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NOWHERE TO HIDE BUT TOGETHER: A NARRATIVE CASE STUDY OF THREE CLASSROOM TEACHERS, A DRAMA SPECIALIST, AND THEIR SUPPORTERS NEGOTIATING TOWARD AN ARTISTIC VISION OF TEACHING THROUGH DRAMA IN AN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
1998

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This narrative ethnographic study seeks to share how each of three elementary teachers, support organizations (a church and a children's theatre) and a drama specialist negotiate and interpret artistic ways into and through the use of classroom drama over the course of two years. The study takes place in an urban, low-socio-economic status, low test-score-achieving elementary school.

The study explores the central question: How do classroom teachers and a school drama specialist negotiate and interpret the evolving status and function of drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool over the course of two years? The study also examines the supplementary question: What is the nature of the other voices and forces influencing or seeking to influence the extent to which drama becomes part of a school's culture?

Data collection and analysis methods include reflective practice as well as ethnomethodology and phenomenology. Narrative is both a means of analysis and a writing form. This study explicates the evolving status of drama (periphery, utility, craft, art) among individual classroom teachers based on their understanding of and drive to take the risk of exploring drama's potential functions in learning, as well as their views of learning itself. The study also looks at the role of influences beyond the classroom walls to provide a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes dynamics and patterns of a privately-funded philanthropic arts program in a public school.
This is dedicated to my family, as it continues to grow:
  Mom & Dad & old baby Joey:
  Maureen & Pete & Joey & Nick & new baby Corinne:
  Chris & Aliita & new baby ?:
  Kathy & Chris & Noah & new baby?:
  Patti & A.G. & new baby?
  And to all the other ???? the future may hold . . .

Thank you for your hope and support in this year of Murray births, mine having
been the longest labor with the least adorable result . . .
Acknowledgements

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Thank you to the teachers and the school and the church and the theatre that herein remain anonymous, but without whom this study would not have even been a possibility.

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Thank you to the brave, insightful teachers and students--ones I know, ones I hope to know, ones I'll never know--who work with one another through any art, especially drama. You are our hopeful future.

Thank you to my principal who gave me extra time to get my “homework” done.

Thank you to the Fielder family for helping me see and feel and learn by letting me into your lives, and your stepping into mine.

Thank you to all the scholars and practitioners in the generations before me that paved the way for me to wonder about drama in the safety and generative insight of their wonderings.

Thank you to Lucy for being my supportive friend throughout and careful eyes at the end of this project.

Thank you to Bob Colby and Bethany Nelson for being my mentors in more ways than they know.
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(Note: There are no tables or appendices)
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Brief Program History

The purpose of this dissertation is to share some journeys in progress. These journeys take the shape of a narrative case study using ethnomethodological and phenomenological methods. In this study, I describe a drama specialist and three elementary teachers in an urban low-socio-economic, low test-score-achieving elementary school using drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool in the classroom over two years. I am Beth, the drama specialist. My colleagues are Geri, Janine, and Lane, kindergarten, third and first-grade teachers respectively at McDowell Elementary School.

Our school’s drama program is funded by Saint Joseph’s Episcopal Church and administered by and through the Children’s Theatre of Webster. Connections between school, church, and theatre weave a rich background for this study. This study traces the first two years of a three-year program whose mission is to provide a “comprehensive arts program” for the students at McDowell and Bentley Heights Schools and involved “a cooperative partnership between the schools, Saint Joseph’s Episcopal Church, and The Children’s Theatre of Webster. The purpose of the program (was) to enrich the lives of these inner-city children both academically and artistically . . .”
The final writing of this document falls at the end of the second year of a three-year grant program that funds a full-time drama specialist, shared between McDowell Elementary and Bentley Heights Elementary. This is an incomplete tale, as are most. On these pages, I try to share some of what has come before these two years, and I look forward someday to sharing what comes after. So this is a picture of where we’ve been and also of where we think we might like to be.

The relationship between wealthy church and impoverished school grew over the years. Written into the by-laws of St. Joseph’s doctrine was the expectation that the majority of its missions would be target local needy populations. Smaller, more individualized programs were united under a three-year project entitled Seeds of Hope.

Seeds of Hope is a commitment of the people of St. Joseph’s Church to share time, talents, and resources through community partnerships based on understanding, spirituality, and hope for the future. After research by The Committee of Twelve, the Seeds of Hope ministries began in 1995 and will continue through 1999. More than two million dollars has been pledged by St. Joseph’s parishioners to support programs receiving Seeds of Hope funds. In addition, more than 265 St. Joseph’s parishioners have participated as volunteers, committee members, and Board of Directors members." (1997 SJ Annual Report).

All Seeds of Hope Programs were aimed to benefit residents of what the church referred to as the “Hope Triangle Area,” a triangular portion of the city’s northeast section that was home to many impoverished families. McDowell was in the heart of the triangle area.

My Role

In this study at McDowell Elementary, I was blatantly both the drama advocate and the drama researcher. Impossible casting, in some eyes. Playing one role well would have all but eliminated playing the other. How could a
person both advocate change and capture a site as it is simultaneously? My answer to that is, in order to change anything in a meaningful way, it must be known, heard, understood, felt--lived, essentially, as closely and complexly as possible.

Meaningful change is slow; there are always stellar moments, but real change takes time and patience. At every step of a change route, a true advocate needs to slow down long enough to see "what is," albeit a hopefully growing and changing place. And though the advocate has begun the journey with a sense of where the change is to go, there will hopefully be an ever-growing number of voices in the ranks of travelers assessing the course. Thus the advocate may begin as a prototypical leader, steering and forging ahead. But the real advocate's task over time is to see that the journey has been reflective; taking stock of "what is" and what is becoming that the destination might belong to all.

That ideal expressed, I do not write and share this dissertation at an ultimate destination, but at several of those critical junctures where we are stopping for sustenance, or checking our directions, or circling back, or reflecting on where we've been.

Dissertation Organizational Overview

To this point I have provided a brief overview of the entire narrative case study as well as a thumbnail history of the drama program being studied.

In Chapter 2, I share my personal journey to my current beliefs about drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool. I support those beliefs with a review of literature in drama and related fields, relying heavily on Dewey's (1934) dynamic organization of art. I share my view of teaching and learning as a series of three similarly constructive and artistic
steps, the fourth step simply making the prior three recursive. Thus, in my ideal world, all teachers would constantly cycle through the steps of envisioning, making decisions, taking action, and re-envisioning, only to begin again, increasingly better-equipped by past experiences. These steps would not be necessarily linear in progression, encouraging circling back and jumping ahead internally as the work might require.

In Chapter 2, I also introduce Bruner's (1996) four dominant models of learners' minds as organizational frames. Views of learning impacted both teaching and learning. I will refer back to this model frequently as I elaborate on that idea throughout this dissertation. By way of abbreviation, I shall label each of the Bruner’s models more simply. Bruner described learners as:

1. imitative apprentices (externalist dimension)
2. mental acquirers (externalist dimension)
3. collaborative thinkers (internalist dimension)
4. critical cultural interpreters (internalist dimension)

Chapter 2 closes with an overview of the beliefs guiding this study in the categories of knowledge and teaching and learning, artful teaching through drama, teachers learning to use drama, and drama’s ideal place in schools.

In Chapter 3, I outline and support the evolution of this narrative case study’s methods using ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches and share the evolution of research questions to the ones that ultimately guided this writing:

- How do classroom teachers and a school drama specialist negotiate and interpret the evolving status and function of drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool over the course of two years?
What is the influence of other individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the extent to which drama becomes part of the school's and each individual classroom's culture?

The importance of narrative as both a vehicle for analysis and a means of capturing and sharing this story of drama going to school is discussed in Chapter 3 as well.

Chapter 4 provides an historical account of the non-classroom, institutional forces invested in shaping this grant-funded drama program prior to any classroom work. These other characters and plots provide rich layers of setting--context that encircles and influences classrooms.

Chapter 5 depicts the interpretive, negotiated journeys of three classroom teachers charged with using drama in their teaching and utilizing me as their "guide" over the two years of this study. The central characters of this tale are three teachers at McDowell Elementary: Geri, Lane, and Janine and me, their drama specialist. The main plot traces their evolving perceptions of drama's place in their school and in their own teaching, since their school administrators decided the best way for drama to "enrich the lives of these inner-city children both academically and artistically" was to have teachers use drama as a teaching tool. The hardest challenge facing these teachers was not finding or creating their own vision but negotiating artistic vision with school vision, knowing it was ultimately they who would have to accommodate--or appear to accommodate--others' visions, rather than believing their own vision was worth nurturing and fighting for. The functions and status of drama grew from that hindered artistic place.

In Chapter 6, I revisit the non-classroom individual voices and institutional forces in an episodic, reflective collage highlighting trends and
patterns in individual and institutional connections and disconnections. In this chapter, I revisit some elements of that culture at work in McDowell school and beyond, perhaps raising more questions than I answer.

In Chapter 7, I share findings and reflect across the layers of this study, laying out findings specific to certain portions of the study as well as trends across cases and settings.

**The On-going Journey**

Several individuals and organizations meet on these pages in the form of a dissertation, a narrative, a story told both through and by me. This is very much my story. However, I can only hope that it is a story that matters far beyond me for it is intended to be about much greater things than me.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE/RESEARCHER REVIEW

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the entire dissertation as well as an introduction of the individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the grant-funded drama program I both participated in and researched in this narrative case study using ethnomethodological and phenomenological methods. In Chapter 2, I will share my personal and professional journey to my current beliefs about drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool. I support those beliefs with a review of literature in drama and related fields, relying heavily on both Dewey’s (1934) dynamic organization of art as well as Bruner’s (1996) four dominant models of learners’ minds as organizational and analytical frames.

This type of a review serves a two-fold purpose, as both the preliminary or epoche phase of phenomenological inquiry in which I gain clarity of my own researcher lenses and as a review of the literature related to answering the central questions of this study. Those questions are: How do classroom teachers and a school drama specialist negotiate and interpret the evolving status and function of drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool over the course of two years? What is the influence of other individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the extent to which drama becomes part of the school’s and each individual classroom’s culture?
Placing My Views of Learning

Some view the learning journey linearly, beginning with teachers learning how to teach and ending with students learning. I take a more social constructivist/socio-cultural view of learning, drawing on psychology and educational philosophy to support a view of teachers as ever-growing meaning makers (Bruner, 1990) traveling on a collaborative (Vygotsky, 1986), experience-based (Dewey, 1938), reflective (Schon, 1987) journey of growth and discovery with colleagues and students. I would argue that the journey begins long before a teacher ever sets foot inside a school, for as Heathcote says, teachers are first and foremost themselves (in Johnson and O'Neill, 1984, p. 61).

In his book The Culture of Education, Bruner (1996, pp. 53-63) describes the four dominant models of learners' minds "that have held sway in our time" (pp. 53-63). He explains that they are not only four ways of conceiving minds in a how-to-educate sense, but also "conceptions about the relations between minds and cultures." They are as follows:

1. Seeing children as imitative learners

The apprenticeship relationship is central to this transmission model. It presumes the children are interested in learning what is being modeled. Knowledge takes the form of skill. Children are conditioned to seek adult approval.

Imitation at work: Lane was a playful first-grade teacher in this study. She knew talk benefited literacy development in children. Rather than simply telling her children to talk during their free time, she interrupted herself mid-sentence during an explanation, picked up a toy phone and said: "Hello . . . yes . . . well, certainly, I'd be glad to, but . . . right. Actually, I'm in the middle of talking to some friends, but I'll call you back . . . OK. No, no--pepperoni. Yeah.
OK. Bye now.” All the phone lines were busy during the next free time.

2. Seeing children as learning from didactic exposure: the acquisition of propositional knowledge.

Knowledge is mental acquisition. What ought to be learned and how that learning ought to be assessed is determined by a distant “third person.” This model lends itself to curriculum resembling facts “offered by the hatful,” testing, deficit model assessments, and a view of children as blank slates or empty vessels. This is the most common view of learning in schools.

Mental acquisition at work: Janine, a third-grade focus teacher, and her co-workers huddled around the thick curriculum book of state standards and objectives. Each teacher held a chart with all her students’ names down the left column and a targeted objective in each column across the top. They place an “M” for mastery, “P” for partial mastery, and “N” for non-mastery in each category for each child.


This model recognizes the child’s perspective and framework. Learning is seen as mutualistic and dialectical; all minds--adult and child--are sense makers. Children have theories about the world and their own learning of which they are metacognitively aware. Beliefs and ideas can be moved toward a shared frame of reference through discussion and interaction. Understanding and interpretation are nurtured through discussion and collaboration. Some feel there is a blurred line between knowledge and opinion in this model.

Collaborative thinkers at work: Geri and I relied on this model in our own communication since we viewed learning differently. Without reflective negotiation, I could easily have dismissed Geri, a focus kindergarten teacher, into the general category of “teachers resistant to drama.” However, sharing interpretations and striving toward collaboration helped me understand her resistance as more complex and contextualized. That did not mean there were
easier answers, but perhaps a better chance of eventually finding them together.

4. Seeing children as knowledgeable: The management of objective knowledge.

This model is a reaction to the third model ("Seeing children as thinkers") which risks overestimating the importance of social exchange in constructing knowledge thereby potentially underestimating the importance of accumulated cultural knowledge. It aims to distinguish between personal knowledge and "what is taken to be known" by the culture. This model advocates approaching classic texts as interpretivists, seeking discourse, not worship.

Interestingly all Bruner's examples of this model called on the arts. An ideal of critical cultural interpreters at work: Dorothy Heathcote's mantle of the expert approach (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995) particularly mapped onto Bruner's fourth model of learning as it required students to negotiate and collectively interpret and question a body of knowledge over time with increasing depth. Mantle of the expert is "an active, urgent, purposeful view of learning, in which knowledge is to be operated on, not merely to be taken in" (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995, p. 188). It helps students construct a center for their knowledge.

One principle behind mantle of the expert is the inclusion of an "enterprise, a client, and a problem embedded in a body of knowledge or set of skills that is linked with the school curriculum" (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995, p. 109). The students communicate, collaborate, and negotiate both within their imagined world and in the context of their classroom. They become part of an enterprise, serving a client, to solve a problem--or problems. Since drama helps to centralize, humanize, and socialize subject matter, some make a case for placing it at the center of the curriculum (Bolton, 1979, Heathcote, 1984.)
Bruner also divides the four categories in half by dimension. He labels the first two models as the externalist dimension in which “theories emphasize what adults can do for children from outside to foster learning” (p. 63). The second two models reflect the internalist dimension which focus on “what the child can do, what the child thinks he or she is doing, and how learning can be premised on those intentional states” (p. 63). Bruner cautions that “real schooling, of course, is never confined to one model of learner or one model of teaching” (p. 63). The categories help make explicit views that underlie many taken-for-granted educational situations.

My socio-constructivist and socio-cultural orientation place me primarily, but not exclusively, in the internalist dimension. This orientation flavored not only my interactions with children as learners, but also with teachers in this study. Each person in this study had a view of learning that impacted both teaching and learning. I will refer back this model frequently as I elaborate on that idea throughout this dissertation. By way of shorthand, I shall label each of the Bruner’s models more simply, referring to learners as:

1. imitative apprentices (externalist dimension)
2. mental acquirers (externalist dimension)
3. collaborative thinkers (internalist dimension)
4. critical cultural interpreters (internalist dimension)

The Artistic Teaching and Learning Cycle: Visions, Decisions, and Actions

I carry the constructivist orientation into the realm of art using Dewey as a bridge. The titles of two of his writings, *Experience and Education* (1938) and *Art as Experience* (1934) display the intended link. Teachers and students are
products of ever-accumulating human experiences.

... every experience both takes up something from those which have
gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come
after... (Dewey, 1938, p. 35)

In writing of aesthetic experience, Dewey explains that in every “integral
experience there is form because there is dynamic organization,” including the
three stages of inception (ingestion and digestion of material through interaction
with prior experiences), development (incubation), and fulfillment (bringing
forth, rendering the conceived as perceivable to the world). He acknowledges
that part of what makes the experience aesthetic is the way it converts
resistances and tensions, “excitations that in themselves are temptations to
diversion,” into the movement of the experience. Three steps, but each is rich
with generative complications that make it “integral.”

I have come to view teaching and learning as a series of three similarly
constructive and artistic steps, the fourth step simply making the prior three
recursive. Thus, in my ideal world, all teachers would constantly cycle through
the steps of envisioning, making decisions, taking action, and re-envisioning,
only to begin again, increasingly better-equipped by past experiences. These
steps would not be necessarily linear in progression, encouraging circling back
and jumping ahead internally as the work might require. Reflective practitioners
cycle would occur on a micro level, in individual lessons and activities as well
as a macro level in dealing with curriculum, long-range plans and objectives,
and the school as a whole, situated among families and organizations in ever-
expanding layers of community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). So not only would we
be products of these experiences, but we would be fully and artistically aware of
the experiences that constitute us.
Artistic teaching makes the classroom a generative place, and considers teachers and students alike to be potential artists. As a generative, productive enterprise, artistic learning shares its responsibility for creation with all involved. Learning is not something that happens to children just because they show up at school, learning becomes something they have an obligation to help create, expand, negotiate, explore, and collaborate within. The potential value of such an approach is broad, but at its core is the human connection teachers and children feel to the things they learn. Art places them inside rather than next to or under the learning. I need only open a newspaper or watch the listen to a political speech to know this view runs somewhat counter to the current view of education as being largely responsible for raising test scores, not fostering art. However, the artistic view places children--complex human beings--on the bottom line, rather than numbers.

Defining Drama

The field of educational drama/theatre is filled with numerous labels distinguishing between practical, stylistic, artistic and philosophical factions most of which are only meaningful to those familiar with the field--and the labels can even seem fuzzy to some of us. In this paper, my references to “drama” imply the process-oriented classroom variety, also referred to as drama, educational drama, curriculum drama, drama as a learning medium, classroom drama, process drama and drama in education. Close variations include story drama and role drama. Creative drama and creative dramatics are related disciplines, but bear greater philosophical variation as will be discussed later in this paper. (Note: I overview one of the more successful drama experiences in this study beginning on page 168. Previewing that section may provide more insight into the sort of drama discussed here than any definitions.)
Whatever the label, hallmarks of working in this manner can usually be traced back to Dorothy Heathcote’s approach. O’Neill and Lambert (1982) describe drama in education as a learning mode. “Through the pupil’s active identification with imagined roles and situations in drama, they can learn to explore issues, events and relationships” (p. 11). Teachers and students collaborate as artists in creating, exploring, and reflecting upon generative imagined drama worlds (O’Neill, 1995, Edmiston, 1991) that frame, elaborate, and complicate layers of classroom meaning making. “Drama is no longer considered simply as another branch of art education, but as a unique teaching tool, vital for language development and invaluable as a method in the exploration of other subject areas” (Heathcote in Johnson and O’Neill, 1984, p. 42). Bolton (1979) points to drama’s learning potential in its ability to cultivate responses on the subjective or feeling level; a level teachers often don’t recognize or ignore. Indeed such a vision of teaching and learning has been rather uncommon, particularly in American classrooms.

In ideal classroom drama work, the teacher functions as artist structuring and participating with children in episodic drama experiences as well as reflecting upon those experiences to generatively shape the next stages of the art. Just as the painter would carefully choose the colors and consistencies of paint to create a portrait, then tinker and test and trade them as necessary during the creation process, the teacher using drama would carefully choose and continually question the modes and strategies of classroom drama work with an eye toward both the large picture and the intimate detail.

Bolton (1996) categorizes the drama “palette” as having three major kinds of “acting commonly employed in classrooms . . . for promoting change in understanding” (p. 11). They are: depiction (demonstration), dramatic playing
(simulation or improvisation), and mantei of the expert (Heathcote's complex model described earlier). However, the creation process is more important than the materials used for many artists, including the teacher working through drama. Artistic drama is not a series of acting activities, it is the under-construction negotiated process. However, unlike the painter, the teacher using drama is not the only holder of an artistic vision. Ideal drama work results in socially-constructed artistic vision, catalyzing expanded understanding.

Early drama teaching is rarely artistic and actually often starts as a series of activities, the idea of a negotiated vision remaining somewhat admirable yet mysterious. Moving from that utilitarian mode through craft toward art takes time, reflection, and apprenticeship experience. Indeed, the teacher exploring drama with the drive to make it her art could easily work in all four of Bruner’s models: 1. apprenticing with and expert, 2. acquiring theories and strategies from texts, 3. collaboratively thinking theoretically and reflecting on practice with others, and 4. critically examining and socially renegotiating drama’s relative status within a culture or across cultures based on cultural texts. However, the basic models of learning that the teachers in this study and I relied upon were the first and third: apprenticeship and collaborative thinking. This provided forum and relationship for the dynamic, recursive artistic model of envisioning, making decisions, and carrying out actions, and re-envisioning drama experiences.

Drama comes from an old Greek word, dran, that means “to do,” hence drama is best understood in the doing. All the more reason for me to share several journeys toward and through drama—in the doing.
Spectacles Under Construction

Who we are as teachers creates the lens through which we see all teaching. In this dissertation, I describe three teachers working toward using drama as a learning medium in their classrooms: toward seeing themselves as artists. My initial intent was to keep myself somehow out-of-the-way of their tales of struggles and triumphs; let the narrative belong to them, place myself on the periphery. But as the study progressed, it became clear that the story was not to be a simple trio of intertwining narrative ballads sung by these three hard-working teachers with me tracking the steady bass line and appearing for an occasional solo. As I tried to climb inside the data and bring Lane’s classroom alive on the page, mid-drama, in her own voice and words, I kept interrupting myself. Paragraphs about my struggles and questions suddenly appeared in a section allegedly devoted to Geri. I had to let myself more fully into the story.

My voice grew to become the melody, essentially, as I realized that how I as a researcher see Geri and Janine and Lane in their drama and learning journeys has everything to do with my own journey and my beliefs about drama and learning garnered over time. So, I would like to lay out my in-progress journey first, as a way to communicate my particular favored route on the road of learning and my accumulated understanding of drama: thus my under-construction lens. Then we shall move onto their journeys.

As I look back over significant steps and memorable moments in my own growth as a learner and a teacher and an artist and a researcher and a writer and a person, I can now attach research findings or theories or philosophies to support what I have come to believe, making my beliefs more significant to those outside myself—or at least more clearly rooted and defined. The writing and framing of these recollections happened after data collection, but aided
greatly in data analysis. To assist the reader in this segment, my recollected journey appears in print like this. My present-day reflections on the recollections appear in print like this.

Underneath It All, Theoretically Speaking

I remember most everything about my youngest brother and sister, back to their diaper days. It made sense that I chose a career that put me around children, I thought, for being second oldest of six, that's what I always knew. Then, one day I watched the two teen-aged siblings, whose diapers I had once changed, babysit a young cousin, Ben.

**JOEY:** A BALL IN HIS SHIRT: Oh no! I lost the ball, Ben.
**BEN:** LOOKS AROUND, THEN NOTICES THE BULGE IN JOEY'S SHIRT. HE SMILES AND RETRIEVES THE BALL, WHICH PROMPTS A SHORT TICKLE SESSION.
Hey, Beth, you should have seen what he did before. He was walking around in Dad's tur hat. It was so funny. Over here, buddy...
**BEN:** TOSSES THE BALL. IT JUST MISSES THE CHINA CLOSET WINDOW. JOEY PLAYFULLY GRABS BALL AND BABY AND MOVES TOWARD ANOTHER ROOM TWIRLING BEN IN AN AIRPLANE SWOOP, BEFORE THEY GO. JOEY TIPTOES NEAR THE CHINA CLOSET.
We gotta be gentle in here. This is dangerous. Gentle. HE TOUCHES THE GLASS SOFTLY
**BEN:** COPIES: Gentle.
**PATTI:** Does he need to be changed?
**JOEY:** I don't smell anything.
**PATTI:** Do you need to be changed, little boy? Hmm? TICKLES HIS BELLY
**BEN:** No change!
**PATTI:** Are you sure about that, Ben?

The image of that fleeting moment stayed in my mind: something to be recalled, to be underlined, to be fondly told to and enjoyably but unconclusively mulled over with my mom and sisters at the kitchen table days later. Patti and Joey were naturals, according to our definition of "natural," completely at-home with playing and changing and setting limits and feeding and calming. So much for my theory about practice and long-term exposure. They hadn't been around babies all the time as I had been. They were the babies. Where and when had they learned all that?
My socio-cultural and socio-constructivist views have their roots in my family. This family-life slice captures some big ideas I have tacitly come to value about children and learning through the family culture in which I grew up: imagination, play, scaffolding, storytelling, observing small—but wondering large. Learning is socially constructed and negotiated (Vygotsky, 1934, Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984) and we don’t always know what’s being taught or what’s being learned or even who’s the “more competent other” at any given moment, if there is one. Scaffolds upon/beside/under scaffolds. Or do we call that culture? (Bruner, 1990) To me, cultural and cognitive forces both shape learning and perhaps shape one another. (Cole, 1985)

Cognition originates in social interaction and centers on children’s appropriation of cultural tools, goals and activities, which they internalise in their coming to be fully functioning members of their cultures. (Meadows, 1993, p. 344)

I can label the underpinnings of my beliefs as largely social constructivist and socio-cultural which coincide with a view of drama as the dialogic (Edmiston, 1994), negotiated co-creation of generative aesthetic experience by teachers and students in their individual and collective cultural complexity. My approach to teaching teachers to use drama grows from the same groundwork. The Dewey-based teacher learning model I propose bears similarity to the constructivist-favored action research spiral (Stenhouse, 1975) of: plan, act, observe, reflect, plan again. It also calls on the reflective practitioner research model (Edmiston, 1991, Taylor, 1996). Taylor describes the difference between action research and reflective practice as the latter being more on-going and purposeful in tying reflection to future practice. That element is present in action research theory also, but not traditionally in action research practice (Taylor in Wagner, 1998). My model grows out of both constructivist beliefs and
experience in this particular research context. A strong scaffold or apprenticeship element became part of the model again supporting Bruner's notion that learning could benefit by crossing models. It also became necessary for reflection as teachers resisted written reflection.

In a sense, what I have done is put labels on my own reflective practice to align it with art. Envisioning is part planning, but it grows out of the cumulative store of integral experiences that shape it, the artist's vision. The richer the range of stored vision, the deeper the artist's understanding and the greater the artist's range of choices and possibilities. Decision-making is its own stage, but enters both envisioning and action phases. Both artist and teacher make planning decisions that turn ideas swimming in the mind into something concrete: a lesson plan, a sketch, a series of notes. This is but the beginning.

In artistic work, decisions are always in question. They are fruitfully required throughout the action phase as well. Decisions frame and reframe the art. The re-envisioning phase cumulatively calls all the experiences decisions into question to inform future art. The vision of a particular piece of art has floated over the entire experience being shaped and reshaped by decisions and actions. Drama done well uses decisions and actions to pluralize the growing artistic vision through the shared experiences and reflection on the experiences of the participating group. Drama is in part bringing vision to life and in part letting life shape vision. Scaffolding both action and reflection helps the teachers of teachers support movement in that artistic direction, one that is not necessarily part of school traditionally.

**Drama and Some "Elementary" Prepositions**

I don't recall much on-purpose, teacher-sanctioned drama in my own elementary school days except for two incidents. Some high-school girls came to my kindergarten
class dressed in funny clothes and taught us about rules. They would do it the wrong way first and the right way second. We loved it. They used a cylindrical block from our own block box for a cigar. In third grade, we did a play: *Hansel and Gretel*. I was the second angel from the right. Yes, there were angels in this version . . . and townspeople and forest animals and--

These are examples of the two ways drama is commonly imagined to “belong” and to be useful in classrooms: as sugar-coating for a didactic adult-performed demonstration of predetermined material or as a student-acted production. In the first case, drama is done for the children. The vision, the decisions, and the actions are all predetermined and all belong to the adult performers. Child participation may be invited, but its outcome has usually been predetermined or predicted by the adult performers to reinforce the preset adult-sanctioned message. The extreme of doing drama “for” children is presenting a teacher-or-adult-acted play for them to watch as in the case of the high schoolers in my kindergarten class.

In the second case, drama is done to the children. The teacher/director has the vision, makes the production-value decisions, the children carry out the actions. However, their actions are tightly controlled by the teacher’s vision and decisions. Children, in the process, may have ideas or suggestions, but the ultimate power usually lies with the teacher/director. The extreme of doing drama “to” children is giving them a script or directions and sending them off to put together their own play for later teacher approval or disapproval. My *Hansel and Gretel* experience was not the extreme, but it was drama done “to” us.

I have no right to condemn these ways of working as they are both contextualized in my vivid childhood memories. However, with some distance I can ask the question: “Well, why are they so vivid?” My answer: “They were
special events.” Their strength wasn’t necessarily centered around artistry or meaning making or discoveries, their strength was in briefly changing the routine of our schedule and the pattern of our interactions. We created within known limits. We had fun. The experiences were treats—even in-school vacations.

The Philosophy Behind Some Artistic Mentors

The truly stellar among memories of my own school learning share the common element of emotional connection. There were classrooms I enjoyed because the teacher seemed to know and reach us accounting for student individuality. There were classrooms I enjoyed because the teacher invited and built upon our emotional and intellectual responses—and then pushed us to go further. There were classrooms I enjoyed because of the swirling passion the teacher had for subject matter or art form... infectious passion. The best classrooms were a combination. The teachers I recall are those who were artistic human beings, inviting me to be considered one as well.

It is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, emotional, and intellectual from one another. (Dewey, 1934, p. 55)

Drama was not ever a school subject for me until college. We read Shakespeare in English class and tried out for plays as extra-curricular activities. Drama and music were always closely allied, given that the all-school play was usually a musical. Music was central for me. I sang and played the clarinet. In doing so, I found some artistic mentors; teachers who lived their art, who never stopped learning, and who were all about inviting others into their art while nurturing a community-felt responsibility for the quality of the art. I also found some who called themselves artists, but didn’t inspire me the same way.

I continued singing in college. My director freshman year was notorious for his passion, sometimes that passion took the form of a humiliating public question or the reading of a stirring poem or the generous sharing of unsolicited advice—for the entire ensemble to hear. But we somehow always knew that beneath his gruffness, he loved us. On
rare occasions, he told us so. We loved him, too—even if he made us nervous. He would write us letters as he reflected at home on the works we were rehearsing. A favorite piece for me was Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*. One rehearsal when we weren’t getting it as he’d hoped we would, he stopped and began ranting. “How can you sing as if you don’t care? Listen to these words—this music—look at me! You are making memories that will wake you sweating in the middle of the night ten years from now—twenty years from now! Let yourself feel it. Concentrate.”

Our choir director’s artistic vision included his singers functioning as artists as well. Toward that end, he made us his apprentices, first living under his vision, but beginning to shape our own. This was largely Bruner’s learners as imitative apprentices model. He also had specific expectations for technique and pronunciation that we needed to flat-out master. Bruner’s learners as mental acquirers. The business of helping us collectively and individually interpret this culturally valued piece of music from another time and place required more internalist exploration, to help us realize our own potential contributions in shaping the art.

If the artist does not perfect a new vision in his process of doing, he acts mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blueprint in his mind. (Dewey, 1934, p. 50)

Dewey points to the artistic value of imagination as well as observation . . . seeing details and relations as well as “the whole under construction” (p. 51). That’s the difference between recognition and “reconstructive doing” (p. 53) or perceiving; it’s alive. Our director considered us artists. This was choral music and he was the conductor. Part of his art was getting us to move beyond the “blueprint” of the notes on the page to creating a sound and telling a story—our particular sound and our particular story. He couldn’t sing it to us or for us, he had to create with us. But he had a much better vision of the whole picture than
we did, and much richer experience. Rather than giving us only mechanical ways to bring our singing into line with his vision, he also encouraged us to emotionallly examine our own visions, that the collective vision might grow.

The effective drama teacher works similarly in that the play for the teacher is different than the play for the students (Bolton, 1979, Morgan and Saxton, 1987) regarding responsibilities and view of the collaboratively created work. The experience can be art for all, or art for her. If the drama teacher only does drama “to” or “for” her students, the vision remains hers and the students simply her medium in this extrinsic orientation. However, if the drama teacher strives to do drama “with” them, bringing them into the realm of Bruner’s more intrinsic third and fourth models where knowledge is negotiated and culturally influenced, the artistic vision has hope for generative pluralization.


In considering careers, elementary education went through my mind, but I dismissed it on the same grounds I dismissed the possibility of piano lessons. My older sister was already doing it, why should I?

In my high-school yearbook, the blurb next to my name said I wanted to study “Communications.” I don’t know if I knew what that meant, but that’s what I said. Talking, Writing, Collaborating, Organizing people and events. Those were all things I could do and had done. Some expected me to study music, but the idea of all the uncertainty that came along with an artistic career choice made me uncomfortable. Plus, I couldn’t play the piano, so I could never have pursued the music teaching option either, I thought.

Once I finally declared a major as English with a writing emphasis, late in my sophomore year, I promptly put that decision into question. I found myself at the career
counselor's office, completely uncomfortable with the fact that this conversation had one topic: me.

COUNSELOR: So you are an English major.
BETH: Yes.
COUNSELOR: What made you choose that?
BETH: Well, I like to write.
COUNSELOR: So you want to write.
BETH'S MIND: Oh, lord... here she goes with that reflective listening garbage.
BETH: I guess. Or teach.
COUNSELOR: English? High school?
BETH: I guess.
COUNSELOR: What would make you a good teacher?
BETH: Well, I enjoy reading and writing. And I like kids. Mostly, I know how frustrating it is to have to interpret literature and not get it right... I'd know how they feel and I'd be able to help maybe.
BETH'S MIND: Great answer, Beth. Who are you kidding? Do you really want to go back to high school?
COUNSELOR: So you could empathize with their frustration?
BETH: Yeah?
COUNSELOR: That might be appreciated, but, I don't know if it's enough of a reason to sustain a career...

We talked on. I grew increasingly nervous as she pressed further about what I liked and enjoyed. I liked working with people. I was a resident assistant. I enjoyed helping and counseling others. I loved children, but didn't want to be an elementary teacher... she didn't need to know exactly why. Music and theatre and the arts were very important, but somehow scary to me. Counselor pay dirt.

COUNSELOR: Have you considered combining some of your interests?
BETH: Sure. Maybe. I don't know.
COUNSELOR: Well, I see some threads of working with people, working with children, writing, the arts.
BETH: I wouldn't feel comfortable being an actor or singer out there auditioning all the time and being a waitress really.
COUNSELOR: There are other options.
BETH: I thought a little bit about arts management.
COUNSELOR: I'm not familiar with that field, but it sounds like a possibility. Let's look. GETS A BOOK FROM HER SHELF:
BETH'S MIND: What book can help me?
COUNSELOR: Let's see... arts... theatre... there's management... here's children... puppetry?
BETH'S MIND: Oh my God--she wants me to be that lady on TV with that lamb puppet! HELP!!!
I never showed for the second session. I declared my major as General Arts. Arts Management and moved on from there. I was able to take several theatre courses and even found one children's theatre course in the offerings. We studied plays for young audiences—and the need for more good ones. We learned about the history of children's theatre in America and even tried our own hands at playwriting and envisioning an ideal family theatre.

