THE FACILITATION OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING: A STUDY OF ADULT EDUCATORS' WORKING KNOWLEDGE

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ ORIGINALITY

I certify that this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores adult educators' working knowledge in the facilitation of transformative learning. It explores transformative learning from the perspective of the educators involved, considering their experiences and their descriptions of incidents. Although there is a growing interest in research into transformative learning, there are few studies that explore the ways educators foster transformative learning. This has been identified as a key direction for research (Taylor 1997, 2000).

The theoretical framework for this study is developed through two approaches; namely, through the literature of transformative learning in adult education and through concepts of narrative, discourse and identity. This thesis argues that Mezirow's theory of transformative learning has limitations when considering social interactions involved in transformative learning. The narrative approach, developed from the literatures of social work, narrative therapy, organisational learning, discursive psychology and education, is introduced to explore issues involved in facilitating transformative learning.

In this study I utilise narrative research because of its potential to explore working knowledge in a comprehensive, contextualised way. I investigate educators' working knowledge through in-depth interviews, inviting educators to relate stories of transformative learning from their practice. The educators' working knowledge is then analysed through metaphor analysis and case examples.

The educators in this study used a range of metaphors when talking about their practice of transformative learning. The metaphors indicate that these educators provide a multifaceted role to foster transformative learning.

Through writing and analysing selected stories of practice as case examples, this thesis presents the facilitation of transformative learning as narrative intervention. I conclude that facilitation of transformative learning requires

capabilities in reading issues and positioning self within interactions. Further, I explore the ways that educators' professional identities are being produced through their working knowledge.

Chapter 1

Working knowledge about the facilitation of transformative learning

Introduction

In this thesis I investigate the practice of adult educators when facilitating transformative learning. In contrast to inquiries that might consider transformative learning from the viewpoint of the learners involved, this study explores transformative learning from the viewpoint of the educators. Thus this thesis is concerned with the facilitation of transformative learning and the working knowledge of adult educators who facilitate transformative learning.

This interest in the facilitation of transformative learning has developed out of my own professional history as a social worker and adult educator. The educators in this study have experience as social workers, psychologists or community workers and they bring this professional background and expertise about change to their roles. Indeed, social work has been defined as a profession that facilitates change[1].

This chapter has three sections. It commences with an outline of the key ideas that frame this study - transformative learning and working knowledge - and links these to my own professional history. The second section provides an overview of the study; briefly outlining the study, introducing the theoretical framework and the research methodology, and discussing the context of the study. The chapter concludes with comments about the organisation of the thesis.

[1] The international definition of social work, adopted in 2000, states that the "social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and liberation of people to enhance well being" (Australian Association of Social Workers 2000). However, the view that the social work profession extensively engages with social change is contested, particularly in Australia in the 1990s (Mowbray 1996).

Key ideas that frame the study

Transformative learning

The first key idea that frames this study is transformative learning. Transformative learning involves change in the ways that learners make meaning. Jack Mezirow, a leading academic in the field of adult education, was the first to attempt to theorise transformative learning as a distinct aspect of adult learning (Newman 1999: 85-86). Therefore his theory provides an initial point of reference for this study. Mezirow defines transformative learning as:

> ... the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or more justified to guide action (Mezirow 2000: 8).

Transformative learning involves transformation of the frames of reference through which we experience the world. As adults we can become aware of these frames of reference, critically reflect upon them and revise them, and thus develop more productive beliefs. Mezirow suggests that frames of reference are composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and points of view. Habits of mind are sets of assumptions that act as filters when we are interpreting the meaning of experience. Habits of mind are then expressed as points of view (Mezirow 2000: 17, 18).

Frames of reference influence the ways that we perceive the world and make meaning of our experiences. They act as the frame in which experiences are interpreted, and therefore both guide action and provide the rationale for action. For Mezirow, learning can occur in four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view and by transforming habits of mind (Mezirow 2000: 19).

Working knowledge

The second key idea that frames this study is working knowledge. Working knowledge is defined as knowledge that is situated in work, in contrast to academic knowledge that is situated in disciplines. Working knowledge is produced through engagement with the challenges, issues and contexts of work (Symes and McIntyre 2000; Lee, Green & Brennan 2000; Hager 2000).

The term 'working knowledge' links work and knowledge, reflecting and creating the trend of connection between work and education (Symes and McIntyre 2000). Working knowledge has a number of distinct characteristics. It is formed within the work. It is often only separated from the work by processes that explicate what was done and why it was done. Its source is work and it is generated in action, through engagement with the issues and settings of work (Garrick and Rhodes 2000: 16-17). Thus working knowledge can be said to be embedded in work and to emerge at specific times. As Fenwick writes:

> Understandings are embedded in conduct. What others call tacit knowledge is viewed by enactivism as existing not within ways that drive actions, but unfolding in circumstances that evoke those particular actions... The focus is not on the 'learning event'... but on the relationships binding them together in complex systems (Fenwick 2000a: 157).

By acknowledging that working knowledge is embedded in work, we can consider the work circumstances that evoke action and knowledge at a particular time (Fenwick 2000a: 160).

Working knowledge can be contrasted with academic knowledge. Lee, Green and Brennan note that working knowledge is centred on innovation and hence is less systematic and coherent than academic knowledge (Lee, Green and Brennan 2000: 121-125). Knowledge that emerges in work has some of the same forms as the work itself. If the work is ambiguous, complex, contradictory,

vague and resists straightforward description, then the knowledge that is formed in the work will also have these characteristics. Further, any conceptualisation of working knowledge must be problematic because it connects relatively fixed academic conventions to an elusive and complex environment of knowing and doing (Fenwick 2000a: 156).

Working knowledge focuses on process-based knowledge *and* propositional knowledge, actions *and* explanations, and implicit *and* explicit understandings (Garrick and Rhodes 2000: 21-26). Also, working knowledge is synoptic and is focused on an entire process. Working knowledge moves between specific parts of the process and the entire process. In contrast, academic knowledge is often reductionist and highly differentiated, and produced in a more linear, causal and cumulative way (Lee, Green and Brennan 2000: 121-125).

Work is the site of working knowledge; where it is used and validated. Decisions about the authenticity, value and legitimacy of the knowledge are based on whether that knowledge can be put to work (Garrick and Rhodes 2000: 16-17).

A story of developing professional interests

Over the last decade, these ideas of transformative learning and working knowledge have influenced me in my role as an education consultant to health and community service organisations. The approach in this thesis reflects a professional identity that has been formed through my career in social work, adult education and research. Through the following story I show how this thesis brings together various interests of my professional career.

As with many women of my generation, my career decisions in the 1970s were formed within competing discourses of women's work. I decided to become a social worker, after having considered a career in mathematics or computing. During the 1970s in New South Wales, Australia there were innovative and challenging positions for recently graduated social workers interested in community work.

My interest in transformative learning was sparked when teaching in a Welfare Work Certificate at a Technical And Further Education (TAFE) college. The learners were community members who had been active in various community organisations such as women's health centres, charities and refuges, and who were now interested in taking up professional roles. Subjects such as communication and counselling brought up personal issues for these learners and I was both daunted by the responsibility of responding to their issues and excited about the potential for transformative learning in their lives and communities.

After this 'initial burst' of professional development provided by my undergraduate degree, my work and my teaching, I experienced a vacuum. However, during my early thirties, I worked in an organisation that had a long history of reflective practice and supported the development of professional expertise. There I saw the contribution leading practitioners made to professional practice and I began to understand the potential of the role of practitioner-theorists.

As a result, I decided to expand my role in continuing education, and in 1991 I enrolled in a Master of Education program at the University of Technology, Sydney. This provided an opportunity to follow up some of my interests through an academic program and the literature of adult education. I found the emerging literature of transformative learning both an inspiration and a disappointment. As I responded to the writings of Mezirow and other adult educators I had a sense of seeing 'myself and my work' in the texts. However, I also formed the view that educators in my professional field did more, and we were more, than the academic literature of transformative learning indicated.

At this time I also began to develop an interest in working knowledge. In my first few years as an education consultant, I led a training program on Family Counselling for staff in a number of family support services. During the early 1990s, the staffing profile of family support services in New South Wales was

very mixed. Some staff had degrees in fields such as social work and social science. Other staff had no formal training in counselling but had years of relevant experience, maturity and a track record of community leadership. As I listened to some of these family workers talk about their practice, I heard examples of judgement in practice that I could directly relate to current theories and 'cutting edge' approaches. However, the language that the family workers used was usually anecdotal and intuitive rather than analytical and theoretical. And when they were presented with theoretical concepts they saw them as ways of naming the processes that they had already discovered themselves through their experiences of life. I realised that there were a range of pathways to effective practice and a range of ways in which knowledge can be developed and articulated.

During the mid-1990s, I was involved in, and managed, national competency standards projects[2] for vocationally trained staff in aged care and children's services. This developed my interest in research into work practice in client service and community work, and led to an exploration of suitable research methods. Overall I found research methods such as functional analysis, focus groups and critical incident interviews were useful for the explication of competence. However I found that staff who had developed their capacities through life and work experience understated what they knew when responding to these methods.

A serendipitous event developed my interest in a new form of investigation. I was to hold a focus group in a regional town in Tasmania with people who provided front-line aged care but who had not had formal accredited training. However, due to a severe thunderstorm only three people turned up. We did go ahead with the focus group but in an informal, conversational way. As we talked

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[2] Australia established an industry-based national vocational education and training system during the late 1980s to early 1990s, focused around work competency standards. Competency standards were developed for many areas of work through collaboration between government, employers and unions.

I noticed that the most significant information came out of the stories the participants told, and I realised the ideas that informed their decisions were embedded in these stories, especially in the stories they told about unusual events in their work.

This experience developed my interest in the ways that knowledge is embedded within narratives of practice and led me to develop story-based investigation methods in my next project, which was to develop the National Child Care Competency Standards. The stories of practice often expressed working knowledge that was beyond the practitioners' explicit frameworks of understanding. Implicit in the participants' decision-making were sophisticated informal theorisations of practice,` and the story-based research methods enabled them to express these implicit understandings.

I concluded that narratives of practice enabled health and community professionals to relate complex incidents in a comprehensive way. The narratives of practice could include what happened, what the practitioners did, why they thought they did it, and the contexts of people, time and place.

Currently I am interested in research that brings out the working knowledge that is embedded in the practice of experienced staff. I consider that this implicit working knowledge, in tandem with academic knowledge, can inform the continuing education of professionals.

Overview of the study

This second section of the chapter commences with a brief outline of the study. Then I introduce the theoretical framework that was developed for the study, outlining key terms and concepts. I explain the rationale for selecting narrative research for the study and consider its suitability for research of professional working knowledge. I conclude this section by discussing the postmodern context of the study.

Outline of the study

This study involved experienced adult educators from the community work sector, who participated in a series of in-depth interviews. Lyn[3] is a social worker working with the AIDS Council of New South Wales. Peter is a therapist and educator who works with young people and staff such as teachers and youth workers. Sandra is an educator with particular expertise in vocational and workplace-based programs. Bev is a social worker who talks about her role as a committee member in a group participating in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

The educators were invited to talk about their experiences of facilitating transformative learning. The interviews were structured as a series of story-based conversations, in which educators related a range of stories of practice and then explored a significant story in greater detail. This study is thus focused on the experiences and perspectives of educators, rather than on the experiences and perspectives of learners.

This study is an inquiry into the ways that adult educators talk about their practice when it involves incidents of transformative learning. It explores such questions as:

What do educators select as incidents of transformative learning?

[3] A number of strategies were used to respect the educators' privacy. The names of the educators involved in this study have been changed in some instances.

How do they talk about what happened?
How do they construct the social relations between themselves and learners?
How do they explain or justify their interventions?
What discursive resources do they use to describe interventions?
What are the implications of using these discursive resources?
How do these discursive resources construct their professional identities?

By constructing stories of practice, the educators provide their versions and their explanations of events. This thesis both explores the working knowledge of these educators and considers implications of their working knowledge.

Further details about the educators and the research process are provided in chapter 3.

Theoretical framework for the study

The literature of transformative learning provides a significant resource for this study. In particular I draw on Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, and various responses and critiques from other adult education theorists such as Hart (1990a, 1990b), Newman (1994a, 1994b) and Wildemeersch and Leirman (1988). Although this literature provides a significant starting point for this study, it is my contention that Mezirow's theory has limitations when investigating social interactions within educational practice. Therefore I review the facilitation of transformative learning in relation to *two* theoretical approaches: Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, and theories of narrative and identity.

I contend that Mezirow's concepts do not convey the ways that assumptions develop through interactions across socio-cultural *and* psychological domains. If educators focus on psychological assumptions they can overlook the impact of social processes within the educational environment. However the converse can happen as well. If educators focus on socio-cultural assumptions they can

find themselves unable to draw out the personal implications for learners (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine 1998: 91). The challenge is to focus on both the personal *and* the social.

As a number of authors have outlined, theorising in the social sciences is often caught in the binary[4] of the individual and society (Henriques *et al.* 1998; Ellsworth 1992). The work of Henriques *et al.* (1998) is significant for this thesis. They provide a well-documented critique of the assumptions of psychology, outline the ways the binary of individual and society operates in the discipline, and emphasise the importance of moving beyond it.

In adult education specifically, Finger suggests that duality of individual and society has been a theoretical problem:

> Adult education currently does not have any model of adult learning which would combine the individual and society in a satisfactory way, integrating both into a perspective that is meaningful to the person, as well as for modern society (Finger 1990: 29).

A theory of meaning using the literary metaphor of narrative gives emphasis to both the personal *and* the social. People construct narratives from their personal experiences using the social discourses available to them. If an experience is very new, the capacity to think and talk about it is often limited by the language and narrative forms that are available.

A narrative view of meaning-making is being explored in such diverse areas of social science as organisational learning, narrative therapy, social work and adult education. This has historical roots in the humanities, drawing upon such disciplines as postmodern philosophy and literary theory (see for example Lyotard J-F (1989)).

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[4] Binary thinking is present in many formal and informal Western knowledge systems. Differences are cast as opposites; for example, practice and research, male and female, reason and experience. Further, one binary is usually cast as positive or superior to the other.

The term 'story' has been applied to the way people talk about their experiences, highlighting the way people often construct an account of their life in a narrative way; with a beginning, a middle and an end, characters and a plot. White is a theorist of narrative therapy, and defines story as:

> ... a unit of meaning that provides a frame for lived experience. It is through these stories that lived experience is interpreted... Stories enable persons to link aspects of their experience through the dimension of time (White 1992: 80).

Davies writes about story from the perspective of feminist poststructural analysis and defines stories as:

> ... the means by which events are interpreted, made tellable, or even liveable (Davies 1991: 43).

Mezirow theorises transformative learning as a process of changing meaning perspectives and he appears to treat the concept of a meaning perspective as relatively discrete. On the other hand, the concept of story implies connection between various aspects of meaning. Story conveys a relationship between the historicity of experiences, in certain times and places, and the meaning-making that accompanies those experiences.

Story does not purport to be a direct representation of experience, but represents the key meanings of those experiences. The concept of story emphasises the construction of meaning, with any particular construction of the story being one of many alternatives. It is possible to review whether there is a better story about one's experience. Although alternative stories are "alternative fictions", their significance can be that they allow for more useful reading of events (Solas 1995: 34).

The talk that occurs in education contexts can be conceptualised as a process of sharing, enacting and constructing stories. Plummer suggests that education

is "systematic storytelling" (Plummer 1995: 145). Gergen suggests that a range of professional practices such as therapy, education, organisational change and scholarly writing can be theorised as the social construction of narratives (Gergen 1999: 167-193). Further, he suggests that such theorisation could provide dramatically useful perspectives (Gergen 1999: 168, 190).

Stories are developed within and across discursive domains. Discourse is a term that is defined differently within different literatures. For the purpose of this study, I have selected the definition developed by Yeatman that "discourse is the power to create reality by naming it and giving it meaning" (Yeatman 1990: 155). This definition highlights the influence of discourses in constructing social realities. This definition of discourse should be understood in the context of Foucault's work. Discourses are "groups of statements" that are organised (Foucault 1972: 117). The way that Foucault uses the term 'discourse' is in contrast to the way it has been used in linguistics traditionally (McHoul and Grace 1993: 26-41). His definition is geared to showing the relations between organised bodies of knowledge and forms of social control. Yeatman's definition also draws out the link between discourse and power, without assuming that groups of statements are always explicitly and formally organised.

Social identity is formed through discursive practices. When people construct a story of an experience they construct meaning about the experience and they also construct their social identity. People can be said to develop a story of 'self in the world' out of their social experiences. Thus social identity is developed through the person's response to their discursive contexts:

> Discourses make positions available for individuals and these positions are taken up in relation to other people. When taken up, the world is seen from the standpoint of that position and this process involves, among other things, positioning oneself in relation to categories and storylines (Pease 1999: 103).

Narrative research and studies of working knowledge

This study explores the working knowledge of adult educators by eliciting narratives of their practice. It is an example of the kinds of research that are being developed through professional doctorates of education.

The workplace is being constituted as a site of knowledge production and as a particular discursive domain for knowledge production (Usher 2000: 160). Professional doctorates in education have arisen, in part, as a reflection of this interest in work as a site of knowledge production.[5] As outlined by Lee and Green, the possibilities and problems associated with professional doctorates are different to those of disciplinary doctorates (Lee & Green 1998: 4). The Doctorate of Education (EdD) provides an opportunity to reconceptualise the relationship between different sites of knowledge and the relationship between knowledges and practices (Brennan 1998: 68). Professional doctorates can be conceptualised as a space where the focuses of the university, the profession, and the workplace overlap (Lee, Green and Brennan 2000: 127). Thus professional doctorates can be seen to produce hybrid forms of knowledge and professionals with formal research skills (Lee, Green and Brennan 2000: 118-119). The purpose of a professional doctorate is the development of the relevant field of practice. As Brennan writes, the EdD "implies a strong place for the researcher as a contribution to the development of professional workers *in the field*" (1998: 69, italics in original).

Narrative research has particular potential when researching professional practice and working knowledge. Yeatman suggests that investigations into the kind of professional knowledge that includes judgement, ethics, and intuitive knowledge can only be achieved through narrative modes:

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[5] Professional doctorates are a relatively new award in higher education in Australia. In 1990, the Higher Education Council recommended the introduction of doctoral programs more suited to professional disciplines such as education, and the first Doctorate of Education (EdD) commenced in 1990. The education researcher completing an EdD is usually older and studying part-time, and is not usually preparing for an academic career.

> We can learn about what it means to *do* judgement, trust, intuition and so on only from stories and narratives about actors doing these things. This is because such doing by its nature is embedded in the particularity of its context. It is not that judgement, trust, intuition and so on are ineffable. They can *be* expressed and communicated, but only as narratives about particular actors doing these things in particular ways (Yeatman 1996: 298, italics in original).

Narratives construct knowledge in particular ways. It is knowledge that is situated in the particular context. It is knowledge that connects explanations with descriptions of actions. It is knowledge that connects ideas, emotions and actions and it is knowledge that connects theories, professional experiences and personal experiences.

Narratives of practice include various details of the experience as the person develops a shape to the events through the telling. The experience of what happened is linked to ideas about the significance of what happened and why it happened. Descriptions of practice are thus infused with explanations, confusions, justifications, doubts, and emotions:

> Through personal experience, we come to know. Through story we make it known. In narrative we weave the fabric of our lives (and others) connecting information with experience to construct knowledge (Brunner 1994: 58).

Context of the study: interface of community work and adult education

This is a study of the working knowledge of professionals who are both adult educators and community workers and so is located at the interface of these two fields of practice. My own professional identity, as an education researcher with training as a social worker, also places me at this interface.

This study is a contrast to the majority of studies of working knowledge. Most studies are in an industrial context, with large organisations, with men, and with staff who are less highly educated (Smid 2000: 416). This study is located in a human services context, in small and medium-sized organisations, with a majority of women, and with staff with a mix of education levels. None the less, I do bear in mind, and from time to time refer to those majority studies.

Further, it can be argued that social work has a particular perspective on research, and that social work research is distinguished by key professional concerns (McDermott 1996: 5-7). Those relevant to this study are a concern with the process of change and a concern with the 'social'; that is, with the interface of the private and public, the person and society. These concerns embrace a multi-dimensional view of human action, which raises particular research challenges as the researcher seeks to deal simultaneously with the person, the group and societal institutions (McDermott 1996: 7).

This study contributes to the identification of shared knowledge in this specific professional community of adult educators. However, as the people involved in this study have significant expertise in facilitating change, their working knowledge could also be relevant for a wider audience in adult education.

Context of the study: postmodernity, adult education and community work in Australia in the late 1990s

The broader political-socioeconomic context and the more immediate organisational contexts for this study demonstrate features of postmodernity[6].

Education is no longer viewed as a tightly bounded field, defined by the functions and purposes of educational institutions such as schools, universities

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[6] As outlined by Ife, the term 'postmodernity' can be used when seeking to talk about the postmodern in a descriptive way (Ife 1999: 212).

and colleges. A focus on learning in contexts such as the workplace raises new questions, dilemmas and perspectives (Edwards & Usher 2001; Usher, Bryant and Johnston 1997; Boud and Garrick 1999; Foley 1995; Hager 1999).
Adult educators are acknowledging the diversity of settings, goals and processes, and learning is seen as boundless, occurring in multiple ways, at multiple times over a lifetime, and in multiple settings. Knowledge is seen as partial and there is scope for diverse sources and forms (Edwards & Usher 2001).

Social workers have also been grappling with the implications of postmodernity for practice, especially when intending emancipatory outcomes. Some social workers are working in contexts that are characterised by ambiguity, competing views of reality and constant change. As Ife outlines, the benefit of a detailed consideration of postmodernity is that it can "encourage a concentration on processes - on how we get there rather than on where we are going" (Ife 1999: 217). However, there is debate about how to integrate this understanding with the profession's key commitments to social justice and human rights (Ife 1999; Fook and Pease 1999).

The work contexts of the educators in this study demonstrate features of postmodernity. Their learners are community members, program coordinators and volunteers. The programs include formal, informal and incidental learning, and the settings vary widely. For example, one educator facilitated a learning experience not so much as an adult educator but as a leader in a social movement, in the process demonstrating how significant learning opportunities can arise when a group of activists address a difficult situation. This raises questions about the boundaries between citizen, activist, educator and learner. Another educator conducted an accredited course which was located in neither an educational institution nor a workplace. Rather, the course was funded and arranged by the government body that funds the non-government based services, and a result of this cross-workplace setting was that a wide diversity of claims about 'truth' had equal weight.

Organisation of the thesis

Dilemmas in constructing the thesis

A number of tensions emerged in the development of this thesis. The main dilemma was how to investigate the richness of professional practice while maintaining focus and containment. Secondly, there was the challenge of exploring adult educators' professional practice without establishing a binary of the personal and the social. Thirdly, there was the challenge of writing the educators' working knowledge in ways that did not imply that their narrations of events had a direct correspondence to the events.

As previously outlined, this thesis is located within a specific area of professional practice, at the interface of social work and community work on the one hand and adult education on the other. This location does not have a specific literature that could be used to frame the study. Deciding how to narrow the focus of this study was daunting because there are so many issues that could have been researched. At the time of planning this study, in the mid-1990s, Mezirow's theory of transformative learning had some central significance for adult educators, including community adult educators. My initial planning for this thesis placed Mezirow's work at the centre. However, the stories in the interviews prompted me to place greater emphasis on the concepts of story, narrative and discourse.

Further, as outlined in the previous section of this chapter, the contexts of practice for social workers and adult educators in the late 1990s were characterised by features of postmodernity. One of the challenges in constructing this thesis was to investigate educational practice in ways that would acknowledge the social complexity of such practice, and then work with that complexity (Lee 1992: 9-10). Another challenge was to make decisions about focus without being caught in binary thinking about educational practice. If I had focused on either the personal dimensions or the social dimensions, I

would have predetermined that dimension as the locus of change. By gathering stories of practice I sought to include both the social and the personal

In this study educators were asked to remember and relate incidents of the facilitation of transformative learning. Thus the data is a number of accounts of these incidents of practice; the data is not a direct representation of what happened. Memory is regarded as a construction of experience, and there is no "aboriginal reality" to which memory can be compared (Bruner 1986: 46). This study is not investigating the incidents of practice themselves, rather it is investigating the working knowledge embedded in these accounts, and exploring the discursive resources that these educators used when narrating their practice of transformative learning.

These dilemmas, and the ways that I sought to address them, led me to restrict the interviews to a small number of people. This contained the data, while still allowing the richness of the data to be considered. Therefore the thesis makes no claim for extensiveness. However, because experienced educators were involved in this study, I do claim that the working knowledge explored is likely to be useful in addressing issues within the field.

The value of the thesis is not that it contributes, over the longer term, to a specific area of knowledge that is relatively constant. Rather, its primary value is likely to be in the way that it contributes to dialogue, writings and conversations around the issues involved in facilitating transformative learning. The style of the thesis is exploratory and synoptic. It is, in effect, a thesis that could be described as a thesis of complementary parts rather than a linear, integrated whole. It seeks to mark some areas of knowledge embedded within this field of practice, at this point of time, and to point to issues that are emerging and likely to gain significance.

Outline of the structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction and overview to the thesis. It has outlined its focus on transformative learning and working knowledge, given some background to the development of my professional interests, signalled the theoretical framework and the research approach I used, and provided some comments on context.

Chapter 2 covers a review of the literature, drawing out issues related to the facilitation of transformative learning. In this review I consider central features of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and discuss their implications for facilitation. Also, I propose an alternative approach to theorising the facilitation of transformative learning. In seeking to address some of the limitations of Mezirow's theory, I explore ideas of narrative, discourse and identity. These ideas are drawn from a range of theoretical fields that are relevant for this study: namely adult education, social work, narrative theory, narrative therapy and organisational learning.

In chapter 3 I outline the research methodology that is used for the study. Exploring some of the challenges of researching working knowledge, I outline the rationale for narrative research. I describe the research process of the study and the processes that were used to develop the case examples and metaphor analysis. I conclude with a discussion of some of the issues involved in implementing narrative research.

Chapter 4 begins the analysis of the findings. I introduce the educators who were interviewed for the study and identify common features of their accounts. In this chapter I identify the metaphors that the educators used to talk about the facilitation of transformative learning. The metaphors are analysed as discursive resources and I discuss how they denote subject positions for both the educator and the learners.

In chapter 5 I develop two of the educators' stories of practice as case examples. Using these case examples, I explore the facilitation of transformative learning as a process of narrative intervention and examine the ways in which the subject positions of learners and educators are established.

In chapter 6 I present two themes from the case examples. I describe the educators' professional working knowledge in terms of their capabilities in reading issues and in terms of their capabilities in positioning self within interactions. In this chapter I outline a framework of reading strategies developed through this study and introduce the idea of reading repertoires.

Chapter 7 provides the conclusion to the thesis. I bring together ideas from earlier chapters and explore how the adult educators' identities are developed through their working knowledge of transformative learning. I propose that the educators' professional identities encompass the provocative and the evocative. I identify the emergence of postmodern narratives of the practice of transformative learning and finally, I review some of the challenges that were involved in conducting narrative research of working knowledge.

Chapter 2

Issues involved in the facilitation of transformative learning

Introduction

In this literature review I explore issues involved in facilitating transformative learning. Whereas much of the literature deals with transformative learning from the learner's perspective, this review deals with it from the educator's perspective. Facilitation of transformative learning is considered through two theoretical approaches: Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and theories of narrative and identity.

This chapter has four sections. The first section explores how transformative learning occurs through perspective transformation, drawing on key concepts in Mezirow's theory of transformative learning. Mezirow's ideas are discussed in relation to the literatures of transformative learning, adult education and organisational learning. I commence the section with a discussion about what prompts transformative learning and I review Mezirow's concept of a disorienting dilemma in relation to other triggers for transformative learning, including social change. Then I outline a series of phases in the process of transformative learning, developed from Mezirow's theory and other references. I conclude the first section by considering transformative learning and rationality. Mezirow emphasises the process of critical reflection and this thesis critiques his overemphasis on rationality and explores a broader view.

