a second language (ESL) and adult basic literacy and numeracy.*
>
> *(ABL/N), which are offered as components of ABE, and credit*

courses that are offered in regular day school in ESL and in basic

level English and mathematics. (August 2, 1990)

One of the two most critical criteria this document specifies for deeming the eligibility of an

adult student for a credit course is that

the student is taking credit courses in ESL or in basic level English

and/or mathematics as parts of a larger credit program that leads to

the acquisition of an OSSD [Ontario Secondary School Diploma] or

a Certificate of Education. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990)

Consequently, according to the original and current intention of adult ESL funding, adults

not pursuing a secondary school diploma should be in Continuing Education for their cultural

orientation and educational language needs. The demands of most of the ESL students in the adult

day schools are not reflective of the original purpose in the Education Act. This secret story reveals

that the goals of adult day schools and Continuing Education are overlapping primarily for funding

purposes and creating the felt tension between groups of educators. If teaching adult immigrants in

our adult day schools - who already have a high school diploma in their own country or who are not

really capable of acquiring one in Canada- were deemed an important value for boards of education,

then we should advocate in that direction instead of creating a facade. It is one thing to demand a

change in how we look at the fundamental purpose of the school board; it is different to obscure the

needs of the adult ESL population to feed a funding issue. On the other hand, we need to recognize

the gap between the needs of high school - age students leaving the Board and the programs provided

for adults in the community college system. Because of their funding being based on the

employability of their graduates, community colleges are forced for reasons of accountability, to take

students that are at a higher level that some of the high school graduates. Up until now, the boards

of education were trying to respond to that gap by offering their own adult upgrading education programs including ESL through Continuing Education. It may no longer be possible.

To ameliorate the reality of this situation in the fall of 1997, Ruth Walker, on behalf of day school and Continuing Education principals and administrators, presented a model for adult ESL to the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training which suggested a distribution of adult students between the two educational panels depending on the immigrants' goals and English proficiency. The process and results of creating this document extended back into the female administrators' stories about sharing ideas, reconsidering options and caring about each other's domain. In its intent, the model seemed to offer some possibility for the implementation of recommendations 3 (7a) and 3 (7b), from the Equity for Adults Report (City Board of Education, 1991). That report recommended examining the feasibility of establishing a bridging program to prepare adult learners to move from the non-credit ESL to credit granting programs that lead to an OSSD or Certificate of Education. It also promoted the availability of both types of Adult ESL courses as part of the daytime and evening programming of secondary schools, which would facilitate interaction and accessibility between regular school day and Continuing Education panels. Recommendation 6 (7) addressed a territoriality issue. The non-credit ESL instructors felt unreasonable expectations were placed on them by day school teachers who sometimes complained of disturbances to their room - a direct reflection of my experience with the principal, Sophie Kaftal. This recommendation spelled out ways that principals and ESL administrators could provide "opportunities for communication and problem-solving between day school and evening school staff regarding the shared use of classroom space..." by having "a memo from senior administrators, including principals,to day staff regarding the rights of evening class instructors and learners..." (City Board of Education, 1991, p. 66). So far, there has been no official provincial Ministry of Education and Training response.

Unfortunately, the larger story of educational and philosophical change which this political protest signals cannot be completed here. Possibly, we are experiencing the beginning of the greatest transition in education since the Hall-Dennis Report in the 1960's (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1968). Currently, Continuing Education instructors and support staff have returned to their shared premises with the day school staff. Expressed misunderstandings about the perceived lack of support during the teachers' strike surface daily. Tales proliferate about some members of the Conversation Focus Group being so tied to their point of view on the picket line that the question of human and equal rights comes up for discussion. Some Focus Group participants overtly express their teachers' fears that Continuing Education instructors are going to take away their jobs.

This polarization and personalization of political action erases some of the intended commitment to equity that was more easily discussed around Lynne's table. It appears that when we feel powerful as a group of protesters on a picket line, we don't always treat each other equitably - when jobs are at stake in different educational domains and when support staff don't stand beside us. Our more militant feelings cause some of us to strike out against the disadvantaged. Our personal and professional values sometimes get mixed up in their public expression. In this frame of mind, as women leaders, we should be mindful of our expectation that men treat us fairly when they perceive themselves as more powerful in situations which affect our jobs and our working conditions. The lines of feminist and masculinist perspectives begin to blur without intention. Political conviction is moving beyond gender.

Perhaps we have to return to Pat Daly's suggestion that we not take on the structural inequities at the provincial Ministry of Education and Training level; but instead, we should work on the day to day relationships with each other. She muses that there is substantial gender differentiation in Harris' Conservative government - men may manoeuvre as part of the political game and some women will work harder to fight this sense of isolation during transition.

Away from the issues of the strike, the Conversation Focus Group agrees that energy must go into survival. We see how the changing social narratives are altering the relationship among their stories. Originally when we began our Conversation Focus Group, we were dealing with issues of equity - female administrators' experience within a patriarchal board of education. But these stories as told, have evolved into several larger general questions about gender and the workplace. Just as we think we are beginning to understand their stories within their personal and professional contexts, the social narrative shifts. We become immersed in the conceptually analogous conflict between seemingly disadvantaged Continuing Education instructors and day school teachers. In turn, the teachers, who are feeling disadvantaged with respect to the provincial government are protesting potential education legislation by the Conservative government. These interlocking circumstances remind us that narratives are all embodied in the reality of ongoing life that operates on many levels. When we think we have our battleground clear, it shifts because the social narrative changes.