At least I knew there was a field that involved children and theatre arts. They even had a national organization, and could use another playwright . . . maybe . . . one day.

**Hands (and Wings) On: Exploring Playful Learning**

Graduation approaching. I was truly lost, but two internships in an arts listing appealed to me. I arranged to do them both. The first was at The Philadelphia Zoo. I was one of seven interns who worked at an education center called Treehouse designed to help children experience and understand the perspectives of animals. There was a honeycomb with cells large enough for children to climb inside and hear the buzzing and smell the honey. There was a chrysalis in which they could spin, then emerge as a butterfly. There was a life-sized dinosaur the children could climb upon or slip their heads inside her and look out her eyes while smelling what she ate for lunch. Fear not, she was an herbivore, so the scent was chewed plants not rotting flesh. We interns were all dressed as different animals. Yes, I was a bee. No one bothered to tell me on costume-picking day that part of being the bee was leading the bee-waggle line when we talked about bee communication. Consequently, there are several family home video libraries that are a good source for anyone interested in blackmailing me.

The other six interns were varying species. We varied outside our wings and tails as well. Four days a week, we filled our positions at the Treehouse and on the fifth day, we each worked in another self-chosen area of the zoo. I opted to work in the education department helping develop activities and events for the learning center itself. But some of my colleagues were drawn by other interests. "The alligator," for instance, loved the big
cats so she assisted with a study on tigers. And "the butterfly" was a marine biology major, so her fifth day was spent with sea lions. Through one another, we gained tremendous factual knowledge as we gossiped about our adventures and grew as friends.

We took the behind-the-scenes-employee zoo tour, including the commissary where we saw just how many frozen chicks, horse carcasses, and bushels of lettuce it took to feed "the collection." We peeked in on a two-day-old giraffe and his mama. When else would I have noticed the necessary height dimensions of a giraffe barn or received the universal protective mother's glare from a giraffe--at my eye level? She meant business. That zoo--as most--was a community, a culture of discovery just brimming over with stories. A sick zebra slumber party. Fading flamingos. Rhinoceros sex. Lost children. I couldn't go anywhere without learning something about animals, their habitats--or the people who came to see them.

The job was to help children learn, but our intern program was established on the belief that learning was central to teaching; knowledge was negotiated and socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1986). We read about our animals and their habitats for factual background (Bruner's second model, learners as mental acquirers). But we grew in our knowledge as we shared and negotiated it in the context of Treehouse, each other, and a zoo full of experts, forcing us to be collaborative thinkers and critical cultural interpreters, too. This zoo was intended to be a place of discovery for all. Teachers seeing themselves as learners is an important constructivist notion. Teaching and learning are intertwined. Echoes of this sentiment could be heard in the whole language movement, on the rise at the time of my internship.

Perhaps more than anything else, whole language is about learners feeling whole and able and part of a community of learners. It is about belonging and risk-taking and feeling successful as teachers and learners. It is about the power of collaboration to break down the isolation of teachers and to establish communities of belonging and learning for all students and teachers. (Routman, 1991. p. 4)
We interns, along with the child visitors and their adult companions, belonged to the center's community of learners, but how and why we taught and learned varied widely. The environment was playfully and artistically inviting by design, luring through varied senses and intelligences. (Gardner, 1993) The idea was that children would learn as they played in these fantasy habitats that walked the border of play's non-literacy attitude requiring "players to understand that what is done is not what it appears to be." (Garvey, 1990) At least once a week I saw a child completely unwilling to relinquish his dinosaur status while Mom struggled to remind him he was, in fact, a boy—a boy about to find reality in the time-out chair. Heathcote (in Johnson & O'Neill, 1984) writes about one of the links between the arts and play being temporary freedom from the burden of the future, because the arts and play are both "lifelike, but not life itself."

I would expand that a bit further by pointing out the natural synergism between child play and art. Children's playfulness benefits art as it makes any creation potentially temporary, available for reconsideration and questioning and revision. This playful sense that so enhances and invites art is not something they learn, it intrinsic to children in a very natural way.

What to do in this enticing environment was usually led by the children. In the course of an hour, the bee hive could be a scientific specimen, a teaching prop, a chair, a "buzz-buzz" toy, a jungle gym, a theatre set, a diaper-changing table, a dramatic-play prompt, a hiding place, and an accident site. As interns, we joined the action as we saw fit or felt like it. The continuum of roles ranged from playground monitor at one end to ever-responsive dramatic player/teacher at the other end.

The aim was informal, curiosity-driven experiential learning. Dewey (1938) writes of some experiences being interesting and lively, yet "their
disconnectedness may artificially generate dispersive, disintegrated, centrifugal habits. . . . (The experiences) are then taken, either by way of enjoyment or of discontent and revolt. . . . Under such circumstances it is ideal to talk of self control" (p. 26). Simply put, if a well-intended experience goes awry, we blame the child's poor behavior.

One intern renamed our center "The Land of Overstimulation." Many children left the center having had a wonderfully rousing romp up and down the jungle tree without ever knowing that's where they were. Play--in the here and now--was the predominant mode. We seldom slowed or strayed from that unless there were small crowds or special events. For such events, they would call on me to design stories and scenes and games to help children learn about the animals, their lives, and conservation.

These activities fell into the "to" and "for" categories of drama: fun and creative, but within known limits to convey known material. Bruner's external views of learners as imitators and mental acquirers. The material to be conveyed was more important than the art form. Drama was a utilitarian vehicle. Success was measured by child enjoyment. The energy emanating from the activities needed to be akin to the energy emanating from the children's play. If not, they would take off mid-story for the nearest alligator egg and hide. That is not to say they didn't have a valuable learning experience at the egg, rather that I needed to understand the playful draw of the egg and fold that element into my lesson to make it as worthwhile to them.

At that point in time, my interpretation of drama's potential functions was limited. I used it as I knew how and was familiar. Each intern also had belief's about drama's potential functions and her relation to bringing those functions alive. I was considered one more prone to using drama, one more likely to play. Others avoided it as uncomfortable. Over time, drama achieved a peripheral
status in their work and a utilitarian status in mine, which grew out of our perceptions of drama’s potential functions in the context of our work.

Though the way I strive to work in drama now is different than this, the experience gave me broad insight into the breadth of responses children could have to a playfully evocative environment and the inherent responsibility of the teacher to both evoke and guide learning.

Though drama has play as an element, the level of freedom is different in drama than it is in play. In his book, *Toward a Theory of Drama in Education*, Gavin Bolton (1979) describes the three major orientations of basic drama experience as exercises, dramatic playing, and theatre. He then goes on to explain that a teacher must use these forms in combination “so that the strengths are harnessed and the limitations reduced.” Thus the teacher frames the experiences episodically.

The framing choices the teacher makes in manipulating the drama’s context so as to encourage play in a specified manner or direction are similar to choices made solely by children in play. Though both contexts are child-centered, drama is adult-manipulated. The maker of the rules varies from play to drama. Child play can be framed to give it dramatic art form, but left alone, play ordinarily reinforces the known (Bolton, 1986). Drama, on the other hand, seeks to affect subjective understanding at a meaning level. It is up to the teacher to facilitate that gear switch. This has implications for teachers finding their way into using drama. Their understanding of, comfort with, or propensity toward play could serve as a scaffold for understanding and entering into drama.
Hands Off: Seeing Myself in Other Artists

The second internship landed me as an arts-management intern at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts children's division, then called "Programs for Children and Youth." This was the sort of work environment I had imagined might be right for me. I was in charge of enrollment for Saturday drama classes which meant I sat at a table while other people taught children in various parts of the building. I also helped with the box-office ticketing which meant I put tickets into envelopes while others put the play together.

I learned a lot of valuable things about how an arts organization runs and how invaluable strong arts management is. But most of all, I saw first-hand that the people who were working as legitimate artists with children weren’t doing anything that I couldn’t do—or learn to do.

By the end of the second internship, I had decided to apply to masters programs in theatre education. I was amazed to know there were any. I attended Emerson College in Boston, MA. The program offered opportunities for classes both in theatre for young audiences as well as drama as a learning medium. Professionally, I was home. People who knew me knew that this was a good path for me. And I was finally at a point where I could see enough safe options to be willing to risk something artistic. I needed to love my work. I could love this, I thought.

"Yes, Fairy Godmother. I'd Like To Be Dorothy Heathcote, Please."

I loved all my classes. The drama as a learning medium classes inspired me more than the theatre for young audience classes. I recall watching Three Looms Waiting, a video chronicling the career of Dorothy Heathcote, the pioneer of what has come to be known as process-oriented or classroom drama. It told of her finally gaining the courage and money to leave the factory looms at which she and her mom had earned a living to pursue schooling in the theatre. Her boss had promised there would be "three looms waiting" for her return. Evidently, they still wait. She went on to be—a—if not the—pioneer of drama for learning.
I have seen that video several times since and I always find it both inspiring and unsettling, much like drama itself. Heathcote is a leader, a model, a guide, and an inspiration. However, she will never be duplicated. We in education have trouble with that. We have been taught to want practices we can easily snap up and copy, rather than ponder over and struggle with. We have somehow fostered pockets of belief that teaching practices can almost be made "teacher-proof."

Robert Colby, my professor, had actually studied with Heathcote for a year. He had been present during the time one segment of Three Looms was filmed. He pointed out an autistic child in the film, who engaged so naturally in the drama. Apparently during a later drama session, the child actually spoke his first words and was whisked off to be seen by specialists and what have you; the drama had elicited a major breakthrough for the child. A remarkable moment to behold, no doubt.

Robert acknowledged the strength of Heathcote's presence and artistry as both awe-inspiring and intimidating. He told of the occasional self-imposed frustration he and other classmates endured in trying to learn from Heathcote, measuring themselves by their perceptions of her standards. One classmate suffered severe depression during the year with Heathcote. The cumulative reasons for such a state obviously reached back beyond that year; however, Robert tried to explain the depth of self-reflection Heathcote both sought and elicited. To work in drama was not to stand outside, but within—within who you are and how you are—without a place to hide, essentially. For some, drama epitomized a place to hide; a place to assume the identity of another to get away from who they are in "real life." Not so in this type of drama. This was about being who you are, yet being and seeing as others... or something like that... well, it sure was intriguing. What was that first line again? Oh yes... "Now what do you think we ought to do a play about?"

I was sold.
Buying Books and Deciphering Visions: It's All Drama, Right?

The art of Heathcote's drama was that it was self-reflective and dialogic (Edmiston, 1994), allowing and urging participants to stand both outside and inside an experience for the experience to develop. I can wrap words around my growing understanding of those ideas now. But at the time Heathcote's work was simply compelling in a very basic and visceral way. I was driven to be around it and learn as much as I could about it, but I had no fancy labels, nor did I seek them. I just wanted to understand how to do what she did.

ROBERT: In this course, I want you to get familiar with several different approaches to using drama with children. Don't feel you have to buy a book for every approach. I have several samples here. Take a look at them and we can order what you each want.

NICK: Who's that game lady again?

ROBERT: You mean Spolin?

NICK: The mirror game and all that, you know.


MARCI: There's a lot of stuff in this McCaslin 1990 book, are we being tested?

ROBERT: This class is more practical, unless you wanted a test...


Who were these people? Were they friends in real life? How different could their work be? I ordered one of each. When they came in, I sprawled on my bed and paged through. The books stirred a combination of excitement and questions. Spolin... so I could spend the rest of my career playing games? Or are they just warm-ups? Oh—you need to play them in a certain order? McCaslin... I know I shouldn't judge by the cover, but those children look sort of posed, is that how creative drama goes? Where would I start? OK. imagination first, then concentration, then... Wow. There's a lot of stuff in here. Hey look, there's even a few pages on drama as a learning medium. O'Neill... I'm sure these are perfectly wonderful lessons. but I can't picture them... would I understand better if I were British? Do they really last a whole class period? Where's the action?
As we began reading and exploring more practically, similarities emerged. All three aimed to promote personal growth by creating socially interactive, process-oriented, improvised experiences for participants in a creatively altered learning context. But their missions differed, too. Spolin was the easiest to separate for she sought to teach people how to be actors through games while the other two had more complicated aims. Spolin explained her approach to games in a functional definition:

The game is a natural group form providing the Involvement and personal freedom necessary for experiencing. Games develop personal techniques and skills necessary for the game itself, through playing. Skills are developed at the very moment a person is having all the fun and excitement a game has to offer--this is the exact time he is truly open to receive them. (p. 4)

According to Spolin, one need only play a game properly and learning the targeted acting skill would occur automatically, with some "side-coaching" from the teacher. The ultimate goal was spontaneity. Physicalization was primary for the actor, according to Spolin, since ultimately it was the actor's job to "show" the audience. For me, one of the most interesting contrasts between the games approach and classroom drama was viewing the experience over time. Spolin believed her games ought to flow in a certain progression, however she also believed that

without exception, all exercises are over the moment the problem is solved. This may happen in one minute or in twenty, depending on the growing skills of students in playing. The solving of the problem is the scene's life force. Continuing a scene after the problem is solved is cerebration instead of process. (p. 37)

Spolin's "cerebration" was classroom drama's vital, sought after generative reflection or contemplation.
O'Neill described drama as the richly complicated art she practices:

There has to be engagement, but simultaneous contemplation. One is not working for "hallucinated participation" but for a kind of dual awareness, a critical consciousness. (In McCaslin, p. 294)

The quest for complication and fostered tension was not so strong in creative drama as in process-oriented drama. McCaslin explained creative drama more simply by its idealized benefits to children:

By offering an opportunity for participation in drama, we are helping to reserve something of the play impulse in all of its joy, freedom, and order. (p. 447)

Even more interesting to me was how each of the latter two subtly and graciously wondered about the other's presumed conceptual framework or artistic view. These interchanges were couched in a creative drama text in the chapter entitled "Drama as a Learning Medium" (in McCaslin, 1990, p. 294). Each makes sense of her own art in the critical interpretation of and negotiation with the other. They are operating in Bruner's fourth model of learners as critical interpreters.

O'Neill: Drama lessons that rely on games and exercises to the neglect of the creation of dramatic roles and contexts are lacking what is, for me, the essential activity of drama. Drama is by its nature an experimental, exploratory and ambiguous process (p.294).

There was an implication that reliance on games and exercises strategically prevented drama from developing in fruitful, though unknown and potentially complicated directions; that working from this frame ran the risk of superficial, going-through-the-motions activity; that the teacher quit before she started; that such an approach relegated drama to a craft or a skill level rather than elevating it to a generative, collaborative art form. Or maybe I just imagined that subtext.
McCaslin described Heathcote's "followers" as including more classroom teachers while creative drama "followers" included more drama teachers and specialists. She described the main thing distinguishing Heathcote's style of drama from other drama teaching as the technique of working in--and stepping in and out of--role, for "clarification" and "further discussion."

McCaslin: It is this technique that most differentiates (Heathcote's) work from that of the majority of American creative drama teachers, who rarely take an active part or stop a scene that is going well to discuss it. Heathcote's classes, because of their interest in the situation, are able to stop, enter into discussion, and then continue playing (p. 292).

There was an implication that the drama somehow ceased when discussion began; that the teacher was intruding on working artists by assuming a role in a scene that was "going well;" that such an approach allowed the teacher to impinge upon the art that clearly was created by and belonged to the student artists. Or did I imagine that, too?

Without having seen all three of these orientations in action over a number of years in a number of contexts, I might be tempted to simply say that the creative drama and games approaches fall under the category of doing drama "to" children while the process-drama approach falls under the doing drama "with" children category. However, I don't believe it's that simple. In their purest theoretical forms, each of these approaches aspires to have teachers doing drama "with" the children. Practitioners in each arena would claim that they shared with their students on the vision, decision, and action levels. To an extent, they could. But participation in the creative drama and games approaches would require students to adopt some predetermined elements of the teacher's vision in order to have the right to make decisions and carry out actions. Thus, they were joining a work of art already partially in progress
toward a largely known end, or at least a familiar form. Whereas in process-oriented drama the teacher would begin with a vision, a huge part of her agenda would be the task of keeping that vision under constant negotiation and revision that it might be shared or even discarded and replaced by the vision of another. Thus, the constantly renegotiated shared vision would be the goal of drama, rather than simply a step in the process.

**Trying On the Process: Renting Experiences in Others' Dramas**

Teacher in-role and mantel of the expert were the two clear-cut, concrete ideas I got from studying Dorothy Heathcote’s approach from across the Atlantic in the learning medium class. The shift in power to the children made sense. What a brilliant discovery that the dynamic of endowing children with the roles of experts, then approaching them in-role as someone needing their help and expertise could generate such theatre and such learning. I never would have come up with that on my own.

Demonstrations helped further my understanding. Robert Colby, our professor, had one lab class where children from the elementary school down the street came for a lesson. We had planned a mystery drama, each of us bringing in a piece of evidence, various ones of us playing roles. Prior to their coming, we had plotted through courses they might take and even brainstormed and improvised a few “what if” scenarios.

Having taught a few college-level drama classes and run a few drama workshops for teachers, I now see the dilemma Robert faced in a college class of this nature. Drama is a lot more complex than simply assuming a role and approaching the children as real experts. We didn’t have regular field placements in which to experiment with techniques through trial and error. He was caught. If he made the drama too complicated or if we bombed, most would have just abandoned the prospect of working in this manner for something easier. He was trying to create a positive learning experience on
two levels— for the children visiting and for the college students. He did what I
found I do when I only have a short, intensive window of time to "win drama
supporters." He relied on a tried and true, sure-fire lesson. It rallies support, but
it doesn't always give rise to the conversations about complications. With so
many of us involved, the lesson took on a performance element which almost
bordered on a T.I.E. (Theatre in Education) experience. Were we doing drama
"for" the children or "with" them? The proper answer is probably "Some of
each." That wasn't necessarily bad or wrong. Even doing drama "with" children
usually includes some "to" or "for" strategies effectively. The key was knowing
and varying strategically. Such aesthetic structuring is vital to using drama
artistically.

I fortunately had an opportunity to continue more hands-on learning beyond our
classroom through a research assistantship. Robert and one of his former students, Bethany
Nelson, were part of a study on sixth-grade scientific literacy. There were many
components, including technology, experimentation, etc. I was only involved in the
drama component, designed to create a context for students to use and further their
accumulating hypotheses, scientific knowledge, and reasoning skills in a drama context. I
observed some drama lessons and occasionally participated in-role. I also spent a summer
transcribing interview tapes, essentially eavesdropping on the children's insights about
drama and their learning. Oh how those children loved to be listened to—whether in the
drama or in an interview. They knew they were heard, differently than they were
accustomed to being heard. That's as clearly as I can describe it. I could just tell.

Knowing what I now know of the drama field and its frequent links to
sister disciplines and more firmly established bodies of theory and research, I
find it interesting that my drama "apprenticeship" put me in a scientific rather
than a literary, humanities, or social science context. However, the experience
helped me readily see parallels and links between scientific and dramatic thinking. O'Neill (in Taylor, 1996) echoes this observation in reminding researchers of links between the scientific and the aesthetic. Both rely heavily on generative, creative, precise, recursive, problem-solving thought.

Bruner (1970) claims “... it is only through problem solving and the effort of discovery that one learns the working heuristic of discovery ... the very attitudes and activities that characterize ‘figuring out’ or ‘discovering things for oneself’ also seem to have the effect of making material more readily accessible to memory.” (p.100) Drama affords that opportunity, with and without links to science. Perhaps more importantly, the project laid the foundation for me to be alert for drama's eclectic potential across a wide range of disciplines.

Truly I don't know the ultimate findings of the study because I graduated prior to its completion, didn't know where publications of its findings might appear, and wasn't yet wise to the academic way of making certain I could lay partial claim to any research activity that even remotely involved me. However, I gained a great deal in my ignorance. Most of all, I walked away with an understanding of two teachers' artistic styles of interpreting Dorothy Heathcote's approach to drama.

One drama was a mystery, I played one of three suspects. Something crossed over in me at that point; one of those a-ha moments. I loved it. There was a charge that came from working with children in-role, when it was "really cooking" and growing and generating what would follow, excitingly unimagined paths.

This was my first experience of doing drama “with” the children. Neither of us would have been anywhere without the other in that interaction. I think now of Bethany and Bob's skill in laying out the drama which was to include four adults in-role and a classroom of sixth graders. The adults helped them shape the initial vision, but our characters were our responsibility... and we
had to remain ambiguous enough that our guilt or innocence would grow from subsequent reflections with the children. The plot was not predetermined.

To this very moment, I don’t believe it is possible to begin using drama without first experiencing it on some level. Participation, free from the nervous entanglements of planning responsibilities, was what Dewey would call an “integral” aesthetic experience for me. Its residue would linger in and even shape experiences to follow it. I borrowed Bethany and Robert’s vision and quite a few of their decisions, but I was responsible for my actions, though they would have saved me if I had gotten in a mess. It was safely scaffolded (Bruner, 1983) and those scaffolding others reflectively helped me safely negotiate my way in my zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986).

This experience allowed me to take the knowledge I had acquired in class work about drama (Bruner’s second model) and play with it in a practical apprenticeship situation (Bruner’s first model). Knowing drama’s potential functions in combination with trying to bring those functions meaningfully alive for myself helped me move drama from a utilitarian status to a craft status with respect to my style of teaching and learning. I was not an artist, but I had observed an artist and been inspired by her to drive myself in that direction.

Patterns of functional use of drama in pedagogy over time give rise to categories of assigned status, based on function, in the range of all the things a teacher does. The four categories I use to describe drama status in my own work and in this study are: periphery, utility, craft and art. If drama has periphery status, it has a patterned use as being insignificant in “real” learning; it is for “silly,” break, or fun times only, e.g. playing house during free time. If drama has utility status, it is only allowed into the realm of “real” learning as packaging for more privileged content, e.g. having students act out a story to
assess comprehension. Both of these statuses use an externalist orientation, limiting drama to being done "to" or "for" children.

If drama has craft status, the teacher has recognized drama's artistic potential and is actively and reflectively working toward it. Drama becomes an opportunity for co-created learning. The teacher operates as the reflective apprentice, borrowing technique (decisions and actions) to help clarify and develop artistic vision. A gap exists between artistic appreciation and artistic practice in this status. It isn't always pretty or easy. Progress through craft status gradually bridges that gap, propelled by personal drive to achieve artistry. An element of the craft status is the teacher's recognition of drama's generative potential, hence its reciprocally beneficial connections to other learning areas, e.g. response to literature and writing. This, too, serves as scaffold.

If drama has art status in a classroom, it is at the center of learning; a vehicle for both exploration and generation of curriculum. Artistic appreciation and practice come more comfortably in line and the borders between doing or using drama and regular classroom learning blur. Every action of the teacher will not necessarily drip with artistry. Sometimes it will be craft. But the drama is centrally poised to inspire generative artistic thinking and frame inquiry over time, e.g. Heathcote's mantel of the expert model.

Another drama I recall had to do with Madame Marie Curie and her struggles with acceptance by the academy because she was a woman scientist. Perhaps the drama itself was not as significant as the preparation. I remember Bethany talking about "social objectives." She had noted that girls in several of the four classes would relinquish participation to the boys, even when the girls clearly had contributions that emerged more privately.
This was not only about teaching science, it was first about teaching children.

I also saw her lose her temper once. She dropped out of her role, as they sat half-un, half-out. “Come on, you guys. I can’t do this by myself. If I’m up here in role and you’re back there playing around, I feel like a jerk and we’re not getting anywhere. Now are we going to do this together or not?”

There was comfort in seeing her struggle, if only for a fleeting moment.

Robert had a great deal of respect and admiration for both Bethany, his former student, present colleague and Dorothy Heathcote, his mentor. He acknowledged that Bethany had her own version of drama, a variation on Heathcote’s theme. More controlling perhaps, more rigid lines and delineations, more teacher in-role, less student movement and “crowd scenes” and group consensus opportunities. She worked where she was comfortable. She and Robert would talk about the lessons afterward. The last lessons would help shape the next lessons in a generative way, determining what content ought to be next; where the kids seemed to be. They also talked about the four teachers in the study and their classroom climates, how the teacher’s habits and patterns and routines and personal comfort levels with drama seemed to influence their students’ collective engagement in the drama. They were artists, but the art wasn’t only in the aesthetic dramatic events, it was in the purely human ones, too.

I wanted to student teach in an elementary setting. The only elementary placement was with a teacher who admired and knew of Heathcote, but worked more in a creative-drama capacity. She had built a strong program, but I didn’t know how to get practical moment-to-moment guidance in developing my own drama ideas, including visions, decisions, and actions. Our initial visions weren’t in line. So I learned a lot about discipline. One of the most-often-repeated subconscious mantras was a quote from Robert: “The best disciplinary tool is a strong, engaging lesson.” However, it often waited by a guilty moment when I wasn’t providing the least bit of stimulus for engagement. The
student teaching placement taught me a lot about how elementary and middle-school drama programs function. But my time with Bethany and Robert taught me a lot about how I wanted to function—for my sake and even more so for the children's.

Teachers of drama may share beliefs, but no two teachers are identical. Dorothy Heathcote (in Johnson and O'Neill, 1984) writes of the teacher's natural need for security in terms of thresholds. However, she goes on to emphasize the responsibility implicit in that need. Heathcote believes teachers must recognize their thresholds

... that they may gradually push back these security needs and accept more tenuous positions ... that eventually they may teach from positions of calculated risk. I believe that few teachers discover their true teaching thresholds because of timetables and syllabi which prevent the discovery of natural teaching pace and rate. (p. 63)

Heathcote's thresholds include:

• noise
  How loud is too loud? How much order is required for comfort? Are there schoolwide limits—overt or implied?

• space
  Do you want to build a group sense or factions? How near or far from you do you invite your students—and for what effect? What challenges and assets does the physical room lend?

• group size
  What size group best suits your objective? (Be wary of the idea that a smaller number is always easier or better. That is not always so.)

• decision-making and leadership
  How do you structure to foster leadership among the students in the immediate and over time? When do you hold fast to leadership for yourself? How do you feel about group decision-taking?
subject interest of the teacher

What preconceived ideas about content or art form might stand in your way of building on student ideas?

evaluation and standards

What are you looking and listening for? What counts as important and relevant? How do you find it?

teaching registers

How broad is the comfortable range of interactions with students? How might taking on different roles expand that breadth? How comfortable are thoughts of playing with status and relinquishing power?

All seven thresholds are likely familiar to most teachers in some form. The last four are particularly important to teaching through drama as they can tend to fall stagnant victim to the learning-as-mental-acquisition model Bruner describes as pervading most schools. Using drama helps create a context—a world (O’Neill, 1995, Edmiston, 1991)—for playing with established habits and patterns. Of all these thresholds, the decision-making and leadership threshold seems to stand separate but also pervade into all other thresholds areas... haunt most teachers feeling inadequately equipped to teach drama. It is about power negotiation.

I want my classes to learn to make decisions, and to understand the problems and rewards of these decisions, so I regard it as my prime task to insure that they clearly understand the choice between possibilities, the nature of the decision taken and the demands likely to be put upon them because of the decision taken. (p. 66)

Like their students, drama teachers are always making choices that place demands upon them. All teachers have their own thresholds. The danger lies in not knowing them, hence not pushing them. The teacher, according to
Heathcote, owns the responsibility for the depth to which the drama penetrates.

Bolton (1979) described a pattern of behavior he experienced at drama conferences over time “where, in the early stages, members have vigorously nodded to each other in mutual agreement only to discover much later that they have been speaking from totally different conceptual frameworks in spite of using the same vocabulary” (p. 1). This points up two important things to me. First, all drama is somehow linked and bears some sort of similarity—be it small or large—to all other drama. Second, drama without a conceptual framework is just words and activities. Most of us start there, as unglamorous as that sounds. Our conceptual frame is our vision and it needs time to grow and change. We can admire another’s vision or conceptual frame and aspire toward it, but we must build our own.

This is illuminated in Cecily O’Neill’s (1991) candid reflection on her own growth as a drama teacher first hearing Heathcote describe drama as a “shared learning experience” (p. 11). O’Neill had believed herself to be providing such a thing in her classes, but then admitted to being

... unaware of the real implications of this belief for my own practice and the demands it would make on me and on my students. Until then, my main function as a teacher had been to provide ideas for my students, ideas which allowed them to work through a number of different tasks and exercises, and to oversee their work. Although it seemed that these brief improvisations could lead into drama, in practice none of them was ever allowed to develop to the point where it had a life of its own. As a teacher I was in charge of the ideas, so control of the materials of the lesson stayed firmly in my hands. (p. 11)

She was doing drama to her students. O’Neill wrote about later getting to the point where she was able to work from “within” the drama, largely relying on teacher in-role and working toward spontaneity and autonomy. Then her struggle became taking on too strong of a role, thus controlling the drama’s
content, "instead of working to develop its structure" (p. 14). She was doing the drama for the children. Craft takes a long time to become art. The border between the two is seldom crossed but once.

**Finding my way in schools: Assessment by engagement**

I got a job in North Carolina as an elementary drama specialist. I was assigned to six schools, two at a time for twelve weeks at a stretch. At one point, I added up that I taught almost 3000 kindergarten through fifth grade students that year. I would often play different roles during drama classes, so children didn’t always remember my name. I remembered faces, though. When we would have those weird what-is-my-teacher-doing-at-the-grocery-store encounters, I would say: “Hi, honey.” And the child would say: “Hi, drama.”

The first year of teaching is often a year of learning and adjustment. Mine was anyway.

No one teaches a teacher how to teach. Teachers are made in the classroom during confrontations with their classes, and the product they become is the result of their need to survive and the ways they devise to do this. Heathcote in Johnson and O’Neill, 1984, p. 151

Though they become teachers in the interactions with their students, where they have been and how they have been there shapes who and how they are. I was a product of survival.

Surveying teachers to find out what they were working on helped me integrate some drama lessons into their classroom efforts. The reality of time and planning constraints limited my ability to tailor lessons. The curriculum was a list of isolated theatre skills, so I didn’t pay much attention to it. But that also left me feeling resource-less. All the lessons I used, good and horrible, came from me.

I was not responsible for grading the children. I was observed three times, once by an assistant principal, twice by a county observer. I had a mentor who met with me once at the start of the school year. He handed me a creative drama text book, invited me to watch him teach a lesson, talked with me afterwards, and sent me on my way with a
Planning seemed endless. Envisioning lessons and deciding how to implement them plagued my mind. Some books provided ideas, but adopting another’s exact lesson plan has often felt like using a map of Toledo to find my way around Seattle. There were so many things that I could only learn in the action phase. The poor children I taught on Mondays! But I grew a lot in being able to do lessons more than once, getting second, third, and twentieth chances to reflect and refine. The downside, of course, was refining to the point that lessons became theatre events. By Friday, I was a one-woman show. Questions could almost have been scripted. Transitions could almost have been choreographed. Within their time slot, these lessons were often engaging, active, creative, verbal, generative events. But then they were over. And the next week, it was something else.

Teachers who stayed to watch drama would note how drama brought out some quieter students, or helped channel energy positively for others who often found themselves in trouble. The children’s language and actions and interactions in-role were perhaps the most noted items of observation. “I’ve never heard him talk like that!”

Teachers observing drama would often speak of its importance for bringing children “out of their shells” or “making them more confident.” The fact that drama created a context where children felt compelled to talk, that they believed their own words to be important enough to share and assured that those words would be heard was not the issue observed. But at least the depth of talk and difference in classroom interaction was noticed on some level. Drama and language use have been examined by Edmiston, Enciso, and King (1987), where drama becomes a vehicle for language exploration. Drama, as a communally-created experience, provides enriched opportunities for participation and observation yielding increased depth and originality in
learning. Learning through drama is based on shared voices which tap an innate dramatic sense common to all people. “The voices in our own mind, our skill in representing the actions and speech of others, our ability to see the other side of things, to create opposing opinions, to be able to anticipate the answers to the questions we ask, are all built on our power to dramatize, to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes.” (O’Neill, 1995)

20/20 Hindsight: Real Strategies/Retrospective Suggestions

My known and comfortable dramatic strategies or modes included: teacher in-role, mantel of the expert, storytelling, mime, voice-over, and games. I usually tried to use mime, voice-over, and games within the other contexts. Lessons framed by story were often the most engaging for the children, consequently, the easiest for me to manage.

Egan (1986) advocates placing storytelling at the center of the curriculum for its power to engage children naturally, stimulate imagination, and explore timeless human concepts and ideas.

As we talk together, revealing ideas and attitudes, we alter both others and ourselves . . . We are the story, all of us (Barton and Booth, 1990, p. 9).

Barton and Booth describe story as a “living context for making meaning.” In “my” stories, we were a living context, but I kept too-tight a hold on the meaning being made. I had already largely determined the meaning prior to ever whispering “There was once a small village on the edge of a mysterious forest . . .”

David Booth is hailed as an accessible link between classroom teachers and drama practice. In his writings, drama is positioned among more familiar classroom literacy approaches, such as story talks and reading aloud, things teachers already do. Booth is perhaps best known for his work in story drama,
mentioned as one of many potential story responses. It is exploring "the essence" of a story through improvised drama.

    Fundamental memories brought forth by the intensity of the reading or drama experience are tapped so that the resultant response is both personal and universal, and can be shared in the context of the literacy situation and the dramatic experience. Then the literary code will be broken and the context made significant to the "theory of the world" that each individual is in the process of creating as he or she is educated—in the widest sense of the word. (Booth. 1994. p. 119)

Many of the elements Booth describes were present in my work, but it wasn’t on my agenda to “break literary codes” or to explore “theories of the world.” My work didn’t have room or time for too many ideas messing up my lesson. In every school, control was valued over generativity. In my naivete, I didn’t realize the two were not polar extremes. In a sense, I was leading a running tour through an art museum, stopping only for the pieces I thought worthwhile. There was art all around and inside. But I was the only one allowed to be an artist. The most the children could hope to be: my obedient apprentices.

    Why didn’t I know about David Booth? I also wish I had knowledge of a couple “how to” drama books, like Teaching Drama (Morgan and Saxton. 1987) or Making Sense of Drama (Neelands. 1984). Books like this could have illuminated the complicated intricacies and illustrated the array of options available to the teacher using drama.

    Drama done well constitutes strong, imaginative, evocative teaching. A glance at the questioning section of Morgan and Saxton’s text supports that claim. They discern between questions that concretize, questions which help shape Inner understanding, and questions that press students to a deeper consideration of a situation. They describe how questions can function to close, summarize, clarify, build tension, lure, and prompt reflection. They advised and
warned . . . "The question's delivery is as important as its message" . . .