The second section of the chapter explores how transformative learning occurs narratively. This section outlines an alternative theoretical approach to transformative learning, reviewing concepts of story, discourse and identities. The narrative approach allows us to explore the ways that meaning is implicitly carried in all communicative activity, through language and through positioning of subjects (Kress 1988; Foucault 1988; Henriques *et al.* 1998). The narrative approach enables us to consider the social interactions that are involved in

transformative learning. I conclude this section by introducing the idea that facilitation of transformative learning is narrative intervention.

In the third section of this chapter I review some of the implications of these two theoretical approaches. This thesis argues that Mezirow's theory supports a normative stance and that narrative ideas support a strategic stance. Further, I argue that Mezirow's theory supports an essentialist view of self, while the concept of subjectivity supports a discursive view of identity. Also, while Mezirow promotes ideal conditions of discourse in learning groups, this thesis promotes the idea of reflection on the operations of power.

In the fourth section of this chapter I review some of the implications of these theoretical approaches for educators' professional identity. I consider Mezirow's description of the educator's role together with other descriptions from the literatures of adult education, organisational learning and narrative therapy.

How does transformative learning occur?: perspective transformation

This first section of the chapter reviews Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, focusing on the ways that transformative learning occurs through perspective transformation. Mezirow focuses on changes in meaning through a direct process: assumptions are identified and critically reflected upon, and revised assumptions are validated through discourse and then acted upon (Mezirow 1997: 60). Mezirow regards critical reflection as the primary process for transformative learning. This thesis critiques Mezirow's approach as limited, arguing that educators need to recognise other processes that can also lead to perspective transformation.

Triggers for transformative learning

Mezirow theorises that transformative learning involves perspective transformation, which he defines as:

> ... the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings (Mezirow 1981: 6).

The learner finds that the old frame of reference is inadequate to deal with the current situation. The trigger for transformative learning is often a new situation, a crisis, or a change in context that raises new questions. Alternatively a situation might include an anomaly which challenges the learner's previously clear understanding or highlights doubts within the learner's understanding. Mezirow calls this trigger a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow & Associates 1990: 13). Thus transformative learning is seen as more likely to occur when experience provides a dilemma. The argument is that people tend to hold onto

valued frames of reference until a crisis or negative effects show that they have failed or are inhibiting performance (Wildemeersch and Lierman 1988: 22).

In this thesis I suggest that the concept of a disorienting dilemma is too narrow and that challenges, new experiences and integrative events can also act as triggers for transformative learning. Cranton suggests that a range of events can challenge a learner's assumptions. She suggests that crises are the usual trigger for transformative learning, but that other stimuli such as "people, events or changes in context which challenge the learner's basic assumptions" can also act as triggers (Cranton 1992: 148). She also includes features of the educational process such as participation in specific education activities, challenging social interactions and reading or visual materials (Cranton 1992: 146).

Transformative learning can occur when there has been a change to an individual's position within their social context which has implications for their social identity. These changes are more likely to require change at the level of meaning. Wildemeersch and Lierman note that such learning does not occur frequently. They develop concepts of the self-evident life-world, the threatened life-world, and the transformed life-world (Wildemeersch and Lierman 1988: 20-23). The threatened life-world, which is the prelude to transformative learning, occurs more often when the context is uncertain and relatively unstructured.

Organisationally focused writers such as Senge (1990), Marsick (1988, 1990), and Boydell and Pedler (1981) regard complex problems as the trigger for transformative learning. Boydell and Pedler (1981) write that they are more able to introduce a philosophy of self-development in a firm that faces a strategic imperative. Marsick (1998) notes that strategic learning is most relevant in organisational situations of novelty, complexity, and ambiguity, and it is these situations that require a commitment to evaluate assumptions at the individual and organisational levels.

Taylor (1997), in his review of empirical studies based on Mezirow's theory, concludes that there are various triggers for perspective transformation. These include opportunities to integrate understandings. Whereas a disorienting dilemma provides a trigger for change through disruption, an integrating circumstance provides a trigger for change through addition. Integrating circumstances are when the learner finds:

> ... something which is missing in their life; when they find this 'missing piece', the transformational learning process is catalysed (Clark, quoted in Taylor 1997: 39).

The adult education theorists who consider transformative learning within social movements see momentum for social change as the trigger for transformative learning. Although Mezirow takes transformative learning as his central focus, some writers in the transformative learning literature place social change as their central focus. For example, Heaney and Horton express their aim as *social* empowerment rather than *individual* empowerment, and they critique Mezirow for his failure to give equal weight to social action (Heaney and Horton 1990: 87). For these theorists, the purpose of transformative learning is liberation. They emphasise the structures and concrete experiences of oppression:

> The mind adjusts to the body's chains... It is not merely the mind, dulled into acquiescence by atrophied imagination, that blocks liberating, transformative action. It is concrete situations, structures and organisations that maintain oppression (Heaney and Horton 1990: 87).

For Heaney and Horton, transformative learning starts with an invitation from a community who are engaged in a political struggle (Heaney and Horton 1990: 89). The educator enters at this stage, once the issue has already been crystallised and action has commenced. They contend that liberation requires education of the mind and action to establish concrete alternatives, and that emancipatory education is a part of the broader aims of a social change process. Hart (1990a), who writes of women's consciousness raising as an

example of transformative learning, also sees education as part of the process of social change. She emphasises the need to start from the personal experience of women and then to establish theoretical distance in order to promote understanding of that personal experience. She sees consciousness raising as a cycle, from personal experience, to a theoretical grasp of the larger social reality, to a practical orientation leading to emancipatory action (Hart 1990a: 67, 71).

The writers who place their emphasis on social change rather than individual change, emphasise the importance of action. It is at the stage of action that a transformed learner becomes an agent for social transformation. Mezirow draws a boundary at the stage of action. He focuses on the facilitation of awareness of alternative meaning perspectives and the "use of them to more clearly understand" (Mezirow 1981: 20). He states that the educator does "not prescribe the correct action to be taken" (Mezirow 1981: 20).

The process of transformative learning

Mezirow (1981) initially described the process of transformative learning by identifying a series of stages, based on his research into women re-entering college in later life. However other empirical studies have not confirmed these stages. Lytle's study found that only 30% of the learners demonstrated all of Mezirow's ten stages (Taylor 1997). Two studies, one by Pope and another by Courtney, Merriam and Reeves, conclude that transformative learning is a process of unfolding realisation and it is a more circular process (Taylor 1997). In Mezirow's recent publication (2000) he reworks the stages and presents them as elements of transformative learning. They are:

(1) a disorienting dilemma;
(2) self examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame;
(3) a critical assessment of assumptions;
(4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation is shared;

(5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
(6) planning a course of action;
(7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
(8) provisional trying of new roles; and
(9) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (Mezirow 2000: 22).

Mezirow's elements of perspective transformation still imply an intentional, unidirectional process of change. However, transformative learning is often a less rational, less organised and less defined process. Therefore I have developed the following outline of phases in the process of transformative learning by drawing upon Mezirow's outline of elements, and upon the contributions of other writers.

In this outline I do not intend to suggest that all of these phases always apply, nor that all of these phases are always equally significant. Neither do I intend to suggest that transformative learning occurs through each of these phases progressively. Rather the process is more likely to be circular and recursive (Taylor 1997). Further, the centrality of critical reflection is countered by including negotiations in social relationships as they are often a very significant factor in transformative learning (Lyon 2001; Courtenay & Merriam 1998).

1. Taken-for-granted world

The first phase is what Wildemeersch and Lierman call the self-evident life-world, in which current frames of reference fit with experience, and usefully explain and justify action (Wildemeersch and Lierman 1988: 20). As Jarvis notes, it is habitual:

> For as long as there is continuity between people's own individual stocks of knowledge and the socio-cultural temporal world in which they act, they are enabled to perform in an almost unthinking manner (Jarvis 1987: 167).

It is also a stage of confidence, where the inner and outer worlds are in a coherent relation. Life reinforces the stock of knowledge that the person holds (Jarvis 1987: 167). Learning is additive, as the person extends and refines current knowledge and skills (Courtenay, Merriam, Reeves & Baumgartner 2000: 103). This is the precursor to transformative learning.

2. Trigger for perspective transformation

The second phase involves a trigger. For example, new experiences demonstrate the inadequacy of existing frames of reference, or an anomaly creates doubt about their validity. People may initially respond with self-protective strategies such as denial (Courtenay & Merriam 1998). It is often a time of confusion and discontent involving intense emotions such as anxiety and anger (Lyon 2001; Taylor 1997). Alternatively the experience may be one of discovery, accompanied by a sense of curiosity (Lyon 2001: 122).

This phase of the process can be characterised by disengagement from social relations and a reduction in the quality of relationships with others who are associated with the source of confusion (Taylor 1987: 185). Alternatively people seek out and develop relations of support (Lyon 2001, 2002; Courtenay & Merriam 1998).

3. Return to past frames of reference

The next phase involves returning to the old frame of reference even more strongly, hoping that it can be reinforced and will continue to remain valid. This is more likely to occur when the learner has intense feelings around the issue. This is the fundamentalist response when information is discrepant with the valued frame of reference.

Kuhn is a sociologist of science who writes about shifts in epistemological paradigm in the scientific disciplines. He presents a similar phenomena, describing times when scientists are trying to:

> ... push the rules of normal science harder than ever to see, in the area of difficulty, just where and how far they can be made to work (Kuhn 1970: 82).

4. Review and rethinking

This phase includes testing, questioning, and evaluating frames of reference. It includes Mezirow's elements of self examination, critical assessment of assumptions, and relating one's discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues (Mezirow 1981: 7, 2000: 22).

This is a time of separation, when learners are most likely to experience a sense of grief that the old meanings are no longer valid.

5. Dormancy

This is an empty, 'not-knowing' time, where the learner is poised on the edge of the unknown. The learner is neither engaged with the old frame of reference nor with an alternative perspective.

Taylor notes that exploration actually begins once the learner can relax with the problem without thinking that they have to resolve it (Taylor 1987: 186). Kuhn also notes that the person needs to reach a point where they are able to live in a world that is "out of joint" (Kuhn 1970: 79).

6. Experimenting with new possibilities

First actions based on new frames of reference are often very tentative. Mezirow describes this phase as exploring options for new ways of acting (Mezirow 2000: 22). Taylor describes it as an intuitively-guided exploration and notes that social relations are now marked by collaboration (Taylor 1987: 186, 187). Kuhn highlights the fluidity of this time, describing it as involving "the proliferation of competing articulations, the willingness to try anything" (Kuhn 1970: 91).

7. Developing new understandings and actions

If the experiments indicate positive possibilities, the learner continues to develop and test the new frame of reference. Mezirow identifies the elements as: building competence and self-confidence in new roles, planning a course of action, acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans, making provisional efforts to try new roles, and assessing feedback arising from those efforts (Mezirow 2000: 22).

Taylor notes a shift in social relations to solitude as the person prepares for a stage of "stepping out" (Taylor 1987: 188).

8. Consolidating the new perspective

Mezirow describes this as a time of reintegration, in which the learner re-engages in her or his social worlds in ways that are based on the new meaning perspective (Mezirow 2000: 22). Taylor describes this time as the application and refinement of the new perspective. Kuhn describes the stage of normal science, in which scientists tend to take the foundations of their field for granted, and focus on subtle and specialised investigations of problems that can be investigated by the tools that the new paradigm supplies (Kuhn 1970: 21, 37, 38).

Lyon (2001) makes the point that transformative learning often occurs over a long time span. Therefore educational events are likely to influence a limited number of phases in the process rather than to influence the entire process.

Transformative learning and rationality

Mezirow contends that perspective transformation occurs through critical reflection on assumptions. He distinguishes critical reflection from reflection generally because it involves an assessment:

> Critical self reflection on assumptions emphasises critical analysis of the psychological or cultural assumptions that are the specific reasons for one's conceptual and psychological limitations (Mezirow 1998a: 192).

Further, Mezirow places rationality at the centre of his theory of transformative learning:

> Education for adults may be understood as centrally involved in creating and facilitating dialogic communities to enable learners to engage in rational discourse and action.

and:

> Rationality means assessing the validity of expressed ideas through reflective and critical reflective discourse. Rational thought and action are the cardinal goals of adult education (Mezirow 1991: 354).

Mezirow argues that beliefs should be assessed through reason and he promotes the universality of rationality (Mezirow 1998a: 2-4). He has been critiqued for his overemphasis on rationality (Taylor 2001, 1997; Hart 1990b; Clark & Wilson 1991). Hart critiques Mezirow's concepts because they lie exclusively in the realm of cognition. She suggests that practitioners need to become more attuned to non-cognitive and non-linguistic aspects of the learning process and to the ways that these aspects contribute to the critical abilities of learners (Hart 1990b: 135-136). Hart talks about the importance of women connecting the personal and the political. She quotes from a woman named Ruth:

> 'Yes', she cries, 'I remember... ah', she says, 'I understand... And the ah arises not merely from her lips and mind, but from her entire being (Hart 1990a: 55).

Mezirow tends to downplay the personal and the emotional in his discussion of transformative learning through his valorising of rationality and his focus on assumptions rather than the experience itself. Taylor (2000, 1997) concludes

that empirical studies of transformative learning minimise the significance of critical reflection and place greater emphasis on holistic knowing and affective dimensions. Marsick and Watkins (1990) suggest that transformative learning will always involve grief as transformative learning involves the death of self. They note that an individual experiences the "agonising grief of colluding in the death of someone who he knows was himself" (quoting More, in Marsick & Watkins 1990: 235). These writers argue that a central focus on rationality denies the affective dimensions that are as much a part of transformative learning as new frames of reference.

Considering defensive responses and resistance

Trigger events may lead to transformative learning but they may also lead to defensive responses, resistance responses, alienation or despair. A disorienting dilemma may be met with greater determination to defend the old belief, rather than with curiosity and a commitment to discover new understandings. Triggers which may lead to transformative learning for one person may lead to defensive reactions and the strengthening of current frames of reference in others. Wildemeersch and Lierman note that if the life-world is threatened a person may either fall back on their taken-for-granted aspirations and actions *or* they may explore new perspectives (Wildemeersch and Lierman 1988: 22). This potential for increased defensiveness is the counterpoint to the potential for transformative learning. Kuhn suggests resistance is based on the belief that the previous paradigm can still work and will ultimately solve all problems (Kuhn 1970: 151).

Salzberger-Wittenberger (1983) draws on psychodynamic theory in her discussion of unconscious behaviour and defensive behaviour in the teacher-learner relationship. She notes that teachers of adults are often surprised that their relationships with learners involve aspects which they are inclined to associate with children and adolescents (Salzberger-Wittenberger 1983: x). She outlines emotions of fear, insecurity, dread, excitement, loss, and confusion. The more unfamiliar and unstructured the situation, the more childhood

anxieties are likely to be aroused. Some learners are more vulnerable due to past experiences of loss. Salzberger-Wittenberger also outlines some of the hopes and expectations learners invest in the teacher, which influence the way in which the relationship is perceived.

Brookfield suggests that adult educators tend to ignore the possibility of anxiety and pain in learning. By holding on to the assumption that learning is a joyful, wholly fulfilling experience in self-actualisation, educators can overlook the aspects of learning that might be threatening and therefore met with resistance (Brookfield 1985: 45, 44).

Unconscious and/ or resistant behaviour can occur in group learning environments. Foley draws on Bion's theory of groups to examine the ambivalence of adult learners about group membership, and the unconscious, defensive reactions of dependency, fight-flight, and pairing that can take place (Foley 1995: 150-154). Menzies' work on the anxieties of groups and organisations also draws on Bion:

> [Bion] describes the human being as a group animal: as such he cannot get on without other human beings. Unfortunately he cannot get on with them very well either. Understanding his attempts to solve this dilemma, at evading it or defending himself against the anxieties it arouses, are [sic] central to the understanding of groups and institutions (Menzies 1970: essay 3).

Menzies (1970) notes that organisations have an unconscious, shadow side to their functioning. Personnel act defensively and the organisation develops socially structured defence mechanisms (Menzies 1970: 10). As a result, initiatives in organisational learning can sometimes arouse these emotional defences.

It could be argued that unless learning touches on these issues it does not have the potential to be transformative. It is important not to see defensive and

resistant reactions as negative indicators. Rather, they indicate that a significant learning issue has been touched on and that there are past experiences of pain or distress that hold the learners back. Senge suggests that these defensive reactions also hold great potential for fostering learning, if educators can find ways to unlock the energy they contain (Senge 1990: 237). Senge suggests that the skill in working with resistance is to discover its source, rather than to simply push harder.

Efron and Rowe (1987), who write about strategic parenting education, see defensive behaviours as evidence of a relationship pattern that is locking people into unproductive outcomes. This understanding focuses attention on the relationship, rather than on the people within it, and the challenge then becomes to develop a strategy to disrupt this negative pattern and open up the opportunity for more productive relations (Efron and Rowe 1987: 10). This moves beyond an intrapsychic approach which locates the defence in the individual, manager or organisation to one that considers the relationship pattern being enacted.

Jarvis raises the possibility of more extreme responses than defensiveness - those of despair and alienation. He draws attention to the possibility that any discontinuity can become a chasm, and that the learning situation can be seen as meaningless rather than meaningful (Jarvis 1987: 169). It is therefore important to consider the circumstances that are more likely to lead to despair rather than transformation. Jarvis says that despair results from a context that is regarded as "unchanged, unchanging and apparently unchangeable" and where "individuals feel powerless to change" (Jarvis 1987: 170, 171). Also, a person may find that the gap between their stock of knowledge and the demands of the situation is so great they perceive it as impossible to bridge (Jarvis 1987: 170, 171). This is particularly important in considering educational practice with those who have been powerless for a very long time. Rees argues that these people tend to feel that life is a never-ending struggle against forces that are largely out of their control (Rees 1991: 26). Such people have been variously described as defeated, buffeted, and passive and Rees suggests that their fatalism,

resignation, and pessimism come about because political, social and economic constraints have been internalised (Rees 1991: 26).

How does transformative learning occur?: a narrative approach

I have argued that Mezirow's theory of transformative learning has strengths but that it also has limitations, and that some learners may respond to educational events that aim to stimulate transformative learning with defensiveness, resistance and despair. In this section I explore writers who theorise meaning and change using concepts of narrative, discourse and identity. A narrative approach locates meaning in the interactions between subjects and their social worlds. Transformative learning is thus considered as a social phenomenon, involving social interactions between learners, between learners and educators, and between learners and different knowledges.

Language and meaning

All social systems are "language-generating" systems (Anderson and Goolishan 1996: 27). Further, language not only carries meaning, it also contributes to the creation of meaning (Kress 1988: 82, 86; Anderson and Goolishan 1996: 27). Communication that is designed to influence may provide overt instruction. In educational contexts, such instructions are often embedded in the form of moral imperatives, legal requirements, or professional standards. Communication also provides implicit instructions to the hearer (Kress 1988: 118). Indirectly, language carries assumptions of the reader or hearer and thus positions the learner in certain ways. These positionings communicate meaning about the person's identity. With specific reference to the production of texts, Kress states that:

> In making these assumptions about me, the writer of the article constructs a text that embodies all these presuppositions about me, and in so doing invites me (instructs me? coerces me?) to be the kind of reader envisaged by the producer of the text... every genre positions those who participate (Kress 1988: 106-107).

Such instructions and positionings are not automatically constitutive of meaning. The instructions may be accepted or rejected, and the positioning may be more or less powerful. The instructions and positioning may also be constant or variable, they may be consistent, inconsistent or contradictory, and they may be clear or ambiguous within the communication. The instructions and positioning may be welcomed or rejected by the hearer.

Considering the ways that language carries meaning, educators can consider the ways that transformative learning might occur through discursive means. The educator's language, their positioning within the social domain, the language and positioning of other participants, and the discursive practices used throughout the program can all promote transformative learning.

Story and experience

Concepts of narrative have been applied to the ways that people engage with their social worlds, including the world of education. Bruner talks of:

> ... the "new" recognition that people narrativize their experience of the world and of their own role in it (Bruner 1990: 116).

Bruner (1986) contrasts narrative knowing to paradigmatic or scientific knowing as an alternative mode of understanding realities. The terms 'narrative' and 'story' highlight a person's interpretation of their experiences and their social worlds. Narrative knowing has a number of properties. Narrative provides structure to experience, it is temporal, it is situated in place and it connects the personal and the cultural (Bruner 1986; Rossiter 1999; Plummer 1995; Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Boje 2001; Polkinghorne 1995). Narrative connects various aspects of our experience, bringing them together into a structure or a sequence. Story gives shape to our experiences:

> It is this story which gives our lives their essential shape, defines their heights, their plateaux, their declines, marks out their movement, direction, changes in direction (quoting Salmon, in Solas 1995: 34).

The concept of narrative conveys temporality. The past is a recollected story, constructed in the present as we piece together events and understandings. Stories are renegotiated as we incorporate new or unexpected experiences. Stories also link the present and the future, conveying predictions and expectations of the future (Bruner 1986; Rossiter 1999; Clandinin & Connelly 2000).

Stories are simultaneously a personal and a social phenomenon. They are constructed to represent the person's experience. However stories also have a social role. Plummer is a sociologist of stories who is concerned with the social role of stories, the ways that stories are produced and the work that they perform. He considers the links between stories, actions, contexts, and society by posing questions such as:

> How do stories get produced: what brings people to the brink of tellings? How do people come to construct their particular stories (and possess them as their own)? Further what might silence them, and what might bring people to the emotional brink of revealing all? (Plummer 1995: 24-25).

Narrative may be relatively coherent or incoherent, more ordered or confused, and more univocal or multivocal. Boje (2001) argues that 'narrative' is distinguished from 'story' by its coherence, and he promotes a focus on antenarrative. Antenarrative is speculative expression, prior to the clarity and coherence of a narrative:

> I am more interested in antenarrative, where people are still chasing stories, and many different logics for plotting an ongoing event are still being investigated (Boje 2001: 4).

Storytelling communities

Education groups are social communities where stories are introduced, exchanged and developed. Education groups are one of a range of communities that create, hear, interpret and validate stories (Plummer 1995: 144, 145, 150; Rossiter 1999: 66). We can thus consider how a specific education program enables certain stories to be constructed, told or silenced. For example, Ellsworth applies questions such as these to her education practice, when she asks, "What diversity do we silence in the name of liberatory pedagogy?" (Ellsworth 1992: 91). Further, she considers that group learning involves learners in complex negotiations about what they disclose and what they leave unsaid (Ellsworth 1992: 105). The negotiation of meaning in a learning group develops from a series of complex interactions around story telling, audiencing, and power. By focusing on the people who are the audience of the story, as well as the person who tells the story, we can develop an interactional perspective of story development.

We can also investigate the social function of stories. The outcome of telling a particular story may not be predictable: a story may open up some possibilities while closing down others (Plummer 1995: 28). The way that a story interacts with other stories, so as to establish polarisations or affinities, may also be unpredictable. Boje applies the concept of storytelling to organisations and also develops the idea of performance of stories, by considering the ways that people communicate and enact various stories. He defines a storytelling organisation as "a collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sense making " (Boje 1994: 6). Stories have many purposes in organisations. They are used to instruct, to strengthen relationships, to give vent to personal feelings, to inspire, to summarise important information, to try to understand the world, to preserve history, to entertain, to pass on a tradition, to provide moral education and to convince (Kaye 1996; Reason and Hawkins 1990).

Stories are constructed with discursive resources

People construct a story of their experiences, and talk about their experiences, through discourse. Therefore we need to consider the range and types of discourses that are available to them. Discourses provide discursive resources such as terms, concepts, arguments, metaphors, and linguistic structures that then circulate within a given field. The discursive resources that the person uses construct experience in a particular way. They foreground some aspects of the experience, they background other aspects, they position subjects, and they provide explanations for events.

Potter and Wetherell write about "linguistic resources" and outline that all accounts of an event are "built out of pre-existing linguistic resources" (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 33-34). This involves the person in the selection of resources, although this selection process may be quite unintentional.

Discursive resources provide a way to talk about experiences and also set parameters. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for people to express 'the unsayable' within certain historical times and contexts because language is not available to describe their experience. Foucault's analysis of knowledge seeks to identify the circumstances that will allow certain knowledges to emerge. In describing the law of emergence, Foucault writes:

> The conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse, the historical conditions required if one is to say anything about it... are many and imposing. Which means that one cannot speak of anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new (Foucault 1972: 44).

Discourses that co-exist within an interaction space often compete, contradict and conflict with each other (Henriques *et al.* 1998: 203; Pease 1999: 105). Plummer notes in his research into stories of sexuality, that postmodern stories and modern stories co-exist, and that modern stories still predominate: new stories are emerging "alongside the older ones" (Plummer 1995: 131). Boje

(1994) identified pre-modern, modern and postmodern discourses of organisational learning, and suggests that all of these discourses intermingle in contemporary organisations. He suggests that organisations are polyphonic, and many discourses are operating at one time. Further, rather than one discourse being regarded as superior or more liberating, all can both constrain or be used to develop strategies (Boje 1994: 451-455).

Stories, discourses and identities

Stories express social life and also shape social life. By focusing on the ways that self is produced through social interactions we can consider both the flux and endurance of identity:

> The Self, then, like any other aspect of human nature, stands both as a guardian of permanence and as a barometer to the local cultural weather (Bruner 1990: 110).

Stories establish parameters for identities. Boje suggests that stories discipline people by the way that they define a character, the way that the plot sequences action and the way that the story provides scripts for action (Boje 1994: 7). People select stories according to the implications they have for their identities:

> Such stories, as it were, can be tried on for psychological size, accepted if they fit, rejected if they pinch identity or compete with established commitments (Bruner 1990: 54).

Discursive psychology focuses on human behaviour that is relational and considers "ways of being and doing that performatively produce particular identities" (Henriques *et al.* 1998: xvii). People develop identity through the discursive practices of the social worlds in which they relate, and particularly through the social worlds that are most central to their identity. Discursive practices establish certain subject positions (Henriques *et al.* 1998: 203). For

example, through this study I identify narratives that establish subject positions such as expert, problem-poser, problem-solver and charismatic leader.

A range of co-existing subject positions may be available during a specific interaction (Hollway 1998b: 230). Thus the concept of a unitary self is called into question (Henriques *et al.* 1998: 204). Social identity is formed in contexts of competing discourses (Pease 1999: 103). A specific interaction may involve competing discourses and suggest a range of potential subject positions. In complex social interactions, people may enact multiple subject positions and these may be contradictory. People develop identity as they adopt a number of subject positions, and overall these may be coherent or incoherent (Henriques *et al.* 1988: 203; Bruner 1990: 107).

Recognising the construction of the subject within social interactions does not imply a lack of agency (Davies 1991; Hollway 1998a: 57; Pease 1999: 105). People demonstrate agency in the ways that they resist a dominant discourse or enact allegiance to a discourse:

> Subjectivity can be glimpsed as a process of finding yourself becoming a subject over the course of an infinite series of encounters, involving reflexivity and creativity (Henriques *et al.*1998: xvii).

A person may pursue, avoid and/ or follow certain subject positions. People invest in certain subject positions over time. Thus subjectivity develops through a continual process of being subject to and making subject in social relations (Henriques *et al.*1998: 3; Hollway 1998b: 237-238). The pattern of investment may reflect the person's history and/ or the material and social implications of differing subject positions. Thus some subject positions can be familiar and welcomed, while others might be regarded as alien, forbidden or relatively powerless (Hollway 1998b: 238; Pease 1999: 104).

This view of identity emphasises the continual development of identities as the subject interacts with their social world. Davies asks:

> A central question then becomes in what sense am 'I' spoken into existence through these discursive practices (Davies 1991: 46).

Rephrasing this sentence in educational contexts, a central question is how educators and learners speak the 'I' into existence in educational programs.