Consequently, when times are hard, equity seems to be a luxury issue. Job security demands everyone's attention. Administrators remark that we should be nervous because life will not be seen in a gender way. In fact, "some women, have already adopted a masculinist way of doing things" (Sybil). Like those administrators that still consider the importance of caring and relationships, Barb promotes a belief in finding in each other a group of strong women leaders, standing for collaboration (Christiansen, Goulet, Krentz, & Maeers, 1997) and equity. They feel that the informal structures will continue to be important among small groups of women. As senior official of the City Board of Education, Pat believes that women in positions of responsibility will be seen as a vehicle to get things done. They want their narratives to textually represent this hope. We know change will be more tolerable if we can resume a cultural conversation where we get the drift.

Chapter 6. Educational Significance: the professional knowledge landscape through narrative inquiry

6.1 telling "nested" stories

The whole point of stories is not "solutions" or "resolutions" but a broadening and even a heightening of our struggles - with new protagonists and antagonists introduced, with new sources of concern or apprehension or hope, as one's mental life accommodates itself to a series of arrivals: guests who have a way of staying, but not necessarilty staying put." (Coles, 1989, p. 128)

While there are many studies about organizational theory and the analyses of bureaucracy (Mayo, 1933; Taylor, 1947; Weber, 1957; Schon, 1983; Senge, 1990; Czarniawska, 1997), both the presence of women researchers and the concept of gender with reference to the development of organizational policy and procedures, have been substantially invisible (Schmuck, 1975; Byrne, 1978; Adkinson, 1981; Reynolds, 1995). Subsequently, feminists are starting to express the values of the female world and to reshape the disciplines to include the voices of women (Belenky, M. F., Blythe, McV. C., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M., 1986, p.6).

I approach the end of this thesis journey by reconstructing in this chapter what I've come to know as a result of this inquiry. The significance of this thesis lies in its narrative capacity to uncover the intricate nature of the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) of seven female administrators in adult education. In stories from the City Board of Education, this metaphorical concept reflects the relationships unfolding among people, places and things. It is a step in the direction of developing an understanding of the notion of intersection between the personal and professional lives of these administrators - principals, co-ordinators and senior officials. By bringing gender into inquiry in the context of a large learning organization, it acts as a tool to

validate women's personal knowledge, derived from experience, including how we are implicated in what we know. In addition, this work sketches an insider's view of Adult and Continuing Education in transition, at the beginning of substantial reform.

One of the the strengths of narrative is "in the dialectic between the unique experiences of individuals and the constraints of broad social, political, and economic structures (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 128). Through the metaphorical concept of the professional knowledge landscape, these work narratives illustrate the "nestedness" (Lyons, 1990) or inter- connection of personal and professional stories of experience to the understanding of larger human and social phenomena. When Mary Lo's story opened, it was embedded in the multi-faceted landscape of community. She expressed the keen conflict in the "between-ness" (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) between herself and the landscape of the Chinese social service agency where she worked. By the end of her chapter, she had walked away from a comfortable immersion in her own cultural community - her identity as a woman manager secure in its transformation. She had made the bold move to the City Board of Education, a multicultural hierarchical organization embedded in massive reform imposed by the provincial government.

On the other hand, Ruth Walker's and Pat Daly's stories represented a different socially constructed world view of knowledge, acquired inductively through conversation (Mishler, 1991) between these senior officials and myself. Their positions were privileged at the City Board with regard to knowledge about the interwoven nature of classrooms within schools, schools within boards of education, and municipal boards of education within provincial education ministries. This opportunity to share ideas led to a modified kind of feminist interview - a kind of informed discourse whose structure and meaning were jointly produced by an interviewer and interviewees. The paradox of constructing a relationship in which both voices were heard in a narrative in conjunction with the unnamed silence imposed by a participant in a position of organizational authority demands further

inquiry. This relational situation brought the issue of dominance into the participant/researcher relationship from a different perspective. My notion of "ladder chats" supports feminist literature (Finch, 1984) which acknowledges the possible lack of affinity between female researcher and female participant because of status.

Beth's story reminded us that participants, research methods, and results of research inquiry are interpreted and privileged through consciously sanctioned epistemologies and texts on the professional knowledge landscape. With particular reference to sexual orientation, my initial assumptions did not offer a balanced view of the social landscape. Instead, it reinforced the universality of my own heterosexual experience as researcher. In sharing Beth's experience, the relationship of her knowledge to truth was recognized. Her account may help to maintain the reality that research participants are embodied individuals with specific differing sexual preferences within the larger educational community. In turn, other administrators or researchers who hold advantaged positions can in the future, more readily challenge the homophobia that immobilizes and silences many gay and lesbian people.

The metaphors which dominated the discussions in the Conversation Focus Group revealed a coherent and systematic language, reflecting their inter-relatedness and the most fundamental concepts and values in our culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Beginning with dramatic sexual, animal and warlike imagery to describe their relationships to some powerful men in their personal and professional lives, the administrators moved on to a consideration of how the organizational metaphors of the "funnel" and "conduit" fit the institutional rhythm on their professional landscape. They understood the embeddedness of the educational system, the interwoven relationship between different levels of government and the challenging relationships between colleagues at different levels of responsibility and power.

Perhaps by bringing gender into the inquiry at the City Board, this thesis acts as a tool for the Focus Group as it came to acknowledge the nestedness of their own role as female administrators in the shifting social narratives. From the familiarity of naming the organizational barriers to women, they began to look at corresponding barriers to adult education in the school board milieu. By the end of our conversations, as the teachers were planning a political protest, the Conversation Focus Group didn't see any resolution to the expressed conflict between the seemingly privileged status of the teachers in the day school and the differentiated status of Continuing Education instructors. From a realistic but discouraging perspective, they all recognized that funding was now the prevailing force driving adult education. Only Pat Daly and Ruth Walker saw the potential of creating a community which shared resources, both human and pedagogical. They suggested that the idea of partnership and collaboration around subject areas like ESL could move the concept of partnership between adult and children's credit day school programs and Continuing Education into an attitude of action, particularly in the area of curriculum. A ray of hope in difficult times.