Questions are not the sole prerogative of the teacher and answers are not only for the students. This book remained unknown to me. Meanwhile, I sat through more than one lecture-style workshop on higher-order thinking and questioning skills. Longing for art, but being fed skills.

State funding for the drama program phased out as planned. Individual districts were to pick it up, at which point most schools opted to advocate for teachers using drama themselves rather than having a specialist. I agreed in a sense that isolated, schedule-driven drama for drama's sake in the elementary school was not nearly so meaningful for learning to a broad range of children as art contextualized in ongoing classroom inquiry. However, I was saddened knowing that on paper, the teachers would be responsible for classroom drama, yet, in reality, none of them would be helped or guided. They were considered already equipped.

Arts educators are operating under intolerable conditions, not the least of which is the general attitude that what they teach is irrelevant.
(Oddleifson, 1994, p. 448)

"Commercial" Drama

I was becoming well-versed at the art of looking for a job. My mother kept quoting the keynote speaker from my undergraduate graduation whose main message was that life in the arts had many benefits, but that few things came easily and without struggle and sacrifice; paths were unclear and ill-defined, but worthwhile. She got a lot of mileage out of that one. Still does.

This particular artistic struggle landed me at the Children's Theatre of Webster, teaching a variety of after-school and Saturday classes to the public on-site and to various school groups and organizations through the outreach program. Most class titles were cute, catchy, and thematic, because that approach sold. Many participants were familiar with the theatre's programs or at least its reputation and expected classes would include games.
stories, improvisation, sharing, performing, and fun. Year-long classes provided more potential for more process work, but even there, many children—and their families—had distinct ideas about what was important in a drama class.

I was part of an artistic community. The borders were usually warmly permeable. Over the course of my time with the theatre, I taught, I performed, I wrote, I directed. And I worked with others who were similarly eclectic, but with different priorities. Many theatre artists worked in both children's and adult theatre, further widening the community for me.

Even though I was working with people whose visions did not coincide precisely with mine, I had colleagues. We learned from each other. I was working with a group on an underground railroad script. The Education Director volunteered to come in and do a lesson she called “Escape.” She said it was a Brian Way exercise. The children played the hunter/hunted game. Then she had them repeat an escape sequence several times, with increasing complication each time. They talked a little bit afterward about how they felt, and that was that. When she and I talked afterward, she described the experience she provided as “packing”—extra ideas and feelings to surround the play, aiding its passage safely into audience perceptions. Her “packing” would have been part of the bejeweled gift, rather than the safety material in a process-oriented context. So visions and conceptual frames were really about priorities? Maybe.

Charming by Engagement: Spoiling Auntie Comes to Visit

I was the first considered for an impending part-time drama job funded by St. Joseph’s Church through Children’s Theatre at McDowell and Bentley Heights Elementary Schools. I was the only teacher who had any experience as a public-school drama teacher. One year made me an expert. We had to go into a staff meeting and present a little bit about the program. Teachers could opt to participate or not.

I resurrected some “greatest hits” lessons from my former school job to start out. By that point, I had done some of those lessons hundreds of times. Literally. They all
though I was magic. I continued a second year. Teachers attended workshops conducted by the Education Director and the Theatre-School Liaison from Children's Theatre, my bosses. Theirs was a stronger creative drama/activity orientation than mine. Teachers liked learning games, but that was not what I was doing in classrooms. I think they figured I had my own approach, but we were all basically doing the same thing. They got good reports, so my feedback was: "Keep doing what you're doing, Beth. They love you."

To teachers and administrators, drama was seen as a positive force and a strong catalyst for learning. Student engagement was appreciated as being interesting and complex and personally varied (Warner, 1995). Even though I was forever being asked to put together "a little something" for a performance event, there was a growing understanding that drama wasn't just doing plays. However, few tried drama on their own.

One teacher did approach me for help doing drama with a story she had read. I knew I spent an inordinate amount of time planning/giving birth to lessons. But it was almost always done alone. As I worked with this teacher the only way I knew how, my process became explicit. The lesson was a success in terms of student response, teacher pleasure, and administrator pride, but I marveled at the labyrinth I had dragged the teacher through. How soon would she ever do that again? Who else would have endured the procedure? Did it need to be exhausting?

Drama was exhausting for me because I recognized it as art, and willingly went through the recursive steps of envisioning, decision-making, acting, and re-envisioning. I also recognized that the process was the art. However, I had notions of control and order--some internal, some from school--that limited the artistic process. I would do the mental gymnastics of what-if-ing a lesson through all its stages and transitions in the planning so that the children could feel that they participated in constructing the vision, making
decisions, and implementing actions as their own when in fact, the vision was mine alone—just disguised. I knew how to work “with” children. I was afraid to work “artfully with” them. Or maybe I just didn’t have the safe scaffold to get there.

Drama can be a slippery operation. I’m constantly amazed at all the new things it keeps teaching me. There are always gaps I’m aware of; things I’m conscious of as eternal struggles and recurring challenges. But even more interesting is learning something that I thought fell into the category of things I’d somewhat mastered or at least fully understood the ideal to which I aspired. Engagement was one of those things. Says Heathcote:

I must first attract their attention. If I have their attention, I can gain their involvement. Then I have a chance for their investment and from that their concern. If I have their concern, I have hope for obsession. (in Morgan & Saxton, 1987, p. 22)

There was a time when I would have told you that, yes, on several occasions I have had drama lessons in which children grew through all these phases. I thought the children were obsessed, in the positive sense of the word. Attention and involvement often happened. Children often got to the point of investment, as well. Concern might have slipped in rarely, but never obsession. I waver on concern and obsession now because I see they both require time to grow and are both very private emotions. I was too ready to be pleased with the fact that children looked happy or scared. I needed to know what was inside. They needed to know what was inside . . . themselves and their classmates. I needed to slow down and ask.

Imagined worlds and real worlds: drama and the inner-city child

As the drama teacher serving two schools, I didn’t have the opportunity to know all the children as deeply as I could have, were I with them everyday. McDowell started a
Student-Teacher Buddy Program in my second year there. That gave me the perfect occasion to focus in on my two new buddies: Raymond and Ty.

Raymond and Ty were—and are—brothers in a family of four children including an older sister, an older brother and their mom. We became “buddies” in their second grade year. They just now finished seventh grade.

We have done a lot of things together, in and out of school over the years.

Following are two conversations, as I recall them. Both happened at my residences, about five years apart.

Father I

December 1992

BETH STANDS AT THE SINK RINSING SPAGHETTI SAUCE FROM A POT. RAYMOND BRINGS OVER THE BREAD BASKET FROM THE TABLE. TY STARES AT THE CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATED AT THE JUST-DECORATED CHRISTMAS TREE.

RAYMOND: No, Miss Murray, it’s our sister’s daddy who lives in South Carolina. Can I try that again? You got any more peels?

BETH: Rinse the plates into the sink and scoop the spaghetti down. You did all the peels.

TY: RUNNING TO THE SINK! It’s my turn. You do the water.

RAYMOND: Hot or cold?

TY: What? That’s so cool.

BETH: Ooh!—watch your fingers, honey. There are sharp blades spinning down there. Now where’s your daddy?

TY: Dead. Got shot.

BETH: I’m sorry... Does that make you f--

TY: Can we make cookies now?

BETH: After we clean up... Do you ever feel sad about your dad?

RAYMOND: I was only three.

TY: I was two.

RAYMOND: Ty was sittin’ on his shoulders when it happened.

BETH: Really? How’d it happen?

TY: My grandfather.

RAYMOND: It was an accident. He felt bad.

BETH: Do you remember your dad?

TY: Some.

RAYMOND: Mom has some letters he wrote from jail. Hey—try some bread in there.

TY: No, man. I’m eatin’ that.
RAYMOND STUDDS THE SERIES OF FAMILY PICTURES ON BETH'S LIVING ROOM WALL. TY AND BETH WATCH TELEVISION.

RAYMOND: Miss Murray--I mean, Beth.

BETH: Yes, honey?

RAYMOND: Don't take this the wrong way, but you looked kinda stupid with short hair.

TY: I think she looked better.

BETH: Thanks guys. I should have you over more often.

ALL LAUGH

RAYMOND: COUNTING THE MEMBERS OF ONE PHOTO: Now which one put her sneakers on in the lightning storm?

BETH: Kath. Blonde one in the front.

TY: And which one played basketball?

BETH: Joey and Chris and Kath. She even played in college.

RAYMOND: Are these all your brothers and sisters?

BETH: Except the tall guy and the little kid he's holding. That's my brother-in-law and my nephew. And then my parents.

RAYMOND: PAUSE: You all got the same daddy?

BETH: Yep. The guy in the glasses.

RAYMOND: Wow, that's so weird.

Raymond and I had a lot of things in common, but our family worlds were different in ways, none as strange to him as his strange to me. Not all McDowell students had the same social challenges as Raymond and Ty. Some didn't seem to have any. Few of them ever dwelt on those challenges because they didn't label them as such. They were just living life as they best knew how according to the culture that surrounded them, as were all children across the city.

We are increasingly aware that two cultural worlds collide when children of low-socio-economic status attend school (Heath, 1983). An exhaustive review of this literature is beyond the scope of this study, however, relevant literature does fall into two general views--large and immediate--based on the questions they address. The large view raises questions like: What's going here? The immediate view raises questions like: So what do we do about it?
First, the large view. Since schools have been in America, they have been a reflection of its society as well as a main site for attempts at monitoring, shaping, controlling, improving, even remedying elements of that society. In Shirley Brice Heath’s (1983) eight-year ethnographic study on language and learning in two Carolina Piedmont mill communities, she had this to say of schools:

The school is not a neutral, objective arena; it is an institution which has the goal of changing people’s values, skills, and knowledge bases... eventual positions of power in the school and workplace are fore destined in the conceptual structures which they (the children) have learned at home and which are reinforced in school and numerous other associations. (p.368)

Schools have long-standing, entrenched modes of operating. Some families share those cultural modes and prepare children for a smooth enculturation to school, others do not. Meanwhile schools persist in operating as the white, middle-class cultural institutions that they are (hooks, 1994).

Because schools reflect society, disparities in society often become disparities in schools as was witnessed by Jonathan Kozol in *Savage Inequalities* (1991).

There is a deep-seated reverence for fair play in the United States, and in many areas of life we see the consequences in a genuine distaste for loaded dice; but this is not the case in education, health care, or inheritance of wealth. In these elemental areas we want the game to be unfair and we have made it so; and it will likely so remain. (p.223)

Alan Luke (1991) supports Kozol’s observations on the politics of schooling, aimed at privileging some and excluding others.

...What counts as legitimate school knowledge and competence in the classroom is the selection by and in the interests of particular classes and interests in society... (p. 7)
Haberman (1991) goes so far as to identify what he calls the “pedagogy of poverty.” He claims the traditional skills-based curricula that often spawns a deficit-model assessment of students has persisted more strongly in many schools serving students of low socio-economic-status despite pedagogical changes in schools for “children of greater material privilege.” Haberman acknowledges this is not the mode of operating at all schools serving children of low socioeconomic status, however the condition is more frequent in such schools than in their higher-socioeconomic-status counterparts. Haberman believes such pedagogy yields a cycle of tedious, uninspired, rote learning.

In the more immediate view are efforts to make a difference in the face of these institutionalized disparities. Many a child of poverty has historically been labeled in school as being: “a slow learner,” “educationally disadvantaged,” “culturally deprived,” or having “an organically-based impairment” or “impaired intellectual functioning.” The labels vary over time, but all serve to isolate—in more ways than one—children who need “instructional support” at school. With the Title I shift to schoolwide support and movement toward inclusive classrooms, several studies have recommended views of instructional support beyond the one-on-one tutorial. Such studies seek to outline effective practices for helping children within the context of an effective school.

Instructional support has been suggested to help children deal with schools as they are. Support might come in the in the forms of extended school time, more intensive or more expert instruction, integrating arts into instruction, flexible scheduling, allowing greater collaboration among teachers, strengthening and focusing classroom instruction, involving teachers in decisions (Allington & Walmsley, 1995). Another study claims results over time as they sought to “eliminate the achievement gap by the end of elementary
school" with an emphasis on reading, writing, language across subject areas, active learning, heterogeneous grouping, student-student and teacher-student interactions, higher-order thinking, inquiry process, parent and community involvement (Knight & Stallings, 1995). Stoddart (1993) believes in alternative routes to certification to accommodate a wider cultural range among teachers willing and effectively able to teach in the inner city schools. Other suggested efforts at prevention include early intervention, reduced class size, regrouping, tutoring/mentoring, cooperative learning, family partnerships becoming components of schoolwide literacy programs (Ross, Smith, Slaven, and Madden, 1997). Some opt for making social issues central curricular content (Barnstable, et al., 1995).

Johnson (1997) aptly points out that in identifying factors that endanger potential school success, the exercise often becomes one of pointing beyond the list and the school to the challenges of society at large. Acknowledging that, studies on student “resilience” in the face of challenges attribute success to affective/emotional adult support, high expectations, opportunities to participate and contribute, self-assessment, modeling and discussing resilience and constructivist principles (Bernard, 1997).

Along the same social flexibility lines, bell hooks (1994) writes about the tension poor and working-class college students experience in feeling they have to conform to white, middle class norms on campus, then “deal” differently at home. Her encouragement is to “believe they can inhabit comfortably two different worlds, but they must make each space one of comfort... creatively invent ways to cross borders... All too often students from nonmaterially privileged backgrounds assume a position of passivity” doomed to either accept or reject imposed norms. “This either/or often sets them up for disappointment

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and failure" (p. 183). Delpit (1995) believes the role of the educator is to help guard against such failure by making explicit the language codes and the power implicit in those codes while nurturing flexibility in switching between codes.

Some claim schools need to do a better job at the philosophical level in making more inclusive choices, in an effort to prevent marginalization of certain populations. Just as it might benefit students to remain culturally flexible and able to "cross borders," so might it help schools to adopt a similar mindset. Research points to the positive role of not only involving, but striving to better culturally understand and learn from families, that schools and families might build communicative partnerships (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, Purcell-Gates, 1992, Shockley, Michalove & Allen, 1995). This includes such subtle but important findings as acknowledging the value of home-side family involvement, noting the leadership role of the teacher in establishing and nurturing the school-home relationship, and remaining aware of the counterproductive tendency for parents' involvement to decline as children age (Epstein, 1986).

Curriculum and instruction are being pushed to reflect flexibility and awareness as well. "Culturally relevant" teaching requires squarely facing racial and cultural issues in class, seeking to match school culture with student culture, remaining aware of subtext being as important as--or more important than--curricular text (Ladson-Billings, 1992). The cultural histories of voluntary and involuntary minorities (Ogbu, 1992) as well as their historical and structural contexts, their cultures of story and language (Foster, 1992, Ailen, Michalove, and Shockley, 1993), and their valuing of community have also been found significant. Teachers of all students, of all cultures are encouraged to remain
are that "many of the practices that count as sound education apply complexity in long-standing patterns." The temptation to "simplify to skills" as the sole means to reach children who are having difficulty ignores the larger problem. (Strickland, 1994, p. 334)

Harold Rosen (1975) reminds us that insight of the poetic variety lurks in everyday folk, regardless of class--or sometimes perhaps due to it. The complexity and richness of life is not commensurate with income level.

... out there in the 'social context' there is a culture which is alive and kicking. Just as we have discovered that children do not come to school to be given language but arrive with it as a going concern, we need to discover that children come with this, too. indeed, their language, the despised vernacular of great cities and industrial towns is part of it . . . It is not a matter of asserting that working-class culture is infinitely superior . . . but rather of demonstrating that it is there at all, that it is pertinent to our concerns, that we build on it or build nothing. (p. 341)

So what is the role of arts at the low-socioeconomic-status/low-test-score-achieving school? Some view drama as a tool to help motivate a desired skill, such as Wolf’s (1994) study where drama provided a new lens for “remedial” reader text interpretations. Other approaches target appreciation of an art form from outside to stimulate critical thinking and inquiry as well as build self-esteem (O’Thearling & Bickiey Green, 1996). The nature of drama can open culturally-charged situations for exploration, allowing the flexibility of both immediacy and distance, so as to deepen complex understanding from a variety of perspectives (e.g. Manley and O’Neill, 1997, Bontempo, 1995, Hanley, 1995, Tabbone & Albrecht, 1991). Philosophical connections have also been drawn between drama and varying cultures such as an alignment with Native American communication patterns and beliefs about teaching (Foreman, 1991).

Perhaps the most valuable long-term aspect of drama with all children, but especially children with extra challenges of any sort, is perfecting the artistic
practice of imagining and inhabiting "possible worlds" (Bruner, 1986). Therein lies unending hope and promise. One of the best definitions of drama I ever heard came from a little seven-year-old girl. Her mother asked what she did in drama that made her like it so much. Her reply: "We go inside our heads and have adventures."

Well-intentioned outsiders wishing to "help" those in the impoverished margins of society have sometimes turned to drama and theatre, recognizing their "educational, social, and artistic force" to benefit those in need. Hecht (1991) chronicles the work of Edith de Nancrede at Hull House in urban turn-of-the-century Chicago, building theatre experiences with recent immigrant through the settlement house. Nancrede worked as a director and teacher over generations. The director that followed her had a much more "professional" relationship with the group "lacking the close personal ties that Nancrede shared with those whom she had taught since childhood . . . encouraging those in her program to think of themselves as participating in a large family . . ." (p. 9).

Nancrede believed that the ability to imagine another's point of view was the most valuable thing gained from "dramatics" as it benefited them in life. A similar sentiment prompted the Webster Junior League--and other Junior Leagues across the country--to open a children's theatre fifty years ago hoping to "enrich young minds." It is now the Children's Theatre of Webster.

Others had a social and political motivation for change. They preferred to penetrate the "oppressed" group, and work for social and political change dramatically from within.

The fundamental hypothesis underlying the totality of the Theatre of the Oppressed: if the oppressed himself performs an action (rather than the artist in his place), the performance of that action in theatrical fiction will enable him to activate himself to perform it in his real life." (Boal, 1995, p. 46)
Boal found inspiration in the political writings of Paulo Freire.

For the truly humanist educator and authentic revolutionary, the object of action is the reality to be transformed by them together with other people—not other men and women themselves. The oppressors are the ones who act upon the people to indoctrinate them and adjust them to a reality which must remain untouched... The revolutionary's role is to liberate, and be liberated, with the people—not to win them over. (Freire, 1970. p. 75)

Thus drama has been a positive force done to, for, with, and artfully with impoverished groups. "Artful with" bears possibilities for change, the extreme of which might yield talk of liberation, oppressors, and revolution. Could the very ones supporting the presence of the art as a vehicle for expression and exploration also be the oppressors themselves? Is this what a church envisioned when it funded a drama program for low-income children? The first approach would accommodate some outsiders to remain on the periphery of experience but at the forefront of philanthropic support. The second approach demanded immediacy of action by design.

The question then quickly turns political: Is the intended agenda one of large-scale social freedom from oppression or of maintaining the status quo? Or is it that simple? We shall return to this question later in the dissertation as it is part of the study's background, yet in the foreground of our everyday cultural existence, thus subliminally central. In schools, Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson (1995) talk in terms of script... the teacher's being the privileged, monologic "official" script, the students' subservient to that institutionalized dynamic, the "unofficial script." Resistance takes the form of an underlife, not contesting current roles, but forming its own world--and a powerful one. The teacher world and the student world often remain separate; parallel. Often in the third space, where the two meet in an unscripted, taken-by-surprise discovery mode.
Bahktin's heteroglossia becomes a positive force in determining "what counts as knowledge" as opposed to an impediment to a preset teacher script and agenda. Drama, in or out of school, helps lend voice to the underlife.

**Ph.D. School, Theoretically Speaking**

Returning to school for a Ph.D. took me away from teaching children on a daily basis, which kept much of what I learned about drama frustratingly theoretical. However, the absence of daily obligations to children and the freedom from the necessary gnawing worries of elementary school life helped me to look and think broadly and forge meaningful, big-picture connections—if only in my own mind. Never before had I read so much or written so much or photocopied so much (dreaming of inventing a direct, non-reading route between photocopy machine and brain: in so concentrated a time.

Most of all, never before had I been part of a community of people who basically shared my vision of what the word “drama” meant. I was referred to resources that matched that view—and stretched it. I observed and participated in the dramas of others, some truly works of art: a gentler, slower, more pensive, more subtly disturbing and communally generative art than I had come to know. I can only use such specific terms reflectively and retrospectively. Participating in Cecily O'Neill’s dramas and watching her communicate with students opened channels for understanding texts and lesson plans that had prior remained somewhat mysterious to me.

Experiencing Cecily O’Neill’s and David Booth’s and Gavin Bolton’s artistry from inside the drama experience helped me see that drama would never be the same thing to every teacher. Each had his or her own artistry. And each admired and learned from the others. The university experience also helped me see the importance of exploring and blurring lines between drama and other fields and disciplines.

Theoretical exposure to a range of people and writings across disciplines but sharing a constructivist thread, helped me understand drama more broadly
as a contextualized craft. I grew forward, raising the status of drama in my teaching closer toward art, when I realized drama's generative role in learning more clearly. It was particularly evident in drama's artfully synergistic relationships with classroom context, response to literature, and writing.

**Drama and Classroom Context**

Moving away from the special-event mindset to the meaning-making mindset meant letting drama look more like school and having school look more like drama (Bolton, 1986). How else would most teachers find the comfort to even start?

... any choice of pedagogical practices implies a conception of the learner and may, in time, be adopted by him or her as the appropriate way of thinking about the learning process. Pedagogy is never innocent. It is a medium that carries its own message. (Bruner, 1996, p. 63)

Drama easily aligns with Bruner's fourth knowledge model, both exploring newly-constructed meanings as well as culturally-honored ones. The mantle of the expert particularly, the central focus of *Drama for Learning* (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995), lends itself to such inquiry. As mentioned earlier, one principle behind mantle of the expert is the inclusion of an enterprise, a client, and a problem embedded in a body of knowledge or set of skills that is linked with the school curriculum. (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995, p. 109) The students communicate, collaborate, and negotiate both within their imagined world and in the context of their classroom. They become part of an enterprise, serving a client, to solve a problem—or problems. Since drama helps to centralize, humanize, and socialize subject matter, some make a case for placing it at the center of the curriculum (Bolton, 1979, Heathcote, 1984, O'Neill, 1995, Heathcote and Bolton, 1995) that it might serve to frame classroom inquiry and motivate students intrinsically. Fully benefiting from
mantel of the expert requires for drama be inquiry-based, central to the curriculum and spread over time. Most American classrooms don’t operate in this way. Properly implementing mantel of the expert would require a teacher’s rethinking and restructuring classroom practice starting on the philosophical and theoretical level, recreating a vision of learning, not only on the activity level.

Ideally, drama cultivates an evolving, generative, shared meaning-making context among its participants. Calling on Bakhtin, Edmiston (1994) explains drama’s ability to foster this dialogic thinking and discourse, as opposed to the monologic variety common in many traditional classrooms. “Applying Bakhtin’s ideas to drama in education places the power and responsibility for understanding firmly with each student. However, this is in the context of the continual need for teachers to engage students in genuine dialogues both with each other and with themselves” (p. 35). There is evidence that the process-oriented, generative environment created by drama encourages children to take a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning (Wright, 1991).

Wagner (1991, 1998) exhaustively reviews studies linking educational drama to student attitude and perspective taking, mental imagery, creative thinking, oral language, reading, and writing. However, the areas that capture my fancy most were the areas flavored with “indeterminacy” (Iser, 1974), particularly response to literature and writing.

Drama and Response to Literature

The term “pretexts” (O’Neill, 1995) is described as a story or letter or idea or dream that serves as “a preliminary frame for drama” to open up possibilities. Truly anything, even an idea can be pretext for drama. What the teacher does
with the pretext matters more than what the pretext is. On a pedagogical level, the pretext becomes a dynamic symbol of the general mode of operating in drama... it frames... it hints... it foreshadows... it determines the first moments of action... its effectiveness... relies upon essential simplicity... minimal character... implication for action. Powerful, but subtle and scant. In getting a good pretext and getting a handle on an enticing slant for luring students into that first encounter as generative, artistic contributors, a large portion of the drama work to follow would grow from student ideas.

Sometimes a pretext is a scaffold to help a teacher get started in drama. The danger lies in the teacher thinking that a pretext automatically becomes a drama. Not so. It is the teacher's dynamic use of the pretext that makes the drama utility, craft, or art.

Drama and response to literature share similar qualitative attributes. With the research on imagination and response to literature, drama shares the concept of a created "secondary world" (Benton, 1983) for exploration. In the response literature, the secondary world exists in the mind of the reader. Good classroom drama creates a complex environment for inquiry and exploration, opening possibilities for access to students through a variety of "intelligences" and positing that there are likely far more than seven or eight intelligences at work in drama (Rogers, O'Neil, and Jasinski, 1995).

During drama as response, the intersection of the drama world, the text world, and the reader's personal world creates a dynamic context for literary response and exploration (O'Neil, 1995, Rogers and O'Neil, 1993, Enclso, 1992). Drama creates a public forum for private understandings (Rogers and O'Neil, 1993). In these mingling worlds, students and teacher question and interpret the book text as well as their own evolving drama text, firmly in
Bruner's third and fourth internalist models of learning. This is truly literature as exploration (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995).

Drama and Writing

"Written language emerges most strongly when firmly embedded within the supportive symbolic sea of playful gestures, pictures, and talk" (Dyson, 1992, p. 18). And so it is the written language that gets privileged because we are talking about a school setting, and in a school setting the written word is historically valued largely because it creates an artifact that is a record of progress which exists independently of the social interaction. It creates something to hold, grade, bind, rank, file, comment on, or hang on the refrigerator. Meanwhile drama and play might be stereotypically relegated to less academic and more social categories. However, "the academic and the social are not so simply--or so profitably--separated" (Dyson, 1987, p. 417).

The dramatic context seeks to help students by joining rather than separating such naturally, artistically linked companions as drama and writing. If they are engaged in the expressive and reflective aspects of drama, living through "here and now" experiences that draw upon their own life meanings, then the writing that accompanies the drama and the writing that grows out of it may possess the same characteristics and qualities. (Wagner, 1998, p. 73)

Indeed the histories of both drama and writing are tied with habits of creating objects (plays or written pieces) to be displayed for others. The more recent histories of both fields have also included "process" movements in the realm of education. Process drama recoiled to the opposite end of the performance continuum from theatre, and claimed to only use drama for learning. Process writing set about shifting the focus to how the writing was created, away from concern over the qualities of the end product. In more recent years, the
process still matters in both fields, but there seems to be softening on the formerly strict borders between process and product in the favor of artistic complexity (e.g. Knipping, 1993, O’Neill, 1995).

Drama and writing both allow manipulation of distance. Good drama, like good writing, views things both “minutely and with an overview” (Heathcote in Johnson & O’Neill, 1984). Because children can actually embody distance in the course of a drama lesson, it becomes a recognizable—even concrete perspective, one that they might be able to envision more readily as a writer having lived through it in a dramatic way. Children “embody” themselves, their friends, and their experiences in the imaginative worlds they create through writing to help create “firmer ground” on which to stand (Dyson, 1988). However, “worlds first discovered through talk and pictures do not easily fit on a page” (p. 24).

Drama and writing are both complicated, generative, idiosyncratic, emotional artistic procedures. Sometimes they are one in the same. Drama can be prewriting (Jasinski, 1996, Booth in Wagner, 1998) or the rehearsal or inspiration for a written narrative (Moore and Caldwell, 1990).

Though Dyson often writes of drama and classroom composing, the sort of drama to which she refers is usually informal, dramatic play or a writing strategy called Author’s Theatre (e.g. Dyson in Wagner, 1998) where part of the composing process is acting out one’s writing to gain perspective and feedback. I would place “Author’s Theatre” in the doing drama “to” children category, since limits of its vision are preset and the teacher has no role in the action phase. Yet, Dyson’s work always compels me. Perhaps that is due to Dyson’s style of writing research reflecting the essence of drama moreso than do her actual observations about drama itself. For instance:
Written words, like oral ones, are a means for participating in an always changing social community, a never-ending process of societal history making and, thus, their meaning, their appropriate use, is always changing too (Dyson in Wagner, 1998, p. 167).

I wish Dyson would conduct a study or two in drama classrooms where drama is done “with” or “artfully with” children. Her research is artistic to me. I imagine her sensitive observations and ability to crystallize key moments and patterns from within the chaos of classrooms could provide helpful information to both beginning and experienced drama teachers. Her depth of understanding and curiosity about writing would likely both inform and be informed by artful drama research.

Drama and writing both help students grow in artistic and personal depth through reflective practice. “Language is that which makes us human and we are caught within our own words” (Booth in Wagner, 1998, p. 75). Lucy Calkin’s (1986) central aim in teaching writing is to:

...give upper elementary children the chance to talk about their thinking, writing, and reading processes, many of them will become astonishingly articulate about their fleeting, intangible mental activities. And when children can describe what they are doing as they write, it adds enormously to their dawning sense of deliberateness and their control over their writing. (p. 149)

Breakthroughs in writing and revision come when the writer “sees the words as temporary, the information as manipulable” (Graves, 1983, p. 151). The same can be said for breakthroughs in drama. Both arts are both serious, yet playful enterprises. “Exploration involves gaining information whereas play involves practicing and recombining that information” (Pellegrini & Boyd, 1993, p. 108). Complementary processes.
Teacher as Writer/Writer as Artist

Assignment: Write a seven-page theme on a person you admire.
Creation context: Kneeling by my bed—thethesaurus propped on pillow, alone
Feedback: A-

Assignment: Write an autobiography.
Creation context: Library, student union, study lounge, outside—with a yellow tablet, alone. Then at the typewriter under a humming desk light, alone
Feedback: Teacher conference. A-

Assignment: Create children’s puzzle-book pages.
Creation context: Office, business hours, with office mate—two pages done
Office, after business hours, alone—the rest of the book done
Feedback: Hand-written editorial comments, occasional phone calls

Assignment: Write a play.
Creation context: Dorm room—with archaic word processor, alone
Feedback: Classmate commentary, professor commentary, director commentary, actor commentary, technician commentary, audience commentary, colleague commentary, friend commentary, janitor commentary, school teacher commentary, child commentary, subconscious voice commentary

Assignment: Write a dissertation.
Creation context: Home office—with computer and a very necessary new chair
Feedback: Find yourself in it, locate and finish, rest TBA

Each writing assignment in this sampling of my writer’s history catalyzed learning. But can you guess which one was the most over-whelming—in both
positive and negative directions? Turning an original work over to a director
and actors to see my private imaginings taking on life beyond me and the pages
I'd written was both educational and emotional.

Every person involved brought a new voice, a new insight to the piece. And they
were all eager to help—to shape the art. This was the most public and social writing had
ever been for me. No one's comments hid behind a fiery pen or a phone receiver.
Responses were all very immediate and personally delivered. I loved to see people bring
things to the script that I hadn't imagined or intended. I loved to see people bring things
to life just as I had imagined. Other things made me cringe. Because the work was new,
at a point of struggle, the script was sometimes blamed and changed in lieu of lingering a
bit in the struggle—to see. We had a production schedule, after all. So many possibilities
and explorations were missed with a necessarily linear, product orientation.

The realization of the connection between a drama teacher and a writer
set off bells and whistles for me. Though in one way, the teacher is striving not
to "write a play" while doing drama, in another way, she is very much a
playwright. Choosing words, setting moods, establishing frames, creating
symbols, suggesting images. These are all jobs of both the writer and the
drama teacher. Following are some ideas reframed as advice intended for the
drama teacher, but equally relevant for the writer.

Bolton (1986):

• perceive action and object as resonators of meaning
• tighten and focus
• encourage tension
• contrast
• make available rich, suggestive, beyond-teacher-control symbols
• remain sensitive to symbol potential

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O’Neill (1991) writing on behalf of “great dramatists” throughout history:

• start in medias res

• strong starts include arrivals, returns, questions, messages

Neelands

• collect literary starting points (in Miller & Saxton, 1998, p. 24)

• collect photographs and images suggestive of crystallizing experience (in Miller & Saxton, 1998, p. 24)

• work indirectly and affectively (1984)

All of these practices work toward either luring responses from children or framing the responses the children give. Those responses are the heart of the drama. The teacher’s role is writerly only in a poetic, suggestive way. The teacher functions in prompting and focusing artistic visions, that the children may move through to decisions and actions based on a community vision. If the vision belonged only to the teacher, she would be playwright, they her actors. Generativity is the goal. Restraint is the watch word.

The teacher becomes part of the dramatic action, yet maintains the responsibility for “steering” the drama. O’Neill (1995) calls on Peter McLaren’s concept of “liminality” where “people ‘play’ with familiar elements and disarrange and defamiliarize them” to describe how the teacher functions in drama (p. 18).

Working in role, the teacher can lead the students across the threshold into the imagined world of drama, a place of separation and transformation where the rules and relationships of classroom life are suspended. In this dramatic world, participants are free to alter their status, choose to adopt different roles and responsibilities, play with elements of reality, and explore alternate existences. When the dramatic world takes hold and acquires a life of its own, all of the participants will return across the threshold changed in some way, or at least not quite the same as when they began. (p. 19)
This passage underscores the role and power of ambiguous ownership in the dramatic experience. Stating “the dramatic world takes hold and acquires a life of its own” almost implies that truly successful drama belongs to none of its participants. Yet the participants have created this world to which the drama belongs. Leaders of drama are guides to new worlds . . . without clear maps of the terrain . . . I like to imagine these guides, the liminal servants to the work, trying to lead the way while walking backward, so that they do not become intent on reaching a predetermined destination as quickly as possible” (O'Neill, 1995, p. 66).

Though the teacher is uncertain of the exact destination, she is responsible for making certain the group travels together, looking for sense and meaning. Together.

Writing has always been a meaning-making tool for me, artistically, emotionally, cognitively. Sometimes that meaning is more clear than other times, but the procedure of striving to capture thoughts and images and senses and ideas on the page has always been a challenge I accepted with a strange combination of confidence and fear. Pretty early on, somebody complimented my writing. Mrs. Brusselis used to read my Friday creative-writing stories out loud for our fourth-grade class. That was all I needed to keep going: someone else’s vote of confidence. Eventually, I came to believe writing was something I could do, even if it took a long time. Repeatedly, writing has been my safety net, my ticket to entry, and my secret passage on this life journey. It’s my sense-making lens. It’s my initial source of confidence in a new situation. It’s my first frame of reference as an artist seeking to create.

Theory. I’d Like You To Meet a Few of My Practicing Friends . . .

As I took the last of my courses and struggled to make sense of exactly what a generals exam might be, news of my old job reopening with a three-year contract drifted
northward. I couldn’t resist the opportunity to get back in a school and figure what all this
teach theory meant to me in the immediacy of classrooms. It also seemed to hold ample
opportunity for dissertation research. The heaps and piles surrounding me at this very
moment are testament to that.

