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Concepts and Methods for Using Narrative in Teacher Education

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Abstract

Someone tells you a story. It seems wrong. It misrepresents someone you care about. But it has been told by someone you do not want to offend or contradict. What do you do? You feel you must say something—set the record straight, absolve your friend, clarify your relationship to her, assert your view on what is right and wrong. How do stories provoke this sense of urgency? When a story is told and interpreted, nothing less than truth, power, morality, and individual agency can be at stake, and these stakes are too high to ignore. The stories analyzed in this book illustrate that narratives bring into play those elements that bring meaning to life . . .

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CONCEPTS AND METHODS FOR USING NARRATIVE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Betsy Rymes

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Someone tells you a story. It seems wrong. It misrepresents someone you care about. But it has been told by someone you do not want to offend or contradict. What do you do? You feel you must say something—set the record straight, absolve your friend, clarify your relationship to her, assert your view on what is right and wrong. How do stories provoke this sense of urgency? When a story is told and interpreted, nothing less than truth, power, morality, and individual agency can be at stake, and these stakes are too high to ignore. The stories analyzed in this book illustrate that narratives bring into play those elements that bring meaning to life:

Truth: Stories can be accurate or inaccurate. But even inaccurate stories may be taken up and used as "fact."

Power: How stories are interpreted may have just as much to do with the power of those telling and listening to them as with their factual content.

Morality: The way stories are told and interpreted are always positioning tellers and audiences within a moral framework: Characters are "good" or "bad." How we tell stories and react to them positions us as "good" or "bad" people.

Individual
Agency: How stories are told and interpreted can affect others'
           beliefs and actions.

When we understand the social, interactional, and linguistic layers involved in the telling and interpretation of any narrative, we can harness the force of narrative to learn about and influence our lives and the lives of others.

Because storytelling is such a common and powerful means to understand and relate to students and colleagues, as well as understand and take action oneself, narrative is critical to the practice of teaching. This book is about the insights and opportunities for action that narrative can bring. The teacher and student stories analyzed in this volume illustrate key issues that surround the telling of any story. Our goal in this chapter is to introduce concepts and methods used in the rest of the book. We build on the research history provided in the first chapter, drawing on literature from sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, psychology, and linguistic anthropology to introduce the methods that subsequent chapters use. These methods of narrative analysis can help educators to learn about themselves and others and to act more effectively.

In what follows, we conceptualize the role of truth, power, morality, and individual agency, and we outline methods for empirically studying these critical elements that are in play in any narrating event.

TRUTH: NEGOTIATING TRUTH
THROUGH NARRATIVE POETICS AND PERFORMANCE

At first, it seems as if "truth" or factual accuracy would be the most important criterion for determining whether a story told is a good one. If a story tells the truth about something, then it is fair. If it does not, it is not. Truth in narrative is not just about factual accuracy, however. Narratives do not transparently represent the world but instead select from among many potentially relevant facts and craft them into a coherent whole. Spoken narratives are also performed, and the character of the performance influences the effects a story will have on an audience (Baumann & Briggs, 1990). Truth is poetically crafted in every story and negotiated within every act of storytelling. We need to explore not only whether a story tells the truth (i.e., whether it contains verifiable facts) but also how narrators construct and perform their stories to create truths about how we should understand and act toward others.

Poetics: Constructing a Narrated Event

How is truth poetically constructed in a narrative? Consider a story you've heard that contains claims you don't believe are true. It tells about, for example, a time when your friend made a potentially disrespectful remark like, "This school is a nightmare!" What made this statement count as "offensive" within the story? This may be less a matter of whether your friend actually uttered the words in question and more a matter of how they are interpreted—more a matter of "narrative truth" and less a matter of "historical truth" (Bruner, 1999). "She couldn't have meant it that way!" is a much different response than "She never said that!" A tape recording could easily prove whether your friend did or did not utter certain words. But how can we ever know what she "meant"? Presenting what someone "meant" in a story is a matter of selecting bits of context that shape how her statements are understood (Ochs & Capps, 2001; Wortham, 2001). Narrative analysis encourages us to look, as authors within this volume do, at how storytellers' poetic arrangement of narrative chunks sets up relationships within a story and how, through these relationships, a particular stance toward events and characters emerges. Your friend may come off looking bad not just because the narrator reported something she said but also because the narrator arranged the story to communicate that her utterance was bad. This volume provides some accessible tools for exploring the poetic arrangement of stories and uncovering the tacit evaluations that narrators make.

