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Teachers' Pedagogical Stories and the Shaping of Classroom Participation: "The Dancer" and "Graveyard Shift at the 7-11"

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This article illustrates how teachers' pedagogical stories inscribe worlds, beliefs, and identities that position their students' participation and performance. Based on a view of storytelling as a rich site for observing teaching as the joint social construction of "self" as successful academic performer and social actor, the article analyzes two teachers' storytelling practices that, unbeknown to them, were integral to teaching and learning in their high school classrooms. The two teachers held contrasting visions of education and accomplishment. The analyses of the teachers' object lesson stories illustrate the particular dispositions, beliefs, and values that they manifested for their own roles as teachers as well as for their students' roles as learners. Each set of stories appealed to a particular demographic group of students. By juxtaposing these unique narrative repertoires, the article extends sociocultural theories of how successful student participation is a local, interactive accomplishment tied in complex ways to larger social narratives.

KEYWORDS: *classroom discourse, social context, teaching narratives.*

> If this were a swim class, and you guys were OK dog paddler swimmers, but you couldn't really swim, couldn't do the crawl really very well, could sort of get across. And I said, "Well, we are going to learn to do the crawl." Some of you rushed home at the end of the first practice and bought water wings. Water wings are blow-up donuts that you put on your arms and you can even put them on your feet and you can float without even thinking about it. And you can sort of crawl with those water wings on. Of course you don't know if you are doing it or if *they* are doing it because they float anyway no matter what you do; even if you don't try to swim, you are floating. OK?

> Well, at the end of the swim season those students who had water wings on the whole time, if we allowed you to compete in the swim meets with your water wings, you probably wouldn't win too many events. But you also would not know if you could really swim or if it was really just the water wings. True? Are there any water wings for an English class? [A student responds with the answer the teacher intended: "Cliffs Notes."] Really. Cliffs Notes. [Laughing] Gosh. Cliffs Notes. Well, I would like to ask you in all seriousness. Please not to buy the Cliffs Notes . . . because . . . you can get through the end of this year and not have improved your reading. ("Cliffs Notes," Day 1 in English Literature)

This article extends theoretical and practical understandings about the role of teachers' discourse practices in shaping students' classroom participation. Scholarship demonstrating the importance of narrative in the construction of knowing (White, 1981), of self (Bakhtin, 1981), and of knowledge (Bruner, 1986) suggests that pedagogical stories are rich sites for observing how successful academic performance is a social construction. Our analysis of teachers' instructional stories is built on Bourdieu's (1977) assumption that alignment of teachers' and students' dispositions is critical to students' recognizing and responding to learning opportunities, on Gee's (1996) theory that students reinforce and reconstitute "selves" when they take on discursive "identity kits" during classroom activity, and on Fairclough's (1995) view that teachers' discourse powerfully shapes who students think they are, who they think they can be, and who they ultimately can become.

We apply these perspectives to two teachers' storytelling practices that, unbeknownst to them, were integral to teaching and learning in their high school classrooms. Unique in their profiles, the two teachers and their class-

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room cultures held contrasting visions of education and accomplishment. Our analyses of these teachers' stories describe how they positioned students as learners and shaped beliefs about what constituted the purposes and goals of classroom activity. Through the kinds of stories they told and the contexts in which the stories were presented, these teachers offered opportunities to particular demographic groups of students to engage in academic learning. By juxtaposing two repertoires of pedagogical stories, we extend sociocultural theories of how successful student participation is a local accomplishment tied in complex ways to sweeping social narratives.

Storytelling as Pedagogy

Educational scholarship that theorizes a social and interactional view of the role of narrative emphasizes the importance of narrative in classroom teaching and learning (Hicks, 1994). Theories about narrative as a way of constructing knowing, the known, and the knower depict narrative discourse between teachers and students as an important mode through which academic knowing is tied to student identity (Bruner, 1986; White, 1981). Storytelling interactants, from the cultural perspectives of Geertz (1973) and Goodenough (1981), build knowing and being within individual classroom cultures. Through their narrative interactions, they construct ways of acting, believing, perceiving, and evaluating as classroom members. Stories, from this perspective, are symbolic conversational texts that embody sociocultural membership; they represent and construct understanding among tellers and hearers. As argued by Rorty (1979), understanding is central to knowing and being within social relationships. Through self-reflexive classroom conversations, of which storytelling is one genre, members attempt to find and build as much agreement as is needed to understand what they know and need to know, how they are being viewed, and who they need to be in their current situation.

Bakhtin's (1981) theorization of the dialogic properties of interactional discourse provides a view of the transformative power of this culture-constitutive and self-reflexive process. Stories, as representations constructed through dialogue, compel as well as construct and convey transformation through the value-laden constructions that tellers make of themselves, others, and "realities." As part of larger, continuing classroom dialogues, members' stories purposefully build on prior discourse (including stories) and influence what talk may come next. Through stories, members tell each other their current reading of the classroom norms. That is, their stories communicate how they believe teachers and students should act and what behavior, information, and points of view they should value, believe in, and know about. Thus when teachers tell stories, even when the stories are not explicitly or intentionally instructional, they tell them in a way that represents a view of what counts as classroom-appropriate social and academic knowledge and performance.

Laden with instructional messages, these texts instruct students in the discursive roles that they should take up, the understandings that they are expected to demonstrate, the information that listeners expect to hear, and the ways of conveying it. On the basis of these story texts, students choose whether, when, and how to enter participatory interactions and evaluate the success of their participation. Over time, the frequency, duration, and kinds of stories that teachers tell and the occasions on which they tell them shape the norms for how students think they need to present themselves, what students count as knowledge, and how students display achievement in their classroom.

Teachers' instructional stories not only influence students' ways of being and acting in their classrooms but also imply that this is the kind of knowledge that is needed by all students in all classrooms—knowledge that Fenstermacher has called "studenting" (1986). Students' views of how to be a student emerge, as do teachers' pedagogical and curricular practices, from experientially embedded beliefs about subject matter, teaching and learning, the goals of schooling, and the role of education in life (Richardson, 1996).

Teaching as Promoting a Relationship Between Self, Accomplishment, and Classroom Practices

The teachers' stories that we analyzed were discourse structures within which, and from which, social "selves" emerged and were recognized and acknowledged. Through the stories, both the teachers who spoke them and the students who interpreted them constructed socially acceptable subjectivities. As Giddens (1990, 1991) has theorized, "self" is a "reflexive project," the focus of a continuing dialogue that individuals sustain with themselves in relation to their changing lived experiences. For our study, we theorized teaching and learning as the voicing of socially appropriate selves through interactional discourses constituting social classroom practices that promoted academic accomplishment. In the two classrooms we studied, students demonstrated through their academic performance and social behavior that they were able, with regularity, to ascertain the selves they needed to be to act competently as builders of academic knowledge and as cultural members.

We synthesized this conceptualization from the work of three scholars: literacy scholar James Gee, critical discourse analyst Norman Fairclough, and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Gee theorizes student selves in classrooms in terms of social perspectives or positions. Students position themselves in relation to others as they engage socially. Through their discourse they recognize themselves and others as certain kinds of people. Their local conversation is a site for the expression of macro-Discourses (which Gee marks with a capital D). These are ways of being in the world or identity kits with instructions about how to look, act, and talk, so as to take on particular social roles that others will recognize. Consequently, for students to engage in classroom talk and activity, their social Discourses must be compatible with those of their teacher. Students who ascribe to ways of being in the world different from those required for classroom participation will struggle with issues of social membership and have difficulty demonstrating capability.

Gee's theory extends Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" (1977), which theorizes a relationship between self-identity building and group (e.g., classroom) practices. By conceptualizing how the observed order of a social group comes to be, Bourdieu theorizes a dialectical relationship between what students internalize or incorporate and what they externalize or objectify. Each student brings to the group a "*habitus,* a way of being, a habitual state, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination" (p. 214) produced by the material conditions of his or her prior existence. Each student's habitus signifies principles by which the student generates and regulates what he or she regards as "regular" ways of being and acting with that group. On the basis of these principles the student responds strategically to unforeseen and ever-changing situations by drawing from similar past practices (e.g., politeness conventions). When students endowed with a similar habitus interact in a practice (e.g., reading a text, assessing performance), everything is organized by concordant principles that anticipate particular reactions and allow for a recognizable and comfortable range of implicated strategies. When group members do not have a common habitus, those whose dispositions are far removed what is suited to current practices will regard the practices as unreasonable, impossible, or even ridiculous.