My job was to be a bit different, however. I was to still work with children, but
spend more of my time getting teachers to use drama in their instruction. The prospect
was exciting. I hadn’t read many teacher studies on drama.

We do know that the greatest factor influencing whether and how art
(visual art, music, dance, or drama) ever happens in a classroom is the
teacher’s perceived value of the art (Kaaland-Wells, 1994).

In the field of drama, the chasm between those who work with children
regularly and those who write about drama in education is not terribly wide.
There is a strong tradition of learning by doing. It follows that such a tradition
would cultivate reflective practitioner, action research and participant
observation studies. The larger perspective becomes clear through better
understanding one’s own practice (Edmiston, 1991, Errington, 1996, Taylor,
1996) or the practices of another closely observed. (Jasinski, 1996, Warner,

Reluctance is often the trademark of the novice drama teacher. And
indeed the teacher’s role is a difficult one, calling on her to support an
imaginative venture, yet remaining aloof enough to oversee, as would a director
(Bolton, 1979). In his teacher researcher study on his own drama teaching,
Edmiston (1993, 1991) provided the thick descriptions of his reflexive practice
that so strengthen our field. As important was his pervading sentiment that
studying himself was terribly difficult. Indeed it seems that when drama is done
well, there is not any place for the teacher to hide.
As Edwards and Cooper’s (1996) study on the development of a support group of seven teachers trying to implement drama in their classrooms revealed, the development process of a drama teacher is on-going. Incorporating drama into a teaching repertoire implies change, which is often first met with theoretical consonance, but practical dissonance. Indeed the categories of drama discussion moved from “It’s hard to do that because . . .” to “How could I do that?” to “I did that and . . .” (p. 55). One of the major breakthroughs came when the researchers expanded their roles from facilitators of a drama support group to classroom demonstrators and consultants. This finding helped shape my relationship with the teachers in this study as a co-teaching one where we were both members of a reflective group of interpreters and participating in an apprentice partnership.

Flynn and Carter (1994) described their experience as a collaboration between a drama specialist and a classroom teacher. The classroom teacher responded positively to having a drama specialist “demonstrate” how to work through drama in a process oriented way. The teacher gained insight into how this mode of working “fits” and improves upon, expands existing goals and curriculum. However, the classroom teacher seemingly remained in the role of observer begging the question, “Would drama happen again without the drama specialist?” A foreboding question . . .

We inside the field of drama in education, as those inside most any field, can be very specific about the nuances of one form of drama over another and borders between styles and practices and viewpoints. However, to most teachers out in the world, we are all one In our drama expertise. In their eyes, according to Hundert’s (1996) study of 184 teachers in the Niagara Falls region, drama is appreciated as beneficial, but given low status among all the events
and requirements of school. A large portion of the teachers reported using
drama to some extent, more in the early grades. However, drama’s “across the
curriculum” possibilities were viewed mostly neutrally or negatively. Thus
those teachers seemed to lend verbal support to drama, but give it low priority.

What we are able to see and hear is the product of our cultivated abilities.
The rewards and insights provided by aesthetically-shaped forms are
available only to those who can perceive them . . . all experience is the
product of both the features of the world and the biography of the

So what hope could be held out for teachers to think of themselves as
artists in creating exploratory dramatic worlds in their classrooms? . . . And
inspiring children to do the same? Heathcote provides two lists of features
good teachers need--or need to acquire. First, the (1984) five features of
creative work (including teaching):

- the drive to want to do it
- the feedback to satisfy having done it
- content of the doing
- signals to communicate during the doing
- the rituals of going about it

Heathcote (in Johnson & O’Neill. 1984) claims that teachers need to be
given the experience of “committing others to work.” As a teacher, she seeks to
place herself in the valuably vulnerable position of being a working companion
so as to build a master-apprentice relationship (p. 28). Students need to have a
learning situation so they can “behave with the responsibility of experts instead
of only hearing about experts” (p. 29). Heathcote also believes that striving
toward expertise means striving toward the cultivation of artistic skills and
awarenesses such as:
• theatre understanding: volume, as opposed to linear growth
• development
• significant selection: take a significant view from a general one
• selectivity: the playwright's discipline of understatement
• perception: penetrate outer form for inner meanings
• poetic handling of language
• worthwhile tension
• non-verbal signals
• interpretation: sensitivity to other art forms
• ability to conceptualize the general idea to a particular, then universalize
to draw in the group
• patience: taking people right where they are
• personal commitment

These are not the usual items on a checklist of "teacher features." They are
ambiguous and slippery and huge. They are human qualities—human qualities
vital to the creation of art. One cannot possess these qualities or aspire to them
and maintain a narrow view of learning or aesthetics or humanity. However, it
must be respectfully borne in mind that

. . . in theorizing about the practice of education . . . you had better take
into account the folk theories that those engaged in teaching and
learning already have. For any innovations that you, as a "proper"
pedagogical theorist, may wish to introduce will have to compete with,
replace, or otherwise modify the folk theories that already guide both
teachers and pupils. (Bruner, 1996. p. 46)

None of the above would ever develop without a teacher's personal drive "to
want to do it." Step one.
The Current Set of Spectacles

You now know more than you ever wanted to about Beth Murray's life in and out of art. Those previous pages chronicle the journey of my ideas and beliefs about drama and learning, dumping me off right here in your lap with this abbreviated version of what I think is important about learning and drama.

On knowledge and teaching and learning:

• To me, knowledge is socially constructed and culturally shaped.

• Teachers are first and foremost, people. Like all people, teachers are the sum total of their experiences.

• Schools are filled with people who have varying views of learners, including learners as: imitators, mental acquirers, collaborative thinkers, and critical cultural interpreters. Most people hold a primary view of learning, but use others. Schools primarily foster looking at students as mental acquirers. Drama primarily fosters looking at students as collaborative thinkers, critical cultural interpreters, and selectively as apprentices and mental acquirers.

On artful teaching through drama:

• Good teaching is art. Good art creates integral experiences (Dewey, 1934) for all involved, in this case teachers and students.

• In drama, artists/teachers work recursively through vision, decision and action phases toward creating “integral experiences” that in turn contribute to their generative artistic vision.

• Individual drama strategies or activities can be done to (teacher controls vision, student controls decision and action), for (teacher controls vision, decision, and action), or with (negotiated vision, decision, and action) children. Most varied drama experiences involve all three approaches, usually leaning toward one preposition or another as more central.

• The best classroom drama leans toward “with,” striving to involve students as artists in the meaning negotiation at every level: vision, decision, and action. However, constantly renegotiated vision is not just a step in drama. It is the goal, and that which most differentiates it from other dramatic approaches. I call this working “artfully with” the children.

On teachers learning to use drama:

• All teachers have different thresholds or limits (Heathcote in Johnson & O'Neil, 1984). The art comes in knowing, then slowly nudging those personal limits
toward perceived risks.

• Most teachers have distinct ideas about drama, what it's for, and where it belongs—or doesn't belong—in relation to their teaching.

• Artistic mentors provide inspiration and/or scaffolding to novice artists as both map routes in each of their on-going journeys through craft toward art.

• Those teaching teachers to use drama are at once teachers, artistic mentors, artistic models, drama advocates, and learners themselves.

• The use or lack of use of drama by a teacher is guided by her perceptions of drama's potential functions. Considered over time, patterns of use reflect the status the teacher has given drama in her teaching: periphery, utility, craft, or art.

On drama's ideal place in schools

• A teacher's generative orientation toward curriculum both invites, catalyzes, and benefits from drama.

• Such an orientation requires encouraging and modeling inquiry, choosing and framing strong, suggestive drama pretexts that serve as a center but also drive inquiry over time, planning for and based on student and teacher reflection, viewing learning as playful, viewing play as serious, understanding drama-writing and drama-response connections, artistically distilling and representing intimate, intriguing human elements from big concepts—and vice versa, viewing students as artistic collaborators, remaining infectiously curious and flexible, and accepting of “mistakes” as material for valuable reflection and growth.

• Schools reflect society. Society has not been an historical haven of fairness. Schools are not fair.

• Categories of ideas on what to do about unfair schools fall into three basic camps: Help students cope with schools as they are. Help schools stretch their cultural borders and understanding to make them more interactive, culturally collaborative places. Change the system or rebuild another.

• All three approaches, however radical or mundane, could learn from the artist who is well-versed in the complicated nature of envisioning, deciding, acting, and re-envisioning—repeatedly, complicatedly, socially, individually, uncomfortably, cooperatively and symbolically—knowing always the process is the product. There are no easy answers.
These beliefs have guided this study which has placed me right in the thick of wondering how people inside and outside the classroom make sense of drama in a very real way. Teachers are central to the study, because it is only in their using drama that its benefits can be generatively experienced and widely understood. However, my belief that there are benefits in need of understanding, yet drama is scarcely present in most American schools and classrooms, places the responsibility back in my lap to work toward figuring out why not, which is more positively asked as how drama is interpreted and negotiated and shaped when it is present. The stories of three teachers in an urban school at various stages of artistry in their drama teaching, in an under-construction drama program are presented in Chapter 5. The central question of this investigation are presented in more detail in Chapter 3, as part of the methodology.

These beliefs also tint the lens through which I describe and analyze the larger context of program supporters historically in Chapter 4 and as a collage reflection in Chapter 6. And when I close, in Chapter 7, these beliefs will help frame what I still believe, what I wonder, and what really matters at this point.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared my personal journey to my current beliefs about drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool. I supported those beliefs with a review of literature in drama and related fields, relying heavily on both Dewey's (1934) dynamic organization of art as well as Bruner's (1996) four dominant models of learners' minds as organizational frames. In Chapter 3, I will outline and support the evolution of this narrative case study's methods using ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the entire dissertation as well as the individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the grant-funded drama program I studied. In Chapter 2, I shared my personal and professional journey to my current beliefs about drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool. I supported those beliefs with a review of literature in drama and related fields. In Chapter 3, I will outline the evolution of this narrative case study’s methods using ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches.

Research Questions

The original research questions were:

• How do classroom teachers and a school drama specialist negotiate and interpret the evolving status and function of drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool over the course of two years?

• What is the influence of other individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the extent to which drama becomes part of the school’s and each individual classroom’s culture?

However, the original research questions were:

• What is the nature of teacher ownership in coming to use drama as a learning medium in kindergarten, first, second, and third-grade classrooms over
two school years? What are the varying routes to and degrees, styles, and patterns of ownership taken—and not taken?

• How do students come to feel ownership over drama? What is the relationship between teacher and student ownership in drama? How does drama build on what teachers and students already own?

• To what extent does drama become a part of a school’s culture? To whom does it belong at various points in its development? What forces—within and beyond the school—shape it?

• In all layers of context concerned (student, teacher, administration, parent/family, church, theatre, community), how is the drama program talked about? How does such talk relate to the drama program in action? What is the vision of drama’s potential?

The Methodological Journey

Returning to the journey idea, I left on my research journey with a purposely vague sense of where I was to go and an idea of some travel companions who might help guide this adventure: ethnography, reflexive practice, action research, phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, and critical pedagogy. They all had their turn to navigate. Some sat in the front seat the whole trip. Others were so distracting that I kept trying to lock them in the trunk, hoping to only pull them out for very specific purposes. Still others slept in the back seat despite all the racket and awakened just at the moment I needed guidance in finding a clearer route. And still others were accidentally left sitting on the porch, not having been missed, until the journey had ended.

In the big-dreaming proposal phase, I saw opportunities to look broadly and deeply, across layers of community over weeks and months and years of growth. I imagined voices other than my own telling this tale of drama finding a
place in and among learning lives in a richly varied cultural context. The teachers were always at the center of this study, but at its inception, I was dreaming in ethnography.

I had anticipated that the ethnographic element would provide an opportunity to give voice to different perspectives on drama, including mine, but that the real story would lie beyond that point where varying layers came to share some sense of common or complementary, negotiated vision. Though there were glimmers of common vision, the real story became the varying perspectives on drama: deep-seated, individual perspectives—including mine—coming together, but remaining apart. And so the study took a phenomenological turn, in an effort to look at individuals and their experiences as elements of world views under construction. Ethnography—backseat!

Ethnomethodology continued in data collection as “ethnomethodological analysis focuses on the interactionally unfolding features of social settings, treating talk and interaction as topics for analysis rather than as mere communications about more sociologically important underlying phenomena” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994, p. 265).

As the central teacher question became more complex, the “other layers” received less attention. Quite simply, I did not see the value in finding out what a father’s thoughts of drama in his daughters school were until I felt we had established drama in her school. Negotiating the establishment of drama became the central unit of analysis. That dynamic placed focus on classroom teachers, support organizations, school administrators, me—and the gaps among us.

The focus question of this investigation framed teachers in their dynamic relationship with drama over time. Supplementary questions about extended
contexts--both within and beyond the school--formed concentric rings around the teacher questions. Essentially, with this study I sought to tell the story of drama attempting to find a home in different classrooms, using the narrative voices of those who lived through the experience as much as possible: teachers, surrounded by all those who support them.

In order for teachers to be co-researchers, they needed to reflect and write and make the study theirs, too. For any number of reasons, that was not the reality at McDowell. I had a choice between pressing my reflective practitioner/action researcher expectation of them or assuming most of the reflective responsibility myself. I chose the latter and lost on one hand, but gained on the other. The moment I conceded to not requiring regular, written reflection was the moment I knew this study would not be a glory story of a few teachers discovering the latent artists within themselves through drama. That was the price. The gain was getting a picture of average school life with drama in it, or trying to be. It was a sadder road to travel, but perhaps a more helpful one in the big picture of understanding drama in--and not in--schools.

I was knowingly entrenched in everything. I purposely blurred the lines between researching drama and advocating its use, believing the research-advocacy border to have always been questionable (Barone, 1997). I was to tell the teachers' stories. Alcoff (1991) differentiates between speaking about others, speaking for others, and speaking to others. All are part of research such as this.

We are all collectively caught in an intricate, delicate web in which each action I take, discursive or otherwise, pulls on, breaks off or maintains the tension in many strands of a web in which others find themselves moving also. When I speak for myself, I am constructing a possible self, a way to be in the world, and am offering that to others, whether I intend to or not, as one possible way to be. (p. 21)
We choose to whom we are accountable—it is a political/epistemological choice (Alcoff, 1991) that is under constant construction. Ethically and practically, it was of primary importance to me that any data-collection strategies also contributed to the overall growth of this drama program and those who partook of it. The boundary between the data’s collection and its analysis was unclear as was the line between myself the drama specialist and myself the researcher. Such ambiguity is central to ethnographic inquiry:

in finished anthropological writings . . . this fact—that what we call data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to—is obscured because most of what we need to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea, or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined. (Geertz 1973, p. 9)

Every element of this study had been in progress prior to the study’s inception, in some shape or form. The study was temporary. The lives of those involved stretched out before and after data collection. That included my life and my ideas and beliefs, including a deep-seated critical perspective on disparities in our society and educational system. Critical theory was the one companion I tried to stick in the trunk. It was hard to work everyday in a school that was part of a system that was part of a cultural history and a nation plagued by systematic patterns of institutionalized oppression and injustice (Spring, 1994, Kozol, 1991). That is not a description of McDowell alone, that is a description of school in America. It helped me to recognize these patterns, but sometimes their magnitude was paralyzing. I could identify oppression, but felt at a loss for what to do about the situation. Or better, I failed to see how anything I did was much help—making me a victim of oppression as well.

I found critical theory strategically helpful in considering the relationships between school and the support organizations in this study. Those
relationships were concrete to me, unlike the distant, almost-non-human relationships of "the school system." Perhaps that was a start. But as I look back, my critical perspective was not something I could opt to turn on and off as it was convenient. It was part of how I thought--and think; it was part of who I am as a person.

Indeed, critical theory has received its fair share of criticism, particularly as being utopian, highly abstract, and lacking a context, thereby being rather removed from day-to-day living. Ellsworth (1989) reminds us that it is in contextualized situations that "all knowings are partial knowings" (p. 323). She looks at power itself as the "antagonist" in critical pedagogy, claiming no one is immune from problematization with such a stance--including critical pedagogues. The discomfort I felt with the critical perspective was simply inherent in taking a critical perspective: everything was potentially ambivalent and uncertain and open to question through such a lens. I remained continuously ambivalent about the role of power in this program, particularly between the church and the school. And I was the major link between those two entities, uncomfortably questioning my own power decisions. The isolation of ambivalence contributed to making this study a story told by and reflected through me: a narrative.

Narrative sat by my side the whole trip, sometimes speaking, sometimes writing, sometimes thinking, but always seeking meaning. Narrative became both a vehicle for analysis and a means of capturing and sharing this story of drama going to school, from the first field note to the last page of the dissertation.

Narratives, for all their standard scripts about life, leave room for those breaches and violations that . . . (make) the all-too-familiar strange again. So while the "storying" of reality risks making reality hegemonic, great stories reopen it for new questioning. That's why tyrants put the
poets and novelists in jail first. That's why I want them in democratic classrooms—to help us see again, afresh. (Bruner, 1996, p. 99)

"In the study of human experience, it is essential to know how people define their situation" (Marshall & Rossmann, p. 40). In this study, I chose to define my situation through narrative. Hardy (1977) refers to narrative as a primary act of mind. Bruner (1990) distinguishes between paradigmatic and narrative modes of knowing, noting the greatest strength lies in the latter for it precedes and engulfs the former. Writing in narrative voice places this dissertation on the unclear border between study and story. I prefer to think of it as both. In narrative, "credibility is accomplished, in part, through the artistry of the teller... and in part by locating the story within a larger context of genre" (Richardson, 1997, p. 77).

Most writers, regardless of their written genre, are telling a story of themselves in some way (Richardson, 1994, Geertz, 1988). "We are all a plurality of other stories, including our own. We are our stories" (Rosen, 1986).

In qualitative research, the researcher is "the instrument" through which the investigation is conducted. Researchers' choices reflect who they are and what they believe over and over again, on both obvious and subliminal levels. Gathering data beside and among the people I was studying felt very comfortable and natural. I don't recall making a conscious effort to position myself explicitly one way or another. I went to work and did my job each day. A central function of my job was building relationships with and working alongside teachers, then reflecting on that work to shape the next step. Collecting and wondering about data blurred into my job description. However, when it came to writing, whether due to fear or residual positivism or just plain ignorance, I had a hard time placing myself in the study. I didn't want it to be all about me.
but the data clustered around the tension between what I envisioned and what others envisioned. The narrative was mine to tell, and it was more my story than I had ever imagined it could be.

Narrative has always been a very natural part of my thinking and communication. However, making that narrative public has opened me up to the potential criticism of being simply narcissistic in my writing of this study. The fact that chapter two is a review of literature encased in a review of my own artistic journey make me further open to such criticism. Both choices were not made in an effort for self-promotion, they were tools for analysis, they were important parts of the journey. I prefer to see the choices as appropriately uncomfortable yet grounded risks necessary for growth, of myself and my field. I could have easily hidden in the third person or the passive voice, but that is not where the study led or the story lived for me as a researcher.

Our silences, both those we choose and those of which we are unaware, are also issues of voice in our research texts. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 424)

**Data Collection**

The actual data collection and analysis methods evolved as the study progressed, given the qualitative nature of this inquiry. Data sources included: research journal entries, field notes, lesson plans, meeting notes, year-end reports, organizational publications, formal and informal interviews, tape-recorded interactions, correspondence, newsletters, schedules, phone conversations and messages. Any quotes from the journal or field notes are indicated with a label and date as are audio-tape transcriptions. Some data is interpreted in dialogue format, though not dated. These items are not direct quotes, but compilations.
The preliminary phase (September 1996-March 1997) coincided with "starting up" the program, fulfilling responsibilities inherent in my job as drama specialist. The first (April 1997-December 1997) and second (January 1998-June 1998) phases provided a continuation on a deeper, more specified level. Both phases included data collection, analysis, and manuscript writing. The difference between phases was a matter of focus, the first on gathering and analyzing data through cycles of writing and reflection and theory/category building, the second on writing. No practice was exclusive to one phase or the other, simply more prevalent. Because of the narrative element, a strong, open sharing of and two-way communication about all phases of the inquiry with those "being studied" was a necessary feature (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

As a "backdrop," I explored the history of the relationship between the low-SES, urban elementary school involved in the study, the students' community, the church that funded this program, and the children's theatre that managed this program, through interviews and artifacts and daily life events. Key informants beyond focus teachers included students of focus teachers, the principal, the literacy coordinator, the children's theatre education director, the church volunteer coordinator, the church drama program founder, various church volunteers.

Data Analysis and Writing

The writing became central to the analysis as well as to the inquiry. I made discoveries and raised questions as I struggled to turn raw data into a dissertation. For me, the whole research process was a constant cycle of writing, re-writing, and revising.

I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something I didn't know before I wrote. I was taught, however, as you were, too, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say. (Richardson, 1990)
Phenomenology was sleeping in the backseat for most of my data-gathering leg of the journey, but moved to the front during the final analysis phase. I'm afraid I didn't ascribe to the ideal model of phenomenological inquiry laid out by Patton (in Marshall & Rossman, 1990) as three basic steps of epoche (self examination), phenomenological reduction (clustering around themes), and structural analysis (description of deep structure), but I did similar things, particularly, I categorized data in themes. The self-examination was extremely important, though I did not write it until after the data was collected. The function was not so that I could "get out of the way" as Patton describes, but so that I could find myself in the data and the story--get in the way, and understand how and why I was in the way.

The revisions to categories or themes serve as a crystallization of my analytical journey. Throughout the study, I was curious about how people talked about drama, as that talk reflected their beliefs and ideas about how drama might belong in school. The beginning categories catalyzed an exploration of the notion of ownership in drama. I had written preliminary categories of things to look for, isolated by contextual layers (teacher, student, support organizations, etc.). The teacher categories included these ways of talking about or referring to drama: initiative (asking questions, making requests), repetition (imitating, adapting, or revising co-taught lessons), public valuing (sharing, talking about experiences publicly), recollections (referring to, quoting, or simply remembering a drama experience in another context), resistance (of course), and planning (steering the future course).

These categories remained--and grew--throughout the study to an extent, as I was always curious about how people talked about drama. But data
collection became more focused as other themes emerged: themes that were characteristic of the teacher-student context as well as in the support organizations. They were broader, more conceptual notions: working to, for, and with; giving and receiving; words and deeds. They helped me wonder about relationships founded on helping others: teacher-student, administrator-teacher, funder-recipient. Maintaining two sets of themes allowed me to be alert for specific school-level phenomena that became the stuff of describing teachers' views of drama's functions as well as remaining aware of connecting patterns of talk and interaction that pervaded all involved organizations in the bigger picture. The functions expanded and eventually evolved into status categories of: periphery, utility, craft, and art on the teacher level. The more broad categories provided general vehicles for exploring intersubjectivity within and across layers of context.

The final analysis and writing categories emerged from my writing of chapter two. They included: knowledge and teaching and learning; artful teaching through drama; teachers learning to use drama; drama's ideal place in schools. These categories helped me frame some large, unwieldy ideas for readers beyond myself. In short, by gathering and analyzing what I had come to know and believe about drama, I created a frame for helping to explain my emerging findings in this study to others. Thus by the study's completion, phenomenological, ethnomethodological, and narrative elements were central, yet almost indistinguishable from one another.

Drama and Qualitative Inquiry

As with drama and many other areas of my life, I found my safe way into research through writing. Richardson refers to narrative as both a "mode of reasoning and a mode of representation." Appropriately--so is drama.
Reveling in the complexity of human interaction is a feature common to both drama and ethnomethodology. That it is ultimately impossible to separate the foreground from the background, an "informant" from her milieu, the "event" from its surroundings," challenges many of the ways in which those of us in educational theatre have conducted our research and have placed our attention (Grady, 1996, p. 70).

The importance of reflective practice (Taylor, 1996), the dialectical relationship between theory and practice (Ellsworth, 1989, Lather, 1992, Grady, 1996), and the parallels between modes of qualitative research and dramatic modes (Edmilston and Wilhelm, 1996, Carroll, 1996) are but a few of the many connections that researchers and theorists have noted between drama and the field of qualitative research. The process of doing or using drama artistically has always been a research act of sorts. The boundaries are blurred, the terrain uncertain. And that made the traveling all more fruitfully adventurous.

**Conclusion**

To this point, I have talked about the genesis of this study and situated it in my beliefs about drama and learning. In this third chapter, I outlined and supported the evolution of this narrative case study's methods using mainly ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches. In Chapter 4, I provide an historical account of the non-classroom, institutional forces invested in shaping this grant-funded drama program prior to any classroom work.
CHAPTER 4

VOICES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

The individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping this grant-funded drama program were introduced in Chapter 1. They surfaced again in my professional history in Chapter 2, as I am not a stranger to any of these organizations. In Chapter 3, I explained the methodology I employed in gathering data from these organizations. This chapter provides the historical setting of the study's background voices and forces, beginning with the organizations involved as collaborators on a grant, then considering each one individually in light of their program hopes. The organizations are: McDowell Elementary School, St. Joseph's Episcopal Church, and The Children's Theatre of Webster.

The Support Organizations

This is a story about drama and an elementary school and the grant and supporting organizations that put the two together. It traces the first two years of a three-year program whose mission was to provide a "comprehensive arts program" for the students at McDowell and Bentley Heights Schools and involved "a cooperative partnership between the schools, Saint Joseph's Episcopal Church, and The Children's Theatre of Webster. The purpose of the program (was) to enrich the lives of these inner-city children both academically and artistically..."
Every story has its central characters, its main plot or focus. The central characters of this tale are three teachers at McDowell Elementary: Geri, Lane, and Janine. The main plot traces their evolving perceptions of drama's place in their school and in their own teaching, since their school administrators decided the best way for drama to "enrich the lives of these inner-city children both academically and artistically" was to have teachers use drama as a learning medium. Their journeys will be traced in Chapter 5.

Other characters and subplots are vital to the telling of this tale in all its rich context. These other characters and plots provide rich layers of setting: context that encircles and influences classrooms. It is there our story begins, that we may find a shared sense of place in all its complexity.

The Main Research Setting: McDowell Elementary

McDowell Elementary School was an L-shaped brick structure of 15 adjacent classrooms, one to four portable trailer structures, a cafeteria, a media center, a gym/multi-purpose room adjacent to a stage which is actually a music classroom. All the school's classroom doors opened directly into the temperate climate of the Carolina Piedmont region. In 1983, Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways With Words* ethnographically captured a similar geographical area, telling the tales of people "gettin' on" in their communities that centered around working in the textile mills of this cotton-growing region. Fifteen years later, most of the mills had closed. Some had been allowed to simply crumble and decay. Others had found some interesting second lives. One mill was converted to low-income apartments. Several McDowell students lived there, with hallways wide enough to drive a truck through, "if you'd a mind to."

McDowell was there when the mills were in full swing. Most of the students at McDowell had families somehow tied to the mills, too. But not any
longer. The asbestos and the cracked linoleum tile floors were visible signs of McDowell’s age. A neighborhood senior citizen told me the school was built on top of an old graveyard, “which may not have been a very smart thing.”

Haunted or not, when originally built, McDowell housed kindergarten through second grade students. In the mid 1980’s, it became a K-3 school. Then in 1997, halfway through this study, it converted to a K-5 school.

Bold, primary, upper-case letters lined the front sidewalks. They were the artistic product of volunteers from a large, local financial institution’s volunteer day. The group also did some planting and landscaping along the walkways. The playground equipment was donated by another organization, though half was later removed by the school system since it was deemed “unsafe.”

McDowell has traditionally been a common recipient of private gifts and donations intended for students who ranked among the lowest in both socioeconomic status (nearly 90% qualified for the federal free or reduced lunch program) and academic achievement exams in the county school system.

Some writers and researchers have collectively referred to children such the ones at McDowell as “at risk,” “children of promise,” “children we worry about.” (Allen, et al, 1993) On a day-to-day basis, McDowell teachers and administrators referred to their students as “needy,” “these kids,” “kids like this,” “this population,” “our kids,” or “kids like ours.” Sometimes the word “at-risk” would crop up. The label will not likely ever find universal approval given the volatile social ground on which it rests. For now, I prefer the simple, plural possessive myself . . . “our kids” and “our children.”

Saint Joseph’s Church

A local church referred to McDowell students as theirs, too. Well, local, as in located in the same city. The two institutions were actually about 12 miles
apart. That was only the beginning of their differences. McDowell was in the
northeast section of the city. St. Joseph’s was in the southeast. McDowell’s
population was 74% African American, 15% Caucasian, 10% Asian, and 1% Hispanic. St. Joseph’s Church’s population was almost 100% Caucasian.
Most McDowell families rented homes. Many St. Joseph’s families owned more
than one home. The list goes on, but the basic idea ought to be clear.

The relationship between wealthy church and impoverished school grew
over the years, as written into the by-laws of St. Joseph’s doctrine was the
expectation that the majority of its missions would be targeted locally. Smaller,
more individualized programs were united under a three-year project entitled
Seeds of Hope.

Seeds of Hope is a Commitment of the people of St. Joseph’s Church to
share time, talents, and resources through community partnerships
based on understanding, spirituality, and hope for the future. After
research by The Committee of Twelve, the Seeds of Hope ministries
began in 1995 and will continue through 1999. More than two million
dollars has been pledged by St. Joseph’s parishioners to support
programs receiving Seeds of Hope funds. In addition, more than 265 St.
Joseph’s parishioners have participated as volunteers, committee
members, and Board of Directors members. (1997 SJ Annual Report)

All Seeds of Hope Programs were aimed to benefit residents of what the
church referred to as the “Hope Triangle Area,” a triangular portion of the city’s
northeast section that was home to many impoverished families. McDowell was
in the heart of the triangle area. Among the Seeds of Hope Ministries there
were:

- a jobs skills education program
- programs and services at a neighborhood Episcopal Church (a
  preschool and an after-school program, a community nurse, a children’s
  loss and grief counseling services, a teen club, an after-school children’s
  photography skills program)

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• programs and services at a neighborhood YMCA (a neighborhood family center aimed at reducing abuse and neglect, a preschool and an after-school program)
• an elder medication assistance program
• presiding Bishop’s fund
• an AIDS education network with both prevention and living-with-the-disease components
• a home for non-violent woman offenders and their children
• a collaborative program with a neighborhood child development center to provide specialized services for children 6 weeks to 5 years old
• a collaborative program with YouthTech, a Habitat for Humanity project geared toward helping teens learn “construction and team-building skills”
• an education project of which the drama program is a component.

In its annual report, the Hope Triangle Education project was outlined as such:

Seeds of Hope funds support the drama program offered at both schools and field trips to drama programs, family-involvement projects, camp experiences to build self-esteem and teamwork potential, and after-school enrichment programs. The objective of these programs is to provide an academic and enrichment foundation that will support individual and family development.

Saint Joseph’s Church and McDowell Elementary

The relationship between McDowell and St. Joseph’s went back almost three decades, recalled Pauline, a life-long member of St. Joseph’s Church and a strong supporter of the Hope Triangle Education Project (Interview, 2/17/98).

About 20 or 25 years ago, our pastor noticed that McDowell was always on the bottom of the barrel... you know, with test scores in the newspaper and all that sort of thing. And he wanted to give experiences to these children in need. So about $300.00 or $500.00 was budgeted each year. Now the person who oversaw the project before me would turn the money back to the church each year because he couldn’t find anything to spend it on.

When I got involved, I got groups to go places and do things, we did writing—a poetry contest, swimming lessons, crafts and activities. We made kites and flew them with a group of about 30 or 40 kids right out on the playground. There was a man who had a kite shop over there and he was sort of quirky but he was wonderful with the children. Sort of an Ichabod Crane character. He was calm and soft-spoken and patient, but he’d correct their grammar sometimes and keep them in line. And they listened because he was kind of quiet and different.
Our budget grew because I just kept asking for more . . . and they kept giving it to me. Well, one year I asked for $5000 extra . . . I think it was 5000 . . . to take the kids to Washington, DC. The next year, they still gave me the same total amount. $10,000.00. So I approached Marilyn at the Children's Theatre. I told her I wanted to do something very creative with this money. That was the pilot year of this drama program.

I don't ever buy equipment or supplies. I want to buy something for the children. One time they (the school administration) wanted us to get fans. "Oh no," I thought. Someone else would buy them. They needed them. Someone would do that. I wanted to take the children to a play at Children's Theatre . . . A few years ago, someone bought state-of-the-art Orff instruments for McDowell. And do you know where they are? Sitting on the shelves. That's why I don't buy equipment. I want something for the children.

That "something for the children" became a pilot drama program with a part-time drama specialist (me) serving McDowell and Bentley Heights. The following year, a school-system grant funded a full-time drama specialist position and the church continued to pay for trips to Children's Theatre. Children's Theatre continued in a support role, providing supplies as needed and directing the annual production. There was a hope of bringing the magic of theatre to children who'd likely never have otherwise experienced it.

The Children's Theatre of Webster

The Children's Theater of Webster had grown over its half-century history. A 1997-98 membership drive brochure shared some of that history:

In 1948, Webster was a small city with a few large buildings surrounded by rolling farmland. World War II had recently ended, the Baby Boom had just begun, and television was just starting to replace radio as the center of family entertainment . . . In 1948, a group of women . . . started the Children's Theatre of Webster with the conviction that live drama could provide exciting entertainment, while teaching and inspiring young minds.

The original group of women who started the theatre were members of the Junior League organization. There are nearly 300 Junior League organizations
worldwide today. Though each organization may have elements idiosyncratic to its region, they all share a common history and mission with the original league founded in 1901 New York City “to involve those more fortunate in helping those more in need.” (ALJ webpage, 1998) In this particular case, those in need were children. In the early days, according to the unofficial theatre historian, “they were better . . . given the climate, at serving both [African American and Caucasian children]” (Informal conversation 8/22/98). That changed.

Tremendous, steady growth was a hallmark of the theatre’s first fifty years of existence, “acquiring permanent staff and performance spaces, building an active volunteer corps, and developing a strong relationship with the schools.” The Junior League was--and is--still a strong presence at the Children’s Theatre of Webster in a volunteer capacity. The organization has grown beyond volunteer-only staff. However, up until very recently, the majority of those visiting the children’s theatre in a non-school-field-trip capacity grew to be upper-middle class, white children.

Culture of Change at the Theatre

When I first taught at the theatre in 1992, there was only one “child of color” in each of my year-long classes of 12 to 15 students. Some other classes had none. Sadie and Ronald were two African Americans who were often around the building. They cleaned and “kept the grounds.” They were also employed by Marilyn (then the executive director) at her home as the “hired help.” Quincy, a talented actor and teacher, was the only other Black employee I remembered seeing around quite regularly.