Performance: Emergent Truth in a Narrating Event

A story does more than *represent* an event, however. Stories are also *performed* in conversation. In other words, the events of a story are always described within a narrating event that takes place between the narrator and audience (Wortham, 2001, 2006). A story not only sets up discourse-internal poetic relationships, as it describes and evaluates a narrat*ed* event, it also has performative effects within a narrat*ing* event, as the narrator tries to accomplish something with the storytelling and the audience reacts to that attempt. When you hear a story about your friend, for example, you are engaged in a narrating event, an interaction with someone who could be challenging you to defend your friend, attempting to bond with you, or just sharing a relaxing moment after a stressful day. In telling and reacting to this story, the narrator and audience work together to create a kind of truth—a lived reality about how people would interpret and react to a situation or a character. This kind of truth often resonates much more with an audience than a truth backed up with facts and figures. Paradoxically, storytellers can often construct a sense of their

own truthfulness by *not* explicitly backing up their claims. By not explicitly backing up claims but instead poetically crafting and performing narratives that make claims about people, storytellers can be even more convincing than if they inserted factual footnotes at every turn (Fox, 2001). In conversational storytelling events, truth and believability are emergent qualities agreed on collectively as a story unfolds.

Through poetics and performance, narrators and their audiences construct often-shared accounts of what happened, how we should evaluate what happened, and what kinds of people the characters must have been to have acted like that. Another kind of truth that can emerge in storytelling involves the relative positions of the people who are listening to the story. Within a conversation that includes storytelling (a "narrating event"), a story and reactions to the story position audience members with respect to the kinds of characters and issues raised in the story (the "narrated event"). As the story about your friend unfolds, for example, you have choices about how to react. How you react could be transferred onto the relationships within the story being told. If your friend's remark ("This school is a nightmare!") is presented as offensive in the narrated event, by aligning with your friend in the narrating event, you are potentially positioned as offensive too. Those who align with the story's theme are positioned as good people, who all recognize this comment as problematic. Those who contest this perspective may be positioned as bad people. In this way, the narrative truth represented in the narrated event could become a lived truth in the narrating event. Thus, a story is never "just" a story. It is a story that could have lived consequences in the here and now of its telling, perhaps long after the story has been told.

Narrative and Difference

Narrative truth is not always agreed on in practice. One reason for this is that people bring different experiences and perspectives to any story. Depending on the background of participants in a storytelling event, our perspectives will be more or less closely aligned. Because of this alignment, or lack thereof, a story can strike some listeners as accurate, well crafted, and good, but others may see it as an unjust misrepresentation. We select different features and combine them to make different points, to foreground certain features and background others. We craft stories differently, hear them differently, and thus can potentially be positioned differently by different storytelling events.

Narratives and the resources used to convey positions within them are thus what the sociolinguist Jan Blommaert (2005) calls "placed resources," the meaning of which depends on the positions of the people participating in the narrating event. If we are in a situation in which all people are likely to agree with us, our narratives are likely to be effective.

But if we are surrounded by different kinds of people, the story may never get off the ground. How can we know the relevant presuppositions that go into understanding a narrative? How do we know how narrative presuppositions "place" or position us in a given storytelling event? In addition to looking at the text of a narrative, we need to look at the cultural backgrounds and varying beliefs among relevant subgroups in our context. This background information can suggest why individuals tell and react to stories in various ways.

This volume analyzes narrating as one important site in which teachers and students do cognitive, ethical, and interpersonal work. Narratives, because of the various truths represented in them, both carry traces of our differences and provide a medium for the negotiation of those differences. This use of narrative to understand the depth of our differences—the extent to which we all see "truth" differently—arises in all the chapters in this volume. Juzwik raises the question, for example, of how a teacher's narrative depiction of the Holocaust positions a student whose relative was a Nazi soldier. How can truth be represented in a way that redeems this student's family member (and the student participating in the class discussion)? Kerschbaum analyzes how two undergraduates position each other through stories about their dramatically different high school experiences in a relatively privileged and a relatively underprivileged school. How can those chasms in experience be represented in a way that explains and justifies the current peer-to-peer relationship between these two students? Johnson looks at how a teacher candidate's story can be interpreted as both evidence of a pre-service teacher's sense of entitlement and a critique of the elitist structure of higher education.

