An Autoethnography:

Using Stories and Drama to Improve My Teaching: A Professional Storyteller “Bends Back” to Look Forward

Dissertation

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Abstract

Employing autoethnography as methodology, this study details the promise and problems from my fourteen years as a classroom teacher and nine years as a storytelling teacher at the secondary level. It juxtaposes these experiences using the storytelling and storymaking processes found in process drama and dramatic inquiry. With dramatic inquiry, it examines how story is used to sustain the inquiry of students as they engage in the fictional world not as passive listeners, but as active agents or co-constructors of drama worlds (O’Neill, 1995).

This is a critical study of how my identity as a professional storyteller and storytelling teacher has changed as a result of studying and teaching using pedagogies known as process drama (Heathcote, 1984; O’Neill, 1982) and dramatic inquiry (Edmiston, 2009). These methods of teaching employ improvisation and teacher-in-role (Heathcote, 1984) to co-construct and imagine in a drama world (O’Neill, 1995). As a storyteller, I have viewed storytelling within a limited “organized storytelling” (Stone, 1999) context with fixed rules and set descriptions of the essential story elements including tale, teller, and audience (listener). This study challenges these traditional assumptions of how story has been used in storytelling introducing other contexts, namely dramatic contexts, for classroom learning. It also questions how and why organized storytelling privileges the
told story when story is used for classroom learning and explores how storymaking can be included in performed stories.

It shows through autoethnography and thick description my transition from storytelling teacher to one who purposefully incorporates more---namely storymaking in my classes, process drama and dramatic inquiry. In addition to performance storytelling, this work values storymaking (King, 1993) and a different form of performance (Peterson & Langellier, 2004) found in “everyday narratives.” Applying these everyday narratives to classroom contexts when students are using process drama or dramatic inquiry, the teacher narratives are changed. This study examines how teachers can use the five dimensions of narrative as outlined by (Ochs & Capps, 2001) to improve their instruction. It details how improvisation (Heathcote, 1984) and facilitation by the teacher (and students) can expand the learning that comes from using narratives.

Most of all, this work uses writing and telling stories to improve my teaching practice. Honest and situational examples in the form of scenarios and narratives highlight and emphasize my teaching. It is about the personal change in my teaching; it is about how I am identified and how I identify myself when using stories.
Dedication

To my loving wife, Barbara
Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Lyle G. Cordi who taught me my first stories and teach me everyday the value of living life well.

Dr. Brian Edmiston who not only expertly shared with me the wonder and educational value of process drama, but has changed my teaching and how I respond to my students.

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Because of you, the stories continue to be told.
Vita

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Publications

Books


Chapters in Edited Books


Peer Reviewed Journal Articles


*Editor Reviewed Journal Articles*


*Media*


Cordi, K. (2002). Community Campfire CD
Cordi, K. (2001). Listen to the Animals CD (Storytelling World Award)
Cordi, K. (2000). Kevin Cordi LIVE CD
Cordi, K. (1998). Tales to Tickle Your Funny Bone CD

**Fields of Study**

Major Field: Education
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Chapter 1—Introduction

“Life must be lived, but can only be understood by looking backward” (Winn, 1960, p. 56). The purpose of this study is to explore and reflect upon how, as a teacher, I have changed in my use of storytelling, storymaking, and drama to review critically my past work as a teacher and evaluate my past teaching practice, as well as my present understanding of teaching. I look back so I can go forward.

Autoethnography

Through autoethnography, rather than stating facts or arguing claims, I use narratives that are emotional, passionate, and situational about my research and experiences within the classroom to travel back to reveal and re-discover arguments and suggest improvements. Written from the heart and mind, I want this study to be evocative. The goals of evocative writing are “to encourage compassion and promote dialogue” (Bochner & Ellis, 2002, p. 749). In this case the dialogue is internal, but when recorded it becomes an external discovery of my work within the classroom. This internal as well as social conversation improves my teaching using story and drama. It provides what is necessary to review my work and not simply engage it. I draw not only from my voice, but also through my writing. I hear the voices and influences of my students, colleagues, and fellow researchers. Tying my reflections and research together forms my understanding.
Situating the Reader, Understanding Autoethnography

The reader should realize that unlike other scholarly texts that hide the use of the word “I” when writing and reflecting, autoethnography calls for it. In this work, I discuss my teaching experience, not in chronological order, but in order of significance. I consider an experience significant if it allowed me to pause or re-think my teaching methods. Such experiences are worth reflection because they break the routine or the reflex choices of my teaching. I stepped out of my routine, adapting to a new teaching situation. When I paused or felt discomfort teaching, I was forced to recognize other teaching choices needed to be made. When this was happening, I became uncomfortable. I needed to accommodate these changes. This study allows me to recognize the need to change the way I used stories. It helped me transition from being a professional storyteller to finding new ways as a teacher to plan and teach using narratives.

Constructing Meaning Using Story and Drama

This dissertation is primarily concerned with two types of meaning making: meaning made from fifteen years of teaching in the form of “story lessons” and meaning made from using narrative in conjunction with process drama (O’Neill, 1985), and a form of process drama, called dramatic inquiry (Edmiston, 2010). How can making meaning be accentuated through drama and story, namely a system of process drama entitled dramatic inquiry?
Research Questions

The following research questions guide my inquiry:

How has my identity as a storytelling teacher changed since I encountered the pedagogy of process drama?

SUB-QUESTIONS

a) What is the significance for my work as a storytelling teacher of extending my teaching by using the pedagogies of process drama and dramatic inquiry?

b) How does the discussion of narrative performance contribute to my understanding of process drama and storytelling in the classroom?

For twelve years, I was fortunate to serve as a full-time storyteller and credentialed teacher teaching story-related classes. In fact, the National Storytelling Network, NSN, names me the first full-time high school storytelling teacher in the country because of my work, innovation and commitment to story. I taught introductory and advanced storytelling, creative writing through creative telling, science fiction and fantasy, and traditional drama classes. With my English and reading assignments, I used narrative as a primary means of teaching. This included teaching a specialized reading class, “Rap and read: using oral language to teach literacy,” and for nine years, a class for students labeled as “disadvantaged” called “Opportunity,” designed for students as a last chance before dismissal. My unique perspective as a storytelling teacher allowed me to build curriculum for these classes using storytelling and storymaking. Over the years, I have been able to experiment, design, and re-shape this narrative-based curriculum and tailor it to meet the needs of my students.
**Unique Perspective as a Researcher/Educator**

In my research for this study, I discovered both classroom teachers and researchers (e.g. Egan, 1989; Paley, 1990, Bolton, 2003; King, 1993) who have studied storytelling, but not from the perspective as a practicing, professional storyteller. Many of the studies concerned early childhood and literacy studies. This study examines storytelling in specially designed story-based classes as well as standard English, reading, and drama classes. It also examines storytelling within the use of drama in other people’s classrooms. This work will not be focused on early childhood: my work primarily reflects my experience at the high school level. However, I will address my experience working with elementary school children when I discuss my work and understanding of dramatic inquiry and process drama.

My experience working at both East Bakersfield and Hanford High School in California was rewarding. The students were in grades 9-12 and came from both urban and rural environments. Over 45 percent of the students were Hispanic. I was able to listen to stories in new ways, unlike a traditional classroom teacher, engineering my curriculum to be negotiated with my students as we built our narratives. We created lasting non-professional and professionally produced CDs and videos of our work. During the times in school and aligned with co-curricular programs, I learned to be an attentive listener of my students’ stories.

This teaching story is one of promise and discovery, though it also chronicles my struggles and personal change. There were many times I questioned if storytelling was
the best method for learning. There were other times still when my students surprised me with the complexity of their story development and the risks they took because of the safe environment we had created for sharing. This work not only chronicles the comfortable accounts in the classroom using story, but also the discomfort I felt as a teacher using story and drama.

Most of this work is about my struggle to change who I was as a teacher and a performing artist. Sometimes my expectations as a storyteller directly conflicted with my established, teacher identity.

Identity and Narrative

Cultural anthropologist Elliott Oring (1994) examines identity and the contributing factors that influence how identity is shaped by others. This is important to my study because I examine not only how I define myself as a storytelling teacher, but also how this definition has been changed in my work with others in the various contexts that I teach. Oring (1994) distinguishes between three types of identities:

1. Individual identity
2. Personal identity
3. Collective identity

The first, individual identity refers to “that sense of space-time connections with states, thoughts, and actions from the past” (p. 212). An example would be the individual sense I could be clear to know that I am the person writing this paper. The second type of identity is personal identity, which is “composed from memories, identifications, and
repudiations of individuals, ideas, and experiences which come to constitute a, perhaps shifting, but nevertheless discernible, configurations” (p. 212). To paraphrase, Lynd (1961) looked at “who one is” but analyzed this only in relation to “what one is” and “where one stands in the world” (p. 14-15). In this context, people perform their identities. Identities are not fixed categories, like “I’m Appalachian”, rather, in some contexts, my Appalachian identity becomes significant, in others it does not. This is why storytelling is so crucial for identity. We tell stories about who we are. We tell stories to help explain our experiences to ourselves. Narratives give meaning to experience. We sometimes reject the narratives others impose on our experiences. Oring (1994) also states there is a collective identity which refers, “to those aspects of personal identity that are derived from experiences that produces the deep sense of identification with others” (p. 212). As Baumeister & Muraven (1996) argue, “it is obvious that identities do not come into being into a vacuum. Nor do they emerge first and then merely seek out a suitable context for themselves. Thus societies can play an important causal role in creating and shaping identity” (p. 405). Sometimes my personal identity as a storyteller was in conflict with my collective identity as an educator. My collective identities of storyteller and classroom teacher sometimes were in conflict. One way to recognize my many identities was with narrative. As Keller-Cohen and Dyer, (2000) note, narrative helps one reveal how narratives change in our lives.

In contemporary scholarship it has become commonplace to observe that speakers use the site of narratives to construct particular identities…the construction of identity being understood not as a single act, but as a process that is constantly active, each telling a story offering the narrator a fresh opportunity to create a particular representation of herself…(p. 150).
However, before the narratives are constructed one must understand what they are and how they act. In the case of my teaching identity, sometimes the storyteller expectations were the ones I adhered to when teaching my students. However, there were times this was not the most effective teaching choice for my students. At these times, I sometimes wrestled with the choices I needed to make, and in this deliberation sometimes chose my storytelling identity over what a teacher should do or could do to improve learning. This critical reflection is about the difficult, sometimes abrupt, sometime gradual transformation and blending of my identities. My understood and misunderstood identities as storyteller, drama teacher, and process drama specialist had established rules, and in order to improve my teaching I learned to challenge their tenets. As a storyteller, I learned to see stories as valuable in the ways they were told. As Stone (1997) points out, “Storytelling in all of its contexts is a dynamic experience in which participants assume social identities as tellers and as listeners” (p. 233). These identities are more “rigidly defined than in casual telling” (Stone, 1997 p. 233). Sometimes, I would bring my storytelling identity into my work in the classroom. A similar effect occurred when I was teaching drama. As a drama teacher, I saw using drama as a privileged art, used only by those studying theater. As an educator, I wrestled with which identity supported my students’ learning. I asked myself questions like the following: Is a storyteller approach appropriate for the classroom teacher who uses stories? As a theater-trained teacher, how could I possibly use drama outside of my formal training arena? In wrestling with such questions, I was looking to change my teaching because I not only learned, but
experienced, new uses of story (storymaking, process, and dramatic inquiry), beginning to question my teaching choices.

In writing this autoethnography, I am also searching for where I was troubled in my teaching. I continue to shift who I was as a teacher to who I am now. I use stories to learn from my own teaching of storymaking and storytelling. One might say I am learning between my work as a storyteller, storymaker, and teacher. I am searching for a “new middle” (Pratt, 2008; Welty, 1984). In Chicano literature, this is called Nepantla, connoting in-between or a reference to the space of the middle (Mora, McKnight, Ceballos, & López, 1993). Anzaldúa, (1999), a social theorist and activist, addressed issues of identity creating states of in-between different “realities.” These in-between realities can be compared to my work as teacher and storyteller. After all, we are storied people (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In these storied worlds we search to find meaning for our actions

From birth, humans are agents in a storied world, where their actions and intentions are, understood through narrative structures. Narratives are used to both to keep track of the regularities of one’s own existence to make sense of strange, new experiences (Davis, et al., 2008, p. 47).

Transformation to Create a New Middle

Most of all, this work is about transformation. How have I changed as a teacher during my fourteen years in public schools, as a storyteller in the classroom, and most recently as a teacher who uses dramatic inquiry to help students learn? I have become a different teacher as my identities and understandings have shifted, changed and ultimately reformed. In fact, when two identities are in conflict, a new one is formed. Mora (1993)
calls this a “new middle.” This is where I am; I am in the middle of what it means to be a storyteller who works in the classroom. I am in the center of my understanding of how to use drama for learning. I stand between my work as a professional, performing artist, and as a teacher. In this study, I seek more understanding as to how these identities work in concert and sometimes in conflict within the classroom. I endure a personal transformation in order to become a more informed and skilled teacher. I draw upon my identity as a professional storyteller when it helps my students’ learning and informs my teaching. I identify as a process drama specialist when I need to use stories to promote learning. I look to transform my understanding so it improves my teaching.

Personal transformation however, involves an internal power struggle between the deep yearning for growth within you and those seemingly insurmountable forces that desire to keep you where you are. Forces whose muscles have been strengthened and toned by years and years of habit of incorrect thinking and action (Nyabadza, 2003, p. 1).

In writing this autoethnography, I am searching for where I was troubled in my teaching. I continue to shift who I was as a teacher to who I am now. I use stories to learn from my own teaching of storymaking and storytelling...

**Assumptions About Storytelling**

This study debunks some of my formal training as a teacher. My educational preparation included coursework as a classroom teacher where I was expected to create lesson plans accounting for each minute of my instruction. Using stories and drama, there were times we did not follow a timed schedule, instead we followed our collaborative inquiry. Each day’s stories built upon the prior day’s discovery, as we simply explored a question or subject, spending time researching and developing narratives or using drama to study
within the fictional world. Time was not measured in physical intervals, but instead by what was significant for my teaching. In this work I examine what the students were learning or not learning. I question how I plan for instruction as a teacher.

My assumptions about storytelling developed from years of training as a professional storyteller and were echoed and reinforced by a community of storytellers. Many of the people I worked with had limited time in the classroom because they were invited into the classroom as guest artists only. As a teacher I had my own classroom. I built community daily within my classroom and used stories for longer projects such as exploring *The Canterbury Tales*. I was both teacher and artist, but a teacher who was first using artistic understandings and skills to teach as I was performing. I am always a, “storyteller, story teacher” (Gillard, 1996). However, I still followed storyteller assumptions in my dual, classroom role. This study troubles these assumptions as I work to become a better teacher. I examine points of discomfort---times when it seemed awkward to teach under these assumptions.

1. **Told stories are privileged as tools for learning.** As a storyteller, I learned stories must be told in order for them to be considered “valuable.” In many of my assignments as a teacher, my students created stories, but only to be told. The creative process of storymaking was to serve as the end result of telling. This work examines the storymaking process as a valuable part of learning.

2. **In order for a story to be performed, it must follow a prescriptive method.** Stories that are told must be told in a certain way. This usually consist of students sitting in semi-
circles sharing stories while the teller stood and shared the tale. This was the “standard” telling environment. In fact, many storytellers insisted on this environment before they shared their stories. This work questions this formula and presents new environments for both storytelling and storymaking.

3. **No questions are to be asked while a storyteller is telling a story.** I followed this for years. It was the classroom expectation. In fact, I often treated storytelling time as sacred time. Questions were not asked until the story experience---the telling of the complete story---was finished. This work examines what happens when students are not only allowed, but encouraged, to ask questions about the stories---while they are shaped, told, and/or shared.

4. **Storymaking only serves to promote storytelling.** As I shared, I privileged storytelling over storymaking. I did not examine how the actual narratives that were shared as stories were made. The questions, the involvement, and the diversity of responses were not examined as much as the telling. This work allows me to reflect upon the student learning during the storymaking process.

5. **Stories must have a beginning, middle, and end in order to be shared as a told story.** I often told students they could not share their stories unless they had these essential elements (Collins & Cooper, 1997). This was the criteria I used to evaluate my students when they shared their stories. This work allows me to look, not only at stories that have these components, but also the messiness of stories (Pagnucci, 2004) when shared as fragments or incomplete thoughts. This work allows me to examine
story fragments as teaching techniques. This includes holding back part of a story to increase interest.

**Reflection from Writing**

In order to examine these assumptions, I “bend back” (Guralnik, 1982, p.45) and critically reflect upon my experiences in the classroom using story and drama for teaching. However, I do this not as a journal to recount my experiences, but instead as critical reflections that will provide me a way to weigh my comfort and discomfort as a teacher over the years using autoethnography as a method to reflect upon these experiences. As I write about my past experiences, I draw upon my new understanding of using stories and drama from my doctoral work at The Ohio State University. There is a personal change that comes from writing to form a “new middle” (Pratt, 2008; Welty, 1984). In Chicano literature, this is called Nepantla connoting in between or a reference to the space of the middle (Mora, 1993). Anzaldua, (1999), a social theorist and activist, addressed issues of identity creating states of in-between different “realities.” These in-between realities can be compared to my work as teacher and storyteller. Writing becomes a powerful tool to not only address my many identities with teaching and performing, but to produce change as well. Welty (1984) understood this.

Writing a story…is one way of discovering sequence in experience, of stumbling upon cause and effect in the happenings of a writer’s own life…connections slowly emerge. Like distant landmarks you are approaching, cause and effect begin to align themselves, draw closer together. Experience is too indefinite outline in them to be recognized for themselves connect and are identified as a large shape. And suddenly a light is thrown back, as when your train makes a curve, showing that there has been a mountain of meaning rising behind you on the way you’ve come, is rising there still, proven now through retrospect (p. 90).
Through retrospective writing, I intend to help shine a brighter light on my teaching practice. Sometimes, like a neglected room, it will stay dark because no one has entered in a long time. In the middle of my teaching experience, I did not make time in an organized fashion to record my reflections; instead, I simply learned new methods by doing them. This form of writing is called autoethnography where experience is critical to the writing. “Ethnographic life is not separate from the self” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 253). As I write, I construct myself, and in so doing, begin to understand my actions. At the same time, understanding my motivations informs what I write and how I make meaning (Richardson, 1997). I look closely at the narratives that occur from my experience, rather than through them. Richardson speaks to the value of authentic, yet critical, writing. She expresses how maintaining an academic writing was not accepted by some of the academy, in her writing she worked to demonstrate that the researcher’s voice has a place in academic writing. As an academic researcher, she insisted on incorporating her voice in her work. I mirror this need and it is reflected in this work.

**Narrative as Ends and Means**

This work is concerned with narratives in two interrelated senses: making stories and telling stories.

The act of composing a narrative is a tool for making sense of some aspect of the world, and the resulting narratives are used to frame one’s knowledge. Narrative is both means and an end (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008, p. 45).

Storytelling is the actual telling of stories, which in my past teaching, was the only product or end result I was interested in pursuing. However, storytelling always involves storymaking. In my identity as a professional storyteller, I previously did not highlight
the educational value of the storymaking process. In this work, I examine not only the
use of told narrative to create meaning for students, but also how students construct
meaning or create narratives. For example, a student may tell a story about Christopher
Columbus. The student works to make his story accurate so he researches and spends
time with the teacher designing what he wishes to perform. There is learning involved in
the process. The interactions among students and teacher allow students to test ideas and
learn how a story is constructed. Students are able to distinguish what parts of the story
are significant for telling. By creating and telling this “told story,” the student telling and
other students listening can raise questions about the story and they may tell additional
stories in response.

**What Does Performance Mean?**

This study is also concerned with how I define performance as it relates to learning. I
look at the question, is it necessary to perform stories before a listening audience or can
stories be part of an experience in lieu of a structured performance? The standard
definition of performance is connected to the way a storyteller shares a polished story for
a listening audience. However, as I have discovered, performance can occur even in
classroom conversations. As Bauman (1978) asserts, a story is performed once it is
uttered. This work explores this definition of performance. It addresses, can students be
inside the narrative as opposed to performing it? How do and can I employ performance
in my teaching?
My Understanding of Drama Based On My Past Experience

In this study, I record and highlight those times when I stepped away from my traditional, teacher training including times I taught English or drama. For example, as a theater teacher, my training and practice, which included Summer Stock Theater in Kentucky, showed me how the theater operates. It directed me to understand my classroom should be or could be a microcosm of the theater world. My occupation as a theater teacher was to prepare students for a possible theater career or at the least, to understand how to behave, perform, or learn from the professional theater. I learned and taught the importance of auditions, rehearsals, and script reading. Whereas I privileged told stories in my storytelling classes, I privileged the training and performance or “try outs” of actors in my drama classes. The best roles went to those who worked for them.

New Understanding of Drama

This study reflects my changing understanding of how drama can be used in classrooms to promote learning. In contrast with drama as theater performance, i.e. drama as a product, I focus on drama for learning and the process of using drama in the classrooms. I use O’Neill’s (1995) term “process drama” to refer to classroom drama focused on learning. I also use Edmiston’s (2010) term “dramatic inquiry” to refer to process drama pedagogy that highlights learning through inquiry. As I developed a deeper understanding of process drama and dramatic inquiry, I let go of some of my assumptions about drama as theater in order to understand other ways of using drama to engage more students and promote learning.
Changing Understanding of Teacher

A key teaching assumption that I challenge in this study is that the teacher is solely responsible for knowing and leading the curriculum. I begin to learn the value of negotiated learning. In other words, I need to listen more to my students and work with them, and even at times, have them help me build my curriculum. In Heathcote, Johnson, & O'Neill, (1984) Heathcote shares teachers should “negotiate with significance” (p. 25). What is meant by significance is to take a specific view instead of a general one. She states, “The teacher must be able to take a significant view from a general one, and make it happen with meaning to those who bring it into focus” (p. 32). Heathcote (1984) also shares that a teacher’s perception must also be significant.

The way in which the eye sees with significance that which underlies the creations of painters, architects, sculptors, natural lines of landscape, forms of artifacts. The training in the natural seeking to beneath the outer form to the inner meanings so that the apparently dissimilar are revealed to have common areas of meaning (p. 33).

I note the times when instead of imparting my curriculum, I shared the process of learning by inviting my students to help me shape the curriculum. The students’ actions and language helped me change what we were doing in order to advance the learning using stories and drama. As I highlight the teaching choices I made to negotiate classroom learning, my identity changed from authority figure to facilitator of learning.

Definition of Terms

Narrative (story): The ability to narrate an experience in a form that can be understood by others is fundamental to the establishment of identity and social relationships (e.g., Ochs & Capps, 2001). Narrative is, “a crucial resource for societal emotions, attitudes,
and identities, developing interpersonal relationships, and constituting members in a community” (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Instead of relying on narrative from a textual reference, I am considering narrative as an interactive process (Ochs & Capps, 2001). I examine narrative as a verb (to narrativize) and something produced as narrative. In defining narrative, I look at it as both a process and product.

**Storytelling:** “To tell a story is to create community….Yet uncovering our stories is not a simple process” (King, 1993, p. 1). Keeping this in mind, there are many ways to use storytelling, including traditional ways. According to (Stone, 1998), traditional storytelling is, “the kind of narrative that takes place in full tradition; it usually takes place in more casual context than do organized storytelling events, though it can be formal and performance-centered” (p. ix). What is meant by full tradition is that it occurs in a ritual way, an organized environment and method. Students sit on the floor as the teller stands and tells a complete story. A complete story is one that has a beginning, middle, and end. Stone (1998) defines organized storytelling as, “consciously scheduled and presented performance of stories in formal settings, to children or adults, whether in schools or libraries, on concert stages, or at storytelling festivals or other events” (p. ix). However, storytellers have not agreed on a single definition of storytelling.

**Storymaking:** According to King (1993), “Storymaking, storytelling, and the make of drama are integrative activities requiring the storymaker, teller/dramatist to unite disparate bits of information into a whole (story) that sustains the viewer’s/listener’s interest” (p. 1). Stories do not act alone. They depend on the maker and other tools.
Stories and drama cannot be made in isolation; each teller/maker of drama conceives his or her story in the context of a complex of other’s stories. They work with our own stories exclusively. We can also use tales told from around the world that broaden our horizons, cultivate empathy for those thought to be different than ourselves, and provide the possibilities for connections across time, culture and experience.

**Inquiry:** Inquiry is more than asking questions, it is acting on and exploring the questions together. Inquiry and change often begin with a vague feeling of tension that we may not be able to articulate. Something isn't right, and we aren't quite sure what it is. Over time, we get a sense of what is bothering us, and that leads us to take some kind of action (Short and Harste, 1996). As Harste (1996) advocates, in a classroom context, students are curious and teachers should build upon those questions to create curriculum. Instead of "making sure" that students comprehended according to our interpretation, we provided opportunities for readers to construct and explore their understandings with others through conversation and dialogue. As Edmiston (2010) stresses, “Inquiry is grounded in finding answers to questions that people feel are important enough to pursue over both time and space in the various communities they feel a part of, like the clubs, organizations, or websites that people join” (p. 4).

**Ensemble:** According to the American Heritage College Dictionary (2002) ensemble means, “a unit or group of parts that contribute to a single effect” (p. 466). However, when I use this term ensemble in relation to storytelling and drama, I am referring to when everyone, adults and students, unite to create a dramatic/story experience. In this
definition, students and adults are working toward understanding, but can try many methods at the same time as if they are in an imaginative place. What they do as an ensemble is to take part in making the imaginary world real by their actions and words. In my understanding of ensemble, I refer to Neelands’ (2009) idea of ensemble as a way of using drama to promote a better understanding of the world. When students are working to improve or learn something together, whether they are in the fictional or real world, they learn about issues such as working together, addressing needs of the group, and even use drama to address and enact issues of social justice and being democratic. As Neelands (2009) states, this ensemble work creates “a better version of the real world on an achievable scale (p. 187).” In my form of ensemble, called ensemble storytelling, we use narratives to help understand community and democratic principles in both worlds.

**Process:** The methods upon which learning creates engagement for learning.

**Dramatic Inquiry:** Dramatic inquiry dramatizes inquires about life and it is improvised when actions and responses in particular social situations within imagined cultural communities are not predetermined but are collaboratively created by participants and mediated by adults (Edmiston, 2010).

**Identity:** Oring (1994) defines three types of identity, personal, individual, and collective. People perform their identities. Depending on context and community, identity is shifting; not fixed. Baumeister and Muraven (1996) point out that an identity is affected by a social cultural context. Mary Louise Pratt (2008) connects identity to,
“contact zones” which are—“social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (p. 519).

**Process Drama:** O’Neill (1984) call process drama a “mode of learning” (p. 11) learners of any age use to imagine roles to “explore issues, events, and relationships” (O’Neill & Lambert, 1983, p. 11). Improvisation is key in process drama. Product is not the outcome, the importance lies within the process contained within the drama. Process drama is a pedagogical use of dramatizing for teaching and learning rooted in the pedagogies and scholarship of Dorothy Heathcote (Wagner, 1976, Johnson & O’Neill, 1984, Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

**Teacher in role:** Dorothy Heathcote (1995), “pioneered the strategy as the practice of teacher structuring from within the drama by participating in fictional encounters alongside the students” (p. 276). Johnson and O’Neill (1986) explained Heathcote’s position as, “the teacher as the most mature member of the group, has not merely a right but a responsibility to intervene, since learning is the product of intervention” (p. 12).

**Role:** “When participants in drama activities imagine that they are other people then they take on ‘roles’” (Edmiston, 2010, p. 222). People can also have social roles, “that exist in parallel with any imagined roles” (Goffman, 1974, p. 228). Goffman states we see the world through frames, and in doing so, engage in the world in roles. In the dramatic world, these roles can shift in the drama.
Summary of Chapters

*Chapter One: Introduction*

I address how autoethnography allows me to write and reflect upon my classroom use of storytelling and storymaking, and how my assumptions have changed about storytelling and storymaking with the introduction of drama as a teaching pedagogy.

*Chapter Two: Literature Review*

This examines thinking concerned with storytelling and storymaking along with process drama and a special form of process drama entitled dramatic inquiry.

*Chapter Three: Methodology/Introduction*

This chapter explores autoethnography and why this is critical to this study. It details scholarly work about the nature of autoethnography and the uniqueness of the method for recording and reflection.

*Chapter Four: Using Storytelling and Storymaking in My Classes*

This chapter details how I have used storytelling and storymaking in the classroom. It chronicles what I have learned over time as I experimented with new methods of learning. In the chapter, I hold steady the essential elements of storytelling namely that of the connections between tale, teller, and listener.

*Chapter Five: Story In Connection with Process Drama and Dramatic Inquiry*

This chapter chronicles how I have re-thought my perceptions of storytelling and storymaking and the use of narratives when added to process drama, namely dramatic inquiry.

*Chapter Six: New Middle: How I am Employing What I know about Story and Drama*

This chapter synthesizes my understanding of storytelling, storymaking, process drama, and dramatic inquiry. It details how I am currently incorporating what I know from studying theses teaching pedagogies combined with my classroom teaching. It also introduces, “ensemble storytelling for performance and ensemble story learning” (Cordi, 2007).
Conclusion

My intention in this study is to explore how my identity has shifted as a storytelling teacher. In doing so I release, re-visit and ultimately re-define how I use what I know about story and drama. I examine how I use storytelling, storymaking, and drama as systems of learning instead of as simply ways to entertain students. I show how stories are used and do more than record; I critically reflect upon the use of storytelling and storymaking, with and without the use of drama in order to inform my future work as a storytelling teacher who wants to promote inquiry and learning. I do so using autoethnographic writing as a means of reflection. Learning from this work as much as re-visiting it; I want it to produce a personal transformation. I hope it will change me as an educator, instead of being torn from my artistic and teaching identities; I will create a new middle as a new understanding of what it means to have multiple identities when teaching. As named, Mora (1993) in her book, *Nepantla: Essays from the Land in the Middle*, reflects upon her discomfort of living on the borders, between the United States and Mexico; between European-American culture and her own Chicana culture.

There probably isn’t a week of my life that I don’t have at least one experience where I feel that discomfort, the slight frown from someone that wordlessly asks, what is someone like her doing here? But I am in the middle of my life, and well know not only the pain but also the advantage of observing both sides, ‘albeit with my biases, of moving through two, and in fact, multiple spaces and selecting from both what I want to be part of me, of consciously shaping my space (Mora, 1993, p. 6).

I, too, have asked myself both as a storyteller and as a teacher, “What am I doing here?” I have also heard these questions asked by others. From shaping my space in the many
worlds that I live and work, I am in a new middle, but in this middle grounding, I need to look back to see what lies ahead as I work with storytelling, storymaking and drama to improve as a teacher.
Chapter 2—Literature Review

What Is Narrative?

In this study, I am concerned not only with the textual definition of narrative and the stories created, but also narrative as a mode of communication that operates in an interactive fashion. There are many ways people have looked at narrative. I am interested in how narratives work with students when at times when they are constructing meaning through storytelling.

Interpretations of Narrative

I am primarily interested in an interactive approach to narrative, that is, people engaging in continual communication as they share ideas through storytelling. For students, storytelling is one way of co-constructing meaning out of experience. In his now classic essay on how narrative works, William Labov (1972) describes narrative as, “one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (p. 396). This seemingly technical way of understanding narrative is useful for understanding how narrative works. Labov explains that narratives are not always told in the same order as the events they describe. Instead, narrators “recapitulate” the past; they re-configure the order of events to make meaning.
As Rosen (1988) observes, narratives are not as simple as a, “neat match between experience and a sequence of clauses” (p. 10). The match is never exact. Labov, other sociolinguists, and folklorists studying conversational narrative have pursued these ideas further to understand how narrative works in everyday interactions. Folk narrative research includes both textual comparative studies of tales collected from particular cultural groups and studies of traditional storytelling performances (Mills, 1990).

Recent years have seen a shift to narrative studies in education and social science. This research relies less on text and more on use: context of performance.

As a fundamental genre that organizes the way in which we think and interact, narrative encompasses an enormous range of discourse forms, including popular as well as artistic genres. The most basic and most universal form of narrative may not be the products of poetic muse, but of ordinary conversation (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 185).

The work of Ochs & Capps (2001) sees use as a significant element of narrative and that is as Hardy (1963) shared the, “raison d’etre, why (narrative) was told and what the narrative is getting at” (p. 12). As mentioned, work on storytelling until the second half of the 20th century focused not on the interaction involved in narratives, but on the actual content, the text, itself.

When we think of narrative, literary forms come to mind as narrative texts *par excellence*. At least since Aristotle’s Poetics (1962), narrative genres such as tragedy and comedy have been the preoccupation of philosophers and critics (Ochs, 2001, p. 185).

Over the past decade or so, the analysis of narrative in the social sciences has shifted away from an exclusive interest in content.
Analyses of narratives focus more on the ways in which storytellers and the conditions of storytelling, shape what is conveyed as on what content of those stories tell us about people’s lives (Elliott, 2005, p. 42).

**Narrative Performances**

Storytelling and storymaking are primarily concerned with how people communicate, including listening and telling. How narratives are performed is becoming increasingly important to researchers such as Langellier & Peterson (2004) who turned their attention to the performance aspect of storytelling. “The intervention shifts analytic focus from story text to storytelling performances as embodied, situated, and embedded in fields of discourse” (p. 2). Narratives found in conversation are called, “performance narratives,” (p. 3). The mere act of “let me tell a story” creates a relationship between storyteller and listeners as audience so that, “the telling of a story is a performance” (p. 2). However, I wonder if stories are performed when uttered, could stories shared in everyday conversations also be a form of performance? If true, this allows me to re-think how storymaking could be an integral part of performance. Viewing all stories uttered as performance, Langellier & Peterson (2004) believe students working in small groups sharing ideas, often in the form of narrative exchanges, are performing within these exchanges “As a human communication practice, performing narrative combines the performative ‘doing’ of storytelling with what is ‘done’ in the performance of a story” (p. 2). Each communicative utterance could be seen as a performance of stories.

The research on conversational narrative provides a new perspective to my ideas about storytelling; I see storytelling, not simply as a performed practice art before a listening
audience, but instead as accepted everyday classroom conversations as narrative performances to examine the learning contained within them.

**Narrative as a Method of Learning**

While students can be entertained by a told story, within the context of a classroom, the primary reason for told stories is to help construct story for students to learn from experience. Storytelling as re-playing is one way to see storytelling as learning. The experience is personal; for Goffman (1974) views narrative as personal re-playing.

A tale or anecdote, that is, a re-playing, is not merely any reporting of a past event. In the fullest sense, it is such a statement couched from the personal perspective of an actual or potential participant who is located so that some temporal, dramatic development of the reported event proceeds from that starting point. A re-playing will therefore incidentally be something that listeners can empathetically insert themselves into, vicariously experiencing what took place. A re-playing, in brief, recounts a personal experience, not merely reports on an event (p. 504).

The storytelling experience is more than re-telling, it is a way for students to see again a story or an idea not simply as a past action, but instead as an active experience for learning. Goffman (1974) shows re-counting or using narrative serves to personalize experience.

**Ochs and Capps’ View of Story**

In *Living Narrative*, Ochs & Capps do not concentrate on performed narrative (what I also call told stories), but instead examine stories in the context of everyday conversations, often the same type heard on a back porch or shared informally at a storytelling festival. They are interactive, involving people talking with one another and
including narratives as part of talking. They outline five dimensions of narrative: tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance. These dimensions can occur in varying degrees. For example, a told story by one performer can have low tellership because only the performer is telling. However, when a group tells together, it creates high tellership. The dimensions work in concert with each other as well. Significantly for this study, stories can appear as fragments; fragments can be neglected, questioned, changed and extended into longer narratives that may (or may not) be shared as told stories.

Keeping use in mind, Ochs & Capps, (2001), note, in everyday conversations, people tell stories. Some appear like book texts, displaying basic plots with a clear beginning, middle, and end, but still some others are fragments, neglected, extended, shared, and/or discarded.

This is not to say “polished” narratives are to be overlooked, but that there are more narratives to be used for teaching.

Ochs and Capps don’t want to ignore smooth traditional narratives or pretend they don’t exist; they want to broaden the framework that includes them so that we don’t forget the messy end of the spectrum, the more frequent one (Agar, 2005, p. 26).

Especially interesting are incomplete narratives or what Ochs & Capps (2001) refer to as narrative fragments. As a storyteller, I believed narratives necessitated a clear beginning, middle, and end to indeed be classified as a narrative. These definitions informed my practice both with storytelling and storymaking. According to Ochs & Capps, (2001) each narrative, whether finished or not, is a narrative. They claim these fragmented
narratives are often more interesting to study. They invite additional interlocutors or active participants to help them trouble, discuss, or problem solve with narratives. Story fragments are not often found in performance narratives which are strictly prepared and performed for audiences.