There were occasional crimes in the area. At one point a man, who happened to be African American, was seen stealing a wallet from the building.
He allegedly would return from time to time. Eula, one of our less-culturally-aware employees would spread the word by saying: “Be sure to put your purse up out of sight because the Black man was back the other day.” Eula was an extreme example, but her naively caustic words pointed up an obvious lack of diversity and cultural awareness inside that building, and a tolerance of that lack. Quincy, of course, would good-naturedly refer to himself as “the other Black man.”

Eula had seen the face of the theatre’s clientele, performers, and teachers change rather drastically in more recent years to reflect its adjusted mission:

To enrich the lives of young people, ages 3-18, of all cultures, through theatre and educational experiences of the highest quality.

And she grew in her way, too. She still answered the phone with the southern, mountain flair that made the caller think the words were actually spelled: “Children’s THEE-aytor.” But she began preparing tickets for and house managing audiences that reflected the growing diversity of Webster, working hard everyday to look past skin color and ethnicity. She remembered fondly days gone by. “Way back when, I used to make the costumes, too. And sometimes I’d even be up on the stage. (laugh) . . . We had a good time.”

A new administration came in just as I was leaving to go to school in 1994. Marilyn stepped down, albeit begrudgingly, for it was difficult to leave a part of herself behind. There had already been one attempt at her retirement. But she insisted on staying around to supervise and guide the new executive director “for six months to a year.” He lasted almost six months. Marilyn had a difficult time letting go of “her baby.” She herself was a Junior League member and entered the Children’s Theatre in that vein while it was still a volunteer-run
organization. However, it was Marilyn’s vision to make the Children’s Theatre of Webster a professional organization. And she saw it through that transition.

There were stories of Marilyn donating her entire paycheck on a regular basis to insure financial solvency of the theatre. She also felt responsible for the landscaping and floral displays and other important details of the place, often seen out on the front steps in her suit and heels, garden hose in hand, explaining—then ultimately demonstrating—to Sadie and Ronald exactly which plants she wanted pulled and which needed more water.

The new administration brought the theatre to new level of professionalism with the particular mission of reaching children and their families who would not have historically visited the theatre. The organization grew markedly in its cultural diversity, both internally and among those served. It was almost too easy for people to laugh and marvel at how Marilyn used to run the place “back then.” But one long-time employee pointed out that we pay a price for the corporate feel of the place.

It’s not always good that everyone knows their jobs and their limits... those blurred lines are gone and replaced by policies and missions. Sometimes we get so caught up in policies and missions that we forget about art, simple art. And we forget where we came from. Good and bad, we came from what was before us. Good and bad, then has partly made us now. We forget that.

Where They All Meet: McDowell Drama Program

And so this drama program at McDowell came from two women, essentially. Pauline and Marilyn were both active members of St. Joseph’s Church and Junior Leaguers. They were social friends, each helping the other out. There were often people—mostly women—who attended St. Joseph’s, belonged to the Junior League, and volunteered at and supported the Children’s Theatre. Their world was a far cry from the world of
McDowell, but in their way, they were very sincerely “the more fortunate helping
those more in need.”

The same corporate feel that had crept through the Children’s Theatre
had also crept through the church’s mission work. Individualized, grass-roots
efforts were being consolidated to have a greater impact, thus the “Seeds of
Hope” program. One social worker at McDowell described the change in
dynamic as being the result of a “new generation of church women” who
wanted to raise money for needy organizations, but felt the need to work in a
very professional way, including the organization in deciding how that money
ought to be spent. Apparently, Pauline was considered of the old school, where
the purpose was to raise the money, envision the project, and see the project
through. Indeed, one day, Pauline was trying to contact me at school to set up a
site visit with “a few people.” She must have called several times before I ever
got the message. The secretary nearly leapt out of her chair to give me the
message/s. She simply smiled, winked, and said: “You know you’re her
project.”

For both the church and the theatre—old generation and new generation—
this project seemed to hold promise for emanating something hopeful and
positive . . . and somehow marketable, though I could not put my finger on what
that meant at the time. But the development director at Children’s Theatre said
to me at an initial meeting. “It’s nice to have you, Beth. You’re going to be our
biggest commercial here for a while.”

Entry

As a researcher, I found it difficult to demarcate the precise start of an
ethnographic study in a familiar environment. Technically, the study began the
moment I applied to return to my former position as a drama specialist at both
McDowell and Bentley Heights Elementary Schools. Intending to make one or both schools a research site. Realistically, the start became blurred as I returned to faces I had taught as kindergartners, first graders, and second graders who had grown into fourth graders, fifth graders, and sixth graders. I returned to familiar colleagues and administrators; most interviews began with hugs. The geographical coming and going—two years away at a university—created a “before and after” landmark of sorts. But had it not always been the same me with the same eyes, ears, hands, brain, and heart—and them with theirs? How would I separate then from now, or better—why?

Questions of ownership narrowed and metamorphosed—into related, more focused, questions. The central questions were all teacher questions, with connotations and implications for all levels.

• How does a teacher’s own talk about drama both reflect and influence her accumulating experience in approaching drama as an artist?

• What is the nature of the other voices and forces influencing or seeking to influence the extent to which drama becomes part of a school’s culture?

My first official day of school (8/16/96) began with a school-wide tour guided by the principal: old faces, new faces, familiar faces on bigger bodies. Being a year-round school, things were already a month into the school-year routine. The kindergartners I left two years previously had become third graders. The old third graders were sixth graders over at Bentley Hills. Seven of the twelve McDowell teachers had been my colleagues before.

“Where have you been? I started looking for you August 1!”

“i still remember that one thing you did with the ladies and the hats with the flower in her hair . . . Ida B . . . Ha !”

“Hey—i remember you. Did you used to be a secretary or something?”

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“Thank goodness you’re here to help me use those puppets.”

“You look like our old drama teacher. I think it’s the hair.”

“We don’t want to miss out on drama. We didn’t get it the whole way last time . . . when do you start?”

“Remember that story we did when we were scared in the woods?”

“What’s a drummer teacher?”

Between hugs with old friends and handshakes with future ones, the principal whispered news and answered inquiries, pointing in the direction of passed-by doorways as though they were the people discussed. “. . . She left, she wasn’t much of a team player and you know you have to be a team player here at McDowell . . . Oh now Eileen left because she felt she had to pursue other challenges, hated to see her go, but . . . Do you remember Fran? Was she here with you before? Gone, too. She needed to be on the regular school calendar like her son’s school, of course . . . I want you to meet somebody. This is Briana, one of our new third grade teachers, you two are cut from the same cloth, I think. She and Janine will make a great team. Leann, too. The principal squeezed each of our hands in one of hers, as if testing the circuit.

The Principal’s Vision

Our walk took us back to the principal’s office. She smiled and restated how happy she was to have me back and reiterated her general vision for me yet again . . . that she loved my work with the children, but that this time the plan was that all teachers on campus would be using drama in their teaching, not just those who elected to. We sat in chairs next to one another with our knees almost touching and she began to talk--almost whisper, keeping track on her fingers--about her staff and what I’d likely find.
Kindergarten is an interesting mix of people. They somehow all get along together, even though they're all very different from each other. Yes, Geri used to be on our after-school staff and then we hired her after she graduated and she has such a way with those children. Well, first grade is wonderful. You remember Lane, of course. And the other two are strong as well. They make a good team. Second grade has some difficulties, but they're our most experienced team. We want them to do more active things. And third grade, this is Briana's first year in third grade. Janine worked with Eileen before. They are young and have lots of energy and fresh ideas. I think you'll enjoy working with Janine and Briana and Leann. But third grade is where we fall down with our goals and those tests. I wish you could have seen how the special area team has worked so beautifully together to do these marvelous projects and productions. They have been working with third grade using multiple intelligences. I see you as the perfect fourth member to that team, too.

"You sound like a teacher sorting out all the personalities in her classroom," I observed.

"Of course, but you don't want to tell them that."

So the principal's vision was set, or at least clearly expressed. The decisions and actions were up to me. Actually our ideal vision of all teachers using drama was shared, we just had different pictures of how it might come true: the nature and level of change required. The principal offered her support of any quotas or requirements that I might make of teachers in the effort to prompt them to use drama in their teaching; she would hold people accountable for me.

I feared such requirements might put drama in the "one more thing" category (for teachers who already felt there were too many meetings and too much paperwork at McDowell), come across as heavy-handed and presumptuous on my part, and turn some off to drama fairly early. I opted to spend the first year working side-by-side with teachers in their classrooms hoping to be able to establish rapport and understanding on an individual
basis. The principal advised me toward planning with the grade-level team. I wanted to get a feel for the place again and in more specific terms. Some things had not changed.

Of all the forces shaping the expectations of this developing program—and most programs on campus—the principal's emerged as the strongest. She was in charge of the school. She had the ultimate say-so in who would be hired for the drama instructor position and the ultimate power for laying out expectations for the presence of drama at McDowell. She was a writer and an eloquent speaker herself, a former high-school English teacher. She had a particular affinity for drama having been involved with it in her youth... she loved ancient mythology and all sorts of fine literature and rather disliked rap music calling it "undignified." She once described us as "soul sisters" in our beliefs about how children learn and how schools ought to be, especially schools for our McDowell children. It was stated over and over to the staff at meetings that people visiting our campus felt a sense of warmth and welcoming and concern for children and teamwork... those always ranked high on her list of favorite words and phrases for inspirational staff sermons.

Drama fit with all of those words; even collectively represented them. She would talk about drama as "magic" sometimes. Staff members clearly knew her stance on drama and how classrooms ought to look and how hands-on education ought to be. To me, she had been charmed by the engagement of drama: how it involved children. But she had made little distinction between process-oriented drama and product-oriented drama. Time and again she had explained to me through a thankful beaming smile how prior to having any drama experience, our children would get up in front of others at an assembly and mumble self-consciously... and how drama had improved their
self-esteem. She had described drama as the antithesis of worksheet learning, she liked how it got children up and moving and talking and interacting. She had never been nit-picky about precisely requiring proof of where and how anything having to do with drama specifically connected with the curriculum. Her support of drama, and consequently of me, seemed to be housed among her beliefs and convictions and philosophies. There were grade-level teaching teams who also shared her natural affinity for drama and more experiential learning, there were others that did not. Each always seemed to know where they stood, and were expected to stand.

We’re goin’ to be like the first-grade team. (laugh)
Oh but I don’t know. I’m hearing a lot about third grade this year . . .
They may be the golden children this time.
We’re never the golden children.
I think that’s just our perception of it. I swear I do.
You keep perceivin’ . . . (Interview 8/21/97)

Priority: Teaching Teachers to Use Drama-Pleasing All

The responsibilities of the “drama instructor” according to the grant narrative negotiated between the school, church, and theatre included:

- provide direct instruction to students in their regular classrooms
- meet with staff members, individually or in groups, to provide additional instruction on integrating drama into the curriculum
- work with students after school by offering drama club to interested students on a weekly basis
- work with students after school in an audition-only group to create a production calling on parent and St. Joseph’s Church volunteers to help

Clearly, the greatest challenge as well as the principal’s priority among the four was the second responsibility. Helping teachers re-envision their teaching was--and is--a trying process. In retrospect, doing any of those four things well--at two schools--could have easily required more than one full-time drama instructor. Instead of simply recognizing that, there began a small gnawing in
my stomach that has persisted to this moment and will likely last until I leave this position—and perhaps I’ll take it with me wherever I go. It is the feeling that I owe, that I’m not quite doing enough or explaining it right or that I’ve let this teacher down or disappointed that student. This poem perhaps best captures the sense.

The day that I married, my mother had one piece of wedding advice. “Don’t make good potato salad,” she told me. “It’s too hard to make and you’ll have to take something every time you get invited somewhere. Just cook up beans. People eat them, too.”

My mother was good at potato salad and part of the memories of my childhood have to do with the endless batches made for family get togethers, church picnics, Civitan suppers, Democratic party fund raisers, whatever event called for potato salad. I’d peel the eggs. My mother would pack her big, red picnic bowl high with yellow potato salad (she used mustard), and it would sit proudly on endless tables and come home empty.

What my mother might and could have said is: “Choose carefully what you get good at ‘cause you’ll spend the rest of your life doing it.” But I didn’t hear that. I was young and anxious to please and I knew her potato salad secrets. And the thousands of other duties given to daughters by mothers, and sometimes I envy those women who get by with pots of beans. (Carson, 1989)

This whole document would be more brief and less complicated had the subliminal desire to please all not been among my intentions. How could I
make everyone happy? Rational or not, conscious or not, the thought was ever present. I was to be a gift, a positive force, an envoy of hope representing St. Joseph's Church and the field of drama. Really, I always knew I was just Beth. Therein might have dwelt some tension. Church visitors, though always announced, would want to see me in action with children--engaged children, happy children, grateful-for-Miss-Murray children--inspiring teachers, if possible. School administrators would like to see teachers using drama under my guidance or cooperation as well as children performing in classrooms and on stage. Children's Theatre people would hope for all of the above, as well as pleased church people and pleased school administrators. Teachers and students were anxious to get started which was equivalent with having me in their rooms, leading the charge. As always, there was nothing to do but start, stomach ache or not.

I was determined to leave time for planning with teachers—to do it right this time. I was also determined to visit every classroom in the first quarter, to get everyone on board, knowing drama was best understood from inside. I didn't quite realize that those were somewhat opposing aims. My role needed to be part change agent/facilitator building strong, slow-growing meaningful support for drama through genuine use and interaction and reflection with both teachers and children. But I also needed to be the fairness police, dividing my time equitably, sharing it broadly, touching every classroom and student and teacher as much as possible. An attempt at fairness and broadness won out—as it often does in schools—and scheduling became all important. From my December 11 Quarterly Report to Children's Theatre:

My aim this quarter was chiefly to expose all teachers and students to the possibilities of drama. Many of them were familiar with drama and with me from my last stint with them two years ago, so in ways, this was a refresher. For those new to drama, most (teachers) had at least heard
about the former drama program and our start-up discussion included talking about things we remembered from drama "before." In all, this very much feels like a continuation of what came before.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided historical snapshots of the support organizations invested in shaping this grant-funded drama program prior to any classroom work. Chapter 5 picks up where this chapter leaves off, depicting the interpretive, negotiated journeys of three classroom teachers charged with using drama in their teaching and utilizing me as their "guide" over the two years of this study. We will revisit some of these individual voices and institutional forces again, in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 5

TEACHER ARTISTIC DRAMA JOURNEYS--TO DATE

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the entire dissertation as well as the individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the grant-funded drama program I studied. In Chapter 2, I shared my personal journey to my current beliefs about drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool. I supported those beliefs with a review of literature in drama and related fields, relying heavily on both Dewey’s (1934) dynamic organization of art as well as Bruner’s (1996) four dominant models of learners’ minds as organizational frames. In Chapter 3, I outlined and supported the evolution of this narrative case study’s methods using ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches. In Chapter 4, I provided an historical account of the non-classroom, institutional forces invested in shaping this grant-funded drama program prior to any classroom work. Chapter 5 I share the individual, interpretive, negotiated journeys of three classroom teachers charged with using drama in their teaching and utilizing me as their “guide” over the two years of this study. The research question being answered is: How do classroom teachers and a school drama specialist negotiate and interpret the evolving status and function of drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool over the course of two years?
My interpretation and analysis is shaped by the beliefs I laid out in Chapter 2. The central ideas those beliefs are repeated here.

**On knowledge and teaching and learning:**

- To me, knowledge is socially constructed and culturally shaped.
- Teachers are first and foremost, people. Like all people, teachers are the sum total of their experiences.
- Schools are filled with people who have varying views of learners, including learners as: imitators, mental acquirers, collaborative thinkers, and critical cultural interpreters. Most people hold a primary view of learning, but use others. Schools primarily foster looking at students as mental acquirers. Drama primarily fosters looking at students as collaborative thinkers, critical cultural interpreters, and selectively as apprentices and mental acquirers.

**On artful teaching through drama:**

- Good teaching is art. Good art creates integral experiences. (Dewey, 1934) for all involved, in this case teachers and students.
- In drama, artists/teachers work recursively through vision, decision and action phases toward creating “integral experiences” that in turn contribute to their generative artistic vision.
- Individual drama strategies or activities can be done to (teacher controls vision, student controls decision and action), for (teacher controls vision, decision, and action), or with (negotiated vision, decision, and action) children. Most varied drama experiences involve all three approaches, usually leaning toward one preposition or another as more central.
- The best classroom drama leans toward “with,” striving to involve students as artists in the meaning negotiation at every level: vision, decision, and action. However, constantly renegotiated vision is not just a step in drama, it is the goal, and that which most differentiates it from other dramatic approaches. I call working “artfully with” the children.

**On teachers learning to use drama:**

- All teachers have different thresholds or limits (Heathcote, 1984). The art comes in knowing, then slowly nudging those personal limits toward perceived risks.
- Most teachers have distinct ideas about drama, what it’s for, and where it belongs--or doesn’t belong--in relation to their teaching.
• Artistic mentors provide inspiration and/or scaffolding to novice artists as both map routes in each of their on-going journeys through craft toward art.

• Those teaching teachers to use drama are at once teachers, artistic mentors, artistic models, drama advocates, and learners themselves.

• The use or lack of use of drama by a teacher is guided by her perceptions of drama’s potential functions. Considered over time, patterns of use reflect the status the teacher has given drama in her teaching: periphery, utility, craft, or art.

On drama’s ideal place in schools

• A teacher’s generative orientation toward curriculum both invites, catalyzes, and benefits from drama.

• Such an orientation requires encouraging and modeling inquiry, choosing and framing strong, suggestive drama pretexts that serve as a center but also drive inquiry over time, planning for and based on student and teacher reflection, viewing learning as playful, viewing play as serious, understanding drama-writing and drama-response connections, artistically distilling and representing intimate, intriguing human elements from big concepts—and vice versa, viewing students as artistic collaborators, remaining infectiously curious and flexible, and accepting of “mistakes” as material for valuable reflection and growth.

• Schools reflect society. Society has not been an historical haven of fairness. Schools are not fair.

• Categories of ideas on what to do about unfair schools fall into three basic camps: Help students cope with schools as they are. Help schools stretch their cultural borders and understanding to make them more interactive, culturally collaborative places. Overthrow the whole system and rebuild another.

• All three approaches, however radical or mundane, could learn from the artist who is well-versed in the complicated nature of envisioning, deciding, acting, and re-envisioning—repeatedly, complicatedly, socially, individually, uncomfortably, cooperatively and symbolically—knowing always the process is the product. There are no easy answers.

Overview

This chapter attempts to lay out the highlights (and not-so-high-lights) of three different teachers’ two-year journeys with or toward teaching through drama. You will meet each teacher first in the context of her grade-level team.
This team was to be her learning community; her sister collaborative thinkers and critical interpreters on this drama learning journey. Then each teacher is considered individually, using her words and mine, to help flesh out the ongoing negotiations and interpretations of using drama toward artful teaching. Each segment concludes with a recapping of the range of functions she saw drama as having over time, as well as the resultant status/es drama held.

The first year of the study, there were 12 teachers at McDowell. There were 16 teachers the second year. Each was expected to use drama. Each classroom could have been a rich study all its own. I continued to work with all teachers throughout this study, but chose Geri, Janine, and Lane as focus people.

As with any study, some of the narrowing took care of itself with teachers deciding to transfer to another school the following year, the second year of the study. I believe every teacher is capable of using drama as a learning medium. But they don’t all value it the same way I do. Not all teachers perceived drama as valuable, but every teacher participated. Drama would mean different things to different people, regardless of how many times I tried to redefine it for them. And focus people emerged almost by a process of elimination.

Some teachers just never saw drama as valuable past a periphery status. One teacher would occasionally throw around the idea of having me come in to help the children do drama and learn how to act in this or the other situation. Her assessment of drama was clear in how she spoke of it. One day in passing she mentioned how “crazy” her children had been that day. I commented that they were rather calm and engaged for drama. Her reply: “Oh sure, if you’re up there spittin’ wooden nickels!” Another time she reported to
me (5/26/97): “You should have seen me today. I got really wound up reading that story.” Implying an understanding of drama as being akin to getting wound up and showing off.

I eliminated another teacher, for her most comfortable dramatic mode was games. “How about some games like we used to do? Remember the clothespin game? Do you have any other ones that I don’t know?” (Interview 6/8/97). She also requested that I create a first-grade drama club on Friday afternoon as a behavioral incentive (1/10/97). She didn’t seem interested in or comfortable with the messy parts of drama.

Another teacher all but asked to be eliminated. She would participate as requested, but only for that portion of the lesson in which she was vital, busying herself at her desk or running errands until it was her time to speak, and not always making it on time. At one point, I had to stop and discipline her class during a lesson. She broke in and came to my defense saying: “You better pay attention to Ms. Murray, because I don’t do drama, like I said I don’t do art. You don’t get it except when Ms. Murray comes in. This is a treat for you.” Was that a loud and clear message for the children—or for me? Her grade-level teammate would participate similarly in drama, while also doing paperwork. She often would take drama time “to run and check her mailbox” or to go to the restroom. Despite the fact that the expectation that all teachers would be working with me in all drama experiences, her conditioned belief that arts time was equivalent to teacher release time ran quite deep. That was sad, for there were moments during drama in which she and her students worked very well. But it was not important to her.

I actually began writing with five focus people, but keeping track of them made my head spin and made enemies of my readers, so I narrowed one last
I let go of a kindergarten teacher who was a willing, but self-doubting participant in drama.

I have tried to use drama more this year. Drama is different with and without Beth. Without her, we spent a lot of time this year using drama retelling stories. I had the puppet stand out many a times and once we read a book, we tried to bring in props. (Interview, 5/24/97)

Ghana, a third grade teacher, was the last one eliminated. But given how closely she and Janine worked, studying one was in part studying the other.

Part of choosing Geri, Janine, and Lane was logical and reasoned and part of it was simply feeling. in each case, there was at least one strong, concrete element that made me think she had potential to be an interesting drama study participant, as well as at least one strong, ambiguous element that made me wonder about her in ways I couldn’t easily answer.

Geri’s obvious strength: firm, sincere connections with students and families

Geri’s mystery: strength in silence

Janine’s obvious strength: valuing the social context of her class

Janine’s mystery: a calm, subtle, creative drive

Lane’s obvious strength: expressed interest and experience in drama

Lane’s mystery: selective playfulness—when and why did she play?

I will call on Bruner to provide a framework for placing these teachers in relation to one another and the school culture. Geri, kindergarten teacher, viewed learners primarily as mental acquirers. Janine, third-grade teacher, viewed learners primarily as mental acquirers and collaborative thinkers. Lane, first-grade teacher, viewed learners primarily as collaborative thinkers.

All three teachers were different from one another as were their experiences with drama, depending partially on themselves and partially on outside forces. However, one element was constant in all three cases: drama
was not their top priority. The corollary to that: their priorities were seldom their own.

Grade-Level Learning Communities

Each grade-level team met with me in August of 1996 to help us start negotiating a common artistic vision for our drama program. Peeking in on Geri, Janine, and Lane with their respective teams in-action shows more about them, their most immediate learning community, and their views on drama than I could describe alone.

Geri's kindergarten team (Team meeting 8/26/96) looked forward to implementing a drama program as something that could be done "to" their students; a means to convey known information, prompt desired behavior, or frame independent creative activity--peripheral to the main action of the classroom and its main academic agenda. The intended pattern seemed to be: teacher plans, student enacts, teacher remains on the periphery.

Andrea: One of our goals as a team this year is that we have the children involved in more drama within the classroom . . . We're trying to purchase more puppets, more centers just set up more of a dramatic play instead of just having housekeeping and blocks. So I don't know if maybe you could even give us some ideas to use for backgrounds . . . We haven't actually discussed exactly what we want from a drama program, because we don't know when you're going to be in there and you know, so we've just got a little bit of input . . . We like the kids to do role plays. I think they'll enjoy that. I'd like to do getting along and cooperation . . . Teach them to get along and kind of give them ideas how else you can handle certain situations instead of just hitting and crying and stuff . . . And we can tie into literature, too. I think.

Cathy: She speaks for all of us . . . and I would like to develop more into role-playing so that they can then take off and then do it on their own.

Geri: She said it.
This interaction displayed Geri’s finely honed talents of silence and patient understatement. She seemed to always trust that others would talk. And they always did. When she spoke, she delivered a calm, sincere message that was usually heard with the reverence due a person thoughtful enough to only speak when she had something important to say.

As a learning community, I can liken their interactions to ones of business. They basically respected one another and collaborated peacefully, but each seemed to operate with her own agenda, priorities, and style. Their meetings were not a generative affair as the above interaction crystallizes. Drama was another item on the agenda. They addressed it.

Janine’s third-grade team (Team meeting, 8/25/96) was the only team with teachers who were all unfamiliar to me—and me to them. There was positive energy and curiosity about drama and how it might work; they seemed to see potential. Their questions moved beyond the realm of “What time do we get you and for how long?” That was heartening. They seemed to share drama’s exploratory nature explaining how they were curious about “the literature connection,” because they were “trying to integrate . . . as much as possible,” according to Briana. Actual experiences with using drama themselves was somewhat limited to performance-based things; doing drama “to” them. Janine’s experience struck me as what one might stereotype as the options available to an elementary teacher relatively inexperienced in drama.

Janine: . . . In the beginning of the year, the only thing we’ve done so far, is we came up with rules and they had to act out the rules but nothing as far as—well last year my class was a little project. For our PDP (Professional Development Plan) we did a musical.
Beth: Oo-hhh wow
Janine: And we did “It’s a Jungle Out There.”
Briana: And it was very good.
Janine: It was good, but it was nerve-racking. It turned out good though.
Beth: I think that’s a hard thing, too when you have a production that
being a whole different thing than if you're just doing a process-oriented
thing.
Janine: Mm-hmm. Right.
Beth: You know 'cuz you get to the point where you have to go "No,
you're just going to stand there and be quiet."
Ali: Yeah.
Janine: But they did as far as like the money they had to sell tickets and
do scenery and costumes. I mean it was all--
Beth: And the parents come for that kind of stuff don't they?
Janine: Yeah.
Beth: Oh--that's wonderful. Good for you.
Briana: And . . . our kids were able to go. They had popcorn. It was really
neat.
Beth: So where did the idea come from originally?
Janine: Well, I was working with the art teacher, the PE teacher, and the
music teacher and we did something on multi-c--
Beth: Multiple intelligences?
Janine: Yeah.
Beth: Oh OK. Great.
Janine: My class. I don't know why they picked my class because I had a
bunch of hoo-has last year.
Beth: No--sometimes that's the reason.

Though Briana was more familiar with specific potential drama might
have as a learning medium due to a two-week residency the previous year with
two actor-teachers from Children's Theatre, her assessment of its value seemed
to still rest on performance values . . . the ultimate plus being children getting
comfortable being in front of one another.

Briana: . . . And it was excellent and I just loved it and they loved it and it
made them have so much you know their self-esteem was building and
so by the end of it they were not so shy to stand up and . . . they could
just stand right up and do it . . . and it was just wonderful but you know I
can just not think of the stuff . . . so I'm glad to have somebody to work
with . . . It's really neat. I mean it's like oh now we've got somebody to
help us out.

Janine's team seemed to begin to see possibilities and welcome drama, even
before our meeting ended.
Briana: Basically it would just be integrated with everything else, right?
Beth: Yeah, yeah I mean that is the big thing that i--
Briana: So it wouldn't be extra time, Leann.
Beth: That--what is important for me is to not feel like one-more-thing for your guys.
Janine: So it's not like, “Stop! We have to do drama!”

Lane’s first grade team (Team meeting, 8/28/96) had a broader view of the potential of drama, as something that could be done “to” children, but also “for” them in a performative way. The team seemed a bit more willing to place themselves closer to the action as well. That vision was catalyzed largely by Lane, a teacher I had worked with previously who strongly embraced drama. From the very beginning literature had been a vehicle for our communication. Lauren could even join in on our sharing. The books also were talked about as things we could do drama “to” . . . even occasionally “with.” She was the “creative one” the team.

Lane: . . . Well I have been coming up with some books for this second quarter that we want to use or you know how or act them out or bring drama to them or like I was saying earlier . . . what do you call it when the teacher gets in that the character role?
Beth: Teacher in-role.
Lane: Yeah, that’s cool.
Beth: So do you guys have books already, like do you feel like you have a bazillion books already or do you want me to be looking for books?
Lane: Well definitely The Rainbabies (Melmed, 1992). I’ve got some that I’m sure we’d all want to use. Some real good ones. I’m not sure if you’re familiar with that one called Grandpa-something I don’t know if that’s a good one to act out but it’s ahh--
Beth: But it’s--
Lane: Hey--somebody could be a grandpa---arrrr . . . (Turns into an old man and growls)
Lauren: Things like that Yo! Hungry Wolf (Vozar, 1995) . . . that’s a real cute one . . .

There were elements of a relatively strong understanding of drama’s potential as well as some room for growth and depth within the vision of drama
and within the units themselves, though it took me a while to recognize that. I wanted very much to provide opportunities for teachers to see how drama could help them teach what they were already planning to teach.

Beth: And do you know stuff that you’re doing within families, like things that you want to focus on or concepts or themes from that or--
Lane: Well I mean we could give you all of that social studies business, but I mean like roles in families...
Lauren: Jobs—you know different jobs and
Lane: Yeah, jobs... and where families live. All families don’t live in the same kind of abode whatever...

The activity orientation started to make itself clear with Lane’s reference to the most-oft replicated “thing” learned from my previous time with them.

Lane: We have played that game. What is it partner-partner? With the eyes to the ears or--
Beth: Oh yeah—person-to-person.
Lane: We have played that ‘til the cows come home. So you need to teach us another one, because I am so tired of it.
Beth: (laughs)
Lane: I have decided that there is no one who has lived fully until they have watched first graders play that game.

Whether I was responsible for the perception or not, drama was seen as the potential “fun shot” to inject in existing material. And the next request became:

Lauren: I— I’d like a to like a storehouse, not a storehouse, but just like a whole bunch of ideas just for daily stuff you know like--
Lane: You mean fun things?
Lauren: Yeah, essentially. Yeah just fun things that I could use in conjunction with like
Lane: The last time, Beth, didn’t you give us some kind of manu—not a manual, but—something... Or something you could do with them... Beth: So when you say fun things—what do you mean?
Lauren: I mean with like let’s say I need one of the groups. We do groups. Do something with a book. I take a book and I think of (2) stuff I can (2) do with it
Lane: You can take a character, do a puppet.
Lauren: Right.
First grade even dared to mention the possibility of a performance; charmed by the one they had seen Janine’s third-grade class do the year before.

Lane: Do you think it's feasible. I've never tried it with kids this age, first graders, to do like a play on a big scale and have children make props and all that kind of stuff?
Lauren: Like third grade did last year.
Lane: Yeah. Yeah I mean go that far.

Partway through her wondering aloud, with a little prompting, Lane vividly remembered an experience we shared with her former second graders trying to do a play.

Beth: Yeah. I think production is always possible, but it's always a different dynamic.

Lane: (imitating James’ voice) But, Mitt Ca-wght!! (laugh)

She had cast James, one of her children who was attending speech class and dealing with some self-control issues, as a central character, believing it would be a good experience and a self-esteem builder. Plus, he had always strongly engaged in classroom dramas. In ways it was a “good experience” for him, but we both garnered several gray hairs in the process . . . and I don’t know that the audience quite followed the plot. Charmed by games and performance or not, there was strong hope for drama in first grade.

**Individual Journeys**

We set about using drama, all nodding our heads and smiling in agreement about its importance, but holding a whole range of different visions of the art and ourselves as artists in our own private minds. Visions eventually lead to actions. Different visions yielded different journeys. Each teacher’s vision of learning and drama and this particular school in her own words appears
Geris Journey:
From Periphery to Utility
(compilation of field notes and interviews on 5/26/97, 5/21/98)

The Big Mission: Children Must Acquire Curricular Knowledge

My main goal is to make sure my activities are focused on the standards, the objectives we need to teach and to make sure that they're interesting and that they apply to every child, no matter what level they're on, especially during centers. And that's a hard thing to do. Because sometimes you just want to generalize and just put one thing out and let all the children do it, but some children are much higher, so you have to come up with different things to challenge them... so that is my main goal. And making sure my classroom is theme-oriented, so you can walk in the classroom and go, "OK... I know exactly what they're studying." That's more important for the kids. And I know it's what they the administrators want, so that's what I try to give. I do my job. Balancing all that is my biggest challenge... and the paperwork. It gets in the way.

Geri was in charge of her class's learning, holding herself personally accountable for making certain each child had the materials with which to learn each day and that administrator expectations were met. According to Bruner's (1996) four conceptions of learners' minds, her over-riding model was the second one, seeing knowledge as mental acquisition. Geri would stray to other conceptions in certain contexts, but she mainly saw her position hierarchically, the curriculum and expectations passed to her from above were to be passed on to the children.

The thick-enough-to-be-a-booster-seat state curriculum guide was central to the kindergarten team's planning. All grade-level teams, planned and submitted written thematic units for the year, divided by quarters according to
The kindergarten unit reflected their focus on required standards. There was a section on the unit plan form that read: “Standards to be assessed.” Literacy and math assessments appeared privileged over social studies and science assessments in their specificity of what was sought to be seen. There were almost always lists of specific, observable verbs under the literacy and math headings (e.g. “points to words,” “names some letters,” “uses manipulatives,” etc.)

Meanwhile the social studies and science standards were listed as fairly broad and vague topics, sometimes seemingly not bearing much of a connection or planned sequence to one another. In the case of the second quarter unit, science topics included seasonal changes, senses, day and night. Social studies topics included holidays and farm life. Health topics included major body parts, food groups, and personal fitness. These topics that were seemingly intended to be starting places from which teachers might extrapolate some of their own approaches and standards, became lists, too. They were not specific or connected, thus neither was the quarter or the unit, much past books and activities centering around the same topic for a while.

“Dramatic play/art” appeared in the listed literacy assessments. (It was the only noun.) So to abide by the standards was only to insure that dramatic play existed in the classroom. The state saw drama as an optional way to assess literacy, so did Geri.

Geri would regularly reinforce opportunities for those observable literacy assessments. Just prior to going to independent center time, Geri shared the activity options with the children, saying: “I was so proud of Russell on Friday. During independent center time he chose to practice his letter sounds with the pointer. And I saw Zatasha reading the big books that we read together this
week and have on display."

Grace (2/25/97), during center time, chose to read a class big book utilizing a pointer. She sat proudly on Geri's coveted green stool where the teacher often perched. To her ever-dwindling audience of three, Grace asked in her best teacher voice: "Who can read this page, boys and girls?" (James attempted to crawl away.) "James, make a better choice or flip your strip . . . Chenda, here. Use the stick." This was Bruner's first model of learners at work: learners as imitators. The child was imitating Geri . . . or using drama to be an apprentice teacher. It was playtime. That was fine to Geri, but not important.