Each of these analyses raises questions not only about whether the educational stories are accurate—although truth is often an important and contested issue, one that is especially evident in narratives about the Holocaust—but also about how the stories are poetically crafted to do the cognitive, ethical, and interpersonal work of understanding and identifying oneself and others. These analyses are about truths that emerge within storytelling events for people in particular contexts and for particular purposes. Each of the authors emphasizes that, by attending to the poetics and performance of these occasions and by analyzing the diverse narrative voices among teachers and students and within teacher education, we may be able to contribute to the fashioning of new truths that serve teachers and students better.

Methods for Uncovering Narrative Truth

To understand what narratives have to tell us about diversity and other aspects of teaching and learning, we need a set of tools for understanding both the poetic organization of a story and the performative effects of that

story. Traditional analyses of narrative focused primarily on the structure of the narrative and built on a framework for narrative set forth by Labov and Waletsky (1967/1997). Following the idea of a literary narrative that includes recognizable elements, Labov proposed a six-component standard form for oral narratives: Abstract, Orientation, Evaluation, Complication, Resolution, and a Coda (this account is described in more detail in Chapter 4). In this book, you will see that most narrative analyses start with some sort of narrative chunking of this type. This type of pattern can become a tool for crafting a consistent narrative truth. A narrative "resolution" that involves punching someone in "self-defense," for example, only makes sense when framed by an orientation, evaluation, and complication that begs to be resolved with such a rash action. Within the standard expectations of this form, truth—the truth that self-defense was necessary, for example—is judged on the basis of the interconnectedness of these parts. As we analyze a narrative form such as this, it becomes clear that the relationship between, say, the orientation section (or "setting") of a story and the evaluation or complications within a story can make it seem that certain courses of action are more appropriate than others (Capps & Ochs, 1997). In this sense, we can examine the chunks of a narrative to explore how a narrator is constructing a coherent narrative truth.

Regardless of how careful a narrator is in crafting the story internally (e.g., of linking an orientation to a complication), effective narrators must also simultaneously monitor and account for an audience's reactions. That is why analyzing oral narratives is not simply a matter of structural or grammatical analysis but also a matter of *discourse* analysis. What methods do we use to understand how narratives unfold in interaction? Instead of specifying a normative linear structure, a specific slot for a dramatic event, or a specific slot for a conclusion, Ochs and Capps argue in their wide-ranging treatise on conversational narrative, *Living Narrative* (2001), that it is more fruitful to analyze oral narratives in terms of the degree to which stories attend to different dimensions that unfold during a story's telling:

Tellership: who is telling the story;
Tellability: how interesting the story is;
Embeddedness: how the story is situated within a stretch of talk;
Linearity: the sequential or temporal ordering of events; and
Moral Stance: the moral values being conveyed through the telling.

These dimensions are highly variable across narratives. The dimensions of "tellability" and "tellership," in particular, highlight the part of narrative analysis that attends to its performance in an interaction. Some facts universally strike us as highly "tellable." A murder or an act of adul-

tery, for example, is a fact that, in and of itself, renders a story exciting. But a storyteller who is attuned to her audience can make nearly anything tellable by noticing how an audience responds to story details and making narrative choices accordingly as the story unfolds. In this way, an audience, even by their simple physical presence, acts as a co-teller of any story. Thus, reporting someone who said "This school is a nightmare!" might be made into an entertaining story—a tellable oral narrative—by the way the storyteller frames that comment both within structural expectations for a narrative and in terms of the audience she is addressing. Therefore, tellability and (co-)tellership are tightly linked dimensions of storytelling that are highly contingent not only on the facts and structural expectations that feed the narrated event but also on the relationships that are in play during the narrating event.

Discourse analysts have tools for investigating the co-tellership and tellability of a narrative. How do story recipients respond to the storyteller's setup? What a storyteller means can only be accomplished if listeners agree, during the course of the telling, to that meaning. Depending on how listeners respond, "This school is a nightmare!" could take on any number of functions: a joke, a complaint, an act of blatant disrespect or negligence, a cry for help, a politically rallying cry, and so on. Part of what that comment means can be analyzed by its situation within a story's structure. But whether listeners laugh, frown, or get up and storm out of the room will also shape how that story unfolds, what that comment really meant, and what it will mean in the future (Ochs, 1994). These reactions also determine whether a remark subsequently counts as "tellable" or mundane.