**Performance Narratives and Everyday Narratives**

Ochs and Capps (2001) distinguish between everyday narratives and more formal performed narratives identifying everyday narratives as stories one might hear on a back porch often delivered in fragments whose direction and exchange is often unpredictable. Performed narratives are planned, designed to meet a certain audience’s ends similar to those heard at a storytelling festival. An audience must be present to hear the crafted, performed stories. Ochs & Capps (2001) further discuss everyday or living narratives. Living narrative focuses on ordinary social exchanges in which interlocutors build accounts of life events, rather than on polished narratives…many of the narratives under study…seem to be launched without knowing where they will lead (p. 2). As Bauman (1978) and Langellier & Peterson (2004) note, conversational narratives are performed in different ways than polished narratives. The very nature of being spoken to as a listener includes “both performance and performativity” (p. 2). In other words, they are performed, but the conventions for performance, including taking a longer turn at talk or following up on something someone else has said, are part of the participants’ shared understandings of appropriate social interaction (Shuman, 1986) There is a more formalized performance such as stories told at a storytelling festival and less performed events such as a club meeting. As Rosen (1986) points out, the narrative is in the making. In other words, speakers shape the conversation. The way the words are
delivered and the environment in which the narratives are shared all contribute to how the narratives are heard, understood, questioned, and performed. These questions are extremely useful to me as a performer examining my own performances whether on stage or in the classroom. For example, in the classroom, I can consider how participants negotiate the rights to tell particular stories in particular occasions. The same type of narrative lives within the classroom as in porch style narrative exchanges. Stories from the classroom consist of both living and performed narratives; both involve performance. In my reflection of how students co-construct meaning using stories, Ochs and Capps (2001) work is especially useful for identifying the positions of students and teachers in classroom and their use of both performed and living narratives as well as the distinctions across drama forms, storytelling and storymaking.

In the classroom, students not only talk about the work they do, but also about their personal lives. As noted, narratives are considered performed when expressed, but narratives can also be seen as texts, or told stories. In this sense, narratives act as a noun, but also as a verb. Viewing narrative as performative enables me to see how students create narratives and use them to learn. “Performance re-situates narratives as an object of study; narrative is both a making and a doing” (Bauman, 1978, p. 3). In order to further understand how storytelling and storymaking are performative, I turn to the work of Bauman (1978) who views narrative as an interactive relationship between what is said and the way an event is formed.

Literary theorists occasionally look outward from the texts toward the relationship between narratives and the events they recount, whereas anthropologists tend to
look in the other direction, toward the relationships between the narratives in which they are performed (Bauman, 1978, p. 3).

**Narrative, Teaching and Performance**

When narratives are vocalized, they are performed (Bauman, 1978). Narrative as communication is, “situated, its form, meaning, and function” (Bauman, 1978, p. 3). However, these narratives do not all act the same way. Some are given greater emphasis because of the speakers’ privilege or others are embedded within specific contexts. For example, a teacher could share a story like a storyteller, and because of his or her authority, he or she is expected to be the one with the authority to tell stories. His or her tellership is high. He or she has the right to tell. It is expected because of his or her position in the classroom with the students. However, at any time, if another teacher might tell something considered more important, the other teacher may have more tellership. Tellership, in this case, is tied to authority. Narrative serves this function; it can be regarded in the form of degrees, high and low depending on what is being done. By studying these degrees or what Ochs & Capps (2001) call dimensions of narrative, one can see more clearly how narratives are actually used in the classroom.

**Dimensions of Narrative**

Using narratives is about being messy; it is a “healthy disorder” (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 181). As noted, narratives are sometimes shared in fragments, whole segments or they are dropped, neglected, and/or advanced by other narratives. In this healthy entanglement, there is a concerted effort to make meaning amongst the active participants in the narratives. Such messy narrative inquiry works on multiple levels for the speakers.
and listeners in their larger classroom inquiries. Ochs & Capps (2001) outline five
dimensions of narrative that can vary in their intensity and significance from high to low
degrees. The dimensions of narratives can change as quickly as mid-sentence and can all
be operating at the same time. In order to understand how these narratives work, they
must be seen in relationship with other narrative dimensions. Performed narratives have
traditionally held privilege over everyday narratives.

Ochs & Capps argue that conventional narrative have privileged one end of that
continuum. In particular, one teller instead of multiple tellers, high tellability
instead of low tellability; detachment from the surrounding activity at the expense
of embeddedness in the local context; a certain and constant moral stance over an
uncertain, fluid and dynamic one; a close temporal and casual open-endedness
and/or spatial organization (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 238).

However, these dimensions change when more tellers are involved. In order to
understand how these dimensions change in classroom narratives, one needs to examine
each dimension.

*Tellership*

Tellership measures a teller’s involvement within a conversation narrative, as, “the extent
and kind of involvement of conversational partners in the actual re-counting of a
narrative” (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 24). In essence, tellership is about when particular
people orchestrate their involvement in the telling of stories. High tellership includes a
“primary teller” (p. 25) or “set of active tellers” (p. 25) as co-constructors of the stories.
When more tellers are added, the tellership increases and more tellers can be involved in
the conversation because the narratives are shared. This also raises the opportunity to
negotiate the stories. As Dyson (1997) states in discussing informal storytelling in

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primary classrooms, “composers are not so much meaning makers as meaning negotiators who adopt, resist, and stretch available words” (p. 4) as tellers co-author stories. They help co-construct the making of the narratives. “The idea of co-construction has been examined as a new way of examining narrative and steering away from the distinction of the active teller and passive audience” (Norrick, 2000, p. 133). Tellership levels can vary. An example of high tellership is, “on one end of the continuum, the storyteller holds the floor during the unfolding of the tale, while the audience’s role is typically to listen attentively” (Ware, 2006, p. 45). Another example is when the teacher controls how much telling and listening can be introduced with and for the students, and depending on the teacher’s choices, will determine the tellership in the classroom.

Tellership forms within a classroom context where the teacher is usually seen as the person with sole authority. However, when using storytelling and storymaking and introducing drama, teachers can play different roles, and thus create greater tellership for and with the students.

Tellability

In order for narratives to have tellability, they must be reportable. However, listeners can alter the tellability by changing it within everyday conversations. This thought is mirrored by (Foucault, 1976):

The agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained) but in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know. And this discourse of truth finally takes effect, not in the one who receives it, but in the one form who it is wrested (p. 62).
Narratives that have low tellability invite other stories to be part of the narrative because they are part of the communicative exchanges. As Norrick (2007) points out, one of the primary reasons for sharing narratives is “opportunities for co-narration and laughing together” (p. 134). Tellability allows other interlocutors or active participants into the narrative because each person is invested in the “news” being shared (Norrick, 2007, p. 29). Each action is news. Agar (2005) provides an example.

If I tell a story that begins, “The funniest thing happened this morning. I woke up, went into the bathroom, and brushed my teeth, “I doubt that any co-tellers within range will be inspired to join in. The story is too much routine to be tellable. On the other hand, if I opened with “I started to brush my teeth and the toothpaste was full of fire ants,” co-tellers would jump into the story with their views as to how and why such a thing could happen (p. 29).

In the classroom, each student, with a teacher facilitating, can provide a voice in the making and the performance of narratives. Each action created by every student has meaning. When students are the ones making and sharing narratives they are all invested in its direction as a co-authored process.

Even as a teller works to design a story appropriate to the local audience and context, the audience is already imposing a designing of its own, interrupting, correcting, co-narrating (Agar, 2005, p. 136).

From a teaching perspective, what is important “is not a matter of re-telling stories after another person is finished, instead what is important is the reconstruction rather than the simple recall of ordered events” (Norrick, 2007, p. 139). How a story comes together can help students create meaning because they are invested in the construction.
**Embeddedness**

This is the third dimension referring to, “the extent to which a personal narrative is an entity unto itself, separate from prior, concurrent, and subsequent discourse. It is related to turn organization, thematic content, and rhetorical structuring” (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 37). How attached or detached are the narratives to other conversations is both contextual and situational.

In every story there exists dialectic between teller and listener and at some horizons of and listening fuse…and as our lived worlds merge, engagement begets reciprocity and participation in the world of the other and evokes from us the call to act (Polakow, 1985, p. 827).

On the one hand, narrative is simply a performance, detached from other narratives. On the other hand, the surrounding discourse and social activity is important because this can change the way the stories are embedded in other discourses and narratives. In traditional teaching, a teacher provides a form of performance as a narrative is presented. However, when children use stories and play, many other narratives can surface because they are being built by the students who actually participate in a fictional world. For example, students who use narrative to move into a fictional world as a pirate can reference their narratives while they are in the fictional world. This connects to frame (Goffman, 1974). Participants, like the students in the world of pirates, can switch frames, from the frame of classroom instruction to the frame of narrative fiction, to other narrative frames, such as personal frames of viewing that can include the frames of fictional roles such as pirates. Students may discuss ways often moving back-and-forth between the classroom frame and fictional frame. Many pirate-related stories, for example, can surface and re-
surface because the narratives are embedded in the fictional world evoked through the
telling of stories.

*Linearity*

As the fourth dimension of narrative, linearity is concerned with the narrative’s order.

With performed narratives, the story is told in recovered chronological order—a closed
temporal order. The narrative follows a prescribed order when made and performed.

However, at the other end of the continuum, we have open temporal order. An example
of this could be brainstorming where narratives are shared after an impulse to share them.

When students are playing, they exchange ideas as they think of them often in a non-
linear fashion. If one examined all the narratives, they would seem entangled, yet this is
a healthy disorder” (Pagnucci, 2006). This entanglement consists of various types of
narratives, in varying degrees that are supported or discarded by other listeners and
tellers. From a learning perspective, it is valuable to look at what is said, not said, and
how it relates to other narratives especially during the sort of play that students engage in
when using the pedagogy of process drama.

*Moral Stance*

This is the last dimension presented by Ochs and Capps that refers to narratives’
evaluation. Agar’s (2006) asks, are narratives, “open, uncertain, or fluid?” (p. 34). Do
the narratives postulate moral ethics or code or do they ask the students to consider their
own moral wrestlings? What is meant by “moral wrestling” is when we are presented
with conflicting ideas that go against our natural impulses. We wrestle with ideas of
whether the action or choice is right or wrong. When Ochs & Capps (2001) refer to morals, they see them as the, “traditional ideas of morality, the nature of the good—the just society, right action, the values ones lives by” (Agar, 2006, p. 34). Ochs & Capps, (2001) see the morals found in narratives occurring as an unraveling process. From a classroom context, I think of the widespread program, “Character Counts” where students are asked to concentrate on moral values, one per week. For Ochs & Capps (2001), this is too defining; it tells the students how to act. They do not see narratives as tight bundles, but instead gathered from fragments of conversations that can invite moral thinking. It is the reflection and the weighing of ideas that promote moral wrestling.

In this study, I struggle with how these dimensions of narratives affect how students construct meaning. How do I recognize when I as the teacher embed narratives or reduce tellability or tellership? How do I account for this in classroom teaching using process dram and story? Before these questions can be addressed, one must look at the difference between theater and process drama.

**Theater and Drama**

The terms drama and theater are often used interchangeably. I use the term theater to refer not only to the physical space where plays are rehearsed and performed, but also as a study of what it takes to create a play.

Theatre indicates the more formal study of the techniques of acting and stagecraft, often culminating in a performance in front of an audience. Theatre in this sense is primarily concerned with the acquisition of a body of skills and knowledge, in other words learning about the subject (Taylor & Warner, 2006, pp. 31-32). 

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An actor performs in a play. However, in this context, I refer play to a child’s pretending in an imaginary world. Drama, in contrast, “at it’s simplest, drama is wondering, ‘What if…?’ “The term process drama usually distinguishes the particular kind of complex improvised dramatic event…like theater, the primary purpose of process drama is to establish an imagined world, a dramatic ‘elsewhere’ created by the participants as they discover, articulate, and sustain fictional roles and situations” (O’Neill, 1995, p. xvi). O’Neill believes process drama relies on improvisation and episodic events to create a drama world. “The episodic structure of process drama allows the gradual articulation of a complex dramatic world and enables it to be extended and elaborated” (O’Neill, 1995, xvi). The dramatic “elsewhere” allows students and teachers to move within the drama world.

Because drama experiences occur in fictional worlds when students imagine they are elsewhere, their feelings (which may never be shared) and the movements (which may only be seen as a tilt of the head) connect with and amplify their thoughts of other people, times, and places. Drama worlds are suffused with empathy because they ‘exist in the hearts, voices, and hands of children and their teachers (Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1998, p. 5).

These worlds are experienced as children and the teacher interaction with each other (Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1998).

Narratives are necessary in process drama since, “Drama is the act of crossing into the world of story” (Booth, 2005, p. 13).

Heathcote (1984) notes:

A broad definition of educational drama is “role-taking”, either to understand a social situation more thoroughly or to experience imaginatively via identification in social situations. Dramatic activity is the direct result of the ability to role-play-- to want to know how it feels to be in someone else’s shoes (p. 49).
In the 1960s, Heathcote pioneered process drama where the teacher takes on a role, called “teacher-in-role,” entering the fiction to help students question, enact, and engage in the world they have created. Students, too, take on roles entering social situation not as students, but characters in the imagined world of a story. This work is not concerned with training actors. With process drama, Heathcote shared how drama could be used to develop the “humanness” of students while promoting social and emotional development.

_Drama and Play_

This study is not concerned with traditional theater, but instead with process drama which involves children with adults playing in an imaginary world. Producing a play is different than the verb “to play” which includes when a child pretends to be someone else. Unlike theater, the drama I am concerned with, process drama requires students to simultaneously engage in pretend play (Edmiston, 2008). “In pretend play, people pretend together to move and talk and interact as if they are whatever people or creatures they want to be, in any time or space, engaged in any imagined activity” (Edmiston, 2008, p. 9). Bolton, Davis, & Lawrence (1986) view an actor’s experience as quite different.

Now if we move into theatre, the actors are in a very different order of experiencing, a difference that is crucial. The degree to which the actors can say “it is happening now; and I am making it happen” is significantly reduced or overshadowed by an orientation towards interpretation, repeatability, projection and sharing with an audience (p. 165).

However, with pretend play and process drama, a child can be anywhere at any time. He or she can play with others who agree to play in an imaginary setting with them.
Drama for Learning

Practitioners and theorists have used varying terms to describe how they use drama. There are two main approaches to educational drama, creative drama and drama in education the main term used in the United Kingdom before the term process drama (O’Neill, 1995) became more prevalent. “These two approaches rise out of the national traditions in education and in drama, but differ in emphasis and strategies, yet they both are considered art forms and processes of learning (McCaslin, 1996). In 1972, the term, creative drama was introduced by the Children’s Theater Association of America as an, improvisational, process-centered form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, to enact, and reflect upon the human experience” (Davis & Baehm, 1979, p. 1). Creative drama usually starts with warm-ups and exercises for relaxation, with a story at the center of the teaching lesson, but with the teacher on the sidelines of any fictional world. Drama in education, (1962) using Heathcote’s term plunged into pretending to be elsewhere. The teacher does not remain on the sidelines but joins in as a full participant in what Heathcote called “teacher-in-role”. Unlike creative drama where the story is simply re-created by techniques such as using pantomime, role playing, or music, in this work, I examine educational drama where stories are more than a re-telling or as a stimulus for a dramatic action. In this work, with process drama and the pedagogy of dramatic inquiry, stories are presented not so students can witness a polished performance, but so they can learn with and from stories.

Students constantly need to adapt to the drama. Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler (2008) stress that when children are engaged in play, they are involved in complex learning.
Learning is, “a playful phenomenon (that is) about moving into and through an evolving space of possibility” (p. 83). In process drama, students use stories to help them move and not only create possibilities but have a, “lived through experience” (Heathcote, 1991). The stories constitute an alternative set of possibilities when they provide entry into another world and/or sustain the drama. For Davis et al. (2008) using teaching in a complex manner is not about, “how to control what happens, but how to participate mindfully in the unfolding possibilities” (p. 226).

**Process Drama, Story Drama, Dramatic Inquiry**

Process drama, educational drama that Heathcote (1984) showed could be used for learning, invites students to co-construct with the teacher as they move into a fictional world as, “critical co-investigators,” of both any fictional and its implication for the lives of students and others in the everyday world. Using improvisation, students reflect and can act on their ideas.

Both teachers and students are able to reflect from “inside the drama.” Reflection inside the drama and reflection in an ordinary discussion differ in that when we are in the drama we are not only able to look at the significance of the events and interpret them as “ourselves” but we can also do this from the perspective of the person we are pretending to be (Edmiston, 1993, p. 257).

By focusing on inquiry, students engage and explore together what they wish to learn or understand. Edmiston (2010) stresses,

Dramatic inquiry dramatizes inquires about life and it is improvised when actions and responses in particular social situations within imagined cultural communities are not predetermined but are collaborative created by participants and mediated by adults…(p 257).
Process drama focuses on discovery and meaning making, not product. Process drama is a systematic way to teach and learn using drama. As Booth (2005) notes, concerning story drama, there are many stories in process drama.

In story drama, there is the story we begin with—our shared story; the story of the drama—our created story; and the stories triggered by the drama from student’s life experiences—our own life stories. As teachers we work with students as co-constructors of a common story, represented through drama, based on and integrating pieces of the stories we have met and the stories we have lived (p. 13).

This work will look at the many stories that occur during, and as result, of storymaking and storytelling, with and without the use of drama. Narratives can appear as “messy” stories without ending or simply narrative fragments. In fact, an unfinished story often provides the spark or pre-text (O’Neill, 1995) for process drama.

**Narratives and Process Drama**

Narratives are an integral part of creating a drama world. Narratives operate differently in process drama than in regular theatrical drama. In theatrical drama, one story is represented—though we can hear other vantage points through the characters and actions in the play, story is often one, controlling narrative. For example, in *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Isben, a story is represented as theater, detailing Nora’s struggle in society. We learn about this struggle through her insights and the other characters in the play. The product is an artistic rendering that tells the play’s story. In contrast, in process drama there is no pre-determined controlling narrative already written down as a script. Rather, the story or stories are created in process. Bolton (1979) explains what is important in using drama is what happens between the actual and fictional world with the children. This dialect relationship is where drama comes into play. “Drama is a metaphor. It’s
meaning lies not in the actual context nor in the fictitious one, but in the dialectic set up between the two (p. 128).” The teacher facilitates how students construct meaning with the students in both worlds.

I believe that when drama is a group-sharing of a dramatic situation it is more powerful than any other medium in education for achieving our pedagogic aims. But this kind of drama puts tremendous strain, tremendous responsibility on the teacher. He has a very positive role because children left to themselves can only work horizontally at a “what if”. Imagination is the psychological process which takes a particular form in dramatic activity. It requires that the participant consciously adopt an “as if mental set, simultaneously holding two worlds in his mind, the present or real world and the absent or fictitious world should happen next” level. (p. 44).

Stories can be used to help students engage in both worlds and with stories; students can explore possibilities with the stories that are co-created using process drama.

**Story Drama**

David Booth (1994) uses the term Story Drama detailing how his approach to process drama combines story and drama in a systematic way for learning.

In my work, story and drama are forever linked. Even now, when I am reviewing a new picture book or novel for children, I cannot escape the possibilities that flood my drama-structured mind. Similarly, when preparing to work with a group of youngsters for the first time in drama, I cannot imagine entering the room without a range of stories ready to tell or read aloud. Perhaps I require the safety net of narrative in order to attempt to leap into creating stories together through drama (p. 8).

Much of Booth’s work is invaluable for my study, especially the attention he gives to narrative in connection with drama. He values the work of professional storytellers. I have found his writing invaluable, for example *Storyworks* (2000) Booth has written with Bob Barton. Booth takes a text, usually a children’s story or young adult book, and using process drama, creates and explores the stories that arise from concentrating on the
situations of the characters. However, the story is a pre-text; the story is only the entrance to a drama world where the story and the stories behind the stories in the text can also be explored. As a professional storyteller, I am also interested in how told stories in addition to the published stories Booth uses, can be used as a pre-text with process drama.

In drama in education (DIE) or process drama, classroom practitioners transform texts, sometimes using them as starting points, but always exploring the spaces (i.e., a realistic problem that could be solved) between episodes in a story to create an imagined world and change the story into something quite new (Wagner, 1976, p. 7).

O’Neill’s (1995) shares, “a pre-text has a precise function that goes much further than merely suggesting an idea for dramatic exploration” (p. 7). Overall, “the pre-text furnishes an excuse for immediate action or task or carries an implication of further action, so that the participant’s anticipation and search for fulfillment can begin” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 23). In other words, any story used as a pre-text for entry with a drama world, is not a text to be staged, but rather a narrative to be used to generate other narratives as students and teacher imagine together that they are elsewhere.

**Product and Process Drama**

In theater, the actors and playwright and director work together to create a play which in performance becomes the product. The play is created as a collaborative outcome of their dramatic interpretations and choices as they turn a script into a performance. Bolton (1992) stresses that a play’s success depends upon the actors. Whereas: in process drama success is depends on how well students are engaged in the process drama.
When I first started to teach drama, any occasion when a small group was brought out to the front carried the implication that the “success” of the exercise rested on the “actors”….In the usage I am now suggested its success is dependent on the imagination of the “directors,” for the “actors” may simply be offering themselves for manipulation, merely carrying out the director’s instructions using appropriate “descriptive” technique (Bolton, 1992, p. 25).

In contrast with staged drama, which is theater with an external audience, process drama has no external audience. According to O’Neill (1995) process drama is an, “exploratory dramatic activity where the emphasis in on process rather than product” (p. xv). The purpose of drama is, “to establish an imagined world, a dramatic ‘elsewhere’ created by the participants as they discover, articulate, and sustain fictional roles and situations” (O’Neill, 1995, p. xvi). Process drama is not intended to be viewed by an outside audience as in theater.

**Reflection**

In process drama, children share their reflections within the fictional world as they make meaning about any imagined events and their accompanying narratives. They do to from the perspective of characters or fictional roles. Children “think from within a dilemma instead of talking about a dilemma” (Heathcote, 1976, p. 127). Drama becomes a reflective tool so students can wonder both within the fictional and classroom worlds. As Edmiston and Wilhelm (1998) observe,

> If students are exploring questions through drama they will need to stop “playing” with a question and think about what has been “played”. As they interact, the students will be constructing new understandings which may clarify some ideas yet “problematize” others. Our interventions can influence this process when we direct the student’s attention toward making or interpreting the fictional world (pp. 88-89).
When students’ reflections are formed by inquiry, questions within process drama can be considered, “dramatic inquiry.”

**Teacher in Role**

Heathcote (1962) revolutionized educational drama by employing a teacher-in-role within process drama. Wagner (1976) states,

> One of Heathcote’s most effective teaching ploys is her skillful moving in and out of role. She goes into role to develop and heighten emotion; she comes out of it to achieve distance and the objectivity needed for reflection (p. 127).

The teacher engages students, not as a teacher but as if she is someone else within the fictional world often a character from a story is Story Drama. (Neelands, 1984) shares,

> It is…important to remember that the purpose of the teacher role is to put the children into the immediate situation where they have to do the thinking, the talking, the responding, the decision making, and the problem solving…It’s essential…to step back and push the group into using their own combined resources as a way of dealing with whatever arises (p. 50).

Thus, the teacher’s function in role is not to entertain, and rarely to instruct, but rather to promote students’ learning. It is important to stress that when the teacher is in role the power can shift within the relationship—between teacher and students (Heathcote, 1984). If a teacher takes on an authoritative role such as a ship captain, he or she can address students according to rank. However, if she becomes a lowly pirate who sweeps up the ship than the students can address this pirate differently if they are in authority, such as a pirate in charge of guarding prisoners. When power shifts, so does the authority for creating and telling stories. Thus, the teacher can significantly affect what and how students create narratives.
Co-Constructing Stories

The stories in dramatic inquiry create possibilities for students to co-create narratives, but it is the teacher’s role as a critical co-investigator that encourages learning. According to King, (1995) when students are engaged in storymaking, the possibilities are open and many.

The process of storymaking leads us along our inner path, to find the places where stories live. There are many ways to begin and no one way works for everyone every time. What is always required is acceptance—of ourselves and of our stories. (p. 16).

Stories can serve as entrance points into the drama. However, in order to co-construct a story, one must accept that each person can actively participate in the storymaking.

Using story as mode of entry and sustained curiosity allows students to both engage and challenge within their inquiries. In this skilled shifting where possibilities open, offering many pathways to follow within the drama. For example, in the England experience, a student was simply playing without direction on the snowmobile—messing around, not involved in the drama. Edmiston asked the child, “What is this for?” The child created a narrative, with the help of Edmiston, that he was checking the snowmobile’s speed. Edmiston used this new information to keep the student involved in the drama by asking him to check the speed continuously to let him know when the snowmobile was ready. This teaching move kept the student invested in the drama and subsequently the learning pathways to follow within the drama. With the teacher, as a class, direction is negotiated.
Improvisation and Process Drama

Moffett (1983) in his analysis of drama and narrative as aspects of the “universe of discourse” advocated dramatic improvisation as a powerful way to imaginatively enter the world of story.

Improvisation can be used as an entrée into a literary work soon to be read: the teacher abstracts key situations—say, Cassius’ efforts to persuade Brutus to join the conspiracy—and assigns this as a situation to improvise before students read the work, so that when they do it they already have an understanding of what is happening and how differently the characters might have behaved. This kind of prelude also involves students more with the text (p. 91).

Similarly O’Neill shares, “improvisation is at the heart of the event” (O’Neill, 1995, pp. xvi-xvii). Inside a drama world, stories do not look the same as they do when used in organized storytelling. Improvisation that is directed by the teacher can allow for “deeper inquiry” (Edmiston, 2009) when the improvisation is structured. The teacher can facilitate students’ moves among fictional situations in the drama world as they wonder how their characters might behave in possible scenarios. Plus, the teacher can introduce other characters to test their ideas. Although a script is not used, the teacher does plan strategically but not for how the story will unfold rather, the teacher plans for deepening inquiry by shifting viewpoints and reflecting to make meaning of the events by mediating the process of creating fictional situations within dramatic inquiry.

Story and Improvised Drama

David Booth (1990) like Moffett, regards story drama as a way of accessing and performing the world of an ongoing narrative. In process drama, story is constantly being shaped by the negotiations among students and teacher. As students improvise they
“think in and through the materials of the medium” and “control significant aspects of what is taking place” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 1).


Although drama is not story, there are interested comparisons between the way “meanings” are constructed in both story and drama. In a sense, the teacher is using role to start “writing” the drama….Because the teacher is trying to work indirectly (i.e., at an affective rather than intellectual level,) the writing is suggested and resonant, offering a number of open-ended possibilities to which the group can respond…the difference of course is that drama offers the “readers” the chance to become involved into the action and to share in “writing” of the drama with the teacher (p. 4).

As Heathcote shares the living through experience of process drama as students create imagined events.

It is not stories the students re-enact; they simply live through some events as best they may using what they already understand to “inform” the situation, and give them a hold of it. And this, in turn, leads them to need further information, gleaned through the living-through (p. 65).

One way to further information is when adults tell stories. At the same time, the ongoing narrative collaboratively created by participants in process drama is not created the same way as a told story. As Heathcote (2006) notes,

Any story will be constructed by a different form than that of a narrative because theater is a synchronic art not a diachronic one, stories must be broken into episodes and each episode made to yield the learning experience the teaching requires (p. 131).

When I was teaching using the Titanic as the subject of the process drama, I deliberately did not tell the story of the Titanic, instead we experienced it in episodes such as an engineer shares her account of building structures to withstand icebergs, meeting Captain John Smith and trying to comfort him at his time of loss, preparing to meet the
press…each episode was a way we shared, experienced, told, and contested why the Titanic sank. Stories did not always link the episodes. For example, we made a map charting the ship’s direction to move our drama into learning about the danger of icebergs and to move to talking with Captain John Smith, I deliberately changed the setting to be a quiet place so all ideas can be heard. As a teacher, stories are only one way to move the drama; I can also employ other tools such as drawing, writing, tableau and dramatic conventions.

In dramatic inquiry, students’ questions not only create an entrance into the drama world, but open up new narrative possibilities. Edmiston (2009) illustrates:

In a 9th grade high school urban English classroom students spoke as if on the telephone with their congressional represented by Brian, to begin to explore their inquiry question: what might be done to help refugees in Darfur. Later, they deepened inquires as they shifted perspective to imagine they were journalists, incognito, entering Sudan to document events and make them public.

**Conclusion**

This chapter is an overview of how co-constructing learning using stories can change teaching. It outlines how narratives are used for performance in everyday narratives. It provided an understanding of process drama and namely dramatic inquiry. It highlights the importance of seeing narratives and improvisation as tools for learning. The next chapter will examine how autoethnography, critically writing about my teaching practice, is the most effective method to explore how storytelling and storymaking, with dramatic inquiry and without, can assist a teacher as students learn to construct meaning using narratives.
Chapter 3: Methodology/Introduction

This dissertation is primarily concerned with two types of meaning making—meaning made from 15 years of teaching in the form of “story lessons,” and how meaning is made from teaching narrative in conjunction with process drama. The following research questions guide my inquiry.

Research Questions

How has my identity as a storytelling teacher changed since I encountered the pedagogy of process drama?

SUB-QUESTIONS

a) What is the significance for my work as a storytelling teacher of extending my teaching by using the pedagogies of process drama and dramatic inquiry?

b) How does the discussion of narrative performance contribute to my understanding of process drama and storytelling in the classroom?

In order to support this type of inquiry, I selected a research method that allowed for questions and reflection within my unique perspective as a teacher. I began to explore, in a systematic way, my work as a professional storyteller and teacher to describe, analyze, and interpret my dual roles as both storyteller and teacher. Instead of setting up a controlled environment, I examined my classroom experiences using story lessons. I wanted to recall, record, and question how my instruction was geared to help students create meaning from these lessons. Using my experience in the classroom, I searched for
a naturalistic inquiry to study real-world situations as they unfold naturally (Lincoln &

**Reflective and Reflexive**

The subject of this work is the analysis of my own teaching practice and exploration
within to improve from reflection. Reflectivity, developed from the ideas of Argyris and
Schön (1973), is the process where an individual can reflect upon his or her assumptions
and actions to determine how they influence a situation. A change in practice can occur
as a direct result of this reflection. In this study, I look back upon my practice as a
storytelling teacher examining and evaluating the various forms of my story lessons.

What is expected from this reflection is new awareness. This review becomes a research
method where I, as the researcher, can improve my teaching. Dewey (1933), in addition
to arguing we learn by doing, emphasized the importance of reflection about the teaching
process. He argues “reflective thinking” must be a goal for teachers because we learn
from this reflection (Dewey, 1933). He describes reflection as, “the kind of thinking that
consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving serious and consecutive
consideration” (Dewey, 1933, p. 3). What we think about subconsciously can rise to the
surface when we reflect upon it (Dewey, 1933). Schön (1983) notes the importance of
the reflection for practitioners in *The Reflective Practitioner*. Reflection can be used by
researchers to both discuss and evaluate their work. The notions of reflection-in-action,
and reflection-on-action were central to Donald Schön’s efforts in this area. Reflection-
on-action is a way to reflect upon past work. Much can come from this type of reflection.

As Schön (1983) notes:
As [inquirers] frame the problem of the situation, they determine the features, to which they will attend, the order they will attempt to impose on the situation, the directions in which they will try to change it. In this process, they identify both the ends to be sought and the means to be employed (p. 165).

Schön (1983) later suggests using observation and reflection as a way to demonstrate tacit knowledge of our practice. For fourteen years as a storytelling teacher, I have reflected anecdotally upon my work, but not formally as a researcher. This study allows me to examine formally, and in a scholarly way, my own practice to improve using narratives to teach students. I engage in reflective practice which is defined as,

a cycle of paying attention to one’s own actions in relation to intentions…for the purpose of expanding one’s opinions and making decisions about improved ways of acting in the future, or in the midst of the action itself (Kottamp, 1990, p. 182).

This reflection is unique and Schön (1983) advocates personal by design.

Each practitioner treats his case as unique, he cannot deal with it by applying standard theories or techniques…he must construct an understanding of the situation as he finds it. And because he finds the situation problematic he must reframe it (p. 129).

In addition to bending back upon my teaching practice, I use narrative inquiry, especially as a lens, including Ochs and Capps’ (2001) view of interactive narrative and narrative as it relates to process drama, to reframe my understanding of how I have used story lessons. Being reflective is important to this study, as is being reflexive. In order to be reflective, it is important to look at exactly what it means to be reflexive. According to Russell and Kelly (2002), reflexivity is a process of self-examination informed by the thoughts and actions of the researcher. Reflexivity has often been called, “bending back on oneself” (Guralnik, 1982, p. 45). I reflect on blending my practice of using story-based teaching back to explore my own “story lessons” methods to help students learn. By bending back, as a form of inquiry, I hoped to advance my own teaching practice.
Reflexivity is the ability to locate myself as a researcher in the research act, to the point where the reflexive positioning and the reflective process becomes the research. Qualley (1997) considers reflexive work to be connected with engagement.

As I understand it now, reflexivity is a response triggered by a dialectical engagement with the other—an other idea, theory, person, culture, text, or even an other part of one’s self, e.g., a past life. By dialectical, I mean an engagement that is ongoing and recursive as opposed to a single, momentary encounter (Qualley, 1997, p. 11).

One does not engage in reflexivity unless one has another thing to reflex. Qualley (1997) explains this further:

When we reflect, we fix our thoughts on a subject; we carefully consider I, mediate upon it. Self-reflection assumes that individuals can access the contents of their own mind independently of others. Reflexivity, on the other hand, does not originate in the self but always occurs in response to a person’s critical engaging with an “other.” Unlike reflection which is a unidirectional thought process, reflexivity is a bidirectional, contrastive response (p.12).

One can be reflective, but in order for one to be reflexive, a change must occur. This is the primary difference between the two. Anthropologist Barbara Babcock (1980) uses Greek Mythology’s Narcissus to describe the difference between being reflexive and reflective.

Narcissus’s tragedy then is that he is not narcissistic enough, or rather he does not reflect long enough to effect a transformation. He is reflective, but he is not reflexive—that he is conscious of himself as an other, but he is not conscious of being self-conscious of himself as an other, and hence, not able to detach himself from, understand, survive or even laugh at this initial experience of alienation (Babcock, 1980, p. 2).

Unlike Narcissus, I have to take the time to see the change in my work. I need to be reflexive about my dual role. This reflexive study concerns itself with my dual perspectives as a storyteller who has developed story lessons and a storyteller who uses story connected with process drama. My recent work at The Ohio State University
allows, and even forces me, to question my assumptions of how narrative is used with children. One such assumption is that telling a story is a solo art. My main experience with telling stories was when I alone would tell stories for children or adults. Another is that all stories must have a beginning, middle, and end. This reflexive grounding creates a space for an internal discourse to occur from continuous observations and reflections. I engage with my understanding and consider the various meaning making that can be achieved from both narrative teaching positions.

Reflexivity and reflection requires inquiry, and because this is research based inquiry, I have chosen a qualitative design to inform this study.

**Qualitative Inquiry Research Design**

To engage in inquiry as a researcher is to ask and pursue systematically a series of questions. According to Eisner, (1991), qualitative research is the search for qualities—the characteristics of our experience. We translate these qualities through our chosen representation and conceptual outlook (Eisner, 1991). Constructed meaning is rooted in one’s perceptions and experiences. Meaning is not derived from charts and statistics like in quantitative research, but instead, is based on the analysis of the data, and the emergent themes and ideas detailed by the researcher. From these ideas, the researcher constructs an understanding of the data. From studying the narrative teaching employed by me and process drama specialists, I can construct and assign meaning to the teaching.

Qualitative research is rooted in constructivist thinking. As people work together, they share ideas. “The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that
meaning is socially constructed by individuals in their interactions with the world” (Merriam, 2002, p. 3). In my work, I construct meaning from my teaching experience with students, my training with other storytellers, and my reflections with other educators and process drama specialists. I then record and provide analysis through reflection. Based upon the most recent work of students, teachers, and process drama specialists as they engage in social learning, I advance my understanding of narrative teaching practices. In a sense, I look forward as I transcribe video and interpret meaning from my field notes. This analysis focuses on the work conducted socially in a collaborative fashion. When learning is viewed from a social context, meaning is not constructed from a single truth. “There are multiple meanings of individual experiences” (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). Meaning making relies on the context in which it is made. Positivists engage in quantitative research supporting reality as, “a fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon” (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). Constructivists, using qualitative research, support the idea that, “multiple constructions or interpretations of reality” are present in a state of continuous change (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). In qualitative work, one must interpret many meanings. I must be able to interpret my past and present work using story and explore my thinking and experiences to construct meaning. This is why, in conducting this research, I employ an interpretative stance.

**Interpretive Qualitative Design**

Eisner (1991) defines interpretation as, “a process of explaining the meaning of an event by putting it in its context, making the experience vivid, identifying its prior conditions and potential consequences, and providing reasons for practices” (p. 3). In the first part
of this study, I will make vivid my years of teaching to improve my use of narrative with students. In analyzing these vivid experiences, I need to anchor my thinking within an interpretative lens. Interpretive qualitative research designs consist of four characteristics (Merriam, 2002, pp. 4-5):

- A primary goal of understanding meaning constructed by people about their world and experience. Focused on a particular setting, qualitative research involves an attempt to understand a specific situation.