The facilitation of transformative learning as narrative intervention

The narrative approach considers learning in relation to the storying and restorying of experience. By relating life narratives, learners become more aware of the direction of their life and can review or restory their experience. The potential of an alternative narrative is that it provides a new version of experience:

> The transformational power of narrative rests in its capacity to re-relate the events of our lives in the context of new and different meaning (Anderson and Goolishan 1996: 27).

Narrative therapists describe their interventions as introducing alternative narratives, reconstructing narratives and developing new narratives. There is always a range of potential stories that may make sense of a person's experience. In narrative terms, transformative learning can be described as the development of an alternative story. The alternative story carries the possibility of new understandings, new positions, new actions, and new identities:

> Such alternative stories carry different knowledges of self, of ways of being in the world (White 1995: 65).

Freedman and Combs (1996) outline the process of narrative therapy as opening space for new stories, constructing a new story and then performing the new story. Learning groups provide a context for the development of new narratives. Stories of self that have been developed in a person's private social

domain are frequently reinforced in public domains; for example, by discourses about gender, class, race, and age. The legitimacy of the story is reinforced when there is mirroring of meaning in public and private worlds. Therefore, if the education context provides an audience for an alternative story of self, new understandings can emerge.

Further, narrative interventions may not always introduce a new story but rather they may address the ways that various stories come together. Stories of identity may be competing, multi-faceted, and contradictory. Different discourses may weaken the power of a particular story or they may add legitimacy and power to a story. Thus, learning groups provide contexts for competing stories of self. As Diamond outlines, various stories of self might be circulating, such as the story of the educator I want to be and the story of the educator I don't want to be:

> It is not so much the disappearance of certain elements and the emergence of others, as it is a question of shifts in the mutual relationships among the components of the system, such as among myself, the teacher I am, the teacher I want to be, the teacher I fear to be and pupils (Diamond 1991: 123).

Boje also describes transformation as a re-patterning of various elements in stories. While change is sometimes viewed as displacement of the old by the new, change also involves shifts in emphasis among discursive elements (Boje 1994: 41, 2001: 44).

Implications for the facilitation of transformative learning

So far I have presented narrative theories as an alternative to Mezirow's theory. In this section of the chapter I will bring together the two theoretical approaches, and review some implications for the facilitation of transformative learning.

A normative or strategic viewpoint

To be named as transformative learning, Mezirow states that perspective transformation must be 'emancipatory'. A positive benefit accrues. If a change in perspective limits a person's understandings, such 'learning' would not be transformative learning. Mezirow states that people develop superior frames of reference through transformative learning; that is, frames of reference/ meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, more permeable or open, more discriminating, emotionally capable of change, reflective and more integrative (Mezirow & Associates 1990: 14, 2000: 8).

I suggest that Mezirow emphasises the development of superior frames of reference because of his view of adult development. Mezirow sees the autonomous adult as one who critically reflects on assumptions developed throughout earlier stages of life. Mezirow links critical reflection, adulthood and autonomy and thus proposes developmental norms:

> Transformation Theory's focus is on how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others - to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers (Mezirow 2000: 8).

Mezirow's idea of adulthood is founded on his belief in the universality of rationality (Mezirow 1998a, 1998b). He suggests that transformative learning will lead to beliefs that are "more dependable" and "more justifiable or true" (Mezirow 2000: 4). Further, he outlines ideal conditions for discourse, promoting

a democratic ideal where ideas are introduced, weighed and validated in a discussion characterised by equal opportunity for participation and the absence of coercion (Mezirow 2000: 13-14). Thus Mezirow outlines a series of standards, both for meaning perspectives and for discourse within education groups. He suggests that these standards are not utopian ideals, but rather are:

> ... a set of standards useful for understanding and facilitating significant adult learning and for judging social conditions that impede or facilitate such learning (Mezirow 1996: 240).

Thus I suggest that Mezirow's theory is a normative approach. Alternatively, narrative concepts can be used to develop a strategic approach. As outlined earlier in this chapter, people may be eminently creative and reflexive in their social interactions, developing and transforming subjectivity progressively but they may also become relatively fixed in relation to particular subject positions (Pease 1999: 103).

For example, Diamond considers why teachers fail to test and elaborate their personal theories, and he identifies three reasons. Firstly, he notes that meaning structures can be in chaos if they are too vague and loose, and thus they are not clear enough to be tested in practice. Secondly, he suggests that meaning structures can be so constricted and closed that evidence that would not validate them is excluded. Thirdly, he suggests that meaning making is so circular that a person endlessly tests and retests the same hypotheses (Diamond 1991: 50).

These concepts focus on the ongoing process of meaning making. A narrative approach considers whether the process of meaning development is productive. Thus I suggest that it is a strategic approach.

Power relations and transformative learning

Mezirow's ideal conditions for discourse present a concept of power as something that distorts rational judgement and full participation in dialogue:

> Fostering discourse, with a determined effort to free participation from distortions by power and influence, is a long-established priority of adult educators (Mezirow 2000: 14).

However, knowledge and judgement cannot exist outside of both power relations and historical contexts. Otherwise we disembody words, as if the words did not reflect the social distribution of power in that place and time. Foucault argues that knowledge cannot exist outside of power:

> Perhaps, too, we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests (Foucault 1977: 27).

Further, Foucault provides a way to consider power within social relations, as "a productive network which runs through the entire social body much more than a negative instance whose function is repression" (Foucault 1979: 36). He challenges a reduction in our understanding of power to the image of 'master' (Foucault 1979: 53). The image of master leads us to think of power in negative terms and limits our responses to power in terms of refusal, limitation, obstruction, or censure. Rather than considering power as something that can be possessed, power is considered as something that acts:

> Power is not possessed... As far as we go in the social network, we always find power as something which 'runs through' it, that acts, that brings about effects (Foucault 1979: 59).

Power is a productive force, it is an integral part of all social relations and is always operating within social interactions. This view of power opens up an alternative approach. Thus, rather than seeking to promote ideal conditions of rational discourse, we can map the operations of power within networks and intervene strategically in these networks. Thus we would emphasise the educator's capacity to move within the dialogue, enacting power in flexible ways.

View of 'self'

There is an essentialist view of self in Mezirow's theory. For him, transformative learning is the process of becoming more truly one's self; that is, less influenced by oppressive societal norms. Mezirow writes of 'false consciousness', 'self deception' and 'delusion' (Mezirow 1985, 1991). He suggests that ideal dialogue only occurs when people are free from the various forms of distortion associated with false consciousness (Mezirow 1985: 145, 146). This does not acknowledge that truth is contested and that there are competing views of truth within any society (Foucault 1979).

This assumption of the 'authentic' self beneath the oppressed self is seen in the transformative learning literature of women's consciousness raising. For example, Hart writes about the problem of women having a "colonised meaning perspective" that has usurped any authentic meaning (Hart 1990a: 52). Therefore women have not only been kept "from pursuing but also from perceiving [their interests]" (Hart 1990a: 52). Further, anti-racist educators consider ways that learners can reclaim their cultural identity, beyond the terms established by dominating power relations (Tolliver & Tisdell 2002).

This view of an 'authentic' self conveys a dualistic position, and this is most useful when there is a clear political choice to make. This view clearly defines a group who are oppressed and others who are the oppressors, and there is a clear sense of the identity of the enemy (Newman 1994a). In the health and community sector, this view has been significant in the development of

educational practice in the areas of domestic violence and sexual abuse. However, this view is less useful for this study, which explores the implications of a more ambiguous web of power relations.

Poststructural analysis challenges an essentialist view of self, and therefore the view that transformative learning is a process of discovering the authentic self. Poststructural writers have critiqued the essentialist view of identity:

> Humanist discourses presuppose an essence at the heart of the individual which is unique, fixed and coherent and which makes her what she is... poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak (Weedon 1987: 32).

Also Foucault's conceptualisation of power enables us to consider the power implications of the production of identity. As outlined previously, a poststructural view emphasises that the subject is produced in a "mutually constitutive web of social practices " (Henriques *et al.* 1988: 117). Although multiple discourses operate in the social domain, all subject positions are not equally attractive to a person at a particular time and place. Power operates within the network of practices that constitute the social domain in ways that make some subject positions more or less attractive:

> ... it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject (Foucault 1982 in Henriques *et al.* 1998: 117).

This leads us to consider the ways that discourses invite people to adopt a particular subject position and the ways that a particular position is outlined as the 'norm'. Power is often disguised as presentations of the normal (Foucault 1979: 66). Foucault's concept of technologies of self draws attention to the choices that people make in constructing any story of self:

Technologies of the self… permit individuals to effect… operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves (Foucault 1988: 18).

The role of educators who facilitate transformative learning

In this section of the chapter I bring together ideas from Mezirow's theory and narrative theories regarding the role of educators who facilitate transformative learning, and outline a multi-faceted role.

Mezirow describes the educator as an empathic provocateur:

> ... gently creating dilemmas by encouraging learners to face up to contradictions between what they believe and what they do, disjunctures between espoused theory and actual practice, and discrepancies between a specific way of seeing, thinking, feeling and acting and other perspectives (Mezirow 1991: 366).

Thus Mezirow suggests that the educator's focus is on contradictions in the learner's communications and actions. Numerous educators have outlined educational practices based on Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 1990a, 1990b; Saavedra 1996; Courtenay *et al.* 2000; Sokol & Cranton 1998; King 2002; Christopher, Dunnagan, Duncan & Lynn 2001; First & Way 1995). They establish learning activities and learning environments that assist learners to uncover and critically reflect on assumptions. Cranton suggests that the role of this kind of educator includes the following: recognising the learner's assumptions, creating an environment to challenge those assumptions, assisting the learner to identify the assumptions and consider the consequences of the assumptions, providing psychological support to the learner as they revise assumptions, and supporting the learner to act on the revised assumptions (Cranton 1992: 151-152).

Mezirow, Freire and Horton emphasise the educator's provocative role. Mezirow notes that Freire precipitated perspective transformation by developing pictures or stories that represented cultural discrepancies. The rationale for this provocative role is that the learners are either unaware of the discrepancies or the discrepancies are taken for granted (Mezirow 1981: 19). Horton uses the

metaphor of seeing with two eyes, suggesting that both the person and the specific social change need to be considered together. He describes this through the metaphor of binocular vision:

> I like to think that I have two eyes that I don't have to use the same way. When I do educational work with a group of people, I try to see with one eye where those people are as they perceive themselves to be... Now my other eye... I already have in mind a philosophy of where I'd like to see people moving. It's not a clear blueprint for the future but movement towards goals they don't conceive of at the time (Horton 1990: 131).

Thus he suggests bringing together both the learner's goal and the educator's goal to form the focus for the educational process.

Senge also describes a provocative role for leaders who create change in organisations. He notes that leaders need to establish and manage creative tension; for example, by creating and then dramatising an issue so that it can no longer be ignored (Senge 1990: 357). Stimpson suggests that women have a social responsibility to name reality that has been pushed to the edge of invisibility (Stimpson 1988: 88). Even prior to publicly representing a truth, the issues must be looked at and named. These writers promote an active, provocative role for educators in representing and advocating for a truth that is being ignored. As Tisdell (1998) notes, educators have a proactive role in challenging unequal power relations so that systems of privilege are not replicated in the education context.

Head reminds us that, in this provocative role, the educator is an invader and the challenge is whether she or he can contribute as both outsider *and* friend. Otherwise he suggests that learners will regard the educator as an alien power that should be repulsed. The educator is seen as someone one who seeks to extend what the learner defines as an issue of interest (Head 1977: 127, 142, 194).

Hart uses the metaphor of mothering to highlight the responsiveness of educators (Hart 1992: 178). She outlines a relationship that involves continual adaptation of each to the other, as the educator responds to both the potential and the limits of the learner (Hart 1992: 179). Also, using the example of the relationship of an artisan to the crafted object, she develops a view of work that integrates the dichotomies of our society. These include reason and emotion, body and mind, enjoyment and burden, particular and general, individual potential and societal norms, nearness and distance, and autonomy and control (Hart 1992: 175-190). In this way, she describes the educator as engaged in a responsive interaction with the learner, moving among these dichotomies.

Freire (1972) uses the metaphors of the midwife and the banker to describe contrasting views of the role of the educator. The educator as midwife assists the learner to give birth to his or her own knowledge, while the educator as banker simply deposits knowledge in the learner.

Senge draws on David Bohm's work about dialogue. He suggests that co-creation of new meanings is the hallmark of dialogue and he distinguishes dialogue from discussion. Whereas discussion involves presenting and defending different views in order to lead to a decision, dialogue involves exploring a complex issue. Differing views are presented as possible routes to a new idea (Senge 1990: 238-249). It is a very fluid description of the way in which knowledge emerges, and primarily emphasises the process of learning. Bohm suggests that there are three conditions necessary for dialogue:

1. All participants must 'suspend' their assumptions, literally to hold them as 'if suspended before us'
2. All participants must regard one another as colleagues
3. There must be a facilitator who holds the context of dialogue (Senge 1990: 243).

The educator is also described as having a narrative role in learning environments, responding to narratives and developing narratives. Rossiter

(1999) describes the educator's role through a range of narrative metaphors. Educators are described as keepers of learners' stories, as they establish an environment where stories can be told and received. Secondly, the educator acts as an engaged audience, demonstrating receptivity to the story as it is expressed. Further, the educator is described as an editor, critic and co-author, assisting the learner to revise their narrative.

Gergen and Kaye (1996) suggest that human service professionals are engaged in narrative interventions. They suggest that at some juncture in social life, particular narratives are so powerful that the professional must inevitably respond to them. They suggest that one response is to act as the recipient of the narrated reality, and accept the story as told. However if this choice is taken the existing assumptions also remain fixed. As a result, the range of possible options remains circumscribed by the existing story. In contrast, the professional can introduce an alternative narrative into the interaction. Thus the educator is a narrative facilitator.

Conclusion

Mezirow's theory provides the theoretical starting point for this study's exploration of the facilitation of transformative learning. Concepts such as frame of reference and perspective transformation clearly distinguish transformative learning from more instrumental educational endeavours. Mezirow's focus on the impact of a disorienting dilemma and the significance of critical reflection provides educators with a guide to the ways that learners directly engage in transformative learning.

However, Mezirow places undue emphasis on the significance of rationality. The wider literature suggests that transformative learning is rarely a rational process, and educators' practice of transformative learning will require an understanding of emotions, defensive reactions and alienation. Thus, this thesis argues that Mezirow's theory has limitations in theorising the educational practice of transformative learning.

Therefore in developing a framework for this study, ideas from theories of narrative, discourse and identity are also introduced. The concepts of narrative and discourse draw attention to the interactions between subjects and the social, and the ways that learners and educators develop identities discursively.

Chapter 3

Research methodology

> My project rises from delight, not disappointment. It rises from what I know about the ways writers transform aspects of their social grounding into aspects of language, and the way they tell other stories, fight secret wars... (Morrison 1993: 4)

Introduction

There is a growing interest in research into transformative learning (Taylor 1997, 2000; Christopher *et al.* 2001; Courtenay *et al.* 2000; First & Way 1885; Gravett 2002; Lyon 2001), but to date there has been less research into the ways that educators *facilitate* transformative learning (Taylor 2000: 318).

Taylor reviewed empirical studies of transformative learning and concluded that in-depth studies are needed to address current limitations in transformative learning theory. Such studies would explore catalysts for transformative learning, the influence of context, the forms of knowing involved, the diversity of learners, and educators' practice in fostering transformative learning (Taylor 1997: 47).

This study of working knowledge is focused on educators' practice, exploring the complexities of facilitating transformative learning. As Taylor notes:

> It is imperative, in this new millennium, that we set a new direction of research for transformative learning theory that focuses on understanding with greater depth its inherent complexities... (Taylor 2000: 286).

In the first section of the chapter I discuss narrative research, outline why narrative research was chosen for this study and review its potential for investigations of professional practice. I discuss some of the potentials of

narrative interviews and some of the issues that arise in conducting them. The two methods used to analyse the data, namely case examples and metaphor analysis, are outlined. Then the study is described as an intensive study and I review the potential and limitations of intensive studies.

In the second section of the chapter I outline the specific application of narrative research in this study. I outline the approach to the interviews, consider the interview sequence and discuss the approach to questioning at different stages of the interview. Then I outline the six sets of readings that were used to analyse the data.

In the final section of the chapter I reflect on some of the issues that arise in narrative research, considering ways in which practitioners select incidents and develop narratives of their practice.

Narrative research

Introduction

Narrative research is based on the metaphorical concept that people make meaning by narrating their experience. Narrative research focuses on narrative knowing, whereby we seek to develop explanations of our actions in a specific context (Polkinghorne 1995; Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Boje 2001).

Stories are holistic constructions that connect events, emotions, perceptions, interpretations, interests, and values. Stories merge information of the personal with information of the socio-cultural. Therefore stories are a suitable form when researching experiences (Polkinghorne 1995). Further, narratives can convey the complexities of human action, and differences, multiplicity, and change (Polkinghorne 1995). Reason and Hawkins suggest that there is much to be learnt about the ways that story-telling can be used for inquiry (Reason and Hawkins 1990: 83).

Narrative research suits studies of working knowledge. Narrative modes enable us to investigate the ways in which professionals *do* the process of judgement (Hager 2000; Yeatman 1996; Connelly & Clandinin 1999; Clandinin & Connelly 2000). Narratives can convey the integration of knowledges embedded within professional practice. Professionals are involved in a continual process of integrating and differentiating their knowledge as they make judgements. Working knowledge involves a series of judgements and actions over time, and researchers can investigate this process through narrative research.

As an investigator of knowledge, there is also the question of my current and developing capabilities. It is important to consider the skills that I already possess, and the kinds of research for which I have most capability. Reinharz investigates the training needs of new researchers, and suggests that people choose to work with their strengths (Reinharz 1981: 428). Thus, I propose that

narrative research suits the study's purposes and also suits the capabilities that I have developed through my professional history (as outlined in chapter 1).

Working knowledge and professional practice

Professional practice involves the integration of a range of knowledges, as practitioners develop their judgements about how to respond to specific issues and contexts. The rationale for using narrative research for this study is linked to this view of professional practice.

Professional practice is often seen as the application of a universal professional body of knowledge to a series of specific situations. However, various writers have noted that professional expertise develops in the practice context and is not the direct application of professional knowledge to particular situations (Usher 2000; Candy 1991; Yates and Chandler 1991). The working knowledge of professional communities is not always identified as knowledge as it may be tacit and hidden within descriptions of work as action.

My interest in researching working knowledge is based on a commitment to knowledge in a broad sense. For example, Yeatman argues for an "inclusive and 'non-scientistic' map of knowledge" that acknowledges and respects multiple inputs into knowledge, including the knowledges of academics, practitioners and "ordinary knowers" (Yeatman 1996: 284). Hager argues that our current understandings of knowledge are skewed and limited because they are overly influenced by academic criteria for legitimation (Hager 2000: 73). The social work profession, along with other professions, has had a tradition of valuing 'practice wisdom' in addition to the disciplinary knowledges that underpin professional practice. Practice wisdom focuses on the decisions that social workers make within practice contexts (Tierney 1993).

Yeatman considers the professional's capacity to integrate and synthesise a vast array of knowledge inputs through the process of forming judgements. She suggests that the capacity to synthesise develops through pressure on

practitioners to deal with a range of stakeholders who have different needs. Further, she argues that practitioners' expertise has a complexity that is often overlooked:

> On their side, practitioners are misled by the privileging of scientific types of knowledge into a severe understatement of the challenges, creativity, wisdom and vision which attends their ability to integrate different types of knowledge, both scientific and non-scientific, within their practice. A good practitioner is someone who intelligently operates an epistemological kaleidoscope constituted by the different types of knowledge input (Yeatman 1996: 289).

The professional might draw upon both disciplinary knowledge and other ideas circulating within their world of life and work. Hudson suggests that the professional knowledge of social work can be categorised into five main forms: theoretical, empirical, procedural, practice wisdom, and personal knowledge such as intuition, cultural knowledge and common sense (Hudson 1997: 35). The value of a component or the mix of components is its usefulness in forming and refining judgements. Hudson suggests that when professional social workers are required to make judgements about complex issues where there is insufficient knowledge, and they are uncertain, they rely on stress-reducing mechanisms to cope (Hudson 1997: 43). The development of judgement involves a capacity to select a component of knowledge, or a mix of components, which may be most useful to respond to the particular requirements of a situation (Hager 2000: 94; Hudson 1997: 38). This conception of professional practice considers the wide range of knowledges that the professional may draw upon when forming judgements.

Hatton (1988) discusses the limitations of professional judgments when she conceptualises the work of teachers as *bricolage*, taking up Levi-Strauss' term. The work of *bricolage* occurs within fixed constraints of materials, tools or explanatory categories, and the *bricoleur* makes do with whatever is at hand. Creativity is limited to new uses of the materials and rearrangements of existing

means. Hatton argues that there are parallels to the work of teachers, as they are constrained by, and accommodate to, an existing pool of resources and materials. Further, she suggests that the intellectual *bricolage* of teachers usually involves explanations within a limited and unquestioned framework. Thus the work of teachers is seen as conservative, and their creativity as limited and *ad hoc*.

Professionals remake their professional knowledge as they develop and this supports the development of their judgement. Studies of expertise have considered professional expertise as a very fine-tuned and detailed pattern recognition process, based on underlying principles (Yates and Chandler 1991: 139; Benner, Tanner & Chesla 1996; Glaser 1985: 7). The expert can quickly discern the ways that a situation is similar to and different from other instances. Tennant draws on the stage theory of Schmidt *et al.* regarding the development of clinical expertise among doctors, and notes that the expert stage is characterised by the remembering of previous patient situations as "instance scripts" (Tennant 1991: 51). Benner notes that expert nurses use their past experience to guide their perception of clinical situations, to decide on the most salient features of the situation and to predict warning signs (Benner 1984: 8-9; Benner, Tanner & Chesla 1996). She suggests that expert nurses organise their experience as clusters of "paradigm cases" (Benner 1984: 8).

Narrative research and educators' working knowledge

Researching such multifaceted knowledge poses particular challenges. How can we assist educators to explicate the knowledge that is enmeshed in their actions? How can we engage them to express the nuances of their knowledge? How can we identify knowledge about ways to address a specific problematic issue while also acknowledging the synoptic view? How can we deal with knowledge that is relatively incoherent and unsystematic? If we are to address these issues, we may require new forms to elicit and write knowledge.

Narrative methodology is increasingly being used for research in education (Hones 1998; Butt, Raymond, McCue & Yamagishi 1992; Middleton 1998; Diamond 1991; Kaye 1995; Goodson 1992). For example, Goodson (1992) reviews the trend of studying teachers' lives through life histories, autobiography and collaborative autobiography and Diamond (1991) uses narrative research to elicit teachers' self-narratives.

Knowledge embedded in professional practice involves particularities of responses to the nuances of context. Diamond notes that narrative research investigates the interaction between a person and their environment, recognising that the person is an active influencer of the environment as well as being moulded by that environment (Diamond 1991: 89). Narratives can be used to explore multi-factor, interactive realities of human action and thus they have significant potential for studies of professional practice.

Narrative research elicits a particular form of data. Narratives provide data from the perspective of the people who are interviewed. Their stories are framed according to their perception of the experience. Interviewees construct knowledge throughout the interview, fashioning their stories according to their interpretive frameworks (Jarvinen 2000).

Reason and Hawkins note that any narrative method is a "creative medium through which the meaning can take form" (Reason and Hawkins 1990: 81). Research methods are depicted as a container in which meanings find their shape. They suggest that meaning may be communicated through a variety of different languages, including the languages of words, action such as mime and drama, colour and shape such as drawing and sculpture, and through silence and stillness. Telling stories of practice through narrative interviews is just one of these languages. All of these languages are symbolic; meaning is embedded within them and these languages require interpretation if meaning is to be unlocked.

Narrative interviews

As I explain in detail later in this chapter I invited educators to tell me stories of their practice. The stories emerged from our interaction in the interviews. While it was the educators who produced the stories, I coaxed and provoked them to do so (Plummer 1995: 21; Hones 1998). As Mishler notes:

> An interview is a form of discourse... An interview is a joint production of what interviewees and interviewers talk about with each other (Mishler 1986: vii).

The challenge of narrative interviews is to design a process that will enable practitioners to name significant areas of practice. People may be ready to speak of significant, emerging issues if the process supports this (Plummer 1995: 13). Stories gathered in research are a public, constructed communication of meaning. Narrative research involves people in deciding whether to make an experience public, when it had previously been private and less open to scrutiny. Then they make choices about how to construct the story for public expression. Therefore their expression is a strategic communication choice. Issues that may have been private become public, what was implicit becomes explicit, and what was marginal may become more central through the choices made in storying.

The narrative mode includes expression and explanation. Reason and Hawkins define expression as the "mode of allowing the meaning to become manifest" and explanation as "the mode of classifying, conceptualising and building theories from experience" (Reason and Hawkins 1990: 80). Interview questions may guide respondents to speak in a narrative, expressive way or may guide them to analyse their experience and provide explanations.

Story telling generates a certain quality of data. I have found that information generated in critical incident interviews conveys a linear process of events over time. In contrast, a story telling approach can gather information from many

angles and elicits data with more ambiguity and complexity. A critical incident interview might start with the story of an incident, but its structure quickly moves people into a cause and effect approach to explanation. The narrative mode invites data that is more exploratory, less linear, and more symbolic.

There are challenges in eliciting the complexity of the story. If people are directly asked to express their story, their first choice may be a one-dimensional expression. The more ambiguous and conflicting components of the story may be left unsaid. Establishing a conversational style of communication rather than a formal style can encourage the person to relax and open up the story. A cyclical process for revisiting key stories can also support expression of more implicit meaning. A cyclical sequence also enables the interviewer to move beyond an initial saturation point in listening, and thus hear additional information and different information.

Making decisions about ways in which to gather information requires a consideration of the kind of relationship that would support the process. A formal, distant stance is likely to hinder in-depth expression of a story, particularly any story that draws on unfamiliar experiences. Rather, a commitment to join with people and to establish a climate of respect is more conducive to full story telling (Mishler 1986: 29-31). Otherwise the information that is presented will be limited by the person's need to protect more of their experience from the gaze of the researcher.

All events are experienced through existing pre-understandings. These pre-understandings lead us to interpret the situation even before we come to grips with the breadth and depth of that experience. The process of story telling involves the narrator in moving between closeness to that experience and distance from that experience. The questions in the interview must therefore include ways to establish closeness to the experience and also ways to establish distance from it. Questions that prompt the story-teller to step back and provide comment from a distance may engage them in additional exploration, beyond their initial understandings.

Therefore, I suggest that the role of the researcher in narrative research interviews is firstly to facilitate an interactive process between the educator and the researcher, in order to elicit important stories, and then to enhance the richness of the story telling through questions and responses. Taking this further, we can conceptualise the role as fostering the self-research of these practitioner-knowers, with the intended outcome that the researcher and the practitioner name emerging knowledge. We have both "left our mark on the process and the product" of the study (Gudmundsdottir 1996: 294).

Due to my interest in research that is focused on issues in practice, I considered a problem-based methodology for a time. However, as Robinson (1993) outlines it, this methodology positions the researcher as the problem-solving consultant. Such a role perpetuates the idea that researchers have more knowledge, or superior knowledge, to practitioners who are positioned as the 'problem-holder'. I suggest that, in the area of transformative learning, we have much to learn from experienced practitioners and that the theory may even lag behind leading practice. Therefore, it was important to develop a more exploratory style of investigation; an investigation with practitioners, based on respect for their implicit and explicit knowings. Rather than focus on practice problems, I preferred to focus on challenges practitioners have faced:

> ... not a problem in need of solution but a mystery in need of evocative comprehension (Van Manen 1990: 50).

Challenges of practice can provide mysteries that are the impetus for reflection and investigation over many years. As Epston notes in relation to one case example, "it took me another ten years to figure out the significance of his comments" (Epston 1998: 7).

Case example method

Stories can provide detailed information about practice and they can enable us to explore multiplicity and variations of education practice (Diamond 1991: 89, 92). To understand a specific example of practice, particularly to seek to understand why things happened, we need to investigate the various aspects of the experience, the interdependencies in those aspects, and the patterns that emerge (Sturman 1999).