The kind of truth that emerges in a storytelling event—the lived reality that follows a narrating event—can be analyzed by attending carefully to the story structure and the way in which story elements are reacted to in the narrating event. As the narratives analyzed in the following chapters illustrate, identifying a story's structure can be a starting point for an analysis. Identifying how that structure is shaped by the others present within a narrative performance is a necessary next step. By attending to the tension between narrative structure and narrative performance, these analyses attend to emergent truths that affect the people telling, listening, and being told about.

POWER: THE NATURALIZATION OF CONVENTION THROUGH NARRATIVE POETICS AND PERFORMANCE

Once we recognize that narrative truth, although oriented to verifiable facts, is also emergent within the storytelling event, we cannot ignore the possibility that some people's versions of the truth may take precedence.

There are not only multiple versions of the truth, but some of these versions normally count more than others. Our narrative resources are not only "placed" or socially positioned, but they are also differentially valued. Within a narrating event, some ways of telling a story may seem intuitively more "natural" than others. Why is this?

Sometimes certain perspectives come to seem "natural" because people in higher positions in a structural hierarchy hold them. Other interpretations seem "marginal" because people in marginal structural slots hold them. Narrative can reinforce the power of dominant points of view if powerful people deploy their points of view in telling and reacting to narratives. Moreover, discourse-internal features of narratives can carry those dominant views from interaction to interaction. Parmentier (1994) calls this the "naturalization of convention."

However, narrative performances also provide some degree of wiggle room—no story is told in a vacuum, and when alternative perspectives are voiced, there is a possibility to contest even the most structurally embedded, "naturalized" perspectives. Chapters in this volume analyze the structural, discourse-internal language of narrative and also the performative effects of those narratives in an encounter to expose the workings—and sometimes the undoing—of this "naturalization" process.

Discourse-Internal Power

How do linguistic resources make conventions seem "natural?" Narratives are only one mechanism through which people accomplish naturalization, but they can be powerful ones. Within a narrative, relationships between words and the sounds that compose words gain power by constructing more or less repeatable chunks of language. These repeatable chunks come to represent natural-seeming perspectives. Think, for example, of a poetically repeatable phrase from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, his hope for the day when children will "be judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin." This fragment is resonant, in part, because of the simple alliteration between the words "content," "character," and "color." This similitude renders the fragment repeatable, and so it becomes memorable apart from the context in which it is told. In the same way, the repeated parallel iterations of "I have a dream…" in King's speech, just like Shakespeare's "To be or not to be" or the Bible's "Thou shalt not…" have turned these collections of words into memorable bits that stand on their own. This kind of speech is easily extractable from its context, and thus it can circulate widely and have the power to influence how people think about things (Baumann & Briggs, 1990).

Once something is extractable, it can be more easily placed into new contexts (like other narratives). "I have a dream" is not only a memorable phrase, but it is also one that has been used and reused in interaction after interaction ever since Martin Luther King, Jr. first spoke those words. So, paradoxically, discourse-internal features of language such as alliteration or poetic repetition can facilitate the traveling of a text and its message beyond the initial setting of its occurrence—making that message endure as something more "natural," not simply an isolated feature of one speech event that arises from a particular perspective. Well-crafted narratives, just like isolated phrases within them, can become powerful beyond the immediate context of their occurrence, in part, because of their discourse-internal structure. Such narratives are "powerful" because they naturalize the storylines they convey. This recognizable combination of features, deployed within narrative, may subsequently travel beyond narrating events. Moreover, these poetic, recontextualized chunks may have existed long before singular narrating events as a part of some preexistent, allegedly "natural" discourse ("Thou shalt not…").

Performative Power

The structural features of words and their conventionally understood meanings combine to create such discourse-internal effects. In performance, those effects can be taken up in normative or non-normative ways. In King's speech, for example, he not only makes great use of language, but he also makes great *re*-use of language, taking entextualized bits from the past and reperforming them for new effects during his speech. From the Declaration of Independence, he takes, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," and he recontextualizes this recognizable bit in a way that resonates anew, in the context of the civil rights movement. When King pronounces "that *all* men are created equal," he draws on the lasting power of the original declaration, and he brings it into service of the current performance—a black man demanding that this sentiment be honored (Urban, 2001).