- The researcher serves as the, “primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 5). In qualitative designs, the researcher becomes a human instrument gathering, managing, analyzing, and interpreting data.

- Art investigate process. Unlike positivists, qualitative researchers do not begin their study with an a priori hypothesis that they then test through experimental research. Working from the specific to the general, qualitative researchers gather data to construct themes, hypotheses, and theories. The researchers build theories and understandings garnered in the field.

- A “richly descriptive” final product (p. 5). Through words and pictures, instead of numbers, qualitative researchers communicate what they learn about a particular phenomenon. Such rich descriptions pertain to the investigated setting, the participants, and the specific activities undertake.
Although I am exploring using narrative teaching over a period of years in many different classrooms, I will study the teaching and how it leads to meaning making using story when combined with process drama techniques. In both inquires, my study is designed to inform my own pedagogy through the interpretation of my narrative teaching practices. I, alone, evaluate and interpret the data serving as the human instrument using my awareness and knowledge as well as experiences to support my analysis.

This type of research sometimes needs to be an inner process. The data only becomes clear after one engages in understanding and constructing meaning. It is an experience of the mind.

As I gather the insider view, I view from the outside as well. I do not act alone in gathering information. Although I filter it through my analysis, I rely heavily upon the past comments and experiences of my students and others who work with story. From these varied vantage points, I am able to both write and speak to the themes and narrative teaching methods. For over fifteen years, I have collaborated and exchanged ideas of how best to use story as a teaching tool. These discoveries will prove essential as I write about my experiences using story and storytelling to improve my teaching.

I work from my inquiry questions to discover emerging teaching methods to construct meaning to improve my story teaching practices. These emergent teaching strategies will become known to me as I continue my inquiry. As an additional guiding framework, Ochs and Capps’ (2001) dimensions of narrative: tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance will direct me to emergent practices. I will also draw from
storytelling and process drama specialists’ theories and practice to round out my
discussion.

Stories create pictures. By exploring narratives, one can re-visit story and the learning
lessons surrounding it. I will explore the stories developed through story lessons and the
pictures students used to represent their own learning. This can include, “semiotic tools”
(Vygotsky, 1978) including the use of language which is always symbolic. According to
Vygotsky (1978), we use language to symbolically express an event or idea, especially
narratives, to re-create events with words.

Teachers do not only use spoken language in their teaching to help students find
meaning, they employ strategies that include representing narratives in many different
ways including: creating pictures, drawing ideas, and mapping directions. These
alternative meaning making methods are often used in both story lessons and process
drama. In my own practice, I have examined how students have, both in the past and
present, processed meaning from story. I use Anthropologist Geertz’s (1973) “thick
descriptions” (p. 29) to form accurate representations of the meaning making process.
Geertz (1973) believed in anthropology, as well as other fields, a thick description of a
human behavior explains not just the behavior, but context as well. This term, first used
by Geertz in The Interpretation of Cultures (1973), describes his own method of doing
ethnography. A thick description describes the experience using detail so the researcher
can often re-visit the experience by the description. I will detail my teaching work using
narrative. This includes thick descriptions of my direct instruction, collaborative work with students, and performance work by both students and myself.

The Work of the Storytelling Teacher

As a professional storyteller for the past twenty years, I have acquired a unique understanding of the art. I have used storytelling on a daily basis for over fifteen years in the classroom designing basic and advanced storytelling classes. I also have created and taught storytelling as it applies to history, reading, English, composition, and other co-curricular subject areas. For nine of those years, I worked in a small, rural school district in California as the first full-time high school storytelling teacher in the country. In these roles, I designed teaching lesson plans using story and storytelling to guide student meaning making. It soon became difficult to design a teaching plan without using narrative. As one of my students Jennifer shared, “Mr. Cordi, you use story in all your teaching. I have had many classes with you and I have noticed this.” As I began to explain, she stopped me and said, “You don’t understand, I just wanted you to know that I liked it and I know it works.” Like Campano (2007) recalls, “over the course of my teaching career, my investigation into my students’ experiences and my own reflections about the relationship between teaching and research became inextricably linked context of inquiry” (p. 9).

The purpose of this study is to both explore and reflect through formalized methods how story can assist with my story-based teaching to help students make meaning from the use of narrative teaching. By questioning and troubling my story teaching in the form of
“story lessons,” I can improve my own story teaching practice. Through personal reflection and reflexivity, I will gain new understandings of my teaching. In addition to examining my practice of story lessons over the years, I will also examine not only my teaching efforts using narrative, but how they are used when working in conjunction with my present understanding of process drama.

For the past five years, I have engaged in doctoral study as a researcher, participant-observer, and student studying process drama and its connection to teaching and learning. As a storytelling teacher, I reflect upon story connections questioning how process drama and storytelling can work in tandem. In the winter of 2007, in a rural elementary school in England, traveling with my advisor Dr. Brian Edmiston and process drama teacher Tim Taylor, for three intense schools days, I videotaped, assisted, taught, and observed process drama at work in its form as dramatic inquiry. We worked with 34 students ranging in ages from 5 to 9. During this time, we employed narrative in a dramatic exploration working collaboratively with students to make meaning. We entered a drama world of mountain climbing to assist and save a wounded mountain climber. Drama was used to help students create and engage the narratives.

For three, full school days, except lunchtime, with our help, students built this drama and explored, in dramatic story-based ways, how to help the injured climber. Students created first aid stations and snow mobiles out of over-sized wooden blocks designing their story and play around these representations. These models invited narration from the students and teacher. They told the story first and used the models to sustain it. The
blocks became places where drama was realized. Both telling and sharing helped this realization. What was critical was the teachers’ use of mediation as tools (Vygotsky, 1978) used to help students make meaning from the dramatic experience. Mediation was used to advance learning and the unfolding narratives. This mediation, by the teachers, often occurred within the narratives. For example, the blocks became helicopters flown to assist the rescue and narratives were used by students and adults to communicate within the drama world. Using narrative based teaching was a way students were invited into the drama and also how the drama was sustained over time. As the teachers and students told stories, they also created their part of the fictional stories and enacted them.

*Story Events*

Environments, story lessons and process drama could be considered story events because each story event calls for students and teachers to act differently than the other. As Bauman (1976) notes, the events can change the culture. The interactions and expectations of the events are not the same. Story events invite different levels of participation, distinguish different roles of the teacher and students, and assign different ways story can be represented and shared. I will explore the teaching in the story events that can elevate or hinder a student’s meaning making by writing about these experiences from a personal perspective. I write about how the culture context changes with the events. One way to record and reflect upon this is to employ ethnography as a research method.
**Ethnography**

Ethnography has been defined by Chambers (2000) as an, “inquiry that aim(s) to describe or interpret the place of [a] culture in human affairs…composed of those understandings and ways of understanding that are judged to be characteristic of a discernable group” (p. 852). Pepper and Thomas (2002) describe ethnography as a, “first hand, intensive study of a given culture and the patterns within that culture with special attention to all aspects as to reveal cultural patterns” (p. 159). Hargreaves (1994) expands this definition to school communities believing each school has its own culture. Simply put, story-based classrooms comprise a culture where the event, story teaching and storytelling, help to shape the culture. As an educator, I have been an essential part of that shaping. My study will permit me to speak to my work in this process.

At first, ethnography was inviting to me because I could use primary data, video, photographs, and audio resources. Ethnography is a method whereby the researcher must make the strange familiar (Tierney, 1998). This leads to the question, strange to whom? Since I am studying my practice, it is what I know, but I must reflect upon to truly discover. I am not a stranger to the work. Ethnographic researchers are often told to ignore personal reactions drawing in outside views to foster objectivity. However, this study is concerned with my teaching. I examine my teaching perspective, not from a removed perspective, but as an insider. One way is to use a methodology known as autoethnography. Though widely used, this method still has been subject to some criticism. Sparkes (2002) warns the researcher who employs autoethnography may be viewed as narcissistic and in danger of gross self-indulgence. The subject of this work is
me. I am willing in this writing not to write about what worked in my teaching, but also critically reflect upon what did not work as well. I have no pre-set conclusion; I develop this work through my reflections not because they are mine but instead, because they give voice to discuss teaching first hand.

**Autoethnography as Method**

The term autoethnography, coined by David Hayano (1979), comprises a set of issues related to anthropologist’s view of their own people. My story as a storytelling teacher is unique. An in-depth exploration into this will inform my understanding. Denzin (1989) identifies several different forms of writing called, “biographical methods” (p. 27) believing autoethnography consists of two distinct forms, ethnography and autobiography. As I examine the narrative process of learning, I explore and reflect upon the situational context through my own lens, paying particular attention to how a fictional ethnography occurs when students are placed in the fictional world, either by hearing a told story or being engaged in process drama.

By writing about this experience from a personal, insider perspective, as both as a teller and teacher engaged in fictional worlds with children, I can speak to the uniqueness of these learning cultures. Using this method will assist me as Denzin (1989) notes, by placing my story (ies) in the center of the writing of the culture. In autoethnography, researchers are encouraged to use personal experiences and detailed personalized accounts from within a culture, in this case a story-based classroom, to examine deeply the interactions of self within the culture and the interactions of others who work or live
in the culture. I would not argue about the validity of my perspective and my interpretations. My voice would be the study and my study would use qualitative methods with an insider’s perspective as the basis of my analysis.

*Why Choose Autoethnography?*

When Dr. Amy Shuman introduced autoethnography as a match for my work, I was immediately drawn to the connections and insight it could provide. In order to understand my past use of story, autoethnography allows me not only to examine, but re-examine the world of my teaching and the cultural make up of process drama and re-engage with it using language. This inquiry method bridges self-reflexive insight with writing. Self-reflexivity is a major component to this style of writing (Shields, 2000); therefore, Ellis and Bochner (2000) write, autoethnographic texts are usually written in first person and can highlight dialogue, emotions, and self-consciousness at it relates to the culture being studied. In addition to providing a voice for me to record and reflect, it also provides a place to ask questions and promote inquiry within these learning contexts. Richardson and Ellis (2004) argue autoethnography is an effective method of inquiry. Autoethnography, “…blurs the boundaries between individual reflexivity, (auto), the transcriptions of collective human experience (ethno) and writing as a form of inquiry (graphy) that does not merely write up the research but is in itself the method of discovery (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006). By recording and reflecting upon my use of narrative, I can discover the emergent teaching strategies that have and have not worked over my years of teaching. This discovery can be seen through the lens of process drama
in order to examine how narrative is significant to the teaching practices of process drama.

However, this style of writing is more than writing to present the narratives I describe. Re-calculating charts and graphs cannot support my understanding of narratives. Using autoethnography, I have a way to accurately describe the words and language in story teaching and storytelling. I use story to explain story.

To support my insider perspective, I will include, “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973). Instead of bulleted remarks or summative analysis, I will present a thick or detailed description. This will help readers enter the world I narrate. Geertz (1973) calls thick description, “an elaborate venture in” (p. 2). According to Geertz (1973), much can come from reviewing experience in writing.

What we can construct, if we keep notes and survive, are hindsight accounts of the connectness of things that seem to have happened: pieced together patternings, after that fact…It calls for showing how particular events and unique occasions, an encounter here, a development there, can be woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go (Geertz, 1973, pp. 2-3).

To do this, I engage in the process of re-visiting, re-thinking, and re-telling stories of my practice and understanding of process drama. Although I will use thick descriptions to explore questions concerning process drama, new insight will be the desired outcome. At times, I will draw from direct observation and recorded field notes from my experience in England. I examine this in relation to my writing of story lessons. Together, this will help direct my analysis to include my past and present story teaching work. As I bend back, I move forward in my inquiry of my own teaching work. Stories will also serve as
points of reflections. During my years as a storytelling teacher, I developed curriculum, created lesson plans, and wrote reflections focusing on storytelling as tools for learning. Because of this intense reflection, my writings inform my methodology. Plus, by reflections, I can discover connections with my past work. Since the core work of my dissertation concerns the importance of narrative, I address my analysis using a narrative style of writing.

*Role of the Researcher*

Academics often write from an impersonal nature when reporting research. Schubert (1991) notes, [teachers], “become akin to participants on assembly lines rather than professionals who conceptualize, act, and reflect on work derived from deep commitment” (p. 210). Jungck (2001) adds, “the dominant perception of what is considered ‘real’ or legitimate research has functioned to artificially separate teachers from researchers, teaching from researching, and theorizing from practicing” (p. 333). In traditional research methods, the researcher’s role is often marred or impersonal. An impersonal voice would not work since the subject of the research is my voice---my story teaching practices and how I can improve them. My voice supports this study. Richardson (1997) questions, as do I, “why don’t we include ‘I’ in our research?” (p. 3). She continues, academics are given the story-line that ‘I’ should be suppressed in their writing, that they should accept homogenization and adopt the all-knowing, all powerful voice of the academy, but contemporary philosophical thought raises problems that exceed and undermine the academic story line. We are always present in our texts, no matter how we try to suppress ourselves (p. 3).
However, as Campano (2007), laments, “some university-based researchers may disregard the stories of teachers because they are not rigorous, are too subjective, cannot be generalized, are self absorbed, and so on” (p. 17). He continues, “Why engage in the risky”. Why tell stories from and about the classroom? (p. 17). For me, the answer is simple; sharing my story teaching practices is an effective way to address my work in the classroom. As writer Tony Morrison makes clear, “students (and teachers) write not only from experience but for experience; storytelling becomes an ongoing process of inquiry and discovers that is potentially generative” (Campano, 2007, p. 18).

As teacher and researcher, I depend upon experience and the ability to re-think or “bend back” (Guralnik, 1982, p. 45). By these experiences as a storytelling teacher, I am a, “teacher-as-reflector” (Schön, 1983) writing about my own practice. As a reflexive researcher/teacher, my analysis is my own, a “custom job” (Nightingale, 1999, p. 228). “Reflexivity then, urges us to explore the ways in which a researcher’s involvement with a particular study’s influence acts upon and informs such research” (Nightingale, 1999, p. 228). Reflexivity places me within the research. According to Scott and Morrison (2006), reflexivity may be, “defined as the process by which a researcher comes to understand how they are positioned in relation to the knowledge they are producing, and indeed, is an essential part of that knowledge-producing activity” (p. 201). Positioning is key.
Positioning of the Researcher and Teacher

In my research, I must be cognizant of how I position students when using story lessons, and how I am positioned by storytelling events and the formed culture that results from the storytelling event. I also must see how students are positioned not only from story, but from using narrative in conjunction with process drama. I serve many positions in this work as a student learning from the experience, a teacher instructing students, a teacher engaged in drama with students and a teacher designing instruction. In all cases, I reflect upon and analyze these positions. Although I employ many roles, all data is filtered through my understanding. I interpret how the data are gathered, processed, and organized. What is also important is how the idea of self helps the narration of my research (Lichtman, 2006, p. 12). Self is integral to my study. In order to talk about self, I must be able to narrate self.

The construction of selfhood, it seems, cannot proceed without a capacity to narrate. Once we are equipped with that capacity, we can produce a selfhood that joins with others, that permits us to hark back selectively to our past while shaping ourselves for the possibilities of an imagined future…our stories also impose a structure, a compelling reality on what we experience, even a philosophical stance…Storymaking is the medium for coming to terms with the surprises and oddities of the human condition and for coming to terms with our imperfect grasp of that condition (Bruner, 2002, pp. 86).

The storyteller/researcher interprets the data, becoming a filter for understanding, and shapes the information through meaning making (Bruner, 2002). Researchers who chose autoethnography must be good tale-tellers.
Data Collection and Data Analysis

While researchers are involved in the field, I need to understand that, “in qualitative research, data analysis is simultaneous with data collection” (Merriman, 2002, p. 14). Lichtman (2006) agrees citing qualitative research as something that, “moves back and forth between data gathering/collection and data analysis” (p. 15). Observation data is being gathered while field notes are analyzed. Transcriptions come from the video data and interview questions are formed from the lived experiences—the actual work in the classroom. The process of data collection works in concert with data analysis.

Narrative writing/telling as data

I have written formally and informally about using story and storytelling to teach. Richardson (2004) argues writing is a method of inquiry. In this study, writing becomes a method to ask questions to discern the meaning of my teaching. One way is to tell stories and write using narrative. Shank (2002) suggests the use of narrative in current ethnographic practices is autoethnography. He further proposes we cannot know the influence and impact of autoethnographic researchers, unless we know them from their perspectives—we must hear it in their own world. According to Richardson (2004), language “is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and the self” (p. 480). Richardson (2004) focuses on both who and how stories are told arguing for a specific type of narrative writing when conducting research. “Writing is always partial, local, and situational and that our self is always present, no matter how much we try to suppress it” (Richardson, 2004, p. 480). This applies to the writing in autoethnography.
Auto-ethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth auto-ethnographers gaze first through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretational (Ellis, 2001, p. 729).

Polkinghorne (1988) also advocates for narrative inquiry as a means of research supporting story to make meaning. She agrees story is a way to understand and record experience. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) agree, if, “we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively” (p 13.). They refer to the process of writing and telling stories as, storied. With this in mind, the object of my inquiry is the storied nature of human experience, in particular my teaching (Gudmundsdottirr, 1998). Story is, “privileged to capture the richness of teachers’ understanding of practice” (Gudmundsdottirr, 1998, p. 1).

When narrative is used to record our thinking, we begin to make meaning about this thinking. As Pagnucci, (2004), illustrates, “living the narrative life means re-thinking one’s whole approach to knowledge. Narrative believers seek to create knowledge through the telling of stories” (p. 47). We understand by telling stories.

…our notions of what is real are made to fit out ideas and how we came to know reality. I’m suggesting that what stories do is like that: we come to conceive of a ‘real world’ in a manner that fits the stories we tell about it, but it is our good philosophical fortune that we are forever tempted to tell different stories about the presumably same events in the presumably same world…Let stories bloom (Pagnucci, 2004, p. 103).

To report is to carry again (Forest, 2007). As noted by McEwan (1995), telling stories about our teaching is more than recording our practices, instead “we are possibly altering them” (p. 341). This occurs when researchers write narratives.
What is central to personal account methods is the construction and rendering of meaning through narrative devices, and what weaves this method so well into research is its directional focus “inward” and on creating understanding through the temporality of past, present, and future (Jungck, 2001, p. 341).

**Participant observer**

In my experience working with my advisor, Dr. Brian Edmiston, and process drama specialist, Tim Taylor, I not only videoed the experience, but also was a participant-observer. This unique position invites an insider perspective to the teacher-directed meaning making process with both narrative and process drama. For example, instead of videoing the teaching, I participated in the inquiry as a fictional BBC reporter granting me entrance into students’ worlds. They accepted me in my role and understood the video was now part of the drama. By being a BBC reporter, their story now involved an interviewer in their story. I was not only recording the story of the mountain climbing, but I was in the story. Participant observation describes, analyzes, and interprets an everyday activity to understand it more fully (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher is actively involved in the actions of the subjects and serves as the primary tool for gathering and analyzing data.

**Observations**

While interviews provide a secondhand account of the meaning making and video has the ability to re-visit the process, observation is a view from a, “firsthand encounter” (Merriman, 2002, p. 13). Observation is a key ingredient to effective qualitative research as a firsthand account and primary resource. It complements the adage, “seeing is believing.” When I served as a human instrument, observation is how one gathers data.
“The human-as-instrument is inclined toward methods that are extensions of normal human activities: looking, listening, speaking, reading, and the life” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Going into a social situation and looking is another way of gathering materials about the social world. There is no pure, objective, detached observations; the effects of the observer’s presence can never be erased (Denzin, 2000, p. 48-9).

Observation is natural. In fact, observation has been characterized as, “the fundamental base of all research methods in social and behavioral sciences” (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 389).

**Participants**

In order to address my own teaching practices, the primary participant is me. However, I am to write and reflect upon this process in relation to the social context of the classroom. In the second part of the question, the meaning making using process drama, the target population for this study is the primary student in a rural classroom in England.

**Promises and Limits of the Method/Data**

**Promises**

Autoethnography requires me to challenge my assumptions. During my fifteen years of teaching using narratives, I have found myself teaching students from my performance understanding of storytelling. When narrative works in conjunction with process drama, performance is not the outcome and therefore the basics assumptions of using narrative teaching changes. This methodology allows me to test, evaluate, and frame my thinking concerning both teaching pedagogies. Teachers often do not make time to examine critically their classroom practices. Indeed, in the fifteen years I have taught high school,
I rarely had time to write down my thoughts or evaluate them through a narrative lens. I tried to make the time, and I did write about my practices, but not in a concerted effort. The ability to reflect is one that must be learned.

The increasing demands on teachers...require that they spend more and more time trying to get things done rather than thinking about what they have done or what they will do. Reflection is a luxury most teachers do not have the opportunity to indulge in (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 21).

This methodology allows me this freedom and space. People’s lives matter, but much research looks at outcomes and disregards the impact of the experience itself (Bell, 2002, p. 209). As imagined too, in standard school settings, reflection is not the norm. This approach allows me to voice my practice and to understand my work. Using narrative in autoethnography allows me, as a researcher, to arrive at information that I do not know already (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

**Limits**

I, as the researcher, can only see this work from my understanding. “At every point in our research—in our observing, our interpreting, our reporting, and everything else we do as researchers—we inject a host of assumptions” (Crotty, 1988, p. 17). The social context of the people I am working with will be at the forefront of my analysis. As Pagnucci (2004) recounts, “in a narrative world there is no such thing as fixed truth. Stories are always fluid, moving, changing. There are no truths, in a narrative life, only different ways to tell the story” (p. 52). “Truth” changes as different contexts are presented.

Because a narrator tells us what happened, where and when, he or she tends to convey an aura of truth along with the narrated events. Indeed, they are the truth from the teller’s advantage point at a particular item of the inquiry. Yet that truth
may change as the inquiry progresses in a retelling of a story, especially if various actors are consulted (Conlee, 1999, p 58).

Stories are meaningful when placed in context. Josselson (2006) adds, “The challenge that confronts us is how to assimilate narrative understanding at a conceptual level in a way that does not return to a modernist frame, but rather to treat them as situated interpretations” (p. 6). As was noted, storytelling events are situational and will be interpreted through a cultural understanding. Another area to avoid is what Clandinin (2001) calls the “Hollywood Plot”, where everything neatly works out in the end. When this occurs:

The researcher must make a series of judgments about how to balance the smoothing contained in the plot with what is obscured in the smoothing. To acknowledge narrative smoothing is to open another door for the reader (Clandinin, 2001, p. 181).

My teaching does not always end with, “happily every after”. In fact, narrative can help extend the traditional ending of a story. Using narratives in teaching can also expand the learning. In this work, I am not concerned with smoothing out my teaching, but instead placing the work under a reflective and reflexive lens.
Chapter 4: Using Storytelling and Storymaking in My Classes

In this chapter, I use autoethnography as an interpretive lens to reflect upon my classroom practices as a storytelling teacher. I explore my research questions as I evaluate critically my own teaching history, using story. Using autoethnography, I examine my work as a teacher and storyteller because the method calls for me not to simply re-tell my story, but instead to wrestle with the worlds where I was placed in order to dig deeper beyond the surface of my teaching and to position my writing through many lenses.

The following research questions guide my inquiry:

How has my identity as a storytelling teacher changed since I encountered the pedagogy of process drama?

SUB-QUESTIONS

a) What is the significance for my work as a storytelling teacher of extending my teaching by using the pedagogies of process drama and dramatic inquiry?

b) How does the discussion of narrative performance contribute to my understanding of process drama and storytelling in the classroom?

Using autoethnography to explore my research questions, I need not re-tell my teaching career, but instead trouble my thinking over significant times in my teaching, including addressing my life before I was a teacher. In this chapter, I explore three elements: stories about my past and my first experience as a storyteller; reflections about those
stories; and perceptions of storytelling and story used for teaching, and creating spaces for student voices.

Let us examine more closely these elements:

1. Stories about my past and my first experience as a storyteller.
   
   I outline how I became a storyteller and how growing up in a storytelling, Appalachian culture directly influences my work as both a professional storyteller and teacher.

2. Perceptions of storytelling and storymaking used for teaching

   I detail and critically review how stories are seen as teaching tools, especially the work of Ruth Sawyer. I also sharply contrast this with my own discoveries using story to teach.

3. Spaces for student voices

   I detail how I create a space for student voices by honoring their insight and stories in the classroom and by forming a storytelling club.

When examining these elements, many questions arise which I address through autoethnography. Questions such as: How has my personal orientation raised by Appalachian parents influenced by work as a storytelling teacher? How have I taught in both worlds of storytelling and education? How have traditional rules of storytelling affected my risk taking when teaching using story? How important is performance to storytelling? How does improvisation help teaching? Which did I value more---storymaking or storytelling? How have and will these choices affect my teaching?
Autoethnography depends upon self reflection. The chapter’s style is deliberately designed to reflect and utilize this methodology interweaving the personal, scholarly, experiential, and professional. I have purposefully avoided presenting some of the material simply as data and still others as commentary. With autoethnography, I argue it is all data, and at the same time, it is also all reflective. Clearly, story can be both data and written as commentary. I do not separate these categories, but instead deliberately blur the genres (Geertz, 1973).

**Why Autoethnography?**

In order to reflect upon my work as a storyteller, teacher, and teacher employing stories and storytelling as pedagogy, I use autoethnography because it allows my voice to tell my own story through a critical lens. What makes it critical is the story is not mine alone. It draws upon the many voices that have helped shape and question my teaching. This includes my students and other faculty, as well as the many identities that sometimes served in conflict with each other in my teaching. Composing an autoethnography creates an engagement where I cannot only chronicle these voices, but evaluate them as well. However, as Jones (2008) notes, “autoethnography is a balancing act” (p. 207). Where do I start? How has story become part of what I do? How do I separate my life story from critical reflection? Autoethnography also allows me to reflect upon my teaching from a social understanding. As Spry (2001) notes, autoethnography is, “a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts” (p. 710). With autoethnography, I can evaluate my teaching choices based upon the social groups of my students and even the structure of my classroom.
In this work, I push myself to understand what I have done using story and what I could have done to improve my teaching by changing the way I used story and storytelling. In my attempts to make clear how my life story interrelates to my teaching story, I draw upon the work of Holman Jones (2008) who after examining various interpretations of autoethnography, offers one of her own.

Setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation…and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives (Denzin, 2003, p. 209).

In order to push myself to understand, I need to release ways I have traditionally accepted when using story and storytelling to teach. In this work, I am trying to let go of what I have learned and know about the world of storytelling and education, so I can gain new understandings of how these worlds both contradict and complement each other. In so doing, I intend to establish what is referred to as a “new middle” (Mora, 1993), a cross among story, storytelling, and education. Autoethnography depends on my understanding formed by the social groups I have been in, the ones I was admitted to, and those I had to work to join. This work is about the wrestling to be understood in the worlds of teaching, telling, and something in-between.

Jones (2008) shares, autoethnography is, “how selves are constructed, disclosed, and implicated in the telling of personal narratives as well as how these narratives move in and change the contexts of their telling” (p. 211). When using autoethnography, one can use personal stories to, “interpret the past, translating and transforming contexts, and envisioning a future” (Jones, 2008, p. 211). In these accounts, I study how my past use of
storytelling cemented how I saw storytelling. It contains the wrestling when I tried to model professional storytellers’ ways of using story. Did this become the foundation I used when developing story lessons? Lastly, how have my students and their needs helped me to transform context when using storytelling so that it can advance my future work as a storytelling teacher?

The goal of autoethnography…is to show rather than to tell and, thus, to disrupt the politics of traditional research relationships, traditional forms of representation, and traditional social science orientations to audiences (Denzin, 2003, p. 203).

However, autoethnography is about creating an emotional experience (Bochner, 2001; Ellis, 1995, 1997; Jago, 2002, 2001). In these discoveries, I become vulnerable to accepting some of my choices using story that were not the most effective. I chronicle the emotional understanding of when I learned the value of improvisation and community as well as my awareness of the worlds I wrestled with within my classroom.

In her book, Imperial Eyes, Mary Louise Pratt (2008) defines autoethnography as, “a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them” (p 586). I have stepped into different worlds to synthesize my teaching. In the world of storytelling, I have many other listeners and tellers, whereas in the world of education, I have my students and faculty members. My storyteller-self was not always a storyteller. I met an oral historian once who believed people who own the rights to their stories are those who have lived them. When I asked how she learned this, she acknowledged it was from others. It was all about the attribution rather than ownership; how you see yourself, instead of how you claim it.
One might think attribution is the same as ownership, but it is not. This is a difference specific to storytelling. When you perform someone else’s story, the ethical thing to do is to give attribution—say where you learned it. There is a social significance and emotional appeal to storytelling. In academia, we are often asked to suspend affect. However, based upon my social contexts, one must take on particular affects in academics as well. For example, to be a teacher, you must be an authority. To be a storyteller, you must guard who you are and whom you allow into the “club.” I’m interested in exploring how people, especially students and myself, cross outside the lines of any particular world and then recognize their own multiple positions. Autoethnography allows me not only to step into these worlds, but realize how the worlds were constructed and even explore the other “possible worlds” (Bruner, 1986) that could improve my teaching using story and storytelling.

A Stubborn Start: Holding Back in Sharing the Story

In this chapter, I resist doing what comes naturally to me---telling the story upfront. It is a natural inclination to tell my teaching story as one long autobiography, but with autoethnography, I share a critical reflection that helps me examine my teaching to improve it. Instead, I share stories, but in an on-going dialogue. I argue a story has multiple unfoldings, some beginnings, some endings, and still some unresolved pieces. This is the reflection within this chapter. However, to provide a clue, because after all, a particular perspective drives my narrative, it is a story about re-examining what I knew initially about storytelling and using that insight to construct pedagogy. Teaching called for a different method, suspending what I knew about professional storytelling to
accommodate better teaching. This narrative is, in part, about the blocks and intersections guiding this journey. Along the way, I offer comments about testing traditional ways of story use and breaking the rules of storytelling, re-designing story to elevate my teaching, creating story spaces for student stories, and the importance of community over performance. To discuss these practices, I detail classroom examples through thick, narrative stories to engage in critical reflection. As a narrative teacher, I believe these stories will help orient the direction of my writing.

In essence, the narrative teacher believes in the power of story, and so stories become a central tool for teaching and learning. Living the narrative life means rethinking one’s whole approach to knowledge. Rather than always pursuing knowledge through analysis and critical thinking that rely on critiquing and dissecting ideas, narrative. Believers seek to create knowledge through the telling of stories (Pagnucci, 2004, p. 47).

Using autoethnography, I can dig deeper into my teaching history to determine how my choices helped inform my pedagogical philosophy and methodology. Bochner (2001) argues for qualitative research employing narrative.

The narrative turn moves from a singular, monolithic conception of social science toward a pluralism that promotes multiple forms of representation and research: away from facts and toward meanings; away from master narratives and toward local stories; away from idolizing categorical thought and abstracted theory and toward embracing the value of irony, emotionality, and activism; away from assuming the stance of disinterested spectator and toward assuming the posture of a feeling, embodied, and vulnerable observer; away from writing essays and toward telling stories (pp. 134-135).

*The Importance of Reflection*

Dewey (1933) describes reflection within the classroom as, “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads” (p. 9). Self-reflection,
especially in print, creates a certain messiness, uneasiness, and definite vulnerability (Denzin, 2003, p. 9). However, it is only through this sifting and shifting of experience and analysis where new connections and learning begin. I need to give myself permission to be messy in order to understand how narratives used for teaching can become clearer to me in my teaching practice. Pagnucci (2004) calls this, “the pleasure of messiness” (p. 52) and states, “narratives can address contradiction, confusion, and complexity without offering any concrete answers, which is, upon consideration, exactly what real life does” (p. 52). As Pagnucci (2004) recounts, “living the narrative life is about figuring out what counts” (p. 54). In this chapter, I wrestle with “what counts” in re-telling and re-focusing my teaching life as a storytelling teacher. I open doors, not only to my classroom, but to my actions within the classroom hoping to learn from my promising teaching practices as well as my mistakes. I will not censor my actions, but instead detail them for understanding. In some cases, this analysis will invite change. To discuss these practices, I detail classroom examples through thick, narrative stories to engage in critical reflection. As a narrative teacher, I believe these stories will help me orient the direction of my writing.

As Kemmis (1985) underscores, reflection is a personal and social process. It is personal because I draw upon my perspectives and insights in my teaching. As I reflect, I reference my work in the form of dialogue. It is social because the dialogue is not confined to the voices I have to offer, but incorporates many other voices to help further my understanding. This includes my parents, other teachers, and my students. I have to admit, in order to write about these subjects, I needed to change how I felt about my work
separating my inhibitions of how telling “your story” can be seen through an academic lens. For years, I have known the value of telling stories, but when using my own experiences as a model for reflection, I had to remind myself of narrative’s ability to address and re-visit the past to inform the present. However, the world of academe is only beginning to concern itself with the world of the storyteller. In my coursework, outside of folklore and storytelling classes, I rarely found storytelling as an oral art emphasized; instead there was a heavy emphasis on narrative as a written work. In fact, in general, professional storytelling is new and often seen as indifferent to the academy. I knew this before I engaged in this study, using my writing to merge these worlds. I hoped to sustain the voice of a storyteller, but also keep a voice that could be recognized for academe claim. Few professional storytellers have written academe work, but I felt a need to not separate my voice as a storyteller, but to merge and apply to my understanding of scholarship. In contrast, narrative is recognized in scholarship.

As outlined in chapter three, Campano (2007) shares how narrative can be used to understand the relationship between research and teaching. Writing stories can bring out perspectives. As Geertz (1973) supports, story is a process of construction and by working with stories, a “battery of interpretations” (p. 3) can assist the researcher to think about the past, present, and the possible. Autoethnography creates an engagement between self and the social contexts---in this case, the world of teaching and the world of the academe. In this work, I examine and contest the social world of professional storytelling with the classroom. In these worlds, I listen not only to my voice, but I also recall and focus on my students’ voices. I am able to engage, look back on my story use,
and see how my students and I were restricted by my teaching, and also how we advanced because of it. Addressing these worlds can create a tension that can help me understand my role in both academic and storytelling environments. In writing using autoethnography, I needed not to worry how my work might fit within an academic tone, but instead, concentrate on how I had taught. Using autoethnography allows me to dialogue, and in that communication, many voices can help my search in improving my teaching. This method helps me make sense of my teaching life.

Once we understand that communication embodies both the personal and the cultural, and then we legitimate the need to show how individuals use communication personally to cope with difficult moments in their lives. This brings up intricate connections among experiences, grasp what personal experiences mean, and express those meanings to one’s self as well to others (Bochner, 2001, p. 12).

Attempting to be honest about my beginnings as a storyteller and teacher as well as my developments over the years, I needed to allow the narratives to speak so I could understand them. This reflection is about being in both worlds where in each world I have a different voice. I straddle both worlds, realizing what can be learned from these voices. Let us examine the worlds in which I write. First, I need to acknowledge there are other worlds in my teaching that I do not extend. This is the world of a white, married, man. I recognize this position of viewing the world also invites and deters other perspectives. In California, I taught many migrant workers’ children. I would never state I understand or could relate my world to their work in the fields. In this work, I discuss my world of being a story listener, hearing my students’ stories of West Virginia. This was my first understanding of the educational use of story. I then dismiss the world of the professional storyteller where I learned the rules of storytelling and mix these worlds
with my world as a high school educator, process drama teacher, and Ph.D. student. From this intermingling, I consider how all these worlds inform my writing. Clearly, autoethnography, as a methodology, supports the process. As I engage in dialogue, I allow my stories and reflections to describe and speak to my history. As I steer away from being “academic,” but instead being multi-voiced, I believe I become more diverse in my academic analysis. As Becker (2007) adds,

> Academics favor a few classic personae whose traits color academic prose, shape academic arguments, and make the resulting writing more or less persuasive to various audiences. Those personae inhabit a world of scholars, researchers, and intellectuals in which it is useful or comfortable to be one another of these people. The academic-intellectual world has an ambiguous and uneasy relation to the ordinary world, and many academics worry about their own relation to ordinary people (p. 33).

My narrative has helped form the foundation I have used later as a storytelling teacher. My audience is, in many ways, myself. I want to understand my work. However, it is also includes other readers who are interested in my reflection as scholarship. The first person I need to relate this work to is myself. From there, I can build a better understanding of what I am saying. My writing will include my stories as my method of inquiry. However, the standard “boring” (Richardson, 1997, p. 474) writing where the points are “organized and outlined” (p.474) may, “undercut writing as a dynamic creative process” (p. 474). Instead, my writing will reflect a narrative understanding and not the, “homogenized voice of science” (Richardson, 1997 p. 474). Instead, I engage in what Richardson (1997) refers to as “writing stories” (p.474).

> These are narratives that situate one’s own writing in other parts of one’s life such as disciplinary constraints, academic debates, departmental politics, social movements, community structures, research interests, familial ties, and personal
history. They offer critical reflexivity about the writing self in different contexts (p. 474).