Melidonis proposes the case example research method as having particular benefit for research of clinical psychotherapeutic practice because it develops data that practitioners find useful (Melidonis 1989: 227). Rather than seeking to prove that a theory is true or false, case examples are designed to develop knowledge that practitioners can draw upon to guide their practice. The particular case provides an example of a process involved in practice (Melidonis 1989: 227; Middleton 1992: 19).

As outlined by Melidonis, case example research investigates core events in a case and their relation to outcomes. Case examples usually represent complexities or problematics of practice. Thus the inquiry links core events with a successful or unsuccessful outcome (Melidonis 1989: 228). This can be a cyclical process. For example, the restraints that prevented desired outcomes can also be discussed and new plans or strategies identified.

Melidonis emphasises the way that the data is organised and the way that distinctions are drawn out in the data. If done effectively this can assist practitioners to review the applicability of the case example research for their work contexts (Melidonis 1989: 232). Melidonis provides an example of documentation in a case using four columns. These outline the problem, the desired outcome, the strategy and actual outcomes, according to each family member and agency staff.

Case examples can be particularly useful when they are significant examples of practice. Significant experiences may provoke detailed reflection and re-examination of knowledge:

> Often, it was an emotional encounter with a client that changed a professional's practice, particularly if confronted with client situations that challenged their knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions. This challenge triggered a reflective process that began an examination of issues within the professional's role... Often, these encounters were such memorable experiences that professionals tended to use them as a way to organise and rethink their professional work (Daley 2001: 48).

Some case examples are especially significant as they represent ways that an educator organises his or her working knowledge to address complexities of practice. They are "instance scripts" or "paradigm cases" that demonstrate the ways that information, experiences and knowledges are connected to respond to specific challenges (Tennant 1991: 51; Benner 1984; Daley 2001: 48).

Metaphor analysis

In this study I make use of metaphor analysis. Metaphor analysis has been promoted in adult education research because metaphors communicate experiences that cannot be expressed literally (Proctor 1991: 64; Kaye 1995; Deshler 1990; Lander 2000; Bozlk 2002). Interviewees may use metaphors when expressing emerging knowledge. Linguistically metaphors are a bridge between what is known and what is becoming known (Gudmundsdottir 1996: 297-298; Deshler 1990: 297, 311).

Metaphors, as discursive resources, are personal and social constructs of meaning. Experience is interpreted through language and it is not possible for educators to provide a story of practice outside of language, nor is it possible for them to relate a neutral interpretation of their experience. Practitioners work within a network of discourses. Socially located discourses guide their practice

by emphasising aspects of the incident and excluding others, and by organising the educator's perception of events. Metaphor analysis draws attention to the discourses that infuse stories of practice.

Researchers have identified educators' metaphors as a way of understanding educators' professional development, professional identity and perceptions of the field (Proctor 1991; Diamond 1991; Kaye 1995; Lander 2000; Bozlk 2002). Some metaphors are relatively unexamined, and by unmasking them we may develop fresh understandings of practice:

> Metaphors are most useful when they afford fresh insights and help to create new frames of vision (Diamond 1991: 110).

Metaphor analysis can be illuminating because metaphoric language can often indicate the educator's understanding of their reality (Kaye 1995: 7; Diamond 1991: 110). The identity of the educator is also closely linked to the metaphors that they use in their story telling:

> ... the user became part of the image rather than an observer on the sidelines (Kaye 1995: 6).

The process of analysis is thus a matter of proceeding to "unpack the meaning" in the metaphor (Deshler 1990: 301).

An intensive approach to research

This study utilises an intensive research approach. Intensive research approaches have been utilised by researchers in education and narrative therapy such as Middleton (1992), Butt *et al.* (1992), Epston (1998) and White (1992). Intensive research approaches have particular potentials and limitations.

In-depth interviews elicit multiple dimensions of an issue and explore the meaning and significance of people's actions (Mishler 1985: 74-75; Walker 1985: 4; Jones 1985: 46). I suggest that narrative interviews are successful when they elicit information that is rich, vivid and multilayered. As Geertz (1975) outlines, the data from ethnographic studies is thick description. Many details of an experience can be documented, creating a thick description of the experience. As Geertz explains by amplifying Ryle's story of two boys winking, thick description provides details that enable us to draw distinctions about the significance and meaning of certain actions (Geertz 1975: 3-7, 16).

Epston is a theorist of narrative therapy who draws on Geertz's ideas of ethnography and suggests that he regards himself as "an 'ethnographer of the particular', drawing as close as I can to the experience of others" (Epston 1998: v). Thick description is developed by the researcher's close engagement with the focus of the research. The capacity to draw close is of particular value when research concerns the problematics, complexities and novelties of practice (Epston 1998: v, 7). As suggested by Mishler, the case study or case example approach is an intimate approach. Just as Trow contrasts the "grid of two hundred million and the grid of intimacy" (Mishler 1986: 120), so case example research is in marked contrast to research methods that seek the views of multitudes. Case examples provide an intimate and concrete exploration of events, and the meanings that the person gives to them. Sometimes such research can be "microscopic" in focus (Geertz 1975: 21). The data is valuable due to its "complex specificness", providing finetuned detail (Geertz 1975: 21, 23).

It is important to acknowledge that this study has limitations in terms of its extensiveness (Mishler 1986: 108). Because a small number of adult educators were involved there are limitations to its representativeness and generalisability. However, the intensiveness of the research approach allows documentation of substantive accounts of practice and close analysis of the educators' practice. This focus on gathering thick descriptions establishes a dilemma for the research study, as raised in chapter 1. How many interviews of thick data can

be analysed before the quantity of the data means that the researcher loses attention to the nuances and the complexities? The researcher not only has to gather the data, but also to grasp it, come to terms with it, make sense of it and write it:

> What the ethnographer is in fact faced with... is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must conceive somehow, first to grasp and then to render (Geertz 1975: 10).

The issue is one of sufficiency. The researcher reaches the point where she or he finds that the data is sufficient for the nature and degree of analysis required. Sufficiency reflects the quality of the data that emerges from interviews as well as the quantity. Other narrative studies have involved a range in the number of practitioners. I reviewed narrative studies using case examples and involving one practitioner (Middleton 1992; Melidonis 1989; Clandinin & Connelly 1990), two practitioners (Butt *et al.* 1992), three practitioners (White 1997: 53-92) and five practitioners (Knowles 1992; White 1992).

The limitations of an intensive narrative methodology are acknowledged, but I suggest that these limitations are of less concern because this study intends to illuminate the mysteries of complex practice rather than develop general laws of human behaviour (Butt *et al.*1992: 51; Mishler 1986: 132-135). The study intends outcomes such as sensitising practitioners to the intricacies of practice and suggesting alternative ways of thinking about incidents of complex practice (Butt *et al.* 1992: 56; Mishler 1986: 132,134). Therefore, it is the vividness, sharpness and relevance of the accounts that will establish their value.

The process of developing significant conclusions from such specific data depends on the degree to which the data says something profound that can engage the reader (Geertz 1975: 21, 23; Stake 1995: 135). Although the data

may be comprised of a single case example, that case example may address large issues and may do so in a powerful way:

> The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts (Geertz 1975: 28).

It is the "delicacy" of the distinctions in a study that establishes the potential for generality (Geertz 1975: 25-27).

It is therefore intended that this study can provide a particular kind of contribution to understandings of transformative learning, via intimate, densely textured accounts by educators of significant incidents in their practice.

Application of narrative research in this study

In this study I investigated the working knowledge of adult educators through in-depth interviews. I invited the educators to talk about transformative learning in their practice and to relate stories of incidents that involved transformative learning. The educators matched the following profile: they provided education programs within the community services and health sectors; they were experienced educators; they were experienced group facilitators; and they expressed an interest in transformative learning. Initially I approached them to explore their interest in participating, and then I sent a letter of invitation outlining my purposes and explaining my approach.

Introduction to the educators

Lyn

Lyn is an experienced social worker, with particular expertise in facilitating groups. At the time of the interviews, she was working at the AIDS Council of New South Wales. She talked about a training program for volunteers in the Community Support Network (CSN) who provide support to people with HIV/AIDS. The volunteers provide a carer role to clients with HIV/AIDS, and provide a range of supportive functions such as shopping, companionship, and housework. People who volunteer for this program contribute a small amount of time each week to assist clients of the CSN service. They have an initial training program, over two consecutive weekends, followed by ongoing monthly group discussions that they can attend as often as they wish. As volunteers, all carers have chosen to participate in the training. Because their work is unpaid, their motivation may be linked to their own personal experience. For example, some have had previous experience caring for a family member or friend outside of the CSN program. Lyn also talked about a training program for staff in community transport services in western Sydney. The program was designed to prepare staff to provide transport services to clients with HIV/AIDS without discrimination.

Peter

Peter is a therapist and educator with extensive experience providing education programs for community workers, teachers, and others who work with youth. He also works with young people, both in facilitating life/ health education programs and in facilitating therapeutic programs. For example, Peter conducts forums in schools that explore the issues of relationships, community and drugs. Because his work is both educational and therapeutic, his views of transformative learning reflect awareness of the similarities and differences when promoting change in the two contexts.

Sandra

Sandra is a leader in the field of workplace assessment in Australia, and at the time of the interviews had recently returned to the role of education facilitator after occupying management roles for many years. Although she worked as a community worker many years ago, most of her professional career has been focused around vocational and workplace-based training. She talked in detail about a specific professional development program in workplace assessment for community arts workers. The community arts workers develop arts projects with young people who are marginalised from community structures, including work and education.

Bev

Bev is a social worker with many years of experience working in community organisations. She is also a member of a social movement within the Uniting Church that is pressing for the rights of members whose sexuality is gay or lesbian. Bev talked about her role in a group of Uniting Church members preparing to march in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in 1999. At this time, conservative groups within the Uniting Church were attacking the group's participation in the march.

Interview format

I held a series of in-depth interviews with each of the adult educators. The interviews were relatively unstructured and they were designed as a space for the educators to explore their practice. My intention was to allow the educators to shape their talk according to their views and interests in transformative learning.

Framing the interviews

I suggest that the stories of practice emerged out of my interaction with each of the educators during the interviews. We negotiated expectations and priorities and so established the frame for the interviews together. The educators brought their priorities about the stories they wanted to relate and I brought my interests about the stories I wanted to hear. I defined my interests and my understandings of transformative learning through the letter of invitation and in the first questions in the interview. I intended to encourage stories of transformative learning that were rich, multi-faceted and 'on the edge of the new'. The issues I reflected on as I planned and conducted the interviews were: 'How do people see me?', 'What will they think I want to know?', 'What will they think I will understand of their experience?', and 'How do they think I will use what they say?'. The educators' interpretations of my expectations also influenced the interviews, and expectations and meanings were progressively negotiated (Gudmundsdottir 1996: 295-297, 302; Mishler 1986: 2). For example, one of the educators in the study responded in this way:

> Well, let me talk about a couple of things and see if it gets to where... Okay, this may not be what you are asking about so I'll tell you briefly.

Sequence

Each interview was structured as a sequence of story-based conversations about the adult educator's experiences in facilitating transformative learning. The process was iterative. Key stories were often revisited and new stories were added.

The interviews occurred in stages. The first stage was an opening conversation in which I asked the educator to talk about his or her understandings of transformative learning. In the second stage I invited the educator to relate stories from his or her practice of transformative learning. This occurred over one or two meetings and was followed by an in-depth exploration of a significant incident. The third stage of the interviews was a concluding conversation, in which the educator reflected on issues that had arisen during the interviews.

Although the interviews all followed this sequence, there were variations in the number of meetings and the length of time spent for each stage. Also I revised the process for the sequence after my interviews with the first educator. I had developed a copy of the text of the first interview, with the metaphors the educator used in bold, and used it to commence the second interview. The educator was invited to suggest meanings embedded within the metaphors, to review the link between the metaphors and the experience, and to comment on the implications of the metaphors. This process was abandoned because we found that it interrupted the flow of the interview process and the expression of the story. However, a retelling of the significant story did lead to increasingly rich data, and this focus on the telling and retelling of a significant story was then continued with the other educators.

Questions

Mishler suggests that there is a circular influence between questions and responses during in-depth interviews. In this way, both the educator and the researcher are engaged in a process of seeking understanding and making meaning (Mishler 1986: 97). I designed questions as strategies to launch the different stages of the interviews. The question I used to launch the first stage was, "What does transformative learning mean to you?". This question encouraged the educators to review their understanding of transformative learning, and provided a framework for them to use when they came to select specific incidents.

The educators were then invited to select from their practice what *they* regarded as examples of transformative learning. The questions to launch the second stage were designed to invite expression and to suggest a story telling mode rather than an analytical mode of thinking about practice. For example:

> Tell me a story about some time in your practice where you felt there was something going on that you'd say, in your terms, was transformative learning.

The interviews were designed to encourage in-depth exploration of incidents of practice. Additional questions were based on the stories told and were asked in order to prompt a more detailed account and to follow up on affective, cognitive, relational and contextual aspects of the stories being told (Mishler 1986: 99). For example:

> What kind of emotion? What was his mood at the time?

> Were there any other factors that she communicated as well...?

> How did that come about, that sense of a need to respond to her differently...?

I sought to use terms and phrases in the questions that reflected the terms and phrases used by the educator, and so prompt them to more fully explore *their* understandings. Questions were used to prompt the educator to continue to elaborate the story, to identify key features of the incidents, and to consider how the events developed over time:

> At the end of the time, how would you describe their responses?

> If you imagine what their first thoughts were about assessment when they were right at the beginning, in those first few minutes when you met

> them, and what their thoughts about assessment were at the end of the two days, how would you contrast that?
>
> Had it changed?
>
> Which were the pressure points and which were the real flow points?

I invited the educator to develop an explanation of the events:

> Why do you think that's important to her?
>
> Is there any significance in any of that?
>
> Was there some reason that he was put under particular pressure?

I also invited the educators to review the personal aspects of the incident and to talk about their understandings of it:

> What were the things that you felt most engaged with...?
>
> Looking back, what are you most satisfied with, in terms of what did emerge?
>
> What was the biggest challenge in working with them?
>
> What does it feel like in terms of how you would name that kind of role?

Questions were often preceded by a summarised outline of my interpretation of what they had been saying, to seek clarification of a detail and also to review my thinking with them. For example:

> So have I got it right? There's a sense of which you actually started in exploring their different experiences.

The third stage of the interviews was designed to enable the educator to reflect on the issues which had been raised and to bring the interview process to a close.

Processes for analysing and writing the data

In recording, reading, analysing, and writing out each educator's stories, I reshaped the stories and in effect retold them one more time (Clandinin & Connelly 2000).

Reading the data

I audiotaped the interviews and then transcribed them quickly so that I could check the accuracy of the transcription with the educators. The educators commented on the value of the transcripts, not just as a record of the interviews but as a record of their views about practice, at that particular point of time.

I reviewed the texts that were formed from the interview transcripts through a sequence of readings. In the first set of readings I identified the metaphors in the text.

In the second set of readings I considered the metaphors in relation to the major stories of practice. I selected the major stories of practice on the basis of their length, their detail and the educator's enthusiasm when relating them. Then I identified the pivotal points in each of these stories. Thus, I focused on the way that the narrative was developed, noting key events and noting language that indicated points of pressure and decision. The interview transcripts were then formed into a text covering the left-hand side of the page, and I used the right-hand side of the page to record my comments. I wrote my reflections about the pivotal points and the metaphors. For example:

- "Setting the scene, why she needed to do something differently, via contrast"
- "Problem identified"

- "Request - insist - advice"
- "I think here that she expected to get a positive response from people"
- "Intervention was focused on the mood initially"
- "Now focusing on exploring difference"
- "Excitement"
- "Exercise brings together a lot of the issues identified so far: stakeholders, needs of marginalised youth"
- "The negative she wants to avoid is being boring"
- "Still keeping the dialogue continuing, not shutting it down, still listening to differences"
- "Stay in the dilemma long enough for the key issue to emerge"
- "Focus = link to group"
- "Interesting, the point at which she engaged about facilitating a better story, within the game"
- "Key move - out of either/ or".

In this way I explored the narrative structure of these stories of practice, and developed a view of events, characters and themes within the overall plots of each story.

In the third set of readings I highlighted sentences, phrases, and words in the major stories which I saw as constructing subject positions. The central questions guiding these readings were:

> How is the learner positioned by this discourse? What consequences might this have?
> How is the educator positioned by this discourse? What consequences might this have?

In these readings I also looked for the pivotal points in the narrative. Again I recorded comments on the right-hand side of the page. For example:

- "Position facilitator - initiator"
- "Observer of group energy"

- "Entertainer *vs* build a relationship - fast *vs* slow"
- "Convincing and persuading"
- "Testing the knowledge, testing her"
- "Let go earlier position and reason"
- "Observe - lead"
- "Explorer".

Through the commentary column I was able to establish a space for myself as the researcher, highlighting my responses to the interview transcripts. Thus I was able to dialogue with the text. Also I could reflect upon the comments later and acknowledge the personal reading of the texts. As Scholes points out, there is an interaction between how we read texts and how we read ourselves:

> To read at all, we must read the book of ourselves in the texts in front of us, and we must bring the text home, into our thoughts and lives, into our judgements and deeds. We cannot enter the texts we read, but they can enter us (Scholes 1989: 6).

In the fourth set of readings I considered the text through a wider range of theoretical perspectives, developing questions from the work of Foucault and other poststructural researchers (Foucault 1979,1988; Hollway 1998a, 1998b; Davies 1993). The questions included:

> What is focused on centrally, what is marginalised or overlooked?
> How is identity being formed and transformed?
> What are the power effects of this discourse?
> Who does this discourse serve, through the way it positions the learner and educator?
> What are the conditions that allowed the discourse to emerge?
> What events and imperatives in the societal context have led to this discourse emerging?
> How was this discourse taken up and used?

These questions were not as directly productive as the questions which focused on subject positions, but they led to a broader analysis of the stories of practice.

In the fifth set of readings I returned to the metaphors, considering them in relation to the debates surrounding the two theoretical approaches outlined in chapter 2.

These sets of readings influenced the way that I have structured the thesis. The first and fifth sets of readings were used to write chapter 4, which explores the metaphors in relation to the facilitation of transformative learning. The second, third and fourth sets of readings were used to write chapters 5 and 6, which considers facilitation of transformative learning as narrative intervention.

The sixth set of readings occurred at a later stage, while I was engaged with the process of writing. I revisited the texts for further detail, for aspects that had been overlooked, and for links between metaphors used at different stages of the interviews. While writing the chapters, I revisited each of the texts on about ten occasions. By parallel reading of the interview texts and the drafts of chapters, I was able to reflect on questions such as, 'Were the forms used for writing compatible with the overall form of the interview text?'.

Metaphor analysis

I identified and highlighted the metaphors in the interview transcripts. Then I listed them and established themes by clustering them together in different ways. I analysed the metaphors to explore what they conveyed about the educators' views of transformative learning: what it is, why it occurs, and how it occurs. Further, I analysed the metaphors to explore how they discursively established subject positions for the educator and for the learners.

Case examples

Two of the major stories were selected as case examples. The main challenge in writing the case examples was to distinguish the educator's story and the story that was being developed through my writing. As Plummer writes:

> And how was I to write this? In his voice, or in his voice through my voice, or even in my voice though his voice? (Plummer 1994: 12).

I used the following process to write the two stories of practice as case examples. I started with the interview transcript and progressively reduced the text. I used this to write a summary of the intervention, identifying the main issues in the story and the pivotal points. I tried to write the summary in a form that was close to the educator's language and narrative style, as I consider that specific stories presented in research texts should reflect the language and emotions of the story-teller (Hones 1998).

I sought to identify the 'narrative backbone' of the story (Mishler 1986: 84, 103). This form of writing developed sharper focuses on both the issue and the educator's intervention, enhancing the coherence of the story. In the process of writing I created a narrative with a coherent plot from an account of practice that had been more diffuse (Boje 2001; Polkinghorne 1995).

I then analysed the case examples, looking for links between the intervention and the outcomes. I used a variation of Melidonis's four-column analysis. He had examined the case example in terms of the problem as identified by the different practitioners, the desired outcomes, the strategy or plan, and the actual outcomes (Melidonis 1989: 231). For this study, I used the following structuring categories: the issue, the impact of the issue within the group, the intervention, and the results of the intervention. The structuring categories highlight the process of intervention, thus emphasising what each case example could contribute to working knowledge about facilitating transformative learning.

Discussion of the methodology

What was selected as a significant incident?

At a different time and place, the educators might have provided alternative accounts (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Gudmundsdottir 1996; Davies 1991). A number of factors impacted on the way they constructed their stories. Some factors related to their intentions and the narrative modes with which they were comfortable. Others related to the process of the interview and the interaction with the researcher, such as shared areas of curiosity and interest.

The educators scanned their practice and identified incidents that they perceived to be transformative learning. They decided which incidents, and which aspects of those incidents, to make public. Each of the educators appeared to select major incidents in order to reflect on them further, so it could be said that the incidents represented emerging practice, in contrast to areas of practice which they considered fully formed and developed.

When I reflect on the ways that the educators selected an incident, I believe they were guided by a sense of surprise and/ or contradiction. The incidents engaged them enough to want to reflect on and discuss them for several hours. In the two case examples there was something about the event that positively surprised the educator. Bruner suggests that surprise indicates that an event violates presuppositions in some way:

> Surprise is an extraordinarily useful phenomenon to students of mind, for it allows us to probe what people take for granted. It provides a window on presupposition: surprise is a response to violated presupposition (Bruner 1986: 46).

In some way, these incidents were unexpected and did not conform to the educators' anticipations. The educators were therefore very alert to the details in the incident and were able to provide thick, multi-faceted descriptions.

The process of telling a story of practice

Stories of practice are self-narratives, and therefore have some of the features of autobiography. For example, the person telling the story is also the central actor in the story:

> The story of one's own life is, of course, a privileged but troubled narrative in the sense that it is reflexive: the narrator and the central figure in the narrative are the same (Bruner 1987: 13).

Bruner identifies a number of consequences of this, including the likelihood that the narrator will account for events in terms of intentions and depict themselves as having agency. The intentions and agency of others are inaccessible to the interviewer. On occasions, I had to remind myself to remain focused on the educator's account throughout the interview, rather than thinking about what other stakeholders might have said about the incident. I was also aware of the way in which the educator's story-making intention structured the account. At times, narratives are constructed in a way that gives primacy to narrative significance. Thus, an aspect of the event may be omitted, or minimised, or given prominence, not only because the educator experienced it as more or less significant but because, in the process of talking about the event, it fulfils narrative significance (Gergen and Kaye 1996).

To tell the story, the educator must engage both in a process of remembering and a process of organising those memories. The educators did not claim that their memories were complete; on the contrary, they commented that their memories were incomplete and hazy at times. Memory is a construction of past experience, and has no claim to completeness. Memories are not a random sample of experience but a significant sample, and significance may reflect novelty and surprise, and/ or contradiction and conflict.

Haug used memory-work to research the ways in which women were forming their lives, and from this work she developed some key ideas about researching

memories of experience. Experience involves the chaos of detail, which is structured through memory. Our perceptions of earlier experiences may be ordered through our present interests and present view of ourselves. Diversity and contradiction in past experience are likely to be compressed according to our present views. And, some memories have considerable omissions and gaps (Haug 1997: 46-48, 60, 68).

Some incidents are very difficult to remember. The experience may be chaotic or difficult to conceptualise. It may be difficult to talk about the experience because there is little language to describe it (Boje 2001: 7; Haug 1997: 62). Alternatively, the incident may invite a habitual, cliched telling that "condemns us to walk on the well-trodden path of that which should be" (Haug 1997: 63). Thus researchers seek a variety of ways to encourage people to "mine" the memory further for greater precision or additional linkages (Haug 1997: 56).

Despite these limitations, Haug strongly advocates the value of memory-work and of researching experience:

> Alongside omissions, absences and the unnamed, it is still possible to reconstruct past events in the cracks between the echoes of our silence (Haug 1997: 68).

Haug promotes strategies that increase the value of data developed through researching experience, arguing for both a detailed focus on one particular situation and a broad exploration, and for limited decisions beforehand about which aspects may prove relevant (Haug 1997: 49, 54).

How do interviewees construct stories of practice?

Gudmundsdottir suggests that interviewees draw on a narrative structure in order to organise information:

> When faced with the task of making sense out of perceptual information, informants and researchers also habitually draw on their surrounding narrative structures. People use the narrative form as a kind of heuristic device to sort out the relevant facts and arrange them in some kind of logical order (Gudmundsdottir 1996: 296).

The educators constructed their accounts in different ways. The incident that is used for the first case example in chapter 5 was a tightly constructed story that used a hero/ champion story structure. The incident that is used for the second case example in chapter 5 was a loosely constructed, exploratory story. The educator is very familiar with reflective conversations about practice and the story structure reflected an iterative, reflective conversation.

The narrative structure that is used for a story of practice will impact on the story. Any narration will broaden or narrow the field of perception, and will deepen or lighten the intensity of the story. Gudmundsdottir suggests that narrators in research interviews either broaden their perspective, generalising the story to a range of events and contexts, or they deepen their perspective by further exploring the meanings of events:

> In restorying the narrators jointly either 'broaden' the narrative perspective to generalize to other settings, or they 'burrow' to explore the deeper meanings of events (Gudmundsdottir 1996: 298).

The educators in this study described the results of the process as a deeper, clearer, more animated story of themselves as practitioners. One educator described the process as leading to a new connection of elements across many times and contexts. We become the narratives we speak about our lives (Bruner 1987). As we converse about our lives, we speak ourselves into existence, using or modifying the language, the metaphors, and the storylines that are available in the culture.

Conclusion

Stories of practice are not transparent representations of practice events. They provide data about the ways educators talk about their practice, explain their actions, and review their judgements. The case examples and metaphor analysis developed in this thesis are a further re-telling of the stories of practice. The educators' accounts have been structured and analysed, and specific features of the educators' accounts are placed in textual space in relation to other features of accounts. Thus I have developed a more coherent narrative, focusing on the issues relevant to this thesis.

Chapter 4

The facilitation of transformative learning: metaphor analysis

Introduction

This chapter explores the working knowledge of the educators in this study by analysing the metaphors that they used throughout the interviews. Metaphors are regarded as a particular kind of discursive resource, through which the educators communicate some of their understandings of transformative learning. The metaphors are analysed to explore some of the issues involved in facilitating transformative learning. Specifically, I explore some of the issues reviewed in chapter 2, informed by both Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and concepts of narrative and identity.

The chapter has four sections. The first section provides some indications of the contexts that frame the metaphor analysis. It identifies common features among the educators' accounts and introduces the contexts of the educators' work. In the second section I identify metaphors used by the educators to talk about transformative learning and in the third section I explore what the metaphors indicate about the facilitation of transformative learning. In the fourth section, the metaphors are analysed as discursive resources. In this section I discuss some of the ways that the metaphors suggest particular subject positions for educators and learners. In this way, the chapter both explores the educators' working knowledge and considers some of the implications of this knowledge.

Contextual factors

Features of the accounts

The accounts of practice in this study have four common features. They are accounts by educators, presenting their understandings of transformative learning. They are accounts by educators who have current or previous professional experience as community workers, therapists or social workers. The majority are accounts of transformative learning in a group learning environment, and they are all accounts of learning within community organisations.

Accounts of educators

This study provides information about educators' perceptions of transformative learning in contrast to other studies which deal with learners' experiences and perceptions of transformative learning. The educators' accounts include descriptions of events, explanations about their actions, and reflections on the decisions that led them to perform those actions. Therefore they are more than accounts of specific events in professional practice. They are accounts of the working knowledge of these adult educators.

Accounts of education professionals who are also human service professionals

The educators involved in the study have established reputations as adult educators within the community sector. They have followed a variety of professional development pathways in relation to adult education. They all have professional backgrounds as social workers, psychologists, or community workers, and these professions also influence their work as adult educators.