If a group is to coalesce and experience social homogeneity, its members must recognize and be affiliated with a shared set of principles. When homogeneity (or what some teachers refer to as a sense of community) occurs, students have recognized at least minimal concordance between the characteristics of their personal histories and classroom principles. The appearance of tolerance for diversity within a group that shares common principles is the power that unites and motivates.

Such relations operate automatically and invisibly. Each person's actions unwittingly reproduce principled meaning without his or her conscious control. This means that within practices organized in concordance with students' own beliefs and dispositions, students have no difficulty in grasping their rationale, making them their own, acting in accordance with the same rationale, and assuming the rightness of their actions. The "unwitting" factor has particular applications in this study, which involved observation of teachers' narrative actions. Through this lens the teachers were observed as unaware that the practices they regarded as position-neutral pedagogical improvisation intended to motivate students were, in Bourdieu's terms, the enactment of acquired schemes of thought and expression. The teachers were not cognizant that during their instruction they and their students were "endlessly overtaken by [their] own words" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 79).

By adding Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse theory to Gee's and Bourdieu's perspectives, we want to bring to the foreground the hierarchical asymmetry between teachers and students and the dominance that teachers exercise through their narratives. Critical discourse theory posits the teachers' stories as a material form of dominant social action. That is, the stories produce, reproduce, or transform social structures, relations, and identities among the students and their teacher. They do so by making available and shaping what are regarded as valid ways of performing in the classroom and thereby determining the field of potential engagement for students. Consequently, pedagogical stories powerfully influence which discourses will be produced, who will produce them, and how they will be judged.

Method

The story analyses provided in this study emerged from separate continuing interactional ethnographic analyses of two classrooms begun in 1993 and 1994, respectively. In previous analyses of the discourse events of the two classrooms, the instructional story emerged as a dominant discourse genre, raising the question that led to this study: How do the teachers' ways of storytelling shape students' identities and their expectations of and opportunities to learn academic subject matter? From ethnographic and formal interviews with the two teachers that applied the same guide and protocol to discern what, how, and why they taught, we learned their views about tracking and their goals for their classes. In their own ethnographic and formal interviews, students told us why they were taking their classes, what they hoped to gain from doing so, and their goals for schooling and for life afterward.

The Teachers

Dave and Jack taught in separate high schools in the same district. Regarded as outstanding teachers in their schools and communities, they were educational leaders, each with more than ten years of experience. Both English teachers, they taught a full range of subjects, including advanced placement and basic courses, and had been active fellows in their local national writing and literature project. The two shared similar profiles in the respect that they commanded from students, colleagues, and parents and in their roles in school and district decisions, their involvement in professional development, their experience with tracking-related problems, and their exposure to teaching diverse student populations. At the same time, the two teachers differed in their views about the goals of schooling and their teaching.

Dave's View

Dave believed that tracking was a necessary institutional structure for distributing students to achieve the goal of schooling, which was to provide a good-quality academic education leading to higher education. This belief rested on the assumption that the literacy that students learn in preparation for college also prepares them for life outside school. Consequently, in Dave's view, a college preparatory curriculum should be the standard against which student achievement, teaching rigor, and sorting needs are assessed. Educators with this view are concerned with whether students read, write, or numerate sufficiently well to move through the stages of preparation for college entrance. The top tracks are reserved for the more rigorous courses of academic study and the students best suited to pursue them. The general or middle tracks accommodate students less able, interested, or prepared for advanced study. The lower tracks serve those whose attitudinal, preparational, or native intellectual attributes compromise their studies. For Dave, sorting students supports them and their teachers in targeting the kinds of curriculum and expectations that suit their interests, skill levels, and capabilities.

Dave believed a certain amount of mobility across tracks was possible, inevitable, and preferable. Capable students who had been languishing in general or basic courses could, through commitment and hard work, be successful in higher-level classes; and those who lost motivation, though capable, would descend down the levels. His views resonated with under-achiever/over-achiever theories that he shared with his colleagues.

Dave's goals for his Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) English literature class reflected his beliefs. He wanted to provide opportunities for his highly motivated students to be high achievers. The outcomes by which he measured the success of his teaching were consistent with stakeholders' goals: students' good grades on academic tasks, high standardized test scores, acceptances to four-year universities, expressed love of literature and reading, sound reasoning from textual evidence, and convincingly written essays.

Dave's Class

Dave's eleventh-grade GATE English literature course had a long-established history as a gateway course into twelfth-grade advanced placement English and then a four-year university. In recent years students had been permitted to self-select into this and other previously restricted courses. In the year of the study, 10 students designated "general" and 17 GATE students shared the classroom—17 females and 10 males. All but 2 were of European American descent (2 were Mexican American), from middle and upper middle class families, two-thirds with parents who worked in education or had done so. The general students selected the course because it was recommended by friends, siblings (many of whom had taken the course), or parents.

Without exception, the students entering this classroom had sought membership as an opportunity to advance their academic careers, a view that was reinforced as the course progressed. Nevertheless, students' early attitudes and beliefs about how they would take advantage of the opportunity were less definite and sometimes ambivalent or conflictual. All students appreciated the stimulating challenge of the teacher's approach, but many had trepidations. The general students voiced anxiety about their lack of knowledge and about how quickly and how much they would have to learn. They feared that they would not succeed. Some GATE students expressed concern about their grades. The tension between appreciating more rigorous intellectual work not tied to concrete, explicit formulas and feeling insecure and less able to "read what the teacher wants" was voiced repeatedly by some students. Other GATE students expressed, first, surprise, then concern about the amount of work assigned and the speed with which the course moved; some were pleased that the class covered so much ground so quickly, yet worried they were not learning what they should. Others were fearful of being held to a standard they could not meet but pleased to be working toward its accomplishment.

Jack's View

Jack opposed tracking. He thought the current academic and social sorting practices shaped many students' perceptions of themselves as academically mediocre or incapable and of school as a place for other kinds of people. He was aware of how this shaping contributed after high school to students' comparable placement in the society's economic and social hierarchies, and he considered this sorting process unjust. As co-chairman of his school restructuring committee, he had spearheaded arguments to eliminate hierarchical sorting for most classes. He believed that sorting students privileged a few students and teachers while making teaching and learning in most classrooms more difficult. He assumed that not all students would or should go on to college, that they had diverse learning styles, and that their lives outside school often positioned them to value school differently from college-bound students. He viewed education as a lifelong process in which formal schooling was a resource that students should value and use at certain stages to support their life choices and conditions. To teach students from this perspective meant giving them opportunities to develop a positive disposition toward learning, practical knowledge-building proficiencies, and literacies that would serve them in school and in the world.

Jack's goal for his class was to provide multiple opportunities for all students, whatever their previous learning experiences and current views of school, to participate meaningfully in academic activities. He looked for evidence of students' meaningful participation not only in academic accomplishment but in their improved school attendance, mixing with new social groups, socially responsible behavior, and expressed enjoyment and valuing of school and of learning.

Jack's Class

The Academic Foundations for Success class was designed to socially integrate ninth graders and prepare them for high school academics—those with learning disabilities, those whose first language was not English (predominantly Spanish speaking), and those designated general or gifted and talented. Since the course was being taught for the first time, Jack's students had few advance expectations for the course. Over the first three years, while the class and other restructuring measures (e.g., block scheduling) were instituted, the dropout rate decreased, overall grade point averages increased, scores on standardized tests of academic achievement rose, and reported incidents of fighting and malfeasance declined.

Of his 20 students, 5 were classified by the school as special education students (3 spoke Spanish as their first language), 2 as GATE students, 2 as transitional English-second-language students (1 born locally and the other a recent Mexican immigrant) and 12 as general students (English was not the first language for 7 of these students). In interviews, 5 of Jack's students said college was a goal and connected doing well in school with future success. For the others, school was a place they were required to attend, which they did not like or find valuable except for opportunities it afforded to meet with their friends. One of these students, a boy dressed in the crisply ironed white T-shirt and low-riding black pants signaling real or "wannabe" gang affiliation, expressed the multiple, often conflicted, positions and messages that characterized many of his classmates' academic and social lives. He knew that an education was important to earning a good living and he wanted to do better in school, but he could not be seen carrying school books or appear to do well or enjoy schoolwork.

Many of the students already worked for a minimum wage after school. They variously aspired after graduation to become a comic book artist, a professional hip hop dancer, a makeup artist, the first in the family to receive a high school diploma, pregnant, and married and a parent. When asked what they planned to do after school, the five special education students uniformly responded, "I don't know, get a job."