In this case, I situate myself, and my writing, within the classroom. However, before I can look at this, I must explore my work within a professional storytelling context before I became a storytelling teacher.

I balance how much of my story I share and review. I constantly wonder what I should leave out and keep in the narrative. Where do I start? How has story become part of what I do? However, the story needs to be pushed and questioned. I have carefully selected each story to help address my teaching practices. Each story and event I describe as storytelling events help to inform what I understood in the past with story and storytelling to inform my current understanding. Each story is a window to my understanding and questions. In order to see this, one must look at the context for each story. These stories can and have started as early as my childhood days. Cristina Gonzalez (2002) relates the difference between telling your life story and composing an autoethnography.

When I am writing an autoethnography, I am coding. I am keeping a track record of the way that I made my decisions. As John Johnson and David Altheide said, we need to be accountable for the decisions we make along the way, as this is our form of validity in ethnography. And that’s what I hold up. When I make the decision to tell this piece and this piece, if I’m an ethnographer and I’m doing an autoethnography, I can’t hide behind, “Well that one just felt right….I have to be able to do what Carolyn (Ellis) described earlier about pushing the end of her story, looking at why she did this and why she would not do that. And that’s where I draw distinctions between “just telling a life” and “writing an autoethnography (p. 166).
Stories about My Past

Story has been woven into my life because I was raised by storytelling parents. They are from West Virginia and would often regale all six of us children with tales of rural Appalachia as our teaching lessons. Known as traditional or back porch storytelling, story was used to help rear us. It was not performed as a storytelling event, but instead occurred when my parents wanted to entertain or teach us a lesson. Almost daily, my mother, or sometimes my father, would share stories not only about living in West Virginia, but how to live our lives. This goes beyond simply teaching a moral, because my mother used personal stories of family and friends we knew to help inform our own actions. She would tell the story of someone we knew and the wrong choices they made, and in the story, warned us not to make the same choice. While my mother was preparing dinner, feeding the dog and cats, driving to pick up my father from Goodyear or using spare places in between, she would tell stories. I vividly remember she wove skillfully stories with epigrams such as, “never take the hat off of someone from West Virginia”, or “you need to be ready for a fight” or “your handshake is as good as your word” and “people who worked hard did not have to share it.” She would often sing a story about “getting a little dirt on your hands” and ask me, “What kind of dirty were they talking about?” Before I could answer, she would tell me the story of the song where a son’s mother tells him to “get a little dirt on your hands, son” and he robs a bank. Mother would laugh because the subject was dirt on the hands and not crime. When recalling these stories, especially the last one, I begin to sense why story is invaluable for me. My mother would not ask questions like, “what is the lesson?”, but instead let the story speak.
However, she would tell it to me repeatedly to make sure I understood it. It was different each time---never memorized word for word---instead, skillfully designed for me and my learning.

I remember long drives to Goodyear where my mother would share her childhood struggles, evoking my empathy. In her family, only she and another sibling graduated from high school. My mother spent her days caring for her many siblings living in rural, rustic conditions with no indoor toilets, using water from the spring, and canning for their next meal. In looking back at this time, I am sure it affected the way I see how stories are used. She made them personal, and from the beginning, I felt connected to the stories she told. They were the basis of my own learning; in growing up my mother was the teacher using personal narratives to help me understand the consequences of my decisions. If I was complaining, she would share in a non-judgmental way, a story about how far she walked to school. I remember when my sister Melinda was lying, she told about how she lied to her grandfather, and although he never said a word about it, he knew. She had to build trust up from there. These homespun stories were used to help rear us. I wonder, could this be why I was attracted to professional storytelling in the first place? I come from a culture of story, a place of story, and I have worked hard for the last fifteen years as a teacher to help find a place and culture for students’ stories. In fact, I feel someone is lost if he or she is not able to tell stories.

In sharing this story, I still wrestle with whether to include this. How important is my personal upbringing? Although I value and realize the importance of being in a
storytelling family, how much can it help me understand why I became a storytelling teacher? I need to keep in mind autoethnography is about overlapping narratives and would be considered a blurred genre since, “it overlaps with other areas such as sociology, journalism, literary criticisms and as Jones (2008) reminds us, “to say nothing of our favorite storytellers” (Denzin, 2000, p. 209). Why not include family tradition especially when it connects to using story to teach? After all, my parents were my first storytellers and also my first teachers. They also shaped the way stories were used in my life—to teach.

I am drawn to narrative as a primary classroom tool. I know this began through my mother’s circle of understanding and now from writing this, I realize I have incorporated her teaching practices into my own. Who am I not to value my parents’ stories? At the same time, in the context of academia, I have learned I could or even should or might be expected to de-value these stories. In my educational coursework and in class discussions, we rarely discuss the importance of our backgrounds. We talk about social justice issues and their effects in teaching, but from a distance. We were asked to consider the implications of our roots and place in society, but how often do we tell about it? How often do we share where we are from in direct discussion of our teaching? With autoethnography, I attempt to sustain the engagement between my worlds. In this case, I am looking at how to engage between the world of my parents and the world of academia. This is one source of multi-voiceness. The reverse is that my parents do not feel engaged in my academic world. Although academic language is distant and remote,
through her narratives, my mother reminds me of the significance of my place in learning. This serves to be a powerful lesson in the classroom.

My First Experience as a Storyteller

Another world I have engaged in outside of my family that has contributed to my understanding of story and storytelling is the professional storytelling world. In my attempts to make clear how my life story interrelates to my teaching story, in this work, I am trying to let go of what I have come to know about the world of storytelling and education, so I can gain a new understanding of how these worlds contradict and complement each other. It is easy to share my life story. However, where it becomes autoethnography is when these events become significant. They help me understand my work as a storytelling teacher: to question what I have done in the past and inform how I would use that understanding to make better choices in my teaching using narrative. It is not simply the stories contained in this chapter that are the important ones, but it is also my reflection upon these stories that creates significance. The stories serve as transitions in my thinking, pauses in my reflection, and complete changes in my teaching. There is a social significance and emotional appeal to storytelling. In academia, we are often asked to suspend affect. However, based upon my social contexts, one must take on particular affects in academics as well. For example, to be a teacher, you must be an authority. I am interested in exploring how people, especially students and I, cross outside the lines of any particular world and then recognize our multiple positions.
In creating this chapter, I allow this approach to guide my thinking. My autoethnography is a story relating my life as it structures my teaching practices. By sharing and understanding my journey, I can see the parameters I have relied upon when becoming a professional storyteller surface. By writing about my past understanding of how I understood what it meant to be a professional storyteller and using autoethnography, I can put this side by side with my understanding of this in relation to teaching. My writing allows me to examine my past coupled with my present.

*Storytelling as Entertainment*

My first understanding of storytelling was to entertain. This mindset affected how I saw story in community and educational contexts. I soon stumbled upon stories in professional storytelling that were unlike the traditional home stories my mother and father told when and wherever they could. Stone (1998) refers to organized storytelling as structured around an event where stories are told and not organically produced such as traditional storytelling on back porches.

At Kent State University, I studied communications as an education major with a focus to teach journalism. During the summer of 1987, as a roving journalist searching for stories, I stumbled upon a flyer entitled, “Once Upon a Time Storytelling Conference.” I called education professor Olga Nelson and asked if I could write a story above the event and she agreed. Initially, I was there to cover the event as a news story, not to be personally involved. I had expected a short visit, but the event sparked an interest. The room consisted of around 70 “old” people paying over $300.00 for a week of stories (at
19, I thought anyone over 30 was old). Few smiled, some played with their pencils, but dispositions soon changed after the first storyteller, Bat Burns from Ireland, sang his first story mesmerizing his audience with his humor. His other selections were both funny, and downright sad. I was hooked. There was something in the presentation of these stories that in some way mirrored my mother’s recounting, although more “rehearsed.” His tone, his physical composition and his style of telling were prepared. When my mother shared, my role was as a listener. I, or my brothers and sisters, were the only audience. In this professional setting, the stories were skillfully designed for a number of audience members. This helped accentuate word choices and delivery. The audience helped to direct the stories. Although my mother had a dynamic and charismatic way of telling, Burns was more focused in his presentation. In some ways, this made us listen more. Until this time, I had never seen a story performed. I pleaded with my editor to allow me more time to write the story. I was hooked; I needed to find out more about storytelling. I was determined to study this art form to find my own storytelling voice. However, the next step in making this happen did not occur quickly.

In writing this chapter, I wondered if I should include the emotional impact that hearing the professional storytellers had on me. I could have simply stated I first became interested in storytelling the first time I saw a professional storyteller. However, autoethnography is about creating an emotional experience (Bochner, 2001; Ellis, 1995, 1997; Jago, 2002, 2001). In fact, if professional storytelling did not affect me emotionally then and the way it does now, I would not have explored the teaching that surfaced from storytelling. It was this drive to know more that made me search to be
what I witnessed. For example, when I heard Jay O’Callahan tells a sixty-minute story from the point of view of a grandmother of a family who worked in steel mine in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. I was in the mine with her. O’Callahan would accentuate with his voice and body the woman’s pain when her husband was injured from the heat of the iron. When O’Callahan represented this person, he did not tell it as though it happened to her, it happened as she told it. Although he was male, he told the hardship story in first person. He shared his interviews, the people of the story and adapted the tellable story from these conversations. It was although the woman was in the room and was addressing all of us. In fact, she was. O’Callahan slipped away and my mind wandered to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Another storyteller, Tim Tingle, author of *Crossing Bok Chitto*, told the story of a young Choctaw girl who leads a runaway slave family to safety. I could tell Tim was there when he told it. He did not remove himself from the experience, but delicately took us on his journey. Taylor transitioned his story to include the spiritual world connection of the Choctaw. Using only words and movement, I felt as though I, too, had entered the spiritual world to help them make this famous crossing. This was quite different than O’Callahan, but in his way, making storytelling a personal art, we still were able to enter the story by his telling.

My friend and colleague Pat Mendoza, who is a two-time Vietnam Vet, shared how the first Vietnam War Memorial was named, “Angelfire.” He travels there every year as an honored guest. However, as he shares his stories, you feel as if you are there with the
soldiers. None of these experiences happened to me, but he carried me to these places and the emotional spaces developing around them. I had seen theater productions, but always felt I was an observer of these productions; however with the storytellers, I was emotionally attached. It was as though the storytellers through their stories said, “come sit for a tale and let it take you to this place.”

When I listened to the story of my student, Angel, of her need to cut herself, I soon realized the school did not want to hear her story. In fact, they were telling her to leave school. Her story was a hard one and the school made it clear they did not want to hear it. When these expectations from the school restricted her voice, I created a place to share where we could all value the listening process where we suspend judgment and lend support. I invited her to a storytelling club where we accepted all students. She was able to tell this story there. In fact, I worked with my student board to show them how to accept everyone who came to the meetings.

I was not trained to listen this way as a teacher. It was emotional for me to validate the importance of listening within my student’s life history as well as my own. It was also emotional to realize how important community was for my students so I began to build my curriculum with story to create community. When using autoethnography, I do not hide my feelings for my choices. This deliberate inclusion, I believe, helps to make my stories more authentic and revealing. I began to re-examine, how often do we allow students to tell their stories? I began to align my own teaching to include more questions to encourage such as, “what do you think of” and “share your insight” as part of my
teaching. After all, as a student, how connected can you be to learning if you feel disconnected to what you are to learn? As teachers, we have students like Angel who needs to feel wanted before she can learn. I need to remember this as I teach.

Jones (2008) shares, autoethnography is, “how selves are constructed, disclosed, and implicated in the telling of personal narratives as well as how these narratives move in and change the contexts of their telling (p. 211). When using autoethnography, one can use personal stories to, “interpret the past, translating and transforming contexts, and envisioning a future” (Jones, 2008, p. 211). In these accounts, I look at how my past use of storytelling cemented how I saw storytelling. Lastly, how did my students and their needs help me to transform context when using storytelling so that it could advance my future work as a storytelling teacher? Denzin (2008) shares,

The goal of autoethnography…is to show rather than to tell and, thus, to disrupt the politics of traditional research relationships, traditional forms of representation, and traditional social science orientations to audiences (p. 69).

**Searching to be a Professional Storyteller**

For one year, I could only find worn out library records featuring storytellers as my only source for professional storytellers including nationally known tellers such as Donald Davis, Elizabeth Ellis, and the Folktellers. I mirrored their voices and sounds trying to imagine how they might physically tell stories. Donald Davis mirrored the style of my mother telling personal tales. However, his tales were carefully crafted so each word was significant. If he repeated something, it was meant to be repeated. Elizabeth Ellis also told personal tales, as well as fairy tales with a feminist slant. It was from her I learned
the power of perspective. Her female characters did not exhibit mousy dispositions, but instead, were powerful.

The Folktellers were a tandem group that showed me you could share in the telling experience with someone else and it took craftsmanship to do so. I even committed some stories to memory. Although I had taught myself with the tapes of their performances, nothing compared to live telling. A year later, I saw an advertisement for a storytelling performance by a local guild. I drove two hours to Cleveland and from that day forward, I joined the group meeting once a month to both listen and tell with other members. However, I learned more than how to tell stories or the expected ways to tell. As I studied, I learned there were both implied and direct conduct rules for telling.

In writing this chapter, I have referred to the stories that helped me, but also addressed how my storytelling has been transformed. Initially, I followed strict rules, both implicit and explicit, as to what was considered good storytelling. This includes: never interrupting the teller while he or she was sharing a story, the story must be told in one sitting, and only participate in the story when prompted to do so. I believed this, in some way, helped me improve my narrative delivery, but at the same time, was also a hindrance to my understanding of the full range of narrative and its potential when used for teaching. At the beginning, these rules helped me appreciate and improve as a teller. I worked on creating stories that could be told to an audience. I spent a great deal of time crafting the stories to mirror the storytellers on the tapes. However, this also rooted my thinking of how a story could be used. I dismissed stories as not workable that took
more time, included interruptions, and involved improvisation. This type of honest reflection serves as a, “doorway, an instrument of encounter, a place of public and private negotiations—where the goal is not just to empathize, but to attend” (Salverson, 2001, p. 125 emphasis added). In reflecting back, I attend to how I changed and broke the rules of storytelling in order to improve my teaching.

**Traditional Rules (Direct and Indirect) in Organized Telling**

From working with the guild, I learned how to stand or sit while telling stories, realized the importance of the beginning, middle, and end when composing a story for telling purposes, and the vital importance of catering a story for a specific audience. I not only learned storytelling, but the expectations of professional storytelling, including etiquette. They include: 1) a teller must tell before an audience. A story is not considered a told story unless shared with an audience. However, it could not simply be a gathering of people---the telling must happen when the teller had all the audience looking at him or her as he or she shared a story that could be told in one sitting. The audience was expected to listen to the story while the teller told. 2) A teller must never interrupt the flow of their story when he or she is telling. What counted as interruption is equated to the curious questions a pre-schooler might ask when hearing a story. They ask about the story, tell the teller about new directions of the story or ask questions where they are confused. In organized storytelling, the story is the experience, not the questions. The story is seen as something that must be told completely before a listening audience who can share comments. There are stories that encourage participation, but this is at the discretion of the teller.
Perceptions of Storytelling and Storymaking Used for Teaching

The Influence of Ruth Sawyer

Considered to be a pioneer of professional storytelling, Ruth Sawyer was one of the first to define the art in relation to performance. She was a former librarian who left her work to become a professional storyteller. Her book, *The Way of the Storyteller*, is still considered a classic text for beginning storytellers. Sawyer (1942) believes storytelling is first and always a spoken story. “The instrument is our voice that we work with…the spoken language—words” (1942). She believed voice was the primary tool in telling, setting the tone for students to listen actively and not just passively participate while story is told (Sawyer, 1942). Sawyer (1942) concludes her chapter about “preparation” with the teller’s goal. “To be able to create a story, to make it live during the moment of the telling, to arouse emotions—wonder, laughter, joy, amazement—this is the only goal a storyteller may have” (Sawyer, 1942, p. 148).

I chose to challenge these traditional paradigms because in teaching using story, my goal was not simply to “arouse emotions”, instead, I wanted to use stories as a tool to introduce new material or reflect and extend an idea or concept. When working with students, in addition to telling fairy and folktales---told in organized storytelling---I often introduced personal and original tales. Sawyer did not see this as “tellable” material. In order for a story to be considered tellable, it must attract the audience’s attention and be told in one sitting. Storyteller and author Kay Stone (1984) believed, “a person who tells folk and fairy tales as being involved in traditional storytelling where the teller was ‘non-theatrical presentations’; ‘authentic oral narrators’ and extolled as ‘real’ storytellers” (p.
4). She agrees with Sawyer. She describes a typical storytelling event at a school or library, as a form of organized storytelling.

Organized storytelling usually took place during the day and in a pre-designated place with a somewhat formal arrangement: children sat on the floor or in chairs and the storyteller stood or sat alone in front of them, more firm separating the single teller and the many acquiescent listeners. These sessions often lasted from thirty to sixty minutes and were scheduled in advance (Stone, 1998, p. 19).

These storytelling rules and/or guidelines stretch back to the work of Ruth Sawyer, a pioneer of professional storytelling. Sawyer was one of the first librarians to quit her job to become a professional storyteller. Sawyer established respect and recognition for the art of storytelling, but almost fixed how stories could be conveyed in schools and libraries. The way stories are told in organized storytelling (Stone, 1998) is recorded in her book, The Way of the Storyteller. These are the same rules I learned as I discovered telling stories. However, I did break away from these rules because, when I was working with students, they had their own way of telling and sharing stories. I eventually learned to let go of these rules, in some cases reluctantly, finding new ways to use narratives for teaching. I also had to re-define the way I defined story performance and story events. I detail this later in the chapter. Within the past five years, I have leaned away from only accepting performed stories seeing performances in everyday storytelling (Ochs and Capps, 2001) as legitimate means of sharing.

**Storytelling for Learning /Breaking Sawyer’s Rules**

When I started as a storyteller, I used stories to entertain and perform for an audience. However, when I started to teach, my story use transformed, shifting to a learning focus and outcome. I distinctly remember a student who worried about the gossiping she heard
about herself and asked if she too should gossip. I turned to a Jewish story to help her. This is a story where a woman has to pick up feathers in a pillow on a windy day at the Rabbi’s request. Before it was easy to spread them around, but to pick them up was a different matter. The Rabbi said so it was the same with gossip. My story was used to illuminate the student’s choices. I referred another student seeking understanding for her cultural background as a member of the Cherokee tribe to old folktales and personal narratives of Cherokees to discover past heritages. She did not want or need a pleasing story, but a way to connect to her personal history.

Another notion of Sawyer and organized storytelling is storytelling stands on its own. It cannot be combined with other teaching such as art, history, math, or English. As many storytellers informed me, holistic storytellers are storytellers who simply tell stories, without props, and no extended learning. They believe the story speaks on its own. As noted, Sawyer (1942) objected to using story in combination with other arts or learning.

I am decrying…the telling of stories to impart information or to train in any specified direction. The sooner this unhampering be accomplished the more positive and direct will be the approach to our goal, which I take to be creative (Sawyer, 1942, p. 32).

As a teacher, I had always used story in combination with other learning practices. When I first taught British literature, I soon realized my students were not fascinated with the text as it was written. For them, Old English and Medieval England were barriers to their understanding. The works of Sir Walter Raleigh, Edmund Spencer, and William Shakespeare did not mirror their own lives. I used story to help students connect and understand poetry and stories. When we were studying pastoral poetry, I created a
modern story environment to share student re-workings of the poem, in this case, the Drive-in Theater. Students shared love sonnets and “A Nymph’s Reply to the Shephard” in a story vernacular that included contemporary language and behaviors. We compared the original story that was told with the one they created from modern times. When we contemporized stories, words and settings, students then wanted to learn the original language and plotlines. Sawyer would disagree.

…it has been a kind of horror that I watched eager and intelligent young minds being thumb-screwed under the belief that storytelling could not stand alone as an art that is reason for existence depended on some extraneous motive (Sawyer, 1962, 1942, p. 32).

In schools, effective teaching increased learning, but in the world of professional storytellers, this is not a concern. Storytellers do not concern themselves with the learning, but instead with the story experience. The main question to be answered was – is the story pleasing for the listeners? The listening experience was what was required in order to learn. Therefore, in order to use stories to teach students, I needed to use stories more than for a listening experience, but for a learning one.

Uses of Stories: Story as Discipline and a Doorway to Literature

In my first job at Brunswick High School in Ohio, I taught American Literature, British Literature, and speech. I struggled to find how best to control or manage my learning environments. I soon discovered story invited students to listen to my teaching. I purposefully shaped my instruction using stories to build classroom community. On Fridays, I designed stories to teach the British Literature curriculum developing our own version of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, called The Brunswick Tales. As Barthes (1974)
states, “the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of text” (p. 3). Students created their own stories, oral and written. They performed their Brunswick Tales only after preparing them for a journal manuscript. When we performed and shared our stories, we began to know one another better. Instead of traditional reading, such as chapter readings, we read to design stories to share in groups with the class. In my British Literature class, we re-wrote and performed Romeo and Juliet telling our own story. In my speech classes, students gave speeches influenced by a biography of a famous person. Instead of simply reading the biography, we created first person, biographical performance stories.

Initially, I worried about using narrative in my lessons. I was unsure how storytelling fit into the academic disciplines I was teaching. I was trained to use rigid lesson plans to introduce subjects, not story. When I first started teaching, I thought my students would question my story-based pedagogy. This did not happen, in fact they asked for more. Teaching using story worked. I recognized my particular leaning toward narratives. It became almost a reflex to look for how I could address a lesson using story or story performance. If it was poetry I would determine how it could be performed like storytelling. If it was non-fiction, I looked at how story could be developed from the essay. Although I worried my students would ask for less story-based work, they never did. I did not use them in every lesson, but I did lean toward narrative as a teaching method. Because my students responded to story, I worried less about disciplining my students and began to build my curriculum to include the student discovery of narrative. When I assigned poetry, students created a narrative outlet to perform what they had
studied. When reflecting, I gave students a good deal of freedom to work within the set parameters. Narrative provided students a way to talk about the literature becoming producers of the text which included deciding what they considered significant in their learning (Heathcote, 1984).

**Changing Role of the Storyteller**

At Hanford High School in 1995, I had the honor of serving as the first high school storytelling teacher in the country where my role as a storyteller changed forever. As a classroom teacher, what was my role? Could I still be a storyteller if I did not traditionally perform stories? When I began teaching in 1990, I was the storyteller and students were the story listeners. The roles, however, would reverse as I listened to the students’ stories. I draw upon a telling experience to illustrate. When I told *Little Burnt Face*, an Algonquian tale, I used often in the classroom, I was the only teller. Following the rules of organized storytelling, no one interrupted. However, left to wonder, when I served as the sole teller, was I unintentionally silencing my students’ stories? As Dyson and Genishi (1994) caution,

> stories, and therefore aspects of children’s lives, can be silenced if listeners (including teachers and peers) do not appreciate the diverse ways stories are crafted and the range of experiences they tap (p. 4).

Since I served as the only teller, how could I craft the telling of stories to include students’ voices? I wondered how I could change my role as the primary teller to provide an outlet for students to partner in the storytelling experience.
Students Sharing Their Told Stories: Socio-Cultural Learning

After sharing a told story as Sir Gwain and the Green Knight, I asked students to share their own versions of a tellable story. As Dyson and Genishi (1994) share, “the storytelling self is a social self, who declares and shapes important relationships through the mediating power of words” (p. 5). It was not enough to tell the story to the class; I needed a better way to increase the relationship between the story and the tellers. As we continued to share, when students started to tell together, I introduced tandem telling so they could socially engage not only in the telling process, but in the sharing of the tales as well. By working together, they could share ideas and re-interpret text. Although I did not have the formal language then, I was advocating a socio-cultural approach to learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Social learning is not random, but learned (Vygotsky, 1978).

Relationships that can enhance or inhibit learning are organized or structured in families, schools, the workplace, and so on. In other words, when we organize a classroom and the interactions within, we are structuring learning (Oakes, Jeannie, Lipton, Martin, 1999, p. 81).

I explored learning derived from teaching involving more tellers, which went against the rules of organized storytelling. I simply wanted to work with my students to ease their fears, so I encouraged them to partner with another student storyteller. As expected, students felt more comfortable telling with another person. Many of my students in California were second language learners, showing much apprehension when telling alone in front of the class. Clearly, students gained confidence when partnering with another. When partnered with another teller, students were less resistant to tell. They engaged in the social sharing of ideas for their stories. They tried many styles and were not stilted from lack of practice. For example, many students chose to tell an old
Appalachian folktale, *No News*, which lends nicely to tandem telling as an effective introduction. Although they were telling socially with one another, the words were not in a social context, there were no deviations in the words to be used with this type of tandem telling. The words were scripted and memorized. Although, socially, they could negotiate their posture, timing, and pausing, who tells what, their word choices were exactly dictated by the text. Even though students do deviate when telling, they are somewhat confined by the structured back- and- forth of the conversation. I not only wanted to find another way to use story to help students not only share a story together using a written text, but to find meaning through their own language choices and even frame new stories based upon these choices.

I was impressed with Jonatha and Harold Wright, Tandem Tellers and Story Quilters, whose storytelling style use more improvisation and playful banter instead of a defined script. I had hoped to incorporate these concepts within my own classroom. In improvisation, each teller works from a “story line,” knowing the story well enough to play as they tell and create. However, from a personal conversation with an Upper Skagit elder once shared, first know the bones of the story and then, and only then, can you add the flesh. For example, if students are “playing” with the telling of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, they may find new ways of telling, perhaps making the mother more pronounced discovering she is really a rapper. They are free to experiment with language in rap verse to develop plot. Tandem telling with improvisation was one of the first efforts to help students’ co-author their work.
When those involved in narrative interactions actively participate as both tellers and recipients, they exercise their entitlement to co-author a narrative. When a narrative concerns a lived experience, co-authors impact the understanding of that experience. It is not only a narrative but a life or a history that is collaboratively constructed. Narrative is a sense-making activity; it is also a primary vehicle for retaining experiences in memory. Entitlement to co-tell a narrative is then a powerful right, encompassing past, present, future, as well as imagined worlds (Ochs and Capps, 2001, p. 201).

When students start with a story line, instead of a full story, they can introduce their own experiences into the story work. Each new step, from solo to tandem telling to improvisational stories, creates a social context for learning and working with students. I, as well as my students, could scaffold Bruner and Wood, (1976) with one another to complete a story. As Dyson (2000) points out, the more students are engaged in co-authorship, the more they learn with their own language. Unlike the type of tandem telling where students are provided with the words, with story lines, students can use improvisation to choose the words, how they are said, and how they are performed. They can do this in a social context, working with other students. They co-author the construction of the story discussing how they see the story in relation to how others see it.

As authors, children may thus learn that they do not own their text’s meaning, but they are responsible for that text nonetheless and, moreover, they are responsible through it (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280).

Through what they chose to say and chose not to say, they respond to the world around them (Dyson, 2000). Initially, I asked my students to memorize lines when working with a partner, but soon afterwards, I employed more of an improvisational assignment for tandem telling. In fact, in my first year of teaching, I called the best-selling co-author Kim Kirberger of *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* convincing him we could produce a video of stories before the first book was published. I was sent an earlier version of the
book and I remember being frustrated alongside my students because we had to stick to the script. I knew my students could learn so much more if they had some latitude to re-interpret the work so I convinced the authors to permit us some leeway. They allowed us to alter about 10 percent of the actual text. During the process, which took over 1000 hours’ of volunteer time after school, I asked what was I teaching? What were my students learning from this story work? Applying Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural perspectives on learning, I now see students were confined because the language could not be changed. They were confined by the scripted language and they were told to not deviate from it more than 10 percent. They were confined because they were not creating or involved in the making of the work, but instead only in the performance of it. Although I do recognize in the interpretation with voice and body, there were more choices. However, my students were new to understanding performance. They showed frustration in learning and doing the same thing over and over again. They were not free to make choices because they were stuck on learning the script. In fact, we were way over schedule because many of them would not memorize. We had little time to explore choices in the work because we spent more time just learning the words.

In order for my students to learn, they needed be able to co-author the work. In this way, we could have made meaning together. As Dyson (2000) referring to Vygotsky, illustrates,

when children’s meaning-making, their imagining of pleasurable worlds, is “completed” in words, the ideological “force” of those words may reverberate in their classroom communities and, simultaneously, in their own sense or consciousness of themselves as social agents in those communities (p. 129).
Students need to be involved in the co-creative process. When students seek the help of others in creating and performing narratives, narratives can take on new directions.

Alternatively, the would-be narrator may seek others’ assistance in developing a point of view on events. While even the simplest predication conveys a point of view—through choice of grammatical form, lexical content, prosody, stylistic register, dialect, language, and the like, narratives have the potential to build more elaborate perspectives, cause-effect relations, and implications (Ochs & Capp, 2001, p. 114).

**Perceptions of Storytelling and Storymaking Used for Teaching**

As I reflect upon my work as a storytelling teacher, I need to ask, did I place more value in telling than the making of story? How important was it to perform the stories? Can one learn from the act of creating stories? Which method supports a more sociocultural approach to teaching? King (1993) explains the value when students are creating stories, can this be mirrored when students are telling stories? My own teaching experience has shown that sharing stories and making drama help to make the abstract more concrete, diverse facts more understandable, and arouse interest in learning as students become engrossed, not only in the story itself, but in the cultural or social context in which it is told. How much of a cultural and social understanding was provided by my focus on story performance? Which place, storymaking or storytelling, allowed for co-authoring? In other words, what would I emphasis in my teaching, the storytelling and/or the storymaking? Before teaching, I was a performer. I saw value in a told performance. In fact, I had a bias toward performance. I have to admit my bias may have limited my understanding of how narrative could be used for teaching. My leaning toward narrative
as performance tilted my teaching toward performance. This is hard to acknowledge because much of my work was oriented toward this.

In writing this autoethnography, I also need to be vulnerable (Behar, 1996). It is hard to admit I spent time focusing my teaching on performance. As a result I recall the discomfort of my students in California, especially those who were migrant students, where they tried to slip into the shadows, and how I spent extra effort trying to not only create a story, but perform it. Although I did work hard to create a non-threatening environment for performance sharing with the class, I have to humbly realize now sometimes the storymaking would be enough. Students did not have to perform their stories to be learning from them. There is value in storymaking. From this, I learned to establish a differentiation between storymaking and storytelling. Not all stories need to be performed to learn from them. In turn, performed stories can be a place of learning, but in order to elevate, students should have more choices in the improvisational nature of performing them. In other words, I need to be less of a director who states you stand here or you say this and instead allow the stories to take shape from a socio-cultural method of learning. Initially, I concentrated on the performance, but as we worked together, I in turn, trusted my students to develop their story work together.

I think of the times when my students were collecting ghost stories and the spirited conversations we had about what they discovered. This discussion was rich, but sometimes in my teaching, I would rush these invaluable conversations to make room for the performance. My teaching was often hard-pressed because of the need to rush to
performance. It is also humbling to realize as a professional storyteller, I often reduced the tellership and tellability for my students. Since I was making the decision what was told and how it was told, I reduced their level of participation and limited the topics. In sharing _Little Burnt Face_, I could have taught the same principles if we co-created a native tale based upon non-fiction resources.

When I served as the primary teller, my students could not be as I was the sole teller. If I directed the stories, my students followed. These are times in my teaching when I should have shared in the telling instead of placing the solo spotlight on my telling. Although my intent was to direct my students to learn from oral telling, at times, it might have been better to build a community of sharing instead. I did not provide adequate time for the material because we rushed to perform it. Writing about this encourages me to re-think and re-evaluate my work. However, with that, I also need to humbly address the ways my work denied opportunities in my teaching for my students. As a storyteller, I gave priority to a told story as a marked method of evaluating my progress of teaching. I needed to let go of being the teller so more learning could be involved. It was a humbling process to realize I was being a “ball hog” sometimes when my students could all have been on the field. Using this method, I can discuss ways that did not work in my teaching.

Indeed, these researchers are vulnerable to the criticism that they are self-indulgent and that they air dirty laundry that nobody wants to see. Yet they ground these practices in the idea that researchers need to understand themselves if they are to understand how they interpret narrator’s stories and that readers need to understand researcher’s stories (about their intellectual and personal relationships with narrators as well as with the cultural phenomena at hand) if
readers are to understand narrator’s stories (Tierney, 2002; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997).

I was always looking for how story could be told, and instead, I needed to look at how story, performance or not, could be used to enhance learning. Upon reflection, I have learned there are other ways to accomplished shared telling. As Langellier & Peterson (2004) note,

At a minimum, performance involves a two-step process of “taking” and “making” experience for someone: first, as an embodied listener at work in the world, the storyteller takes his or her consciousness of experience and “in turn” makes it an experience of consciousness for the audience (p. 3).

Can something be performed when it is in the making process? How valuable is highly performed storytelling and more causal storytelling in everyday lives? Bauman (1967) argues all speech is an event. In his sense, the interaction of speaking, the involvement of different participants, their roles, and the negotiations of their relationships is always an event in itself. He suggests we understand such events, which are on a continuum of more and less performed (1967). In everyday conversation, a narrative requires a longer turn at talk and therefore is always somewhat of a performance, even if it is very informal. Bauman (1967) argued when a narrative is spoken, it is performed. In my classroom, what kind of events provided the most effectve teaching, formal or informal performance? When teaching using a more formal performance storytelling lens, the event changes. As Peterson (2004) describes,

When we participate in storytelling, whether as storytellers or audiences, we re-enact storytelling as a conventionalized form of communication as well as collaborate in the production of a unique story or performance. This storytelling event recites, recalls, and reiterates previous storytelling events in general and in particular. In brief, storytelling is socially and culturally reflexive (p. 4).
One of the strongest lessons in my teaching was not performed as a told story or prepared and presented for an audience. This was using narrative to promote questions and inquiry not performance. This experience showed me performance is not always audience-centered. Some narratives require a different kind of participation and are less for an audience and more of an interlocker (Ochs and Capps, 2001). Each member is involved in the conversation. Audience-centered storytelling involves identifiable tellers and listeners. Typically, a solo teller shares a story with a group of listeners. However, what happens when there is no audience? Instead, there is a group of students and a teaching model using narrative to question and consider possibilities. In traditional storytelling, in order for it to be storytelling, it must have “the teller, the tale, and the listener” (Lipman, 1999). However, if the listening is more active instead of passive, it does not occur in “once upon a time” time, but instead in the present moment, can it still be considered storytelling?

This is an example where I needed to re-define the term storytelling. I needed to see the storymaking process as a form of storytelling. Tales were being exchanged, interrupted, changed, and evaluated. Many tellers, instead of one, were telling stories where some were complete, some abandoned, and some only shared in fragments. However, these experiences involved the components of storytelling, tales, tellers, and listeners. It only lacked an audience, but it still was considered storytelling. Strip away the audience and stories can still be performed.
Storytelling was definitely evident when the high school janitor came into my creative writing class to show me what he had found on the roof above my classroom. In a wadded up bundle of blankets were baby clothes, textbooks, teenage girl clothes, and food items including cereal, canned foods, and empty beverage containers. The last item was a journal. As I read it, I discovered seven years previously a student wrote the journal while she and her new baby lived on the high school roof. There were sporadic entrees of her life as a runaway. I shared the journal with my next class and we discovered her story together. As I read it out loud, we learned her boyfriend had beaten her and she was too scared to go home. She shared how hard it was to live on her own, but did not mention living on the roof. I did not know what to do with the journal. Some students chose to write about how they would have finished the journal if they had been her. Others wrote in role as the student, boyfriend, or even the father. After class, some students expressed real concern to help find out more about the story. We never performed this story, but instead used it to help build upon each other’s questions and ideas. Although it was not formally performed, stories were being told from this experience. We spent four class periods with some of the best writing and discussion.

During this time we were sharing stories—stories of the possible and stories to fill in the gaps left by the journal. At no time did we perform our interpretation; instead we were involved in the narrative of this girl and her baby. In working with this story, I came to know my students’ stories. Students even began to share their own stories. As Benjamin (1969) states, “the storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. He, in turn, makes the experience of those who are listening to his
tale” (p. 87). Clearly, this was another effective way to use narrative. When students share narratives, they take risks which can lead to more sharing. In other words, when the stories are told, they can be shared with others. This young lady’s journal invited students to tell their own stories of hardship, what is was like being a Latino teenager and how parents react if you have a baby when you are a teen.