This influence is evident in the ways that their educational practices address issues in relation to the personal and the social (Jessup and Rogerson 1999). It is also evident in their commitment to social justice, whether that be defined as

establishing access to societal resources or as challenging power relations that lead to oppression. They have all been part of trends within community work practice in Australia during the 1990s; for example, challenging practices that collude with discrimination and the domination of clients including women, indigenous Australians, and children. In their accounts they were able to draw upon discourses current in both the human services professions and the adult education profession.

Accounts of group learning

Almost all of the examples of transformative learning given by the educators involved group learning. Group learning provides a distinct experience for educators and learners. It has particular potentials, issues, and pressures. From a narrative perspective, group learning brings together a range of personal stories and discourses. As a group develops, it develops a group story. Educators who facilitate group learning work with all of these stories and with the ways that these stories come together.

Accounts of learning within community organisations

The educators in this study talked about education initiatives within the community sector. The community sector provides services to individuals, families, and communities and works to address social issues and health needs. The community sector largely comprises non-profit organisations. These organisations have been established with aims that reflect specific philosophical stances and values.

Most of the accounts were of various education programs for workers within the community sector. These included education programs for coordinators, front-line staff and volunteers working within community organisations. The work these people do usually involves personal contact with clients and tasks are completed through the medium of a relationship. This means that effectiveness in establishing and maintaining relationships with clients is a key feature of

learning and development in the community sector (Jessup and Rogerson 1999). It also means that education programs in the community sector tend to be based on assumptions and expectations that may not apply in other areas of work. For example, staff and volunteers are expected to develop their capacity to hear stories of suffering and to provide service to all members of a community without discrimination. As a result, in the community sector, work-related learning is often closely linked to personal learning.

Metaphors used by the educators

Introduction

This section identifies metaphors the adult educators used when talking about incidents of transformative learning. The metaphors highlight contrasting ways of understanding transformative learning.

Seeing things differently

Lyn, Bev, and Sandra used metaphors of light and vision. They talked about transformative learning as a process in which learners develop different perceptions of the world:

> Learning is about transformation, it's about change, it's about seeing yourself in relation to the world differently (Lyn).

A number of phrases were used, including:

- "they are seeing something differently"
- "light globes have gone off"
- "lights going off"
- "big picture"
- "they also start seeing differences".

Shift

All of the educators used the metaphor of transformative learning as a shift. Metaphoric language included:

- "there was certainly a shift"
- "shifted people"
- "they've shifted somewhere"
- "shift gears"
- "shift our thinking".

This metaphor of shift conveys the idea that transformative learning is a discontinuous movement, leading to a change in direction or location. Similarly, the educators used the following ideas of movement, change and conversion:

- "moving from something into something else"
- "like a conversion experience"
- "change points".

Journey

All of the educators used metaphors of travel:

- "where she'd travelled to"
- "discovering a new and better way"
- "culmination of a journey"
- "road map"
- "going somewhere new"
- "critical milestones".

These metaphors convey a sense of continuity, linking an episode of transformative learning to the journey from the past and into the future.

A new environment

Lyn and Sandra talked about transformative learning occurring through the learner's experience of a new environment, using such phrases and words as:

- "environment"
- "microcosm of the philosophy"
- "immersed into that sort of space, that sort of environment"
- "entering into"
- "strange other world".

They described the learning group as a particular environment, in which the learner was located for a short time.

Emergence

The educators used the metaphor of emergence to describe the ways that emotions and experiences were expressed in a learning group. Metaphoric language used included:

- "emerge"
- "real people start to emerge a bit more"
- "other things emerge".

This metaphor conveys an awareness of the breadth of the learner's experience and considers what they might gradually express in the learning group. Similarly, the educators introduced the idea that underlying issues come to the surface:

- "that surfaces lots of issues"
- "underlying reasons".

Becoming in touch

Transformative learning was described as a process of becoming "in touch" with significant experiences and feelings:

- "in touch with their own feelings"
- "in touch with their own humanity".

This metaphor conveys the transformative potential of learning events that bring people close to intimate, personal aspects of their lives:

- "intimate moments".

Energy

All of the educators used various metaphors of energy to talk about transformative learning. They talked about education activities that were transformative using words and phrases such as:

- "dynamic"
- "the source of energy"
- "creative"
- "wild"

- "the click"
- "humour and laughter that has a power, it's like a wave"
- "something that's moving and has to be alive".

These metaphors and terms convey meanings of energy, life, movement, creativity, unpredictability and power. This language was used in contrast with metaphors that suggest engineering and construction:

- "dry"
- "formula"
- "rules and steps"
- "planks"
- "linear".

Converging stories

Sandra described transformative learning in relation to the range of stories in the group. She used the following metaphors to describe a process of pulling apart stories and ideas:

- "broke it all down"
- "tease out new ways"
- "unpack it".

She also described a process of bringing stories together:

- "you start with stories, pull them together"
- "playing around with a content area"
- "throw things back"
- "hooking your own experiences into the system".

Some of the phrases suggest ways of responding to ideas and stories by using one's hands. Sandra and group members 'handled' the range of stories that converged in the group, unpacking them and then playing with them together to create a new story.

Cooking

Peter and Lyn both used culinary metaphors:

- "ingredients"
- "taster".

Thus they described some of the intangibles which are combined and are experienced by the learner.

Conclusion

The metaphors used by these educators are very sensory in nature, spanning four of the five senses (touch, taste, sight and sound). The metaphors provide a glimpse into these educators' working knowledge. Metaphors are discursive snippets and they indicate some of the understandings that guide these educators when facilitating transformative learning.

Issues in facilitating transformative learning

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and concepts of narrative and identity provide the framework for this exploration. I suggest that the metaphors used by the educators in this study indicate a multifaceted view of transformative learning.

I propose that Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation is compatible with the metaphors of seeing things differently, shift and journey. However, the metaphors of a new environment, becoming in touch, emergence and converging stories emphasise the transformative significance of social relations. Further, the metaphors of energy and cooking emphasise the intangibles of group-educator interactions. Thus I suggest that the metaphors indicate that the educators in this study have a multifaceted view of transformative learning, which confirms and extends Mezirow's theory.

Perspective transformation

The visual metaphors highlight the ways that learning events can lead to alternative perceptions: light is shed on an issue whereas it had previously been 'in the darkness', an issue is seen differently, and differences are now perceived. Mezirow's concepts of perspective transformation and frame of reference are also visual, implying the ways that an artist might draw a scene with a particular perspective or frame their representation.

The concept of the educator as an empathic provocateur is confirmed through the metaphors of seeing things differently, shift and journey. The metaphor of shift is compatible with Mezirow's earlier depiction of transformative learning as a discontinuous change. Sandra talked about the educator's role as that of establishing learning activities which have the potential to act as triggers:

> One thing I've done a lot with training programs is actually tried to identify which activities are the ones that are the turning points.

The educator was also described as fulfilling a supportive role, acknowledging the challenges learners face in making such shifts:

> ... that doesn't mean that a person will not run away from it (Sandra).

The metaphors of journey indicate that transformative learning is progressive. Rather than focusing on a crisis or a dilemma as a prompt, they depict transformative learning as an ongoing process, and so are compatible with the more recent revision of transformative learning theory to include more progressive processes (Mezirow 2000; Gravett 2002; Lyon 2002; Taylor 1997, 2000).

Disorienting dilemma - new information

Mezirow suggests that transformative learning occurs when a disorienting dilemma demonstrates that a learner's existing frames of reference are inadequate. This study indicates that the educators' emphasis was less on the learner's experience of a disorienting dilemma and more on the interactions occurring within the learning group. Although they were observant and empathic to the learner grappling with a disorienting dilemma they were more focused on the potential of the learning environment to support transformation. They talked more often about noticing a person responding to something new, significant, surprising, or provocative in the program:

> Then I think people started seeing possibilities... I think it was when we had some sort of concrete proposals in front of us that went beyond 'do we' or 'don't we'... and when people started saying 'Well we could do it this way' (Bev).

> A new shared understanding, with nuances that were perhaps different (Sandra).

Information about new possibilities may be gained directly and indirectly through talk and actions. The metaphor of cooking indicates that transformative learning is not always a mindful process, and that learners may unconsciously learn alternative frames of reference through observation and experience: it might be 'tasted'. Mezirow recently acknowledged this:

> Beliefs do not need to be encoded in words. They may be encoded in repetitive interactions... (Mezirow 2000: 5).

Disorienting dilemma - social interactions across difference

The metaphor of a new environment enables us to explore these unconscious processes further. Lyn used the metaphor of a new environment when describing how learners' experiences with different people can prompt revision of assumptions. The literature of transformative learning has placed emphasis on relations of social support during transformative learning (Weissner & Mezirow 2000; Mezirow 2000; Hart 1990a; Taylor 2000; Belenky & Stanton 2000). However, through the metaphor of environment, these educators underlined the provocative influence of other group members.

Lyn talked about the significance of the group environment and the transformative potential of relating to people who are different. Differences among learners are presented as living frames of reference:

> ... and to actually almost look at it through the lens of all the differences of the people in the course (Lyn).

The learner's experience of coming to know others and seeing issues from their perspectives disrupts existing habits of mind. This is the impact of connected knowing, as learners listen to each other's stories, try to understand them and enter into belief in relation to them (Belenky & Stanton 2000: 87-89).

In the Community Support Network training, where volunteers learn about caring for someone with HIV/AIDS, Lyn described the impact of differences for one particular man:

> Most of our groups are very diverse… we get a real mix of gay, straight, men, women, nuns, priests, sex workers, literally, I mean you can literally have those two people in the room at the same time… we had this one particular course where, what was unusual about this course was that there was only one gay man in the course… he was very put off from the very beginning of this course that there were all these straight people here… He said that 'I have to say that this has really had an effect on me to see that all you people with really different backgrounds…'. He said 'I've never spoken to a nun before'… and it seemed like it was quite a significant shift for him to make.

This man had expected to be in a learning environment with people who had similar frames of reference. The group experience was a provocative one because people had different frames of reference. Lyn said, "they didn't reinforce his view of things."

The metaphor of a new environment can also be interpreted with reference to poststructural views of identity. Identity is continually being formed and transformed in different social domains. This man was unable to continue to 'be himself' when talking about the issues of HIV/AIDS with a nun. Lyn described his initial relational style when confronted with people who were not gay men as "personally attacking" and seeking to "rile people up a bit". But this learning group provided him with new relational experiences and an opportunity to abandon the subject position of attacker.

However, Lyn contrasted the man's experience in the learning group with his experience in his daily life, reminding us of the limited power of the learning environment:

> People can see things in one particular environment and appear to make a shift in one particular environment and then you go back to a much more consuming environment which has always been and continues to be a particular way.

The person's usual environment may be experienced as a relatively 'consuming' constant that counters any shift made in the learning group. Thus Lyn called the learning group a "honeymoon phase". As outlined in chapter 2, a return to past frames of reference should also be considered as a possible phase in the process of transformative learning. This return may or may not be followed by further phases in the process of transformative learning. Experiences in the 'new' learning environment therefore create the potential for transformative learning, but are not the complete process. As Peter stated:

> ... but if you have enough experiences where you are more like this than that, then you might end up being more like this.

Transformative learning may sometimes be a very circular and erratic process, as people return again and again to issues until they have enough power to implement significant change (Pope, in Taylor 2000: 311).

This metaphor of a new environment draws our attention to the contrast between the learning environment and the person's usual social environment. It leads us to consider issues about support for the new learning in the learners' usual social worlds. For example, 'How will key figures in the learner's social world respond to this new learning?', 'Who might welcome it?', 'Who might resist it?', 'What discourses there might compete with the new learning?', and 'What discourses there might confirm the new learning?'.

Critical reflection - new possibilities

The metaphors of emergence, becoming in touch and converging stories also emphasise social interactions. All three metaphors indicate that transformative

learning can occur when learners move closer to themselves and to others as they talk about significant experiences. This reflects a mode of learning that is based on the ethic of care:

> In this mode, questioning, listening, and responding to everyone's concerns is seen as the way to bring about lasting and satisfying solutions to moral predicaments (Belenky & Stanton 2000: 79).

Critical reflection involves an examination of existing frames of reference, and thus orients learners to their current meanings and the ways that these meanings have developed. Critical reflection focuses on past or current frames of reference, assessing their dependability (Mezirow 2000). The metaphors of emergence, becoming in touch and converging stories focus on alternative frames of reference that are emerging and may be useful in the future. Rather than indicating a critical mode and looking to the past, these metaphors indicate a creative mode and looking towards the future.

The educators described the group learning environment as a space where issues could be explored through alternative frames of reference. Sandra talked about the ways that the learners work both with their own specific local situations and with "the big picture". She explained the process of transformative learning as one of establishing a forum for stories of experience:

> Process that will enable things to be named in different ways... a process that will enable stories to be exchanged and heard and articulated and synthesised and applied to a variety of contexts.

Thus a process that enables stories to be told in a different way may be transformative:

> I was able to hear everybody's positions and synthesise where they came from and actually reinterpret them back to the group, using language that suddenly made the click happen for them (Sandra).

Rationality - emotionality

Overwhelmingly, these educators talked about transformative learning as a process of emotionality rather than rationality. Their emphasis on emotionality probably reflects the topics in the programs that they were describing:

> A number of people wrote down that their fear was they would catch AIDS and give it to their family... so it's a fairly reasonable fear or concern in that setting (Lyn).

Lyn and Peter used the metaphor of "tapping" when talking about the expression of emotions:

> ... allows a person to tap into something that they wouldn't normally tap (Peter).

> They've been surprised that it's come up... it's going to tap into things (Lyn).

This metaphoric language expresses the idea that underlying issues are brought to the surface. The educators suggest that education programs that are transformative challenge people to explore the personal:

> ... going to transformation where they start to operate in that sort of way, get in touch with their own humanity and stuff, rather than the layer of intellectual stuff that sometimes teaching gives us (Peter).

The transformative potential was linked to the personal significance of the emerging information. Peter recounted an occasion when learners completed an activity which involved thinking about a significant event, representing it in a drawing, and talking about their response to the event. Peter thought that this had been a transformative learning experience for one woman in particular because of the emotions that she conveyed while telling the story. Through this

activity she was able to link a significant experience in her past with her present identity and her present social world.

The educators talked about the impact of learners becoming in touch with their emotions. For example, Peter talked about educational forums he holds at schools in which he invites young men to talk about emotional needs and emotional support within friendships. Peter asks for two volunteers to come up to the front and have a conversation with him in front of the rest of the group:

> And so I'll interview boys, often it's around the idea of risk, so I'll say 'Okay, risk. Imagine that this weekend we are going to go abseiling, who wants to come?' and everyone's hand goes up straight away. 'We're going to go parachuting', everyone's hand goes up, 'we're going to parachute without the parachute', everybody's hand goes up. 'Okay, we've got that sorted out. Different sort of risk, I want somebody to come up here. I am going to ask you deeply probing personal questions, to which I expect completely honest answers. Any volunteers?' and somebody comes up.
>
> And so Ben comes up, 'okay Ben, first question I've got for you, is there anybody here in the room that you like and trust and respect and who likes you, trusts you and respects you?'. 'Ahmed.' Ahmed comes up, and I'll say the same thing, 'okay boys what I want to do is interview the two of you about each other, deeply probing personal questions, complete honesty, is that cool?' And they go 'cool' and then I'll say 'okay, Ben tell me about Ahmed, tell me what sort of person he is', and they say all this stuff 'oh he's got a big heart, you know', all these wonderful things. And you say 'Ahmed this is what I'm hearing about you, is this true?', and he'll go 'oh yeah' - it's beautiful you know. Then I'll say 'okay let's imagine that you're distressed, you're upset about something, what's at least one thing that you could rely on Ahmed for, that you know that he would be there for you if you were distressed?' and they'll often say 'oh I could talk to him'.

> So I'll say 'beauty, let me check this because you're a bloke, right, you talk to him?'. 'Yes I would.' 'Let me check, Ahmed he would talk to you? Would you listen?' 'Yeah.' 'Okay you guys are saying that you would talk and listen' and often that's it.

As Peter notes, this educational process assumes that boys are able to be in touch with their feelings, and then creates an opportunity for them to do so. Thus they experience themselves as 'able', rather than 'unable', and this is potentially transformative.

The images of abseiling and parachuting convey the risk involved in expressing feelings as that of 'falling' or 'dropping'. These images also convey choice because they are activities where the person himself decides to 'step off the edge'. But the images also convey safety, as both activities involve equipment that allows the person to control the fall. Thus these images suggest that the emergence of emotions is both risky *and* safe.

Lyn suggested that emotional issues were an underlying motive for participation in the Community Support Network training:

> Sometimes they may be more reluctant to shift around something for a whole lot of other reasons, not because they don't want to be good carers... I mean, the stated reason would be 'I want this information in order to be a good carer' but the underlying reasons why people want that information; 'I want to process my grief', 'I want to understand things that I didn't know when I was caring for someone'... 'I want to know what's going to happen to my friend when they get sick'.

Lyn talked about occasions when the emotionality took over and she used language such as:

- "overwhelming"
- "fear kicks and overrides the simple facts"

- "when they're out there your own stuff overrides".

Thus emotional issues can both reinforce and compete with the goals of an education program.

Rationality - other ways of knowing

The metaphors of a new environment, cooking, energy, touch and emergence contrast with Mezirow's emphasis on critical reflection and rationality. These metaphors support more recent work in the literature of transformative learning which argues that critical reflection is not always a part of the transformative learning process and that other forms of knowing may predominate (Taylor 1997, 2000, 2001; Cranton 2000; Mezirow 2000; Weissner & Mezirow 2000).

The educators in this study presented a multifaceted view of the knowing that develops through transformative learning. They linked feeling, thinking, relating, imagining and action:

> So that's my sense of transformation, it might be that you had a feeling that you did not have before, you had a feeling that you had long forgotten... or maybe you felt sympathetic towards somebody who for three years you had been fighting... or maybe you had a thought about the way you could [be] something in your personal life... so it might be a really practical thing (Peter).

Similarly the metaphors of energy suggest that the educator is responding to non-verbal, affective dimensions in the learning group. Rather than suggesting that an educator is a facilitator of the rules of reason, these metaphors suggest that the educator is a facilitator of emotions and imagination.

Metaphors of transformative learning: discursive resources

In this section of the chapter I discuss the educators' metaphors as discursive resources. Discursive resources provide a way to talk about and understand experience. However, they also set parameters for what aspects of the experience are noticed and for the ways that the experience is understood. I also suggest that the educators' use of these metaphors discursively produces their professional identity.

I review the educators' use of the metaphors through two questions:

> How are the learners positioned by this metaphor?
>
> How is the educator positioned by this metaphor?

Thus I explore some of the implications of these metaphors for the professional practice of transformative learning.

I propose that the metaphors used by these educators provide a variety of ways of understanding the facilitation of transformative learning. The metaphors of seeing things differently focus on the perceptions of the learner. The metaphors of journey and shift focus on points of change within the longer timeframe of the person's life and work. The metaphor of emergence focuses on what is expressed and the ways that education programs lead to experiences being made public. The metaphors of becoming in touch focus on experiences of connection and closeness. The metaphors of energy focus on the mood of the group and the creative processes of learning. The metaphors of converging stories focus on the educator's involvement in the creation of narratives. The metaphor of cooking focuses on what the educator and the learners bring to the education program.

Seeing things differently

How are the learners positioned by these metaphors of vision and sight? These metaphors focus on the perceptions of learners and the ways that they may change their frames of reference. The educators talked of a range of ways that

learners come to see things differently. They drew attention to significant information circulating in the group. The educators suggested that the most significant information was something surprisingly different or, alternatively, something that provided a new synthesis. The sources of this information were comments made by other learners, common views shared among group members, comments of the educator, and diagrammatic representations of group dialogue about an issue. Thus learners are also positioned as the source of potentially significant information.

How is the educator positioned by these metaphors of vision and sight? Certainly the educators suggested that they were a source of illumination; for example, by introducing a new idea or by providing an activity through which the learners perceived an issue differently. Lyn also explained her role as a magnifier. For example, she said that she might magnify the learners' vision about a provocative issue by asking questions, and thus drawing out additional comments from the group of learners.

A new environment

The educators talked about the environment of learning, particularly in terms of the different people within the learning group. The learners form an environment for each other, creating a social context that impacts on each of them. Lyn described it as learners "being in another world".

I suggest that the environment of the Community Support Network training program was significant because of the absence of meaning-making around life-threatening disease in the learners' usual social worlds:

> So there is something about what originally brings people together, that common sort of interest... I've heard people who have been around in Community Support Network for years and they still talk about their original training group which was 1980-something, and that there were

> people they met in that training group who were still extremely important to them (Lyn).

How is the educator positioned through the metaphor of a new environment? Lyn talked about influencing the group interactions so that a person was prompted to move closer to an issue or step back from it. For example, she might organise the composition of a discussion group so as to increase a particular learner's interactions with people who have different experiences and perspectives. Thus she acted to moderate or increase the provocative influence of the group as a learning environment.

Shift and journey

Both of these metaphors focus on the learning path over time, the metaphor of shift emphasising discontinuity and the metaphor of journey emphasising continuity. The metaphors relate learning events to what was happening in the person's life beforehand and to what might happen after. The learners are positioned as the ones in charge of their learning. The educator or the learning group might prompt a shift, but the learner is responsible for the shift. The educators saw this as particularly important when aspects of the learner's personal life were involved. The learner was positioned as the person who held the choice about whether the shift was made:

> ... up to her and what she takes up and what she doesn't (Peter).

> I wonder if, two days later, she would be able to say so, whether she would hold it (Lyn).

In these metaphors the educator is positioned as a companion on the path of learning:

> That we will be along… to check and see how she's doing… we know about the stuff that we think might be happening for her and we are making some guesses about that (Peter).

The educator prompts the learner's memory:

> … so throughout the course of the year we go and check how she's travelling… same question, 'what is your answer now?'… 'is this the same or different from last time?' (Peter).

Although the educator is positioned as the person who notices and names the changes that are occurring, he or she is expected not to intrude into the personal aspects of the learning:

> As well as affirming that the way that he or anybody in the group tries to live their lives is completely their prerogative. We are not about making judgements about people's personal lives (Lyn).

The educator develops knowledge about potential pivotal points in an education program, and seeks to replicate these points in the future:

> That sensitivity to change points in the group… I know how important those particular events are in shifting people's thinking (Sandra).

> … so I try to put into a training program environment a scenario or an activity which will create the environment and maybe replicate some of the turning points (Sandra).

Emergence

These metaphors of emergence position the learners as people who give expression to personal experiences, memories, and emotions. They alert the

educator to the sensitivity of the topics addressed in the programs. Peter noted that he is careful to consider what a particular question or activity might tap into:

> ... it was this respect, this privacy, this assuming that people can look into their own lives and make a choice about what they want to say, that they can keep it private if they want to.

Thus, he is careful to position the learner as the one who makes the choices about what to make public.

The educator is positioned as the person who invites the expression of personal information. This means that the educator needs to be prepared for emotions to emerge in an unexpected way. Lyn outlines the way in which she prepares herself mentally for people's possible reactions if she knows something of their past experiences:

> Whereas you expect it a bit more when it's the person who comes to volunteer who says, 'Well, I lost my son a year ago and that's why I want to do it', so you're expecting this person's coming, they're going to be vulnerable.

In these ways, the educator is positioned as the person who will respond to the learners' personal experiences. Lyn and Peter also talked about providing a caring and compassionate environment in which personal experience could be related and emotions could safely emerge.

Becoming in touch

Peter's forums in schools challenge cultural assumptions about boys' inability to relate to others in an emotional, intimate way. Boys talk publicly about emotional needs and emotional support. As Peter outlined, this intervention consolidates an existing subject position for some boys and it introduces a new subject position for others.

How is this achieved? Peter starts with an assumption that boys have the capacity to be in touch with their feelings:

> So what I assume is that boys are in fact in touch with their feelings at various moments, if they choose to be, and something creates an opportunity for them to be, and they can certainly articulate those feelings.

Peter invites the boys to talk about friendships in a tone that conveys that to do so is both daring and yet should not be taken too seriously. His invitation to talk in a 'deep and meaningful way' parodies deep and meaningful conversations at the same time. Thus the invitation provides young men with a socially acceptable subject position from which to relate personal realities to an audience of their peers.

How are the learners positioned through this metaphor? Peter has designed an educational process to counter the polarisation that occurs around discourses of manhood. Peter suggests that young men in schools usually must choose between very rigidly defined, competing subject positions. To be a 'real man' is to talk "fighting words", to take risks, to be "cool", and to provide friendship by offering protection. To be a 'soft man' is to be sensitive, emotional, and communicative. Further, sexual identity is matched to each of these descriptions so that 'real men' are heterosexual and 'soft men' are gay. The process challenges the assumption that young men must choose between a subjectivity of sensitivity, which can only be connected with homosexuality, and a subjectivity of aggression that is connected with heterosexuality. The process allows the young men to touch a subjectivity that combines a 'manly' style with sensitivity.

Pease maintains that men are raised in discursive frameworks and are invited to take up or turn down different subject positions within them (Pease 1999: 97-105). His focus is on the process of choice, whereby men take up a position and invest in it:

> While individuals may, under certain circumstances, resist their particular positioning in dominant discourses, these opportunities are shaped by the availability of alternative discourses. One needs, then, to have knowledge of more than one discourse and to recognise that meaning is plural. This enables some degree of choice on the part of the individual (Pease 1999: 105).

How is the educator positioned by the metaphor of becoming in touch? This metaphor of touch suggests closeness, engagement with emotions and intimacy with others:

> Its an intimacy that the person is choosing to offer you at that moment... it's a shared moment which I think is important to people because it's genuine, it's heartfelt and it's a closeness with another human being. I think that matters (Peter).

Peter is positioned as the one who will respond to a young man's initiative in becoming in touch. Also, as Peter talked in the interview about these schools forums, I imagined him facilitating the process. Peter spoke very quickly and directly, using language that was informal and anecdotal. He was energetic, he dressed casually, he told stories and he used humour. Overall, his style conveyed a lightness of touch.

Energy

The metaphors of transformative learning as energy focus on ways that learners can move beyond factors that limit or block them. The learners are positioned as receivers of new energy, and then as contributors of energy themselves:

> In the first morning when I was trying to engage and set the scene and give the information and create the environment. Once I did that it meant

> that I could push them into the activities; the energy was in the group and it didn't need me to be the source of energy (Sandra).

The educator is positioned as the person who brings new energy to the group, or who unleashes energy in the group:

- "if I surprise people"
- "if you do it the energy is generated in the group"
- "ignite some of that passion in the group".

Peter emphasised the significance of doing things in an unexpected way:

> ... there is something that is sufficiently intriguing about doing it at that moment in the group and in that way which really invites, encourages some people to go into some part of their being in a way that they wouldn't normally (Peter).

The process was also described using medical metaphors:

- "injecting in"
- "like a vitamin pill or dropping a fizzy tablet in".

These metaphors were used to contrast energising processes with processes where people were bored, blocked, and unable to move to resolution:

- "floundering"
- "flat spots"
- "boring is probably the worst you can be in the whole world".

The educator is also positioned as a monitor of the levels of energy in the group, and as someone who intervenes to facilitate, increase or decrease energy:

- "keep a nice energy going"
- "momentum"
- "represent things in ways that can capture that dynamism and reflect it back"

- "I am not prepared to give a lot of fuel to that".

Peter talked of harnessing the energy by moving between one type and another:

> There's something about humour and laughter that has a power. It's like a wave and if you're not careful it can just, you know, explode as a wave and ruin what happens next. Or it's almost like harnessing the power of the humour and sometimes it, you contrast it with something incredibly serious and that can be powerful. But mostly this stuff tends to just happen spontaneously for me. After having done it for a long time, that's sort of like improvising jazz musicians, they've done all their hard work and now they can afford to muck around.

The educator is thus positioned as a creative figure, responding spontaneously and fluidly to a number of different energies.