Narratives are powerful because they have memorable discourse-internal structures such as repetition of various sorts and because we can extract those memorable "truths" from specific narratives and re-perform those bits to achieve new effects. Just as the "truth" of a story emerges in the tension between discourse-internal poetics and performative aspects of narrative, so a narrative's effective "power" emerges within a narrating event through the combination of discourse-internal relationships (such as the memorable clause penned by the founding fathers, "All men are created equal") with the emerging relationships between audience

members and the storyteller in the narrating event (such as reminder by Martin Luther King, Jr., that "*All* men are created equal"). King told stories and used other genres in a way that overcame previously entrenched, powerful belief systems by skillfully redeploying linguistic resources in new contexts.

Reproducing and Inverting Power Hierarchies Through Narrative Poetics and Performance

But how powerful can narrative form and performance be relative to the social hierarchies that are present in any storytelling event? Richard Parmentier (1994) observed that, in some social contexts, "power might be best viewed as the harnessing of forces through innovative semiotic tropes rather than as the manipulation of cultural conventions by differentiated social hierarchies" (p. 124). This suggests that, counter to typical worries about necessary silence in the face of higher-ups, innovative semiotic tropes (such as a well-crafted counterstory or King's recycling of "*All* men are created equal") could redress an offensive situation while minimizing risk. It could be that a well-told counternarrative or rebuttal could have an effect despite preexisting hierarchies.

The power of language may in fact sometimes be more powerful than the power of the entrenched social hierarchy. The narrative analyses within this volume begin to illustrate how narrative force can in some cases be harnessed to contend with seemingly intractable social hierarchies and differences. The chapters in this volume all illustrate how certain features of a story may become entextualized in powerful ways, taken up and reperformed to great effect. Taken as a group, these chapters also suggest how social hierarchies variably influence the performative effects of narratives. Implied in Juzwik's chapter is consideration of the extent to which a teacher's rhetoric—especially compellingly performed narratives—can exclude student voices and perspectives. Thus, it is possible that the teacher may have so much power within the classroom that her rhetoric will inevitably dominate (cf. Juzwik, 2006). Kerschbaum's student narratives, however, illustrate how stereotypical social hierarchies can be subverted through narrative and counternarrative. Kerschbaum's analysis of two students' parallel stories about their respective experiences—at an elite private high school and a substandard public high school—illustrates how a well-placed story can flip a typical hierarchy. The contrast between the potential for reproduction of established hierarchy in Juzwik's study and the reversal in Kerschbaum's illustrates the potential for narrative analyses to address the various possible forms that individual stories can take within educational settings.

Methods for Uncovering Rhetorical Power

To understand what narrative analysis can tell us about power and hierarchy in teacher education, we need to take up the analytic tools that uncover those uses of language that construct new relationships or reproduce old hierarchies. The power of language to craft ready-made, reproducible bits resides, in part, in the poetic ways we memorably combine linguistic forms. So our work as analysts includes deciphering the patterns of language that recur across interactions. These patterns include rhythm and rhyme but also countless other features such as alliteration, repetition, and parallelism. A memorable phrase such as King's rhythmic repetition of "I have a dream" or even the rhythmic rhyme of Johnny Cochran's "If the glove doesn't fit, we must acquit" can carry these phrases from interaction to interaction, collecting standard meanings or even reworking the meanings to create new understandings that can be memorably conveyed in a subsequent encounter. Analysis, then, involves tracking these patterned bits and their trajectories across interactions.

Poetic devices such as parallelism, rhyme, and repetition are resources for our work as discourse analysts when we look at a transcript. Moreover, when we listen to a tape or watch a video of an interaction, we can also analyze the patterns of rhythm, intonation, and stress that make certain bits of language memorable and repeatable. Think, for example, of the difference between a mumbled version of "This school is a nightmare" and a pert, smiling version: "This school is a NIGHTmare!" One version might portray a depressed, lackadaisical teacher. One might portray a spunky, funny version of a tongue-in-cheek complaint. Indeed, "This school is a nightmare!" (and its recognizable, patterned intonation) could be taken up by an entire peer group as a silly complaint, a funny refrain, a shared in-joke. The possibilities are endless. The point is that language and its delivery present us with new ways of making bits of language memorable.