6.2   creating a literature

An organization researcher is in many respects more like a literary

critic than a novelist. The organizations that the researchers describe

are only in a certain sense products of their minds (in the sense that

they are responsible for their own texts); the organizations are

originally written by organizational actors....And as it is not the

difference between fact and fiction that distinguishes us from the

novelists and critics, it must be the kind of texts we analyze and the

kind of texts we write. (Czarniawska, 1997)

In The Call of Stories, (1989), Robert Coles as a medical resident, acknowledges the astute

guidance of Dr. Ludwig, his mentor. Dr. Ludwig reminds him that their psychiatric patients hope that

they tell their stories well enough so their doctors "can understand the truth of their lives...[will]

know how to interpret their stories correctly...will remember that what [the doctors] hear is *their*

story" (p. 7).

In transferring Coles' use of literature in a scientific and therapeutic medical model to an

institutional and academic arena, I was endeavouring to adapt his intention to narrative - an existing

different kind of literature that people might study (F. M. Connelly, personal communication,

December, 1997). Czarniawska (1997) talks about the idea of science not as an accumulating body

of knowledge but as a conversation where scientific texts are voices in it (Oakshott as cited in

Czarniawska, 1997, p. 7). In order to grasp the conversation, we must know who is talking to whom,

who is answering those questions. In this thesis, I chose to share conversations with administrators

about their emerging professional knowledge landscape - work narratives in an educational

institution. Senior officials Ruth Walker and Pat Daly, discussed their organization and their

professional and personal relationships, revealing how they evaluated foundational concepts such

as epistemology and ontology in their day to day practice. Even within the framework of reform and uncertainty, they knew it was important to keep the conversation active. They encouraged women colleagues to adhere to their values of caring, building relationships and being open to change. Their stories remind us how we are implicated in what we know and what we as feminists, are compelled to do with that knowledge. Both Ruth and Pat tried to persuade women administrators not to remain so isolated - away from the conversation - when everyone is aware that the others are experiencing the same discrimination. Somehow women in positions of responsibility still continue to seek individual solutions in the workplace - possibly because they "recognize the collective nature of their subjection" (Chase, 1995, p. 211) and perceive little power to effect change for female administrators.

While narrative, like most literature, attends to the forms in which knowledge is shaped and the effects that these have on an audience, the appeal of institutionalism lies in its primary theme - the origins and development of institutions as a lens for the understanding of contemporary life. Various competing individualist and rationalist perspectives fail to grasp the collective character of organizational life, which is the main concern of institutionalists. In their emphasis on the specific temporal and spatial locations of organizations, institutional analyses, combined with narrative as literature can provide knowledge about their own origins (Czarniawska, 1997).

For example, through Mary Lo's story, we acknowledged her alternative landscape - a counterpoint to the other institutional stories- and different cultural values as co-ordinator of ESL in a Chinese community agency. The contrasting epistemological position she narratively expressed was more than the patriarchal stance of my giving voice to a participant; through collaboration, we depicted her substantial background to help the reader understand her socially constructed view of knowledge from a positivist perspective.

Looking again at narrative as a literature, it can be viewed as a distinctive genre. It can create a different way in which people new to the field could begin to understand it and position themselves vicariously to explore issues in their lives. An interdisciplinary weaving of rhetorical figures and textual strategies can then be of value to organizational studies. Czarniawska (1997) maintains that already there is "genre blurring in several disciplines: economics, business and public administration, sociology, anthropology. All have built connections with literary theory." (p. 7). She notes in anthropology, that Clifford Geertz (as cited in Czarniawska, p. 7) discusses moving to a literary rather than a linguistic approach to the social sciences, as a model for self-understanding. By pursuing the idea that narrative knowledge comes close to the metaphor of the world-as-text, Czarniawska points out the ways in which the stories that rule our lives and our societies are constructed. In accepting that the main source of knowledge in the practice of organizations is narrative, she suggests that we now need adequate devices for interpreting narrative. For example, through Beth Morris' story, a medium is provided through which other administrators can begin to break the silence around disclosure about sexual orientation in large learning organizations. In this manner, narrative becomes a kind of literature that has a value in itself somewhat apart from the knowledge outcomes of this thesis. In its own way, each story reflects the embeddedness of both personal and professional day to day life in the educational system.

6.3   conducting organizational research from a feminist perspective

Through their talk and other symbolic behaviours, people in

organizations produce a shared, intersubjective understanding of the

nature of their reality; provide themselves with a scheme for making

sense of that reality; and importantly, objectify these understandings

so that the nature of their constructed environment appears as "real"

to them. (Munby, 1993, p. 100)

Traditionally, in organizational research, communication is primarily viewed as a channel

for imparting information to administrators for making decisions. Conducting this narrative research

in educational administration from a feminist perspective highlights the distinctive role of language

in constructing the very sense of organizational reality inhabited by participants (Smircich, 1983).