Data Collection and Analysis

Ethnographic methods were used to collect the data on which this study is based (Spradley, 1980). For the analysis reported here, the researcher (first author) and research assistant (second author) reviewed daily videotapes and field notes of the first weeks of each class and coded them for discursive patterns. Early in the coding process we noted the teachers' use of narrative-like constructions when addressing their classes. We found helpful Bruner's (1986) concept of narrative as a mode of thinking distinct from logical or pragmatic thinking. Using Bruner's conceptualization, we selected and labeled as "stories" particular discourse segments that Jack and Dave narrated when they spoke to their entire class. These segments of talk topically were bound with details chronologically ordered to represent an event that had occurred in the past, was occurring in the present, or was likely to occur in the future. Each narrative segment described an event in which people were doing something that was important and valued. Characters in the narratives were assigned motivations for their actions as they related to other people, circumstances, and consequent actions. The stories created a verisimilitude that made what people did (usually they were students) seem real and right within the situations described. Stories often began with constructions such as "I once had . . ." to signal a story about a past experience, or "when . . ." to indicate a narrative about a current event. Stories that projected hypothetical future events might begin with "If. . . ." Stories included specific details that resonated with students' experiences to bring to life characters and their actions. Whether implicitly or explicitly, stories provided messages, morals, or punch lines, conveying the "point" or significance of their telling.

Initial analyses of the meanings of Dave's and Jack's stories confirmed that they were consistent with prior studies of their non-narrative instructional discourse, their curriculums, and their students' performances (Rex, 1997; Rex, Green, & Dixon, 1997; Rex & McEachen, 1999, Rex, 2000, 2001). This internal consistency encouraged us to analyze more deeply what their stories meant and how they influenced their students' participation in the communities of practice that they were building.

In a second level of analysis we identified semantic relationships between the origin of story content, the instructional target of a story, and the way that the story functioned. We called these the "source," "purpose," and "category" of a story. Using a variation of Spradley's semantic domain analysis (1980) (i.e., x is a kind of y), and drawing from field notes, videotapes, interviews, and prior transcriptions and analyses, we created taxonomies for the sources and purposes of all of Dave's and Jack's stories within the context of their continuing instruction. For example, Dave purposefully told his students the "water wings" story as a lesson in how to be a student, specifically to dissuade them from using Cliffs Notes as a substitute or crutch for their reading. The story had originated from his teaching—from his many experiences with students who had used the notes. Most story sources were located in teachers' prior experiences with teaching, with higher education, and with their families. Jack's sources also included sports, film and television, and business. Dominant story purposes in both classes were teaching the subject matter of the class and illustrating how to conduct oneself as a student. Refer to Appendixes 1 and 2 for the sources and purposes of Dave's and Jack's object lesson stories.

We next categorized the stories on the basis of their sources and purposes. Stories such as "water wings" we categorized as object lesson stories because they provided a message or moral of preferred action or state of being. The other stories Dave told we classified as humor, cultural illustration, learning strategy, solidarity, and institutional illustration. Jack's stories we categorized as object lesson, pseudo-parable, classroom culture, procedural, modeling, story elicitation, bonding, availability, humor, historical fact, "If" illustration, and school culture. Refer to Table 1 for definitions and frequencies of occurrence.

Because the object lesson was by far the most frequently occurring category in the two classrooms (35 and 41 occurrences, respectively), we conducted further semantic analyses of each teacher's object lesson stories. We analyzed how the forcefulness of each story's lesson was achieved in the relationships between the teacher's authoritative experience, the source, and the purpose, or targeted instructional application. We returned to students' interviews, surveys, and performance artifacts to determine whether there was evidence of this forcefulness in student performance. As we analyzed relationships between the stories and student performance in each class data set, "The Dancer" and "Graveyard Shift at the 7-11" emerged as key stories.

To ensure validity, the researcher and research assistant worked separately and collaboratively, using an interpretive method of coding (Erickson, 1986) to ascertain confirming and disconfirming evidence of assertions arising from relationships among purposes and sources of stories in relation to students in each class. To establish consistency of quantity and duration of stories, we held time constant, measured in minutes. Because Dave's classes were 55 minutes long and Jack's were 90 minutes long, we compared narratives from the first ten classes of Dave's (550 min.) and the first six classes of Jack's (540 min.). During that period, Dave told 68 stories and

Table 1
Teachers' Stories

Category	Category definition	Frequency
	Dave's stories (550 min/10 classes)	
Object lesson	Provides a message or moral regarding preferred action or state of being	35
Humor	Initiates laughter, not purposefully related to current instruction or procedure	3
Cultural illustration	Provides historical or cultural information for reading a literary text	22
Learning strategy	Reports and recommends an approach to learning	6
Solidarity	Takes students' position to view institutional testing	1
Institutional illustration	Takes institution's position to view institutional testing	1
Total		68
	Jack's stories (540 min/6 classes)	
Object lesson	Provides a message or moral regarding preferred action or state of being	41
Pseudo-parable	Explicitly signals moral purpose of the story	1
Classroom culture	Provides information about the classroom's procedures, purposes, or members	9
Procedural steps	Provides procedural steps for students to follow while engaging in an activity	2
Modeling	Demonstrates how students are to perform an instructional activity	5
Story elicitation	Initiates and sustains student stories	2
Bonding	Shares personal information not purposefully related to current instruction or procedure	7
Availability	Informs students when and where the teacher will be available to them outside class	1
Humor	Initiates laughter, not purposefully related to current instruction or procedure	1
Historical fact	Explains the meaning of an academic term by means of historical information	1
"If" illustration	Casts a student in the class as the protagonist in hypothetical story plot to demonstrate academic term or concept	8
School culture	Illustrates dimensions of the high school resources and culture available to students	3
Total		81

Jack told 81. We conferred with Dave and Jack about our analyses and they wrote their own points of view.[1] However, the final discussion and implications reported at the conclusion of this article are the interpretation of the first two authors.

Results

The Emergence of the Object Lesson: Teachers' Stories During the First Weeks of Class

Dave and Jack knew that pedagogical stories were everyday fare in their classrooms, but they were surprised by the number and the kind that they told. During the first formative days of class (Lin, 1993), both relied on stories to explain to their students what was expected and what the class would be about, while leading students in instructional activity. Most surprising was the dominance of object lessons in their stories, constituting 35 of Dave's 68 stories and 41 of Jack's 81 stories. In both classrooms, object lesson stories told students what they were to do, say, have, be, think, believe, value, remember, avoid, understand, pursue, and expect.

Dave and Jack drew most of their object lesson stories from their teaching of previous classes and their professional lives in schools (this was the case for 21 of Dave's stories and 21 of Jack's). The next most frequent source was incidents in their personal lives (Dave, 8; Jack, 6). In addition, they drew stories from their experiences as undergraduates and graduate students and from later professional development experiences (Dave, 6; Jack, 3). All of Dave's story sources belonged to these three categories, but Jack's also included film and television (6), sports (4), and business (1).

In order of frequency, the purposes of Dave's object lesson stories fell into three categories: learning subject matter (20), learning how to be a student (9), and standardized testing (6). The three purposes of Jack's stories indicate a different emphasis. They were learning how to be a student (24), learning subject matter (11), and introducing class members (6).

Dave's Object Lesson Stories

In Dave's stories, his own and past students' performances were models for his current students' immediate and future approaches to reading and writing. For example, he narrated occasions when people used effective and ineffective practices. One story showed the limitations of rote memory: "A lot of people, truly a vast majority of people, when they [have] this kind of thing to memorize, will . . . repeat the word over and over again without making any sort of connection or association; they just mindlessly repeat" ("Rote Memory," Day 3, 8:25–9:48).[2] Dave's stories pointed out that changing old habits was difficult and uncomfortable, but necessary, and that it took perseverance and attention. For example, he united himself with his students as fellow readers to commiserate about the difficulties of reading.

> I also know that our minds are in the room, out of the room, in the room, over to some other person, back to me, thinking of tonight, back to me, thinking of the book, how much homework do I have, back to me. Isn't that how the minds work? That's how they work while you read too. So this crazy, you know, capricious mind that we have is attending a lot of the time, not nearly all the time. ("How Not to Read," Day 5, 14:25–17:09)

Dave used a story about his father's golf game to illustrate that reading is a skill requiring extensive practice, but not practice of ineffective methods ("Dad Golfing," Day 1, 19:20–20:03). To explain why his approach to reading might be a change from instruction that the students had received in prior classes, Dave recalled how he had learned to read literature in college: "When I was in college the first time, new criticism was the only way." ("College Reading as English Major," Day 3, 36:20–38:05). Using a story about how he had failed to notice his date's braces ("Sharon's Teeth," Day 3, 40:10–42:21), he made the point that people perceive different things to argue for the personal response aspects of Louise Rosenblatt's reader response theory.