At a different time, a non-performance narrative surfaced when I taught an Opportunity class for students who were labeled “disadvantaged” in their learning in some way or simply had been in trouble frequently. It became their last chance to stay in school. I worked with these students during an extended block of time. The assistant principal believed they needed “hard discipline.” I tried this for a short period of time with no success. However, these students, like the students who shared during the reading of the journal, needed a place to voice their frustrations. I opened this classroom, not a place to perform stories, but as a place to share them. As a class, we read the book *Holes* by Louis Sachar. Students began to question the text. They did not understand why it was so hard to dig holes, so I arranged for them to do so themselves behind the bus garage. This experiment created an investment for my students. We were able to not only listen to their stories, but the counter-stories they created through their own experiences. In essence, students who are engaged in crime repeat the crimes without remorse because many people, even school officials such as the school police officer, subscribed to these available narratives. They see “troubled” students. “Available narratives” (Shuman, 1986) are also referred to as master narratives. According to Nelson (2001), master
narratives are, “the stories found lying about in our culture” (p. 6). Nelson (2001) continues,

master narratives are often archetypal, consisting of stock plots and readily recognizable character types, and we use them not only to make sense of our experiences (Nisbett and Ross, 1980) but also to justify what we do (MacIntyre, 1984) (what is going on here?) As the repositories of common norms, master narratives exercise a certain authority over our moral imaginations and play a role in informing our moral intuitions (p. 6).

I have to admit I fought against what people told me about the students who were enrolled in my Opportunity class. Many school officials and students labeled them as apathetic, crooks, or lazy. However, when I taught using the story of Holes, we used the stories in the book to discuss the dominant narratives of their lives with the counter-stories they told about their lives. As Nelson (2001) relates,

I claimed that the stock plots and readily recognizable character types of master narratives characterize groups of peoples in certain ways, thereby cultivating and maintaining norms for the behavior of the people who belong to these groups, and weighting the ways others will or won’t see them (p. 106).

Although my students were lumped together as, “Opportunity students”, they all had different stories to tell. This is where Nelson’s (1995, 2001) idea of the narrative counter story comes into play. “The counter story” says Nelson (2001), “positions itself against a number of master narratives…” (p. 6). I will never forget when Vanessa came to my class and with tears in her eyes, telling me she was worried. When I asked, she said she was too little to be jumped into a gang. Vanessa, a thin short freshman, began to share with me how on her block she had to join a gang; there was no choice. She was worried she might die or at least be badly injured because, in order to be jumped into a gang, you had to march in a parade while your gang beats you with fists and sticks. The master or
available narrative stated a person who joined a gang was up to no good. However, Vanessa told a counter-story about being forced to join the gang. The master narrative would encourage her to move so the problem would go away. When I asked if this was a choice, she said no; they were too poor. According to Nelson (2001), the counter story works in two steps. The first step, “is to identify the fragments of master narratives that have gone into the construction of an oppressive identity, noting how these fragments misrepresent persons…and situations” (p. 7). The second step is to:

re-tell the story about the person or the group to which the person belongs in such a way to make visible the morally relevant details that master narratives suppressed. If the re-telling is successful, the group members will stand revealed as respectable agents (Nelson 2001, p. 7).

I re-told Vanessa’s story to her without judgment. I even explored various interpretations, positioning her not as making a morally degrading choice, but exploring choices she had available under her constraints. After we talked, Vanessa did not show up for three days. I was worried, but when I saw her, she whispered, “I am alright.” I did alert the guidance counselor, but respected her silence in her story. As Nelson (2001) states, a secondary aim of the counter story is, “to alter, where necessary, an oppressed person’s perception of herself” (p. 7). Vanessa was able to see her story and not tell it in a way she needed to communicate. Her silence told a story. Her lack of words spoke about her situation.

There is another dominant narrative being shared with me as a teacher who is expected to advocate school rules over student stories. When we read Holes, my students advocated the need to use frank language and discuss events in their life that were not in a
standardized curriculum. As they discussed the stories, they became more and more answerable (Bakhtin, 1990) as to how they were positioned and how they identified with these positions. Their stories helped give them voice. I gave in; I created a space for them to tell their stories the way they would share it with their peers. This included language of abuse; and morally disrespectful words such as, “wetback”. These words would never be included in standard curriculum instruction. I resisted the dominant narrative a teacher is the police of language. Instead, I listened. As I shared my own story of being jumped on three separate occasions, students felt comfortable sharing their counter-stories of struggling between staying in school and out of trouble, how many probationary notices they received, and in some cases, how much time they had spent in “juvie.” I listened as they shared stories of police officials who labeled them as “troublemakers” or school administrators who treated them differently than any other students. These conversations drifted into further conversation about parents, home life, and gang stereotyping. I was raised to cease all swearing and anger in my classrooms. However, this time I let them talk, and talk they did, learning more about their worldviews and understandings, encouraging them to use the language of their peers.

Another example of storymaking occurred when we collected ghost stories throughout our community. For four weeks in October, students interviewed community members 30 years or older about a ghost or ghost sighting they had experienced in Hanford, California. Each day, students shared with one another often debating and questioning each others stories truth and validity. Although we did perform our stories, it was these critical conversations that made the most significance in their learning fostering
student engagement. This is because students continually searched for meaning with each other.

**Living Narratives**

Ochs and Capps (2001) introduce an interactive definition of narrative concerned with personal, everyday or what they call, “living narratives” (p. 1).

Personal narrative is a way of using language or another symbolic system to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present, and as yet unrealized experience (Ochs & Capps, 2001, pp. 1-2).

**Tellership**

As noted in the descriptive examples throughout this chapter, personal narratives can be found in the classroom. Ochs and Capps (2001) examine these narratives dimensions including tellership. When I changed my own tellership focus to high, involving others in discussion, my students responded to my teaching. My teaching improved. Tellership refers to the involvement level the “conversational partners” (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 24) have with each other within the narrative. In all three illustrations, tellership belonged to both the students and me as we collaboratively shared in the learning. Together we discussed the student’s journal, examined the depth of *Holes*, physically and figuratively, and explored ghost histories. I changed my role from primary teller to “collaborative interlocutor” (Ochs and Capps, 2001, p. 352) inviting students to share their stories and questions. In the case of my Opportunity class, I even suspended normal school rules inviting stories of the students’ culture and identity. I recognized Bakhtin’s (1990) view that language is never neutral; it is filled with many voices.
The author does not speak in a given language (from which he distances himself to a greater or lesser degree) but he speaks, as it were through language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized, become objectified, that he merely vetriloquotes (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 299-300).

Increased tellership, invited others’ voices to be heard.

**Tellability**

The next dimension from Ochs & Capps (2001) is tellability that refers to how relevant narratives are to the teller and interlocutors.

A narrator may relay an unusual incident that captures the audience’s interest and appreciation and draws them into his or her perspective. Alternatively, in other conversational narratives, conversational partners are grilled about their day’s activities and reel out what happened reluctantly, without bothering to dress up as particularly important (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 34).

In all three narrative events (Bauman, 1967), the stories were important to the students. They felt connected not only to their narratives, but the narratives of their peers. I can tell this from the conversations they had with me and their classmates. In the case of the journal, the unfinished story increased their personal investment. I can remember students coming in to see the journal after class and discussing it with their friends. They would argue what to do with it long after class was over. With the Opportunity class, story invited real life comparisons with fiction. I did not create the curriculum alone; we co-created together through our inquiry posing questions and resolving concerns.

I remember one student who wanted to talk about alternative methods of correcting the behavior of the students and he shared the places he was in and how people treated him. This led to us as a class talking about how adults should treat teenagers. When I increased the tellability of these narrative events, my teaching improved because instead
of hearing told stories, we were sharing within the narratives experiences. In fact, student inquiry and curiosity guided the direction of our learning. In these three examples, the story events created transformative learning within the classroom.

…transformations mean progressing from an incomplete story to one that is more complete and compelling. We do this by establishing first the connectedness or coherence that moves the storyline along through time. Next comes the direction of the story, the goal or the point of it all. With the goal established events are selected, rejected, or transformed and take on significance that they would not have otherwise possessed (Gudmundsdottir, 1999, p. 34).

**Embeddedness**

Embeddedness, the third dimension of narrative, describes the connection between narratives. Ochs and Capps (2001) define it as, “the extent to which a personal narrative is an entity unto itself, separate from prior, concurrent and subsequent discourse, is related to turn organization, thematic content, and rhetorical structuring” (p. 36). When I tell a told story such as *Little Burnt Face*, was it detached from other narratives? According to Ochs and Capps (2001), this would have low embeddedness when compared to the ghost stories mentioned above or the teaching with the *Holes* text. The ghost story narratives often drew from told narratives shared within the Hanford community over many years. Students were able to compare and contrast the authenticity of these ghost stories with other residents who were claimed or unclaimed, ghost tellers. As they shared their tales, students were able to trace Hanford’s history and development. Students would tell a ghost story about how someone haunts the railroad and students would travel on their own to the historical society and not only find out about the possible ghost, but why the railroad was important as well. They shared this with the class. In the
Opportunity class, students experienced first hand how to dig a hole, relating the experience directly to their own lives. A told story in teaching does not occur again after the lesson is completed. It can, but not often because the story is geared around the lesson. However, in the classroom, narratives were often referred to again and again. We went back to the journal because it created significant meaning for all of us. Interest peaked around the school for the ghost stories. Students who were not even in my class would stop in my classroom to determine the authenticity of the ghost stories. When I look at how stories are used for teaching, I need to see how I can embed with other conversations and stories relevant to the students.

I am suggesting high embeddedness is useful for all classroom interactions. Embeddedness is a useful term because it is not restricted to contextual relevance or familiarity. Rather, a teacher can introduce a completely unfamiliar story and provide high embeddedness that makes the learning relevant. At the same time, it is a risky teaching strategy because it goes beyond the structure of the lesson and allows for dialogic inquiry. The teacher is not necessarily in an authoritative role, and the interaction is open to critical discourse. You cannot anticipate the stories and turn, it in as part of a lesson plan, nor can an administrator objectively evaluate it.

My larger question is whether there is any dimension of narrative that might have low embeddedness and still engage the learner? Some solo tellers have argued even the solo art of telling is a creative process that engages listeners. From a teaching standpoint, when students are co-authors, or what Freire (1970) calls critical co-investigators, the
dialogic dimension of learning is more visible. We might consider how high performance and low embeddedness contribute to a transformative environment that transports students into the world created by the solo teller. I would argue that such telling is actually very highly embedded because the storyteller creates a highly embedded context for all participants. James Moffet (1983) might disagree with this because he believes story is by its very nature relegated to the past; drama speaks to the present with a hint to the future. I address these issues further in chapter 5.

**Linearity**

Narrative’s fourth dimension is linearity which, “concerns the extent to which narratives of personal experience depict events as transpiring in a single, closed, temporal or causal path or, alternatively, in diverse, open, uncertain paths” (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 83). In the stories I told or performed, I knew the destination, and in turn, focused my teaching around the significant moments. When I designed the *Little Burnt Face* activities with story, I designed them not around open-ended questions, but more on re-telling or re-focusing what we had to work from in the story. However, with the found journal, as a class, we questioned every day. Students presented their own theories as to how she ended up living on the school’s roof. Clearly, the unfinished journal provided a context for further story generation from multiple voices and perspectives. Without a definitive closure, further inquiry created both possible pasts and futures. Students were quite invested in helping our student, so I never knew what they might introduce into the story. I left the class discussion unstructured and open so we could explore our choices together to unfold this narrative(s). How can I create less of a traditional narrative order with a
structured beginning, middle, and end, and more of an exploration like the ghost stories or the student on the roof? Once again, I needed to let go of my traditional understanding of story and see my teaching from a social, open-ended method. I needed to structure the stories so my students could be involved in their composition and understanding.

*Moral Stance*

The last dimension of narrative is moral stance. As am quoted, in *Moral of the Story*,

> We spend too much time telling students to “Just Say No” instead of seeing the story that comes from saying yes. It is time that the real value of storytelling for children, young adults and adults is realized, so we can value our own choices and help others make theirs (Norfolk, 1999, p. 3).

Is there a better way to introduce morals when using story to teach? As Maxine Greene (1973) argues, “the teacher who wishes to be more than functionary cannot escape the value problem or the difficult matter of moral choice” (p. 181). As a storyteller, I recently traveled to an out-of-state performance where a group of students created a play called, “Second Chances.” The students performed a play chronicling the life of a student who was involved in drugs and dies, but is granted a second opportunity. The play was highly religious with a moralizing stance: “don’t do drugs” and “God says drugs are wrong”. As I watched, I remember thinking how disconnected the play was to the students’ real lives. These students lived in challenging neighborhoods where drugs were present daily. Instead, morals could be developed by opening questions rather than sharing dogmatic platitudes. How can using narratives work to create a space for students to wrestle with these issues instead of giving conclusions on drugs? Can story be used in a better way to help teach moral understandings? Educational philosopher
Nell Noddings (1998) suggests stories can be used as the, “starting point for critical thinking and the philosophical study of morality and ethics” (p. 613). However, like the example above, this is why I strongly object to the systematic story advocated by the DARE program (I learned the same curriculum was used for 9\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} grades). How can this curriculum account for differences in maturation, peer pressure? It is as though the same morals a 5\textsuperscript{th} grader might encounter are equivalent to that of a freshman. From teaching freshmen, I understand the pressures are different, (drug persuasion, higher peer pressure, stronger relationship issues, and even suicidal tendencies). Ochs and Capps (2001) define moral stance as,

narratives of personal experience do not present objective, comprehensive accounts of events but rather perspective on events. Rooted in community and tradition, moral stance is a disposition towards what is good or valuable and how one ought to live in the world (p. 45).

Keeping this in mind, I think if the students had helped design the play, then they could tell the story of their lives or at least how their peers faced these issues. It was quite obvious from the reactions of student actors they were distant from the material. Their lines were given in a rote manner. However, later these same performers mesmerized me when they showed their step dance work. They clearly had designed this. The other stories did not connect to them and there was clearly a distance from the words and the performance. Perhaps it is a difference in medium---one was scripted learning and the other could build on improvisational choices.

When I tell \textit{Little Burnt Face}, I try to present choices the Algonquian people might have made---preserving nature, respecting the spirit world, and valuing individual differences.
In the non-performance work, such as the journal or ghost stories, we did not nullify or criticize the decisions or moral choices presented, we accepted them. As Greene (1973) says of teachers, but the same thing can be said of students,

Involved individuals have to make the moral choices which are ordinarily specific. The more sensitive teachers are to the demands of the process or justification, the more explicit they are about the norms that govern their actions, the more personally engaged they are in assessing surrounding circumstances and potential consequences, the more “ethical” they will be; and we cannot ask much more (p. 221).

We considered choices comparing them with our own choices and lives creating a dialogic space where each voice was answerable (Bakhtin, 1990). As I reflect, I re-evaluate and re-think how I can present and support more perspectives in my telling. Better yet, how can I share the telling so other students are not only listening, but telling their work as well? For example, I caution other educators about programs like Character Counts where students study a value for a week only. I did not like how one moral was emphasized and then forgotten for another. What is lost in emphasizing one moral is among other things student’s opportunity to be addressed. Just like the scripted speeches, there are only the words provided that can be used, but when using story to discuss morals and not choose them for students, students can agree, disagree, bring in personal perspectives, and evaluate the choices of others along with their own.

I need to re-examine what kind of choice, if any, an actual performance of telling allows for students. In stories, we often polarize the choices, but in discovery, the choices are open. Again, I need to examine how I re-define storytelling. Instead, I need to see how I can adopt an “ethic of caring” (Noddings, 1986). For Noddings (1986), the central issue
is not one choice or moralizing principle, but instead the relationship. Natural caring—the sort of response made when we want to care for another (a loved one, a baby, a sick friend)---establishes the ideal for ethical caring, and ethical caring imitates the ideal in its efforts to institute, maintain, or re-establish natural caring. “Persons guided by an ethic of caring do not ask whether it is their duty to be faithful…rather, for them fidelity to persons is fidelity; indeed, fidelity is a quality of the relation and not merely an attribute of an individual’s moral agent’s behavior or character” (Noddings, 1986, p. 385). I need to present stories, but be open to the frank discussions of my students so we can establish and open spaces where we can discuss ideas without judgment. Narrative and drama are tools where this can be done, but only by establishing a non-threatening environment to do so.

**Spaces for Student Voices**

How can I help create the spaces where student voices are heard? These experiences left me to wonder in the classroom, how often are students invited to tell their stories? What have we not heard? I asked one of my students, Maggie Paulo, to report to me any time her honors class teacher asked her opinion. She came in frustrated after three weeks and said to me, “Mr. Cordi, either I don’t understand the assignment or I can’t do it. Outside of this class, no one has asked me what I think.”

The emphasis on storytelling performance conceptualizes narrative as act, event, and discourse—a site for understanding and intervening in the ways culture produces, maintains, and transforms relations of identity and difference (Peterson, 2004, p. 3).
When we worked with the journal, I was not listening as their teacher. During this social and collaborative discovery, I heard the students not as students who wanted to do well academically, but as students who cared about the girl behind the journal. When one of my Latina students expressed a need to know if she was Latina, we talked about the importance of family relations within Latino homes. I remember some of my “rough-edged” students talking about their need to break away. This was not standards-based teaching or typical academic discourse. Narratives launched discussions of identity, and in turn, I slipped away from the identity of academia. Students connected experiences to their own and were able to perform their narratives as discourse for understanding. By forming a storytelling club, I was able to provide an educational environment for listening to students outside of my classroom. In this club, we formed our own community. “Sharing stories and making drama are excellent ways to build community within the classroom, to create a communal space where students feel safe to express opinions not yet fully formed or clearly understood and to discover the stories of their lives and of their society” (King, 1993, p. 5). Even though we worked at the school, our community was created after school hours, a designated time for telling and sharing stories by my students.

**Forming a Storytelling Club in California**

In 1993, one of my students Jennifer Wooley from East Bakersfield High School who enjoyed my storytelling approach asked me a question after class. She shared, “Mr. Cordi, you tell stories in all of your classes.” I went on to share with her, “I know Jennifer, I stopped apologizing for this a long time ago.” She interrupted, “No, Mr.
Cordi, I love stories, could we have a storytelling club at our school?” This simple exchange changed my teaching more than any other experience. I began thinking of how stories could be used in schools and built into the flow of the curriculum. I did not realize it at the time, but by forming a storytelling club, we were using story to build a community within the school. In order to be an effective teacher, one must create a community with students. It involves,

creating a learning environment in…learn how to construct and use learning communities to expand their own learning, perspectives, and problem-solving. For this to happen, we have to build foundations of trust and respect, and a willingness to engage with the learning events (Dozier, Johnston & Rogers, 2006 p. 86).

I informed her I did not know how to start a club and she, in turn, informed me she would find out. At first, we formed a storytelling club called Voices of Illusion following the same rules and guidelines for telling advocated by Sawyer. We extended learning after school with storytelling as a co-curricular place for learning and community building. Clearly, the classroom was not the only place to learn from stories. I did not have to be the person who provided the stories in order for students to learn from them. However, my students were not initially performers; my students were not attached to Sawyer’s storytelling structure and rules, and easily made changes to meet their own storytelling needs. In fact, the students created their own unique storytelling community. This was a place where students could tell stories simply because they wanted to tell them, not because they wanted to perform. It was a place where students learned to coach each other. The storytelling club was also an emotional space to share how you
felt when you did not seem to fit in with others. Most of all, it was a place to hear student voices.

Through the storytelling clubs, I discovered a new understanding of storytelling and recognized student learning must include oral learning. Students needed to have a safe environment to discuss and question. Cureton (1985), who focused on inner-city students, said students need oral learning. When students would come to our club, they would sign up for a story, but often students would say, “I have a story” even though they were not on the list. They would say, his or her story reminded me of a story I have to share. Indeed, they had to share the stories and we always made a space to do so.

The inner-city’s student learning depends on oral development. The student needs to talk out, with a group, the rationale for a particular choice. This oral exchange of reasons and answers also helps to provide the lens apt student with strategies for selecting answers. Most “individualized” programs cannot provide this kind of support (Cureton, 1985, p. 106).

My students were interviewed for a book with the question, what do you learn from telling stories? When he was a sophomore at Hanford High Ken said,

Storytelling can tell and teach many things from the use of drugs to a crazy aunt of the family. People don’t really know that storytelling has the power to make someone cry of sadness or cry from laughter and Voices of Illusion (our storytelling troupe) is one of the many ways to show that power (Norfolk, 2006, 175).

In Ken’s comment, he speaks to the power of story, as well as the inherent strength he found in the storytelling troupe. Students had their own voices heard in the troupe. They could be powerful and tell their stories. As noted, almost all stories were accepted and those that went against school rules could be challenged as well. Like the students in my Opportunity class, students could negotiate with me to tell the story uncensored. I still
had to be the person to decide if it could be shared or not, but as we came to know each other, we also respected our stories. Students like Heather and Michelle would often be there to help students through their story. My students were caretakers of each other as tellers. It was not uncommon for students to air grievances with story (flunked a test, bad teaching, poor parent, etc). We only asked for the title of a story in order to tell it. I often knew what they would tell, but more often than not, it was a surprise to me as well.

When I was teaching in the high school classroom, I tried to establish community, but in truth, initially spent more time teaching curriculum. It was through my storytelling club, I experienced the value of community firsthand. Unfortunately, my idea of high school teaching borrowed from what I remembered as a high school student. As Sadker and Sadker (1994) have argued,

many adults carry high school around with them always. It is a unique, eccentric, and insulated social systems, a pressure cooker where teenagers rush from one class to another, shoved into close quarters with twenty-five or thirty others their age they may love, hate, care little about, or hardly know at all. It has its own norms, rituals, vocabulary, even its own way to tell time—not by the minute and hour, but…by periods…There is life after high school but what we do as adults is powerfully shaped by those years (p. 99).

Despite my best efforts to create community in the classroom, in my classes, we still answered to 45-minute periods ending with a loud, ringing bell. I felt an urgent pressure to teach curriculum over comprehension in this environment. Clearly, this schedule allowed little time to encourage students to design lessons collaboratively. However, my storytelling club, although sometimes directed by a performance, was often a time students could simply tell their stories. It was a place where we would meet once, twice, sometimes even on weekends to tell our stories and listen to others. The students worked
hard to create a social environment. Many students served as officers and one person was in charge of making sure everyone felt comfortable during the meetings, calling anyone who missed and reminding them how important they were to the group, and arranging games to help us know one another. We also did not advocate a competitive feeling, but instead, our group was cooperative by design. Many of my students served in leadership positions, one in particular, was in charge of hospitality responsible for helping everyone feel involved. It went against what Hargraves, Earl, and Ryan (1996) call, “a culture of individualism” (p. 31).

Secondary schools may suffer from a culture of individualism…They are places where teachers own the classroom and students move around the school like passengers in a crowded airport…The lack of home or collective responsibility leads to a weak sense of institutional pride… (Secondary schools) is a “curiously fragmented experience” for students; of school bells sounding every forty minutes or to signal a changing of the guard. Isolation is still the norm for secondary student’s experience…And the world in which they are isolated can be a large, complex, and intimidating on. This is particularly disturbing for young adolescent students whose needs for care, security, and group attachment…are exceptionally strong at this stage of development (Hargraves, Earl & Ryan, 1996, p. 31, emphasis in original).

Students often feel voiceless in school. This was not true in our storytelling club. In fact, one of my students shared with me how insignificant she felt before she went to a festival, but this changed when she arrived. We raised $14,000 to send nine members of our troupe to Kansas City, Missouri to perform at the National Storytelling Conference. When Lacy returned, she confided in me she had been scared. She said she kept asking herself what she had to offer hundreds of professional storytellers. She also shared upon returning she had never felt more powerful because many of the tellers asked for her
advice. “I will never forget,” she said. “It was the first time adults had listened to what I had to say.”

In this place, as well as the storytelling troupe, she had a voice to engage in transformative practices. A place where, according to McCaleb (1994), “students are encouraged to develop their own voices in interaction with the voices of others and to participate in the democracy of the classroom” (p. 13). Our storytelling club invited transformation as a place where, “the teacher aims to bring out the voices of all students” (p. 13). As Giroux (1989) notes, present schooling in America can be highly oppressive. However, when students are provided a voice to tell their own stories, they can transform (McCaleb, 1994).

When human beings are presented with the possibility of writing (or telling) about their world in the way they see it and describe their experiences as they live them, they become more involved in their own learning and are better equipped to transform their own lives (McCaleb, 1994, p. 49).

I remember when sophomore student Angel came in my classroom. She shared how her Cherokee grandmother raised her. She told us about all her mishaps, some of them criminal, and that her grandmother did not know most of it. She told unabashed story after story about being caught by the police, kicked out of school, and brandishing a knife against another student. She did not tell this simply to recount, but to speak to it as though it was a past event she did not want to repeat. She used story to talk about how hard she was working to change her life. Where in the classroom do we account for these stories?
I remember the day Shannon came into the storytelling club after school. In her hand was a small, well-worn journal. As she handed it to me, I looked up to see several of her family members standing beside her. She said, “Mr. Cordi, we would like you to help us tell my great uncle’s story. His name was Chief Dan George.” I was holding the collected, unpublished writings of Chief Dan George, a gifted actor and chief of the Tsleil-waututh Nation in Burrard Inlet, British Columbia. He first came to prominence in a supporting role as the Indian who adopts Dustin Hoffman in Arthur Penn's, *Little Big Man* (1970) for which he received an Academy Award nomination. She shared he had died. They were not asking me to edit or correct his story, but to help them tell his story. I need to understand this required more than being a teacher; I needed to be a listener. I needed to address this need and not try to teach ideas, but instead, show how her uncle’s life story can best be shared. As Rehak, (1996), remarked,

> I work with students who are so thin I can wrap my thumb and index finger around their shoulders…These are twelve and thirteen—year-old children. Children who should be eating constantly, moving constantly, and thinking constantly. Are they supposed to shut and listen? Am I supposed to talk about nouns and verbs in the abstract? (p. 282).

The knowledge they sought was not found in classrooms. The classrooms serve different purposes as Edwards and Mercer (1987) discerned.

> Schools serve many social and cultural purposes…but their institutional raison d’etre is always their function of passing on a part of the accumulated knowledge of a society, and evaluating student’s success in acquiring their knowledge. ..But it consists of much more than given “facts”; it includes ways of operating in the world, and of making judgments…The boundaries of educational knowledge are continuously marked out, and reinforced, in classroom discourse (pp. 2-3).

However, my storytelling club had fewer restrictions than the standard classroom. It was a place where Shannon and her family were not asking me to perform his story, but help
them preserve it. However, it needed to be heard. Once spoken, it would be performed (Bauman, 1967). However, Bauman (1975) notes performance can vary in degree.

In terms of an interpretive frame, verbal art may be culturally defined as varying in intensity as well as range. We are not speaking here of the relative quality of a performance—good performance versus bad performance—but the degree of intensity with which the performance frame operates in a particular range of culturally defined ways of speaking (Shuman, 1975, p. 197).

We were not concerned with performance, but the story served a greater purpose; honoring her uncle by continuing to share his story. Performance gave Shannon the power to tell her uncle’s story. Shannon, who struggled in school and attended rarely, found new language through story. As Goldblatt (1996) underscores, to ask students from marginalized communities to take on academic discourse as their won is to invite them into a world where they have no power, requiring that they check their former badges of power at the door (p. 27).

Our storytelling group did not have an agenda; all stories were welcomed. Shannon felt powerful enough to bring her story to our community. As a teacher, I learned teaching is about creating a space for students to be heard. Sometimes, teaching does not only occur in the classroom. It is important to build a relationship with students to allow them to exercise power by being able to share what they need or what is on their minds. Shannon did not feel comfortable in a classroom, but in a place where students could tell their stories, she felt welcome to be involved. Students exercised power when they served as caretakers for other students’ stories. Trust is a form of power.

I remember Mila, a Down syndrome student, would tell a 15 to 20 minute story without an ending. It was always the same topic---wanting a boyfriend. My students would quietly listen to her story and even offer tips on how to improve it. Mila was motivated
to change and realized if she did not shorten her stories and find a way to end them, she
would not hear other students’ stories. It was not overt coaching, but it was her internal
need to listen to more stories that helped her realize she needed to edit her own work.
She also slowly changed the topic of her stories after hearing folktales and other personal
tales from her peers. She actively listened to the stories of other students and took risks
in her own telling.

I often would assist or pair up students to hear each other or provide direct coaching. The
storytelling troupe needed adult intervention, but not in the same way I was a classroom
teacher. As a classroom teacher, I planned lessons and taught them. As a storytelling
coach, I made every effort to create a storytelling community; a place where all students
could share their stories and have a place to discuss them if he or she desired. I also was
a guardian of the teller. The one and hard fast rule I had was, “No one will make anyone
feel uncomfortable.” I may have been lax on other rules, but this I was not. All a student
(or teacher) had to say was, “I am uncomfortable right now” and I immediately would
work to bring back the comfort. My students knew this and I think this is why countless
students told their stories when they would not speak up in classes. As Vygotsky (1978)
advocates, it is important to mediate the learning of students. It was necessary for the
students. As Goodman (1989) argues,

The notion that children do not need conscious, adult intervention regarding social
values and social interaction stems for the sentimental and problematic
assumption that children will (if only left alone) “naturally” become concerned
with the well-being of others and world around them….Children in our schools
must come to understand the way in which life on this planet is interconnected
and interdependent, and that in caring for others we are in fact caring for
ourselves (p. 109).
When a story is performed, it can involve risk. As Elin Diamond (1996) asserts, “as soon as performativity comes to rest on a performance, questions of embodiment, of social relations, of ideological interpellations, of emotional and political effects, all become discussable” (p. 4). I knew the rights to tell Dan George’s story (Shuman, 1986) belonged to Shannon and her family. It was part of an inner circle of tales I simply did not have the storytelling rights (Shuman, 1986) to tell. As a story teacher, I needed to show how this story could be told; not concentrate on how I would share it. Instead, I helped the family see its political value. As Langellier & Peterson (2004) note, performing narratives focuses on doing things with words and asking what difference(s) it makes to do it? This type of performative storytelling recognizes the reflexive nature of narrative. In stories, students can refer back to past events. Shannon and her family asked me to bring voice to her uncle’s story so others could know him.

As a teacher, I needed to understand, “it is the reflexivity to storyteller and storyteller to audience, to shift consciousness to experience and experience to consciousness” (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, p. 3). Bauman (1967) recognizes each narrative event can be designed for different purposes.

Every (narrative) performance will have a unique and emergent aspect, depending on the distinctive circumstances at play within it. Events in these terms are not frozen, predetermined molds for performance but are themselves situated social accomplishments in which structures and conventions may provide precedents and guidelines for the range of alternatives possible, but the possibilities, the competencies and goals of the participants, and the emergent unfolding of the event make for variability (Ochs and Capps, 2001, p. 60).
In examining these conversational narratives (Shuman, 1986), one must look at more than the text, but the relationship in the conversations.

Conversational narrative demands that we focus on content as well as on text, and on the relationship between narrative and event—not as a matter of preferentiality but as a matter of relationship between speakers and listeners and, correspondingly, between the story world and the storytelling situation (p. 193).

The relationship narratives have in the classroom was different than in our storytelling group. In the classroom, narratives were often connected to curriculum, but as noted before, the narratives in the group could be connected to the students themselves. They needed to tell their stories. As Ochs (2001) notes, “In this fashion, narratives become organized by the contexts in which they are constructed (p. 188). However, they could also be connected to learning from a thematic structure.

I think the most effective example to illustrate this is by reflecting upon the over six thematic shows my storytelling troupe created, designed, performed, and even recorded in a professional studio. Students spent from 100 to 1000 hours practicing and creating storytelling shows based on themes. Some titles included: American choices, American voices: American history told by teenagers and Non-violent Means Told by Teens, or Tell Someone: Keep Kids off Drugs for Elementary Students. We then performed over 50 shows yearly before recording them. However, upon reflection, it is the storymaking process that also provided teaching for the students. For example, I remember how in preparing a performance for a American history program, Dawn, then a freshman, wanted to tell the story of Sojourner Truth, but instead found a book on Maria Mitchell, the first woman astronomer. I watched how she slowly found a new discovery in Maria’s work as
we worked to tell her story. In deciding to use this story, we had much conversation on the narrative she wanted to tell---why would she want to choose one over the other, and when discussing American history, what story does she want to tell? It was these conversations in the making of story that really prove to teach.

However, not all the practices were without incident. I remember how a violent outburst broke out when we were creating a program on non-violent stories. Once, a student threw a pencil and it hit close to the eye of another student. We talked about the issue of non-violence as we made this program. I used this time to teach the students violence was an issue that would show up when you least expect it, but having a choice of non-violence, may help one to be less angry. It was this discussion that helped build more effective understanding about non-violent choices. This is not to de-value the teaching that comes from performance, even the improvisational times that occur after the performance. As a teacher, I need to value the making of story. It is important to remember not all stories had to be performed to be used for teaching students.

Examining my storytelling troupes for the past 11 years and what I can learn from them to improve my teaching; I have identified the following points:

- The narratives were performed in non-performance venues and teaching was still involved. In other words, a polished outcome of a highly performed story was not necessary.

- Many of the stories were improvisational and the making of the stories was emphasized if not more than the storytelling.
• The speech events of the story exchange changed as the narratives shifted from performance to living narratives.

• All events are possible teaching moments, not just performative events.

• Tellership was high when we shared in a collaborative method.

• Tellability was also high when we listened to students’ ideas as they composed their stories.

• The narratives told by myself and students were embedded in other narratives (including dominant narratives, each other’s narratives, teacher narratives, etc.) because we listened to all stories.

• We were able to promote a socio-cultural context of learning since we learned from each other.

Most of all, when I used story to build my curriculum, I did not realize the importance of listening to my students’ stories outside of curricular needs. My storytelling troupe showed me the value of a community of listeners and tellers. I transferred this into my classroom. When I moved and began teaching in California, one student’s request for a storytelling club changed my thinking. From that day forward, I was a new teacher. Only by reflecting about these changes will I improve my practice. As Mattingly (1991) informs,

  Storytelling and story analysis can facilitate a kind of reflecting that is often difficult to do, a consideration of those ordinarily tacit constructs that guide practice. Stories point towards deep beliefs and assumptions that people often
cannot tell in propositional ways or denotive form, the ‘personal theories’ and deeply held images that guide their actions (p. 236).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have tried to dig deep into my personal teaching decisions using story. This reflection has helped me evaluate those choices and the next chapter will explore these teaching changes in a different context--teaching using story and process drama. However, as Jones (2008) notes, “but like all stories, my account is partial, fragmented, and situated in the text and contexts of my own learning, interpretations, and practices” (p. 224). There is still more to explore. In this chapter, I detailed how after reading *Holes* by Louis Sachar my Opportunity students did not fully appreciate the difficulty involved when digging holes until they experienced it firsthand. Throughout this chapter, and in my teaching and work with stories like my Opportunity students, I needed to experience the holes in order to see them, and in many cases make them significant to my own learning and teaching practice. I needed to see that by concentrating on the told stories, I overlooked the educational value in storymaking. For example, when we worked to make *The Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* video and were confined to the words of the text, were there other ways I could have involved my students to create and tell their stories and not the ones from the book? While the subject centered on the lives of teenagers, the time to make the stories was not provided. I also explored my understanding of how storymaking invites learning. Unlike, organized storytelling, where the story performance is the experience, in storymaking, students can interrupt, offer counter stories (Nelson, 2001) and together, experience the roof with a runaway
student to question and learn more about runaways. We can collect ghost stories and
trouble the authenticity of the tales discovered. The standard classroom curriculum does
not traditionally invite student input into its design. Student voices are often missing.
Students like Lacy and Maggie have felt voiceless, and only when invited to share, felt
empowered to tell their stories. They told about their lives and the classroom does not ask
them to do so. In turn, Opportunity students resisted the stereotypical, master narratives
(Nelson, 2001) labeling them as “at-risk”, criminal or juvies and instead began to share
with me their life stories which were vastly different than the media’s perceptions.

However, when students are engaged in storymaking within the fictional world, like
when we experienced imaginary yet possible stories of a real runaway’s journal, it was
then my Opportunity students’ shared their own stories of wanting to runaway or running
away. They revealed what it was like to be labeled as outcasts. This imaginary journey,
or storymaking, forged real connections for students to reveal their own “storied lives”
(Clandinin and Connelley, 1990). Within the possible world of this runaway, they told
their stories. This experience helped me value what my students had to offer, their stories.
However, when students need to tell stories, they do and as educators, we can participate
by listening, sharing, and even making stories together providing as a safe place to do so.
Students need a place to tell their life accounts. We sometimes need to listen without
judgment. Sometimes, as with my Opportunity students, teachers need to suspend moral
declarations allowing students to use frank language. Clearly, students need community
spaces to tell and share stories. When space is not provided within the classroom,
students create their own community. As noted, in my school at a student’s request, we
started a storytelling club. Students came not to perform, but to share their lives and the imaginative worlds they created, but most of all, to share the experience with their peers. With no formal agenda, we heard Angel’s story of self-mutilation, and Mila, who although she had Down Syndrome, and other staff members of the school questioned if she could tell, shared a story every week about her life.

As I write, I, too, am trying to determine how I used and can best employ stories to teach my students. Story does not have to work alone; drama and story can work in concert as I uncover effective ways to teach and provide authenticity for student voices.

As I close in this chapter, I cannot close upon my reflections. Instead, I open them more, not as fragmented pieces, but as integrated, multi-voiced ongoing and developing understandings.