Through a reconstruction of continuing symbolic interaction, the reader can picture the intricate

nature of the professional knowledge landscape at the City Board of Education through the eyes of

seven female administrators and the researcher. In particular, the reader witnesses the following work

narratives: the unfolding of Mary Lo's story as she moved from the familial comfort of a Chinese

community centre to the multicultural Continuing Education Department at the bureaucratic City

Board; the experiences of senior officials, Ruth Walker and Pat Daly as they tried to maintain their

optimism in the midst of gender barriers and substantial reform in adult education; the affirmation

of diverse identities and the relevant generation of knowledge within organizations which were

derived from Beth Morris' story of disclosure; and the shifting social narratives of the Conversation

Focus Group about the advantaged and disadvantaged in society. These administrators switched the

narrative plot from expressed concern about organizational barriers to women to a parallel moral

dilemma about how they would deal with the ambivalent professional landscape in adult education

as they approached the threat of a teachers' political protest (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

To respond to views which suggest that narrative ignores the power dimensions of symbolic processes within organizations (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983; Cole, as cited in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995), I examined the social construction of organizational reality from each participant's point of view. This feminist approach stressed the differential ability of women administrators within the City Board to make their meanings matter. Working with Grumet's definition of gender, this thesis has attempted to understand curriculum as gender text by investigating the relationships between the curriculum of organizations and gender. Grumet states:

> *If sexism refers to the response of society to a particular sexual*
>
> *identity, gender refers to that sexual identity as it is experienced,*
>
> *acknowledged, and owned by the individual.* (Grumet as cited in
>
> Pinar et al., 1995, p. 358)

In the context of a large educational institution, this inquiry focussed on the experience or curriculum of women administrators as it is lived, embodied and politically structured. This approach situated the study apart from the bureaucratic function of developing curriculum; instead the narrative shifted to understanding curriculum, an intellectual, practical and political undertaking. This required a feminist perspective which was concerned with the disparate ways people are judged due to their gender and sexuality and the ways we construct or are constructed by the conventional system of gender (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 358ff.)

The first Conversation Focus Group explored the response of a board of education culture to their sexual identity as administrators. In revealing the intersection between the personal and professional aspects of their lives through symbolic and literal language, they described the professional landscape they experienced. Through our conversations, they came to understand more

clearly that the hierarchies controlled by men, both in their families and at the workplace were part of masculine epistemologies that not only emphasized control, but denied relationship and stressed differentiation (Kantner & Millman, 1975). Stories with regard to growing up, accessing knowledge about administration and needing to maintain community uncovered the institutionalization of the masculine ethic of rationality (Kantner & Millman, 1975). Although there was agreement that the City Board of Education was the first in recognizing the status of women more seriously with the energetic implementation of its sexual harassment policy (City Board of Education, 1989) and its equity policy (City of Board of Education, 1990), institutional sexism is still apparent in the 90's. The structures of power, symbolized by the tough-minded, analytic and unemotional comptroller, the forms of knowledge and the ways of knowing, epitomized by the barriers set up around budget keeping and "the gendered structure of consciousness privileged in schools, curriculum discourse and in society" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 366) continue to be produced by the current gender system. Its expression is realized in some of their stories around the concept that narrative discourse can fulfil several different purposes in the development of obedience in the workplace (Witten, 1993).

The second Focus Group Conversation wrestled with the fundamental question raised by Ruth Walker: "What is the purpose of a board of education?" Having been immersed in a discussion regarding the barriers and stereotyping that women administrators experienced at the City Board, they found themselves engaged in an analogous discussion about the differentiated status of Adult and Continuing Education with respect to the regular day school agenda. The political climate forced an examination of the historical and contemporary marginality of adult education. In turn, the nestedness of both young learners and their parents within classrooms, of the male and female staff in boards of education and of the legislators bound by the province's prescriptive philosophy, was recognized as integral to the understanding of these interwoven communities of people and structures. The administrators were well aware that the value of a framework of learning from birth

to death was being replaced by organizational structures and perceptions of Continuing Education driven by reduced provincial government funding and restructuring legislation.

No mandatory conclusions were reached in terms of how to overcome the disadvantaged status of either being a woman administrator or being part of Continuing Education. Generally, the despondency of these participants in terms of the future seemed to culminate in the anticipation of the teachers' political protest. As principals, some of them belonged to the same federation - at least for the time being. Nevertheless, in reconstructing the two Focus Group Conversations, I uncovered a powerful willingness to continue a commitment to the notions of equity, caring, community and attachment. For them, "caring is not simply a moral attitude: it is an event" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 380) where they understand that caring becomes situated in concrete human relationship by substituting relationships for rules (Grumet, 1988; Noddings, 1984). With the recognition that boards of education and eventually, provincial legislation, had created values that separate day school and adult education - two hierarchies without bridging - they argued for the erasure of both this dominance and the protection of specific domains which underscored broadly characterized class differences. They were looking for ways to hang on to their own values for survival by "knowing how the enemy was thinking" (Pat). Their values didn't need to be different - just how they managed them on the changing landscape. The women voiced a desire to model the habit of reconsidering decisions, when appropriate - for the expressed benefit of all learners and staff, and for an attitude of reconciliation and collaboration. Their hope, but not their presumption, was to make this commitment to gender, an inclusive strategy.

6.4 constructing the participant/researcher relationship

The way an interviewer acts, questions, and responds in an interview

shapes the relationship and, therefore, the ways participants respond

and give accounts of their experience. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994,

p. 420)

Throughout this exploration, the most provoking questions for me as researcher, pertained to narrative inquiry with respect to relationship and voice. Fundamentally, three aspects were considered: moral, epistemological and political. Whose story is it? Whose knowledge are we representing as truth? Whose story is represented in the text? Some of Coles'(1989) ethical understandings about his patients became part of my process in dealing with the participants' narratives. It was an endeavour to make our research relationship more equitable. For example when Coles' patient asked if her stories were making sense, it was reminiscent of the repeated inquiry by the community centre co-ordinator, Mary Lo, about whether I agreed with her interpretation of events in her life. Like Coles, "I put the question back to her, asked her what she meant" (Coles, 1989, p.12).