Dave told six object lesson analogic stories to exemplify how improving reading and writing meant taking responsibility for observing what one needed to learn. Several of these stories reflected his personal life. "If I go to a golf pro to get lessons, and I don't even tee up the ball. . . . Proofread your papers. Tee up the ball" ("Teeing Up the Ball," Day 10, 28:28–29:20). Other analogic stories warned students away from practices that would make the course work easier but would limit their opportunities to learn and grow. Cliffs Notes became "water wings" that artificially kept them afloat and prevented their learning how to read on their own. Later, water wings reappeared in a narrative discouraging the use of the five-paragraph essay "if you have a great deal of trouble essay writing, if you need structure" ("Five-Paragraph Essay," Day 9, 15:05–16:15).

Six stories addressed how his anxious students should regard the SAT and PSAT, which they would soon take. Dave started his PSAT lesson with a story about his son's less-than-successful first attempt at the difficult SAT and his more successful second attempt, to make the point that "scores are just plastic. They can be anywhere," to show a negative and positive case of preparation, and to tell the students not to settle for what they initially think is their best ("Scores Are Plastic," Day 8, 28:01–29:37).

Dave took a similar approach in talking about grades and cheating, for which he told eight stories. One was about a former student whom he had caught cheating under the weight of the course's rigorous work load ("Cheating at the Theater," Day 2; 16:25–18:09). Other stories demonstrated how to complain about a grade ("Who to Complain To," Day 6, 27:53–29:09), explained the impetus and fairness of Dave's grading practice ("Fairness in Grading," Day 6, 32:07–33:13), and illuminated his unique system of giving credit rather than grades for accomplished essays ("Astonishing Essay," Day 7, 55:27–56:56; "B+," Day 10, 31:05–31:37). The rest illustrated the arbitrariness of grades as marks of learning ("Grading Is Arbitrary," Day 10, 30:13–31:05) and told students how to get full credit rather than a less prestigious A on their essays ("How Not to Get an A," Day 10 31:50–32:34).

Dave's object lesson stories carried consistent messages about being tenacious, alert, and responsible in taking up the challenges of learning new and difficult things. They also served to represent those challenges as warranted and achievable if one followed particular strategies and as missed opportunities if one did not. Authoritative weight inhered in Dave's stories about his personal experiences as a successful student, his former students, and his children, who had succeeded or taken unfortunate paths. Power also resided in the stories' detailed representations of worlds and events in which the students could imagine themselves. His narrations acculturated initiates into an academic domain, which every student cast as trustworthy in exit interviews and surveys during the year of this study. They believed that Dave was a reliable narrator and that taking in his object lessons helped them learn and achieve.

Dave's Story: "The Dancer"

Dave told the story entitled "The Dancer" each year, and it was not unusual for students to remember when. Students in his April 1999 class recalled the specific day and told us their common reading of the story, which we will elaborate in this section. Dave told his story on the 13th day of class, as he prepared to return to students their first major essay for the course. The story was a planned part of an essay-writing cycle (Green & Meyer, 1991), the first of many such cycles during the year, as the students wrote case-making essays for their readings of literary texts. At the beginning of the cycle, on Day 4, Dave explained what he was interested in seeing students do as he assigned them to free-write about a viable topic for an essay that they would later compose. He further explained that the method by which the class had been learning to read *Beowulf* was the same method they would use to write papers about their reading of the text—that is, "drawing from the text so the paper is really grounded in the text as [they] frame their argument." On Day 6, he interactively questioned students about the reasons and evidence for their paper topics while the rest of the students watched, waiting for their turn. On Days 9, 10, and 11, he led students in activities that established expectations and supportive interim peer feedback for their drafts in progress. While students asked numerous clarifying questions, he walked them through a handout of essay-writing conventions (e.g., rules for and examples of embedded and unembedded quotations). He modeled for them how to respond critically but supportively to a draft, after which they responded to a partner's draft; and he demonstrated the use of peer editing guidelines before students edited each other's papers. On Day 13, students anxiously awaited the return of their essays to see how they had been assessed. Aware of their concern, Dave told his story.

It was a story within a story. He reported a tale told to him in the early days of his teaching career by a former English student who was also a student of dance. Dave's discourse created a particular identity for his former student and her dance teacher that can be read as an indication of the kind of teacher Dave wanted to be and of how he positioned his students. When he began his story, Dave signaled to students the historical weight behind the words and established his role as an authority figure. His manner of introducing the narrative—"I want to tell you a little story"—and his allusion to the timely coincidence of its original telling with the period when Dave's students were born, served to initiate a fatherly theme that was reinforced throughout the narrative. For seventeen years, while his students had been growing up, Dave had been successfully guiding other students in this particular way.

> I want to tell you a little story. About twenty years ago—I can't believe it—actually, no, probably seventeen, only seventeen. It was when you guys were born, about. I was teaching at LC Junior High and I had a student who was in my English class and also was my aide. . . .
>
> She came into the period when she was my aide, and I was teaching a class that period, and she seemed very down. And I said, "Well, what's the matter." And she said, "Well, last night at ballet— This girl was really quite a fine dancer. In fact is a professional dancer in New York right now—"Last night at ballet the teacher didn't yell at me." And I said, "Well, wouldn't that be more an occasion to rejoice than to be sad?" And she said, "Well, no, not really, because he only yells at the dancers that he thinks really have talent, and that could get better. The kids that he knows, you know, they're just there, he doesn't yell at them, he doesn't give them a hard time, cause he knows they're sort of doing their best and sort of passes it off, and he usually yells at me and he didn't last night and I'm worried."
>
> And I said, "Well maybe he will yell at you tonight." So the next day she came back and she was her usual effervescent self, and in fact he had yelled at her and everything was okay again. And she went on to do a lot of solo dancing and chorus line dancing and major Broadway productions and continues as a professional dancer. (Day 13, 9:28–12:02)

Dave's story depicted him as a sensitive, student-centered authority figure, alert to his student's seeming "very down" and to learning from her. He held up the dancer as a model of the outstanding student whose excellence in her dance classes made her a professional dancer in a venue known for its fierce competition. He depicted the dance teacher as the primary influence on a dancer's professional achievement. The dance teacher's yelling and giving the student "a hard time" somehow assured her success. The happy ending sent the message that, to achieve, even students who are talented need to be continually pushed by their teacher. It told students listening to the story that if Dave yelled at them they must be talented and fortunate to have a teacher who pushed them.

The student's distress when she was not yelled at implied that she understood, accepted, and relied on the expert–apprentice relationship. For her, the teacher embodied the knowledge that she needed to succeed. His actions reflected that knowledge and were, therefore, in her best interest. The dancer's worry when her teacher stopped yelling indicated another of the teacher's roles—to reassure his students that they were actually as talented and capable of achievement as had been thought. Dave's story told his students to regard their capabilities in terms of external reinforcements. As long as the teacher was yelling, the dance student thought she had promise. When the yelling stopped, doubt and insecurity immediately besieged her. This role represents a subtle but powerful belief that successful students require continual external reassurance to maintain an integrated sense of self. Once the yelling resumed, the student was her "usual effervescent self" and "everything was okay again."

Her distress also implied she understood herself to be talented and promising in ways that eclipsed her classmates who were not yelled at. She referred to those students as "just sort of there"; "they're sort of doing their best," which would never be good enough. Some of her distress may also have been due to being treated as one of the "just there" students. The self that she had colluded with her teacher to construct took its identity, in part, from being better than the other selves in the studio. To continue to define herself that way, she was compelled to outperform them. Yelling was not only a signal that she was talented and doing well; it also signaled social differentiation—that she was better than the others.

That the story positioned students as competitors contradicts the view reported by class members at the end of the term—this was a collaborative community of learners. This reading appears less of a contradiction when we consider a difference in scale. Students in Dave's class judged themselves in relation to other students in the school. Students in GATE English literature shared status, in contrast to students in the other English classes, who were yelled at for reasons other than their academic accomplishments.

Over the duration of the course, whenever Dave returned student papers he reminded the students of the dancer story. He explicitly stated his purpose in telling the story when he began his explanation of his paper-grading approach. He asked students to keep the story in mind as they read the comments that he had written on their papers: "That sort of has stayed with me, that little incident, because . . . I would like you to think about that when I write comments on your papers." A little later during his explanation, he invoked the "yelling" metaphor from the story to describe what he was trying to accomplish through his comments: "So I was sort of saying good things and bad things and sort of 'yelling' at you, OK?"