Converging stories

Sandra's metaphors of working with stories suggest a number of images. The words "teasing", "hooking", "pulling" and "unpacking" suggest an image of her working with the stories as if they are a ball of wool or dough. She also talked about both the learners and the educator "playing" with ideas, models and concepts. The stories she was referring to included the learners' stories associated with the topic, and her own story. Thus both the learners and the educator are positioned as storytellers.

Sandra talked about hearing the stories in the first instance and then handling the mix of stories in a creative way, providing a range of inputs such as analysis, synthesis and framing. She suggests that a shared story can be created, linked to each person's story, but also go beyond it. This shared, synthesised story provides a new perspective which the learner can apply in her or his own context. Sandra contrasted this approach with the approach of

educators who regard themselves as technical experts and are therefore constrained by the 'rules' of that specific expertise:

> What it required me to do was to hear their stories, to provide some synthesis and analysis that was not constrained by rules, and to put some creativity and some reframing in, so the analysis made sense to people coming from different perspectives.

Cooking

Peter outlined ingredients in his work that he believes support transformative learning. The ingredients include social contact and intimacy; respectful interactions; being expected to be capable in a situation; and decision and choice. The ingredients are seen as embedded in the activities, his questions and comments, and his overall style. Peter suggested that transformative learning may occur as people respond to these ingredients:

> ... and I think what's happened is I have changed the way that I relate to her, with all those quite definite ingredients as well, and that's in turn invited a different response from her.

The educator is thus positioned as the one who brings her or his beliefs to the program, expressing them through the program and the ways they interact with the learners. The learner is positioned as the "taster", the one who responds to what the educator has brought to the situation.

Conclusion

The metaphors used by these educators express working knowledge about the facilitation of transformative learning. While Mezirow's theory suggests that disorienting dilemmas prompt transformative learning, these educators highlighted events and experiences that intrigued, provoked, or inspired learners. The educators emphasised the experience of new possibilities over critical reflection and their focus was on the potential of a learning environment to introduce new experiences, new people and new ideas. Overwhelmingly they described transformative learning as a process of emotionality, rather than rationality.

The metaphors provide various perspectives about facilitating transformative learning. The metaphors of seeing things differently focus on the perceptions of the learner. The metaphors of journey and shift focus on points of change in the overall path of learning. These metaphors support Mezirow's concept of the adult educator as empathic provocateur.

However, the other metaphors indicate alternative understandings. The metaphor of emergence focuses on what learners express. The metaphors of becoming in touch focus on experiences of connection and closeness. The metaphor of energy focuses on the mood of the group and the creative processes of learning. The metaphor of converging stories focuses on the creation of narratives. The metaphor of cooking highlights the beliefs that the educator brings to the group. These educators talked of the ways in which they designed educational processes to establish new energy, provide new experience, or allow significant information to emerge. Through these metaphors the educators present a multi-faceted view of the facilitation of transformative learning.

Chapter 5

Case examples: the facilitation of transformative learning as narrative intervention

Introduction

This chapter explores two examples of transformative learning from the standpoint of the educator. The case examples have been developed from two of the educators' stories of practice and they are analysed as narrative interventions. Narrative intervention may involve the creation of an alternative narrative, extending the previous understandings of learners and the educator. Alternatively the intervention may involve reclaiming a valued narrative that was being overlooked or was 'lost'.

As outlined in Chapter 2, narrative theory can be applied to transformative learning and has potential for exploring the social and interactional aspects of group learning. The case examples explore what happened when the educator facilitated alternative narratives within learning groups.

Selection and construction of the case examples

Selection of the case examples

The two case examples in this chapter have been developed from two detailed stories of practice, one from the interview with Sandra and the other from the interview with Bev. I selected the two stories because of the way that they held the educator's interest and because they sustained my interest as I re-read and analysed them. I expect that my interest was sustained because they are rich stories about the complexities of practice and because they represent significant aspects of emerging professional knowledge. They are thick descriptions. The educators were still very interested in the incidents, and wanted to explore them comprehensively. The case examples convey an authenticity in the way they depict some of the dilemmas the educators faced. As Newman says, a story can have a sense of supertruth:

> ... I would like to think that the story might have achieved what Aldous Huxley somewhere describes as 'supertruth': that veracity, that accurate echo of human experience, which writing can have even when it is fiction (Newman 1999: 8).

Both stories demonstrate the complexity of facilitating transformative learning. They convey the multifaceted aspects of the educator's intervention. They also elaborate some of the contradictions that are involved in the practice of facilitating transformative learning, and these are explored further in chapter 6.

Both stories of practice are significant because they are emerging stories, reflecting emerging issues that are topical in this field. They are fresh stories; they were not already fully formed and articulated within the educators' professional community. Sandra and Bev described these stories of practice as examples of times when they had to go beyond their usual limits. As the interviewer, I also responded to these stories as ones which had significance.

Gergen writes of the "dialogic potential" when people are exploring shared meaning and developing a shared image of an emerging reality:

> Needed are what might be called *imaginary moments* in the dialogue in which participants join in visions of a reality not yet realised by either (Gergen 1999: 163).

Structure of the case examples

The case examples have been written to draw attention to the link between the intervention and the outcomes. As outlined by Melidonis, case example research focuses on core events in an intervention and their relation to outcomes (Melidonis 1989: 232). I have commenced with a summary of the intervention and then used the following structuring categories: the issue, the impact of the issue within the group, the intervention, and the results of the intervention. The summary of the intervention was developed by progressively editing the text of the interviews. I have sought to develop this summary as an editor, considering issues of length, clarity and ordering rather than rewriting the stories.

Analysis of the case examples

The case examples were analysed to highlight and explore issues of professional practice. As outlined in chapter 3, I developed a bank of questions from narrative and postmodern theories and used these to analyse the text. The following questions are used to analyse each case example as a narrative intervention:

> What feature of the group narrative claimed the educator's attention?
> What alternative narrative does the educator bring into play?
> What moves occurred in subject positions of the participants?
> What moves occurred in subject positions of the educator?

Common features of the interventions

The first case example describes how Sandra radically changed a program in workplace assessment in the midst of the program itself. In order to address a relatively uncommon work context, Sandra and the learning group abandoned the standard program and set about developing an alternative narrative of assessment. This alternative narrative responded to both the learners' specific work context and the national accreditation requirements.

The second case example, taken from the interview with Bev, explores the way in which a valued narrative was reclaimed. Bev talked about her role in a group of Uniting Church members who were preparing to march in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in 1999. This case example discusses the intervention she used to interrupt a pattern of interaction that developed after external pressures were brought to bear on the group. It explores the ways that she invited group members to reclaim, and further develop, the narrative of their mission.

The accounts demonstrate some common understandings about the ways that educators are involved in transformative learning events. The interventions that they outlined include the following features.

Firstly, a problematic group interaction claimed their attention. In both examples, the educator intervened because views in the group had become polarised. Secondly, the educators' intervention involved a move in their subject position. This move interrupted the prevailing pattern of interaction around the issue. Thirdly, this move opened up space for the learners to adopt new subject positions. Sometimes this happened indirectly as learners responded to the new pattern of interaction, while at other times the educator invited participants to move to a different subject position. The educators noted that positive outcomes resulted from these moves; new energy was released in the group, and the group moved forward in a different way. Fourthly, the learning group developed

an alternative narrative about the issue, and this narrative resulted in strategic benefits.

The process of facilitating an alternative narrative within a learning group has similarities with the process of narrative therapy outlined by Gergen and Kaye (1996). The educators' descriptions differ from the theory of Gergen and Kaye in that they emphasised a move in subject position. The narrative therapy theories emphasise the professional's communicative techniques, particularly the use of specific forms of questioning. These educators emphasised the way that their choice of a different subject position changed the group interaction.

A story that is told, a story that is retold

The educators' rationale for talking about both of these stories was to review their actions. Each educator was going over her memory of the incident, considering why certain moves were taken and what resulted from these moves. During the interviews Bev and Sandra seemed to be still forming their views about their intervention and so could be said to be exploring emerging theorisations of their professional working knowledge.

The stories of practice were constructed during the interviews. These stories of practice did not present the practice event in a transparent way. Rather, the details of the event were infused with the meanings that the educator was giving to the event. As the interviewer, I was not focused on whether the account was a true or false representation of the 'reality' of the event since I agree with the contention that all accounts are specific constructions of reality (Bruner 1986; Plummer 1995). The significance of these case examples to this thesis, therefore, is not due to any claim that they accurately represent the events that occurred. Rather, their significance is that they provide examples of the ways that educators talk about significant events in their practice.

Case example 1: Sandra's story

Introduction

This case example involves a professional development program in workplace assessment for a group of community arts educators. Sandra was engaged to conduct the program. The group presented new challenges for her regarding the design of the program, and she was excited about the ways that she and the group addressed these challenges. The community educators in the group developed arts-based projects with young people who were marginalised from work and education. The projects engaged young people in learning through various community arts activities. For example, in a project in Moree, the young people painted murals on the light poles in the town.

During the interview, Sandra talked of her interventions within the group, of the way she facilitated the creation of an alternative narrative, and of the way that this program required her to shift her presentation of identity to the group. Thus, this case example demonstrates how facilitation of an alternative narrative may require changes in the educator's own narrative of self.

Summary of the intervention

It was a last-minute decision to help someone out by running a workplace assessment program that I used to run years ago. They were all youth workers and involved in programs that were funded by the Department of Education to engage young people who were truants from school or marginalised. Most of them were finding that engaging young people through community art projects was a reasonably positive and effective way of doing that.

So in saying I'd do the training, my first dilemma was that I knew that the design of workplace assessment was not going to fit well with that particular target group of community workers. So *day one, the biggest challenge was this sense of 'Oh my god, I have no intention of teaching what I am supposed to be*

teaching' so I struggled with my preparation for the first day... thinking I'd be ashamed to teach at this level. It was too simplistic, too babyish, too obvious, there was no analysis there, really.

So I decided I would change the style and develop resources beyond the sort of material about assessment in a factory and try to use some of the things that I am committed to around action learning, etcetera. I basically decided to take a punt and trust my instincts and actually deliver the program at a much more complex level and also to try and put into practice a lot of the issues that I've dealt with in assessment and have passion about.

I'm just trying to remember the sort of steps in the program. I actually did something with them at the beginning about 'assessment from hell' which most of us have had, me and the group. We've all been in formal exams where we had no idea what the questions were, we didn't know what the benchmark was, we had no control over the time, the place, the style, the method, there was no appeal; all that sort of stuff. So people were able to share those examples and use them to draw out what is good assessment. So in terms of the shift, I think what it meant was that they had an opportunity and a model right at the beginning to question: question what they came into the room with about training, about assessment.

I did an activity I designed a long time ago which is still very relevant. It shows the connections between what's in the media, government policy and the international context - a 'clever country' and 'a level playing field' - what that meant in different workplaces in terms of award restructuring, huge retrenchments, the need for multiskilling, getting rid of demarcations. I talked a bit about immediacy, the ITAB[7] system, recognition of prior learning (RPL), ways to aid multiskilling, credit transfer, a national system. So this was actually showing relationships and causes and connections. The reaction from the group

[7] The ITAB system was established in the early 1990s in Australia. ITABs are Industry Training Advisory Boards, and they bring together employers, unions and government representatives in a particular industry.

was mixed, because what it actually did was create cynicism because what it shows is that the training agenda was about helping retrenchments, making a workforce compliant, about training only being training to do a job. So there's actually a cynicism that comes out of that and people can see all those things put together. And then what I had to do was turn around and actually be an advocate for an industry-driven approach which is about stuff around transparency and industry having a right to say what it wants rather than educationalists in ivory towers. This meant there was a bit of tension and debate amongst the group about the pros and cons of industry-driven systems etcetera, which was quite positive.

So that was good for setting the ground around the system, but it still meant that I was operating from an instructor approach. A lot of it was my knowledge and trying to engage them in it, but it was still pretty much me out the front with some brainstorming and pushing ideas through. And I can do that well but it's not how I think good training occurs. I moved away from that and what it meant was that the second day needed different energy. Day two was really focused on learning by doing, which was quite exciting I think. Probably the most exciting part though was getting to the end part of the day and doing this thing about pinnacle assessment, how do you design an assessment method that will enable you to assess a number of units of competence together. And I made this up as I went so it was a bit bizarre.

The most exciting part was when I broke them into groups and I said, 'Now each group, I'm going to give you an assessment task to do and you have to try and come up with a single assessment task for the whole thing.' Now with the first group, I said, 'Your group is an RPL group, so you have to assume that someone is going to come to you and they've already got all these competencies. How are you going to know?'. So their task was to think of the sorts of prompt questions that they would be able to use to get the story from someone who was applying for an RPL process and to also think about what other evidence they'd want to look at. The second group was to assume that they were to run a training program and assess during the training program, and

the assessment method they were to design was a role-play or a simulation that would enable them to judge the participants as having met all of those units. The third group's task was to come up with a single workplace project that someone could complete which would enable them to meet all the units of competence. They came up with this fantastic idea which was that someone would have to develop a kit on how to be a community mural artist. They spelt out everything that had to go in the kit, including how to do submissions, how to manage the project, how to pick the artist, issues in dealing with young people, guidelines etcetera.

So it's actually creating a particular learning environment and processes that give the power back into the group to do it and to do it well. I think that what it was able to do was connecting with their experiences so the things that mattered to me became things that mattered to them. And, for people like me that's a hard path to walk because I have a certain level of charisma so the teaching role comes very easily to me. I can get away with going in unprepared and 'bull shit' on for three hours and the students coming out and saying it was wonderful because they had a bit of fun and heard some nice stories. There's actually a big tension in people with my style to cross that bridge because it's so easy to rely on your charisma. I think it's an easier bridge to cross if you struggle as a charismatic trainer and so you're desperately trying to find other ways of creating a learning environment. It's easier to cross that bridge because you've got no other choice, but it's harder for people like me.

The issue

Very early on in the program, the educator became aware that the usual program of training to be a workplace assessor would not be relevant to these community educators. The usual program reflects workplace environments and worker characteristics that did not apply in this situation. The young people who would be assessed by the community educators were neither employed nor enrolled in formal education. Rather, they were involved in arts projects which

were designed on community work principles, and which offered opportunities for self-directed learning in a very informal way.

Sandra's challenge was to adapt the workplace assessor training program so that it could be relevant on the margins of vocational education and training. Indeed, these community educators' marginal location within the vocational education field paralleled the marginal location of the young people in their communities. Sandra faced the challenge of designing an assessment program that could be relevant for these community educators who, in their turn, faced the challenge of designing programs that could be relevant for these young people.

The impact of the issue within the group

The issue of relevance was played out in the group from the beginning. In the first session, when the educator presented the rationale for workplace assessment and contextual information about national structures and policies, the group responded with cynicism.

Sandra had previously found that people responded positively to this introductory information, but this particular group reacted in ways that she had not anticipated. As they connected information about the changes in work and training, Sandra described their response as, 'Lights going off, oh my god I understand now'. Their cynicism about an industry-driven system increased. Sandra fostered a debate about the pros and cons of the national system, but she also participated in the debate as an advocate for an industry-driven system, arguing for example for the right of industry to contribute their views about training, and for the importance of transparency.

At this point, there was the risk of disengagement. Sandra was aligned with mainstream work structures from which the clients of these educators were marginalised. This raised questions for Sandra about the way in which the program should proceed. One possibility could have been that the group

critiqued and rejected the mainstream model. This would have aligned the community educators with the marginalised youth and the educator with mainstream work structures, and the educator and the learning group would have been locked into polarised positions.

Alternatively, the participants and the educator could work together and examine assessment both in mainstream contexts and in the marginalised contexts occupied by the participants' clients.

The intervention

Sandra described the two main strategies she used to engage the participants. She invited them to share experiences of assessment and then to develop together a desired model of assessment, and she responded to participants in very immediate and confirming ways.

Sandra invited the participants to tell stories of an 'assessment from hell' and of a 'good' assessment. She described this strategy as one which enabled her to engage with the participants as people with histories. She noted that much of the participants' past experiences of assessment were largely unexamined. She also credited this activity with establishing the expectation that they would be invited to compare, contrast, and question throughout the remainder of the program.

The group developed a model of good assessment, and this became the outcome towards which they worked:

> So there was actually a model to start transforming a way from what we all came in with... So every activity was actually about modelling the things that they had said at the beginning should have happened... so it wasn't just learning about how best to do it, they actually participated in doing it the best way. So I think that was quite engaging in terms of showing that the good stuff was possible.

By developing a desired model of assessment, the participants put to one side their concerns about existing models and looked to the future. I suggest that this interplay between personal histories, shared present experience, and potential future experience increased their engagement.

The other key strategy that Sandra described was her responsiveness to their questions, their values, and the challenges that they presented, and her affirmation of their emerging ideas:

> Like, okay, if you want to try it around the new approach, let's do it.

Sandra devised new educational approaches and activities on the spot, "designing the process from raw materials, like from nothing". She created a space where the participants could test the new model of assessment, on their own terms and in relation to their own issues. Sandra was particularly pleased with the final activity of the program, where the participants formed three groups to design pinnacle assessment processes for community mural projects. One group designed processes that were suitable for the recognition of prior learning, a second group designed processes to be used within a training course, and the third group designed a workplace project. Sandra felt that the group proved to themselves that they could design assessment approaches that complied with their preferred model, and that this engaged them with the preferred model in very immediate ways.

Sandra described how her responsiveness was important in learners shifting from a position in which they agreed with the ideas but still held reservations about the possibility of implementing them:

> Persuading other people was actually about doing it spontaneously there with their material, instead of just doing it with a formula.

She believed that by the end of the program the participants had developed a strong belief in their desired model of assessment and that they had acquired confidence in their ability to implement it.

Results of the intervention

Sandra described the result as a transformation of the participants' views about assessment. Many started with a lack of interest in assessment, followed by cynicism when they were presented with mainstream approaches to workplace assessment. By the end of the program the learners had designed and were committed to a preferred model, which was compatible with the values of the community arts field and was relevant to their work with the young people. They had also developed confidence in the fact that the preferred model was achievable, and Sandra expected that some participants would begin to explore this model in conjunction with Registered Training Organisations in their regions.

The intervention was designed to re-establish engagement and to avoid the risk of disengagement. The intervention resulted in engagement between the learners and their different experiences, engagement with the topic, and engagement with the educator:

> They were quite elated... I think they loved the ideas, I think they actually liked playing with assessment methods and playing with designing role-plays and designing projects, and they got very excited about that.

Sandra also now saw the participants as active advocates for this preferred model of assessment, and she regarded this as significant since these are issues about which she is passionate:

> It was also about trying to ignite some of that passion in the group, so that it wasn't just me... I actually wanted to turn them into advocates for the same things I am an advocate for.

By the end of the two days, the risk of disengagement had been countered and high levels of engagement had been established around the topic area. Members of the group told Sandra that they experienced a sense of connection with colleagues in the workshop, and that they were beginning to set up a communication network across New South Wales in the hope of maintaining this connection.

Case example 1: Analysis of Sandra's story of practice

This section analyses the first case example through four key questions:

What feature of the group narrative claimed the educator's attention?
What alternative narrative does the educator bring into play?
What moves occurred in the subject positions of the participants?
What moves occurred in subject positions of the educator?

Overview of the case example

The participants in this program were community educators involved with marginalised youth. Thus they had formed loyalties with young people who were alienated from societal structures for work and education. The values underlying their work are equity and justice. A traditional approach to workplace assessor training reflects societal structures that have been rejected by the young people. Further, it is based on values that these community educators considered problematic. The challenge for Sandra was to prevent the participants disengaging with assessment. Disengagement would further marginalise the young people from formal education and work opportunities.

As Sandra negotiated her role with the group she found that her usual subject position, as expert about workplace assessment, was a problem. The position of expert aligned her with the traditional approach to the topic area. In response, she moved to the subject position of narrative facilitator. Sandra described this program as personally significant because of the way that it demonstrated her understandings of the educator's role. Also, by reviewing her experience of this program she developed her own story of self as educator.

What feature of the group narrative claimed the educator's attention?

The learners rejected Sandra's initial approach and I suggest that this rejection was significant for her because all of the learners shared this view and the view arose from their rationale for their work. Failure to address this would have led

to the rejection of the professional development program as well as the rejection of the educator.

Sandra had a range of options available, but simple acceptance of the learners' narratives was not one of them. The terms of the program were fixed prior to the educator's involvement and were a given. Sandra did not have complete freedom to redesign the program, and she had already begun to act as a spokesperson for industry-based assessment. She had to respond to the group's challenge in a way that acknowledged the pre-existing narrative which was embedded within the workplace assessment training program.

Sandra responded by inviting the group to explore the topic with her, critiquing a range of views, including the first view that she had presented, and thus developing a more complex story of assessment practice. In starting to develop this alternative narrative, the pre-existing narratives of both the learners and the educator were confirmed, critiqued, and extended.

What alternative narrative does the educator bring into play?

Adult education theorists (for example, Mezirow 1981, 1990, 1991, 2000; Hart 1990a; Brookfield 1985) suggest a process of critical reflection to challenge learners' assumptions. Taking a different approach, Gergen and Kaye (1996) propose adding an alternative narrative. This alternative narrative then takes its place alongside the other narratives. The alternative narrative is not necessarily recommended as better, but it has significance because of its impacts on the interaction.

Sandra's intervention engaged the participants in developing a shared narrative about assessment that both encompassed and extended their own pre-existing narratives. The alternative narrative included relationships between policy and practice, and thus provided a more complex explanation of the topic.

The first activity encouraged the participants to describe the range of assessments they had experienced personally. Through this activity the learners began to develop a shared narrative with the educator. The next activity introduced economic policy, workplace trends, educational strategies, and the industrial relations context for the role of workplace assessors. This activity linked the educator's knowledge to workplace trends with which the participants were familiar. Thus, in the first session, assessment was explored through the personal and the political, connecting these in ways that established tension and debate:

> So their original stories were about them as isolated individuals telling the things from their personal frame of reference. That was synthesised...
>
> What's needed for something to be dynamic is the connection back from the story, so that people's stories need to connect to come up with a general framework... So, in my workplace assessment, they started with their bad stories: I had an exam, I got failed by an inspector when I did my teaching round, whatever.

That the first activity addressed the 'good' and the 'bad' of assessment was also important. One participant commented that many professional development programs in their field only deal with success and do not admit to difficulties:

> I had another person say, 'this is the first time I've been in a forum like this where people are telling the truth... people go to meetings and they say everything's wonderful, I'm getting all my numbers, I don't have problems recruiting young kids into my groups, I'm a success story'.

By sharing experiences and debating views, they developed a shared understanding about the practice of assessment. I suggest that the shared narrative was significant for each person, because it was a better narrative, in some ways, than the one with which they had commenced. The shared narrative both connected with each person's narrative and extended it. This

alternative and more complex narrative developed out of an analysis and synthesis of the experiences of the group members, the issues they raised, the policy rationale for the role of workplace assessors, and Sandra's own experiences about assessment.

Because the alternative narrative was different, broader, and richer than their initial narrative, it opened up the possibility of new ways of thinking. When people start to generate specific ideas for their workplace based on the alternative narrative, they create new stories of possibility:

> People then unpack it by actually coming up with a story again. Now often those stories are very different to the stories at the beginning, somehow they go through a process.

Through this intervention the group constructed an alternative, shared narrative that connected the dialectical tensions that they initially identified around the topic of assessment: good and bad experiences, local contexts and national policies, and mainstream workplace contexts and community youth contexts. The alternative narrative generated new possibilities because it both included their initial understandings and extended them. The educator was equally engaged and she also found that her narrative of assessment was confirmed, critiqued, and extended.

What moves occurred in the subject positions of the participants?

Sandra described the way the program led participants to move to the subject position of designers of a preferred approach. Initially, a majority of the participants were in the subject positions of critic and cynic.

Sandra described the participants as "on the fringes" in relation to workplace assessment. To work well in their role they must meet the expectations of young people who are marginalised from their communities. Therefore they need to adopt subject positions in relation to these young people such as

facilitator of self-directed learning, rather than teacher. Furthermore, the organisations that employ them and the requirements they must follow are not mainstream vocational education and training. They have quite different pressures and requirements from those of TAFE teachers and workplace trainers. Workplace assessment was not completely irrelevant to them, but their work was marginal to the broader field of vocational education and training:

> Well, it's not a requirement, it's a requirement to work in a registered training organisation, they are not in registered training organisations, they are kind of on the fringes, but it seemed the closest qualification that could be offered for staff development.

The participants, occupying a subject position in association with their clients, viewed Sandra's approach as exemplifying operations of power that can oppress and marginalise. For example, they talked about the ways that assessment can be unfair. Their initial subject position was that of critic and cynic. As a result of the intervention they moved to a subject position of explorer, examining a range of views, experiences and ideas, and developing a new model:

> They were comfortable with exploring them as things that mattered.

Once they were developing the new model, Sandra also sought to facilitate their move from a position of being convinced of the rightness of the ideas but unconvinced of their workability, to a position of being advocates of the approach:

> Everyone says 'yes but' when you talk about assessment, they always have a 'but', and I think that the 'but' is that 'Because I haven't done it so all I can see is the problems'. So I have a belief about how people learn which is give people a chance to do it and do it well and they're not going to say 'yes but' anymore because they've got it... and they'll start saying to other people, 'Don't say 'yes but', it's easy. I've done it'.

In summary, the intervention enabled the learners to move from the subject position of critic and cynic to the position of explorer, then to that of designer and then to that of advocate.

What moves occurred in the subject positions of the educator?

At the commencement of the program Sandra described her subject position as that of an expert presenter promoting the ideas in the program. She portrayed herself as an advocate for an industry-driven system, and described her style as "up-front", "pushing ideas through" and "fairly heavy-handed". Her subject position was aligned with a specific knowledge base.

Because the group members took up the subject position of critic and cynic, the position of expert became problematic and Sandra had to adopt other positions if she was to avoid marginalising the participants:

> I was the expert but I wanted to make them experts too, so again it was closing the gap between me, the expert, and them, the passive audience.

The position of expert was moved to the background but not abandoned altogether since it gave Sandra authority to invite the participants to adopt a more radical position in relation to the topic. She described how she could use her position as expert to "give permission to be a bit defiant".

The educator's story of professional identity

Sandra was prompted to consider another approach when her usual approach proved inadequate. She thought that the new approach was risky and the outcomes uncertain, but that it would be even more risky to continue with an approach that was not working.

Sandra described how her intervention was influenced by two transformative learning experiences in her history as an adult educator. She characterised each of these two "transformational" experiences as "critical milestones on my map as to why I am where I am today". These milestones were occasions when she had "to do something creative or sink". I suggest that each of these transformative learning experiences presented her with a dilemma that required her to develop a new subjectivity.

Sandra commenced her adult education career as a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) teacher, conducting community development courses in Melbourne, Australia. She described the first transformative learning experience:

> The first one was a group of second-year community development students and the subject matter was poverty, 16 weeks, 3 hours a week. And I realised... the curriculum and the content area they'd already dealt with. They'd already looked at issues about poverty lines and experience of poverty and labelling and stereotyping and everything and I just thought this is going to be utterly boring, I can get through the curriculum with this group in one day. 'What on earth will I do?'. So what I ended up doing was an experiment for me. We actually had a 16-week role-play of a mock Commission of Inquiry into Poverty and the preparation went for about 5 weeks. I had people being commissioners and they had to come up with the terms of reference and then each week they had to synthesis the findings of the week before and comment on them... Then I had people talking. One was the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, someone else was ACOSS[8], someone else was an employer group and they had to present a case to the Commission as to whatever it was, and then they called each other as witnesses and they showed videos. And they dealt

[8] The Brotherhood of St Lawrence is a church based agency that supports families and fosters community development in Melbourne. ACOSS is the Australian Council of Social Service, a peak organisation that represents non-government agencies. It researches issues for families and develops policy positions regarding social issues in Australia.