In establishing the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of my fieldnotes, I addressed gender sensitivity as an important social variable in all nonsexist research methods (Eichler, 1988). For example, when I expressed an unsolicited reaction to a sexist comment Mary made, I tried to remember that what I was hearing as a researcher was "to some considerable extent a function of [me], hearing" (Coles, 1989, p. 15). Consequently, I became more aware of my subjectivity and its impact on my participants. Even Coles' deeply disturbed male patient was able to acknowledge that he didn't know if he could tell his complete story to a male doctor. He understood that he would certainly tell him a different story than to a woman. In the same way, the women in the Conversation Focus Group would have told a different story, another "truth", to a male narrativist.

Researchers supporting a feminist methodology often write about the desirability of a nonhierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Cole & Knowles, 1993; 1995; Edwards, 1993) in order to be received into the participants' lives. However, they seem to ignore the possibility of a reversal of roles. As a narrativist, I had to remind myself "that as active listeners, we give shape to what we hear, make over their stories into something of our own" (Coles, 1989, p. 19). In terms of each participant/researcher relationship, I tried to negotiate "two people's narrative unities" (Clandinin, 1988, p. 3) as each story was reconstructed. However, as their stories emerged in text, I realized that the organizational status of the participant kept affecting the quality and content of our conversations and interpretations. I named this phenomenon "ladder chats". Their knowledge was different from mine, often with more political power.

Although Oakley (1981) and Finch (1984) maintain there is a cultural affinity between women interviewers and their female participants because they "share a subordinate structural position by virtue of their gender" (Finch, 1984, p. 76), this may not always be expressed. If "there are structurally based divisions between women on the basis of race and/or class that may lead them to have some different interests and priorities, then what has been said about woman-to-woman interviewing may not apply in all situations" (Edwards, 1993, p. 184). Generally, I felt freer about asking more probing personal questions to participants who were not above me on the organizational ladder. I didn't expect them to talk as intensely about Board policy as it affected women. Their interaction was more candid in sharing their working and personal lives as female managers. However, with senior officials, the in depth questions were often relegated to the professional issues such as anti-racist education policy and the development of sexual harassment policy. The personal inquiries as part of our "ladder chats" went only as far as they allowed. They were more experienced and much clearer in expressing how far they wanted to introspect personally in terms of their

workplace behaviour. It was significant in terms of the research relationship that the participant who had more authority in the workplace, often continued to maintain control over the conversation in these circumstances, in a nontraditional narrative manner. Because we were not on the same organizational rung, I had to work harder to be co-researchers in reconstructing their feminist stories of experience (Fine, 1992).

Through the analysis of research texts with the administrators, narrative inquiry helped to maintain the reality that all research participants were embodied individuals with specific differing orientations. Beth Morris' story provided a counterpoint to the universality of the heterosexual experiences expressed by most participants and researchers. It is important to avoid mistaking such dominant political prejudices as sexual knowledge as it relates to the workplace. Beth's account facilitates this understanding and affords an opportunity to contribute to such inclusionary knowledge. In this way, it can encourage the affirmation of diverse identities. "As qualitative researchers, we can more easily write as situated, positioned authors, giving up, if we choose, our *authority* over the people we study, but not the responsibility of *authorship* over our texts." (Richardson, 1990, pp. 27-28). This became an opportunity to challenge the homophobia that sometimes silences gays and lesbians.

6.5   maintaining confidentiality

Confidentiality is consistent with the aim of empowering respondents

in the sense that they retain control over the circumstances under

which their personal views enter into the discourse with others in

their social worlds. (Mishler as cited in Sarbin, 1986, p. 125)

The issue of confidentiality arose on a variety of levels throughout my thesis journey. It revealed itself repeatedly in terms of the most illusive persona in this thesis conversation - the reader. Initially, one of the most painful aspects I experienced was the withdrawal of a participant after several thoughtful conversations about her personal and professional experiences within our patriarchal organization. She had already chosen a particular poem to preface her narrative because she felt it so closely mirrored her experiences growing up and as a woman at the City Board. But eventually her desire to share these events was replaced by a sense of loyalty to her male manager. The possibility of his reading her narrative or any other reader identifying the actors made her feel that her story-telling was a tale-telling out - of- school.   The question of authorship became a serious epistemological consideration. Her recent enforced silence seemed to transcend her need to have her stories told. She didn't feel sufficient control over the readers who would interpret her story as it lay frozen on the page (Thomas, 1992). Fundamentally, she didn't want to hurt anyone. As researcher, I was very disappointed by her withdrawal, but came to understand the situation. It would have been much more difficult to come to terms with her decision at the end of my writing.

The ethical questions that might lead to appropriate guidelines about ownership of material evolving from a joint commitment to a study have very serious implications for researchers and participants alike. In this situation, I offered no resistance. I was too inexperienced to know if it was proper to try and change her mind. I was too close as an insider to inquire if some of our fieldnotes could be used to support other participants' ideas. As a result, I came to learn that to avoid the

possibility of withdrawal at the last moment, it is important to consider releasing participants from their commitment to the research project as soon as there are signs of expressed discomfort or a desire to discontinue the researcher/participant relationship. In honouring the reciprocity of the relationship, it is significant at the outset for the researcher to both understand, explain and maintain the moral obligation and responsibility to the participant as well as to the research. Some of the most significant returns I felt that I could offer was "good listening with its attendant reinforcement, catharsis, and self-enlightenment" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 123). This commitment also included the freedom to withdraw.