"Yelling" as a key metaphor in the story poses multiple questions: What constituted yelling in the dance studio and in the GATE English literature classroom? What did the dancer mean when she said she was yelled at? What did Dave mean when he said he would yell at students on their papers? Furthermore, what did students understand his "yelling" to mean? The commonsense entailments of yelling are loud volume and strong, strident language. Ethnographic data indicate that Dave never raised his voice in the classroom or used what might be regarded as abrasive language. That is to say, he never yelled, either verbally or in writing. By choosing this particular term, he reflected his understanding of his students' position, their experience, and their emotions. Dave's evaluative practices indicate that although he believed critique to be important, he was aware that students were particularly sensitive to having their work evaluated. He believed that students experienced most evaluative comments as being yelled at and could experience benign comments as deeply wounding. His explanation to the class contained references to his concern for students' feelings: "If we left it at that [a grade with little or no comment], I think what I would face, after passing these back, would be a class of wounded students, for one thing, who wouldn't have a clear way to heal . . . I hope none of you will feel wounded by this." Dave told a story in which the apparent antagonist turned out to be the good guy, and the weapon (i.e., yelling) was revealed as a powerful positive force. The story confirms Dave's belief that although students may feel they are being yelled at, they will value his yelling and see him as their advocate.

This intertextual interpretation of Dave's teaching role was illustrated in the discourse actions that students took on their own time, before class had officially begun. Every day as their lunch break was ending, students milled around Dave with questions related to their performance on class assignments; every day Dave would listen and suggest concrete ways they could improve. The mapping of the story "The Dancer" onto his role as essay evaluator and onto his comments provided students with a complexly structured ideological framework for dealing with the feelings they experienced as they read his responses to their papers. It was a powerfully appealing framework that made it possible for them to hear and make use of his principles of practice.

Jack's Object Lesson Stories

Most of Jack's object lesson stories advised how to be a successful high school student. The stories referred to life outside school through allusions to popular culture (e.g., sports and movie making) and media or sports figures admired by or familiar to students (e.g., Barbara Walters, Michael Bolton, and Michael Jordan). His stories assumed that many of his students would have difficulties integrating school into their lives both in the short term and in the long term. The stories provided a means for students to think about how to evaluate their school performances and how to place them in perspective. For example, Jack told of former students who had not taken school seriously, who did not earn good grades, and who missed going on to great careers in drama and sports ("Justin Maceda," Day 3, 74:45–75:26). Stories such as these portrayed the need for students to work, and others warned against too much work. "I've had students in the past who worked so hard they self-destructed" ("Work, Work, Work," Day 2, 83:44–83:58; "Self Destruction," Day 2, 84:03–85:47). "What good is it to be the richest man in the world if you're in a hospital bed with a heart attack because you worked so hard?" ("Richest Man," Day 6, 25:32–26:45).

Fourteen of Jack's stories provided criteria for students to gauge their school progress. Some presented school practices as good ways for students to assess themselves. For example, "Outside of English and [this] course, a lot of teachers in Social Studies require writing; a lot more Math and Science teachers are having students write. The idea is this. . . . After you've been here four years you're going to have a collection of writing from a lot of different classes in there. . . . I wish I had done this in high school because I think this is a good way to see how you have improved over the years" ("Academic Folders," Day 2, 26:45–27:13). Other stories presented school practices as helpful to students in getting work done: "Signing and keeping to this contract will ensure that every one of you gets a passing grade in this class" ("Auto Insurance," Day 2, 31:41–32:36). In the stories, tangible, future benchmarks were associated with high school learning and higher education or careers. "I read in a magazine today that colleges are probably going to require you to have your own computer and know how to use it" ("Have Your Own Computer," Day 1, 31:27–33:02).

Jack's stories about how to be a successful student were often hypothetical and cast his students in alternative scenarios that reflected prior experience with students who did not conform to standard school procedures. Three scenarios depicted students turning in work late to demonstrate which circumstances were acceptable and which were not, as in, "Oh, I did my homework, but I left it home" ("Turning In Assignments Late," Day 2, 35:25–36:18). Another hypothetical case concerned students' right to decline to participate if called on: "If you say no, . . . that's all right" ("Publishing in Class," Day 2, 40:37–41:02). His stories also told students that there was room for disagreement and depicted how they could express alternate views: "If you write a paper, say, that's about a controversial issue and I disagree with your position, if you do a good job of explaining why you feel the way you do, I'm not going to mark you down because I think you are wrong" ("Room for Disagreement," Day 2, 39:58–40:36). In one hypothetical story Jack provided examples of the how students could make public that they did not know something: "You're reading and you hit a word in French and you don't know how to pronounce it. . . . I'd like this to be a class where you feel okay about saying what's on your mind" ("Reading Aloud, Avoiding Ridicule," Day 2, 34:10–35:24). Through Jack's stories, students' missing deadlines, disagreeing with the teacher, and lacking academic knowledge became ordinary conversation about managing learning.

In three linked object lesson narratives, Jack legitimized mistakes. Drawing from sports history, Jack told the story of Babe Ruth, the "Strike-Out King," who made many mistakes between hitting the big ones ("Babe Ruth, Strike-Out King," Day 6, 70:57–71:25). Then, drawing from his high school experience, Jack told about being a poor, often-sidelined player because he mistakenly joined the basketball team instead of the swim team. Once he realized his error and switched into a sport that fit his talents, he did well. "If you don't succeed in one direction. . . ." ("High School Basketball," Day 6, 72:17–73:38). To illustrate a different way of thinking about mistakes, as "miss-takes," he narrated a movie-making analogy: "A miss-take is like, if you're shooting a movie, you take one take, and then it doesn't work or you want to do it better, you take another one, so that's kind of what making mistakes is all about." Jack's "mistake" stories were imbued with the value of learning from error: "Success has no rules, but you can learn a lot by failure" ("Shooting a Movie," Day 6, 73:39–74:02).

While Jack's object lesson stories promoted ways to be successful as a student in his Academic Foundations for Success class and in other classes and beyond, they also provided a comfortably recognizable way of talking about how to do so. The stories framed learning for students not yet familiar with academic or social success, for students who may have experienced difficulty in learning how to be successful, and for students who may have grown impatient with others who performed differently than they. The stories inscribed a way of acting in the classroom that guarded personal dignity; they portrayed a classroom that protected participation, one where students could decline to participate without penalty and where mistakes were expected as developmental signposts. The stories moderated academic performance, positioning it as one of the things that students do to be successful people in the world, but at the same time warning against regarding high academic achievement as the sole measure of personal success. Though striving for and earning good grades were expected, academic excellence needed to be kept in perspective in relation to other important considerations.

Jack's Story: "Graveyard Shift at the 7-11"

By looking more closely at a story that Jack told when he explained one of the class purposes (to think about high school as preparation for a career), we observe what, in particular, spoke to his students. Jack's story began as part of a letter that he read to his class on the first day of the course (Day 1, 16:26–16:33). He had written the letter to introduce himself to the class and to model the letters that he wanted them to write about themselves for homework. They were to "talk about the things you like to do for fun, the things you have accomplished so far in your life, and what you hope to have happen in the future." The letter reading came after students had completed personal information cards that included their post–high school plans, if they had decided, "to follow a specific career, be a certain kind of professional or job . . . if you know where you want to go to school after you get out of high school, [name removed] college, or [name removed] university."

The letter began with the bittersweet ambivalence that Jack felt about returning to teaching after a summer spent traveling, and went on to relate his experience of teaching at this high school for the first time the previous year (before that he had taught at another high school for ten years) and the many jobs he had held between college and teaching. He described his hobbies, the challenge he had taken on that year as chairman of the school's restructuring committee, and the hopes he had for what that meant for the school's success. The letter depicted him as a person who had built a life by going many places and doing many things, all related to education, from which he had learned and benefited.

Midway through the letter, when Jack read about working the graveyard shift in a 7-11 store, he began to enlarge on the experience and to construct his story.

> *Reading:* At one point, I even worked as a cashier during the graveyard shift from midnight to 7 a.m. That's not a career I'd recommend unless you are an insomniac who likes boredom. *Speaking while looking at the class:* You do get to have all the free Slurpees you want, you know, but other than that it's not a very good job. They don't pay very much, and [big sigh as he shakes his head] in the middle of the night, sometimes I wondered, what am I doing here, you know, four in the morning, you're sitting in a 7-11 store. Not a whole lot of people come in at that time.