The next chapter will examine stories as they are shared using process drama. In this vein, I continue to extend breaking the rules of storytelling and re-defining the place of story and performance.
Chapter 5: Story In Connection With Drama

In the previous chapter, I struggled to understand what it meant to be both a professional storyteller and a classroom teacher. I used autoethnography to explore my research questions. I privileged telling told stories as a way for students to learn. I also showed how I realized that the storymaking process could be significant to student learning as telling stories alone. I address how my identity as a storytelling teacher has changed since I have explored the following: how being raised by stories has provided a foundation of how I view using stories, how my practice as a professional storyteller has blurred causing me to question how I use stories in the classroom, how my preference for told stories in the classroom and not storymaking altered my work as a classroom teacher, and lastly, how forming a storytelling club provided space for students to share and tell and make stories. In the next chapter, I continue to re-define how stories are used in the classroom using pedagogy of process drama. I examine new ways of looking at storymaking and story performance by employing dramatic conventions. In the previous chapter, I employ improvisation when sharing stories like the stories that were developed from the runaway student’s journal. I also shifted from performance to storymaking with my students and in this chapter continue to do this while creating an imaginary story world together. I also detail how collaboratively I use improvisation to create story worlds (O’Neill, 1995).
I continue to address my research questions namely:

How has my identity as a storytelling teacher changed since I encountered the pedagogy of process drama?

SUB-QUESTIONS

a) What is the significance for my work as a storytelling teacher of extending my teaching by using the pedagogies of process drama and dramatic inquiry?

b) How does the discussion of narrative performance contribute to my understanding of process drama and storytelling in the classroom?

In this chapter, I continue to explore my research questions as I critically reflect upon my experiences with the pedagogies of process drama and dramatic inquiry.

In my writing, I will address the following questions:

1. How do I foreground the storymaking process as much as storytelling?

   In order to address this I must include in my storytelling identity storymaking and explore how process drama and dramatic inquiry use storymaking to help students learn from this pedagogy of learning. I learn as a student in this process. I also explain how I used storymaking when I was the teacher of process drama.

2. How do I incorporate the audience into the learning?

   Once again, as the student, I was not part of an external audience; I was involved with other students, in some cases, my fellow college peers and others, with elementary and high school students. As a storyteller, I performed for my students, in this work outlined in this chapter; performance is redefined to include how performance helps accentuate the stories used in process drama and dramatic inquiry. Aligning my understanding of how stories are used in my storytelling
with how they are used in process drama allows me to dig deeper into the educational value of storytelling and storymaking. This chapter explores new dimensions of how performing with changes the stories when it is not performing for students.

3. When students are engaged in the storymaking process, where does storytelling happen?

In the previous chapter, I was pleasantly surprised at the amount of storytelling that happened during the informal times in the classroom. When my students were engaged in conversation, we often shared many stories. Here again, in this chapter I outline the stories that happen as they are created using process drama and dramatic inquiry. A key difference is that this happens in a drama world (O’Neill, 1995) I am also a participant in the world with the students. Understanding this process assists me in creating teaching opportunities from these unplanned stories.

4. Can there be more than one teller in both storytelling and storymaking?

In the previous chapter, I explained the value of storytelling starting with tandem telling (two tellers at one time) and moving toward improvisational storytelling. This chapter outlines stories that are primarily built by improvisation choices of my students. Using process drama and dramatic inquiry, I explain how whole classrooms are involved in the telling and making of stories.

In order to address these questions, I not only use my experience with stories to help inform my writing, but also initially I hold still the essential elements of storytelling, that
is, the tale, teller, and audience. I examine how these elements change when used with process drama and dramatic inquiry.

**What Does Story Look Like In Process Drama?**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I examine both the text as story, but also the “living narratives” (Ochs & Capps, 2001) and how conversational narratives are used by students. Stories in process drama serve both functions. Students working with the teacher can create a narrative such as traveling West (O’Neill, 1982) but the narratives are not seen as a polished told story, but instead as O’Neill (1982) and Heathcote (1991) state, the narratives are episodic. They occur across a continuum within the drama. They do not follow a chronological order. The text is ever shifting and negotiated based on the facilitation of the teacher.

Other types of narratives are “living narratives,” however within process drama these narrative conversations do not necessarily occur in the past such as “Long time ago, this happened…. ” Instead, the students are “living-through” the many stories presented in the drama world. There are also narratives that occur in the classroom that build from the fictional narratives. The teacher can facilitate using narratives to discuss and question what is occurring in the fictional world. One of the critical differences between the told stories found in storytelling is the tale, teller and audience is more or less fixed. These storytelling elements change, and in some cases, blend when used with process drama. The tale is not one, but many and sometimes without closure. The tellers can by many, often the whole classroom and the listener is inside the drama world and with an external
audience. Both arts serve to create a narrative(s) to be shared, how this is accomplished is sharply different.

In the seminal text, *Storytelling: art and technique*, Baker & Greene (1977) outline the importance of tale, teller, and audience.

> Storytelling, at its best, is mutual creation. Children listen and, out of the words they hear, create their own mental images; this opening of the mind’s eye develops the imagination (p. xiii).

As a performance storyteller, I typically told stories for children. I, too, agreed with, (Baker & Greene, 1977) “that listening can be a complete experience” (p. xiii). I thought this was the most effective use of storytelling because of the way students listened and talked about the storytelling or about the story or “as if” we were in the story. From their conversations, they talked as if they were in the story and seeing it unfold before them. Strum (2000) refers to this as a “trance-like” state. This is an entranced time when the story becomes part of the listener’s attention. However, when I first experienced process drama in the Northwestern University classroom of professional storyteller/creative dramatics professor Rives Collins, I expanded my understanding of what it meant to be in the story.

*My First Introduction to Process Drama with Rives Collins*

_Vignette of the event:_

At Northwestern University, I entered the classroom noticing the chairs and tables were scattered in small, what was later revealed to be, stations around the room. There were pictures about the Wild West covering the desks and chairs. Collins, the professor, read an article to us, but not as the professor, but as someone recruiting for people to walk The Oregon Trail. In role, he shared he was looking for new travelers to go with him. As a group, also in role, we choose to travel with him. We debated what to leave and what to keep for the journey. At each station, in role, we found out something new about our
journey. Along the journey, we created our narratives. Some people shared how they ate spoiled food and they needed to do something. Others shared their expertise, fixing wagon wheels, cooking food, watching for Indians. We faced real world decisions of the time when some of us became sick and we had to decide to leave them.

_My reaction_

Before I entered the room, I assumed we would be working with performance. I knew Collins as a storyteller, and from my prior experience as a drama teacher; I assumed we were going to engage in some type of storytelling or theater for performance. First, I observed, the storymaking process, not storytelling, was central to this approach to drama; process drama, very different from anything I had experienced.

_How Did Collins Make the Storymaking Significant in the Drama?_

I had to admit, at the time, I had not witnessed or been actively involved in this type of storymaking. I asked many questions to determine how I could introduce this type of storymaking into my own classroom. At that point, I had taught for eight years, (including drama), but this approach was new to me. I had learned about group and tandem telling, even storytelling based on improvisational starters, but this was different than all of these. With this process, storytelling and storymaking were not rehearsed, but experienced. I needed to know more.

Collins developed his work based upon ideas generated from O’Neill and Lambert’s (1984) text _Drama Structures_. According to O’Neill and Lambert (1984), what is important in using process drama is the structure and not the plot of the stories within the drama.
Before Heathcote’s work became known, the pattern most familiar to teachers was plot. They see structure as overriding plot, even when the dramatization is embedded in a time sequence such as their lesson based on “The Way West.” (Bolton, 1988 p. 42)

He used “The Way West” drama structure. Drama Structures are defined as a series of dramatic episodes based upon a theme that can be used for teaching. O’Neill and Lambert (1984) caution about the use of plot within this structure.

Since this theme has a kind of narrative shaped provided by the “journey,” it is important not to allow the linear development of story-line to take over. If it happens, the work may become a series of incidents—“what happened next.” Instead, drama is likely to arise from moments of tension and decision, or when the settlers must face the consequences of their actions (p. 41).

This narrative structure that was developed from tensions and decisions was what at first most confused and invited me. I was confused since this use of narrative within a dramatic structure was not to “tell the story,” but instead to build upon tension which produced other narratives. I was invited because up until this time I had never seen narratives used in this way. It was a different type of performance and the teacher was instrumental in helping to create the structure and consequently, building more narratives. Let me illustrate:

In this case, our structures were the ways that we could use drama to engage enter “the Wild West.” O’Neill (1982) recommends ways teachers could create a living drama from the ideas. These included providing a picture, adding content and history, meetings, and suggestions about role changes and possible settings. All the ideas listed above are used to create the drama world of “the Wild West.” Using these within the drama structure, I did not only think about the drama, but I also thought about how the decisions we made in the drama world could apply to the real world. I found myself wondering about
questions such as how to collaborative with others? What did I know about the real West, and so much more? The fictional story helped me question my story (Bolton, 1984, p. 6). I wondered, how would I react to what was happening in the fictional world? This would help me relate this to my own narratives. To cite O’Neill (1982), “In creating and reflection on this make believe world pupils can come to understand themselves and the real world in which they live” (p. 11).

As I experienced process drama for the first time, I wondered how stories were structured within the drama and what stories might look like within the drama.

**How Stories Are Structured Within Drama**

The way west was a series of dramatic events purposefully structured to encourage students’ investment within a drama world. Narratives were created, discarded, extended and manipulated to motivate and sustain student engagement. As Collins read the first article, he shared the promise of traveling west. He structured and slanted his narratives, to help us affirm our choice to take the journey. However, he was not telling a story of someone walking on the trail; we, along with Collins, in role, were walking the trail together. We worked from a drama structure while in present time that created a fictional past. Moffett (1983) reasons that narratives reside in the past, while drama is always in the dramatic present. In this context, although the story of the “way west” happened a long time ago, as we enacted the stories, they resided in the present. We acted within the stories as though they occurred as we created and suggested them. “The action of a narrative is not ongoing. It has gone on; it is reported action” (Moffet, 1983, p. 62).
According to Moffett, the action of drama is ongoing; it is what is happening now. Using process drama, one can travel to a fictional world such as a time when Bessie Coleman became the first African American pilot, but the students are not moving in the world of the past as though it was “a long time ago.” Instead, the story is occurring as though it is now. Students can also travel into the possible worlds such as traveling to Mars. However, again the action is ongoing, it is not like a told story where the storyteller states, “this is what happened to Bessie Coleman,” instead, it is “My name is Bessie, do you know how I can get a pilot’s permit?” They are not talking about Bessie, they are talking to Bessie, it occurs now. Our narratives of the way west were not in the past; rather we were walking the trail facing crucial decisions discussing how to treat the injured as though it was happening to us. Did the drama actualize the story to present time? In our imagined experience, we changed the stagecoach wheels when they were broken, argued over what to bring, and suffered the hardship of the trail. The use of drama allowed us to actively create the stories we were experiencing.

In performance storytelling, I can only persuade the audience to listen more intently by changing my tone or even the story’s direction, but I cannot deviate from a predetermined plot. Listeners are unaware of the story’s basic structure. Storytellers call performance storytelling, the “theatre of the mind.” In process drama, narratives are not structured simply to be heard or told, but are to be enacted and experienced together. The teacher helps direct the created structures, but they are built together. Collins was not the only one structuring narratives. We each added our own stories along the way. Many of these stories were negotiated. For example, when he asked if we wanted to travel, we
were given choices of what to take on the journey. As a group, we decided which ideas would be best to enact. We followed some ideas, but some were not followed. As a group, we decided to settle and each buy land but we wanted to be close to each other. During the journey we told Collins what role we enacted. Some of us choose to be rifleman or farmers. We negotiated what supplies we would take and decided if we should approach the Indians or attack. As O’Neill (1982) shares, “Drama is essentially social and involves contact, communication and the negotiation of meaning” (p. 13). Students discussed, debated, and agreed why one action might be significant and others were not. Students used both verbal and nonverbal cues to create the drama world. For example, a student could simply nod no to a request. However, the student could state, “I don’t want to do this and I am not doing it. It is dangerous.” Within the drama, actions spoke as loud as words. For example, when we assessed the supplies we had collectively, I remember distinctly one person who wished not to share with us. From here, many stories surfaced because this person withheld his supplies. As we imagined why he might be so stingy, one person offered, in role, an explanation detailing a fictional, sick daughter who needed the supplies. From then on, we told this enacted story as the reason the man withheld the supplies. We negotiated the story as it happened. As O’Neill (1984) supports,

> Within the safe framework of the make-believe, individuals can see their ideas and suggestions accepted and used by the group. They can learn how to influence others; how to marshal effective arguments and present them appropriately; how to put themselves in other people’s shoes (p. 13).

In imagination we used the supplies, ran out of medicine, and searched for healing plants to substitute for the medicine. Storymaking moved us into the drama world, because we
did not only talk about the need for finding plants, we searched for them. As a professional storyteller, the narratives I use are limited by the amount of overt negotiation with an audience. In process drama, the narratives only continue to be made when they are negotiated in an open manner. This is because they require dramatic action---to fix a wheel, one must fix a wheel, but one must suggest it in some manner. However, the negotiation involved in performance storytelling is much more hidden. As a storyteller, I need to try to find out what the audience needs to improve the stories. They can suggest stories, but I also need to be able to “read” them to see what they need. I am in charge of the telling. I must look at eye contact, body posture, how they stand, and their facial expressions to help direct the telling of stories. This makes me wonder, how can I use the overt negotiation in process drama in storytelling events?

Questions emerged from the stories in way West process drama. In organized storytelling, there were limited ways we could talk about the story because we relied on one telling. How often did I disregard material about the story simply because we were limited to the told time frame of a story? Did I regulate questions using storytelling to build a told performance? I remember in my acting classes we used dramatic conventions such as “rewinding a scene” or “creating tableau” to understand character motivation or a plot, but here we used these conventions to watch or view our understandings of the evolving narratives. We were able not only to rewind the work, but were able to go back to it after it was replayed. This shifted created meaning to our actions.
Looking back and looking forward to an event highlights and makes accessible hues of significance not available if only one can be in the event. The potential for ‘living through’ drama expands, making a cascade of possibilities if the present embraces the past and the future, if the pain of an event was yesterday or the implication of an event is tomorrow (Bolton, 1997, p. 42).

O’Neill in her Masters thesis called this, the “creation manipulation of time” creates significant meaning to the stories used in each episode (Bolton, 1997, p. 42). Instead of examining narrative or even teaching terminology, O’Neill relies heavily on the conventions of theater to explain her form of process drama.

It is the language of the theater that Cecilly O’Neill now applies to her study of how process drama works. This is not the traditional language of climax, shape plots and sub-plots but contemporary theater language of episodes, transformation, ritual, spectatorship, alienation and fragmentation….it is improvisation that she sees as the centre of process drama, even though she may employ depiction and scripts as part of the sequence (Bolton, 1997, p. 42).

Stories were changed using improvisation. Some of these were changed as a result of using dramatic conventions. Sometimes, using dramatic conventions changed the directions of the stories. For example, we used tableau to show what we were experiencing on the trail. Each person created a scene, some showing hunger, some tiredness, however, we were inside the perspective---we had experienced, in role, similar feelings and actions. We were performing our learning as insiders who wanted to understand what we were experiencing. A student on the way west experience, we decided to keep a journal to help others who might walk the trail at a later time. From this re-playing of our fictional lives, we constructed meaning to record for others. We did not look to an outside audience to praise or critique our work because, in this sense, performance checked our progress and confirmed our learning within the dramatic structures. It also suggested other ways to explore in the fictional world.
The stories used in process drama did not consist of only one negotiation, but of many occurring at the same time. With Collins, we were simultaneously telling and experiencing stories and each classmate added to the dramatic experiences. Each story presented or offered is negotiated, which changes how it is used in the drama. O’Neill & Lambert (1982) believe, “In drama, the representation of experience which each individual offers to the group is subject to the scrutiny of the rest. What is offered may be modified by others, who in turn, must modify their own contributions” (p. 13).

*The Appearance of the Stories*

Unlike professional storytellers who prepare and create stories with a clear beginning, middle, and end, Heathcote (2006) prepares stories for process drama work quite differently. “I hardly even see narrative as a journey from the front end to the back end because I think stories can begin anywhere” (Heathcote, 7-15-2006, personal conversation). In the Way West process drama, the composition of stories was less like told stories, more like the everyday narratives (Ochs & Capps, 2001) identify because of the interactive nature of the narratives. They depend on teller and listener and intermix between the two. Heathcote (2006) notes, “telling stories places the power of the form and the unfolding pattern events, firmly in the hands of the teacher” (p. 9). Many of the stories Collins shared and those we created were simply sparks or fragments of ideas told in a narrative way. There was no story closure, but the story’s significance still guided our discussions. As expected, the unfolding story fragments led to additional questions. Heathcote (2006) notes,
The inner part of stories focuses upon the attitude of a persona which then cause’s response from others, and out of these events is brought about. It is by this kind of ordering that drama produces the opportunity to make constructs (p. 11).

In addition to stories only appearing in the fictional time for one significant moment, I also noticed some stories were not resolved which increased our investment in the story and drama. When Collins hinted at the possibility of poisonous snakes, we begin looking for them. This subtle suggestion directed by Collins, in role, was enough to include this narrative as part of the story we enacted together. As Ochs & Capps (2001) suggest the more one increases tellership and tellability, the more a group feels they can add to the narratives. Stories within process drama can come in many shapes and sizes; they can be overlooked, neglected, and extended (Ochs & Capps, 2001).

Narrative Fragments

A professional storyteller is seen as unprepared if he or she does not finish a “started” story. However, when Collins teased us with a narrative fragment, only a hint of what the West might look like, it created an interest and investment. This was a skillful teaching move using just enough of a story to invite us into the learning to question and act upon it. By withholding the narratives, we were investing in continuing the trip to seek further answers within the story we created. With each step, we discovered more of the story. For me, this was a new way to use narratives and I decided I wished to use process drama in my own classroom. Below is a description and analysis of my experience with my drama classes.
Vignette of the event:

I pre-planned and read about The Oregon Trail restructuring my classrooms to not only accommodate the work stations, but to handle groups of 40 to 45 since my drama classes were large. I wrote an advertisement calling for volunteers to walk the trail. On two separate occasions during the day, I taught my classes with this dramatic structure. Each class had a different response because the students, freshmen to seniors, 33 percent were physically handicapped and 12 percent were classified as special needs. I had to adjust the lesson to work with students who had mobility issues (wheelchairs) and in some cases, memory delays. Both classes accepted the journey, although one class took longer on deciding what to bring. For two and a half weeks, we walked the trail.

From teaching using dramatic structures, I reflected on what was significant for me, and what could I take home to my own classroom. I became aware of how the narratives may be used for teaching. I also became acutely keen as to how my role changed from storyteller and the necessity as process drama teacher to co-construct and mediate stories.

I will use the example above to address this.

Planning for Process Drama Using Narratives

Collins made the drama experience seem effortless because he was both well prepared and skilled. From the daily pre-planning involved in sustaining the drama, I learned more about using drama structures within the classroom. I learned to rely less on the exact details in the text and more on the immediacy of my students’ choices in the drama.

Initially, I thought we could mirror a good bit of Collins’ work and text, but the stories moved quite differently with each class. I needed to plan daily. The specific choices could not always be part of my planning, but I could explore possibilities to present for the students. There is no mention in the text or the work that we did with Collins to accommodate for special needs or to prepare to make friends with the Indians we
encounter on the trail. When my students befriended an Indian asking him to join the journey, this was a highly political move that I did not plan. It was also political for the time. Because of this, it proved to be an effective teaching experience. In the drama we could explore, if we chose this, how to handle travel in villages that are unfriendly for Indians? Our guest stayed with us for a while, but we took him and dropped him off to relatives in a distant tribe. I found working with narratives only improved as I gained experience with them. The practice helped me prepare to co-direct ideas with my students both in and out of role. In my class, I could test and re-test my plans. In order to plan the Westward journey, I need to contextualize the drama to meet the needs of our classroom. This included the physical needs of students in wheelchairs who could not enter the work stations. I made the work stations accessible by using a blanket instead of a desk. With the objects on and around the blanket, all students could equally “enter” the narrative fictional world. In addition to planning for physical accommodations, I had to find a strong enough pre-text (O’Neill, 1982) to invite students into the drama. “A pre-text may be activated by a word, a gesture, a location, a story, an idea, an object, or an image, as well as by a character or a play script” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 1982). In this case, in role, I recruited others for the trail using an advertisement as a pre-text. I was not building to performance, but pre-planning how I could invite students into the drama, and allow the students to expand their knowledge with the unfolding narratives. The work was not over---after each day I planned ways to use narrative and other tools (drawing, writing, tableaus, etc.) to move students forward to expand their learning. Instead of retelling the work, I needed to find ways for students to actively experience it.
**Tension in Process Drama**

As a professional storyteller, I often increased investment in a told story by speeding it up at scary times or slowing it down, highlighting the eerie nature of a setting or character, and in many ways, building the tension as it was told. Altering or withholding story, too, can increase dramatic tension within process drama. As Heathcote (1984) reminds,

> Tension is not a matter of huge terrifying events such as earthquakes, mutinies, armies, and so on; it is a matter of finding a lever from within the situation which is capable of laying on pressure, in the way that sore places can develop on the skin as a result of abrasion (p. 34).

In role with my students, I could add elements to the drama to increase the tension. When the students were on the wagon, a wheel broke. “Hey, what was that noise, I think there is something wrong with the wagon.” This trouble created further investment. As the teacher, although I could pre-plan elements, as noted with process drama, many other stories surfaced as we explored taking us in many, varied directions. This spontaneity is both welcomed and encouraged to extend student investment and learning. I had planned to teach about plants that could make you sick. One student, in role, ate the strange plant and pretended to fall ill. Another student quickly said he had medicine. In order to invite more involvement from all students, I aggregated the situation more by saying, “Look the bottle is leaking, there is only enough for one person.” Since two were sick, students had to re-think their strategies in role. I deliberately troubled the situation forcing them into action and discussion. As expected with process drama, troubling the narrative helped to create further engagement, and as a result, even more narratives surfaced. Students traded ideas in narrative form to determine their next steps. As Bruner (1991) proposes, it may be trouble that compels people to narrate. “Trouble” is felt as dramatic tension.
Trouble is the engine of narrative and the justification for going public with a story. It is the whiff that leads us to search out the relevant or responsible constituents in the narrative, in order to convert the raw Trouble into a manageable problem that can be handled with procedural muscle. (p. 12).


Productive tension is quite different from conflict. It is the key to deepening the exploration of motive influencing action and therefore the journey. Conflict is the shallower concept for it tends to lock people into negative repetitive responses during the interactive process and prevent more subtle exploration (p. 108).

I found that despite my understanding of process drama, sometimes my storyteller identity was fore grounded and as a result, unnecessary, unproductive tension occurred on my part that deterred the learning.

*Unnecessary Tension*

When I told the story of the westward journey within our process experience, I turned my students into listeners as themselves, rather than as enactors of drama. After we imagined a wagon wheel had broken, I found myself trying to telling the story of how the person first learned to fix the wagon wheel. I pressed him to tell us in a told story format, what his first time was like, what he learned and who taught him. I spent more time asking this student to tell his fictional story instead of allowing him to live within the fiction.


Story will perhaps help those teachers who feel more comfortable if there is a plot line to anchor the curriculum, but it is somewhat poisoned chalice in that in every take is unique. It exists to fulfill itself (p. 16).

Since I already had a riveting Westward experience with Collins, I had to fight not to slip into simply re-telling the same stories. Each experience should be unique, not a re-told tale. Instead of telling, with other students, he could have sketched blueprints to re-build
the stagecoach or written via Pony Express to someone for instructions for parts—the choices were endless. These teaching moves also advance the drama. The emphasis is on dramatic experiential learning, not on storytelling as ourselves outside of the drama world.

*From Storyteller to Co-Director*

As I taught, I realized I could not only be the teller or a participant in the drama, but I had to be the teacher as well. Certainly, this was hard to manage because my students could stay in the fictional drama world, but I had to constantly juggle both worlds as I made teaching choices. I was aware of safety issues at the stations so students would not fall over chairs representing stagecoaches. I, too, made directional choices—where did I move the drama based upon student choices to invite deeper connections and understandings? As my storytelling identity surfaced, I had to resist telling the story for the students, and allow myself to experience it with them. As a story coach, I worked with students so they could tell the stories that we created together in the drama world. Narratives are seen differently in the context of classroom interactions. The student’s choices do not always follow my pre-planned narratives. Any story told, for example the wagon wheel tale, is always serving in relationship to what is occurring now and what has occurred in the past. In other words, each narrative is connected to what has come before it. These narratives constitute a teaching experience not because they are told, but because students question, engage, and reflect upon them. Instead of telling stories, we “evoke” ourselves using drama (Wagner, 1976, p. 9). Evoke means, according the *American Heritage College Dictionary* (2002), “to summon or call forth” or to re-create,
especially through imagination” (p. 485). Using process drama, a teacher can use drama and stories to help students recreate the experiences they talk about or suggest and call forth to appear so they can use their imagination to engage with the drama in the present time.

Dorothy Heathcote doesn’t direct drama; she evokes it. Unlike most drama teachers, she allows the students to make as many of the decisions about what the drama is going to be about as possible. She makes only those decisions that must be made if what they choose to do is happen dramatically (Wagner, 1976, p. 9). In this sense, I do not co-direct, I co-evolve. In the way West example, I pre-planned a narrative or pre-text to fuel our drama engagement. In the lived-through experience of the fictional world, students evoke many narratives to create the larger drama. As we create, we debate, and finally agree what narratives we pursue and those we discard. As expected, as the larger dramatic world evolves within a series of narratives, it is affected by our interactions, students’ questions, and suggestions. In my role as teacher within this drama structure, I am always mindful as to how can I involve all students in these unfolding narratives as we decide where to go next. For example, in the west drama, we created a map as a tool to create places we wish to explore. As we used other tools such as writing, language, drawing, and engaging in play or in this case, the map, they can make narrative differently than in a told story. Clearly, within process drama, students can represent their learning using a trash can lid to represent a wagon wheel. This transformation from lid to wheel, invites students to move into the narratives instead of simply listening to them. Consequently, during the drama, I needed to structure spaces where students could interact and create narratives. As a teacher, I needed to decide the best use of the constructions. Initially as a teller, I thought my role was to weave drama
within story, but my role was actually much greater as I took responsibility for helping students to see the worlds we shape, experiencing them critically through reflection. In order to do this, I incorporated more “what ifs” and “I wonder” into the drama. This means the fragments of story, the story behind the stories, and those selections that tease are worth developing within the drama. When brought to the foreground they become part of the collective story.

The next time I participated in process drama at The Ohio State University, it was not using a pre-determined drama structures, was rather using a teaching approach called dramatic inquiry. For five years at OSU, I studied, practiced and taught the pedagogy of Dramatic Inquiry by Edmiston (2007) which emphasizes using drama to promote inquiry with students through collaborative ideas through educational or process drama. It incorporates teacher-in-role, student-in-role, working in a fictional world, and student-centered learning.

I began to wonder where inquiry is situated in organized storytelling. I found myself referring back to the “trance-like” state that occurs in organized storytelling. Countless times, the audience questioned while I told. When my student, Dawn Escobar told a story about Maria Mitchell, the first woman astronomer, another student asked her a barrage of questions, and I was told by the librarian that books describing Mitchell’s life were checked out soon after. Telling the story created a need for inquiry, but this was not always shared inquiry. Students could go to the library after a story or they could ask internal questions and research them later. Many times, organized storytelling created
shared questions and inquiries about the story. For example, I remember hearing Bobby Norfolk share a tale about an African American, Henry Brown, a slave who sealed himself in a cardboard box for three months to gain his freedom rather than remain a slave. This spurred numerous questions, and Norfolk shared more of the story as a result of the questions. Many times, a story was an entry to curriculum study. For example, in telling *Little Burnt Face*, we discovered other native traditions and customs. However, the inquiry questions from the students occurred *after* the story, not during. In contrast, the inquiry in process drama builds from questions that arise during, as well as before and after any imagined experience.

In the following examples, Edmiston created activities to improvise what it might be like to design a school such as the Carlisle school, and in another example, experiencing what the first African American pilot felt and why she might not have succeeded. Like Heathcote, Edmiston & Taylor (2005) turn to an inquiry-based approach to curriculum.

Learning and teaching can be contrasted with the dominant assumption that teachers merely “deliver” the curriculum to pupils. We believe that curriculum, like life should be explored rather than delivered like a parcel…We view teaching as mostly facilitation and mediation of learning through inquiry and we are critical of didactic and transmission teaching methods because they have left too many disaffected pupils on the sidelines of learning (p. 6).

The question arises, when does the inquiry become dramatic? Edmiston (2010) states, “Inquiry becomes dramatic inquiry when children and adults dramatize the inquiry process” (p. 14). For example, in a graduate class, Edmiston negotiated with us to agree to imagine we would design a school and as we were given a dramatic context, build the school for an unknown client, and we accepted it, we did not take a passive role, but were
actively planning the school’s design. Our questions and our resulting actions became more complex as we wrestled with new questions that arose for us. Edmiston took on the role of someone checking on our progress in order to structure and focus our imagined tasked and to report back to our client. In doing so, he could extend our questions; and pose new ones, and deepen our explorations.

A Vignette:

In the fictional world, Edmiston, the professor, had prepared large butcher paper which represented pre-blueprint sheets to build as a group of teachers (which we were) the best school we could build. We were told money was not an issue. As we began to build, we provide reports to some official on the phone. As we immersed ourselves and debated on what we needed for the ideal school, the official’s conversation and suggestions began to bother us. Edmiston, in role of the official, told us were to build a school to “Americanize” Native Americans. “We need to make sure they represent our country.” Over a period of exchanges we found out what Americanize meant. It meant to displace their Native identities which included stripping them from the practices, customs, language, and traditions and replacing them with American ideals. As some decided if we should build the school, others prepared to do so regardless. We struggled over what to do. We were divided. Some of us wanted to be spies and some wanted to stop building. Later, a fellow classmate Sharon shared her personal story, when her father had been placed in a boarding school and stripped from his native ways. This only complicated our difficulty, but it helped us personalize our drama.

No External Audience /Active Inquirers

As we explored our questions interacting with the teacher and one another, our investment deepened. This work made me wonder about how inquiry might be used with told stories? As a storyteller, I wondered how much student curiosity was I able to create and sustain with told narratives. Are there ways to help students inquire more with narratives? In my experience as a participant within dramatic inquiry, I considered how I might use inquiry to promote both storymaking and storytelling.
**What Is Dramatic Inquiry?**

As was noted before, O’Neill concentrates and uses drama conventions that borrow from theater to facilitate process drama. She uses improvisation to highlight tension and discussions occurring within the drama world. Heathcote concentrates on the learning that can be developed when stepping in someone else’s shoes using drama to help students engage and question in the fictional world. She employs teacher-in-role to help the teacher facilitate the drama, along with the questions and “dramatic tension” to allow for deep involvement and investment in the drama. Booth uses teacher-in-role and improvisation, but always this is to be anchored for deep investment in the characters and action from a printed story. When developing process drama, Edmiston also employs improvisation, narrative, teacher-in-role, but what is highlighted is how the drama and these dramatic conventions can serve to promote sustained inquiry with the students.

What is meant by sustained inquiry is that the questions created by the drama becomes an entrance point to develop, further question, and engage in inquiry. However, the questions are not addressed after the drama, but inside the drama. The teacher serves to facilitate the inquiry using improvisation and teacher in role. Students, along with the teacher, engage in inquiry on a continuum of understanding. The activities in the drama are to help extend the questions and curiosities but also to enact and engage in the understanding of the questions by being in role as someone who has an investment to discover more about their questions. “Dramatic inquiry begins when adults participate in, and mediate, collaborative activities in the overlapping spaces of young people’s inquiries and their dramatic improvisation” (Edmiston, 2010, p. 15). Using Heathcote’s strategy of
teacher-in-role, Edmiston engaged in the drama both as an official (in role) and professor in order to support and extend our curiosity of our learning through inquiry. He deliberately withheld certain information which was a skillful way to use narrative as we built the school and as the official’s stance became questionable in response to our desire to know more about why we were building the school. Each teaching move fostered our inquiry and discussion to decide how to proceed or what to do next. However, this approach was not simply asking questions, we created a fictional world where we could address and explain answers to these questions.

What Is Inquiry?
The 4th edition of the *American Heritage College Dictionary* (2002) defines inquiry as, “a question; a query” (p. 716). But the inquiry that grounds the pedagogy of dramatic inquiry goes further. Participants’ questions ground their deepening explorations which they can pursue in fictional situations as well as everyday conversations. Using drama we engage in a continued pursuit to explore the inquiry questions using role and creating a fictional world. We did not simply ask, why were we building the school, we debated it with the official. We did not simply announce it is wrong to do this, but we argued as fictional teachers why it was wrong and what we were going to do about it. And most importantly, we acted upon our questions and responses. I agreed upon a moral stance. We decided to build the school, but in a way to appreciate Native Americans and not deny their culture. In our interaction with the teacher-in-role, we defended our choices.

All in all, we sustained our inquiry by working from a continuum using drama, questions, and activities in the fictional world.
Inquiring Strategies in Dramatic Inquiry

Richard Beach & Jamie Myers in their text, *Inquiry-based English instruction* (2001), introduced six inquiry strategies to help organize inquiry. They are: immersing, identifying, contextualizing, representing, critiquing, and transforming. This helps the inquiry become dramatic with drama and story, students can step into the trouble and even attempt to fix and evaluate in and out of role. I provide an example.

Using drama, all the strategies were presented as we created and then questioned the world we created. In the building a school drama, we entered the world of building a school to “Americanize” the students. *We immersed* ourselves in the world we were presented. However, along the way, we had concerns and *identified* that it was not simply building a school, but if it was right to build this school. *We contextualized* our roles as teachers, but also human beings and *we critiqued* our choices to serve in these roles. In the boarding school drama, by the end, after hearing Sharon’s story of her father, some of us were *transformed* by the experience. I was one of them.

In storytelling, we can immerse ourselves in an imagined social world. Students can engage in a story-like trance as they follow the storyteller, for example, as he or she takes a trip through eyes of the civil war soldier, as Brer Rabbit trying to get out of tar, or as a giant trying to catch Jack who has his golden goose. Stories, too, can *identify* problems or issues such as fighting against your brother who is on the other side, not knowing how to get out of this sticky mess, and running fast enough away from the giant. The storyteller also creates the *context*, and the listener chooses to buy into it. The storyteller
lets us wander as a soldier, hear Brer Rabbit talk, and run with Jack. A storyteller can also position one soldier over another and create a critical perspective on war. He or she can show the danger of not treating everyone fairly by using Barer Rabbit as a metaphor for accepting differences and can show how Jack feels bad when he hears of the giant dying from falling off the beanstalk. It is the last strategy, transforming, where dramatic inquiry stands out. Storytelling by itself does not examine the path not taken, even though it is implicit in the story. Instead, the storyteller directs the listeners on the path of the story. Storytelling does not allow for this kind of revision except through enlightenment. Sometimes a story will be powerful enough to produce change. Transformation is a powerful teaching tool, and as a teacher, I need to use dramatic inquiry with stories if I want my students to really re-think the choices in the story.

“The primary purpose of engaging in inquiry is to help students to gain an understanding of how we construct or author the social worlds we inhabit” (Beach, 2001 p. 20). Using dramatic inquiry, students cannot only understand their own social worlds, but they can imagine other people’s social worlds as well. Using tools such as butcher paper to design and represent what “schooling” mean to them. They transformed because they experienced discomfort and changed as a result as they engaged in the drama. In organized storytelling, as noted, transformation can occur as a result of being enlightened to change. I think of Patty Larkin’s story song, Metal Drums that tells the story of children playing close to nuclear plants. They eventually die early from cancer. This one story song transformed my understanding of the danger of nuclear plants. Other stories such as the ones often told by the trickster Mullah Nasrudin offer simple wisdom by
showing the folly of actions. In a story where Nasrudin loses his keys, he only searches in a well lit area even though he lost them in the dark of the room. This simple story has helped guide me to look where things are lost and not where they are easy. Narratives in dramatic inquiry can occur because socially the stories are not only told, but are shared, challenged, and evaluated by the class and teacher. How as a storyteller can I create this experience?

**The Drama in Inquiry**

One story that closely resembles the one we created in our graduate class was told at a storytelling festival by Lakota Sioux teller, Dovie Thomason. She shared a personal tale of the Carlisle school and how that boarding school stripped away her grandmother’s identity. The story moved me; it brought back this experience and a recent experience when I worked with San Juan Pueblo Estafaez Martinez “Bluewater.” I spent two days with her listening to her stories of the San Juan Pueblo and then hearing her tell the sad account of growing up in a boarding school. When recalling these stories, I am able to remember other narratives as well and be transformed because they are powerful. As every storyteller soon realizes stories creates other stories. When listeners are in the storytelling trance, they often refer to narratives that have occurred to them while the story is being told. It is almost expected that a handful of listeners will tell you stories based on the story you told. This is part of the storytelling connection. Thomason’s story brought me back. As I plan for stories to be told, I also should plan for the stories that occur from them. They too can be used for learning.
Closure on Stories in Dramatic Inquiry

As a storyteller, when I shared tales with my students or even when they created their own, a sense of closure was key. Closure amplified the learning through the full story cycle of beginning, middle, and end. However, using drama, we were able to share the real account of Shannon’s father, but even with this story, it did not close the drama experience for me. My reaction to this continued to trouble me after the class.