The former situation highlights the significance of going beyond the words on the official "consent form" to an understanding of the meaning of consent in a research context. Assuring the tentative participant of anonymity and confidentiality may not be as straightforward as initially intended or foreseen. "Stories of a life told by one person to another are joint productions; they are in a real sense 'co-authored' (E. M. Bruner, 1986; J. Bruner, 1990)" (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 127). Is it ethically possible therefore, for a researcher to guarantee anonymity for programs, institutions or participants? All participants understood that my name on the cover of the thesis and the description of my study would identify certain explicit parameters for the reader. The position that I took politically with regard to the discrepancies between day school and Continuing Education staffing was understood by all participants as it was expected to be by readers of my dissertation in the future. So the question again arises: how can we assure confidentiality of stories when the landscape is so precisely circumscribed by the narrator writing the thesis? After our conversations, the mentioned administrator suddenly began to appreciate that her field of work was so politically publicized by the City Board that her experiences and her relationship with other colleagues and supervisors would be readily recognizable by most readers. Changing the field of expertise by

naming another area in Continuing Education was not a choice; the verisimilitude (Van Maanen, 1988) of the accounts would be lost.

In trying to avoid additional problems of confidentiality with the administrators who had a visibly high profile in the Conversation Focus Group, I utilized a variation of composite characterization (Hollowell, 1977; He, 1998). Hollowell (1977) describes composite characterization as "the telescoping of character traits and anecdotes drawn from a number of sources into a single representative sketch" (pp. 25-26). The reader will decide if the uniqueness of each participant's voice is conveyed in consistent composite characters and whether I have avoided the possibility of stereotyping administrators as a group. My hope is that I have been allowed "to present the life while protecting the privacy of perfectly decent people" (Hollowell, 1977, p. 31). In the end, by yielding to the characteristic narrative process of mutual shaping and collaboration - providing ample opportunity for the reconstruction of stories with the participants - I tried to maintain the moral integrity of this research and safe-guarded the participants' well-being.

6.6   representing text

Participants and researchers are bound by discourse structures to a limited range of expression and understanding. These discourse conventions shape and in many ways limit how we construct our own versions of a life (life as experienced), how we organize and express ourselves through story (life as told), and how such a life can be understood and represented in text. (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p.130)

Text representation became an issue which emerged differently in the stories of Mary Lo and the Conversation Focus Group. Mary expressed concern that she not be pictured in my thesis as the typical community centre co-ordinator. Both philosophically and in action, she was different. She felt she did not represent the kind of blind loyalty that seemed necessary for a manager in a cultural social service agency to demonstrate, in order to retain her identity and power apart from the Board. Her narrative identity was more closely represented by the institutional values of a formal board of education and its patriarchal expression in many ways. Consequently, at the end of her story, we saw that she chose to transfer her career to the City Board as a tangible sign of the renewed intersection between the personal and professional values in her life. Mary Lo made me aware as researcher, of the need to avoid generalizations leading to stereotype - even if the counterpoint might create a more consistent and compelling organizational text.

Contrary to my expectation from the narrative literature (Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), the participants did not want to collaborate on all parts of the text pertaining to them. Mary Lo, Ruth Walker, Pat Daly and the Conversation Focus Group did not want to share the "Reflections" portion of their stories. Only Beth Morris expressed an active interest in reading and reconstructing the interpretation of her story. They insisted that text representation in

this second part belonged to me. They agreed that "their" initial story should be read,discussed and reconstructed together with the researcher; but in their eyes, the "Reflections" section was my autobiographical interpretation of the meaning I had understood. They were looking forward to reading the "Reflections" as my reconstruction in a bound thesis in the future. As a narrativist, I felt somewhat dismayed by the responsibility such trust imposed. But conversations with peers in graduate school revealed a prevalence of this attitude among participants working with researchers who used narrative method. It appeared to me that it would have been beneficial to have them point out whether I had captured the meaning of their stories as they had intended. Consensus was not a goal. I would have liked to have had more of them participate in the mutual reconstruction of my field notes as they became research texts to increase confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). But ,if indeed, we were trying to maintain an equitable relationship indicative of both narrative method and a feminist perspective, I had to view this unforeseen circumstance as another opportunity for "respecting, listening to, and giving attention to how the research act and process fit with everyday lived experiences" (Coles & Knowles, 1993, p. 486). I respected their decision by acknowledging and monitoring my own participation (Hatch & Wisnieswski, 1995).

6.7   emerging criteria for establishing standards of quality

I am arguing for a fluid set of criteria that reflects the fluidity of that

which the criteria elucidate, which is rigorous in being well thought

out but which still accounts for individual readings and

understandings of both texts and the consciousness of an individual.

In short, if narrative inquiry is a type of hermeneutic act, then the

criteria which we apply to it also ought to be hermeneutic in

character. (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995, p. 33)

While language is currently being developed for narrative inquiry, various terms are unfolding that may be more relevant for judging the qualities of a "good narrative"(chapter 4.3.d, Methodology). As a narrativist, I struggled throughout my thesis to grasp the intended meanings of the emerging criteria; and then to realize their intention. Ultimately, the answer to whether a written text is a "good narrative" is in the hands of the reader and other researchers.

Readers' conclusions are derived from the meanings of the text relative to their own worldviews and experiences (Merriam, 1988). However, traditional rationalist notions of reliability, validity, and generalizability are positivist criteria for establishing quality which do not correspond to the paradigm shift to more interpretive research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kuhn, 1970). The historical background of narrative inquiry and story (chap. 4.3.a). Chapter (4.3.d) pointed toward the direction for how qualitative research could be valued in a meaningful way. The nature of the narrative paradigm used in this thesis, discloses modified epistemological and ontological positions which reveal a constructivist view of knowledge and reality from a variety of perspectives. For some of these reasons, we must continue to look for other ways of thinking and writing about what makes a narrative truthful, adequate, and meaningful.