Of all the jobs he had held and the personal details he mentioned in his letter, Jack chose to enlarge upon the graveyard shift. His first story for his students was not about a success or a good time, but an account of despondency. He could have described how he successfully saved the seafood restaurant named in his letter from its slide toward bankruptcy. Or he could have told one of his many engaging social antics stories from his college days. But he chose a story that represented a time when he was not at his best, when he felt his life was not going well. Jack's story encouraged his students to take a particular view of themselves and their circumstances. Designated as a model of the stories that could appear in their letters, the 7-11 job positioned students to recall similar situations. As part of their constructed personal histories, they were encouraged to describe their feelings of despondency in a dispiriting work situation. In addition, Jack's stance in his stories as the older and more experienced life traveler implied that, even if they had not yet had such an experience, they would at some point in their school or working lives.

Jack thought about where he had been and what being there meant. His story cast him in the role of the existential wonderer—"sometimes I wondered, what am I doing here"—who finds himself lost, alone, and doing something unpleasant simply to get by. One way of reading this discourse move is to see it as Jack's representation to students of the kind of teacher he would be as well as the kind of student they could be. He was the wanderer who had been where they were now and who understood how to get beyond that state. He had emerged on the other side of boredom, dead-end jobs, and loneliness, and he could help them get there too or perhaps avoid that route altogether. In making this move, he also sent a message about the kind of knowledge valued in this course. Personal revelation of one's experiences had value and could be useful. There was no shame in being in a dead-end job, and a certain strength accrued to those who reflected on their situation.

Ten minutes later, after completing the reading of his letter and beginning his explanation of what the course was about, he returned to his 7-11 narrative. He had asked students to volunteer what they planned to do after high school. Two students said they wanted to go to college. Five more raised their hands to indicate they too thought they were college-bound. Jack said, "Most of the better-paying jobs, not all of them, but most of the better-paying jobs require you to go to some technical school or college or university to get something beyond a high school degree these days." He started by explaining that high school would present the students with "a lot of [career] options" for them to think about.

> We thought another part of this class would be, you know, since most of you are, you know, you kind of know what you want to do. But we are going to be presenting a lot of options for you to think about over the next couple of years to try to get you thinking, "Well, what do I want to do?" You know, "What are my strengths? What do I like doing? What do I have fun doing?" Because I think that is the key to really having a kind of career you can enjoy. If you like what you are doing, if when you get up in the morning you're excited about going to work, then I think you are in a good job. You're in a job you belong in. I know, like when I was working at the 7-11 store, I only did this about two weeks and I hated it. I had to give it up, uhm, I dreaded going in to that work. I thought, if I had to do that for my whole life I just would not be a happy person. Teaching, however. Teaching . . . you know, I guess the thing I didn't like about the 7-11 job was, it was so boring. It was the same thing, you know. You stock the Hostess Twinkies on the rack, you know, and then you sell a couple of lottery tickets, and that was it. The rest of the time you are just trying to keep people from stealing stuff, you know, in the middle of the night, and keeping them from putting things in the microwave, you know, that would blow up. So it was not a job that really offered a lot of challenges, but teaching is something I really like doing because it's different. Everyday is different, every year is different, every class is different. So I like the variety that's involved. And I think that's the key. So part of the class is going to be getting you to think about, you know, what you want to do, not only while here at SM, but after, after school. (Day 1, 28:58–30:31)

Jack's narrative did not focus on his actions at the 7-11, although the details provided essential ballast for the argument that he was making to the students. He mentioned elements of the job that he knew were familiar to students to tell about himself. He constructed a character who comes to understand how badly he is messing up. In his story he was the inexperienced youth trying to manage the situations in which he found himself. As the teller of the tale, however, he was a grownup now suited to the role of guide, mentor, or teacher. Jack constructed himself as someone who had faced the difficulties of coming into his own and emerged relatively unscathed, someone who could understand the students' anxieties and guide them through adolescence to adulthood. Growing up was depicted as a series of choices and experiences that one had—good and bad—before finally making the right career choice. By positioning himself as someone who figured out how to get out of a predicament brought on by a poor choice, Jack positioned the students to think of themselves as either currently in that situation or inevitably occupying it. Jack tied the person he had become (a teacher) to the people his students would become and how they would get there (satisfied in their careers). And he tied those things to why they were in high school (they were there to practice choice-making and understand their options). Over the course of high school they would make poor choices, reflect on them, and make better ones until, like him, they found an enjoyable career.

Consequently, challenges were to be sought and valued. By juxtaposing what he characterized as the stimulating variety of teaching with the grinding boredom of the graveyard shift, Jack had privileged a job that offered "a lot of challenges." Prevention of stock theft and microwave explosions were not challenges from this point of view, nor were all the free Slurpees one could drink a benefit. By disparaging the limited benefits and challenges of working in a convenience store, he reinforced students' suspicion of such jobs as potential careers and their motivation to make better choices.

Jack's story not only told students who they should be and what they should be doing in high school but also declared the potential personal and career value of high school. The students would experience high school as brimming with variety, as an opportune series of various choice-making events. The message of Jack's story emerged: Because everyone deserves to have a satisfying career, working toward it should be one's central focus, practice, and purpose in high school and in life. To make the right choices students were to ask themselves, "What do I want to do? What do I like doing? What do I have fun doing?" and then act on their answers by leaving behind what was not good for them and moving toward what was.

The Teachers' Points of View

Acknowledging that told stories are polysemic and include more than words written down (Patai, 1988), we invited Dave and Jack to respond to our analyses and to provide their own perspectives on what stories meant in their teaching.

Dave's Response

After participating in the study of the stories that I use in my teaching, I have a better understanding of what I consider to be important elements of my classes. Stories are especially important, I now understand more clearly, because they reflect and reinforce the culture and overall classroom tone that I hope to establish with my students and my curriculum. By classroom tone I mean the attitudes I would like to establish with my students as they experience the curriculum in all of its dimensions. I hope to establish some of the following attitudes:

1. It's okay to be smart.
2. Originality and creativity will be valued.

3. Using evidence to support interpretations is important, and we recognize that there can be multiple readings of a document.
4. The same standards for academic rigor will be applied to the teacher as to the students. No one's ideas will be accepted on the basis of authority alone.

Just as literary tone is communicated by authors' use of diction and their selection and arrangement of details, a classroom's tone is largely communicated by the teacher's stories and language choices in speaking with his or her students.

I had not realized initially the many effects of the stories on my students and my classes. Since this study, I have made a connection (perhaps an obvious one, though I had not consciously thought about it before) between the power of stories in my teaching and the power of stories in my wife's sermons. We all remember the stories, though we certainly do not remember all the direct admonishments, tips, and bits of advice that we hear. Similarly, lessons that include good, illustrative stories undoubtedly are remembered longer by students than lessons that lack them. I can ask a class if I had mentioned something about general semantics, for example, and be met with quizzical looks. But when I remind them of "Sharon's Teeth" they immediately light up in understanding.

My stories reflect values that I hope to instill in my students, and often these values seem at odds with those transmitted by the news media, books, magazines, and movies. Those sources convey what I consider to be competing ways of valuing oneself in the world. Studying my stories has helped me recognize that through them I am trying to counter certain dimensions of these American social narratives. I see a relationship between people's unique, individual experience and the social narratives that bombard them. Before the study my offering of alternative stories was inadvertent. Now I can more explicitly choose their focus, content, and timing to fit what we are trying to accomplish together. I think about the study every time I tell a story, and my insights have helped me to create a more conscious "filter" for shaping them. I have stories about working hard, getting into college, seeing writing as "in process" and not as something "finished," noticing the world from each person's unique perspective, and dozens more. I know that students remember these stories because they refer to them months later in some cases. Often when I address a certain issue in my class of seniors I mention a story I have told them as juniors relating to a certain dimension of the class. The story of the dancer and the teacher who didn't yell at her during a rehearsal is a good example. More often than not, some student who heard the story the past year will volunteer to tell it. It's sort of like taking pleasure in retelling a good joke, except that the attitude is more one of sharing an important truth. This year, because the student in my story received a Tony Award ("Featured Actress—Musical") for her role in "The Producers," its truth value is even greater.