In the fictional world of story—the story of the school—we made real choices. Our inquiry enhanced learning and created understanding.

People dramatize inquiry not through performance for an external audience, but by imaginatively and collectively projecting into the socially imagined spaces of a fictional world where they can enact possible events to better understand something (Edmiston, 2010, p. 15).

As in life, some stories are not resolved. I remember, as a class, we wondered if we should quit building the school, but when we were informed others would build it regardless, we decided to explore become convert spies in order to sabotage the project all the while still remaining in the imagined group of designers. Even as we struggled with our choices and decisions, we never resolved our problems. This experience allowed me to reflect upon how I used stories in the classroom. I privileged my curriculum as a storytelling teacher, and provided spaces to finish stories. I helped students when creating stories to work to possible conclusions emphasizing the ending as a viable part of both the storymaking and the storytelling. Withholding information can create educational discomfort. In other words, in the fictional world, the teacher can deliberately create conflict to extend classroom learning. My background as a storyteller,
from the time I was raised with tales of Appalachia to performing on a stage, I was told,
and even judged, on closing my stories. With dramatic inquiry, the goal was not
resolution, but advancing learning through extended inquiry.

The boarding school narrative we created had no resolution, I hoped for a happy ending
that never came. What happens when an ending is not sharp or clear? Drama, especially
unresolved drama, can allow us to connect and extend learning about a fictional situation
with personal understanding. I know I was troubled with the school drama because
shortly before this experience, when I traveled to tell stories in New Mexico, I had spent
three days with “National Treasure” storyteller Blue Water from the San Juan Pueblo.
Although she shared she was a product of a boarding school, I did not fully understa
what this meant until this drama experience. As I was involved in the drama, I continued
to reflect upon her story, blurring the personal with the fictional. I wanted a happy
ending; I wanted Blue Water to come out okay.

The impact from this experience was not short-lived. In fact, I remember e-mailing
Edmiston explaining how the results of our unresolved stories haunted me. I asked him
how I could conclude the drama, for even though it was long over, it was still in my head.
He assured me leaving it unresolved was intentional because when drama leaves you
wondering invites you to explore more. This convinced me how essential the teacher’s
role is within dramatic inquiry. While the teacher uses drama to help students learn, he or
she must also recognize when the story is too personal. During the work, Sharon shared
her father’s story. At one point she did not feel ready, and Edmiston gave her full
permission not to tell. His mediation provided a space for her to tell, if she wished to do so. In organized storytelling, as noted, we could not ask questions until the story concluded. In contrast, using the pedagogy of Dramatic allowed us to pose questions and act upon them together creating the stories we imagined.

Other Tools for Mediation

As a class, we debated how and if we should construct the school. We heard a personal narrative from one of our fellow students, and we talked in role. As stories were shared, debated, contested, and negotiated. Stories were not the only tools used to mediate the drama---we combined writing, dramatic conventions, and other tools as well. In the boarding school dramatic inquiry, we used paper as school blueprints, we stood in tableau representing a sculpture to be placed in front of the school, and we created dramatic episodes showing what our school looked like by creating statues. All of these were tools—symbolic ways to promote our investment and focus inquiry.

But beyond this verbal expansion is the spread of meaning making using alternative symbolic systems—art, gesture, drama, and music as participants interpret text simultaneously through multiple channels (Wolf, Enciso, 1994, pp. 352-353).

This experience made me reflect more upon how tools maybe used in storytelling. In organized storytelling, storytellers often only use language and their bodies as tools for telling. In fact, instead of viewing drawing, music (some do, some do not) and writing as something that accessorizes the story, when we are working in classrooms, we need to be open to how we can use other tools to help children learn with story. As a storyteller, I
can hopefully find ways to use tools in performance as well as the storymaking process in classrooms.

I need to find ways to expand on how I include and use tools, not only in my use of process drama but also in my storytelling work so that all students are involved in the learning process.

*Breaking the Story*

Heathcote, supports story is not used for creating something, but instead becomes a tool for creating narratives and promoting learning. When asked what process drama does not include she answered, a play or story for acting out and explaining a story. Instead of explaining with story, the emphasis is on experiencing stories.

There is not a story so much as an episode in which possibilities can emerge. These episodes are very focused to serve the needs of the participants: talking responding, thinking, using previous experience, consulting, finding out by doing, trial and error, considering, etc. (Heathcote, 2006, p. 9).

In examining the narratives used in the boarding school dramatic inquiry experience, Edmiston interrupted the narrative to either present new ideas or question our actions in both the fictional and real world. Breaking the story as Edmiston did to present or demonstrate is not generally done with organized storytelling, but here it served as an effective teaching move to help us engage more deeply in our inquiry. For example, when we were discussing and building the statue for the front of the school, Edmiston broke into the story asking how the arms would appear. He demonstrated by showing how they would reach out as though they were welcoming. His breaking of the story
invited us to wonder more about what we saying with the statues. Interrupting the story is an effective move in process drama (Bowell & Heap, 2002).

We would all agree, we are sure, that drama could be described as stories in action. This might lead us to suppose that events in drama have to unfold in a chronological order. However, this is certainly not the case, just as it is not always the case in stories, and in fact if we do always stick to a mono-directional time sequence we will miss a great opportunity to construct a tight and engaging drama and restrict the pupils’ opportunity to explore the issues of the drama in as full a manner as might otherwise be possible (p. 96).

With process drama, one effective teaching move is the skillful placement and organization of narratives. I need to remember this so I can find ways to use this in my teaching work.

**Addressing Critical Issues Such as Social Justice**

Using dramatic inquiry can focus students on being critical about what they experience in the drama world as well.

**Vignette:**

Working in an arts-magnet, urban school in a 4th grade classroom consisting of African-American and European-American children, we used drama to step into the world of Bessie Coleman, the first African-American pilot. Students imagined they were with her when Edmiston blocked her attempts to be a pilot. Taking on the role of a White owner of a flight school in the 1920’s, the students, also in role, stood in a single line and walked past another student in the role of Bessie Coleman and said the obstacles that might keep her from being a pilot. A number of students said money, status, but I vividly remember one white student saying quietly, “Because you are Black.” The student, in response to the teachers questioning, provided a critical doorway in using drama for learning.

When the young, white child opened the door into the fictional world, he focused on race and social justice.
If as teachers, we want to teach for social justice I propose that we need to make power relationships more visible as we build nurturing, collaborative, and fair communities in our classrooms. We cannot teach about social justice in the world outside of the classroom if we do not run classrooms based on what social justice means to children on a daily basis: fairness, caring, and sharing. We can use drama toward these aims (Edmiston & Bigler-McCarthy, 2004, p. 2).

When teaching for social justice using drama, students do not simply address issues they enact them. Teachers can introduce drama to both change and demonstrate power relationships. When Edmiston was in role as a White, racist flight school owner, the students, both Black and White, addressed the owner using drama. In the fictional world, they can in role explain why it is wrong to treat others this way. Edmiston, in role, positioned himself as someone that was not kind. As Edmiston (2009) informs,

Social situations and relationships my change radically when children play (or are engaged in process drama). Teachers using dramatic inquiry may shape social interactions to change the power relationships among children and adults. In play, existing relationships become destabilized, and through dramatic inquiry more complex relationships may develop, as imagined communities begin to grow in classrooms (p. 20).

In this drama, I was working with a 4th grader who was African American and Edmiston had asked the students to draw an event in the story. This student drew a plane with a bomb attached to it to explain a possible reason why Bessie Coleman’s plane had crashed. This drawing became a mediating tool to launch an additional discussion on the events surrounding the crash. No cause was ever determined for the plane crashing and so it was possible a bomb caused the crash. I began to talk about this from the fictional world that we enacted and from the real world as to why she thought this way. We were able to discuss drawing from her experience which she shared how white people can be mean and the experience of the fictional world of Bessie Coleman demonstrated how
some white people react to Black people. The drama and the drawings were mediating tools to engage conversation of how people are treated differently because of the color of their skin. It was not planned out. It happened as a result of the drama; I improvised with the student and the other students. The improvisation using these tools also served to help students learn using drama.

**Improvisation**

According to Heathcote (1991), improvisation is the process of, “discovering by trial, error and testing; using available materials wit respect for their nature, and being guided by this appreciation of their potential” (p. 44). The product of improvisation is the experience (Heathcote, 1991). Viewing these narrative experiences as a collection of episodes (Heathcote, 1991); I recognize each episode creates possibilities for learning. A child’s saying “Because you are Black!” was not planned out, but arrived only after a series of improvisational choices with students which included taking a racist tone as a white flight instructor, using flashback to imagine a White, washer woman’s reactions to Bessie when she was a child, to physically standing in a line as a fictional Bessie Coleman tried to advanced through the line. Through improvisation within the fictional world, students reacted and even debated racism. Holland (1998), taking a cultural anthropologist view, argues people act through the play in improvisation. As students play in dramatic inquiry,

children are free to improvise actions and responses within the implicit social rules of imagined situations (Vygotsky, 1976). Change the imagined scenario and you change the social rules and thus the possibilities for action and making meaning using whatever cultural tools are available and appropriate in the new situation (Edmiston, 2010, p. 23).
Edmiston introduced an environment where racism could both be enacted and questioned within the drama. Teachers can use improvisation and mediating tools to make social justice issues more visible. Students, with the help of the teacher, can decide how to move through the drama. By changing the point of view when telling Bessie Coleman to a racist, White, flight owner, more narratives and possibilities surfaced. As a storyteller and a teacher who uses stories, I explored the significant times I engaged in inquiry, using mediating tools. Basically, “fictionalizing an activity alters how people relate to one another” (Edmiston, 2010, p. 19). Now it was my turn to teach using process drama, highlighting inquiry and narratives in the drama. This experience showed me how drama can motivate what others might consider the reluctant student.

**Vignette:**

I, as well as another graduate student, Chad, was invited to a history class where we planned to teach a lesson about a small village in England known as Eyam. In this fictional town, many of the residents sacrificed their lives so others in nearby villages would not be affected by the rampant spread of The Black Plague. Starting with a personal story of my trip to Eyam, we used this experience to image ourselves as members of the town and participants in the town meeting—the same town meeting where they decided if they should sacrifice their lives or not. Students became townspeople and I, the village mayor.

**Reaching Students on the Edge**

Some students are quiet, reserved, or content not to be involved in most classroom activities, what Edmiston (2008) calls students on the edge of learning. Stories used in drama can reach these students and draw them into the work. After I had completed this drama, I was told a student on the edge of learning was in the class. Neither Chad nor I
could tell based on how involved and invested the student had been in the drama. At the town meeting, we discussed which residents we could afford to lose in the town because they already had signs of the disease. Students nominated people and talked about why they could/should be left to die.

The normally quiet student was so incensed he used his role to exclaim, shouting, “How could we be so damn careless with people’s lives?” He explained he was the blacksmith, and even if he had the disease, he would still be the blacksmith. He screamed, “Who were we to play God?”

The world of the classroom kept this student quiet, but the world of drama, as an active participant in the unfolding story of The Black Plague released his voice.

Dramatic inquiry can be extremely significant way of organizing learning provides children with ways to access and create new ways to think and communicate about the world that just could not be available in the classroom (Edmiston, 2010, p. 21).

This student who was considered an outsider in learning stepped inside the fictional world to discuss real issues such as the value of human life.

In dramatic inquiry, when students take dramatic action (as if they are in an imagined time-space) they can experience significant events in the lives of characters from books or other narratives, represent those events, and then reflect upon such imagined moments in order to evaluate deeds in the lives of those people (Edmiston, 2010, p. 9).

He was moved by the drama to respond. As Edmiston (2010 continues, “Additionally, it is when people interpret such imagined events metaphorically (rather than literally) to make connections with their own life situations” (p. 9). Working within the fictional world allows students who might be considered to be displaced to have a voice.
A Vignette:

I, the teacher Mitch, and later Edmiston worked with four second grade urban children who were blind. One student also had cerebral palsy. They were interested in exploring Mars, and for four weeks, we used drama to create a mission. From this experience, I saw how students could step into the roles they could not necessarily hold in their real lives. In other dialogic inquiry experiences, I had seen students step into the role of German children during the Berlin Airlift, African American pilots, students attending Houdini’s séances, engineers on the Titanic, but at one point using drama we made the impossible possible. We had students who were blind see in the fictional world. With these four students, we built a spaceship and used clay models and braillers to communicate with the Martians.

When we landed, the students created a cosmic dust that clouded the adults’ eyes while shielding the students and Astronauts. This left us blind so the “blind” students volunteered to lead us. In the real world, these were blind students walking into a classroom, but in the fictional world they were experienced, seeing astronauts leading their teammates who were temporarily blind around the planet Mars. It was here I saw how the use of drama provided students more than a voice to speak; it gave them a world to see. Using drama, I watched students ask questions about Mars, its size, and ability to sustain life. They wanted to know how Martians could survive. As a teacher, I was guiding or mediating their inquiry; I was not instructing them. I was later told outside of the classroom, two of the students spent their time sitting for hours listening to radio or TV. Their parents did not communicate with them besides basic needs. These same students were using drama and able to argue with me in role as Senator John Glenn to determine if they should allow International astronauts aboard their ships. They led us around when we could not see. They wrote to their fictional girlfriends/wives or boyfriend/husbands explaining why they were leaving the planet and how they would miss them. In the fictional world, being blind was not a deterrent to preparing and visiting Mars.

On the last day, students presented a giant comic book written in both Braille and in English peppered with pictures displaying the difference they had made on Mars. Clearly, they had wanted to remember the experience. They were empowered to create a lasting document of their experience. Using drama, they had presence in the classroom.

“Dramatic inquiry can be an extremely significant way of organizing learning when it provides children with ways to access and create new ways to think and communicate about the world that just could not be available in the classroom but which are located in
aspects of life about which they desire to learn more expertise” (Edmiston, 2010, p. 17).

For students who sometimes get dismissed because of their inability, in the fictional world, they went to Mars! Their pride transferred to the everyday classroom.

As Edmiston (2007) notes,

> Drama can productively disrupt the sense of classroom normality to create spaces where children can be viewed primarily as using their strengths in learning literacy practices, rather than children with or without disabilities (p. 338).

These students were able to engage in the world of Mars. Despite being blind, at one point, the students in the fictional world of Mars searched for poisonous spiders, talked with John Glenn, wrote to their boy/girlfriends and experienced a rocket launch.

However, we accommodated the experience not limiting their experience, using what they knew such as creating images out of play dough or typing on a Brailler. These tools were used to accentuate the experience in the fictional world. Students fashioned a scale model of Mars from the clay and the Brailler was used to speak to aliens. We learned to mediate in a world where physically they could not see, but in the fictional world they experienced all the world of Mars.

I was later told by the Mitch, the teacher, many of the students sit idle at home. But in this case, they did not sit idle, they used narratives and drama to actively create Mars and engaged in this fictional world.

In organized storytelling, teachers do not always include students with physical and mental handicaps because they think they “can’t sit through it for a long time.” In this use
of story, they don’t sit; they create. As a teacher, I need to keep this use in mind as I work with students who have special needs.

The Titanic

A Vignette:

Picture a classroom where students think as engineers on the ship Titanic. One student is concerned with what type of wood was used to build the ship’s interior, another wonders about the iceberg’s impact, and still others search for clues to explain the ship’s sinking. As we expanded the drama, students were invited to become the engineers using dramatic inquiry as we explored these questions.

The Titanic drama experience challenged my narrow understanding of telling a story. In dramatic inquiry, many narratives abound. It is up to the teacher and students to determine the significance of the narratives presented. The teacher can help align certain narrative using mediation (Vygotsky, 1978).

The drama teacher’s function (or the teacher that uses drama) …is not primarily to instruct pupils or to pass on any body of knowledge. The teacher is seen as attempting to create potential areas of learning in which pupils can participate (O’Neill, 1990, p 21).

When a student said he argued with Captain John Smith and then remembers deliberately leaving the window open on the ship suggesting this was the reason for the sinking, I had to mediate to move to another narrative. The learning was not about revenge or anger, but instead, about plausible reasons to determine why the ship sunk. Because an open window high on the ship would not sink a large vessel, we agreed this was not a narrative to explore further. When mediating storymaking, I had to position this student to have less power in the drama. If we had engaged in his narrative, the rest of our work would have taken directions that did not move us closer to exploring the actual causes. I had to
mediate the significance we gave to this story. In turn, I mediated how much power this student’s story would have in our inquiry. As Edmiston continually reminds me, as a teacher one must be both in the inside (fictional world) and the outside (classroom) to make the best teaching decisions. I had to constantly ask myself, would this help us build our understanding, and if so, how do I share it so we can all be a part of it?

I also shifted roles to promote learning. Heathcote (1976) prefers a, “middle position” (p. 129) so students can exercise more power I review my uses of process drama, instead of choosing the Titanic’s ship captain as my role, I became a fellow engineer alongside my students although at anytime, I could shift in and out role between the fictional and classroom worlds to help guide or instruct as their teacher.

**Guidelines of Role**

When choosing a role, certain, specific guidelines apply in process drama. Heathcote (1976) suggested the following guidelines when using role:

1. Stay in role only as needed.
2. Give information non-verbally.
3. Use the role to keep the group together.
4. Use role to evoke explanation.

To illustrate these guidelines, I use a process drama lesson that I taught about the Titanic where I began in role as an engineer. Later, I became the captain because I wanted them to follow orders. In the same drama, I switched again to a member of the press corps so I could hear them explain what might have caused the ship to sink. Each teacher –in- role
move was deliberate to help students learn new information. I could change the situation both verbally and nonverbally.

As a captain, I stood tall to communicate my authority. However, I did not stand as tall as an engineer because I did not want to be seen with higher authority as the students who were in role as engineers. As a fellow engineer, I worked with students to help create a statement for the press. Teacher-in-role can lead to deeper engagement within the classroom drama. The shifting of roles, (e.g., engineer, captain, press) can heighten engagement. Students react differently for a captain, but might tell something more private to a fellow engineer. As the teacher, I need to decide what role will help the students reflect best about the experience. “As different roles in different situations are undertaken, so pupils grow in their capacity to respond appropriately and effectively within the drama” (O’Neill & Lambert, 1982, p. 141). Heathcote (1976) supports both teacher-in-role and the shifting of these roles in creative ways to use drama to reflect and extend thinking. The value is in the unpredictability of how the roles are used. Instead of defined roles, they shift and extend the learning. Captain John Smith I introduced because students wanted to hear from him. It was not pre-planned; they asked how he might feel when his ship went down. The learning was extended because they asked the captain only he could answer. As Heathcote (1984) stresses, “The most important aspect of role-taking is that it is unpremeditated, unplanned and therefore constantly can surprise the individual into new awareness” (Johnson & O’Neill, 1984, p. 51).
Student can have more power with drama than in everyday life. For example, when students wanted to talk with Captain John Smith finding him sad, they wished to cheer him up. Because students wondered about Smith, we had him appear. While each student shared comforting words, one student told him: “God will provide.” Many students laughed at this. I remember the student turning around and saying, “It is true.” Her own religious story was important to her fictional role. I showed the students how important talking to the captain was and at the same time honoring the young woman’s religious stance. I made a teaching decision to change the tone to honor each offering to Captain Smith. I had the students create their suggestions, but instead of saying them, they could whisper them, almost like a prayer. This way, the students understood the words were shared in sincerity.

As Edmiston (2010) shares,

> When adults assist, critical inquiry questions can be contextualized in engaging imagined-and-real spaces of dramatic inquiry, focused on power relationships, and explored by students in improvised activities that are both playful and performative (p. 3).

Instead of just telling the student her religion had a place, we created a tone of dramatic reverence. Clearly, so that students honor the word offered to Smith.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I used classroom stories as an interpretive lens to reflect upon my classroom experience.
Unlike organized storytelling, the tale used in dramatic inquiry can change quickly in order to support effective learning. One can switch from telling various narratives as engineers on the Titanic to explaining to the press why the ship sank to sharing bits of advice with Captain John Smith so he can find some comfort from tragedy.

These decisions lead into the role of teacher as teller. The teacher constantly negotiates both the fictional and classroom environments deciding what to move and how the learning can be mediated by shifting the narrative. Teachers can break the narrative introducing questions, such as, “what if the iceberg did not hit the Titanic the way it did, would it affect the outcome?” As much as the teacher is teller, he or she is a listener as well. Working to hear student voices so a comment like, “because you are Black” can become more significant. The teacher needs to stay connected constantly making decisions how to use narrative as well as the other tools (writing, drawing, etc.) to promote inquiry. Dramatic inquiry creates opportunities for reflection, both fictional and personal where students can use story to express meaning. Bruner (1994) argues narratives shape meaning; the past, living the present, and directing the future. “Life as led is inseparable from a life told—or more bluntly a life is not ‘how it was’ but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold” (Bruner, 1994, p. 36).

By playing in a fictional world, students do more than just tell their stories; they interpret and re-interpret them with other students. They are able to question, trouble, and change narratives by living within them. They step into shoes they would never have a chance to choose, and once in these shoes, they experience how they fit and what it means to wear
them. In exploring how stories are used in drama, like the tale, teller, and the listener, I, too, shift my understanding of teaching with story no longer working toward a told performance, but using story along with other tools to promote further learning. In the next chapter, I examine “ensemble storytelling” which is a blending of organized storytelling, process drama, and dramatic inquiry. It is a way to involve more students in the storymaking process. Additionally, I chronicle how it can be used to create improvisational performances and for creating inquiry-based curriculum. These processes are new. It continues to be refined and nuanced along my life long journey to uncover effective methods to educate using story. Whether we are storytellers, or teachers who use drama, learning should be the desired outcome. How we arrived there depends on our energy and our planning, and most of all, our willingness to let go of traditional teaching and find a new energy.

When we have had acquaintance via the story-tellers, the poet, the author and the playwright with the emotions and situations of other people, who knows what energies may be released in us for greater sensitivity, greater comprehension, new knowledge of our society and others (and even of ourselves) and of new awareness of our relationships with those near to us in the community in which we live. It is this that concerns us when we consider drama in our schools (Heathcote, 2006, p 10.)

Educators can create new relationships between and among storytelling, storymaking, process drama, and dramatic inquiry in order to enhance and improve their teaching inviting curiosity and exploration within the curriculum. The next chapter expands my understandings of story and drama demonstrating how I have applied recently my understanding and practice of story and drama with ensemble storymaking and ensemble storytelling.
Chapter 6: New Middle: How I Am Employing What I Know about Story and Drama

“In my work, story and drama are forever linked…Perhaps I require the safety net of narrative in order to attempt the leap into creating stories together through drama.”

(Booth, 2005, p. 8)

Like Booth, I too see story and drama linked, but the way they are linked was not revealed to me until I was a student of and taught process drama, dramatic inquiry, and narrative.

This analysis has resulted in a critical reflection of my work as both a storyteller and a teacher who uses stories. It is critical because it goes beyond who I am or was as a storyteller and instead looks at how stories are used in dramatic contexts using process drama and dramatic inquiry. As a storyteller, I have incorporated both storytelling and storymaking into my classroom, and as a teacher, I have discovered stories do not have to be produced to be significant to the learning and by complimenting the classroom curriculum. Most importantly, I have uncovered through scholarly research, direct study, and classroom application how storytelling and storymaking can transform educational contexts extending the learning for students. This discovery informs my newly formed pedagogy making a significant difference in how I structure my teaching.
The following research questions guided my study:

How has my identity as a storytelling teacher changed since I encountered the pedagogy of process drama?

SUB-QUESTIONS

a) What is the significance for my work as a storytelling teacher by using the pedagogies of process drama and dramatic inquiry?
b) How does the discussion of narrative performance contribute to my understanding of process drama and storytelling in the classroom?

My Identity as a Storytelling Teacher

Process drama with storytelling and storymaking as pedagogy has re-shaped my teaching understandings. Before I used process drama, when I was a storyteller, a told story was the anticipated end goal of my teaching. I used the storymaking process to serve the storytelling. This was part of my storytelling identity. However, this identity has shifted to include new ways to use stories with drama. When I was introduced to process drama and dramatic inquiry I experienced firsthand how the stories could complement the drama and how the drama could be used for learning. When students are involved in an imaginary, fictional, story-based world, they have new perceptions, outlooks, and can actively engage in ways unavailable to them in the real world. This use of stories was not to serve the storytelling, but to serve the learning. I adjusted my teaching to respond to the fictional world they co-constructed together. In the case of dramatic inquiry, stories could be used to serve a sustained inquiry---students use stories to engage and enact a fictional world where they collectively can continue their questioning. As a teacher, I build my curriculum from their questions and how they move within the fictional world to address them. This was new to me as a storyteller.
As a storyteller, I soon discovered, students needed a place to share stories. The classroom was not always conducive to sharing---students often felt silenced or disenfranchised. From a student’s suggestion, we created a venue---a storytelling club---to honor student stories, providing a safe place to tell and grow in story. However, using stories and process drama showed me the classroom could accentuate student voice where students can act in role as someone else, but at the same time, collectively build curriculum. I did not anticipate how influential this experience would be in opening my eyes to alternative teaching strategies with stories. It not only changed my method of teaching, but shifted my identity as a teacher. Identity is shaped by others (Oring, 1994). I no longer worry about titles; instead, I use stories as tools to enhance learning. Students are not voiceless when everyone helps someone off a mountain, plans and travels to Mars, or tries to save others from the Black Plague. Using process drama, students can become tellers, listeners and “doers” in the fictional world. Every choice has meaning because as the students co-construct their understandings in role, they learn other valuable skills like relating to each other, collaborating and planning as a team. By telling their stories in roles, they also tell their own stories. They are telling how they move in the fictional world. This is a powerful teaching tool to remember as I plan to use stories. As I use process drama to understand how stories are used, my identity as a storyteller transforms to something new. I am in the middle of being a storyteller and a teacher and the product improves my teaching.
New Middle

As I write this chapter, I am reminded initially how my work reflected my wrestlings as both an artist and teacher. I drew upon Mora’s (1993) idea of a “new middle” where identities intersect to form a new, enhanced understanding. This understanding has changed the way I identify and it as a result of the situational and contextual identities that have formed from tradition, experience, and questioning how these have changed in new experiences and situations.

Three Types of Identities

Individual Identity

My individual identity was defined by who I was—both a storytelling artist and practicing classroom teacher. These identities are performed as well. Each identity shaped my understanding to form my new middle. I cannot ignore, nor do I wish to neglect or abandon these identities; rather I embrace and critically examine them to explain who I am today.

Personal Identity

Initially, my past, being raised by Appalachian parents and later trained as a professional storyteller, helped form my personal identity. As noted by Oring (1994), when those memories shift into “discernable configurations” (p. 212) a personal identity develops. This configuration of identities—storyteller and teacher—inform my teaching. In this study, I reveal how it became difficult to transition between the identities of teacher, storyteller, artist, drama specialist, process drama teacher, and classroom teacher. What I have recognized from Peterson & Langellier (2004) and Bauman (1967) a result of this

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study, I “perform” these identities when I need them. They are not solid or fixed, but instead, when understood can be used to improve my teaching. I have used storytelling and storymaking to perform who I am. These narrative experiences, many of them told here using autoethnography, have helped me realize who I was, who I am, and who I am becoming. In other words, I am all of these, but not always at the same time. I draw upon my storytelling identity for told stories as they relate to my identity as a dramatist and teacher. My individual identity is not shaped by itself, instead, my work with others helps form the identity I perform.

As Keller-Cohen and Dyer (2000) note, narrative is connected to identity.

In contemporary scholarship it has become commonplace to observe that speakers use the site of narratives to construct particular identities…the construction of identity being understood not as a single act, but as a process that is constantly active, each telling a story offering the narrator a fresh opportunity to create a particular representation of herself (p. 150).

Using stories in process drama and dramatic inquiry required me not to operate exclusively as a storyteller or teacher, but to use role to engage and co-construct alongside students also in role within a drama world context to promote learning. I stepped away from my traditional and comfortable identities (storyteller, teacher) to discover how these new roles, both fictional and real, extended and strengthened my teaching capacity. I explored Mars as a fellow astronaut side-by-side with my students. I searched for answers as news reporter when Bessie Coleman’s plane went down. As a BBC reporter, I carried the mountain climber’s stretcher asking questions in role just like my students to extend our inquiry. As an active agent in the narrative, I, too, shaped and even directed story much differently than through performance only.
Collective Identity

Oring (1994) notes collective identity forms as a result of experience “that produces the deep sense of identification with others” (p. 212). Using teacher-in-role and experiencing student-in-role changed my perspectives on teaching. I was able not only to experience an “insider’s perspective” but also able to see how this perspective enhanced the learning. I was learning with students so I could witness first hand what did and did not work and what might be done to improve. Using role helped me engage in the fictional world with others and see how we “storied” (Clandinin & Connellly, 2000) the worlds we co-constructed.

Negotiating Identities

To learn most effectively, I agree with Heathcote (1994), teaching is best when it is negotiated. To negotiate successfully, a teacher must become a skillful facilitator within the classroom. There are times when process drama could be used as a told story, such as the Titanic experience, when I told my great uncle’s story through my grandmother’s point of view. Still other times in the same process drama, the students needed to use stories to talk with Captain John Smith and not listen to a performed story. I needed to negotiate each choice to serve teaching. Is this a place for everyday or performed narratives? How can I use stories to increase learning? Each negotiation depends on the relationship students have to the learning that is offered to them. My facilitator role often becomes one of a negotiator with each learning experience.
Dimensions of Narrative

As a teacher I can change the way that narratives are used for teaching. A teacher can facilitate how narratives are used depending on context. Organized storytelling and stories used in a process drama context works differently. I see organized storytelling in the same way Agar (2005) views what he calls a “command and control organization” (p. 27).

One teller runs the show. A narrative is tellable because the teller says so. It is not embedded in what the listener is doing——listeners stop what they’re doing and gather around and listen. The story will be nice and linear, the clear and certain causal analysis you’d expect from the top of the hierarchy. The moral tone will be clear; no ambiguity or discussion allowed. (p. 27).

In sharp contrast is the way that narratives operate when partnered with process drama or dramatic inquiry. Instead of storytelling and storymaking to serve performance goals, the real goal is sense-making and making meaning using drama. Students did not enter the world of Bessie Coleman to tell her story, but instead to make sense as to why she could not fly in America. We watch and join in as many students in and out of role collectively make the story; “We’d hear contradictions and interruptions. Several people would be tellers” (Agar, 2005, p. 27). We hear from the students who sympathize with Bessie’s plight; we hear from those students in role who do not; we hear the story from the white, racist flight instructor as the teacher uses role to tell his story. Each story is embedded in what comes before and after its telling. From reading the children’s book about Bessie, we are introduced to her brother’s story both as a kid and as a grown up. We placed this story in the larger drama to answer our curiosity as to why she could not fly in America.
Some stories might occur in the middle of the drama and reoccur; students might say, "Hey, did you see that, I told you that would happen and it would.” In the drama, story-based world, students can explore the possible and the probable and even the improbable. The stories can occur in various places in planning, in the whole group, and from writing and/or drawing. The stories do not appear in a linear fashion, but from the point of curiosity. When one eases out, another one surfaces. The story does not end with one final telling, but instead continues as we explored the many reasons that Bessie Coleman was refused. The same occurs within the moral tone. Using process drama and dramatic inquiry, we do not tell the students, “treating others differently because of their skin is wrong”, instead they step into the world where it happens. As teachers, we guide them to make informed decisions developing their moral understandings. In the end, “rather than a clear moral tone, it might be a dilemma” (p. 27). They are left to wrestle with this dilemma and attempt to resolve what they think does not fit. This does not always work. They often can engage in this wrestling with other students, as they play using drama in the fictional world and as they question in the classroom world as well. Once again, I help negotiate their understanding and to help them wrestle with their ideas so that they can freely discuss their ideas. Teachers can learn to skillfully facilitate these dimensions of narrative to better inform their teaching both in the dramatic context and everyday world. Although I am examining these as separate categories, it is important to remember that these dimensions work in concert with each other.
Storymaking and Storytelling

It is essential when examining narrative to note the key differences between organized storytelling (Stone, 1999) and storymaking (King, 1993), although both are used frequently in process drama. In process drama, the stories, co-created to support the drama and not entertain an external audience, are always significant for student learning. As noted, in the mountain rescue process drama, the students constantly created stories together to rescue the injured mountain climber. However, they also relied on other ways to construct meaning including telling, writing and drawing which in turn introduced even more narratives. Students might talk while they draw and tell stories to communicate where they are and what they are wondering in both the drama and real worlds. Some of these narratives would be extended, developed and even dropped depending on the students’ interest and direction within the drama. Stories extend the meaning in process drama helping students visit the future possibilities. In organized storytelling, the teller’s use of story is much more limited—telling in a performance to a listening audience. Process drama, however, invites exploration. Stories can simply be snapshots or even stopped and re-directed by student or teacher as the teacher facilities new learning that arises from the co-construction. In order to understand how a teacher might effectively use stories in process drama, one must look at how stories can be shaped and altered by changing the narrative dimension.

As a teacher, I need to use all the tools available, including narratives, to help students construct meaning. As a teacher I am not limited to told stories, and my instruction
should incorporate other ways to represent meaning. I also have to realize narratives occur in many forms.

Process drama and dramatic inquiry have allowed me to expand my understandings and “test” my new identity. I did not have to subscribe exclusively to the rules of storyteller or teacher, but was expected to suspend standard instruction to engage students with role and story co-construction within a drama world context to promote learning. I moved away from my more traditional and comfortable identities (storyteller, teacher) to use role, both fictional and real, to extend and strengthen my teaching capacity. I ventured across Mars as a fellow astronaut side-by-side with my students. I searched for answers as news reporter when Bessie Coleman’s plane went down. As a BBC reporter, I carried the mountain climber’s stretcher asking questions in role with students to extend our inquiry. As an active agent in the narrative, I, too, shaped and even directed story much differently than through performance only. Within this context, there are more learning possibilities. Students are not simply listening to a told story, they can interrupt the unfolding episodes to question, contest, or even change them. The teacher can facilitate the learning by entering the story and addressing the students in role. Students become invested when the work is both contextual and personal. In a sense they are the storytakers of the fictional world and they tell it as it unfolds, sharing when they have something to question, address, or point out as significant. They are involved in the process of learning; whereas, in storytelling, the trance-like state (Strum, 2000) is a desired outcome, but hard to predict if it is achieved for everyone. With process drama, the stories are created as they are made in the present, fictional time. As a teacher, one
can see how much a student understanding by how involved they are in the drama story-based world.

Collective Identity

In examining my storytelling identity, I need to recognize it was shaped by others. Oring (1994) notes collective identity forms as a result of experience, “that produces the deep sense of identification with others” (p. 212). My introduction to process drama and dramatic inquiry changed my identity. First, as a storyteller, I wanted the students I worked with to see me as a storyteller. With process drama, I can be in role as someone who helps view and enact the dramatic world. My identity shifts as my role shifts. Using teacher-in-role and experiencing student-in-role changed my perspectives creating a richer understanding of narrative as powerful agent for both storytelling and storymaking. Knowing how roles are used in process drama and dramatic inquiry, I realize I must shift my identity as I work with many groups for many reasons. Some hire me as storyteller, and still in my classes as a teacher of pre-service teachers, I can negotiate my identities to match the teaching needs of my students.

Stories can simply be snapshot vignettes inviting discussion or even stopped and re-directed by students or teacher as the teacher facilities new learning that arises from this co-construction. Narratives can be messy work, but it is in this disorder and discovery where meaning can be made. Teachers can shape and alter the dimensions of narrative to direct the learning. They need to ask: would it help to add more tellers to this assignment? How much does this work complement other work? Am I teaching from a
moralistic stance or am I allowing students to develop moral understanding from their narrative interactions with other classmates?

**Searching For Meaning**

This chapter details my trials and promises using stories and drama as an educator. I do this to improve my teaching. I now have more tools available for negotiation including both improvisation, and inquiry.

I have shifted my inquiry away from how would a professional storyteller attempt this? Or: How can I create a tellable story from what we are working on?--- As I design my curriculum, I search from a broader perspective and deeper understanding of my new middle to incorporate ways to help students make meaning and, if possible, how to create meaning together.

**My Writing Produces Change in My Teaching**

Autoethnographic writing has extended my understanding of myself, my identities and role. It has allowed me to merge my identities to create a more mindful and informed pedagogy as I plan future curriculum. The merging forms the new middle, a new understanding that does not neglect any past identity or present one that is still forming. While my teaching would certainly have evolved, this concentrated introspection allows me to synthesize my own learning not only creating deliberate applications for my instruction, but allowing me to offer wider implications and future study recommendations for those beginning such a journey.