As part of an ongoing discussion, I welcome researchers' and readers' application of the various criteria of narrative quality which might make the work narratives of the seven women administrators more meaningful to them. Do the emerging criteria for narrative quality such as "trustworthiness" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), "plausibility" (Polkinghorne, 1995) and "fidelity" (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) fulfil the requirement for being hermeneutic in character? As a narrativist, I took the challenge of responding to those criteria very seriously, through my writing and through the relationships with participants. Hopefully, with continuous dialogue in the future, a variety of terms will begin to balance the various competing narrative strands and criteria.

Chapter 7.   Conclusion: becoming fluent

A feminized criticism enlarges and enriches the conversational circle

by admitting women...as subjects, readers, writers, and critics. It

enriches the conversation by naming and admitting female

experience... (Pagano, 1990, p. xx).

This study shares the work narratives of seven professional women at a board of education by exploring alternatives to practices and assumptions which preserve male authority. Through a feminist perspective, both in substance and narrative form, we have named the female experience and temporarily broken the silence imposed on females by patriarchal institutions (Gold, 1994). The approach of bringing gender to inquiry in the context of storied practice in a traditional educational bureaucracy allowed us to reconceptualize the way gender enters our concepts of knowledge and our ways of knowing (Pinar et al., 1995). The professional knowledge landscape was presented as a metaphorical concept which represented an epistemological site for the construction and reconstruction of such knowledge. In this way, we have cultivated the possibility of discussion that enlarges the conversational circle.

I approached the end of this thesis journey by reconstructing what I've come to know in the previous chapter on educational significance. In this conclusion, which acts as a beginning for future endeavours, I describe the direction I would like to explore along with other narrativists, as a result of my inquiry.

The most significant disclosure is the powerful commitment of these women in positions of responsibility, to the notions of equity, caring and community. Attention to the ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984) shows that people are concerned about the whole of moral life in everyday situations, not only in crises. We must enter a dialogue in order to decide how to respond to the needs of others. In naming this cultivation of relationship," interpersonal reasoning", Noddings

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(1991) described five significant features to think about and expand in the future as researchers. They are an attitude of solicitude or care, attention, flexibility, effort aimed at cultivating the relation, and a search for an appropriate response. My thesis observation about women admininstrators' dedication to caring theoretically corresponds with the above discussion. Noddings created an historical picture by tracing Gilligan's (1982) dispute with Kohlberg's (1981; 1984) individualistic description of moral development and then by citing Lyons' (1983) acknowledgement of the centrality of listening, connecting and taking responsibility for the relationship itself. Throughout this thesis, we created similar links with Belenky and colleagues (1986) who address the power and reality of connected ways of knowing and relating in women's lives. Noddings noted that, not only in narrative are we using experience-centred research, but also in pedagogy and ethics in the fields of nursing and law (see Women in Legal Education, 1988; Watson cited in Noddings, 1991). She highlighted the fact that "we are beginning to appreciate a capacity historically associated with women" (Noddings, 1991, p. 158). Since the development of a moral orientation of caring demands sustained interpersonal contact, feminist teachers, administrators and researchers in education must be poised to take the next step so that students can learn to be carers as they see caregiving modelled. Working with Grumet's definition of gender, this study has attempted to understand curriculum as gender text by investigating the relationships between the curriculum of organizations and gender. This required a feminist perspective which was concerned with the disparate ways people are judged due to their gender and sexuality and the ways we construct or are constructed by the conventional system of gender. The work narratives repeatedly tell the story of institutional sexism in the 90's at a board of education, with no simple solution in sight. As a result of this inquiry, I believe future narrative research which inquires into and helps to facilitate an attitude or framework of advocacy would benefit the status of women in educational bureaucracies.

By the end of our conversations, as the teachers were planning a political protest, the Conversation Focus Group didn't see any resolution to the expressed conflict between the seemingly privileged status of the teachers in the day school and the differentiated status of Continuing Education instructors. It became obvious that the political was a daily reality in the personal lives of these administrators. Similarly, only the senior officials, Pat Daly and Ruth Walker saw the potential of creating a community which shared resources, both human and pedagogical. They tried to persuade women administrators not to remain so isolated by seeking individual solutions when everyone is aware that the others are experiencing the same discrimination. This observation may confirm the continuing need for researchers to listen to women's voices as they strategize how to effect change in the power structure within the bureaucracies where they work.

By bringing gender to inquiry, the administrators' work narratives became valuable as a literature, where women could read themselves into the narrative of administration and reform.These administrators were looking for ways to hang on to their own values for survival by "knowing how the enemy was thinking" (Pat). Narrative researchers could facilitate women's commitment to gender by making it an inclusive strategy in their work.

The issue of confidentiality revealed itself repeatedly in terms of the most elusive persona in this thesis conversation - the reader. With the withdrawal of a participant, the question of authorship became a serious epistemological consideration. This situation led to ethical questions that identified the need for appropriate guidelines about ownership of material and informed consent. The implications for researchers and participants alike are serious both in moral and scholarship terms. In my situation, I was too inexperienced to know if it were proper to encourage her change her mind. Narrative researchers need more opportunity to tell their own stories in this area and to use their stories as a vehicle for sharing such knowledge.

Consequently, I utilized different text representation. I used a variation of composite characterization as a way of protecting the confidentiality of the highly profiled women in the Focus Group. In the end, by the narrative process of mutual shaping and collaboration, I tried to maintain the moral integrity of this research and to safe-guard the participants' well-being. Sharing different ways of maintaining confidentiality of participants remains a viable direction for enhancing narrative method.