Getting teachers to reflect on and change their stories would probably be difficult, given that the stories emanate from a teacher's worldview. But it seems important to do so. In fact, the value of this research on storytelling is measurable largely by the extent to which teachers become more consciously aware of the stories they tell and the effects of their stories on their curriculum and on their students personally. Teachers who are more consciously aware of their stories and of the likely interpretations by their students should be inclined to screen stories for likely impact. They might omit some stories in favor of those that can aid more effectively in the creation of the classroom culture that the teachers want to establish. I have found that to be true in my case.

Jack's Response

In looking over the study, I was not surprised by the fact that I used stories to illustrate particular themes in my classroom. It's only natural, since I grew up learning from stories told at home, in church, and at school. And, I must admit, from television as well. Whether told by my dad, who loved to spin a yarn or two, by my third-grade teacher, Mrs. Acker, who read us *Jack Tales* after recess each day, or by Andy of Mayberry, stories have long guided me. In my classes now, talking about shared experiences and reading about the experiences of other times and places connects us on a very human level and provides a needed foundation for understanding the rules and protocols for future interactions within the group.

I have to admit that I *was* surprised by the number of object lesson stories that I told in the first days of the class. This may mean that I am doing way too much of the talking. I might consider cutting out some of the narratives in favor of more activities and student-to-student discussion. On the other hand, if these stories draw students into the culture of the class and successfully establish a tone of mutual respect, then maybe they are most appropriate.

One of my professors in college, George Abernathy, who taught and lived religious studies, had a subtle and dynamic impact on my life and my teaching. He always began and ended his classes with narratives (moral tales, actually) from his life experience, his travels to Asia or Africa, or his reading. Those stories created the spirit of his class and made us willing to think about some of the larger questions that life presents. We became a cohesive learning community.

When I am willing to share things that have happened to me in my life, my students begin to share as well. I know that this approach is working when even the most quiet and reticent students begin to speak up. Some students will not share, and they know that's okay in our class. I can see how my stories echo some of the things that we have been told about life in America and how to get ahead. Personal responsibility and determination *are* key elements in achieving success, but students know there is more to it than that. Ninth-graders have lived thirteen or fourteen years, long enough to see the inequities that exist in schools and communities. Signs of wealth and status are part of the school culture, and students are pretty sharp observers of what counts in social positioning.

One concern of mine is that, as we enter a time of more demands for teaching technological applications across the curriculum, we may lose some of the space for narratives in our classes. I hope that there will always be time in the curriculum for human communication that doesn't involve a machine in the middle.

Discussion and Implications

In this article we have considered how teachers' stories inscribe worlds, beliefs, and identities that position students to engage in classroom instruction. We have observed how teachers can and do use stories strategically as methods for shaping knowledge, reinforcing motivation, and building community. At the same time, it has become apparent that these stories inadvertently determine which views of schooling and of life will prevail. Consequently, if we use pedagogical stories to study the construction and conditions of classroom learning, then it is incumbent upon us to carefully consider both their strategic and their inadvertent influences.

Dave's and Jack's new awareness of storytelling offers ways of consciously thinking about the uses of storytelling as a strategic tool in classroom teaching. Their insights can be useful to other teachers, as well, and to those of us who study teaching and learning. Our analysis of their stories illuminated the role of narrative meaning in connecting what teachers and students think is important to learn and in conveying why and how to engage in learning it. To become more strategic in the use of storytelling requires that teachers analyze the effects of particular collections of stories and that they make that analysis part of their planning. Such analysis requires considering how narratives, in general, express views about what should count as knowledge and achievement and, in particular, how they display the teacher's and others' knowledge and achievement. In addition, teachers should consider whether the messages in their stories are consistent from story to story and aligned with classroom practices.

This kind of analysis is important because object lesson stories with the resonance of "The Dancer" and "Graveyard Shift at the 7-11" become an instructional presence that is reinvoked in daily classroom practices and in students' memories. These narrative ideological frameworks instruct students in ways to express themselves and their understandings. They teach students why, whether, when, and how to participate in learning and how to evaluate the success of their participation. Over time, the frequency, duration, and kinds of stories that teachers tell and the occasions on which they tell them shape and hold steady the norms that guide students. Thus students learn what it is to be a good student, what is worth knowing, and how achievement should be displayed.

Dave's narratives provided students with ways of managing their anxiety about demands to achieve good grades and high test scores. The narratives both reinforced the importance of grades and scores and told students to reach beyond them. Dave's stories encouraged students to seek out powerful learning experiences—to seek out demanding teachers, rigorous instruction, and difficult academic assignments and examinations—and pushed them to achieve more than what they considered their best. In his stories, instructor's critique and critical self-examination played important roles. Successful students in his narratives accepted rigorous critique as the foundation for their improvement. Their acceptance and following of the teacher's directions led them to achieve both in high school and in higher education.

The successes and failures of the characters in Jack's object lesson stories reinforced the importance of life interests and experiences and their relationship to schooling. Jack's stories also contributed to the understanding that school, jobs, and life are about solving problems. Jack's characters made mistakes, disagreed, failed to understand, and missed deadlines in the process of learning. The stories presented keeping track of where one stands as one aims for achievement as what students needed to do. They provided students with strategic, motivational, and procedural guidelines for maintaining a long-term perspective as the context for their short-term failures. In addition, the stories provided a framework of values and dispositions that enabled students to work together to achieve. They taught that all of Jack's students needed to learn from failure by figuring out what had not worked and why.

Clearly, the students in these two classes understood very differently their roles as participants in learning communities. The differences in roles emerged as students recognized, developed, and reinforced the identities that they saw for themselves in their teachers' stories. Dave's students, assuming that the educational system worked for and with them, adopted a critique-based relationship with Dave. Jack's students, who could not be assured of always meeting academic standards, would not have responded positively to a critique-based relationship, which would have merely reinforced their assumption that school is a system organized for others' needs. Their relationship with Jack needed to provide space for ambiguity, error, and knowledge gaps and allow them to measure their performance on a broader scale than the evaluation of immediate academic tasks.

Thus it is important to reflect on whether teachers' stories encompass the range and diversity of the values and beliefs represented by students in a given classroom and whether the stories will appeal to or discourage particular students. We are reminded that stories have the inclusive power to build a classroom community of participants, and we wonder whether, in other classrooms, stories privilege some students and marginalize others. When stories give *all* students an opportunity to recognize, develop, and reinforce their identities, and when they imbue schooling practices with recognizable and valued meaning, then a community of practice exists. It exists because such stories make the recognition and acceptance of similarity and difference possible through articulating a common belief system in which students see themselves, and peers different from themselves, as belonging.

To carry out these reflections, we should attend not only to the kinds and contents of teachers' stories but also to the occasions on which they are told, their purposes, and their forcefulness in engaging students. In addition, we found that to understand whether consistency and alignment existed across stories, we had to consider the instances wherein stories were reinvoked, mirrored, or cross-referenced. Such a logic of inquiry into the narrative webs that teachers spin will help them to locate disjunctions, contradictions, and absences. Looking at the stories they tell will give teachers access to their own meanings and enable them to develop their meaning-making into a conscious strategic facet of their pedagogy.

Stories and their meanings are not chosen and managed by their tellers alone. Stories are also expressions of cultural values, norms, and structures passed on through the tellers, often without conscious intention (Geertz, 1973). Teachers unwittingly select and shape their curriculums and pedagogy according to cultural dispositions about how to get along in the world; and those dispositions are based on perceptions about self-worth, self-efficacy, and opportunity that reflect a teacher's social class and historical time period (Bourdieu, 1977). Macro social narratives are projected through teachers' stories about people's educational and life experiences and their consequences (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1995). The people who populated Dave's stories, including his sons, had a sometimes challenging but upwardly mobile and successful experience in moving through the traditional educational system. Consequently, Dave's stories projected the view that students could do well in a responsive school system. For instance, although GATE English literature was created specifically to serve only students designated as "gifted and talented," Dave had opened it and fashioned it for any student willing to do the work. Students not officially designated as exceptional were given the opportunity to experience the rigorous curriculum that they would need to complete to become top students. Dave's meritocratic view—that anyone can do it who is smart enough and works hard enough—reflects belief in school achievement as an outcome of tenacity, discipline, and hard work. Jack's stories, on the other hand, reflect a life in which schooling does not dominate and education does not inevitably mark a straight line to social mobility and self-fulfillment. Jack's stories reflected a life in which he had learned much outside formal education. They appealed to students who had less faith in their access to educational or societal privilege. Although his stories, as well, promote the everyone-can-be-a-success, pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps view of American individualism, they acknowledge that social and cultural forces are not always opportune and can be arbitrarily or intentionally oppressive. The people in Jack's stories needed constantly to figure out what was in their best interest and rescue themselves from their missteps.[3] Pedagogical stories, as semantic maps infused with an ideological point of view, exert a resilient regularity, systematicity, and uniformity in conveying what counts as getting to the destinations they promote. When students in a classroom meaningfully unite and experience community, they share that ideological point of view. Additionally, when they observe their own and others' success within a community of beliefs and practices, that ideology is reinforced and sustained and takes on the status of "the way life and education are."