**Learning in a McDowell Culture**

I think maybe the goals at all schools are about the same, but different schools go about them differently, so they have different challenges. I have friends at other schools who don't understand why we have to do all this paperwork and these meetings. They don't have to; friends at other schools don't have to do all that. One friend works over at one of those new schools that just opened. And she's the computer specialist there. And they have 1,30-something computers there—all on the internet. And we're sitting here with that points to an ancient apple He! and you would think they would consider schools like ours, because of the neighborhood, because of the type of children who don't get to experience lots of things. You would think they would look at us first for stuff like that.

I think that's one of the reasons why I'm staying. I'm staying for the children. I think they want them to understand so much they want so much . . . And a lot of them don't get the attention at home that they get here. I have no problem spending $2.00 on something that will make my class happy, that will make my kids happy. They appreciate a lot more than some children in some other schools would appreciate. I mean just a sticker and they are just beaming, ya know?
I have a good relationship with families. We're all supposed to do our home visits at the beginning of the year and I do. Now, a lot of them don't want you in there. But we work it out. There's only a handful I never see, and many I see everyday or keep in touch with through notes. Jerome's mother and grandmother, I've seen them maybe two times. There's very little support there. Everything he's learned, he's learned here. And he's one of those kids who wants to learn. So that's sad. That's why I take him under my wing.

Geri and my models of learning weren't precisely in line, but Geri stood out as one of several African-American teachers in my life who admirably made me wonder which special avenues of connection between child and teacher were strictly paved in culture. She managed to foster a firm, yet maternal connection with most of her students. One or two would often hang from her knees as she sat in her stool and passed out the day's prizes or called names for children to wash hands before lunch. She continued on as though the child was just another appendage. And the child inherently knew it was an acceptable time for such behavior.

Her children were also very aware when such behavior was not acceptable. Geri's class stood out among the three kindergartens as being the most self-sufficient. They knew their jobs in the cafeteria. Small groups of Geri's students would walk to breakfast independently each morning as she watched from her door, other kindergarten classes requiring an adult escort.

Calvin, a former student said of Geri, "She's always nice but she puts us on silent probation... that means you can't talk at lunch and you have to sit by yourself. But she gives us treats if we be good" (interview 5/5/98) it was not uncommon for me to come in for drama and find three children at the tables with heads down, and the rest of the class, on the carpet awaiting me. During a lesson, if Geri noticed misbehavior (often before I did), she would simply and
softly say: "Jennifer. Bye." The child would usually just get that deer-in-the-headlights stare and Geri would whisper: "I told you. No warnings. Bye." Jennifer--or whoever--would stand and silently mope back to his or her desk and watch the drama lesson from there.

Geri seemed to have a more consistent intolerance for misbehavior than did the other kindergarten teachers. However, she also encouraged students to "earn their way back" with good behavior. However, only an adult would determine whether a strip stayed or flipped. Whether due to culture, consistency, or some other combination of factors, Geri nurtured strong connections with her children and their families.

Even parents I don't see that much, they know I have the best interest of their child in hand. And I've gotten a lot of compliments from parents.

**Everywhere Drama?**

Drama is everywhere when you teach kindergarten, because you have to make everything fun. They can't just sit for long periods of time without getting antsy. You have to make everything fun, even when you are having the worst day. You still have to make it interesting and act silly. I do it better when there aren't any adults in the room. I guess I've gotten used to my assistant being in here. Sometimes she laughs and sometimes she don't pay me any attention, but when other adults are in here, I can't act as silly.

We do calendar everyday and to make it interesting I have these certain characters that come out. I have Miss Clara. she's a Jamaican lady. Sometimes she comes and teaches calendar. I have Miss Beulah, she's my lady from the country. Sometimes she does it. Oh, what's my other one? We named her. I forgot the other one. I had an English an English man or was it an English lady? I don't remember, but we named 'em. I've done that one. I do it 'cuz we do calendar everyday, so to make it interesting, every once in a while. I'll bring one of them out. And the kids go: whispered "Oooh--she's in a good mood today!" or something like that. And I just act silly and do silly things and
make 'em laugh and everything. So that's one way. And um, I don't know, that's the only thing I can think of.

The signal sounded. It was 8:15 a.m. almost any morning in Geri's classroom. The children obediently cleaned up from free play and gathered on the carpet.

"Good Morning."

Geri smiled, and waited. A faint echo of her greeting slipped out of still-partially-sleeping lips.

"I can't hear you. I said 'Good Morning.'"

"Good Morning!"

Smile. "That's more like it."

It was time to begin the calendar ritual. In the words of Ms. Brussells: "Our calendar is quite extensive." Indeed, often it went on for 30 to 45 minutes. They figured out the month, the day. They chorally counted days. They wrote the number of days in school on the hundreds chart. They took turns being spelling cheerleaders, two with pompons, one with a flip ring of letters spelling out the current month. "Gimme an O!" the three leaders would shout. The class would respond accordingly all the way through to the "r" of October, then three more would replace them. Then onto letter sounds repeated chorally, then individually. And the whole series of other calendar rituals, mostly spoken chorally.

Calendar always ended with a funky little song to which the children all spontaneously sprung to their feet and danced: "Put your hands up in the air. And wave 'em like you just don't care. And if you're five years old and you're in Grade K, say 'Ye-ah,' Ye-ah! say 'Yeah!' Ye-ah!"

Was there drama in that? To Geri, yes.
Even without Miss Beulah or Miss Clara, Geri was making the experience “fun” and “silly.” That fit with her first definition of drama.

Yet she defined drama differently when talking about me in it, that was “role playing just like housekeeping . . . a way of children being able to do things they’ve seen or experienced before.” That was play. Neither definition had any inklings of the generative. Was drama really “everywhere” it could be? Would Geri and I agree on what drama was?

**Secret Drama**

But those characters don’t come out except for my kids. Like I did that when I did my student teaching in second grade. And my kids would tell my cooperating teacher everything I did and she was like: “Let me hear.” It’s like, “No.” I couldn’t. And the first time I did it last year, Ms. Brussells kinda looked up and she went: “Oh my goodness.” But I don’t do it in front of anybody, only my kids. Only my kids. Parents have heard about Miss Clara and Miss Beulah, but they don’t know who. I’ve told them who she is, but they’ve never seen.

Geri’s interactions with colleagues usually consisted of only necessary words, meaningful actions, no fanfare, and no undue attention. I collected tape after tape and note after note of meetings including the kindergarten team. I listened back and reread and often asked: “Where was Geri?” The usual: listening.

She would participate in drama lessons, but I never saw any signs of those larger-than-life characters she told of. And she all but promised I never would. Nearly all the roles she assumed for dramas we did together, whether Goldilocks seeking to right her errors after the break-in, a transplanted city slicker needing help surviving on the farm, or a little girl trying to outsmart the tooth fairy, her character had elements of shyness and uncertainty in the
character she played. She was likely calling on authentic, immediate feelings and using them, as any good actor would. She participated in dramas "with" children, but envisioned by me.

But she secretly did drama "for" her children during calendar. That wasn't my preferred orientation for fostering generativity. But there was something to the fact that this art of hers was a secret between the children and Geri. There was evidence of Geri's thresholds on risk and power and generativity. But she had occasionally led her children to an elsewhere; it was precious to both.

Struggling Toward a Definition of Drama

Drama helps them get into whatever they're studying. They can actually ... I can't say ... they can imagine, like today when Beth had them being fish and talking to each other. I guess they could kind of relate in a way to how fish swim, and what they do when they're in the water, and how they communicate with each other. So it gives them another perspective of what's going on instead of me sitting there reading the story or we just talking about it ... if you (2) interact, if you get into it and you're actually doing it, it gives them another way of thinking and they can use their imagination and creativity.

I would describe *drama* as role playing, just like housekeeping. I would say for most kindergartners or even first graders, that is their favorite place to go. And it's usually the loudest place in the room. I guess it is role play: a way of children being able to do things they've seen or experienced before. I like the interaction. The kids liked to do something different. And something with someone other than me or Ms. Brussels.

Geri saw drama as play or role play. Even in role play, the content was an interactive exploration of "things they've seen or experienced before." Drama was not a place to construct new knowledge, just a place to play with it and with each other. Part of Geri's valuing of drama was my doing it. In her
quiet, yet firm, maybe even subliminal way she was saying, "I will cooperate. I will appreciate, but I have boundaries, too." Implicit in the compliment was the expectation that the role-play variety of drama might always require me.

As time passed and we entered into the second year of our drama program, I envisioned us growing from where we had been the previous year. I had vague plans for a workshop/class. The last year had been devoted to getting and becoming familiar. This next year would be the year for change. But one never really knows what lurks around the next corner.

The Uphill Year at a Glance

Oh Lord! I can't even think about next year now . . .

Even if Geri had shared a plan or conjecture about the following year, it would have likely not matched the route we actually traveled. McDowell changed from a K-3 school to a K-5 school. We knew that was going to happen. The physical school structure was undergoing major constructive repairs. We knew that, too. Repair work got behind schedule. We had a feeling that might happen. Repairs continued well into the first quarter, necessitating that two kindergarten teachers share the wide-open gymnasium/multi-purpose room as a classroom space while the third kindergarten teacher used the adjacent stage space. The physical education and music teachers agreed to teach in the classrooms or outside. We never dreamed it would be like that. Lane described the situation well, saying: "it was essentially like starting over again . . . adding two new grades. New people--brand-new teachers. And tearin' up the school in the process."

Taken-for-granted procedures like students going to the bathroom suddenly became major events requiring scheduling, coordination, and referees. Assistants who had been paired with one teacher were now working
in two or three different classrooms. Some teachers were adjusting to teaching without a permanent assistant. Other teachers were adjusting to having one. Kindergarten teachers sometimes took their students to vacant classrooms as a respite from the din and scurrying of five-year-olds trying to figure what it meant to be in school... and their teachers struggling with the same idea. A teacher assistant told me that as she led a line of kindergartners down the breezeway one child asked, “Where we going?”

“To a classroom.”

“What’s that?”

For kindergartners, three weeks of those circumstances served as the children’s introduction to school. Sadly, when their rooms were finally completed, first graders replaced them in the makeshift classrooms. Drama was far from the center of anyone’s concern.

Drama was not totally abandoned, but the “drive,” Heathcote’s first component of creative work, was largely absent.

“Look what she’s got me doing this time...”

I overheard Geri laughingly sharing the lesson she and I were about to do with her assistant. She saw the plan as something I had her doing. So just as drama could be done to, for or with children, negotiating drama co-teaching could be done to, for, or with another teacher. I wasn’t sure if I was do the drama lessons to or for Geri, but I wasn’t doing them much “with” her. In Geri’s understatement she once again crystallized my trouble. I resisted forcing teachers to use drama. I tried to approach the experience as a shared venture. It may have been shared, but, the vision and decisions, and many of the actions rested firmly with me. This tendency I had wasn’t just an impulse that entered me when I did drama with children and left. The impulse to please and help
and do for others was all through me. And it wasn't always helpful. Here is a lesson that Geri and I implemented together (7/17/97). We had discussed possibilities, but I had written the plan (shared vision, but privileging Beth's). I use the word "we" throughout, because that was the theory. As you read, just take a guess at which of us actually did what.

Focus
We talked about how the ocean moves and how things in the ocean move. We moved like ocean waves. Then we brainstormed things that might live there, stopping to discuss how different sea animals might get along.

Meeting
We conducted a meeting as concerned members of the fish-school community. Have you felt safe recently? Are there any safety concerns? We eventually expressed our concern that over in the far cave there seems to occasionally be a set of large, mysterious eyes. Has anyone seen or experienced them? Or heard anything about any strange goings on? How should we proceed--they are rather big and scary looking . . . solicit input.

Swim-by Spying
We had a gigantic set of eyes, each one on its own stick. Geri set up with them in a corner of the room? We turned out the lights. The children and I secretly "swam" to see what we could observe, agreeing not to touch or get too close or make any noise or sudden movements. Geri operated the eyes, sometimes hiding, sometimes glaring. She also whispered some things about "staying away," etc. for only a few children to hear.

Whisper Stories
In twos or threes, students whispered stories that they had heard or imagined to be true about the mysterious creature with the scary eyes. We switched partners and whispered again on a clap, then shared a few of the stories aloud.

Brainstorm
In the whole group, we brainstormed a list of some words that might describe our mysterious creature as well as reasons he might be hiding.

Really Building the Fish
I attached the mysterious eyeballs to a hula hoop, gathered some art materials, and our descriptive list. Creating the creature became a center in the week's rotation. Each group worked with me, designing the creature mask, picking up where the last group had left off, augmenting the previous vision with their own. We could have used our word list better, making it more specific with each group, a vehicle for one group to communicate with the next, but . . . next time.
Meeting/Interview
Geri set up as the creature again. The children and I met, deciding on a plan of how to deal with that creature. In the course of our discussion, we decided to swim by one more time. Then the children decided they needed to talk to the creature. As a group, we thought about things we might want to know from the fish, then three at a time, children swam over to ask questions. They reported their findings which also helped generate more— and deeper— questions from the group. The questioning continued until we discovered that this particular creature was lonely, but too scared to make friends. The children came up with several suggestions for how to help. She didn’t respond to the offer of a sticker or a birthday-party invitation. Then the questioning moved to who she was and what she needed or wanted. They eventually “lured” her out with a little food and the promise not to swim away when they saw her.

Read Aloud/Discuss
This laid groundwork for the actual reading of the pretext, after which we discussed both stories in relation to each other.

Essentially, Geri acted as the eyes, acted as the masked creature, and read the book. I took charge of the rest.

Deja Vu
Good teaching moves among all of Bruner’s models strategically. Teaching through drama requires similar pedagogic eclecticism. The teachers in this study all moved between models, but seemed to have a home-base model that reflected their predominant view of learning and the world. In cases where my home-base model and the teacher’s home-base model differed, drama lessons were a negotiation. Geri largely saw her children as mental acquirers for whom she needed to provide experiences to help them internalize the given curriculum. In the second year of the study, Geri and I still had not made much progress.

The Napping House (Wood, 1984), a cumulative tale of family members and pets going to sleep, was a book for teaching sequencing skills, according to Geri and her team members. When we planned a drama lesson based on that
book. Geri’s and my varied orientations came to light. She envisioned the drama reinforcing the concept of sequencing by acting it out. She also expressed an interest in steering children’s “free play” in the dramatic play area toward further exploration of the story independently. My take on the book was that the over-crowded conditions might be a jumping off point for exploring problem solving and negotiation in a group, as well as imagining this family more complicatedly beyond happily ever after. I was looking to employ the children as thinkers and interpreters.

Geri had read the story ahead. We had one prop/costume piece for each character (Granny, grandson, dog, cat, mouse, flea). These items were left in the dramatic play area after the lesson, to encourage further play with the story, as requested. During the drama lesson, the children and I looked at two pictures—one where everyone had been peacefully sleeping, the other where they were all rudely awakened. We talked about how they got there and what different characters likely felt or thought based on the pictures.

Geri stepped into role as Granny and set up her bed. One at a time, selected children approached her in-role and attempted to pile into bed as in the story.

Granny Geri: Hey! What are you down’ in here?
Grandson: Goin’ bed.
Granny Geri: Not here. Not tonight. This is MY bed now. (GRANDSON STANDS STARING) Well?
Grandson: Umm... Please?
Granny Geri: Why should I let you?
Grandson: You’re supposed to share.
Granny: I’m too tired.
Grandson: You can use my new pillow.
Granny: Oh, alright, you share. I’ll share. But nobody else.

Each new character had to negotiate a place to sleep. As additional
characters approached, she would sometimes consult with other children she had already allowed in. I was the final character to join them as the dog who could not remain still or quiet. I kept getting ordered out of the room, each time I did. I consulted with the sitting children for advice which I would try the next time in.

Dog Beth: They kicked me out again!
Mary: You be actin’ too wild!
Dog Beth: I’m just playin’
Corey: You not . . . It’s not . . . you s’posed be quiet.
Dog Beth: I don’t feel like it.
Robbie: Be nice.
Dog Beth: I’m bein’ nice!
Angel: Oooh—you got a attitude.

I took and tried a couple more suggestions, then partway through, I gave up my mop-wig to a child to assume the dog’s role. The child tip-toed in and gently asked for a spot to sleep which Granny granted. The sitting children and I talked about why the new dog seemed to have more success than I had. Just as we were about to call the drama to a close and reflect, one sitting child said: “Can I go there?” She was joined by a series of friends. The children and I discussed how they might go about getting into Granny’s bed. They concluded that Granny had been disturbed enough, they would send an envoy after the cat to help them sneak without making a sound, and stretch out without letting anyone hear or feel them.

It was sweet and enjoyable, but somewhat superficial and isolated. The children did play with the props in the dramatic play area. (We could actually count which children played the dog as the rag mop left traces of lint in their hair.) But as with most play, the learning lingered around what was already known. I felt at a loss for how to approach drama in kindergarten in a way that mattered to kindergarten teachers as well as to me. I spent extra time in their
classrooms hoping either opportunities or enlightenment might turn up to help
us improve our collaborating, so I wasn’t always just doing drama for them. My
human presence was appreciated and considered helpful, but the requests
made of me were not requests for art. I helped take children to the bus. I read
with individual kids. I participated in classroom stories and lessons. I became
part of their routine. Innovation would not start with them; it had to start with me.
But how? That concern was soon dwarfed by others.

It Takes a Village . . . Or the Village Will be Taken Over

Just as the last of the dust was swept aside, the final yellow “CAUTION”
ribbon was removed, and the whole school seemed to sigh and finally slide
toward the business of teaching and learning . . . the news came. Several North
Carolina schools, as well as two local schools, had been “taken over by the
state” due to unmet goals, low achievement-test scores, and lack of “adequate
growth and progress.” The profiles of the two local schools were ominously
similar to McDowell’s. Amid rumors and conjectures of what it exactly meant to
be taken over by the state came the confirmation of suspicions that McDowell
was in danger of a similar fate. Because of our transition to K-5 and evidence of
steady—though not quite enough—growth, we were spared, but to be watched
carefully. However, we were only to be evaluated on reading and math scores.
My dramatic little heart sank yet again.

The focus on testing and what such a focus does to the learning culture
of a school is a topic for someone else’s dissertation, perhaps a whole library
full of them, so I won’t elaborate. However, there is one practice excessive test
emphasis spawns that to me is symbolic of the potential damage making tests
too important can yield.
Of necessity and for efficiency, our school targeted greatest energies and resources toward the “brinkers;” those students who were just below the desired standard or level. High-achieving children are assumed more capable of independent activity, lower-achieving children were assumed to be getting their main attention from individual work with the instructional support team. This mindset was not unique to McDowell, though I doubt many schools would advertise its presence. It was not some evil plan of laziness, it was the logical result of being told: “You need this many students at this level by year end—or else!”

One of McDowell’s plans for helping those brinkers with their reading was to have a K-2 teacher, with early-literacy expertise, work regularly with a small group of 3-5 students on “reading skills.” Geri and Lane were both among them.

After being the only thing that was consistent for my kids up until January then being taken away from them for two hours two days a week. That just kind of threw everything off. Drama? When?

Interestingly, the special area team of music, art, computer, and media teachers became responsible for covering classes for the K-2 teachers involved. The theory was in that hour, which also included lunch and recess, the special area teachers could “provide enrichment activities in their respective disciplines.” That was rarely the reality.

The dynamic of arts teachers taking a backseat on the literacy journey had a ripple effect across the campus. By January, the sentiment that anything that was not math or reading was of secondary importance had spread across the place. For those preferring not to use drama anyway, this sentiment lent support to their avoidance. And truly, my inspiration waned as well.

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Kindergarten was a casualty to that situation. I didn’t have it in me to beg them to use drama and they didn’t seek me out.

The Plan

At the end of the year, kindergarten and first-grade teachers met (5/21/98). We reflected on the roughness of our year and looked to the next one. The principal spoke:

Lane asked that we include Beth in this meeting and I am glad we did. When she joined us last year, I told her I wanted her to help all our teachers use drama in their teaching. And as far as I can see, that hasn’t really happened. I have seen Beth come into your classrooms and help you do creative and innovative things, but I haven’t seen you carry them on after she leaves. Now I know this has been a hard year. And I know sometimes it can be intimidating working with someone who has an expertise like Beth does, but . . .

After the principal finished, we talked as a group. First-grade teachers talked of their positive experiences with drama and plans for next year. Geri’s two teammates made repeated comments and questions about needing guidance and a set schedule and suggestions and . . . Geri’s only words:

We need more time to plan with you.

Operative word being “with;” reflectively with. Would it be different?

The Functions and Status of Drama for Geri

Each teacher’s perception of drama’s potential functions yielded patterns of use over time that showed the range of her beliefs about what drama could do. In Geri’s class, without me, drama functioned as independent child play and sugar-coating for more privileged content (calendar characters). The former was not teacher manipulated, the latter was drama done “for” the children. With me, Geri saw drama’s functions as an opportunity for variety of teaching style and interaction, a vehicle for active involvement, a chance for children to explore different perspectives and points of view. These were all things that an
adult teacher could provide for the child learner while remaining external to the child's experience.

This was in keeping with Geri's view of learning as largely mental acquisition and imitation, Bruner's first two models. Though Geri grew more comfortable and willing to participate in the dramas I planned over time, her view of its potential functions remained fairly constant over the two years. And in a time of stress and struggle, drama was easily expendable. Drama in Geri's class remained vacillating between periphery and utility status. Simple.

Janine's Journey:

**Through Periphery to Utility to Craft and Back Again**

(compiled from field notes and interviews on 4/25/97 and 6/8/98)

Where Geri worked relatively independently of her teammates, in third grade, Janine and Briana, were nearly inseparable—so much so that both their ideas are presented here to reflect Janine's vision.

**Socially Constructed Learning**

Janine: The biggest challenge is helping the kids to get along.

Briana: At the beginning of the year, they hated cooperative groups. Now they love it. And they're getting better at it. Our big goal is to get them to cooperate and at least try their best; to at least try. And not start out with that bad attitude... that maybe I can cooperate with this person.

Janine: Team bonding. I mean they were fighting over who would draw!

Briana: ... George, at the beginning of the year hated—and I mean hated—working in cooperative groups and centers. He wanted to do everything by himself. And so I finally asked him, “Have you never worked in a group before?” And he was like: “No.” They just weren't used to it. And now they love it.

Briana: At other schools, they don't have to deal with discipline like we do...
Janine viewed the social interaction as the heart of her teaching. This would coincide with Bruner's third model of learners' minds where learning is seen as dialectical and negotiated. That orientation along with the strong learning partnership she shared with Briana made Janine very open to drama. They shared a willingness to let the social be the curriculum in order that the social could better help generate and support learning. They conceived of their teaching in three-week mini units.

Drama as Social Tool: Drama Specialist as Resource

Janine: Actually, I think drama helps give them something to be active. It gets them moving, that energy moving.

Briana: And they're so active and involved in what they're doing, they're not worried about slapping their neighbor because they looked at them wrong.

Briana: I think it gives 'em more self confidence. And it gives them a way to express themselves... a correct way to express themselves. Beth helps us. She gives us ideas to make things more interesting for them.

Prior to even working in their classrooms, Briana and Janine approached me to help them with an idea. They wanted to do an Adjective Fashion Show. A thousand things raced through my mind, the first of which was: "Eeek! No!!" Then I reminded myself of the promise to build on their ideas. I saw no way to help re-envision this idea in a process-drama frame without trashing it and starting again. And I certainly did not want their first request of me to be met with a shower of negativity. So, I explained that it sounded as though they were more in the market for games and activities. I listed a few, shared a couple choice costume pieces, and left them to run their event. They looked to me as a source of fun and creative ideas for active learning. It was a place to start. I was
happy to help, yet fearful that their understanding of drama would not move beyond that point.

Fortunately, my fears were unfounded. Once drama moved from the theoretical to the actual in their classrooms, both Briana and Janine were not only open, but also insightful and willing to build beyond drama done only by me. Here are some of Janine’s students talking with me about what drama is.

Angel: Umm--you pick a subj—you talk about a subject that we been learnin’ on and then we do things with it. activities with that subject
Beth: Like what?
Angel: Like—the Mondale House.
Beth: Like the Mondale House. OK.
Mia: Sometimes we play games, about like sometimes we play detectives and stuff.
Beth: So when you’re pretending you’re somebody else, that’s a game? (2) That feels like a game? Like if we’re pretending we’re detectives, that feels like a game?
Mia: Yes.

**Drama and the Curriculum**

Janine: Drama helps with integration.
Briana: The stuff Beth does gives us ideas for how to make it more interesting for them--to get them more involved.
Janine: It’s not just like: “OK, write.” And they don’t have any idea what to write about. Their writing after drama is so different than their other writing.

The Mondale house was a local historic site that the third-grade children were scheduled to visit on a required field trip as part of their local history unit. Briana and Janine feared that trip might be dull for the children. We did some drama in preparation with the teacher, the assistant and I eventually playing the role of elderly women who had lived in the house as children to help flesh out the preservation perspective. They had also been in-role as business people and real estate developers.
The morning that the students were to go, the teachers issued them this memo, in role as members of the city council.

MEMO

To: Charlotte City Council Members
From: City Council President
Date: 11/20/96
Subject: The new mall

Council members, please remember that we have still not made a decision on the new mall for North Main Street. If you will recall, in our November meeting, some people supported the idea of knocking down the Mondale house and making it into a shopping mall while others thought that was a poor idea. As you visit the house today, please keep this problem in mind. When you return, I would appreciate hearing from you by letter. What do you think we ought to do? Please provide a detailed plan. Drawings may accompany your letters. Is it history or the mall—or a compromise? Enjoy your visit.

The next morning (11/20/96) the following note was in my mailbox:

Beth.

We just got back from Mondale House. I just wanted to say thank you for doing drama with my class. The class would have been bored out of their minds if it hadn’t been for you.

Thanks again,

Briana

Janine and Briana had the children write as City Council members when they returned, sharing their ideas and supporting them with reasons. It was heartening to have the teachers build beyond what happened in our drama lesson, recognizing its generative nature.

The Mondale House was one of several lessons Janine relied on me to lead, yet she participated and said that after participating, she looked forward to repeating the efforts on her own. She was actively involved in an
apprenticeship role, though she freely talked about her uncertainties and thresholds. (Note: The “sheets” are a reference to my lesson plans.)

Blurred Vision of Co-Teaching Vision

Briana: I forget . . . those sheets. If I could remember . . .

Janine: I just like. I’m not sure what I would like to do because I don’t have much of a background in drama.

Briana: . . . Now I’m just thinking about what I can do next in the lesson.

Janine: And I like to see Beth because then I get a chance to see “Oh. it’s like this.” So then next year like I can do that.

If teaching through drama is an art, then co-teaching through drama is a high art. Two teachers trying to negotiate vision with both one another and a roomful of children can be difficult. Add to that the fact that most teachers are accustomed to being in charge, the artistic mission gets further complicated. Difficult-to-reverse relationship patterns get established before they are even recognized.

I have learned the hard way what seems a simple lesson: Planning can be collaborative in every sense of the word. But unless otherwise clearly delineated, whoever writes the plan or the notes or the outline is in charge. Corollary to that lesson: Want power? Pick up your pen. Want someone else to take power? Hide your pen.

The teachers who weren’t interested in teaching through drama themselves quickly recognized my sense of obligation to this program; that I would take written responsibility. The most they could be in that role with me is apprentices. Those without the drive to work on their own weren’t even apprentices.
Janine was driven. She found a scaffold in the pretext of a drama lesson and crafted from there to make her own. The fact that third grade studied a lot of traditional literature helped Janine scaffold. Working within the same genre, she felt comfortable borrowing a large part of the one lesson’s vision and applying it to a similar pretext. She then borrowed or adapted familiar drama strategies and frames (e.g. putting characters on trial, framing fairy-tale character actions as crimes) but used a different pretext. For example, Janine (6/2/97) did a drama lesson where the children interviewed Lon Po Po (Young, 1989) as reporters, emulating a lesson we had done together, placing the Big Bad Wolf on trial. The initial idea came from a suggested activity in her literature book. Said Janine and Briana: “We just made it more interesting.”

**Pushing Thresholds, Taking Risks**

Janine: When Beth first said “drama,” it’s not what I thought it would be. It’s more integrated. At first I thought it would be plays and stuff like that.

Briana: It’s role playing in order to learn.

Janine: Yeah, rather than reading about it or just talking about it.

Briana: You actually just kind of like ... it’s almost like you get inside the book.

Janine: I always wanted to do something with that The Magic School Bus.

Briana: It teaches me something, too. Because I had a hard time with tall tales, I was not very familiar with them. I never taught tall tales before and so it gives me ideas on where to go ... After seeing you how you just pull this from here and there, it makes it a lot easier for me so now I have somewhere to go.

Janine held the most promise for moving beyond simply envisioning drama to actually making some decisions about it and putting those visions and decisions into action. Janine developed a lesson using The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks (Cole & Degen, 1986) as a pretext.
Janine (Beth’s field notes, 5/2/97): I’m doing *The Magic School Bus*. I was planning to have each kid find one fact, like they do in the story. I wanted to set up the classroom as bus seats and I have a hat. I figured we’d do the facts first, then go.

Of course, I couldn’t resist offering a bit of advice.

Beth: Don’t worry about staying to the book exactly. You can use it as a jumping off point. You can stop and start. You can even repeat and or redo.

That book was so full of information, the facts could easily have overpowered the drama, particularly if the aim were to just “act it out.” Janine set up the room physically, hula hoop tunnels and blue-paper pools. The kids knew it was a special day the moment they entered. Her students recalled the lesson (Interview 6/6/97).

Beth: Did you guys do something with *The Magic School Bus*?
All: Yeah!
Beth: Tell us about that. What did you do there?
Angel: We went through the water cycle and all the different parts of it and how water goes through certain places and how all the dirt that’s in the water goes in certain places.
Beth: And how did that remind you of drama?
Angel: (2) Umm (2) that we were that Miss Hampton she was a fake person.
Beth: She was a fake person, ohh
Angel: She was um the person she dressed up as was just an illustration on a TV show. Ms. Frizzle.
Beth: Miss Frizzle, that’s right. Anything else?
Sandra: When we had the Magic School Bus, it wasn’t real.
Beth: Right, it was just a bunch of chairs. Right. The room looked neat that day, huh? . . . Why do we have drama? What does it do?
Julie: Maybe to um like get you into books some more maybe to like make you want to read ‘em more ‘cuz they’re like drama, ‘cuz drama’s fun.
Sandra: It um tells us about people that’s not real, like when they were alive.
Beth: So we get to actually see what it was like to be those people.
Anything else?
Mia: Make things fun.
Beth: Oh, so it’s a fun thing.
Angel: Learn about things that happened in the past; a long time ago.
Ronnie: Things like what we want to be when we grow up, see if we like it.
Beth: So we see the past and the future, huh?

In the course of one year, Janine’s students had come to see drama as a vehicle for learning and playing and visiting other times and places. Most importantly, they had seen drama as something their teacher did—with them.

The assistant principal referred back to Janine’s school-bus lesson a year later as something she’ll “never forget” because it was so powerful and vivid. Janine videotaped the lesson and shared it with some colleagues. It was hers. All hers. And she was proud. Positive steps. Content was not everything every moment. Art could start as craft . . . maybe it even had to. And that was progress.

Arts, Administrators, and Actions

The McDowell administrators strongly supported the arts and arts in education. Both principal and assistant principal would speak passionately of the power of art in teaching. The “special area” team of teachers were spoken of warmly for their art as well as their collaboration. In the second year of this study, the principal made special budgetary arrangements to keep the art and music teacher based solely at McDowell so as to encourage integrated arts projects in classrooms. They supported my efforts at a drama program and dreamed of all teachers believing themselves artists. They could envision how they wanted their campus to look and feel. Art was elemental to that vision.

The decisions they made, however (such as having special-area teachers cover for classes so that third through fifth-grade “brinkers” could get early-literacy support decision) sometimes worked against their vision. As the
year wore on, it became clear the administrators themselves felt out-of-control of their decisions, too. They were simply obeying orders.

Over the first few weeks of school, this arts-technology integration effort was to take the form of pairs of arts teachers--myself included--devoting part of our schedules to collaborating with classroom teachers on integrated projects. Then, it changed that we would each have one grade level to focus on for the year. In addition to providing arts support, each morning we were to assist during the literacy block, sometimes providing lessons through our arts discipline other times, simply assisting. During that time, I was assigned to Janine’s room.

Ali Drama Aside. Let’s Get to Learning . . .

I didn’t do much drama. That military. That stuck. Ha! Poetry. That was good. Even though it wasn’t really drama.

Janine’s is the saddest story for me to tell, because she had the most hopeful beginning. But she was a third-grade teacher. And the third-grade proficiency tests were growing daily in importance. She had quite a group, too. Smart and creative, but prone to anger. Certain members of the class were like a pebble tossed in a placid pond whose moods and challenges rippled out to engulf those around them. The principal described the problem as due in part to Janine’s lovely genteel nature missing the presence of a full-time assistant who was a lovely “strong, Black woman who won’t take no junk” (Field notes, 11/14/97). Janine rarely sent children to the office, determined to find her own way. Nothing improved. So, one day, they walked into their classroom and it had been converted to a military police state. They had no warning of this. Working in such a manner is not something I ordinarily do or even believe in, as it detracts from drama’s necessarily collaborative contract. But given the
circumstances and the ingrained patterns of interaction, many of which derailed lessons prior to their introduction, we opted to take the children by surprise in a simulation situation that would be able to reflect upon.

We told them special arrangements had been made at the request of the principal for their classroom to be placed under military standards. All requests needed to be hand-written. Hands had to be raised with thumbs tucked and elbows straight. Failure to comply with orders would result in banishment to “The Chamber” where unreasonable tasks were required, such as writing numbers from 1 to 10,000 on a 3”X5” index card. Certain students were selected as spies to record and report the wrong-doings of classmates. Spies were granted special privileges and exceptions. We told them their class would remain 24-hours per day at school until June with perhaps one day off in December. Most believed it, which surprised me. We had told them they could write one letter to their families, if desired. Darius, choking back tears: “But I have basketball practice.”

We limited the simulation’s length because the real focus was the reflection and we were operating under a suspended drama contract. When we finally came clean, the children talked about how they felt. Sad. Mad. Angry. Scared. Uncertain. Frustrated. All justified feelings.

Steven: It was like you were doing what we do. You weren’t treating us with any respect like we weren’t treating you with any respect.

We talked about freedom and responsibility being two sides of the same issue. Janine continued to refer back to the idea that responsibility is inherent in freedom. She also referred to the military-chief role she played as someone other than herself; someone she didn’t want to have to call in.
Some time in late April, I recognized a sheet of paper with my handwriting on it in the front of Janine’s class. It turned out to be the Military Rules. Janine had used an adapted version of this in her class. Sometimes, if things got beyond control, there was a no-freedom military area in the back, with seats in rows and hands that had to be raised with only four fingers up, etc. In my eyes, Janine had sadly strayed about as far from art as possible in her extension of the military drama experience. And I paved the way; I felt guilty. Janine knew “It wasn’t drama,” and expressed some slight concern. But the set-up suited her needs. Her main concern was not being true to the artistic heart of drama, her main concern was day-to-day classroom survival by whatever means required. Drama in a school was not immune from becoming a survival mechanism. Lesson learned.