> with all the different issues of poverty and it went for 16 weeks, and they hired costumes and we went and used the local government chambers and microphones, and they invited the director of the College to the last session because they were so thrilled. They put together properly an inch-thick document of all their research and they wanted it published and they were so proud of that. Now for me as a trainer, the pivotal thing was, it was probably the most exotic role-play I've ever done... but the group said to me that that's the best they've ever had. My role as a trainer was to sit down after the first 4 or 5 weeks when I was helping people do their research and how they were going to approach it. My role was to sit at the back, and welcome them at the beginning, and hand it over and maybe add 5 minutes worth of analysis in a 3 hour session... It was that first time of really shifting from not being out the front, charismatic, but actually creating an environment where they could be charismatic... And I learnt that a long time ago and it was a hard lesson for me to learn.

This milestone enabled her to move away from the position of teacher and charismatic leader. She did this so the students could adopt that position of charismatic leader themselves. When one person takes on the subject position of charismatic leader the others are prompted to take the subject position of audience: to listen, to be entertained and to follow the development of ideas.

For the educator to move between both subject positions of charismatic leader and audience they must span a range of polarities of action. These include active/ passive, speaking/ listening, deciding/ supporting, watching/ watched, and congratulating/ congratulated. Therefore, this experience developed Sandra's capacity to take on the subject position of audience, in addition to that of charismatic leader.

The second experience of transformative learning in her professional development enabled Sandra to move from the position of expert to the subject position of facilitator of agreements. Her job at this time was a management

position and she was facilitating industrial relations discussions in relation to the levels of national competency standards. She talked about listening for the range of views and for points of synthesis among those views:

> There were some strategies I used which were about giving people chances to caucus and meet and talk to each other. But there was also a particular style that I used about documenting people's positions very publicly on whiteboards so everyone could see the positions at every step of the way. And I used my writing on the whiteboard skills to push people on very quickly, and to tick off where there was agreement and circle where there was disagreement and move on, and come back to where there was disagreement... I wasn't a technical expert and so that actually meant that I was able to hear everybody's positions and synthesise where they came from and actually reinterpret them back to the group using language that suddenly made the click happen for them... and then to test it out. If I was a technical expert I would have had a position and I would have pushed my position which would have been 'the rules say'... So what I was able to say, 'So what you're telling me is that you don't like the way these rules are because' and I was able to reframe things.

Sandra described the process as stepping outside the rules associated with any area of expertise. Technical expertise works within certain parameters. This new position enabled her to develop an innovative solution with the participants without being limited by these parameters. She was able to work with *their* language, the language of industrial negotiations in the workplace, and use these shared understandings as the basis for agreements.

Sandra's history of professional development, and specifically these two transformative learning experiences, developed her capacity to move among these various subject positions. This capacity enabled her to design the intervention in this case example.

Sandra spoke about letting go of one subject position and moving to another. Rather I suggest that the moves placed certain subject positions in the foreground or background. For example, the move to the position of audience meant that the position of charismatic leader receded into the background. As Sandra talked, she began to see that she had used that position later in the program in order to give clear instructions, to inject ideas or energy, and to focus group discussions:

> So I guess the personal charismatic style still has a place, I probably hadn't realised it, but it's actually a place in making creative and dynamic the structures for them to get going, so it can actually energise the group to be doing what they're wanting to do... and certainly the advantage of having that sort of personal style is that you can grab the audience, the group very quickly.

Thus Sandra had access to different subject positions, and could bring different ones to the foreground as required.

Case example 2: Bev's story

Introduction

This case example explores Bev's intervention within a group that was planning to march as members of the Uniting Church in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Other groups within the Uniting Church had mounted a campaign to prevent them from marching and the leadership of the church had asked them to withdraw. During the meeting, as they discussed their response to these pressures, Bev noticed that the group interaction was becoming fragmented.

Bev's intervention interrupted this interaction and allowed the group to move forward in a different way. People started to play with new ideas and moved beyond the initial framing of the issue. This case example shows how group interaction can become problematic when a group is placed under major pressure. Bev facilitated an intervention that enabled the group to reclaim their preferred narrative about the ways that they make decisions. Further, this led to a creative resolution of the issues under discussion. Bev moved subject position during the intervention and this provided the opportunity for others to move their subject positions.

This case example also provides an interesting example of the way that specific interventions within a group can have a wider impact within organisations. Group interactions establish subject positions within the group and can also establish relations between the group and other groups in the organisation.

Summary of the intervention

Some Uniting Church members decided to put a float in the Mardi Gras parade for the first time in 1999, and a small group of volunteers including myself got together to try to organise this float and plan for it. The night before we had about seventy people who were able to make it to a meeting to do the final planning and preparations. And the key person on the organising committee

received quite a lot of correspondence from the leadership of the Uniting Church asking us not to go ahead with it, because it would be seen as a divisive thing to do. And they strongly urged us, if we insisted on going ahead with marching, not to march under the logo of the Uniting Church.

They drew the line and insisted that we did not march under the logo. Their concern was that if the logo was seen by the public it would be seen as official endorsement by the leadership of the Uniting Church. So Andrew, one of the main organisers, had received this letter and had also received a number of threats in the lead up to the parade from lovely, Christian people, making all sorts of defamatory comments. So he'd been really worn down by the whole process. Plus he had a lot more at stake, being a minister; potentially, the church could have said, 'You're really out of line here as a minister'.

And so, on the night before the parade, he presented the letter that he'd received. And he presented it, understandably fairly emotionally, because he was feeling pretty vulnerable from all sides. So that was part of the emotion for me, seeing him looking completely worn out. His wife was there as well and she made an emotive appeal on the side. They had to leave their answering machine on because of the sorts of calls they were getting and they were concerned about the impact of the calls on their children. His wife was angry and accusatory. She was strung out from the whole thing. She said, 'Well it's fine for you, you're not getting the phone calls, you're not getting the letters. We're the ones who are bearing the brunt of this attack, we're the public face of what's being organised here and I'm not prepared to wear it or have my kids wear it any longer'.

And so the platform that was set was a very emotive one and Andrew was saying, 'So I'm putting it to you that I think we need to consider this request'. And it was at that point that I think that he invited comment from the floor. So you had a situation where one individual after the other was standing up and saying, 'Well I think this because of this'. So people said, 'I've come all the way from Melbourne to march under the logo of the Uniting Church' or 'That would

be horrible to feel that it wasn't my logo, my church; that's why I've come'. So this went on for some time, individuals standing up, making their case, and, most people as I read it, were standing up and saying 'I've come to march under the logo and that's what I want to do'. And the point at which I decide to jump in was when I could see that there were more hands, like 'I'm next, I'm next'. I could see that we were not going to get anywhere by just having individuals stand up here, there and everywhere and say their bit. And then I thought the final result would have been that we would end up marching under the logo. And I think Andrew's wife would have probably just about stormed out of there and said, 'Well it's fine for you lot, you know, because you're not paying the price that we are'.

So I put it to the group that, in order to try and shift that energy a bit, everyone have a five minute chat with the person next to them, just about where they were at on this issue at the moment. My intention was to spread the energy a bit more evenly across the room, and let everyone have their say because I was conscious that there were some people who hadn't had the chance to speak yet. So at that point, in order to allow people to hear different perspectives, I asked everyone to mix up and to find someone who had a different perspective from themselves and find out a bit about what the other person was thinking and why. Then I asked for a comment from just a couple of people who wanted to march under the logo and a couple of people who thought it was a good idea not to.

So we did that and then I asked people again to get into a small group of two or three, and to reflect on what they'd heard and to see if they wanted to put any proposals either way. And if we were going to march with the logo, were there some other things we needed to take into account, whether that be support for Andrew and his family, whether that be something of a statement we wanted to make about that. So we'd expanded it from just marching under the logo or not marching under the logo to marching under the logo and why and how, and not marching under the logo and why and how and what went with that.

We had a couple of proposals both ways but there were a couple of really interesting proposals from people who said, 'Let's not march under the logo and what about trying this'. And I could see on people's faces that they were starting to consider the issue a bit more. People had all sorts of other crazy, wacky ideas too. I mean some of the ideas were ridiculous and you knew that people were going to reject them but at least you had something, some other alternative to think about. And people explored what other symbols might mean. So I think it was only when we had some really concrete ideas about ways to do it differently that people started seeing possibilities. Until then it was just the logo and not the logo.

So I said, 'We've now got these three or four proposals before us' and there was a large number of people suddenly who wanted to explore the fourth proposal around not marching under the logo because of what was attached to it. And so already you could see that some sort of shift was occurring, and so again I gave people some time to quickly explore it and see what they could come up with. And this proposal came back with some modifications and there started to be some increased energy around. It was this huge banner, so we thought we could cut out a hole where the logo had been, and our symbolism of that was that we would march behind that because people were more important than the symbol. So people would still know it was members of the Uniting Church but they would see human faces rather than a logo. And it would be very apparent to those in the Uniting Church that we had been extremely gracious and had listened to their request but really there could be no major outcry.

That was the point at which there was suddenly an overwhelming majority except for two people who were still uncomfortable about it. One of them decided that he could make his individual protest, so he actually painted a logo on his head - he's bald - and the other said, 'I'm prepared to go with what everyone says because I think it is important that we're unified'.

I think that there was a strong sense of unity after that, there was a collective purpose that was greater than any of our individual desires to do it this way or do it that way. There was something very powerful about what everyone was going to do together. And I think it actually built a sense of community that carried on to the next day. Someone said that it was the best debate they'd ever seen in a church environment, where it wasn't about trying to be nice to everyone or trying to do the right thing by the church or anything like that. It was about how can we be respectful of ourselves and our needs, and of the individuals amongst us who are feeling pressure, and also be true to our cause. So people felt that we progressed to a level where we allowed some conflicting debate without just trying to defend. It allowed everything else to emerge along the way. I was most satisfied that we could come to a common agreement and that it was something that had a lot of power in it. In a sense it had more power in it than if we had just gone ahead and carried the logo.

It also scored us points in the church because we were the gracious group who listened to the advice of the church leadership. I mean we didn't go all the way and say we wouldn't march but we conceded something in their eyes. Whereas the people who were opposed to this going ahead collected thousands of dollars and put ads in the Sydney Morning Herald and Daily Telegraph on the day of Mardi Gras dissociating themselves, saying it was not a Uniting Church event. So this meant that we had a right to raise the whole issue of who owns the logo and to put that on the church's agenda for discussion.

Part of our success was that we didn't allow the whole debate to get focused around the logo. For us the issue of the place of gay and lesbian people in the church was more critical. And ultimately we don't give a stuff about whether we have a logo or not, but what we do care about is everything it symbolised, which is about, 'You don't have a right whereas someone else does, you're not really part of the church, someone else is'. It wasn't that someone had told us that we shouldn't do it, it was that we'd actually decided, 'Yeah bugger it, we won't do it because there's a good reason not to, there's a reason that suits us not to and suits our agenda and our ultimate aims'. I think that was probably what people

were first reacting to: 'Well, I've got to go along with that because they've told us we shouldn't do it, they're always telling us what we can and can't do.' It's almost like we moved from a childlike response to a more adult response.

The issue

The group had come together to finalise their plans for marching the next day. They had thought that they would be fine-tuning their original plans, but now they had to decide how to respond to the request from the church leadership. People were distressed and angry that the church leadership was asking them not to proceed.

Andrew and his wife were also distressed because of the threats that they and their family had received. Further, Andrew's wife became angry when group members were still keen to march, as it was her family that was being threatened.

The impact of the issue

The group had been discussing the request in a fragmentary way, with each person jumping up and giving their individual opinion. Bev anticipated that if this process continued the group would maintain their plan to march and to carry the logo. This would mean that the needs of some members, such as Andrew and his wife, would be ignored and that the request of the church leadership would be rejected. The discussion had been reduced to the question of whether they should march or accede to the request not to march. The shared commitments to the reason for the march and to the goals of the gay and lesbian movement were being lost.

People who opposed the march were using strategies that targeted particular members, increasing their stress and sense of vulnerability. The request of the church leadership had probably only arisen because of the actions of those who opposed the march. Also, the current process of decision making within the

group was adding to the tension. At this stage, the group was responding to an agenda that had been developed by those opposing the march.

The intervention

Bev's intervention enabled the group discussion to break free from the parameters that had been established by other groups in the church. The intervention also utilised a different mood and energy. Bev invited the group to move to a different process, and to explore different possibilities. She did not try to convince people of the benefits of the alternative process or to take control in a dominant way. At all stages of the process, the language was that of exploration:

> So I put that proposal, that the group allow me to see if we could facilitate some sort of process around making a decision that we could own.

She stated that her intention was to find a way for everyone to have a say, and she was particularly keen to include those who find it daunting to stand up and address a large group. She asked each person to speak to others in twos and threes, so that everyone had space to express their views and to be heard. People were asked to talk to others who had a different point of view, then a range of views was canvassed across the seventy people, and finally the group as a whole began to develop and explore proposals. The end result was that the group designed a new strategy. They decided to march and to redesign their banner so that the logo would not be as identifiable to the public but would certainly be identifiable to Uniting Church members and the church leadership. In this way, they developed their own symbol and communicated their right to be seen to belong to the Uniting Church.

Results of the intervention

The strategy that they agreed upon was valued because it increased their sense of common purpose and it led to strategic gains in their relationship with the church leadership:

> I think there was a strong sense of unity after that... there was a collective purpose that we had that was greater than any of our individual desires to do it this way or that way.

Although the group's decision partly met the request of the church leaders, the decision was made on the group's terms and according to the group's agenda:

> Part of our success was that we didn't allow the whole debate to get focused around the logo. For us, the issue of the place of gay and lesbian people in the church was a more critical issue. And ultimately we don't give a stuff about whether we have a logo or not, but what we do care about is everything it symbolised, which is about, 'You don't have a right whereas someone else does, you're not really part of the church, someone else is'.

After removing the central part of the logo from their banner, the group decided to use it in a different way. They signed it, and after the march, group members took the signed logo to the church leadership. The group and those who opposed them were competing for legitimacy with the organisational leadership, and this decision enabled the group to be seen as the ones who were responsive to the advice of the church leadership. Thus they could be perceived as the group that used appropriate processes. Bev states that their strategy brought them increased support from the leadership, particularly in contrast to the opposition group, and enabled them to press further for their rights:

> So it also meant we had a right to raise with the church the whole issue of who owns the logo and to put that on the church's agenda.

Case example 2: Analysis of Bev's story of practice

Introduction

This section explores three features of Bev's account: the re-introduction of a valued narrative, the strategic impact of moves in subject positions, and the redefining of differences beyond opposing polarities. Under pressure, the group's preferred narrative about their purpose and the ways that they made decisions together were lost. The issue was initially defined according to the agendas of those opposing the march and the request of the church leaders. Group members were only thinking in terms of rejecting or acceding to this request. Viewpoints were being framed as opposing polarities. Through her intervention, Bev enabled the group to move away from the crisis narrative and to reclaim their preferred narrative. Her intervention also helped the group move beyond this framing of differences as opposing polarities.

The educator was working within a complex and multi-layered context involving a range of social spaces. These spaces were defined by the relationships among group members, the relationship between the group and the opposition group, the relationship between the group and the wider organisation, and the relationship between the group and the church leadership. Bev's interaction impacted on all these spaces.

What feature of the group narrative claimed the educator's attention?

The letter from the church leadership, requesting that the group did not march, led to the initial group dynamic. The role of the opposing group was in the background at that stage. I suggest that the narrative introduced in the letter carried powerful messages about this group's place within the church. The group perceived it as a message of exclusion, interpreting it as the leadership saying that they did not belong to the church as much as others might, that they did not have the same rights, and that their decision to march was a divisive act.

Bev suggested that group members were reacting to the church leadership as moralistic authority figures.

What alternative narrative does the educator bring into play?

People talked with Bev later and said that their challenge had been to respond to these messages without either appeasing or angrily rejecting the authority figures. Rather, they wanted to act according to their own agenda:

> It wasn't that someone had told us that we shouldn't do it, it was that we actually decided, 'Yeah bugger it, we won't do it because there's a good reason not to, there's a reason that suits us as well not to and suits our agenda and our ultimate aims'.

Bev talked about their satisfaction in arriving at a solution which avoided appeasement or angry rejection. They regarded their final actions as more mature than their initial reactions:

> And now that I think of it, it's almost like you move from a childlike response to a more adult response.

Bev noted that people talked about taking action on their own terms, and that this action provided the basis for ongoing negotiations with the church leadership.

In this case example, the group's preferred narrative about the way that they made decisions is reclaimed and extended. During the crisis it had been lost but Bev's intervention reintroduced it and counteracted the pressures that had led to its loss.

What moves occurred in the subject position of the educator

Bev's actions led to a move in her subject position. After Andrew read out the letter, people adopted the subject positions of opponents or proponents of the church leaders' request. Bev could see what was happening and decided to avoid this subject position. She thought she had more room to move than other people present. For example, she saw that Andrew was caught between the group, his family, and the church leadership:

> And he presented it, understandably, fairly emotionally because he was feeling, yeah, just pretty vulnerable from all sides.

She saw that his position of convenor was dividing him from the rest of the group members and yet, if he supported the majority view, that this was likely to divide him from his wife:

> And I think that would have become increasingly more difficult for Andrew to do because, as I interpreted it, the weight of opinion in those initial comments was we march under the logo. And I think Alice would have, his wife, would have probably just about stormed out of there.

Bev described him as emotionally tied to the issue and unable to make a move:

> Because I was also aware that he was very emotionally tied to the issue, and I think it's the more emotionally tied in you are to an issue, it's harder to genuinely facilitate a process for coming to some agreement.

Bev adopted a new subject position, that of advocate for a new framework within which the group could address the needs, views, concerns and rights of all its members.

What moves occurred in the subject positions of the participants?

Bev did not adopt a provocative stance. She did not guarantee or promote a different outcome, but rather invited people to move into the subject position of explorer.

Bev's account suggests that the group members coalesced around the shared subjectivity of explorer. They explored views that were different from their own, potential ways to expand and modify ideas, ramifications of various ideas, and specific proposals. This new subjectivity led to a different mood within the group:

> There were a large number of people suddenly who wanted to explore a proposal around not marching under the logo because of what was attached to it... and there was starting to be some increased energy.

At one stage, the exploration became imaginative and even playful:

> People started saying, 'Well we could do it this way or we could march with this instead of the logo'. People had all sorts of other wacky ideas. I mean, some of the ideas, it was good, some of the ideas were ridiculous.

Interventions in polarities

I suggest that one of the reasons the crisis narrative was so problematic was that it created divisions and required people to choose one side or the other. A number of polarities were established. These included:

- that the group express their own preference and march *or* that they accept the advice of the church
- that they consider the offence to some members of the church if they marched *or* that they consider the ways in which they had been offended.

These were polarities in the relationship between members of this group and the wider church. Bev also talked about polarities within the group itself. These included:

- care for the needs of all members of the group *or* care for individual needs
- care for the needs of members of the group *or* care for the cause.

Bev introduced an alternative narrative. She did this by creating a space in which differences could be explored and people could move beyond opposing polarities:

> Actually, someone said it was the best debate they'd ever seen or discussion they'd ever seen in a church environment, where it wasn't about trying to be nice to everyone or trying to do the right thing by the church or anything like that, it was about how we can be respectful of ourselves and our needs, of the individuals amongst us who are feeling pressure and attack and... also be true to our cause.

Bev initiated a process that enabled every single person to express a viewpoint. Then, by asking people to talk with someone who held a different opinion on the issue she encouraged dialogue. She provided a process with sufficient structure to give people a sense of safety and with sufficient flexibility to enable them explore new ideas:

> That's quite pressurising because again, as a facilitator, I think you're treading that line of wanting to open things up and allow people a free ranging debate and discussion, and at the same time, for me I'm trying to take it somewhere, I'm trying to get to an outcome or a conclusion, without cutting people off prematurely, and two, without letting people go on, ad infinitum and not get anywhere.

As Bev notes in the comments above, creating this kind of space and facilitating this kind of transformative exchange in a group, may be liberating for the participants but it can create tension for the educator.

Chapter 6

Working knowledge: capabilities in reading issues and in positioning self

> The alternate ways of reading may battle one another, marry one another, mock one another in the reader's mind (Bruner 1986: 7).

Introduction

This chapter explores the working knowledge of these educators in relation to narrative interventions. From the case examples, I propose that the facilitation of transformative learning can be conceptualised as a narrative intervention. This conceptualisation has particular potential when considering the facilitation of transformative learning in learning groups because groups are the site of diverse, competing discourses.

The two case examples in chapter 5 explored the process of narrative intervention. The educators responded to an issue by developing an alternative narrative. In this chapter I propose that the educators' working knowledge included capabilities in reading complex issues. The educators talked of the ways in which they progressively read contextual information and then used these readings to decide on their interventions. I introduce a framework of reading strategies and propose that, in the case examples, each educator demonstrated an effective reading repertoire.

Secondly, I propose that the educators' working knowledge included capabilities in positioning themselves within learning group interactions. The case examples demonstrated that the crucial aspect of each intervention was a move in the educator's subject position.

Professional working knowledge as capabilities in reading complex issues

The accounts of these educators confirm the view that professional working knowledge, as distinct from academic knowledge, is focused on context. The educators made decisions about the way that they would act based on their reading of contexts. In the incidents they related, their readings were sophisticated, reflecting their status as experienced educators.

In this section I outline the educators' capabilities in using a range of reading strategies. Then I present a framework of twelve reading strategies and outline an example of a sequence of reading strategies using Sandra's case example. I explore the benefits and limitations of the reading strategies and conclude with a discussion of the concept of reading repertoires.

Reading strategies

Bruner notes that all readers of experience read with purpose and organisation:

> Readers have both a strategy and a repertoire that they bring to bear on a text (Bruner 1986: 34).

Applying Bruner's idea of a reading strategy I have developed a framework of reading strategies for adult education practice. These reading strategies are reading foundationally, culturally, pragmatically, critically, transgressively, empathically, aesthetically, personally, emotionally, defensively, connectively, and exploratively. I have identified these strategies from the interviews generally, and specifically through considering the sequence of events in the case examples. I asked myself questions such as, 'What prompted the educators to develop their interventions?', 'What had they been noticing about the interactions beforehand?', 'What did they do next?', and 'How did they interpret the group's response to their intervention?'. At each stage of the sequence, I also considered, 'How are they reading the situation now?'.

In developing this framework of reading strategies, my intention is to explore educators' working knowledge, without making any claim that this framework forms a complete map of potential reading strategies.

Different reading strategies focus differently on the experience. Some focus on the experience of the educator, others on the experience of the learners, and others on the statements and actions of the learners. Some of the reading strategies primarily focus on the past, some on the present, and some on the future.

Framework of reading strategies

Reading foundationally is the reading of statements and actions with a focus on pre-determined understandings. It is assumed that the educator has a genuine commitment to his or her existing understandings, beliefs, philosophy, or knowledge system. The central focus of the reader is, 'How do statements and actions within the learning group compare to these pre-determined commitments?' and 'How do my statements and actions accord with my commitments?'. In Sandra's case example, she initially approached the topic of assessment from the viewpoint of her expert knowledge and read the learners' statements and reactions in relation to that knowledge.

Reading culturally is reading the significant meanings and expectations of cultures. The central focus of the reader is, 'What is expected *of* members of this social category?' and 'What is expected *by* members of this social category?'. Cultures may include the cultures of an organisation, a community, a family, an ethnic group, or a professional group. Reading culturally may include an awareness of expected behaviours, values, history, and practices that form the norms of that group. A counter cultural reading posits a contrasting culture, an alternative view of expectations and assumptions. In Peter's forums for schools, his intervention was based on a cultural reading of the expected behaviours of young adolescent boys in those schools. He developed a counter

cultural reading of the friendships of adolescent boys in which they were able to provide support to each other.

Reading pragmatically involves considering the consequences of events. The central focus of the reader is, 'What will happen if...?'. The reader may consider the short, mid or long-term consequences. A pragmatic reading can consider the impact of the event on a range of stakeholders. As outlined in the case example, Sandra's intervention was based on a pragmatic reading of the initial reactions of group members. She concluded that the consequence of continuing with the program in its usual format was that it would be rejected.

Reading critically[9] is reading against what is being said or enacted. The reader critically reviews statements and actions to identify weaknesses of understanding, communicative effectiveness, analysis, and argument. The central focus of the reader is, 'What are the limitations of these views or actions?'. Lyn talked about her response to learners' comments about HIV and how they thought it could be transmitted. The comments of some learners were read as inaccurate, focusing on the limitations of a view that "overrides the simple facts".

Reading transgressively is reading with a focus on transgressions within statements, dismantling the apparent coherence and demonstrating inconsistencies. Consideration is given to ambiguities and contradictions within statements or actions. The central focus of the reader is, 'How are these actions or communications contradictory within themselves?'. Lyn talked about one person who wanted to become a facilitator of the Community Support Network volunteers' ongoing meetings. She talked about her as a "puzzle". Although Lyn thought that the woman presented herself in the training program as a very experienced communicator, and as reasonable, compassionate and level-headed, this was contradicted by later behaviours.

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[9] I have used the word 'critical' previously in this thesis in other ways. Here I use the term as in common usage, to mean "expressing criticism" (Reader's Digest/ Oxford 1993).

Reading empathically is reading that imagines the response of a specific audience. The central focus of the reader is, 'How will they respond to this...?'. Empathic reading may focus on the group of learners in a general way or may focus on one or more learners who are perceived to have a particular response. Alternatively, empathic reading may focus on relevant stakeholders outside the learning context. In Bev's case example, she described people who had been silent during the initial phase of the meeting as those who "often have something good to say and aren't prepared to say something unless they think it's really worth saying".

Reading aesthetically is reading that considers what gives pleasure, satisfaction, and enjoyment. Reading counter aesthetically is reading with a focus on the discomfort of the reader, considering points that are unpleasant, or raise anxiety or distress. The primary consideration of the reader is pleasure or distress. The central focus is, 'Did I enjoy this?', 'Did they enjoy this?'. For example, Sandra related an aesthetic reading of the group's response when she said: "They were quite elated... I think they loved the ideas".

Reading personally is reading that focuses on aspects that resonate with personal experience. The reader considers what is occurring and the way in which that is similar to or different from their own experiences. The central focus of the reader is, 'How does this tally with my experience?'. In the activity on an 'assessment from hell' Sandra read the learners' comments personally, linking their experiences of assessment with her own: "Me and the group, we've all been in formal exams where we have no idea what the questions were, we didn't know what the benchmark was".

Reading emotionally is reading for truths expressed through emotions. Emotions may be stated or may be conveyed indirectly communicative actions. The central focus of the reader is, 'How do I feel about this?' and 'How do they feel about this?'. Lyn's work in providing training around HIV/AIDS involved reading emotionally. She described times when learners find that "fear kicks in", and times when they conveyed "loneliness or grief".

Reading defensively is reading to identify an actual or potential threat. Primary consideration is given to information that has a bearing on the reader's safety, and particularly any actions or statements that imply that safety is at risk. The central focus of the reader is, 'What could I lose?'. Sandra's case example showed the importance of defensive reading and is outlined in the example of a sequence of reading strategies in the next section.

Reading connectively is reading to develop an effective synthesis, by interpreting varied and separate pieces of information in an integrated way. The primary focus of the reader is, 'How do these factors inform each other and come together?'. Bev's case example showed the way her reading of the immediate group interaction was connected with a reading of the organisational response.

Reading exploratively is reading to search for something new. Consideration is given to novelty: new experiences, emerging concepts, new thoughts, and new actions. The central focus of the reader is, 'What might emerge from this?'. Once Sandra abandoned her original program plan, she was left with a sense of uncertainty yet excitement about exploring new possibilities.

Example of a sequence of reading strategies

Both case examples show how the educators used a sequence of reading strategies to inform their decision to intervene. I have elaborated Sandra's case example, identifying the following sequence.

Reading foundationally

Sandra commenced with a foundational reading, designing the program around her extensive knowledge about workplace assessment.

The issue of disengagement developed in the group when she presented information about the rationale for workplace assessment and the national

system. Sandra had previously found that workplace-based assessors responded positively to this information but this group responded with cynicism. They thought that assessment can be unfair and that the structures and systems marginalised their clients.