Narrative displays the goals and intentions of human actors; it makes individuals, cultures, societies, and historical epochs comprehensible as wholes; it humanizes
time; and it allows us to contemplate the effects of our actions and to alter the direction of our lives (Richardson, 1997, p. 27).

In the following pages, I explain how my own professional storytelling has changed. As a professional storyteller presenting around the country and different parts of the world, I am using stories, blending elements of dramatic inquiry and process drama. Because of this, I believe I am a better teller. I have also used elements of storytelling, process drama, and dramatic inquiry to form what I would consider a “new middle” (Mora, 1993) for these practices. I have changed to align my understanding of storytelling and storymaking and my new understanding of inquiry and improvisation for classroom instruction.

New Directions Using Story as a Teacher

I have divided this method into two teaching approaches--ensemble storytelling for performance and ensemble storytelling for learning. In describing these experiences and changes, I will concentrate on how they have challenged my assumptions, introduced new tools and strategies I can call upon when working in each environment, and created significance for my students and myself with each approach. In order to explain, I use the following examples. For my own performance, I detail my own insight based upon various storytelling work experiences in both this country and Singapore.

1. To demonstrate ensemble storytelling for performance, I discuss the storymaking and storytelling involved in the storytelling experience with “The Flying Turtle” and “The Ghost of One Black Eye” and how working as an ensemble in the storymaking process heightens socio-cultural learning.

2. To demonstrate ensemble story for learning, I highlight and chronicle my work alongside teacher Jonathan Fairman at the Cleveland School of the Arts teaching a unit on The Titanic.
Assumptions

Before I discuss these experiences, I address both the assumptions and tools I have developed with storytelling, dramatic inquiry, process drama, and storymaking. I have not disregarded my assumptions about told narratives completely, but within the last five years, since I have been introduced to the profound ways process drama changes narrative, I continue to incorporate storytelling, storymaking, and dramatic inquiry into my work as a professional storyteller, dramatic inquiry teacher, and educator. Although some assumptions I have learned to re-visit, there are others I struggle to release. Sometimes, I privilege told stories in the classroom. Although it took time, basic assumptions like all stories must have a beginning, middle, and end, I have abandoned to emphasis the value of the storymaking process for learning. I have also altered many of Ruth Sawyer’s basic storytelling tenets finding new ways to value both silence and noise while respecting the time needed for storymaking.

Blending of Storytelling and Drama

Within the last two and a half years, I have begun blending storytelling, storymaking, process drama, and dramatic inquiry so my work, both telling professionally and teaching, changes. In order to show this transformation, I draw upon specific experiences as a performer and educator.
As a professional storyteller, and now as someone who has specifically designed instruction using stories for learning with drama, what have I learned about using stories for learning that can connect to story for performance?

**Tale, Teller and Listener**

First, the essentials of storytelling, the tale, teller, and listener, change their relationships with one another when drama is introduced. As a performer, I no longer strive for the trance-like connection (Strum, 2000); instead I find places to invite listeners and students to participate. Professional storyteller Jay O’Callahan believes storytelling can be a lonely business, but, I question, does it have to be with this new perspective? In the role of a professional storyteller, I am the only one on stage telling to a listening audience. I hold the tellership. Whereas there are many listeners, there is only one teller who tries to create a trance-like state for listeners as they slip into the world of the story. Storytellers believe this experience is sacred and cannot be found in any other art form. I have witnessed trance and have been under one myself, however, when forming this new middle (Mora, 1993) of understanding about how storytelling can operate, I learned to find places where the trance is not the desired result, but instead to transform the experience by involving more listeners in the telling process.

*Storymaking Awareness in My Own Telling*

From working with the stories contained in process drama and dramatic inquiry, I have seen how students can engage in storymaking instead of merely listening to stories. For these reasons, I have shifted my own, personal telling as a performer to include the
audience as active agents in the experience. This way they have a higher degree of
tellership. I invite a more “active set of tellers” (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 25). I weave
improvisation into my telling performances. As noted, improvisational teaching is not
easy, although it might appear effortless, and comes as a result of practice. Edmiston
recommends a slow introduction to improvisation involving students in a five-minute
process drama experience to gauge students’ reactions. He believes teachers must
evaluate these experiences with improvisation and build upon them with student input.

Adding Improvisation to My Storytelling Work

In this vein, I am finding ways to include improvisation in my storytelling work. As
Heathcote (1984) states, improvisation is “discovering by trial, error and testing; using
available materials with respect for their nature, and being guided by this appreciation of
their potential” (p. 44). Although I cannot always use experience as the end product from
improvisation, I can use it to improve the performance experience for both the students
and me. For other storytellers, this might be to simply repeat some lines of a story or
hold a few props and make sounds, but for me, it is to build story together. In other
words, even though I am telling a told story for a listening audience, students are invited
to engage in shaping some parts of the story with me. In the storytelling world, this is not
common; it can become a new window of discovery to invite an active trance with the
audience. Let me explain with an example.
Examples of Improvisation in Performance Telling

I recently told for 1,200 upper elementary students in a large theater for 90 minutes at Lorain Community College outside of Cleveland, Ohio. Because of the numbers and time limitations, I could not afford the personal attention for each student mirrored in process drama and dramatic inquiry. Instead, with my new understandings, I chose to work from the collective, meaning involving all students in the learning. In dramatic inquiry, all students can choose the same role. One of the first places I invite improvisation, where all students experience with me, is at the beginning where I set the conditions of the story. Before employing dramatic inquiry, I rarely spent enough time setting the tone for learning. In process drama and dramatic inquiry, students must be invited in and accept the invitation to join the fictional world. In the blending of the methods, as a performance teller, I can do this on a smaller scale in a larger theater. I use silence and breathing literally asking students to breathe in and out for just a few seconds to transplant themselves into the setting of the story. I have them picture the story as I tell it. Using this contemplative time, I work so they enter the story with me before I start the story deliberately increasing the tellability. Meaning becomes personal when they are invited to invest in storymaking process as active agents. After each story, I have them collectively breathe again to help close one story and invite them to the next. For example, I might say, “now that we have traveled to the place where Jack lives, please join with me as we travel to the back woods of West Virginia and discover the old man who does not want company.” This is more than a simple, possibly unnecessary, introduction. It is an involved transition working with creating dramatic structures
(O’Neill, 1982) and dramatic inquiry (Edmiston, 2007). I privilege the time it takes to transition from one moment to another purposefully using drama conventions to help place each learning experience within the context in which it is studied. Storytelling need not be a solo art when process drama tools can be introduced to increase and sustain student engagement and learning.

**Searching for Places to Improvise in Performance Telling**

Now, as I design stories, I search for places to invite improvisation with the audience. For example, in this same program, I told an Appalachian tale called, “Taileybone”, also known as “TaileyPo” and “Most Peculiar Thing.” Although not typically told with audience participation, I actually stop storylines to include ideas from the listening audience. I ask students to suggest names for the three dog characters incorporating them into the story to increase involvement. I often improvise including many other story-based suggestions agreeing with O’Neill (1982), improvisation is at the heart of process drama. In order to improvise, I surrender the re-telling of the fine details and concentrate on how I can make the experience significant for my listeners by personalizing the experience. I use students’ names or invite students to share the stage---this is when storytelling comes alive. Professional storytellers pride themselves in creating a more direct connection with the audience. However, I suggest improvisation makes the audience a part of the stage, where the roles of teller and listener fuse. The improvisation not only includes audience as performers, but also as shapers of story. Before, my storytelling programs, although not rigid, were prepared, and each story’s direction was defined and known to me. For example, with an urban legend called “Gasoline cat”, and
most recently an Anansi tale, “Where Stories Come From,” I stopped the story at specific times so students “paired and shared” ideas of what would happen. Similar to my work in process drama, I used their ideas not only as “talking points,” but as significant times to use improvisation as well. Improvisation is most effective when students tackle unsolved problems. Most recently, I have invited up to fifteen students to join me on stage to share their ideas, as we built a story around their responses. Before, I would see this as a break in the trance-like state storytellers create, but I realize this direct involvement with the tellers allows for a unique learning and performance experience.

Although I incorporated student suggestions, I ended the performance with my pre-planned conclusion. I valued all suggestions, including them in the improvisational nature of our storytelling. Sometimes students provided ideas freely, while other times I invited the audience to echo back what was said. Clearly, I needed to mediate these choices to work them into the story.

**Play Techniques With the Tellers**

As Vygotsky (1978) notes, when students engage in play, they learn more. When telling for a public performance, when I bring students on stage, I am careful to structure their ideas so if it is seen as small, I make it more significant in the re-telling. As I mediate these choices, I build student confidence, not only expanding their ideas, but building them into the story. I might physically echo their story suggestions or incorporate them into moving tableaus borrowed from drama and dramatic inquiry or add mime and still pictures to illustrate their ideas. When I bring students on stage to help other students, I try to use scaffolding (Bruner, 1978) to increase their comfort levels.
**Teaching For Student on the Edge/Telling Together**

Edmiston suggests teaching for students on the edge of learning. These are the students who are not actively involved in the classroom--the ones “sitting on the edge” of learning. As Edmiston had told me if we can reach these children, we can reach everyone because we are engineered our teaching to reach all abilities. In that vein, I bring any student who wants to be involved in the telling on stage with me noting it is possible to co-construct and co-author story with an audience within dramatic inquiry. Improvisation is powerful. It takes careful mediation to create a comfort level with students to tell with me, not for me, creating together. On one such occasion, I ended my program by inviting the entire faculty to improvise a story together based upon students’ suggestions. I allowed the story to change with each teller. I was less a storyteller and more a facilitator for the story and the tellers. Teachers often improvised new ways of representing the story themselves—dancing, singing, or even adding mime. Improvisation has changed me as a professional storyteller; I look for opportunities to create spaces for students to express their ideas and understandings.

**My Past Work With Youth /Storytelling With My Present**

In my other organizing roles in storytelling, I have concentrated on told stories. For over 15 years, I have been considered an advocate for youth storytelling by the National Storytelling Network (NSN). I trained and assisted youth and youth leaders with storytelling performance. I founded Y.E.S., Youth, Educators, and Storytellers Special Interest Group, for NSN with the hopes to unite educators and youth to explore other possible methods of using story. I, along with a few others, helped create a “Youthful
Voices” tent, with standing room only for over 1700 people, telling under the tent at the National Storytelling Festival and for three years served as the Executive Director for the National Youth Storytelling Olympics, a nation-wide event to showcase youth storytellers. These events were milestones for youth storytelling. However, they still were to help tellers as solo tellers, not incorporating collaborative telling. In all these pursuits, and in many conversations, I had always wished there were more ways to showcase youth to show the value of youth storytelling and storymaking. I began to include more youth in my performance work, combining ideas of process drama and dramatic inquiry into performance telling. I was attracted to the way whole groups could be engaged in storytelling. I decided to reflect and implement a method that used groups of people in the storytelling process plus incorporate improvisation and mediation. What I have created I call, ensemble storytelling for performance.

**Ensemble Storytelling for Performance**

*What is ensemble?*

When I refer to ensemble, I mean a group of students who use story to explore and question the story world they create together. Neelands (2009) discusses ensemble in relation to process drama where students “adopt a pro-social ensemble-based process for building community and a common culture” (p. 175). When students engage in a fictional world, they use real world understandings to relate to it. They are able to test what it means to build community, and in role, they become someone else deciding with others how to move into the world. When students are working in an ensemble, as they create a story, they also learn how to live in the story and manage in the real world.
working with students. As Neelands (2009) stresses they learn “the grave importance of our interdependence as humans” (p. 176). My goals in creating ensemble storytelling are not to simply co-construct a story together, but to experience with the students that learning how to live in a fictional world can apply to the real world. By working with fictional role, they are also able to see what does not work as well. Each co-constructed narrative is weighed against ideas and negotiated. These are values any teacher would like to address with students. When done in a concerted or ensemble method, they are not reminded what it means to be democratic in their living---they experience it.

The first word, *ensemble* refers to the whole group, having everyone involved in the process. It is not meant to be like a choir ensemble, where all the practiced voices fit in perfect order, but as an inventive ensemble, where all students are actively involved in learning.

*Involving Many Tellers in The Performance*

As I began developing these methods, I involved all students, not just those with a penchant for performing or stories. This is why I ask teachers, when working with this method to provide 20 to 30 students—any level and any ability---to tell. Before, I would use a few stories, have them practice, and then showcase a few of the students telling for the class. Using the ensemble storytelling for a performance method, I now can involve all of the students in both the storymaking and storytelling process. I struggled with the idea of highlighting performance as an outcome. Using this method, the end product is a
performance that highlights process as well. The process also serves to create the product, the final tellable story.

**Blending Process Drama, Preparing For Performance**

On one hand, this contradicts the tenets of process drama and dramatic inquiry, because it involved a viewed performance by people who were not part of the telling. This method, too, serves to expand some of the tenets such as improvisation and mediation in drama to include performance. I had to weigh my options. Many teachers want a performance. They, like in my past, understood this was the end result for storytelling. I had to re-think and create a method to involve performance but also use what I have learned about process-based learning to create an educational experience. I wished to find a way to allow many students to take part in creating or making the story for performance. When stories are uttered, even story fragments, they are considered performed (Bauman, 1978). What is important is how the stories are *used* with the students. This is why I have created two methods, one that included performance called ensemble storytelling for performance and one for learning, ensemble story learning. I wanted to be able to inform teachers stories are not just for performance, they can be used to design and create curriculum as well.

**Working With The Bones –A Basic Story**

In my previous organized storytelling workshops, we examined stories with a clear-cut beginning, middle, and end. However with ensemble storytelling for performance, I co-create stories with the students. I work with 20 to 30 students for a little over an hour (it
is difficult for teachers to give me more time than this) to co-create a story for performance. Starting with a storytelling skeleton, or just the bones, we build a story to share with other students. Student inquiry can take any direction, but like dramatic inquiry, all ideas are heard and incorporated if possible. Working with students in this fashion is certainly a risk, but calculated. When working with a story called The Flying Turtle a student suggested we tie the turtle to an airplane. Even though this did not fit with the story, we did it. I was surprised I found things we could use in the story from this re-enactment. In order to start this drama, I first shared a told story. I minimize the expression, simply sharing the tale emphasizing we have an hour to build ‘beyond the bones’.

**Adding More to the Telling**

In other words, we add our voices to the making and telling of these stories. This means there were more tellers offering how we should co-construct the narratives. As Heathcote says of improvisation, we use trial and error methods to create our story together. Facilitating and improvisation are tools that allow discovery to create a tellable, shared story developed in the tight span of 90 minutes. It is difficult to build from every idea, but I work to include them all. Also like in process drama and dramatic inquiry, in my mind, I operate from the physical and fictional world. In the physical world, the classroom, I am ever conscious of the time we have to prepare, rehearse, and perform. In the fictional world, we explore ideas as characters in the story. Although this work does have a continual, narrative strand, we are constantly mediating even in the final minutes. Let me illustrate:
An example

In one school visit, we created a version of *The Flying Turtle*, an old folktale found in many cultures detailing how the turtle first cracks his shell and subsequently why all turtles have had cracks since. After telling a bare bones version, I introduce new information---the turtle wants to fly. As the students introduce four or five story fragments as to how the turtle might fly---with the help of birds and other such examples, we enact them. Instead of one or two students explaining the idea, we have one person explain and then we all use drama to present. We immediately step into role as the characters and make it real. Each student presents a choice and I mediate each one. I found the best way to represent and provide a frame is to enter the drama. Students also introduce storylines----maybe he should tie a rocket on his back, superglue feathers to shell, strap himself to an airplane, or even tie himself to a bomb. All ideas are explored, considered, and, using drama, enacted. In the last suggestion, I did not disregard the bomb choice, but instead we collaboratively co-authored how we might attach the bomb and what might happen as a result. Even though, I have to admit, sometimes I do not think it will work, the students have always shown me through their improvisational structuring how to re-think and re-invent story. In their roles as characters in the story, we discuss how it can work. In the end, the turtle eventually bit on a stick held by the birds, but opened his mouth and fell to the Earth. He cracked his shell as a result. However, as I mediated the students’ ideas, we found ways to work as an ensemble in the delivery of the story’s ending. In one telling, we had as many as ten turtles, the rest birds, using drama to represent what happened, and in another we had one turtle, the rest birds.
Promoting All Students in The Telling

I try to avoid one student playing a central role, instead, we switch roles around so students have a variety of experiences within the story. With my mediation, I make sure every student is involved both in the making and the telling of story. Sometimes there are many turtles or a guest appearance from a bear---regardless, all of these ideas change and move with the co-constructions of story. As students understand all ideas are accepted, they become even more creative with presentation and performance. As someone mediating the ideas, one must be careful in organizing how it is structured. Learning to use improvisation the, “teacher imposed structure and intervention is not antithetical to successful improvisation; in fact they are critical ingredients. The trick is in knowing what kind, how much and when to impose structure” (Wagner, 1990, p. 195). In order to determine this, I listen well and I respond to all ideas that the students have as we start to co-construct a story. Using this method, I need to decide when to enter the world with the students, when to step into classroom world to make a point, and how to use intervention and structure to build engagement.

I needed to provide spaces for improvisation for the stories and those involved in making and telling the story.

Improvisation in Impromptu Yet Directed Telling

After this story, we told and used drama to enact another story. However, it had not been prepared. I knew the bones of the story, but using improvisation, the students helped create the direction and action of the story. It was truly improvised by us and mediated
by me. I asked if they want to tell another story. With no practice, we improvised an ensemble performance of The Ghost of One Black Eye. I simply provided the instruction: “build from whatever I suggest or say.” I reminded students, all shared ideas are valued. We often invited other students, or even faculty members, into the performance. I mediated the delivery, although a simple, ghost story with a direction and plotline known to me, it changed with the introduction of the improvisational choices of the students and invited guests. Students physically acted out the work, but along the way, we heard dialogue not from the original tale. I challenged myself to let go of being the solo teller, becoming one who made sure story was experienced by students and audience as they both created and performed. I have to admit when I first started, the story would slip into simply re-telling what I provided, but as I let go of the story and the intended direction, I learned students could really build from the frame.

**Story Facilitator**

In improvisational storytelling, the teller becomes a story facilitator using the story ideas, story fragments, and multiple story improvisations suggested by students as he or she co-directs the development of the story. The story facilitator does not have to talk as much, fill the silence or steer the direction. Students must feel safe, physically, and comfortable enough to be involved. I allow stories to blossom and intervene when they stray from the story’s problem or when a student stumbles in delivery.
An example

One student wished to tie a firecracker to the turtle, a bottle rocket, so he could fly higher. The students did not hear the idea, so I stopped the drama and in the real world, invited the student to repeat it, and in my role as facilitator, I positioned the student to have authority to address questions from his aide. An idea that originally could not be heard, due to this teaching move, proved to be significant as we developed this story. As an ensemble (I performed as well) we learn and perform together. Using this method, I can see students learning from each other by the choices they make as they build the performance together.

However, since the work is designed for performance, we work to create the performance. The students learn from reactions from the audience and I provide “Cordi notes” on what went well to improve and direct learning and future inquiry.

Socio-Cultural Performing With Students

At the National Youth Storytelling Olympics, the National Storytelling Festival, and my work with students in storytelling as a storytelling coach for over 12 years, I was not able to have students really engage in the storymaking process as much as when I use ensemble storytelling for performance. We created what we performed together. Before, students would learn a story and perform it alone for an audience. This way I am able to incorporate a socio-cultural approach (Vygotsky, 1978) to storymaking. Students create together. The students work together and decide how to create a tellable story from their own ideas and suggestions. Students can play with their choices together and I can help
scaffold (Bruner, 1978) the experience. This was not possible when youth told stories as a solo activity. This experience increases the learning potential by including more tellers, adding more improvisation, and using mediation for learning with the storymaking and storytelling process.

Ensemble storytelling for performance is one way to use stories and drama. It is designed to build a performance together. However, I want teachers to realize using stories with drama can be possible for teaching and learning, however, as a storyteller, I realize I do lean toward using narratives in order to highlight learning. This is why I have offered and have taught my approach using ideas from process drama and dramatic inquiry called ensemble story learning.

**Ensemble Story Learning**

*Climb abroad the Titanic*

Picture a classroom where the student thinks and act as engineers on the Titanic. One student is concerned about what type of material they used to build the hull, another wonders about the impact of the iceberg, and all the others are wondering just how to explain why it sank on that terrible night. In a few days they will have to explain it to the press. There is a nervous tension surrounding the meeting, but everyone has an investment in being able to tell us the story. This is what happened when teacher Jonathan Fairman and I co-constructed a story-based drama at the Cleveland School for the Arts using ensemble story learning.
Trying New Learning Using Drama And Storytelling

First, we understood this method was new for both of us. We were fashioning our understanding before, during, and after the experience, which was scheduled to take a few days. We decided we would use a told and tellable story to invite the students into the fictional world.

Told Story as Pre-Text

Like in process drama, the story would serve as a pre-text O’Neill (1982) to invite student engagement in the world of drama. Fairman and I were interested in using storytelling and storymaking with this group of students building upon the dramatic approach of process drama because it employs students as experts in shaping the stories they share. In this case, they were all engineers who helped build the Titanic. Like in dramatic inquiry, student curiosity drove the drama. Although told stories were privileged in this drama, other methods were used to enact the stories. We preferred told stories as a way for students to construct meaning because both Fairman and I were storytellers who wanted to see how both providing space for told stories and creating told stories could help accelerate the learning using drama.

Everyday Narratives in the Drama

However, unlike storytelling, we were interested in the everyday stories in the fictional world as well. It is the unraveling (Ochs & Capps, 2001) from possible story fragments that sustain student interest. As a teacher in role, as one of the engineers, and, at times, as
the person preparing the meeting for the press, I used stories to not only enter the fictional world, but to sustain the drama with the students.

**Using Story as a Pre-Text**

In my previous work with process drama and dramatic inquiry, we generally did not work with a told story performed by a storyteller to enact the drama. I would tell a true story to start the investment and invitation to learn more about the Titanic. To inspire interest, I told my grandmother’s Titanic story. She once told me, “Your great uncle died on that big boat. I think it was famous.” I told this story as though I was a young boy in West Virginia. In the story, I shared how I spent the next few years trying to authenticate this story—searching to discover if my great Uncle really died on the Titanic. In the story, I explained how years later, when I went to COSI’s Titanic exhibit, I found that my great indeed had died, but my great aunt, who I did not know existed, had lived. This tellable story and my personal journey were the entrance points for the students to ask further questions about other stories concerning the Titanic. From here we laid out books, articles, and maps about the Titanic, and students wrote on post-it notes what they found out and what they knew. I developed a story exercise called *I wonder* and *I was curious*. We asked the class to tell a story based on what they had discovered placing it in a frame of a story using *I wonder*. Students shared at least two facts about the story using this frame. After this, we invited them into a fictional world of the Titanic and asked them to consider what roles they wished to play.

Some examples of students’ stories included:
“It was cold, very cold, on the Titanic. It says people died because of the severe cold in the water. I wonder, did they recover many bodies?”

Others said,

“I heard the youngest survivor was only 4 months old. Does he remember anything about that terrible night? I wonder, what would he tell us right now about it?”

Using Role to Increase Engagement in The Drama

We framed these questions inside narratives. These story frames became the inquiry points helping us determine areas of curiosity and learning. We decided who we would like to be and what we would like to discover. Because students were most concerned as to why the ship sank, we became engineers. One student responded:

“My specialty was construction of the boat. Sir, when we were going out to buy the wood. I received a telegram from Mr. Smith and he said we don’t have enough money for the wood. I went out and bought the wood and noticed that this wood was a little flimsy than the wood we were supposed to buy. The iceberg actually cut the wood and might have been because we could not get the other wood”

This student’s story led to other stories and questions. Students informed other students the ship had been built from steel, not wood. They questioned how the rivets were made and wondered could cheap rivets cause the ship to sink. Students, in role, began to defend the rivets while others questioned if buying cheaper wood might have caused the ship to sink.

Preparing a Told Story Environment

In my role, I used mediation and improvisation to prepare a fictional environment. In other words, the fictional place was where stories were heard. An example of this would be a courtroom; we expect to hear told stories there. In this case, the place was an
organized meeting. In their roles as engineers, they prepared for a meeting to address the press. I used parliamentary procedure to recognize students who wanted to share their stories as experts. This format allowed for tellable narratives to surface. An example of this follows.

(Teacher in role): “All right, this meeting starts at 2:15 p.m.; can you check your clocks please? We are going to be here for a long time. Did we bring drinks? Who was responsible for the drinks?”

Student: I was.

Teacher: We are going be here for a while because we have something to figure out. We built this ship. We are getting a lot of flack from the press. We have many people who want to know why it sank. I am not blaming anyone here, because I helped build this ship; we have engineers, we have steel workers, you have done the research. Can you tell us possible reasons for why this ship when down?

Parliamentary procedure outlined a speaking order. Because of this, each student who wanted to speak could. The stories told at the meeting surfaced from their curiosity. The student who wanted to talk about the rivets became an expert on rivets. We had an iceberg specialist tell us how the iceberg looked that night detailing how cold it was. True learning comes when the curriculum is built from inquiry (Harste, 2001). I framed an environment where stories could be told.

In another example, I used story to transform the environment when students wanted to speak to Captain Edwin John Smith to help comfort him. Initially, they yelled responses to him, but a student whispered, “God will provide.” Some students laughed, so I changed the environment so Captain John Smith (student-in-role) and the students’ suggestions would be more accepted. I said,
“Wait, listen, look around, there is mist around the Captain. If you look close, I believe I see a tear in Captain Edwin John Smith’s eye. Look at him, I believe he is sad, imagine if you were him right now, your ship and many of the passengers have just met their fate at the bottom of the ocean. The same people you just smiled at and maybe shared a drink and now look at him.”

I then stepped into the world of the classroom and using told stories said,

“When I read about Smith, most said he went down with the ship, others said they saw a ghost of him for many years, and when they saw him as a ghost he reached out and tried to say something.”

I was pleasantly surprised when student mirrored this. Then I went back to the fictional world, showing that told stories are useful for everyday and fictional world. I said,

“As you walk by, in a whisper say something comforting if you like. If you don’t want to say words, show by your face that you are with him. You don’t have to walk but those that do, come now.”

The students then whispered words of support, some stayed where they were, but a great number moved toward the Captain. After that, the tone of the class was more caring, and reverent. I had changed the environment so the stories shared would be more respected and mediated the conversation so the student-in-role as the Captain would not hear screams, but feel support. I told a story in the fictional world that changed how students saw the Captain.

**Stories for Engagement**

Using stories changed not only the environment, but how the students engaged within the drama. We started with a told story of my grandmother, from there, shaped an environment to invite stories, and used altered environments to shift the stories. This showed me told stories have more value than those performed. We also used narrative fragments to help promote further questions and heighten the investment by exploring
and investigating our work. We were not simply asking questions about the fictional world, we were *acting on* those questions---we wanted to find out and so we explored. 

Along the way, we shared stories.

I wondered what other ways could I employ the tenets of dramatic inquiry and process drama in storytelling.

*New Adjustments*

It is not always a clear-cut decision which method to use with students. Sometimes, I am confused whether to use ensemble story for performance, ensemble story learning, process drama, or inquiry. I still blend these ideas. In fact, the most significant time in my teaching with process drama happened when I did not plan to use it.

*Vignette:*

A rural Catholic school invited me as a storyteller and workshop presenter. The librarian knew my advisor and knew I taught classes in process drama. She made an assumption that what I learned in process drama I could do as a storyteller. She did not separate the two. In casual, I informed her about my work using process drama concerning the subject of the Titanic. Little did I know what I did for 25 students would transfer to over 220 students. I did not plan to use process drama with over 200 students. I planned to provide a told story workshop. I had to think on my feet and change the way that I intended to teach. I let go of the main constructs of storytelling, and instead of preparing for a performance, prepared for mass learning. I divided the groups into smaller groups, still quite large, consisting of 10 to 15 per group. Using a microphone was quite useful to keep their interests moving. I prepared 10 to 15 small process drama experiences in this large gym. This was not easy. I tried, sometimes in vain, to keep the students’ thinking about what they were curious about concerning the Titanic, one of the central goals of dramatic inquiry. I tried to use their curiosity to find out more. It was difficult to have 200 students use tableau at the same time. We did this at first---students were quiet listening to what each scene depicted. However, soon, students wanted to explore more on their own. I found what would bring them back to learning more about the Titanic was to work not toward the inquiry but toward performance. I had one person per group narrate the choices. At the end, we told our stories in a storytelling format where students
would share their tableaus, but tell the stories of the before and after the tableau. This experience taught me to be willing to let go, and adapt to the needs of the learners.

In all of this work, whether it happens when I perform alone or with other students, it is the reflection upon these experiences that has built my direction for change in my future. As a teacher, I am involved in reflection in both the fictional and real world. This reflection leads to further improvisation and contact points for mediation.

**Identity**

This work is about change and how I have seen the identity of “storyteller” and “teacher who uses stories” grow, expand and transform to incorporate many new understandings informed by drama, and dramatic inquiry. In so doing, I understand more about who I am and how my new middle (Mora, 1993) changes with each teaching and personal experience. Instead of struggling to define the change, I embrace and welcome it. I know understanding this change helps inform who I am, who I can be, and who I will be.

Albert (2002) affirms how telling your story can be powerful to helping one know who he or she is.

This storytelling work—and it is difficult—is remarkably, rewarding healthy. As we reveal ourselves in story, we become aware of the continuing core of our lives under the fragmented surface of our experiences. As we become conscious of the multifaceted, multi-chaptered “I” who is the storyteller, we can trace out the paradoxical and even contradictory versions of ourselves that we create for different occasions, different audiences—and the threads that weave all these chapters, all these versions into the whole. Most important, as we become aware of ourselves as storytellers, we realize that we understand and imagine about ourselves in a story (Harrison, 2002, p. 74).
Improving Teaching

In order to be a better teacher, I must engage in the private reflections to make public differences. Witherell and Noddings (1991) suggest, “The power of narrative and dialogue as contributors to reflective awareness in teachers and students is that they provide opportunities for deepened relations with others …” (p. 8). They argue, “Teaching is both a public and private activity. It calls on both narrative and analytic ways of knowing…The act of teaching calls us to live in the worlds of actuality and of possibility and vision” (p. 9).

At the forefront of using storytelling, storymaking, process drama, and dramatic inquiry, is student-centered learning. However, I need to reflect for each class how best to use these methods. Each method is not scripted, but instead a complex system of learning, that depends upon the relationship between students as learners. As Shuman (1988) notes, “Storytelling offers one of its greatest promises, the possibility of empathy, of understanding others” (p. 180). Whether a student is telling a fictional tale or a real one, students are given an outlet to perform, share, and present with other students. And in telling my stories, I, too, feel I know my students more. I am able to share the learning and experience it alongside them.

Implications for Storytellers

Storytellers have followed the basic tenets of storytelling set forth by Ruth Sawyer. However, this study challenges the role of the storyteller, the way story is seen and how it is used for teaching. It suggests as storytellers we need to value both storymaking and
storytelling when we are in the classroom. Both are forms of performance and merely because a story is not performance does not mean it does not have value. We need to become more improvisational in our work, especially when the stories are used for teaching purposes. Storytelling teachers need to expand the way they use stories and value the connection of process drama and story.

At a time when artists are appearing less and less in the classroom due to budget constraints, it becomes important to value and extend how story is used for teaching. Telling a story has value, but so does engaging in the world of story. Storytellers need to sometimes take risks and experiment with story.

As a result of this study, the following implications could be and should be considered in the storytelling community.

1. **Expanding the position of storyteller in academia and education.** Storytellers followed the tenets set by Ruth Sawyer, but these tenets applied to performance storytelling within organized storytelling. However, as more and more storytellers are invited into university and school settings, we need to show the connections between performance and meaning making with narrative. I hope this study invites curiosity and encourages more storytellers to re-examine their own methods and find intersections and connections with classroom curriculum that are more than simply entertainment or one time storytelling performances. Storytellers can partner with teachers across the curriculum to make mindful choices to co-construct learning and create sustained student inquiry. Through
further scholarship and investment, storytellers can forge new, innovative relationships that bridge storytelling as an art to storytelling and storymaking as educational practices to increase teaching using narratives.

2. **Challenging storytellers to step out of the box.** From working in the field and with national organization of storytellers, I know storytellers are often guarded and protective of what storytelling means. They clearly follow an organized definition of storytelling. However, valuing the interactive nature of stories helps expand how storytellers are used in the field. Storytellers are now being called to work in businesses, social justice centers, nursing homes, where performance is not always the desired outcome. Instead, one needs to value stories, both in storytelling and storymaking as community building tools to help give voice to those often silenced. Using storytelling and storymaking with process drama allows adults and students to be someone else to be heard in the fictional world. However, as was noted, this use of stories shows the transfer of what is learned in the fictional world can also be applied to the real world context.

3. **Use process drama in storytelling.** The storytelling community needs to invite, encourage, learn, and challenge themselves to use drama, namely process drama and dramatic inquiry, as they work with students. In a standard based education, stories can be used to engage students in productive inquiry and sustained learning. The needs of the teachers are not the same as the storytellers, but hopefully as storytellers become more and more invested in the continual work in
the classroom; more negotiation can be a result. If storytellers want to work more in the schools, they need to be willing to examine stories in different ways than they are used to seeing them. When used in a dramatic context, students and the storyteller can imagine and enact the story not from a position of authority but as co-constructors. This provides more possibilities for storytellers to be included in classroom curriculum.

4. **Storytellers need to value the storymaking and see the performative quality in this work.** From working with professional storyteller for over 20 years, they would not view storymaking as having a performance element to the process. However, as Bauman (1967) and Peterson & Langellier (2004) note, interactive narratives are performed. Storytellers can expand their work in the classroom if they value creating narratives or storymaking as much as storytelling in performance settings. We need to listen more and employ pedagogies of process drama and dramatic inquiry to see how the goal of using storytelling and storymaking can serve learning not performance.

5. **The value of improvisation.** As Heathcote (1994) notes, improvisation is key to process drama. This is true of storytelling and especially storymaking. After working with process drama and dramatic inquiry, I can see how working with the audience as active agents in shaping the story increases story investment. Many storytellers rely on the audience’s facial expressions to determine the direction of their telling. However, a more immediate feedback is to include them in the
story, not simply using repetition or adding words in an echo format, but actually using improvisation to help shape the story. If more storytellers use improvisation in their work, they can expand their work with students, but also their performances as well. It was when I risked performing my stories and opened up the possibilities for my audience to help me shape them that my storytelling took on new directions. I now try to find places in the story that we can improvise together. If more storytellers use dramatic play in their work, they will see stories from the vantage point of possibilities to explore and develop and not always as a performed work.

6. The value of process drama and dramatic inquiry. As storytellers, our work is narrative. Process drama and dramatic inquiry depend upon narratives, they can not happen without them. We need to invest in this form of narrative so we can expand what we offer in the classroom. With process drama, students can step into the world of the story and question it. With dramatic inquiry, students can question and can engage in their questions by using role to challenge their inquiry. Storytellers search for stories that meet these requirements. However, if more and more storytellers use process drama and dramatic inquiry, they will be involved with students in creating, shaping and directing of how narratives are used to help students learn. Storytellers can expand and re-define what it means to be a storyteller. Instead of one who simply tells stories, one can step in and engage in the stories with the students. The trance-like state (Strum, 2000) can become a
true transformation as an active state where students shape and build the stories they imagine.

7. **The importance of reflection.** Folklorist/storyteller Ruth Stotter once said there is no unified schooling for storytellers---anyone can call themselves a storyteller. Over the years, I have seen storytelling in many forms. I have seen some tellers simply echo the same program year after year. However, the storytellers I admire most are the ones that critically examine their work. In a sense, autoethnography or at least self-reflection and growth are reflected in their work. I can see how they have been changed, altered, and transformed by story selection. I note the critical discussions and analysis in their work as they prepare. This mindfulness sets them apart and in a real sense advances storytelling to a higher level.

Unfortunately, storytellers are often too busy or do not understand the value in writing about their work. Only now are storytellers realizing with the deaths of such storytelling pioneers as Ray Hicks or Jackie Torrence, our art needs to be chronicled, challenged and expanded. Critical autoethnography encourages tough questions, introspection and the informed realization of a new middle.

Storytellers should challenge themselves to such an introspection to understand their art and contribute to its scholarship.

**Conclusion**

My story is still being told. In this next journey, I will continue to use writing as a critical lens to value my work as a storyteller, teacher, and process drama teacher. I
know that in writing I understand how my identity continues to be in flux. As I reflect upon my journey as an educator, I relax, pause, and take respite because I know by staying still, I move forward. In this work, I held still the importance of the essential elements of storytelling and storymaking, that is, tale, teller, and listener. However, as they stayed still, I did not. I wrestled, in my mind, and in my writing with how I could change, and as I prepare to continue to use stories and drama for both performance and teaching, I am willing and eager to change again.
References