The simulation experience had been a powerful, though dangerous one for this particular group. I would like to have built on the powerful, raw response from the children and opened up a study of freedom and responsibility in an historical context, including readings and drama experiences around an oppressed group like slaves or prisoners, this time “protecting them into the experience” as a generative exploration over time. Instead, the experience disintegrated into a discipline strategy partially because other events placed Janine in a relatively similar unprotected position answering to “the powers that be.”

Real-Life Inspection Drama

I really didn’t do as many fun things with my kids this year as I did last year. They had such trouble getting along. Then, everything had to be testing.

We knew they were coming to everyone’s classroom. We had been told. Within the course of our ten minute discussion, six or eight “literacy” people from
downtown came through the classrooms inspecting with clipboards. Janine and I were knee-deep in a drama about survival using the novel, *Hatchet* (Paulsen, 1987) and the picture book, *The Lost Lake* (Say, 1989) as pretexts. We were talking about items we might need for a rescue mission and brainstorming with the kids.

Each entrance and exit of the "literacy inspectors" was framed and accentuated by a loud door slam. Janine's door had been broken and tended to slam. A student had made a hand-written sign that read: "Please close the door gently so it won't slam." Apparently that sign wasn't the sort of literacy they were looking for. Teachers had received a list of what they were looking for and made certain their rooms had the required items. We were told students needed to know why they were learning what they were learning all the time. So, the inspectors might ask a student to explain what he or she was up to and why.

State objectives that were currently being taught needed to be hanging in view of the children. There were sentence strips across the front chalkboard reading: "The learner will use language for the acquisition, interpretation, and application of information." (NC Third Grade Teacher Handbook, p. ELA 47) Some inspectors smiled and nodded to adults, but they didn't speak to us. Some questioned a child or two about what was happening. When "the boss" walked in, a member of our survival team mentioned that we might need to bring tampons on our mission.

In the meeting that followed the walk-through, the assessment was that the literacy block was a place for direct, "in-your-face" teaching. They said they saw a lot of children engaged in lessons, but were concerned that assessment wasn't driving instruction. The report on K-2 was more favorable than on 3-5. A
particular comment on a lesson the music teacher was doing, combining music and the writing of a bill into law and drama (how and whether to pass a law), was that it was "a good lesson, but not for the literacy block." Drama did not belong in the literacy block either. They wanted reading, writing, and guided reading. They wanted three small groups, an adult with each group. They wanted one adult with each group in 3-5. In so many words, we were told that the arts did not belong in the literacy block.

Briana: My girlfriends at other schools don't have this. So why should I? . . . I have more low kids than Janine and Nadine . . . and that's how they're going to tell if I'm a good teacher or not . . . by how they do on the test.

Janine: None of them know what they want, so why take their feedback so personally?

"Downtown" gave us a deadline of December 2 to get ourselves a new schedule utilizing special-area teachers as non-art assistants in the literacy block, or they would impose one. I suppose they were calling the principal on her being charmed by engagement. But what about the social part? If they couldn't get along, how could they learn? The visions of arts specialists in classrooms got revised to a pull-out arts-enrichment program.

An Imposed View of Learning: The Typical Team Meeting

Janine: Let's get that mid-quarter family report done.
Briana: I know, yuck. Mid-quarter report for parents, families 1-98
Briana: They've got live 2.1s.
Janine: Under 2.1 there are five things.
Nadine: Here it is.
Briana: Identify . . . mumbles to self . . . We have four down, if we put that one in, it'll be five.

Briana: I like . . . mumbles to self . . . What does that mean? OK, now I'm done . . . Uses the print . . . and we've already done that revising thing a lot . . . and editing marks . . .
Janine: We could put the prewriting there.
Briana: Now the only ones I have are uses prewriting to blah blah, blah, recommends material for others to read.
Beth: This goes to parents?
Janine: Yeah. And they sign it.
Nadine: I don't know how much of it makes sense to them.

(Team Meeting 1/21/98)
The third-grade team spent hours trying to locate and write the particular standards they were teaching. This was an imposed, not a generative view of curriculum. Accountability made sense, but this sort of exercise seemed to do nothing for inspiring teachers to teach. Instead, it made them look over their shoulders and worry about what they lacked or didn’t understand . . . and send letters home they knew weren’t very meaningful to parents, either. But on paper, everyone was covered, in the event of trouble or failure.

Eulogy
I really didn’t do as many fun things with my kids this year as I did last year. They had such trouble getting along.

Everything had to be testing.

I didn’t do much drama. That military. That stuck. Ha!

Poetry. That was good. Even though it wasn’t really drama.

We finally got reading groups figured out. The kids liked that and they learned, but they got bored sometimes.

You know they did calm down there at the end. Smart group, but all that fighting. I think it might be just how they are. I didn’t grow up with talking mean like that. Maybe that’s just how they’re comfortable talking to each other. And I’m the only one who’s uncomfortable.

I don’t think I’m that great of a teacher. I mean, people tell me I’m good, but I don’t know why. I think there are a lot better teachers than me. Briana, Karen . . . she’s so organized.

I don’t know. I’ve got one more year so that I don’t have to pay my student loan. See how I feel then. Don’t know if I can stay here . . . or if I even want to teach.

Test scores went up.

Maybe the next year would be better for Janine. But, test scores went up.

So it could be more of the same. Janine recognized that she benefited from having a portion of the day where she could work closely in a tightly structured
way with small groups of children to really understand them as readers. I always tried to do that before, but got distracted with other things or whatever. This way, it always happened. And I had a better sense of where each one was.

Our children at McDowell needed structure and routine to a great degree, as do most children. Many teachers sensed their children relied on school routine for security, especially the children who don’t seem to have it anywhere else in their lives. The art of balancing that needed structure with generativity is one big component of artistic teaching. The danger lies in perceiving structure and generativity as polar-extreme opposites. A structured environment could be generative. To be generative requires some structure. Being structured does not mean we know precisely where we are going before we get there.

The Functions and Status of Drama for Janine

Over the course of two years, Janine’s perceptions of drama’s potential functions grew across a wide range, despite the fact that at the end of the study drama’s status was fairly dismal. Prior to the drama program, she looked at drama as something fun to do “to” children (drama as putting on a play or letting children act out the classroom rules). Janine’s social view of learners as thinkers and collaborators very naturally opened her to envisioning drama as a vehicle for both encouraging and framing interaction (drama requires cooperation, builds confidence, focuses energy and activity, models “proper” creative interaction) as well as a tool for framing inquiry and exploration (drama “helps with integration” and helps frame/inspire rich response to literature).

Though Janine fostered a strongly interactive learning community in her classroom, the functions that she saw drama providing were largely experiences aimed at benefiting the children’s learning. She was extrinsic in
that she provided the drama experience, interacted with the children, but there was no element of generativity. What the students brought to the drama did not then become material for the next drama. Each drama functioned as an individual activity; an isolated experience. Within each experience, she worked collaboratively “with” the children, but seemed uncomfortable with the level of indeterminacy necessary for working “artfully with” the children.

Drama’s status in Janine’s class grew quickly through periphery to the far edge of utility status. Janine, her team, and I fostered a fairly strong learning community the first year. On a reflecting and planning level, we were collaborators and co-thinkers, but I was viewed as the expert. This set up a dynamic apprenticeship-expert relationship, the dynamism due in large part to Janine’s drive to make drama a comfortable part of her teaching. She saw co-taught drama lessons as scaffolds—as models for replication or future adaption. There was always an eye toward growth and “next year.”

Janine did move closer to generativity in recognizing drama’s function as an impetus for writing. This understanding of drama’s function as generative along with Janine’s drive helped propel the status of drama in her classroom from the utility to the craft level. She moved from viewing drama’s function as a set activity to teach a certain thing toward seeing drama as a generative mode of working that required thoughtful, strategic decisions on the part of the teacher to yield generative action on the part of the students. Janine’s vision of drama grew throughout the course of the year. She borrowed my decisions and actions, as an apprentice is expected to do. And when she finally envisioned her own drama lesson, she borrowed decisions and actions from the book she used as a pretext. Awkward borrowing and uncertain experimentation are necessary hallmarks of drama’s craft status, and the only avenue toward art of
which I am aware.

It is important to note that these status categories are not lock step phases, even though in striving toward my ideal vision of drama in schools, I might wish them so. In the midst of Janine’s broadening view of drama’s functions, the third-grade team began a study of fables. They broke the children into groups, gave each group a fable, and had the groups act out their fables on video. That was a classic example of doing drama “to” the children. Janine didn’t worry about that function switch as the potential breach in progress that I did. For most of the year, drama hovered between utility status and craft status for Janine.

As mentioned earlier, drama’s functions and consequent status in Janine’s classroom the second year of the study were more strongly shaped by the institutional forces of the school system than by Janine’s own growing artistic vision. Essentially Janine saw drama functioning as a subversive act when it was banned from the literacy block. Holding onto the writing connection was not helpful as only math and reading scores “were being counted,” so writing took a backseat as well.

Drama was not forbidden, however, it was institutionally confined to the utility and periphery status. Requests for drama were functionally driven by the desire to improve test performance. At one point I received a list of vocabulary words appearing in test instructions that our children frequently did not know. The hope was that I might help the children act out the words or create contexts akin to mnemonics that might help the children remember definitions. I tended to ignore requests like that. Traditional literature and poetry were two test-topic concerns that I saw as potentially worthwhile areas for exploring with and through drama, thus allowing me to help the test effort but remain true to some
semblance of leaning toward art in drama. But the spine of those explorations was not to be about examining cultural history or human interaction or complexity. The goal was to make certain key elements of various genres were recognizable; the facts.

Poetry provided the slightest little bit of hope in Janine’s case, however. She and Briana both confessed to never “teaching” poetry because they didn’t know anything about it, other than the fact that they “didn’t get it” in high-school English class. I had planned to help the teachers layout a study of poetry, then follow up with some drama and poetry connections. We never got to the drama and poetry connections due to time. The actual drama craft apprenticeship was on hiatus. But the philosophical apprenticeship had continued. Poetry, too, was art . . . and artful for its subtle indeterminacies. Comfort with exploring poetry could only complement and enhance a continued exploration of drama, whenever it might happen.

Lane’s Journey:

From Utility to--and Progressing Through--Craft
(compiled from field notes and interviews on 6/9/97 and 5/21/98)

My main goal is to have children develop a lifelong love of reading, writing, and other things. There are the Standards and Benchmark goals that I have to achieve and a lot of reading, so that when they leave my room, it doesn’t stop. It continues to the next grade.

The centrality of literature to Lane’s teaching made her classroom an interesting site for considering potential drama experiences, and herself a strong contributor to the shaping of drama ideas. She had an affinity for deeper, more subtle and emotional picture books like The Rainbabies (Meirem, 1992) as well as for more straight-forward, comical picture books,
such as the work of Robert Munsch, most of whose books grew out of his storytelling repertoire. Lane was always open to a new book.

Lane was equipped with pretexts and always open for more. Books and stories provided the spine of her teaching. They weren't just on her shelves, they were kicking around in her brain. That was fertile ground for drama, seeking to help stories grow from stories. According to Bruner's models, her ideas were in line with the fourth model of seeing children as knowledgeable critical interpreters. She felt an obligation to the curriculum, but an obligation to see more broadly than it, too.

I am an avid reader myself—and now I'm a writer, too, I guess. The children's literature section of the library or bookstore seems to call my name. And I answer. I really never paid much attention to people saying that teachers need to write themselves in order to better understand their children as writers. But since I got this computer, it is so much easier. And I see what they are talking about. I showed the kids my file or portfolio or whatever you call it—of the different drafts I've done. They were really into it. I wrote this one story called Red Velvet Cake. It's kind of autobiographical. I don't know what draft I'm on now. But one day, I hope to publish it. That love of literature—reading it and writing it—is something I want to pass onto these children.

Lane and I could communicate about drama through a shared frame of reference: we both liked writing and considered ourselves to be writers. She was very comfortable at the brainstorming stage. She would let ideas flow freely and interrupt herself with better ones. "Well then we could—OH! I just got an idea. But it has nothing to do with what we're talking about." Our communication through literature, however, seemed to hop from book to book. We would generate more ideas than we would ever use as this list of ideas indicates. The overflow theory on ideas was comfortable for both Lane and
myself, and Lauren, too. It seemed to go against Karen's task orientation, however.

Lane's her broad view and appreciation did not necessarily coincide with the grade-level unit plan and all its elements to be checked off upon completion in accordance with main-office or "downtown" requirements. And I quickly learned--thanks to a five-minute timer--that team-planning time was not the place for wild brainstorming and generating possibilities and ideas for classroom dramas. Sitting down and opening up possibilities was to be done at other times; stolen times. Team meetings were for informing and updating and other business-type decisions.

Eventually, I worked with individual first-grade teachers on drama lessons for they respected each other's visions and overlapped in some places, the decisions and actions they were comfortable with varied widely.

I think we've got a larger number of children here at McDowell that are neglected as opposed to your average school, so it's like you end up being social worker, mother, nurse, and... playing all those roles. I think if those needs are not met, then the children are not going to learn... or be as successful I should say.

Our big social challenges when they first arrive at school are listening to each other, sitting there and really hearing directions, being patient, taking turns, remembering to raise your hand... and knowing and having to learn that when you finish this task you have to go over to the next center or the next activity. We're still dealing with children who are largely self-centered and don't you know "Look there are lots of other people in here. I just can't stay at this center all day... or all morning long... Oh."

Drama promotes communication. Communication is the thing that they have to be able to do in order to be effective readers and writers. And if they can't express themselves... it makes the reading and writing so hard... And then, too, I think we are
Dealing with children . . . many of whom are language-delayed and so, (drama) is just another medium, another way of getting them to open up and express themselves. I'd like to see us tie in the drama to the socialization skills that the first graders really need to work on at the beginning of the year. I see that as a really big need.

After Beth came the last time during the pilot phase, I was following the principal around, tugging on her coattails asking: "Can I be a drama teacher, too?" I love it when they sit there spell-bound. Sometimes I think I should have been Lucille Ball.

Lane was hardly ever reluctant to assume a role in drama. "I want to do more of that being a character stuff," she'd say. The assuming of a strong role appealed to Lane. At the beginning, I was feeling the pressure of needing a sure-fire start: a good "sales campaign" to generate energy and enthusiasm for drama with a safe amount of risk.

With this lesson, I aimed to accommodate whichever teachers or assistants wanted to participate. In most classes there were three adults besides myself. It worked, but in some ways was more like T.I.E (Theatre in Education), with some stronger performative elements of doing "for" the children. But it moved toward "with." We were trying to build it together.

First Grade Drama Lesson (9/30/96)

Mystery
I introduced the mysterious basket that appeared on my porch with a blanket and a note attached that reads: "Please find a good family." The kids and I talked about who or what might be in the basket.

Mother Interviews
Established the kids' role as members of the Adoption Board who are charged with finding a home for the basket. One at a time, we'll have each of you assume a role and answer the children's questions in-role.

Discussion
Kids and I discuss pros and cons of each candidate.

Small Groups
You each get a small group of children. Talk about your character's family might be like for a new baby. Then each group makes themselves into two statues of this family, one from a happy time, the other something not happy. Share.
An overheard conversation during the small-group portion:

Shamara: Do you know how to change diapers?
Lane: Oh. Diapers? Well, I could easily hire someone to do that sort of thing. Does this nail polish look alright?
Kevin: She--do you know how to change diapers?
Lane: No. And I don't want to either. I need to get my hair done. Could you please hurry along?
Shamara: Then you ain't gittin' no baby.

From my field notes (10/1/96): “Lane is a natural, but she gave me more eye contact than she gave the kids.” It never dawned on me that she'd look to me for approval in the middle of it all. She was unsure . . . and more concerned about her “performance” than listening to the children and building questions on responses. She talked more than she listened. interesting. Lucille Ball might do the same thing.

We all needed work on our framing and focusing and questioning, in my mind, starting with me. But the teachers and assistants involved were pleased, as were the children. From my field notes: “We have grown each time . . . . the literacy coordinator actually wrote up what we did and submitted it to literacy people downtown” (10/1/96). The principal and assistant principal observed and the principal whispered: “You are empowering teachers to teach differently.” It was a step. However, none of the suggested follow ups happened. Lane had performed marvelously, but I walked out the door and drama went with me. That pattern continued for a good portion of the first year .

I don't feel like ‘drama' has . . . I want it to have a much bigger part. It's like I don't have enough time . . . or either I'm not integrating it enough into all the areas. Maybe it's just me and being by myself (that is, no full-time assistant). I wanted to use it more. And I had other pressing curricular issues and things that took precedence over that and what I guess I mean is I wish I knew how to integrate it more.
The priorities that the school curriculum and procedures set seemed to make Lane doubt her own skills, knowledge, impulses and experience. She was spending more time trying to figure out what someone else expected her to do than what she believed was something worth doing. As an outsider, I saw so much in her as a person that lent itself to drama teaching. But they were not necessarily qualities made clear or valued by the curriculum guide. Her playful nature was a central one.

Here is short story by Broderick, one of Lane’s students. It was to be a family story: something true from his own life.

Broderick: Me and my Grandma we went in the woods. We were picking flowers and we saw a big, ugly wolf and he came after Grandma and he came real, real close and he about to bite. We flew.

in his imaginative mind, it was as true as a story could be. Broderick and Lane shared a special connection. She seemed to have at least one student like him each year—a smart, creative, insightful, funny little boy with a quick temper, a kind heart, and a permanent case of ants in the pants. His imagination rarely sat still either. Lane and/or I would often walk straight up to Broderick and ask: “Have you seen a boy named Broderick?” He would claim it was him, and we’d come back with “No, he’s wearing new Jordans and a warm-up suit. It’s not you.” He’d look down at his new Jordans and his warm-up suit and back at us, and try to claim the title again. Then one day, Broderick walked up to me with a big smile and said:

“Excuse me, have you seen a lady called Miss Murray?”

That playfulness was a genuine part of Lane’s daily interactions with her students. Another child said (4/29/98): “she is the bestest, the wildest, she’s like the craziest teacher I ever had, she’d always play tricks on us.”

“Like what?”
“She’d tell us there was a tree in the back of the room growing, but there wasn’t.”

Lane slid in and out of pretending in her conversations and her explanations and her teaching. But pretending and playing, though central to her relationships with students, were not generative parts of her teaching. She saw playing as a more of a commercial than as a teaching strategy.

**Inching Toward Generativity**

During a unit on animals, we did a drama at the zoo. The children created a collective map of the zoo grounds as planners, then eventually inhabited the zoo as animals. We had heard of some strange occurrences at the zoo, so the animals sat up spying this particular night. Lane crept through the zoo, looking closely at the animals and scribbling down notes on a pad. After she left, we had a quick meeting as detectives then the students set about writing the reports of their findings. (1/10/97) These student writing samples were promising steps toward the generative. From their writing would come the next lesson.

I think that the lady was going to still the animals. then she will kill them. then she will srouf [sell] the animals. (Dee-Dee)

She could of poisin them because when she aske the snake. (Sheri)

I think the lady out to get the lions out of the cag. (Daniel)

We were moving in a more generative direction, but, again, the drama stopped when I left the room.

**Teacher as Human**

This year was probably pretty much the same (as other years) with behavior problems. But I felt that it was different because of being by myself ... there was ... all this bonding that went on and I’ve never experienced that before. I felt like the kids were
taking care of me, moreso than I was taking care of them. I just made it plain that there wasn't going to be anyone to help and I was going to need their help probably more than a classroom that has two teachers. I just had kids that were very nurturing, very mothering.

Lane's students knew she was not perfect. She knew they knew. That was part of the plan. The children knew they had one end of a bargain to hold up, too.

**Mutual Mentors**

The negotiation was part of Lane's and my relationship as well. Truly, as I look back, that first quarter was a reentry quarter for me. I had been taking university courses for two years. Teaching children and doing drama were no longer daily habits for me--though I tried to keep them close. Being back in an elementary school everyday was a gear switch.

I also struggled a bit with my own identity as a drama teacher. I had gained interesting insights into drama and teaching in my readings and course work. I had collected a lot of questions and hunches. Yet they had been insights and questions and hunches gleaned in isolation from a school to call my own. I wasn't able to wade through doubts or question about my own art and practice in action.

Quite the opposite, actually. The few times I did actually teach or present while enrolled in course work, there was always a self-imposed demonstration tension present; that this was not a lesson unto itself but rather a model and a metaphor and everything else for those less-experienced-in-drama observers. I felt (or likely, created) pressure that detracted from my own sense of exploration as a teacher and an artist. That naturally carried over into the McDowell position. But comfort came with time. Those nightmares of Dorothy Heathcote peeking into the classroom window, rolling her eyes and burying her shaking
head in her hands as if willing me back to that third loom waiting, eventually disappeared.

As I talked with Lane today, my internal conflict of the past few years has come to assume a life beyond my own. She was expressing her frustration at her kids not seeming to care about drama as her kids did when I taught here before. She was very kind about trying to blame the kids, but I truly have to assume responsibility for the majority of non-engagement in any classroom where I teach. She reminisced about how the kids would just immediately jump and respond when I made a request in role. She was referring to the Jaclyn Riley-Ida B. Primrose drama lessons where children interviewed teacher candidates. I remember that, too.

I tried to explain the transition point I’m struggling with today to Lane. And I talked in terms of ownership. I told her I know I was capable of doing drama in a way that totally entertained children and engaged them, but that I felt the need for them to share their voices and ideas. A lot of things I did before were story and character-centered and any decisions of significance were made by me... (Research Journal 1/13/97)

Lane assured me that part of the problem was social. The children spent a good part of the day working independently or at centers. Cooperation was optional. She acknowledged avoiding cooperative learning many times “because these kids have such a hard time not fighting.” My struggle improved with time, as it often does. Lane helped me, too. It was refreshing to have a person with whom to hash over my mistakes in search of insights. More importantly, she really heard what I had said. It made sense to her because drama made sense to her. We were all growing.

Progress: Our Plan, Her Pen

That was kind of neat, even though we weren’t sure where it was going to go...

Two good signs for this planning session: Lane was writing the notes and we were talking about strategies in broad, social terms rather than activities in narrow ones. We talked about how storytelling valuable, but dangerous in
excess since children have very little voice or decision-making power. She acknowledged understanding. From that point in our conversation, she used the "elicit" when talking about interacting with the children.

The idea of a kingdom latched on with her. There were spells of silence. I didn’t feel totally responsible for them.

There was to be a letter as an impetus for the drama to begin. She wanted to write it.

She wanted to include partner work, providing an opportunity for children to talk and listen.

We were on our way.

**Survival Mode**

Bryant, one of Lane’s first graders, stopped me on his way to the bus and said: “Hey! We never finished the Queen of the Alphabet Story!” (Beth’s Field Notes, 8/17/97) It was true. Lane and I had shared an idea for Lou, generated by their letters and pictures from the last drama episode. However, in the interim, Lane’s student teacher left, she moved into the gym because her classroom was under construction. As had been the pattern, drama didn’t happen without me. in this case, I could understand why.

This is the first year that I have seriously thought: “I don’t need to be teachin’ any more.” I was just not happy getting up in the morning and I just feeling like I’m torn in all these different directions.

Like Geri, Lane was among the teachers who helped out in the upper grades twice per week. She often described it as “stealing from Peter to give to Paul,” insinuating that she needed to concentrate on her own children so that they might not be in the same boat as eventual third graders.
Campus-wide resentment also stemmed from repeated top-down policy revisions, some from the main office, most from “downtown” but filtered through the office. Our master schedule went through at least three revisions by December. The literacy block approach was reconfigured at least five times. Teachers harbored resentment after a while, few trusting themselves to make decisions without consultation and clarification. The atmosphere was one of isolation. Grade-level teams stuck together. Endurance became the name of the game. People tried to do what they were told. Some tried to maintain a positive exterior. Others just couldn’t. Though some thought otherwise, drama was not something that paints over any sort of teaching and learning, making it look happy and “all better.” Drama needed the proper soil and tending to flourish.

Just as Lane and I were at the ends of our respective ropes, she asked me for some help planning her literacy block, that she really wanted to do drama in there. I warned her that I was “forbidden” in the literacy block.

Lane: And that so--this 8:45 to 9:30 time would really be good.
Beth: OK, so let’s just say
Lane: Because
Beth: OK, so let’s just say 8:45-9:30
Lane: Because it gives us enough time to do the (echo voice) Guided reading. (laugh)
Beth: So that you don’t get struck by lightning.
Lane: I would hate for somebody to come in from downtown and see us doing some actual drama.
Beth: God knows.
Lane: Maybe getting an idea from that and something to write about.
Ohhhh!

She laughed at the very idea that drama wasn’t all about literacy. And so the two naughty teachers set about planning.
Finding Hope in Drama

Our collaboration started with the big picture. Lou offhandedly mentioned that their current unit was “safety” and I probably wouldn’t find anything interesting for drama there. Eyes rolled, nostrils flared. She was a hungry, frustrated artist. So I thought and I dug up books and I used the books to frame some ideas. The over-riding concept that seemed to have more generative possibilities than “safety” was the idea of rules: How rules grow out of our need to feel safe; How rules help a person understand a new place; How rules can vary from place to place; How excessive rules can be just as harmful as insufficient rules; How rules can change, with good reason and negotiation.

I jotted down ideas under each title of a rough way to proceed dramatically, then I turned it over to her. I purposely presented a blurry, but related vision. No decisions, no actions. Her job: choose, focus and clarify the vision, then proceed. This was similar to how good drama works when the teacher is writing the spare poetic line then stopping short for others to fill in detail and elaborate.

She headed down the path of school rules and how they help a person understand a new place. She used a story about a girl and her father switching places--she going to work, he going to school--to lay groundwork. But the pretext was a letter, in a stamped envelope, that read:

Dear Ms. Cartwright’s Class,
Hello. I am going to be the new kid in your class soon. What is your class like? Will I like it? I am SO scared! I have been going to school in Narrowsburg, NY, but my family just moved to Webster, NC this week. I don’t know if my old school rules are the same as yours at McDowell. Will you please help me out? Write back and tell me all the rules and things I need to know to get along. OK? Thanks of for your help. I hope you like me. See you soon.
Your friend (hopefully),
Lily
The children wrote back and talked about Lily for a few days, sometimes
in class discussion, sometimes independently. We did some drama talking and
statues imagining Lily’s feelings. We began to plan how we might help her
understand the rules of our school, each table being responsible for a different
area of the school. Then Lane took the role of Lily and the two came together.

Lane: I told my parents or I was telling them about how we did when that
girl when I y— I came in as that little girl.
Beth: Yeah. (LAUGH)
Lane: AHH! They fell
Beth: Lily.
Lane: they fell they fell over when the child looked at me and said,
(whispered) “Ms. Cartwright’s really gonna like you.” And then they said,
again. “You kinda look like her ya know.”
Beth: (LAUGH) And who was the one rubbing your back?
Lane: That was Quanetta.
Beth: Quanetta. That’s right.
Lane: Any time anytime I showed any emotion like (crying) “I’m scared. Is
this enough? (whispered) “It’s OK, it’s OK. That’s enough lunch money.
That’ll last you the whole week. Don’t worry about it.”
Beth: In ways I think it was interesting, ‘cuz she had you right there by
her. There was just a ton of stuff happening there, because you had the
whole class thing going on, but that like she’ll never forget that.
Lane: I said to her before I left . . . : “Thank you for being kind to me and
helping me.” Or either I did say that to her as me or whatever, I noticed
since then and this is weird, ‘cuz yesterday we were talking about going
to centers and how you behave when we’re not with you or whatever.
And she says (falsetto) “Oh and so you wouldn’t want to go over there
and pull somebody’s bows and be ugly and you know la-la-la.” I said,
“You know exactly.” (falsetto) “You wanna be calm, right?!” But you
know, I love the part when they just believe that.
Beth: Uh-huh.
Lane: That big lie.

Lane’s integral artistic experience was generative for both her students
and herself. In telling the story of the experience to her parents and to me and
to others, she reflected and refined and re-envisioned. I love the way she
couldn’t remember if the reflective interaction with Quanetta was in or out of role
... because it was a human connection whether inside or outside the drama, the lines were blurred. But this was a fairly low-risk lesson for Lane. She loved to play the child.

**Pushing Thresholds**

Lane was more uncertain of how to approach a text she and the children loved: *Babushka Baba Yaga* (Polacco, 1993). Uncertain or not, her effort was one of growth for us in the craft of using drama. In the story, people were forbidden to talk with the strange-looking Baba Yaga who lived in the woods. The Baba Yaga wanted only to care for a child. So she disguised herself as a Babushka and cared for a small boy and faced her struggles for doing so. This brought a story-world rule about judging on appearances and believing others into question. But such a rule had everyday relevance.

Most drama work centered around building a Baba Yaga history; going back and figuring out how the two groups got to be separate. The children began in-role as renowned scientists and explorers who have been studying the Baba Yaga. Lane and I were in-role as reporters researching the mysterious Baba Yaga (3/16/98).

Lane: Thank you all for coming here today. We understand that you know quite a bit about these strange creatures called Baba... Yagas?

Student 7: Baboushka Baba Yaga.

Beth: How do you say that again?

Student 7: BaBOUshka Baba Yaga!

Lane: BaBOUshka Baba Yaga. Hmmm. But you all are experienced with these kinds of people?

All: Yeah. Yup. Uh-huh.

Beth: My friend and I—we don’t know much about them—but we’re very curious to learn more about these people.

Lane: Very curious.

Beth: We um we want to write an article about them, how they are or I mean um how they used to be. Did you ever see one for real? (Chaos of responses) Ut--raise your. One at a time. We don’t want to miss anything. (2) Yes, ma’am.

Student 6: We-eli (2) one time, i was walkin’ in the woods and I saw one.
She had big ol’ pointy ears. (laugh)
Beth: Did you hear that? Pointy ears--could be evil.
Lane: Might be. Were you scared?
Student 6: No. She was nice.
Lane: Did you talk to her or just spy on her?
Student 6: Just spy.
Beth: How did you know she was nice?
Student 6: She was just happy and playing--
Student 1: And singin’ and dancin’ in the woods.
Beth: In the woods?
Student 1: That where they be stayin’.
Lane: Pardon me? How can these old ladles live in the woods?
Student 1: Magic.
Lane: No! Do ya think? Real magic? There is no such thing--is there?
All: Yeah.
Beth: Well, where do these Baba Yagas get their magic?
Student 2: From the woods, from the trees in the woods.
Lane: Magic trees, ya say. But have you ever seen it? That could just be a big story . . .
Student 3: I seen it. One time, one time me and my friend was sneakin’ in the woods and we heard it.
Lane: Witches?
Student 4: They’re not bad witches.
Beth: I understand they stole clothes from the neighbors.
Student 4: They were um they they just wanted to help.
Beth: By stealing.
Student 9: No--no. They just they (2) she took the clothes so she could look like be dressed like the other ones.
Student 7: Baboushkas.
Student 2: So she could get a baby.
Beth: She was a kidnapper, too?
All: No!
Student 7: She was dressing up to be a Baboushka, to take care of somebody else’s baby. She was good.
Lane: You sure?

Their responses were a generative mix of ideas from the story and their own imaginings. From this point, we moved into placing the children in role as Baba Yagas themselves. They were in pairs, interviewing each other. One was to be an old Baba Yaga, the other a young one. The young ones needed to find out all they could about their history from their elder, including why there
were so few left and where they came from. This was a bit messy as an exercise. We let the children find their own space in the room for their interview. In some cases, finding a space became more important than conducting the interview. Other pairs worked more smoothly, as we found out when we called the group back together.

Beth: My young Baba Yagas, what have you found out in speaking to your elders?
Student 14: Her back hurt.
Beth: Pardon me?
Student 14: Her back be hurtin' her, so she got to use a cane.
Beth: Ahh--I see. Yes, many of these Baba Yagas are hundreds of years old, aren't they?
Student 16: 200! (laugh)
Student 17: 400!
Beth: Yes--quite old. So a cane might-- Well now, tell me, did anyone find out any secrets or specials things? (3) Yes?
Student 7: Baba Yagas live in the woods.
Beth: OK. We did know that. Did you find out anything new? Anything you didn't know before? Anything strange or--yeah?
Student 10: Baba Yagas hatch out of eggs.
Beth: Eggs? Interesting. What kind of eggs? (2) What kind, sir?
Student 2: Magic.

This sharing portion was a bit messy. The children weren't much into discussion and sitting at their desks. There were hopeful, creative glimmers, like the egg idea, but I was struggling for grounding, getting that spinning, helpless feeling. And as the transcript makes clear, the going got tough and I took over. Or perhaps the going got tough because I took over. However, a marvelous moment of growth happened for Lane at this not-so-artful point in the drama. I talked about it later at a meeting (5/21/98) with kindergarten and first-grade teachers.

Beth: . . . I felt like there was this one point where there was this positive break through. We were working with the stuff on Babushka Baba Yaga and I was doing some drama thing or another, and it was kinda meh kinda bleh, and Lane came up to me and she takes me by the neck and
says: (whispered) "What we need to do next is ja-ja-ja-ja-ja..." And she
told me. And that's what I want. She knew her kids needed to take this
idea a little bit further. They needed to write and draw about the thing we
were doing drama about. And they did it... That's where it's raw
material. You guys know so many things so much better than I do. You
know your kids better than I do. You know all sorts of stuff about where
you're wanting to head. And I come in there with those sheets so that we
all have a place to start. I don't come in like: "This is the holy bible. You
need to follow this." Alright?

What Lane whispered in my ear as she held me by the neck was
something to the effect that her children had ideas, but they needed to write and
draw and talk about them rather than simply discuss them. That egg idea was a
start. Several children latched onto it, as their writing and drawing revealed.
Lane passed out paper and began explaining. I was definitely not in charge
any more.

Lane: We need to get our ideas down on paper. We need to find out
about where these Baba Yagas come from. Where do you think? Or
how?

The children began writing and drawing. Lane circulated about the room and
watched what was beginning to appear on the pages. I had seen her assume
such a role before as the children wrote, commenting on and questioning things
that caught her eye as almost a playful town cryer; making herself a vehicle for
intertextual communication.

