



NARRATIVE WORKS
Issues, Investigations, & Interventions

SPECIAL ISSUE: A *NARRATIVE WORKS* MONOGRAPH

**LISTENING TO
STORIES OF COURAGE
AND
MORAL CHOICE**

**CREATING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT INCLUSIVE CARE
IN OUR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES**

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Appendices

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Appendix A presents a further discussion of methodology as it relates to both the Courage and Moral Choice Project (CMPC) and the Zakyntos and Hurricane Katrina interviews and analyses. Appendix B contains the interview questions. Appendix C presents a curriculum map for those interested in undertaking a project similar to the CMCP.

Keywords: methodology, interview questions, curriculum map

Appendix A

Methodology for Interpreting the Data from Participant Essays and Interviews

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In our analysis, we principally strove to understand the *meaning* of our participants' responses. To this end, we used a hermeneutical, and therefore dialogical, approach to understanding as articulated by Gadamer (1984). Hermeneutical analysis is based on the assumption that a tradition (cultural content or the investigator's horizon) informs the investigator's interpretation (Schwandt, 2000). In order to reach an understanding that effectively builds a translation between the participant's context and the investigator's context, the researcher must be willing to risk his or her perspective through a process of back-and-forth dialogue about meaning (Gadamer, 1989).

Our initial interviews were loosely guided by a brief interview (see Appendix B, Interview Schedule). We then used questions or requests for further elaboration to check our understanding of the initial interviews. The follow-up questions we used often involved an initial rudimentary translation and paraphrasing of meaning so that our initial interpretation might be commented on and refined by interviewees.

Once we gathered data from our initial interviews, we identified categories using a mapping process described as *axial coding*, which illustrates the relatedness and proximity between categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In keeping with Corbin and Strauss' model, we then searched the data for themes that fell into the subcategories created by the supraordinate categories.

Using a hermeneutical approach, we then brought these categories, both subordinate and supraordinate, back to our participants to test their soundness. Typically, we would present our thematic understanding as a tentative hypothesis, to be built on or questioned by participants. For instance, the supraordinate category of "reciprocity" was suggested in our reading of the initial interviews. Particularly in the initial interviews related to helping and shelter during the Holocaust, participants spoke about the desire to "give back" to those who sheltered and helped, as conveyed in the stories related about the stained-glass windows on Zakynthos.

For those who experienced help and shelter during Katrina, the helpers were not generally at tremendous risk of losing their lives, and

they had a well-developed and fairly self-sufficient helping organization in place. In these contexts, immediate back-and-forth reciprocity was not most fitting. Melody's husband kept asking the Mennonite builders, "Is there something we can do for you?" to no avail.

In these cases, the desire to give back was transformed into the continuing gift of service that Melody and her husband expressed during the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti and in their ongoing work with the Musician's Village. These "other kinds of giving" led to a refinement of the supraordinate category of reciprocity to include the "gift of service" to others, an indirect way of "giving back."

Clifford Geertz (1979) has described the categories that researchers name in their qualitative analysis of interviews as "experience distant" (p. 227). The subcategories (for example, "What can we do for you?") were developed directly from the words of participants; this process is described by Geertz as "experience-near" categories (p. 227). Geertz frames the researcher's task as that of putting experience-near concepts in "illuminating connection" with experience-distant concepts. The juxtaposition of interviewer and interviewee concepts is highlighted in an effort to reliably translate the meaning of symbolic interaction. Categories and their relationships are refined through dialogue about researchers' interpretations and understanding during follow-up interviews. Both the researchers and participants search for examples that may bear out the worthiness of categories through their application to lived experience.

Knowledge that cannot be directly applied to a concrete situation or lived experience remains meaningless and even risks obscuring meaning (Gadamer, 1989, p. 279). Kvale (1995) points to a hermeneutically-based approach in which researchers and participants develop an understanding of the same context through dialogue and then "apply this knowledge by new actions in the situation; thus, through praxis, they test the validity of the knowledge" (p. 34). Before completing our manuscript, chapters were sent to participants to obtain their feedback and to ensure that the refined analysis makes sense and speaks truth to their lived experience.

To further test our categories against lived experience, data from the personal essays were triangulated into our later analysis. We searched for data that might disconfirm or add new meaning to our understanding of the categories. For instance, the theme of "making each other more human" from Santiago's essay added new dimensions to the subtheme emerging from the Katrina interviews of "a return to relationships the

way it should be.” Santiago’s essay expanded our understanding of the subcategory and the result was a more broadly applicable and meaningful category of lived experience.

This methodology was particularly well suited to our central purpose, which was to gain understanding of the experience of hearing stories about helping under stress. Our methodology has directed our attention to the insights, questions, and conversations these stories engendered as we observed common themes across different contexts. The give and take of back-and-forth dialogue allowed us to translate differing meanings across contexts and build a shared understanding.

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Appendix B Interview Schedule

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1. Can you tell me about the stories you heard about rescue efforts, or altruism under duress?
2. How were you related to the teller?
3. How have these stories affected you?
4. Any observations about the effects of the telling of the story on the story teller?
5. Have you intentionally passed the stories on?
6. If you have, how have you passed them on?