Stories also inadvertently shape teachers and their teaching. Stories articulate, affirm, and strengthen teachers' interests and values. Dave's and Jack's reflections show that they were unaware of the extent to which their stories uniquely structured and reinforced their own teaching points of view. They reported that they told their stories for pedagogical effect, to support their students' engagement in learning the curriculum. However, to attribute story emergence only to the demands of a given teaching situation underplays the extent to which Dave's and Jack's stories were voicings of identity. Their object lesson stories expressed and reinforced their senses of who they were, by representing their informal, practical knowledge about their mastery of what Weber (1978) calls "life chances." Their urge to pass on their practical, strategic lessons about the relationship between school and life was realized through storytelling. Dave and Jack converted their own experiences of social and economic necessity into what they thought was best for their students. Although they offered their students choices, the choices conformed to and replicated the views of schooling and life that had evolved from their own experiences and choices. In Dave's stories, life was for the talented and strong who chose to accept criticism. In Jack's, life was difficult and arbitrary and required constant evaluative monitoring. The stories that Dave and Jack told, by articulating the conditions that they warned students of and were preparing them for, shaped and maintained the teachers' identities as viable teachers who had much to give.

Dave and Jack are not anomalies. Traditionally, students describe their good teachers as inspirational storytellers, as Jack reminds us in mentioning Dr. Abernathy. Bourdieu (1977) argues that, driven by a sense of honor, good teachers try to give meaning to the practices that they teach and try to give their students access to the fruits of education. They give the subject matter, the practices, and their way of teaching honorable reasons for existing, and they provide necessary lessons about how the individual comes to terms with the institutional structures of education and the societal structures in which they are embedded. Although pedagogical stories can be honorable and important tools for creating classroom communities, the contrast between Jack's and Dave's social narratives alerts us to reconsider previously unexamined assumptions about communities of learning. Communities of learning are more than idealized spaces in which teachers and students come together to accomplish satisfying projects. What constitutes and creates community needs to be understood as more than a set of instructional practices, approaches, and processes. Dave's and Jack's stories show us how subject matter and instruction are embedded in narratively delivered value systems overlapping with or bumping against students' values. This view encourages us to consider how classroom cultures reflect their teachers' beliefs, why some students find it easier to "buy in" to certain kinds of classes more than others, and how classrooms are the places where societal agendas are inculcated. Dave's and Jack's cases are object lessons for our understanding of teaching and learning and the strategic steps that we can take to improve them.

Appendix 1
Dave's Object Lesson Stories

Story	Source	Purpose
		Learning subject matter
1. Dad Golfing (analogy)	Personal	Reading approach
2. College Reading as English Major	Higher education	Reading approach
3. Listing	Higher education	Reading approach
4. Sharon's Teeth (analogy)	Personal	Reading approach
5. If Anything Is Odd . . .	Higher education	Reading approach
6. How the Mind Works	Higher education	Reading approach
7. How Not to Read	Teaching	Reading approach
8. The *Beowulf* Writer	Higher education	Reading approach
9. Rote Memory	Teaching	Memorizing
10. Phone Numbers	Teaching	Memorizing
11. Memorizing Presidents	Teaching	Memorizing
12. Five-Paragraph Essay (analogy)	Teaching	Writing approach
13. Modifying Language	Personal	Writing approach
14. Complication in Point of View	Teaching	Writing approach
15. Bureaucratic Memos	Personal	Writing approach
16. Twain's Advice	Higher education	Writing approach
17. Ten Video Boxes (analogy)	Teaching	Writing approach
18. Edge of a Cold Pool (analogy)	Teaching	Writing approach
19. Always Right, Always Wrong	Teaching	Writing approach
20. Teeing Up the Ball (analogy)	Personal	Writing approach
		Learning how to be a student
21. Cliff's Notes (analogy)	Teaching	Learning aids
22. Cheating at the Theater	Teaching	Cheating
23. Spilled Milk	Teaching	Classroom behavior
24. Who to Complain To	Teaching	Dealing with grading
25. Fairness in Grading	Teaching	Dealing with grading
26. Astonishing Essay	Teaching	How to get an A
27. Grading Is Arbitrary	Teaching	Attitude toward grades
28. B+	Personal	Attitude toward grades
29. How Not to Get an A	Teaching	Earning a good grade
		Standardized testing
30. Earning Glory on the PSAT	Teaching	Mental preparation for test
31. Prep for PSAT	Teaching	Preparation for SAT
32. My Son's One Achievement Test	Personal	Preparation for SAT
33. Take Test Once	Teaching	Preparation for SAT
34. Scores Are Plastic	Personal	Preparation for SAT
35. Advantage of a Big Vocabulary	Teaching	Preparation for SAT

Appendix 2
Jack's Object Lesson Stories

Story	Source	Purpose
		Learning subject matter
1. Barbara Walters' Interview	Television	Interviewing
2. What Animal Would You Be	Teaching	Interviewing
3. Stereotyping Basketball	Sports	Interviewing
4. Organizing/Writing It Up	Higher education	Interview write-up
5. Justin Maceda	Teaching	Interview write-up
6. Starting the Essay	Higher education	Interview write-up
7. Starting Essay With Interview Structure	Higher education	Interview write-up
8. Most Interesting Fact	Sports	Interview write-up
9. Other Ways to Begin	Sports	Interview write-up
10. Homonyms	Personal	Word understanding
11. Scavenger Hunt (analogy)	Teaching	Inquiry method
		Introducing class members
12. Best School	Teaching	Introduce school
13. Graveyard Shift at the 7-11	Personal	Introduce teacher
14. Map of Your Neighborhood	Teaching	Introduce student
15. Backyard Tree	Personal	Introduce student
16. Huge Map	Teaching	Introduce student
17. Foundations/Architects	Teaching	Characterize the course
		Learning how to be a student
18. Last Names	Teaching	Give all information
19. Have Own Computer	Magazine	Necessary tools
20. Academic Folders	Teaching	4-year record
21. Auto Insurance (analogy)	Teaching	Performance contract
22. Reading Aloud, Avoiding Ridicule	Teaching	Public behavior
23. Turning In Assignments Late	Teaching	Managing deadlines
24. Plagiarism	Teaching	Plagiarism
25. Michael Bolton	Television	Plagiarism
26. Copying Homework	Teaching	Plagiarism
27. How Not to Play	Teaching	Don't cheat
28. Room for Disagreement	Teaching	Managing disagreement
29. Publishing in Class	Teaching	Displaying work
30. Work, Work, Work	Personal	Managing workload
31. Self-Destruction	Teaching	Managing workload
32. Teachers Have Homework Too	Teaching	Respecting teachers' time
33. Taking School Seriously	Teaching	Being successful
34. Day Planners	Business world	Organizing time
35. Some Schools Have Seven Classes	Teaching	Organizing time
36. Responsibilities	Personal	Organizing time
37. Teenage Sleep	Magazine	Organizing time
38. Richest Man	Television	Effort
39. Babe Ruth, Strike-Out King	Sports	Making mistakes
40. High School Basketball	Personal	Finding your niche
41. Shooting a Movie (analogy)	Film	Making mistakes

Notes

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[1]Dave and Jack and the university researchers agreed to share the data and analyses to serve their professional purposes. They also agreed that all four voices would be represented in any publications based on the data. Dave wanted to investigate the efficacy of his teaching methods. Jack, as co-chair of the school restructuring committee, wanted information to improve Academic Foundations for Success.

Prior to the studies, Lesley Rex had worked as supervisor of English student teachers for seven years at Dave's school and for eight years at Jack's; her job included supervising student teachers in their classrooms. She had also participated with Dave and Jack in activities related to their local literature and writing project site. Dave and Jack helped collect and analyze data. The three co-presented various studies from the data corpus at national education conferences, to Jack's high school faculty, and each year to Dave's students.

[2]The title of each story, the day it was told, and the time period of occurrence in minutes and seconds appear after each story segment.

[3]To further consider the macro social narratives that Dave's and Jack's stories represent, see Brian Street's (1984) distinctions between autonomous and ideological models of literacy.

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