In a narrating event, these memorable bits of language carry power. As narrative analysts, we can track how these bits of language are crafted and how they function within a narrative structure, but we can also track how they are taken up by a listening audience and how, in turn, they are carried forward into subsequent narratives and interactions. By looking at a transcript or videotape, we can observe "power" as a process of naturalization of convention—or as resistance to such naturalization—by analyzing whether poetically crafted bits of language are taken up by others and how. In Kerschbaum's chapter, for example, one student positions her own meager high school education in direct parallel with her peer's account of an elite private school curriculum. Rather than accounting for her experience in terms of a stereotypical lament about her lack of preparation for college, however, the public school alumnus uses the par-

allelism of her and her peer's accounts to create a more heroic role for herself. "I don't know how I ended up here [at this elite university], no idea, yeah, but it's worth it," she concludes. The implication, through the parallel, is that her rise to the university was much more impressive given her background. Through the parallelism, she avoids a possible alternative reading of her trajectory—that she is a lowly individual who will probably not do well at university because she has not had the advantages of a quality high school education. It may even be that, by framing her story this way, she constructs a new truth, creating a reality in which college success is more likely for her than for a peer who has taken her own education for granted. Exercising power through narration, then, becomes a matter of reproducing or reworking canonical expectations, rather than being passively subject to them. As Kerschbaum nicely illustrates, analyzing narrative involves finding these concrete poetic traces.

MORALITY: FROM CRAFTING A MORAL TALE TO ANSWERING TO A MORAL HIERARCHY

Stories do more than allow narrators and audience members to establish truth and enact power. They also allow speakers and hearers to establish a shared sense of what is good and bad, right and wrong. Traditional moral tales such as fables explicitly tell us how to behave. In more subtle ways, ordinary stories can also position us within a moral hierarchy. Sometimes these tacit moral messages are communicated through aspects of the narrated story, such as the representation of morally questionable "bad guys." Sometimes moral messages are communicated through ethically salient positioning within the narrating event, as when the audience members position themselves against bad guys and their actions as they unfold in the storytelling. As Johnson writes, listening to teachers' narratives can be a way of "helping teachers learn more about themselves as moral beings." This listening requires that we understand the relationships described in the narrated content of the story and that we grapple with the moral positions that these narrated relationships can project onto the narrating event.

Narrative as Moral Craft: Constructing a Moral Tale Through Narrative Particularity

A moral hierarchy arranges one morality with respect to others. Any story tacitly contains moral stances that position some moral judgments as superior to others and some characters as morally superior to others.

Within a narrative, tellers draw on various poetic devices to evoke these relative moral positions. Specific words and other linguistic devices describe and evaluate roles and behaviors, highlight certain acts as good, condemn certain actions as reprehensible, and invoke various stereotypes. But within stories, characters are not unambiguously "good" or "bad" the way electrons carry "positive" or "negative" charges. The best stories invite listeners into the world of the characters by situating actions within a detailed set of concerns. So, just as story structure can be designed to make a story believable or bits arranged to develop a story's rhetorical power, so details within a story can be fashioned in ways that create empathy and compassion and develop a nuanced moral hierarchy not necessarily based on natural or immutable laws but on the unique, situated details of the story.

As Martha Nussbaum (1995) has written, when we read a good novel or hear a good story, we are constituted as judges by that story. Our judgment, ideally, hinges on an understanding of the story details, not simply on generic versions of "good" and "bad" behavior. In other words, there are no rules detailed enough to accommodate the complexity of our daily lives. For that reason, there is always the need for aesthetic judgment. This aesthetic judgment goes into the crafting of a narrative in conversation.

The analyses in this volume illustrate in detail how storytellers construct characters, set up nuanced contrasts, or create parallels between figures from the past and figures within a narrated event. Good storytellers do not simply and straightforwardly delineate who is good, who is bad. Storytellers paint a portrait of humans behaving in the midst of a range of complex relationships and concerns. "Show, don't tell" is generic creative writing workshop advice. But it is equally applicable to the crafting of conversational narrative. "Harriet is a bad girl" is likely to be an unacceptable narrative utterance. But a careful description of a character's behavior, including quoted speech, coordinated narrative arrangement, strategic deployment of pronouns, repetition, and parallelism, may convey disdain and dismissal far more effectively. So, the aesthetics of a narrative, and judgment of a narrative's aesthetic value, is, essentially, a moral judgment. The devil (and the angel) are in the details, and respecting those details, representing them with accuracy and sense, are the means through which narrators construct a moral hierarchy within their tales.