Appendix C Curriculum Map

Adele Baruch, Amanda Lane, and Molly Rand¹

One of the strengths of the Courage and Moral Choice Project (CMCP) curriculum, as it has been applied, is its balance between structure associated with district learning standards and enough freedom to allow rich, spontaneous learning moments to occur. The successes of the first and second phases of the project are integrated here with ideas for improved application, resulting in the curriculum map that follows this introduction. It is described as a “map” because we point to a number of learning events and strategies developed out of our experience and analysis, but we envision it being applied flexibly, with the particular needs of the school and students involved driving the full structure.

In the project’s second phase, it was taught by two teachers; one who relied on more structured plans and one who typically taught more extemporaneously (after comprehensive planning outside the classroom). The two styles balanced each other well. Both teachers agreed that in implementing the CMCP curriculum, it was important to constantly remain open to the ways that they could connect the larger themes of moral choice and altruism to the student’s immediate experience.

The teachers noticed that they ran into a lull in teacher and student focus and enthusiasm for the project at about 5 weeks into its implementation. They attributed this to the fact that both teachers had deaths in their immediate families, resulting in missed time at school and less school focus for both of them. The strategy they used to move forward was to address this lull in energy head-on in a project-wide meeting, seeking ways to rejuvenate energy and attention.

The curriculum map is described below, with some description of the planning that took place in the months prior to the start of the project. Specific narrative description follows the map, offering clarification around some of the pedagogical approaches and choices.

¹ “Amanda Lane” and “Molly Rand” are pseudonyms for teachers who participated in the CMCP. Their names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Suggested Curriculum Map

Planning participants: two teachers; two artist-educators; local participants interested in stories of helping.

I. 5–9 Months pre-CMPC

A. Teachers discuss an integrated curriculum about stories of helping and history using the expressive arts, including such skills as writing, poetry, songwriting, and visual art.

B. Teachers and artist-educators discuss and create a preliminary workshop schedule.

C. Teachers hold a meeting with individuals willing to share stories of helping to design a panel presentation and discuss potential follow-up interviews with CMCP student participants.

II. 2–4 Months pre-CMCP

A. Teachers present CMCP plans to school board and/or administration as needed; once CMCP is approved, teachers and designated school staff discuss a Project timeline.

B. Teachers begin holding conferences with individual student volunteers who have been selected to participate in the Project

III. CMCP Begins

A. Teachers and student participants co-define “moral courage”

B. Student participants read, view, and listen to stories of courage that required moral choices.

C. Teachers and student participants identify mission statement for the CMCP.

D. Teachers facilitate peer circles for student participants to interview panel participants and to identify community service opportunities

E. Teachers discuss with student participants the interview skills necessary to gather sufficient information to write about CMPC; skills include:

1. Writing techniques for effective storytelling.
2. Art techniques for visual description of stories.

F. Artist-educators are introduced to student participants and visit the CMCP to participate in classroom activities.

G. Teachers contact community sites to secure service opportunities.

H. Teachers arrange time each week for conferences with student participants (each teacher meets with a group for 1.5 hours per each day of the CMCP).

IV. 3rd Month of CMCP

A. Artist-educators implement workshops to facilitate interpretive creation of songs, visual art, poetry, and essays by student participants inspired by the stories they've heard.

B. Panel of individuals with stories of helping is implemented during school; panel includes stories and a question-and-answer session for student participants.

C. Students begin community service and interviews (including interviews with panel participants).

V. 4th–5th months of CMCP

A. Student participants prepare their final assignments.

1. Each student participant creates a poem, an essay, and a visual art piece, and participates in the collaborative writing of a song.
2. Each student participant is expected to choose one of their pieces to share with the community in the concluding CMCP event.

B. Student participants view a guest speaker who will talk about public speaking. (It is recommended that student participants rehearse their presentations prior to the concluding event.)

C. Teachers and appropriate school administrators decide on public venue for the concluding CMCP event.

D. Teachers conference with each student participant about their projects and engage student participants in dialogue around each of the identified learning targets.

E. Student participants and teachers share the evaluation process in individual meetings.

VI. CMCP Concluding Event

Concluding event is held for CMCP that features student participants' presentations of their chosen expression in response to their experience of stories of moral courage; community at large is invited

Final Comments

The two teacher participants focused on interviewing skills with student participants so that students could gather stories of helping from within their community. One of the skills they introduced was a technique called "explode the moment," which means that the interviewer, in order to seek rich thematic moments, essentially "slows down" their inquiry to allow all of the complex details and facets of the moment to unfold. The teachers noted that this technique was particularly helpful for some of the students in telling their gathered or personal stories.

During the implementation of the CMCP, every student participant created an essay, a work of visual art, a poem, and a collaboratively-written song, each featuring a story of courage and moral choice. Toward the end of the project, the participating teachers asked students to refine one of their projects and to prepare it for sharing at a concluding community event. (In the CMCP's pilot stage, the concluding event was a school board presentation.) The teachers noted that the editing of the students' essays was a labor-intensive project involving a

number of one-to-one meetings with each student as they worked on revising their pieces.

As noted above, individual project assessment and evaluation meetings occurred at the conclusion of the project between teachers and student participants. During these conferences, each of the students considered the district's learning targets. Student participants evaluated themselves on each of the targets and engaged in dialogue with their teachers about their teachers' assessment of the same thing. The final assessment was a collaborative evaluation that was a product of the final teacher/student participant meeting.

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Amanda Lane and **Molly Rand** are pseudonyms for teachers who participated in the Courage and Moral Choice Project.