Reading defensively

At this point, Sandra's concern was that the participants would reject the program and reject her and her role. She recognised the risks of disengagement if she persevered with the original program design. In discussing this further, she recalled other occasions when she had had to make dramatic changes to the design of a program. The other occasions were also prompted by a defensive reading of the situation and they also involved creative outcomes.

Reading pragmatically

Sandra recognised that the consequences of continuing with the program in the usual way were likely to be negative. The group could have critiqued and rejected the mainstream model, but this would have constructed a narrative in which the community workers were aligned with the disengaged youth and the educator aligned with mainstream work structures.

The participants and the educator took up the challenge of implementing another option. They engaged together to design an approach to assessment that took account of both perspectives. This new strategy was risky, but Sandra perceived that the greater risk was in continuing with an educational process that was not working.

Reading connectively

Sandra invited the group to explore the topic of assessment and critique a range of views, including the first view she had presented. This developed a more complex story of assessment practice. In starting to develop this alternative narrative of assessment, the pre-existing narratives of the learners were confirmed *and* critiqued *and* extended. Sandra's pre-existing narrative was

also confirmed, critiqued and extended. Connections were made between policy and practice, and between existing models and desired future models:

> So their original stories were about them as isolated individuals telling the things from their personal frame of reference. That was synthesised...

Reading personally

Sandra read the situation personally, reviewing her own commitments about assessment:

> So I guess there's that thing about some passion there...

This reinforced her motivation to continue and succeed with the program.

Reading exploratively

Sandra read the situation exploratively. She identified specific ideas that had the potential to engage these participants and this led to them designing innovative assessment approaches.

The significance of the sequence

Through the various reading strategies the educator developed a comprehensive picture of a complex issue. In Sandra's story the sequence of reading strategies brought together the established knowledge base of the vocational education field, the participants' experiences of their specific work contexts, and the educator's personal experience.

Hart (1992) writes that educators need to develop their awareness of the world of work by connecting a number of binaries that are usually cast as opposites. She argues that educators need to connect binaries such as work and life, the view from above and the view from below, and the centre and the margin. In this way, she suggests that we can "round out the picture" (Hart 1992: 3). She suggests that the skills of artisans and mothers, for example, involve making

connections between these binaries. She identifies the way that both mothers and artisans utilise actions that move from closeness to distance, from control to responsiveness, and from particularity to generality (Hart 1992: 129, 135).

Sandra's sequence of reading strategies enabled her to round out her understanding in the way Hart describes, and thus to deal with the issue progressively. For example, her initial foundational reading established distance, but it was followed by a defensive reading which brought her very close to the dilemmas involved. The pragmatic and connective readings enabled her to consider the issue from a distance again, followed by personal reading of her own motivations which moved her close to the issues once again.

Further, the sequence of reading strategies enabled her to consider assessment from the centre, using national systems and frameworks as her reference points, and then to consider assessment from the margins, where these participants work. Thus, the sequence of reading strategies enabled her to review this complex issue by connecting binaries of distance and closeness, and centre and margin.

Benefits of each reading strategy

The various reading strategies have differing foci and benefits. Each reading strategy draws the reader's attention to a different aspect of the experience. Foundational and cultural readings focus the reader's attention on existing knowledge and existing understandings. Pragmatic, critical, and transgressive readings enable the reader to question existing understandings. Empathic, aesthetic, personal, emotional, and defensive readings focus on the feelings and experiences of the learners and the educators. Explorative and connective readings focus on features of the issue that are emerging, orienting the reader to potential developments and opportunities. Thus, each strategy has specific benefits.

Reading repertoires: a speculative discussion

The experienced professionals in this study each had a repertoire of reading strategies that they could draw upon. The repertoires may have been different but they included a range of complementary reading strategies that worked together and were sufficient for them to interpret and deal with these complex incidents.

The reading repertoires of experienced educators are likely to differ from those of novice educators. I suggest that the reading repertoires of novices are more likely to lead to a naïve reading of complex issues and that a naïve reading may take three forms. A naïve reading may arise from inappropriate application of a specific reading strategy, from an underdeveloped repertoire, or from an unbalanced repertoire.

Firstly, there may be inappropriate application of a specific reading strategy. For example, foundational reading would usually be regarded as inappropriate if it was used to discourage exploration. Secondly, the reader's repertoire may be underdeveloped. The reader may have too few strategies and may therefore be unable to address complex situations. For example, if an educator reads an issue culturally, without reading it critically, transgressively, and empathically, she or he may promote cultural values without considering their relevance and appropriateness. Thirdly, instead of having a complementary mix of reading strategies, the reader's repertoire may be unbalanced and skewed. For example, if the educator's only reading strategies are reading aesthetically, personally, emotionally, and defensively, their perspective of a situation will be skewed to the subjective.

The impact of organisational and community cultures should also be considered. Specific reading strategies are often promoted and validated within organisational cultures. An educator's limited reading repertoire may reflect a limited culture. For example, a dominant culture may validate cultural and foundational reading strategies in harmony with dominant beliefs, and resist

transgressive and explorative reading strategies. Similarly, dominant and limited cultures may resist empathic reading strategies or other reading strategies that respond to the perspective of the less powerful. Working within the parameters of such a culture could limit an educator's opportunity to broaden his or her repertoire.

Therefore any consideration of the educator's reading repertoire must consider both the effectiveness of his or her repertoire, and the repertoires that are welcomed or resisted within the work context.

Working knowledge as capabilities in positioning self within interactions

The educator intervening by moves in subject position

As we have seen, reading strategies can open up new possibilities. However, the educators' interventions were also based on their capacity to adopt alternative subject positions. The narrative interventions described by the educators had clear parallels with narrative interventions in families as outlined by Gergen and Kaye (1996). However, while narrative therapy theories emphasise specific forms of questioning (Anderson and Goolishan 1996: 27), these case examples emphasise the impact of a shift in the educator's subject position.

Bev's case example

The interaction was developing in a way that was seen as problematic: as Bev stated, "I just knew that I didn't want what was happening". In order to interrupt the pattern of interaction, Bev shifted her subject position. As outlined in chapter 5, Bev avoided the subject position of opponent or proponent of the church leaders' request and moved into the subject position of reader of, and then speaker for, a new possibility.

Educators often need to respond at various levels to an incident, be it at the level of individual, the group, the organisation, the community, the society/ nation, or the world (Cunningham 1994: 4). Bev faced the challenge of negotiating multiple subject positions across a number of these levels.

At the level of the individual, Bev had her own personal views. However to avoid the position of opponent or proponent she had to put these views to one side. At the level of the group, Bev was positioned as a leader, being a member of the planning committee. From this position she was able to advocate that all members' views be considered and to propose a more productive group

process. At the level of the organisation, Bev was positioned as a member of the group, seeking to influence the leadership of the organisation. At the level of the community, society/ nation, and world, Bev was positioned as a member of a social movement, seeking to promote equity for gay and lesbian people.

In her description of the incident, Bev emphasised subject positions at the level of the group. However, she also referred to the other levels, and I suggest that the impact of her intervention came about because she was able to make moves in subject positions across a number of levels.

Further, Bev's case example indicates that interventions involve power and that the power effects of an intervention are contradictory. Bev demonstrated and used her power within the group and within the wider organisation. However, her own personal views were subsumed once she intervened. Hence her power was both reduced and enhanced through the intervention. Hutton, discussing Foucault's concept of technologies of the self, notes that "we continually reshape our past creations to conform to our present creative needs" (Hutton 1988: 137). We enact a web of power relations each time we monitor and act upon ourselves, or 'police' ourselves through acts of self-control (Foucault 1988: 19; Hutton 1988: 130,132). These acts free and constrain us at the same time:

> Foucault, in contrast, stresses repetition, which reinforces his central proposition about the paradox of the human condition: We are beings that create forms which ironically imprison our creativity (Hutton 1988: 137).

The subject positions that Bev adopted were both liberating and constraining.

Sandra's case example

Sandra commented that while intervening and negotiating her subject positions within the learning group, she was also involved in an internal negotiation about different subjectivities. The intervention involved moves among a series of

subject positions: the position of expert, charismatic leader, audience and facilitator.

Lee argues that the professional identity of educators is multiple:

> Something of the complexity of the classroom can be mapped through this aggregation of multiple discourses. Through this process, it is possible to glimpse how different positions are set up for, and taken up... Hence, human subjects are multiple and fragmented entities, and social action is a complex process of negotiating a pathway through circulating discourses which produce the possibility of meaning - for the world as well as for the 'self' (Lee 1992: 7).

Sandra's ability to connect these multiple subjectivities was particularly significant for these participants. In effect she developed a narrative of connection and engagement across multiplicity. The participants needed to develop strategies to involve young people who were disconnected from their communities. Communities and young people are often in dispute over either-or issues, such as freedom versus compliance and blame of the individual versus blame of societal structures. Sandra's intervention gave the group the opportunity to develop an alternative narrative which took them beyond these limiting kinds of polarity.

Sandra's case example also demonstrated multiple operations of power. As the expert and charismatic leader, she used techniques of personal power to try to inspire people to adopt her passions. However, she had to move from that subject position and initially she perceived this as an act of relinquishing power:

> It's actually a bigger challenge for me to give away that power of being the entertainer, the charismatic instructor to start really engaging a group in a way where the power is with them...

Yet she could also describe the process of relinquishing one kind of power as a way of maintaining another kind:

> When I've got that charismatic style, it actually means that I'm pretty good at being in control, part of that charismatic one is knowing that it'll go wherever I want it to go, I can rein it in and I'm in control up here, look at me, I've got all the power.

The subject positions Sandra adopted highlight the contradictory aspects of power relations in the teaching and learning process. The educator's positioning of self involved both relinquishing power *and* holding on to it. Both Bev and Sandra facilitated transformative learning through complex shifts in subject position which resulted in shifts of power.

Chapter 7

Working knowledge, professional identities and postmodern narratives of practice

Introduction

This chapter brings together some reflections on working knowledge, professional identities and postmodern narratives of practice. In the opening section of this chapter I explore the educators' professional identities, as produced discursively through the narration of their working knowledge.

In the second section I consider the educators' narratives of practice in this study and I argue that the educators used both postmodern and modern narrative forms. Given the postmodern contexts of adult education and community work, I suggest that postmodern storytelling of professional practice is a trend in the field.

I conclude the chapter by considering some of the challenges that were involved in developing this study of professional practice. This section includes reflections on the results of narrating stories of practice, both for the educators and for the researcher.

Production of professional identities

Multiple readings of ourselves

This study develops the idea that professional identities are produced through narratives of professional practice. Professionals have discursive repertoires that provide discursive resources, from which they construct stories of practice. This study indicates that the professional working knowledge of these adult educators is being produced across a range of discourses of learning and change. Thus, the educators' professional identity is characterised as multiple:

> Just as there are multiple readings of any text, so there are multiple readings of ourselves (Davies 1991: 47).

Through the metaphor analysis in chapter 4, I identified discursive resources used by the educators when talking about the facilitation of transformative learning. The metaphors have distinct implications for the adult educators' professional identities. For example, the metaphor of journey suggests the identity of guide or companion, as the one who is observant of changes and is supportive of the learners as they progress through them. And the metaphors of emergence, becoming in touch and converging stories suggest the identity of facilitator, as the one who listens, empathises and encourages people to talk openly about themselves and their experiences.

The educators' capacity to adopt different identities, that is, to move between various subject positions, enabled them to intervene effectively. By making moves in subject position the educators were able to understand complex situations and respond in a different way:

> ... and a recognition of the constantly shifting identity of the instructor and the learners, implies that neither the identity of instructors or students remains stable... Wherever the various participants (including instructors) are with respect to these ever changing "identity shifts"

> affects what they can understand, see, hear, attend to, voice, or construct as knowledge at a given moment (Tisdell 1998: 31).

This thesis argues that the production of professional identities is not necessarily a process of bricolage whereby educators form their knowledge within the constraints of existing tools (Hatton 1988). Rather, I propose that the educators were constructing their identities across a range of discourses in order to address complexities of practice. They went beyond the limitations of a specific discourse and engaged in "problem- or practitioner-centred" practice where the requirements of a practice situation were emphasised rather than the dictates of a theory or a model (Fenwick 2000b). By drawing on a range of discursive resources educators are able to extend their professional identities and their sense of relational possibilities:

> The speaking/ writing subject can move within and between discourses, can see precisely how they subject her, can use the terms of one discourse to counteract, modify, refuse or go beyond the other, both in terms of her own experienced subjectivity and in the way in which she chooses to speak in relation to the subjectivities of others (Davies 1991: 46).

Provocateurs *and* evocateurs

Educators who facilitate transformative learning have multi-faceted roles and the metaphors identified in chapter 4 indicate that educators who facilitate transformative learning are both provocateurs and evocateurs. The metaphors of seeing things differently, journey and shift are compatible with Mezirow's description of adult educators as empathic provocateurs. However, the metaphors of a new environment, emergence, touch and energy indicate another identity for the educator; that of evocateur.

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning describes the adult educator as an empathic provocateur (Mezirow 1990b: 360-361, 1998a, 2000) and the

accounts by educators in this study indicate that many aspects of their programs were provocative. For example, Lyn's program dealt with acceptance of people with HIV/AIDS, personal relationships and intimacy, sexuality and lifestyle, grief, illness and death and the socio-cultural assumptions of many of the participants in her program were necessarily challenged.

But the accounts in this study also depict the educator as an evocateur. The educator evokes transformative learning by inviting the expression of personal experience and emotions, by introducing alternative narratives, and through the impact of their own style. The educator facilitates a particular 'energy' in the learning group that both evokes and harnesses people's interest.

Nevis draws on the concept of therapists as provocateurs and evocateurs when examining the roles of organisational consultants (Nevis 1987: 125-139). In a similar way I suggest that adult educators who facilitate transformative learning can be evocateurs as well as provocateurs. As provocateur the educator promotes a different perspective around issues. As evocateur the educator establishes a space in which alternative meanings can emerge. Provocative modes promote autonomy by requiring learners to focus on their dilemmas and assumptions. Evocative modes promote integration by encouraging learners to connect experiences and establish meaning in more indirect ways.

Elias (1997) suggests that transformative learning has two traditions; one based on critical reflection and the other based on receptivity and consciousness. Tang (1997) outlines a transformative learning framework based on synergistic inquiry, aimed at expanding the learner's consciousness through self-knowing and other-knowing. By fostering a context where learners hold their differences as equal, educators can foster a new synergistic consciousness which transcends previous differences. Elias argues that conditions which evoke and support transformative learning include those that emphasise the learner's personal capacities, provide a supportive interpersonal context and demonstrate an approach to learning that is appreciative as well as critical (Elias 1997: 6).

Nevis notes that the evocative mode is less likely to generate resistance, and is therefore particularly important when there is anxiety or confusion (Nevis 1987: 138). I suggest that effective educators move between the subject positions of provocateur and evocateur and that this capacity to move easily across these subjectivies enables them to foster transformative learning.

Further, I suggest that each of these subject positions requires a different kind of courage on the part of the educator. As provocateur, the educator aligns him or herself with a specific case for change. The educator may directly challenge certain assumptions or may set up a process that challenges assumptions. This can lead to strong emotional responses:

> Often, learners feel a complex love-hate for the teacher who purposefully engineered the collapse of their existing paradigm, flawed as it may have been (Robertson 1996: 45).

As provocateur the educator needs the courage both to challenge learners and to support them as they deal with change. As many writers have acknowledged, support is a crucial factor in the practice of transformative learning (Lyon 2000; Robertson 1996; Gravett 2002; Taylor 1997).

As evocateur the educator needs the courage to stay with the learners in a context of uncertainty, ambiguity, ambivalence and distress. It takes courage to 'float in a sea of unpredictability' and resist the desire for premature closure and emancipation (Dirkx, Pratt & Taylor 2002; Fenwick 2000b).

Discourse navigators

As outlined in chapter 6, the educators in this study were readers and enactors of narrative, but I believe we can also say that they were navigators of competing discourses.

Farrell suggests that workplace educators are discourse technologists, intervening in local discourses to "shift discursive practice to standardised global discourses" (Farrell 2000: 152). Her study involved educators who came into an organisation from the outside, on the basis of special knowledge and expertise, and brought institutional aims and transnational control to bear on the local context.

In contrast, this study suggests that workplace educators are involved as discourse navigators. The educators in this study did not privilege the institutional, national, and international over the local. They talked of the challenge and potential of working across competing discourses. They considered the importance of interrupting the dominance of the national *and* the dominance of the local. This study indicates that local and national discourses can converge in productive ways and that educators and learners can co-create new narratives. Thus the professional identity of workplace educators, in a postmodern context, involves capacities to navigate the varied discourses operating in that context.

Facilitators of possibilities

As outlined in chapter 4, the educators in this study placed less emphasis on drawing attention to the learners' presuppositions and more emphasis on developing the learners' sense of possibilities. Thus, educators in this study are facilitators of possibility.

Further, as outlined in chapter 5, the educators are co-creators of alternative narratives. Often these alternative narratives emerge as the educator facilitates connections across multiple realities. Thus the educator and the learners move beyond the bounds of existing narratives, and the educator can facilitate new possibilities:

> A sense of oneself as one who can go beyond the given meanings in any one discourse, and forge something new, through a combination of

previously unrelated discourses, through the invention of words and concepts which capture a shift in consciousness that is beginning to occur, or through imagining not what is, but what might be (Davies 1991: 51).

A perspective on authority

The educators in the case examples in chapter 5 moved within and between discourses. This draws attention to a particular aspect of the educators' authority that is derived from their ability to mobilise multiple discourses creatively and strategically:

> Not authority in the sense of one who claims and enforces knowledges, dictating to others what is 'really' the case, but as a speaker who mobilises existing discourses in new ways, inverting, inventing and breaking old patterns (Davies 1991: 51).

Davies explores the concept of agency and authority within a poststructural framework. She considers authority from the position of the hearer, noting that people who speak may be heard as having authority. Authority, therefore does not have to be cast in modernist terms as the result of an educator claiming particular expertise and knowledge. Rather, authority can be 'heard' in the way the educator works strategically with discourses, practices, and relations.

The emergence of postmodern narratives

The accounts developed as case examples in chapter 5 can be described as postmodern forms of story telling. After investigating a range of stories that people used to talk about their personal experiences of sexuality, Plummer argues that storytelling is changing in the era of postmodernity (Plummer 1995: 133-134, 143). He suggests there are three characteristics of stories that reflect postmodernity: ambiguity and indeterminacy, the authority of participants rather than experts, and difference and multiplicity.

The accounts by the educators were characterised by ambiguity and indeterminacy. Parts were tentative. Some of the incidents had not been talked about before, or only briefly. Explanations and analyses were not already well-formulated, nor linked to well-established theories or professional knowledges. Rather, the accounts were exploratory, at times combining well understood and commonly accepted ideas with ideas which were new and only partially formulated.

The educators were highly energised when developing their accounts; they were actively engaged in constructing their views of the realities of their educational practice. They were still deciding how to talk about the interventions and how to explain their actions, often speaking in a circular, reflexive way. Even while they were speaking, the educators were evaluating their practice, still deciding whether their actions were warranted and, if so, on what bases they were warranted. They were still thinking about what the interventions might indicate for themselves as practitioners. They were exploring the challenges of practice in complex, ambiguous situations, and doing so from a stance of uncertainty.

The incidents related in the case examples are examples of "hot action" (Hager 1996: 236). The educators responded rapidly in the heat of the situation, making changes to the content of the program and to the way that they interacted with the learning group. Their working knowledge was generated in

the midst of work, but articulated in the space for reflection that was made available in the interviews. The propositions they developed during the interviews were expressed as tentative. This tentativeness was not because the educators were less confident in the knowledge that guided their actions, but because of the nature of the space in which the knowledge was generated. Complex work contexts are not settled; the boundaries are continually in flux; and the issues present themselves differently on each occasion. Educators need to adjust their expectations in order to respond to new situations.

However, although these accounts were characterised by ambiguity and indeterminacy, they also had features of modern story telling such as a sense of clarity. In the organisational literature, Boje (1994) suggests that postmodern storylines are added to pre-modern and modern storylines, and that all of these storylines might circulate simultaneously within an organisation. Plummer (1995) found that modern stories are still being told, with newer stories being placed alongside them. He argued that modern story telling was still dominant as most stories he heard still claimed to be telling truth, were structured around time and cause, and conveyed some idea about improvement or progress. For example, the educators in this study were claiming to tell some 'truth' about their practice, and their stories were structured by time.

The accounts of these educators demonstrated the postmodern characteristic of acknowledging the authority of participants. For example:

> Issues about the normal way of doing things isn't going to work for this group, being charismatic or having the answers or being the expert isn't going to work for this group, I've got to come up with something that will engage this group in a way where they own the answers... I've got to come up with a process that will enable things to be named in a different way. I've got to come up with a process that will enable stories to be exchanged and heard and articulated (Sandra).

Sandra formed the conclusion that the 'normal' way of doing things would not work for these participants. Therefore the authority of the participants was foregrounded. However, from another perspective, Sandra spoke as the expert. She defined this dilemma as one that *she* needed to address and that *she* needed to solve and to do so she retained the position of expert facilitator. Thus, in Sandra's case example there was an interweaving of the authority of participants and the authority of the expert.

The accounts also demonstrated the postmodern characteristic of difference and multiplicity. Plummer asserts that in a context of postmodernity different stories of truth form alongside each other (Plummer 1995: 161). For example, Peter's forums in schools addressed the ways that stories of risk, relationship, and sexuality come together. He was concerned that stories of masculinity were being developed in a polarised way that prevented the recognition of diverse masculinities. His intervention interrupted this polarisation by demonstrating that a different mix of the discourse elements was possible; for example, that risk applies to emotional closeness.

Plummer (1995: 161) outlines three ways that different stories interact. Firstly, there is separatism and dominance, whereby the 'true believers' seek to establish the moral superiority of their story. Secondly there is communitarianism, whereby ground rules provide a basis for developing collective stories without seeking to assert the authority of one story over another. Thirdly, there is dialogue, whereby a space is established to listen to the others' stories and to allow for the proliferation of stories. This study suggests that superiority of one dominant story is rarely a viable option for educators working in postmodern contexts. These educators chose the option of dialogue in order to explore a proliferation of stories:

> An example of trying to, not even live with both the similarities and differences, but say what can we, what can the exploring of differences, what can that help us come to. Can that help us come to something that's better for all of us (Bev).

The new story may be created and owned in an ongoing way by the group, as in Bev's case example, or the new story may be finalised in a specific context, having been influenced by the exchange of stories, as in Sandra's case example.

However, although difference and multiplicity are features of the educators' accounts, the process of writing has drawn attention to common themes in the accounts. In a sense modern and postmodern elements coexist, and I agree with Plummer's contention that we can avoid establishing a binary opposition between modern and postmodern storying practices by outlining different purposes for the different elements (Plummer 1995: 161).

A trend

I believe that postmodern storytelling occurred throughout these interviews because the educators needed to talk differently about certain educational experiences. These continuing education programs were not held in educational institutions. Rather they were held in work or community contexts and the educators were required to establish themselves and their programs within spaces which were not clearly and distinctly bounded, and which were characterised by indeterminacy. As adult education is progressively influenced by postmodern contexts like these, the issues that these educators described may become more widely relevant. Learning groups can be sites of diverse, competing, and conflicting discourses and postmodern stories of practice are likely to become a trend for educators who facilitate transformative learning.

Issues for the research and writing of practice

Methodological challenges

One of the challenges of this study has been to research and write the working knowledge of these educators in ways that convey the significance of process. The educators talked of a sequence of actions leading to transformative learning, rather than one specific action. As Lee, Green and Brennan outline, professional knowledge is a form of knowledge that is synpotic, focusing on a process of innovation rather than an issue within an academic discipline (Lee, Green and Brennan 2000: 123). It was a challenge deciding how to write in a way that captured the creativity embedded within a complex sequence of actions.

For example, the narrative methodology used in this study caused some particular problems. By the time of writing the thesis, I was engaging with several levels of story telling. There were the initial incidents of practice. Then the educators related their stories months later in the interviews. The educators' stories of practice were a remembering of the incidents and I needed to consider the way they constructed their stories and their reasons for constructing them in the ways they did. Another level of story telling occurred when I transcribed and read their stories of practice. And yet another level was added when I wrote the stories in the form that they appear in the thesis. There were significant challenges in deciding the forms of language to denote the various levels: the incident as it occurred in time and place, the educator's memory of it, their construction of it in a story during the interview, and my construction of the stories through the process of writing.

What are the results of this storying of practice: for the educators?

We do not tell a story about the same event in the same way every time. The process of telling a story of practice will impact on future storytelling. To construct a story, the narrator must identify an agent, an action, a goal, a

setting, an instrument, and a 'trouble' (Bruner 1987). The person will select specific language and ideas to talk about each of these elements. Through the telling, they construct more explicit models for themselves as agents with associated actions and goals.

Bruner (1987) suggests that we become the narratives that we speak about our lives. We speak ourselves into existence using the language, metaphors, and narrative forms that are available in the culture. So we would expect that the educators' narration of their practice would develop their identities as educators. Bruner also suggests that story telling links both the landscape of action, where events unfold, and the landscape of consciousness, where the inner worlds of the protagonists reside. Thus storytelling explores the connections between the landscape of action and the landscape of consciousness. For example, the educators might identify discrepancies and ambiguities when they first tell their stories, and the next time they tell the story they may seek to resolve these discrepancies and ambiguities.

Gudmundsdottir suggests that narrators in research interviews either broaden their perspective about the events, generalising the story so that it applies to a range of contexts, or they deepen their perspective by further exploring the meanings of the events (Gudmundsdottir 1996: 208). The participants in this study made some interesting comments at the end of the final interview. Sandra expressed her surprise that talking about a program of workplace assessment could lead to such a productive exploration of her professional identity as an educator:

> I wanted to actually go back and name to Judi what were those critical milestones on my map, as to why I am where I am today.
>
> There you go, now that's a whole different thing than workplace assessment.

Through the interviews, she developed a map of her own transformative learning as an adult educator, identifying key "milestones" and "elements" in the story of her professional development.

Peter talked of the limitations of developing intellectual descriptions of practice. He suggested that learners' experience is the most significant feature of educational practice:

> There's probably also a limit, I'm not saying, 'Don't ask those questions at all', but there's probably a limit to the questions that we ask... at the end of the day I just do... I think that's the humanity of this whole process too, that's unteachable I think... I don't know how you teach people that stuff, other than to give people lots of opportunities and experience where... they start to operate in that way, get in touch with their own humanity and stuff rather than the layer of intellectual stuff that sometimes teaching gives us.

What are the results of this storying of practice: for the researcher?

This study highlighted potentials and challenges involved in researching and writing professional working knowledge. This study required decisions about how to conceptualise working knowledge and decisions about how to give form to it. Would the process of research jeopardise the richness of working knowledge by taking it out of the immediate contextual relationships that sustain it?

There were also challenges about how to communicate working knowledge, considering that it is embedded in hot action. As Peter said, the conversations in the interviews were not only about his professional knowledge, they were about his person and his life: "It's only my life, Judi". Any expression of working knowledge is a product of that knowledge, rather than a particular knowledge in itself:

> The best image of process is perhaps that of the flowing stream, whose substance is never the same. On this stream, one may see an ever-changing pattern of vortices, ripples, waves, splashes *etc.*, which evidently have no independent existence as such, rather they are abstracted from the flowing movement... knowledge, too, is a process, an abstraction from the one total flux (Bohm 1980: 48).

I grappled with the reasons for telling these specific stories: why did it matter to the educators, and why did it matter to me? I raised questions about why I sought out these people and why they also wanted to talk: what does that tell me about what I wanted to find out and what does that tell me about what I wanted to say? We have reasons when we talk and write about a private world:

> Indeed, why do they turn what was not so long ago a private, secret world into a public one? How do they choose their language to articulate their concerns - where do the words come from? What sort of situations enable people to find a voice? (Plummer 1995: 13).

This study has extended my understanding of the facilitation of transformative learning. It has confirmed for me the value of examining the working knowledge of experienced adult educators. And it has confirmed the value of narrative research as a way of doing this.

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