While language is currently being developed for narrative inquiry, various themes are still unfolding which may be more relevant for judging the qualities of a "good "narrative. As a narrativist, I struggled to grasp the intended meanings of terms such as trustworthiness, transparency, adequacy, authenticity, believability, and fidelity and then to realize their intention. Readers' conclusions will be derived from the meanings of the text relative to their own worldviews and experiences. Although our fundamental interest should be in storying, narrative researchers need to continue to look for other ways that are not positivist, ways of thinking and writing about what makes a narrative truthful, adequate, and meaningful.

My personal intentions in furthering this inquiry are in the areas of contributing to feminist, narrative and educational administration literature. Researchers need to create an overview and a clearer picture of the new dimensions of adult education reform during these changing times in order to understand the implications for professional practice. We need to narratively examine what the implications are for administrators and teachers of adults pursuing a lifelong learning philosophy with a dearth of funding from government.

In terms of teacher education, I would like to advance the development of various feminist frameworks to be used narratively in the study of administration and leadership in education. This reconceptualization could enhance practice in the field. Finally, I would like to participate in the

dialogue for teacher education courses, pre-service and in-service, which examines texts in an effort to know who we are in adult education and our relationship to the educational system.

Currently, through in-service workshops, my own supervisory staff at an Adult ESL Administration Centre and I are sharing experiences narratively as they try to implement government-driven standards of quality for ESL with their instructors in the field. The issues and answers we discuss in an ongoing dialogue constitute the basis of our caring and knowledge. They have come to know that their relationship with their instructors is as important and compelling as teaching for content.

If women of responsibility are to promote and benefit from their personal and professional efforts for social change, we, as narrative researchers also have an obligation - we need to understand the tensions that they work under in an effort to assist their coming to know how these barriers may be overcome. Having women narratively experience the "intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education (Dewey, 1938/1963, p. 20), is the first step in catching the drift of the cultural conversation in organizations. It is a beginning to understanding that "women stand in a different relationship to knowledge from men, and that makes every difference in education" (Dewey, p. 16). The next step is to become fluent in the language in which the conversation happens.

Chapter 8. References

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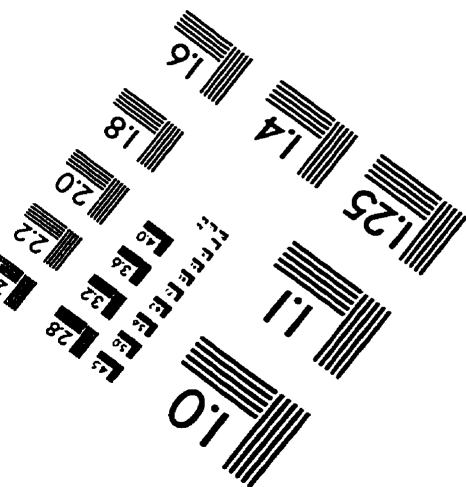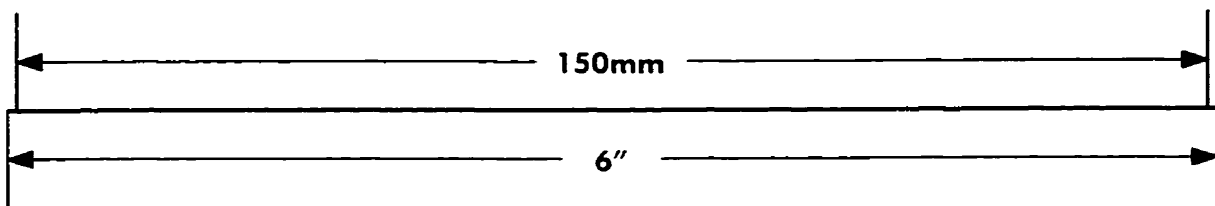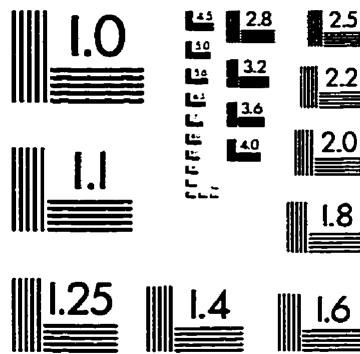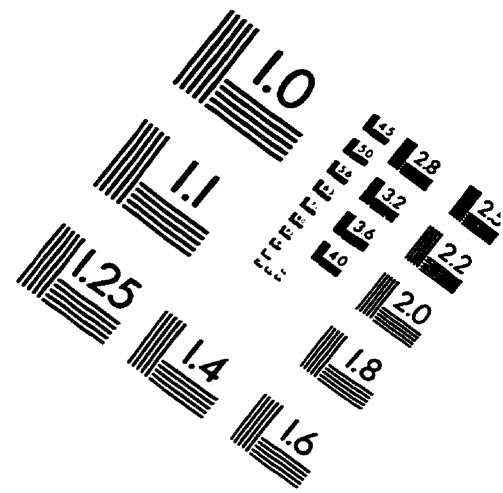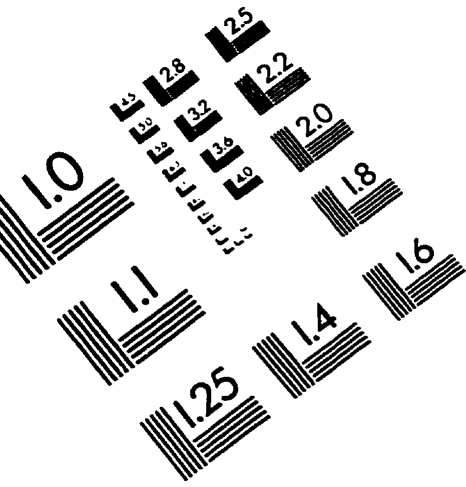
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