Narrative as Moral Performances With Consequences

Aesthetic crafting is critical. But the palpable moral force of a narrative comes from its position within a narrating event. The aesthetics of a well-wrought narrative are only morally relevant when they become "answer-

able" in interaction (Bakhtin, 1993). Just as a judge reaching a verdict can determine someone's life or death, when we hear a story, our decisions about the relative merits of the story's protagonist can have real consequences. The depiction of characters, the juxtaposition of these characters with respect to one another, and the placement of them within a morally charged context—all these are largely aesthetic choices distinct from the event of the story's telling. But as we have argued above, a story is never just a story

When that narrator said "This school is a nightmare," what kinds of moral lessons were at stake? What was the storyteller doing when she made the decision to tell this story, and how is her story answerable in that interaction? Obvious questions of moral responsibility emerge: Would you, by not speaking up for your own interpretation of this story, be acting inappropriately? Through the act of telling this story, the narrating event becomes a moral arena in which all individuals are answerable to the ethical issues raised in the story.

Methods for Uncovering Narrative Morality and Its Interactional Effects

Given that moral hierarchies are essential elements of any narrative, methods for delineating those hierarchies within stories are critical to narrative analysis. As described in the previous section, features of language can become solidified into memorable bits that are loaded with expectations—expectations that can either be taken up, naturalizing certain positions, or subverted through rhetorical shifts. Kerschbaum's analysis of the parallel composition classroom stories, for example, illustrates how parallelism and careful arrangement of story chunks may be able to subvert expected hierarchies and expectations for academic achievement.

These same poetic devices that make language memorable or repeatable can also be used to situate narrative details within a moral hierarchy. Narrative details are meaningless out of context. Any single detail is impossible to place along a value hierarchy without understanding how it is situated within a broader narrative context. A narrative sets up this context, creating a moral hierarchy and situating details and people within it.

We can begin to investigate how narratives construct moral hierarchies by analyzing the arrangement of story pieces and players. Who the relevant protagonists are, what they do, and why they do it are the fundamental building blocks that construct moral hierarchies in narrative. As you look at a transcript and a recording of a narrative, then, delineate who the actors are and what actions they take. The statement "Harriet insulted Orlando," for example, includes Harriet as an agent. Her action

is insulting someone. This initial departure point suggests that Harriet is a person who insults people. But what else does Harriet do in the story? Does she apologize? Bicker? Get good grades? Play sports? What does Orlando do? What people do in stories usually coalesces into a pattern of co-occurrence. Delineating these patterns can be an initial departure point for your analysis of protagonists and their positions within a storied moral hierarchy.

After accounting for who did what in a narrative, the next analytic step is to ask "why?" What rationale is presented for actions within a story? Why did Harriet insult Orlando? Is Harriet a good person despite having committed this insult? This process of understanding why actors do what they do entails the fine tuning of a moral hierarchy within a narrative. As a narrator works out what a statement such as "Harriet insulted Orlando" means, that narrator is positioning characters morally—both characters within the narrative and individuals within the narrating event. The act of insulting someone, for example, can seem wrong on the basis of generic politeness norms. But what if Harriet was simply retaliating after being insulted by Orlando for years? Maybe she was finally standing up for herself. What if Harriet and Orlando had a long relationship with a history of playful insults? These are the kinds of contingencies that create narrative particularity. As narrative analysts, we can begin to look at how these kinds of relationships are set up by analyzing subjects and predicates within narratives. Then we can extend our analysis by understanding how these acts are situated among the structure and details of a story.

Understanding these patterns and what they mean also entails a careful toggling back and forth between the implications within the narrated event ("Harriet is a bad person") and the narrating event ("I, the narrator, am the kind of person who recognizes Harriet is a bad person, which means I am morally superior to her"). Within this narrative negotiation, there are always likely to be alternative rationalizations. Although one version might frame Harriet's insult as a righteous coup after years of putting up with Orlando, another might frame it as Harriet lowering herself, stooping to Orlando's level. How those alternatives are embraced or rejected may be highly contingent on the event of telling. As storytellers simultaneously position the characters within the story, they simultaneously position themselves and their audience within a moral hierarchy.

This kind of moral positioning can occur in classrooms as teachers position themselves, through the stories they tell, as moral models for their students. The teacher in Mary Juzwik's chapter, for example, positions a student in moral limbo by decrying the acts of the Holocaust and all Hitler's minions with rhetorical aplomb. Johnson illustrates how teacher candidates and students also create moral hierarchies as they tell stories. The teacher candidate in Johnson's chapter narratively reverses

her position, from being an entitled college student who expects to have technology at her fingertips to being a college student who struggles to make ends meet in the face of a university that assumes students have substantial resources available. The student in Kerschbaum's chapter also repositions her substandard high school education as an indicator of her heroic rise to success at an elite university.

Each of these examples illustrates how narrators frame their circumstances within a moral hierarchy. But these moral frames are subject to critique, and not all ways of morally framing events are equally attentive to relevant details. Once we see each of these narrative framings as one of an indefinite number of possible ways to frame events, moral positioning and the details of individual experience are available for analysis and dialogue. This raises the potential for individuals to attain positions as moral agents within stories they tell and as they interpret and participate in co-telling stories they hear.

INDIVIDUAL AGENCY: THE POSSIBILITY
OF TEACHER AGENCY THROUGH NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

At the beginning of this chapter, we alluded to times when we are faced with stories we sense are not accurate portrayals but that we feel unable to contest. This sense of powerlessness can be a function of structural hierarchies ("Don't bite the hand that feeds you!"). But is anyone ever really at the mercy of one interpretation, the one wielded by those higher up in a social hierarchy? We have suggested that this is not the case, that typical hierarchies can be inverted through creative use of and reactions to stories. In other words, an account of how the powerful invariably use narrative to further their own ends would misunderstand the kinds of agency that we really have in storytelling events.

Structural hierarchies, such as the power that "naturalizes" convention, do not necessarily inhibit individual freedom of action and keep us from telling powerful new stories from the margins. Instead, there are multiple varieties of agency that exist in any interaction, and the degrees of freedom granted or restricted by a social hierarchy are only one form of agency. Another critical form of agency is the ability to interpret others—in this case, to read the cognitive, ethical, and interpersonal implications of a narrative—and to understand the potential adequacy of one's response. A third, possibly most important, form of agency is one's ability to reflect on the freedom one might have to interpret and respond within a given setting (Agha, 2003, 2007). As Parmentier (1994) argues, the power to wield language in creative and nuanced ways can allow narrators and audience members to modify even entrenched social hierarchy. If we understand the various implications and constraints on our sto-

rytelling and our action, we can tell stories that might modify assumed social hierarchies rather than reinforce or naturalize them.

This book is about harnessing that ability to act as an individual agent—not simply through an act of will but by recognizing the power of interpretation and responsive dialogue that surround any narrative. In schools, teachers too often feel constrained by what they experience as normative pressures or top-down demands from an entrenched bureaucracy. Now, in a time when teachers face demands of high-stakes tests and mandated "teacher-proof" curricula, it seems that teacher agency is increasingly seen by policymakers and administrators and others as a problem rather than an important resource. Instead of being respected as thoughtful professionals, teachers are too often construed as hindrances to the efficient production of high test scores. But if we all accept this hierarchy, we simply naturalize it as inevitable. The stakes—truth, power, morality—are simply too high to acquiesce in this way. As an alternative to this stance of diminished agency, the analyses within this book illustrate that narrative and the dialogue surrounding it provide a medium in which to become more fully agentive as we engage with the world, with the field of education, and with our lived differences. Through the deployment and analysis of narrative, it becomes possible to construct new truths, negotiate our power, and become moral agents as teachers and teacher educators.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How does the discussion of narrative in this chapter resonate with, or depart from, your working understanding of narrative?
2. This chapter suggests that how stories are told and interpreted are always positioning tellers and audiences within a moral framework. Can you think of an example narrative that you have heard in a school where you have worked? Who told the story? (Teacher? Principal? Students?) Can you see any new ways that the narrative might have positioned the teller and audience within a moral framework?
3. This chapter introduces the notion of poetics and performance in relation to narrative truth. Think of a story you've heard recently. What poetic and performative resources did the teller use to construct believable truths about the world? How did you respond to this as a listener?
4. How, if at all, do you think that narrative analysis can open up possibilities for "teacher agency"? Can you think of an example in your working life as a teacher or teacher educator when narrative analysis might have been a useful tool for teacher action and advocacy? Can you think of an example where narrative analysis would *not* have been useful for teacher action and advocacy?

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