Lane: Wha-huh-ho! You mean to tell me these are--what are these round
things hanging from the trees?
Student 9: Eggs.
Lane: They grow on trees? Well, I'll be... And who is that--wait, is that
a bird? Now why in the world would a bird be--
Student 4: Mm-hmm. Lays eggs.
Lane: Now what kind of a smart person would come up with that--
Beth: How does a bird lay eggs, if they grow on trees?
Student 6: They roll and roll and hook on at the end so they can grow on
the tree.
Student 2: And the wolfs can't get 'em.
The children wrote and expanded and talked and drew, working
generatively. Lane described the experience to colleagues at the same
meeting mentioned above:

Lane: . . . I have never seen a crowd as I did at the end of last quarter as I
did when we’d read all those books by Patricia
Beth: Polacco.
Lane: Polacco, Polacco. And the enthusiasm and the interest that they
had for writing.
Lane: We took this literature by the all same author and we found things
and ideas as we went along. And the children found ideas. And we tried
things and saw like whoa—that didn’t go well or let’s can that. So like I’m
finding that you can write it all up, type it up, but it may not go as it
appears, it’s kind of like an on-going—

The generative curriculum—the artist at work re-envisioning through
integral experience. It was a start. The drama actually went on into the next
week. Using the children’s writing, we narrated and pantomimed the birth and
growth of a Baba Yaga. The wolf was hovering about. Afterwards we talked
about how their thoughts and feelings as Baba Yagas. We had talked about
possibilities for Lane exploring the other perspectives in the story: the
babushkas, the boy’s family through other drama avenues. But when I left for a
week to teach at my other school, other priorities filtered in and Lane set drama
aside. That was frustrating. However, there was hope in the way she recalled
the experience and drama’s power and positive role in writing.

The Functions and Status of Drama for Lane

Both Janine and Geri had a preliminary view of drama as something to
do “to” children, functioning to help the children perform. Lane’s preliminary
view, influenced largely by my former work in her classroom, was doing drama
“with” children, but leaning toward doing it “for” them functioning in an overly
performative, story-centered way. Lane began the study understanding
drama's potential functions as providing a vehicle for response to literature, a stage for interactions with teacher in-role, a means to spellbind children. Her drive to participate was strong as was her commitment during early dramas, however, the drive was contingent upon my involvement, particularly in planning.

Essentially, Lane began the study in the craft status, willing to borrow my decisions and try on my actions—usually pulling in elements of her own style very easily. However, the craft which she was willing apprentice to was under negotiation for I was unwilling to return to working precisely as I had before. That under-construction feel produced some discomfort but ultimately led to a link between the apprentice-expert relationship and the co-learners relationship. We were colleagues making sense of drama together during that first year.

At the end of the first year, Lane could assess the status of drama in her classroom as her own responsibility: “I want it to have a much bigger part.” She had an artistic vision of a wide range of functions that drama could have in her classroom, linking drama with socio-cultural context and literacy. Yet her decisions and actions did not live up to the vision. She had a comfort with drama and a long-standing interest in it that neither Geri nor Janine shared. Of all the teachers, Lane had the most evident potential. However, relatively speaking, Geri probably took greater personal risks than Lane that first year. Lane’s drive to make drama a part of her teaching, thus a part of her, was absent except for the time I was present to push her along. Thus, Lane placed drama in craft status because of her vision. Her lack of necessary decisions and actions and re-envisionings impeded progress through the craft status toward art: she was stagnant.
Lane’s growth came in the second year. She began to see drama functioning as a generative force, first within individual lessons, then within units of study. As with Janine, Lane saw evidence of drama’s positive, generative influence in her children’s writing. She knew how they usually wrote. Drama made the usual somehow different both in process and product. That was a selling point. During the second year, Lane also progressed in her in-role interactions with children. She looked at me less and listened to the children more. All of these steps inched Lane along the craft path toward art. The greatest stride came in planning. She held the pen, I did not. Her lessons went in her plan book and I helped as requested. It helped Lane to talk through ideas together, sharing visions. But she would decide what to include and how the plan would find action. Because the plan was hers, she felt comfortable revising decisions as she worked, as any good artist would.

Drama in Lane’s classroom acquired ever-broadening and deepening functions over the the second year. Drama’s status progressed steadily forward through the craft level, toward art. Though we didn’t reach a steady place in art status, there were momentary wafts and hints that smelled of art to me . . . the child whose read-aloud writing described how Baba Yagas hatched from eggs that were laid by magic birds . . . the next child’s unprompted elaboration that the eggs roiled down and attached to the tree branch tips until they were grown enough to fall to the ground and hatch, provided the wolves stayed away . . . the eventual hatching of Baba Yagas that began the next drama . . . the reworking of future units and lessons framed by references to strong, integral experiences (Dewey, 1934) in former ones . . . moving away from fact-only units to more generative ones . . . and talking about such a move . . .
Here is Lane talking to colleagues in a meeting about her own growth essentially, as she describes her experiences working through units in which drama played a central, generative role.

Lane speaks to colleagues of the generative unit: . . . We can get it all down on paper and and go from there and then (we) can trade off . . . It's like you plant this little seed and it just you know starts flowing . . . We want to add more to it. And we want to add more literature that's got a little more meat . . .

Partially for fun and partially to remind myself of the important links between theory and practice, I have translated her words into scholarly terms below.

Lane's beliefs in "scholar-ese":

Lane: We can get it all down on paper and go from there and then (we) can trade off.
Scholar Lane: We need to envision and construct our understanding collaboratively, prizing rather than running from the indeterminacy inherent in drama and all art.

Lane: It's like you plant this little seed and it just you know starts flowing.
Scholar Lane: Good teaching and good art are generative processes.

Lane: We want to add more to it.
Scholar Lane: Planning/re-envisioning should happen recursively throughout any artistic process. The process is the product.

Lane: We want to add more literature that's got a little more meat.
Scholar Lane: Responsibility for the depth of the art falls to us, the teacher/artists. Strong, dynamic pretexts and support texts help feed and inspire depth in drama and inquiry.

Beth's Continuing Journey

Their hardest challenge facing these teachers was not finding or creating their own vision, for that really wasn't encouraged as an exercise. Some negotiated their vision with the school's, others assumed the school's, others play the say-one-thing-but-do-another game. Their hardest job was
negotiating a peaceful vision, knowing it was ultimately they who would have to accommodate--or appear to accommodate--others' visions, rather than believing their own vision was worth nurturing and fighting for. The functions and status of drama grew from that hindered artistic piece.

We had children in role as experts all the time in drama, but we never implemented the full-fledged artistic mantle-of-the-expert approach that placed drama centrally and generatively at the heart of the curriculum fostering inquiry over time. We had hopeful moments and horrible moments and breakthroughs and risks and growth in understanding. But the moments came and went.

The greatest demands on these hard-working teachers when not in contact with children did not require or stimulate broad, artistic, generative thought. Forms, plans, phone calls, meetings, workshops, disciplinary referrals, lesson plans, etc. filled those hours to overfull. This became ever so clear when I asked Geri, Janine, and Lane to present with me at a national conference on drama education.

The general topic was about advocating teaching through drama among classroom teachers. We discussed different approaches and strategies and benefits and challenges. We talked about what we thought drama could do, defined its limits. Then we had each group use sound and movement to depict a classroom teachers' mind. Janine's group moved through a figure-8 pattern each repeating a phrase such as: "Where's your note?" or "No, you can't go to the bathroom now." Geri's group depicted a teacher attempting to teach in the midst of a plumber plumbing, a child throwing a tantrum, and voices asking repeatedly for paperwork and meeting attendance. Lane's group had one scene without drama where everyone slept and made trouble, then one scene with drama where all was well.
We reflected as a group on the fact that drama can't flourish in a mind cluttered by a constant string of crises. A teacher using drama needed to be able to function well in a crisis environment, because sometimes drama created . . . or became one. But distance and reflection were necessary for creative thought—not just for drama, for anything creative. Schools don't encourage that big view, we concluded. Bruner would've agreed.

The other frustrating element, in retrospect, was our tendency to talk of drama as a cure-all for the ills of school. It's easy to do. Some may say I've done it repeatedly on these pages. Drama, depending on how it's defined and done, could provide a temporary disguise of, an entertaining diversion from, or become a dialogic tool for exploring those ills. The mere presence of drama doesn't make a school better or worse. How drama lives and grows inside teachers over time; how the drama encourages the teacher to think like an artist—as would an artist—that matters.

Teachers need help acknowledging the artist that is already within them as an internal scaffold to touching other art. Lane and I had similar visions having both had strong, integral experiences in writing and music. We also shared a view of learning that was similar. Geri and Janine had stronger experiences in visual art. Geri and I had the added challenge of differing views of learning. Janine's and my views of learning were similar the first year, but then we had a hard time the second year with the school system imposing a stronger vision on hers. There is hope in every case, but I can't help but wonder how much easier it all would be if teachers were encouraged to consciously hone their artistic visions as an integral part of teaching, rather than as a stolen part.

It is difficult to be patient with baby steps of progress.
Conclusion

This chapter followed the interpretive, negotiated journeys of Geri, Lane, and Janine charged with using drama in their teaching and utilizing me as a resource and scaffold and storyteller. The following chapter revisits the non-classroom, individual voices and institutional forces seeking to shape this drama program in an episodic, reflective collage highlighting trends and patterns and questions.
CHAPTER 6

ECHOES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOMS

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the entire dissertation as well as the individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the grant-funded drama program I studied. In Chapter 2, I shared my personal journey to my current beliefs about drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool. I supported those beliefs with a review of literature in drama and related fields, relying heavily on both Dewey’s (1934) dynamic organization of art as well as Bruner’s (1996) four dominant models of learners’ minds as organizational frames. In Chapter 3, I outlined and supported the evolution of this narrative case study’s methods using ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches. In Chapter 4, I provided an historical account of the non-classroom, institutional forces invested in shaping this grant-funded drama program prior to any classroom work.

In the last chapter we took an in-depth look at three teachers on their artistic journeys over two years with drama. They are the sum total of their experiences as artists, teachers, and people. The cultural forces around teachers shape their experiences. In this chapter, we revisit some elements of that culture at work in McDowell school and beyond to answer: What is the influence of other individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping
the extent to which drama becomes part of the school's and each individual classroom's culture?

Words and Deeds

One day in mid-December, I helped the music teacher prepare some first-grade singers for an upcoming concert. Quinn kept fidgeting, so I tiptoed over to find out about the trouble. He had a pin that read “Teamwork” which he was struggling to affix to his shirt--or to his flesh, if that was more efficient. I recognized the pin as one the principal had ceremoniously passed out to each staff member as a holiday present, after a “sermon” on how important the team spirit was at McDowell. Quinn’s was missing the back clasp, so I broke the eraser off a pencil and used that as a substitute clasp to keep him from further efforts at piercing his chest. As I was pinning, curiosity got the better of me, and I whispered: “Nice pin, Quinn. Where’d you get it?”

He whispered back, matter-of-factly: “It was stuck on the bottom of my shoe.”

That little story shows, better than I could ever explain, how words and deeds can sometimes be miles apart at our school. Maybe this was true everywhere--in and out of schools. Maybe not. But at our school, we liked warm words like “teamwork.” At least some of us did. And we did work as a team sometimes. But other times we were anything but a team--or we had different versions of what a team ought to be. The spoken ideals were never so simple in action. Were we thinking that perhaps saying things enough eventually made them so? Bruner might agree with words’ powers to shape actions. But words like “teamwork” and “change” would never find their way into action if only ever voiced by one person. By definition they required a dialogic route to action, for the effort could never fall to just one.
Words spoken by one in this study often remained the solo speaker’s words, as was the case with the principal. At the start of this study, she shared her vision of where and how drama should be at McDowell Elementary, how it should change McDowell. However, the observations and wishes she expressed at the start of the study were still accurate observations and unfulfilled wishes two years later. They only ever belonged to her.

The Principal’s Monologic Dream

Kindergarten is an interesting mix of people. They somehow all get along together, even though they’re all very different from each other . . . yes, Geri has such a way with those children . . .

Well, first grade is wonderful. You remember Lane, of course. And the other two are strong as well. They make a good team.

Second grade has some difficulties, but they’re our most experienced team. We want them to do more active things . . .

And third grade . . . they are young and have lots of energy and fresh ideas, I think you’ll enjoy working with Janine and Briana and . . . But third grade is where we fall down with our goals and those tests . .

I see you as the perfect fourth member to that (special area) team, too.

The second year of the study was a difficult one for the principal, as it was for everyone at McDowell. Powers beyond the school’s walls assumed control of many decisions that had formerly been made on campus. We all stood on uncertain ground. It was sometimes unnecessarily harsh and painful. But it made us all struggle to search out a better understanding of ourselves and our ideals in a very complicated, slow-moving reality. There was dialogic growth amid the pain, as we turned to one another to help us better understand where we’d been . . . and where we wanted to be--all of us. Together.
The Dialogic Retrospective

Negotiating Artistic Vision
A Play in Three Acts
(5/21/98 Meeting)

ACT I: The Crisis Vision
Assistant Principal: The thing is, Beth, we’ve had to do it piecemeal because we’re in crisis.
Beth: Right.
Principal: It’s not the way we believe.
Assistant Principal: So we were talking—now you’ve got the pieces. OK. Now let’s get it under umbrellas. Let’s go back to connectedness and integrating those pieces. Hey I used it here, now let’s go back and integrate it. That would fit better here. We didn’t have a choice. We didn’t have any choice.
Principal: I do think something good came out of it
Assistant Principal: Yeah, yeah.
Principal: There are holes and gaps. What we’re doing here, we’re not getting to the joyful part.
Assistant Principal: But it’s not so much changing, it’s putting it in the best place.

ACT II: Negotiating Vision/Making Decisions
Principal: So, Beth, what we’re describing is sort of a coaching in-service where you’re probably a resource in terms of helping get ideas and experience
Beth: Right.
Principal: But at the same time trying to show them what you show them in the classroom kind of helping them to use it.
Beth: Um yeah, I don’t know if this is interesting to you guys to do a year-long thing for CEU credits, like 10 hours
Principal: Yeah um
Beth: And the topic I wanted to do is Drama and Writing
Lane: And you get credit for it?
Beth: Yeah, I’ll do it--
Karen: Yeah.
Beth: But . . . I want it to have a practical component to it. We’ll do some theory on drama, but I want it to have a big practical piece over a long period of time where you can do stuff, think of stuff, try it in your classroom, share it, bring it back . . .
All: Yeah. Good . . .

ACT III: Ready for Action
Principal: But isn’t it the sound and the movement that hooks these kids, would you say that?
Beth: But if it's nyih-nyih-nyih-nyih-nyih, all the time, it's not--Principal: especially for them.
Literacy Coordinator: I don't know, but the lessons I've seen seem to go like this (moves hand in a repeated waving motion) to me, high points and low points... and again the children learn to think, to expand where they are, in a safe environment. Beth makes it very safe for everybody, teachers and children.

The road toward teachers using drama in their teaching could be dotted with enormous positive experience and growth and benefits, but it was not designed to be a fun-filled, effortless, down-hill jaunt on a rollercoaster. It would require time and effort and a personal commitment and patience and communication all those things meaningful change always required. And it would not be a path chosen by all, nor could the reluctant be forced to tread down it without their first coming to the conclusion that it was a path worth their travel.

Beyond the School

The term "society" becomes more complex and less comprehensively culpable for the ills of education when society's organizations assume an active relationship with a school. At least a portion of "society" gets a name and a face. Each organization that supported this drama program--school, church, and theatre--was and is still on its own journey of change, as well.

In his book, Change Forces, Michael Fullan (1995) elaborates on complexity of change in the framework of eight basic and patterned lessons. The lessons include:

1. You can't mandate what matters.
2. Change is a journey not a blueprint.
3. Problems are our friends.
4. Vision and strategic planning come later.
5. Individualism and collectivism must have equal power.
6. Neither centralization nor decentralization works.
7. Connection with the wider environment is critical for success.
8. Every person is a change agent.

This drama program served as but a portion of each organization's journey, a small lane common to three wide roads. These lessons apply to each organization both individually and collectively. They apply to drama. They apply to life in any place people come together—any place worlds collide.

So what has this particular coming together meant for these three organizations, thus far? I have now returned from the third lap around my house in an effort to wrap words around the feeling I have in response to the question I posed. This is still very much feels like the beginning.

The Outside Influence

Not one person from any of the support organizations ever told me how they wanted me to use drama explicitly, other than the fact that performances would happen from time to time. The aesthetic expectations of drama were left undefined. I was considered the expert who would have the good sense to ask a question if I needed to know something, otherwise it was all up to me. They exercised their aesthetic influence by hiring me, then stepped aside.

The theatre had a broader view of the clientele than the church did. The education director ran other programs in schools aimed at helping teachers use drama in their teaching. The theatre recognized the importance of helping teachers use drama so that the program's influence could multiply beyond the three years of the grant. The church left the decision of how to spend my time up to the discretion of the school and the theatre. They knew that I was working to help teachers use drama, but that didn’t much matter. Their primary clients
were the children. And when visitors came from church, they simply expected to see children strongly engaged in drama.

I was the only element common to all three places: the church, the theatre, the school. Because of my independence and freedom, I would describe the outside individual voices and institutional forces as exercising minimal influence over the extent to which drama became part of the school’s and each classroom’s culture. However, each organization would likely argue that their greatest influence was personified by me. I was their representative.

Each of these organizations was striving to help the children of McDowell Elementary... to give them an education, to give them rich experiences, to give them hope, support, and opportunities. The next question: How did these organizations envision their helping role? Giving to...? Providing for...? Working with...?

Being organizations on far sides of the city, occupying separate worlds was not difficult. Even in events of coming together, we were still working toward meaningful “working with” collaborations rather than just obligatory “giving to” and “providing for” unions and connections. The power dynamic was not identical to the teacher-students relationship, but it was nonetheless present. Absence of finding a means for meaningful dialogue and shared vision led to the presence of an underlife: a mutation of the historical separation between the people of these two organizations and the school they sought to help.

Just as the teacher-student power relationship is deeply embedded in our school cultures, there were habitual, known, taken-for-granted action patterns in and among these three organizations. The patterns were not
always effective in fostering learning. Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson (1995) talk in terms of script . . the teacher's being the privileged, monologic "official" script. the students' subservient to that institutionalized dynamic, the "unofficial script." Resistance takes the form of an underlife, not contesting current roles, but forming its own world--and a powerful one. The teacher world and the student world often remain separate--parallel. Often in the third space, where the two meet in an unscripted, taken-by-surprise discovery mode, Bakhtin's heteroglossia becomes a positive force in determining "what counts as knowledge" as opposed to an impediment to a preset teacher script and agenda.

By creating this space for dramatic shifts in what counts as knowledge and knowledge representation, communities of effective practice become disruptive forms of underlife that challenge teaching practices that currently limit the roles, social spaces, and forms of knowledge available to students and teachers. Reconceptualizing reform as a disruptive form of underlife also serves to redefine what counts as curriculum. Curriculum as social heteroglossia, is a constructed text, a mosaic of the multiple texts of the participants. Drama does the same thing.

There are deeply ingrained patterns of interaction between these three organizations. Moving beyond doing things "for" or giving things "to" toward working "with" requires a renegotiated vision, unless the current pattern is a desired end.

The underlife of this drama program might better be described as an overlife, if I recognize the power dynamics at work here. The actual drama work did not suppress an undercurrent of communication, rather the potential of the drama program was shaped by the layers of context, sometimes subtly.
sometimes blatantly in a very broad way. Drama was the alleged focus, however, historical habits and patterns of interaction placed borders on expectations and developments.

These dynamics would make themselves most clear when envoys from one world would cross the border into others' worlds: church folk at school, school children at church, theatre people at school, etc. I came to categorize such happenings as common ground events. The dynamics under examination could provide ample material for a whole string of their own research, far beyond the scope of this study. Following, I provide just a taste of how envoys and events reflect different worlds attempting to come together.

Narrative has served to give voice to the visions of those who have a stake in the presence or absence of artistic teaching and learning through drama at McDowell Elementary to this point. And in appropriately dramatic form, the views and voices once raised are now too rich, varied, numerous, and complicated to be simplified into a final, neat, narrative plot line. This is the story of people who come together, people who stay apart, people who try, people who change, people who refuse, people who care, people who fear, people who risk, people who hide, people who start, people who quit, people who finish, people who learn, people who teach, people who share a world. Their collective journeys continue in both opposing and intertwining directions. For a moment, in my mind and on the page, images and voices from all converge. This collage of categorized anecdotes is not meant to flow as narrative, but rather to provide isolated snapshots of common-ground moments as a way of examining and questioning our togetherness.
McDowell Kids and I at an Adult Sunday School Class (2/19/97)

St. Joseph’s adult Sunday School classes would routinely include visits from the people involved on-site with their twelve Seeds of Hope ministries. The purpose was to apprise church members of the various programs they financially supported as well as to encourage the members to volunteer, to become involved beyond their financial contribution.

When it was my turn, I brought several older children with me. I asked each of them to prepare a brief description of what they thought about having drama at their school. The children and I arrived together as I was their transportation. We barely made it in the door by our designated time as I had gotten lost picking up a couple children and one of our child speakers had overslept. Three of the children dressed in “church clothes” and the other two wore jeans and sneakers, because their drama teacher forgot to tell them to wear anything different. However it was neither our dress nor our hurried gait that made our identity immediately apparent. Not more than three steps inside the front door, Oshanda dumb-foundedly blurted: “This a white church, Ms. Murray?!?”

The woman who spoke prior to us shared important, but depressing statistics about abuse and domestic violence. She shared anecdotes from the lives of domestic-violence victims served by her organization. These anecdotes were each followed closely by emphatic reminders to the listeners that their contributions were helping these traumatized victims. No one seemed to be listening too carefully. As our turn to speak drew nearer, I began to worry that I had misunderstood the assignment. Our turn came. I spoke briefly, then turned it over to the children. They were very endearing and hopeful in just being
themselves. The audience paid much more attention to these children than they did to the woman who preceded us. Their words were along these lines:

Neisha: In drama Miss Murray showed us how to be good reporters. We found out the important crimes and put the characters on trial...

Jamal: One of the many things that I have enjoyed... is when I pretended we went to the Swiss Alps... I did a frozen picture and wrote a letter as if I were one of the people... trapped and lost in the snow.

People smiled and nodded and appeared to listen intently. They seemed interested and engaged and positive. But when we opened up to questions, to make this a two-way-getting-to-know-each-other experience, rather than a lecture or a performance, the only response we got was:

Church Man: Does the school administration seem supportive of this effort?

Beth: Yes. Extremely.

Silence.

Was that all they needed to know?

Out in the hallway afterward, we were a hot topic. People introduced themselves to us and congratulated us on our “presentation.” We overheard people saying: “And she had these kids with her... Oh--there they are!”

Pauline, the original drama program’s founder, was in the crowd.

Pauline: That was fabulous, Beth.

(A woman I had never met came up and put her hand on my shoulder as I stood next to Pauline, the “founder” of this drama program.)

Church woman: Pauline--oh where did you find her?!

Pauline: I know. Isn’t she wonderful?

The two women proceeded to talk about the program and the children and me. I mostly just smiled and nodded, so did the children. This was Pauline’s moment to enjoy. This situation was somehow hers, and so were we.
Volunteer Connections

Among the compliments on our Sunday-school sharing was a note from the church volunteer coordinator. It read:

Rave reviews for your presentation, Beth! . . . Several people expressed an interest in working with you . . . (Personal note. 2/25/97)

"Several people" translated into two in reality. One woman left a message that she was happy to help, but she and her husband were retired and traveled a lot. She and I never quite got coordinated. Another left this phone message:

. . . I will be home all afternoon and all evening . . . I take care of my 97 year-old grandmother, too . . . and I volunteer two days a week through the Junior League. I'll be glad to come over for a performance or whatever. I do want to see it. I do need direction. I'd like to be involved, but probably better next year. I may need to bring my three-year-old, but we could just slip out if he gets out of hand . . . (Phone message. 3/4/97)

She visited once and reiterated that the next year would be a better one for her to volunteer. I didn't really need any volunteers to help run the program and I knew my nature was not to ever ask for help, but I sensed it was important to the church. The volunteer coordinator helped me better understand what potential volunteers sought to do.

Church Volunteer Coordinator: Volunteers are really reluctant to get involved in long-term things. They like it better if they know what they're needed for right up front and it's for a defined time. And they like to be doing something, not just sitting there. They're pretty task oriented. Having to go over there every week as a tutor is not for everyone. If you're like me, you only get an hour. If that for lunch. By the time you get over there and park and all that, you have 15 minutes with the kid. That's why I like being a mentor better. I can call and keep in touch on the phone that way. And we do stuff as we can. I have some kids that I've been with for like 10 years . . . that is the most rewarding. And the families know you care. But it's hard when it changes and like . . . If they get pregnant or they get in trouble, you think "Oh no, what did I do wrong?" But then you just have to know that this is the Lord's ball game. And what's going to happen is going to happen. That's what scares a lot of volunteers. They get afraid of getting too attached . . . or hurting kids, if
they decide to stop... or feeling responsible if something goes wrong, like they let the child down... (Phone conversation. 4/3/98)

The volunteer spirit was a part of the St. Joseph's Church culture. However it was not universal, particularly regarding their project on the other side of town. Some members were content to simply send money to the problem. Some were "afraid" of the neighborhood, according to the volunteer coordinator. Some seemed to fear nothing, like David's tutor. He tutored David on a weekly basis. They had at least a three-year history at the time of this writing. And they had the promise of a strong future of continuing to each "work with" the other.

David's Tutor: I've already told him that I plan to pay for his college education. He's a smart boy, he needs to think like that... i'd like to get him into a magnet school next year... of course he still think's his future is in sports. We'll get him through that... (Informal conversation. 2/24/98)

The tutor felt responsible for helping steer David's future and was willing to be part of his day-to-day life in order to see it through. He was interested in a long-term commitment. But David was also aware that his tutor benefited from their friendship and from David's progress--that David helped fill up the life of this well-off, widowed, retired engineer in a way that brought tears to the man's eyes to discuss. Several St. Joseph's church members served--and serve--as tutors at McDowell. The nature of the tutor relationship would vary, but the long-term, personally-involved relationships were less common than the very appreciated but more obligatory ones. As the volunteer coordinator said, many church members were not interested in such a long-term, uncertain commitment.

At one point, I sought volunteers to work with an after-school drama group for a limited period of time as the children developed a script. They were
all busy with other things. My task was likely still too vague. I decided to get
even more specific, making the aim to create an occasion for church people and
school children to interact. I had the children call the volunteers with a simple
survey we developed. By that point we had begun developing the play, it was
to be about hope. The callers explained the concept to those they called then
asked the potential volunteers a couple questions about what they hoped for in
their lives and a story of something they had hoped for coming true, explaining
they wanted to use ideas from church people in the play, too. The child callers
closed by asking the volunteers if they wanted to help work on the play and/or at
least visit school to see it. Most got answering machines. Some called back,
some did not. But there were moments a real McDowell child was talking to a
real St. Joseph's church person. Some surveys led to prolonged, generative
conversations, some remained strictly business, one was very short and to the
point: “I thought I made this clear before: my wife is not interested in
volunteering at that school. She had a bad experience last year . . .” I shared
the results of our survey with the volunteer coordinator. Her biggest concern
was the the last man mentioned.

Church Volunteer Coordinator: He wasn’t rude or anything, was he? . . .
That’s why sometimes it’s better for me to call. I don’t like you to have to
hear that sort of thing . . . (Phone conversation, 2/28/98)

We ended up with a few volunteers that the volunteer coordinator sought
out. We very explicitly set the expectation as: attending and participating in an
open rehearsal, pairing up with one child, contacting that child one time
between the open rehearsal and the production and attending the production.
Four promised to participate. Three followed through. The experience was
positive for students and volunteers alike. However, it didn’t give volunteers a
true sense of what the bulk of our drama program was like. Being involved with
a play probably helped to continue their performance-driven stereotype of what
drama in education was. But there was interaction and pride and enjoyment.

Mary, Church Volunteer: You know last week when I worked with him, I
didn't think Jarvis would ever be ready for the play. But he did it. I'm so
proud... this is a good program. (After the play, 4/21/98)

Church Volunteer Coordinator: I am so sorry we could only get three
people to come over... those others said they would... this is such a
busy time for everybody... (After the play, 4/21/98)

It struck me that the volunteer coordinator and I had similar tasks... trying to get others to think more broadly and to take risks in human interaction,
hers with volunteering and mine with using drama. We both lived our beliefs in
our own actions, but found some challenges inspiring others on a grand scale.
Change seemed slow and occasionally frustrating for her, too.

The Annual Celebration

WHAT: Seeds of Hope Birthday Party.
WHO'S INVITED: All involved in programs of the
"Seeds of Hope Ministries"
WHERE: St. Joseph's Church Gymnasium
WHEN: March 16, 1997

Every March, St. Joseph's Church sponsored a birthday party for
everyone involved in any of their Seeds of Hope Ministries. It was a huge
event in a gymnasium full of white-paper-covered tables and an endless buffet
of fried chicken and potato salad. Once again, I was driving to the church with a
carload of children who would be expected to perform. This time, it was six girls
who were going to dance. As always, the car conversation proved interesting
as we passed by the large, elegant homes in the church's neighborhood.

Lakindra: My mama takes us trick-or-treatin' over here with these big
houses. They give out Snickers bars--the big ones. We look for big
houses. Some people even leave the candy on the porch with a sign
that say: "Take one!"
Girls: No! You for real? Oh Man! I'm comin' here. . .
This was a whole different world to them. We entered the same building the children and I had visited for our Sunday-school presentation. But it was different. There were all different races of people walking around. There were people hugging and talking and introducing themselves across racial and social lines. There was hope and energy in the air as children and families and church folk and employees mingled. This was one of those rare events when personnel from the church, the theatre, and the school were all in one place, not to plan or envision but to recognize and be recognized.

A warmth filled the place, but there were subtle currents of cold emptiness for me. I could liken the sense to the mixed feeling I’d get sometimes when my father’s side of our extended-and ever extending-family would gather at holiday time each year. The house would be filled with people I cared for and wanted to speak with and understand. And I wanted them to understand me. But it was neither the time nor the place for deep interpersonal exchange. We were more symbolically than actually engaging with one another. We were together, but distracted by the hub-bub of the togetherness. The event was important and valued and annual, but it didn’t necessarily help any of us deepen our understanding of one another in any complex way. However, there was ample material for reflection.

The keynote speaker served as a medical missionary in Africa for six months each year. He used the seed image from the program title, “Seeds of Hope,” as a symbol in his talk.

Keynote Speaker:
There are small deaths in growth.
The seed coat dies,
but the plant thrives.
The flower dies

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that the seeds
may scatter...

A seed growing
is like us as people
stretching outside our comfort zones
and doing things we are afraid of
or unaccustomed to.

The giver often ends up
being the recipient.
The biggest need:
are for the long-term
one-on-one
relationships

McDowell’s principal attended. She smiled and nodded in agreement as the doctor spoke. Afterwards, she translated her nods into words.

Principal: Wasn’t that speaker inspiring, Beth? Like I always say, ours is the work of missionaries, too.

A minister from the neighborhood Episcopal church gave the closing prayer. She stood proudly at the microphone, a contrasting vision from the small-framed, white, endlessly smiling speaker that preceded her. But their messages mingled in a complementary fashion, his the idealism hers the realism, both stressing the importance of small steps in large change.

... The despair of poverty, the despair of affluence . . . our city has been too long divided . . . connections have been made that would see to it that progress has kept going . . . but we’re not happily ever after yet . . .

Church-sponsored Fieldtrips

Trips to camp, trips to Children’s Theatre, and me. We were all three physical representations of what St. Joseph’s funded for McDowell School. These were the types of “experiences” Pauline talked about wanting to provide for “our children” at McDowell. Every McDowell student attended a play at the
theatre during each year of the grant. It was always eagerly anticipated and much appreciated by students and staff alike. But because of the performance element, the experience fell into the “providing for” category of events, rather than the “doing with.” That was fine and valuable, but not really that complex or generative. Camp was another story.

I went to camp with the kids as often as I could, because it was fun for me, too. There was something about going to camp that made everything very immediate and real. Going to camp for a day or two had much more “working with” potential than did going to the theatre for a few hours. Children and adults alike had no choice but to see each other as people because we couldn’t escape from one another. The big, tough third-grade boys knew that I knew they were scared of ghosts at night, despite their denials in the light of day. They also knew I sat right by their door until they slept each night . . .

The moment we began ascending mountains on hairpin turns in our rickety school bus was quite telling. I could usually figure which children were seeing mountains from that perspective for the first time ever. The very first time I went to camp, I discovered two boys to the side of me on their knees, facing their seat, praying: “Dear God, if you see fit to make it safe on our journey, please . . .” There was nowhere to hide, but together. Just like drama.

The next year, the education director from Children’s Theatre joined us at camp. She and another theatre employee had signed up to mentor two third-grade children at McDowell, so when she found out third graders needed another chaperone, she bravely joined and greatly enriched our group. Some children argued incessantly. There were elements of the planned camp activity that weren’t prepared for our level of energy and our need to move. The chaperones were largely referees on this trip.
Afterwards, she and I talked. The biggest puzzle was why the children were so mean to each other. My answer: partially circumstances, partially them, partially us. Her conclusion: “I feel like I have a better understanding of and appreciation for what you’re doing. Sometimes I just didn’t feel like I was being that helpful.”

No hiding.

The Theatre and Low-Income Families

Having had a long history of catering to the more economically privileged, the Children’s Theatre of Webster had made more recent efforts toward diversifying its clientele on both cultural and socio-economic levels. The McDowell-Bentley Hills drama program remained considered the most comprehensive and successful effort at bringing drama to children who would not ordinarily get such an opportunity. Reaching such children was not an easy task as it would problematize long-established, successful, though habitual procedures. Some connection with less wealthy children happened naturally as the theatre broadened its offerings in schools. And some of this broadening happened through strategic, organizational efforts.

We have changed the face of who is seen on our stage. The board has become much more diverse, much more diverse. The staff is becoming more diverse. (Interview with Education Director, 12/17/97)

These changes helped the organization grow in cultural diversity of people served, people drawn to the theatre and willing to support it. However, the drama class title and content had little to do with the diversity of enrolled students in classes at the theatre or one of its satellite sites.

We offered classes like “Drama Around the World.” They don’t sell. They absolutely don’t sell because it sounds like we’re doing some politically correct little—I can’t believe the title of this class. We’ve already sold out
two sections of this class. It's called "Steal the Show." It has to do with how much fun the class sounds like and what appeals to that age group. (Interview with Education Director 12/17/97)

Cultural diversity grew steadily, but reaching high-poverty populations remained a challenge, except through school settings. Serving high-poverty locations presented new challenges.

You've got to do follow up. You've got to create relationships with those people... we've got a new community liaison now, to that end... building those relationships and seeking out new ones... Transportation is often a problem... So that means us going to them... You can only succeed so much before you get to the Children's Theatre... But we want it to go both ways. We don't want it to be so segregated that only a certain population comes to the theatre, but the rest of them are met out in the community.

The Children's Theatre teachers who taught drama classes through camps, facilities, and after-school programs serving strictly low-socio-economic status children found and bravely faced these new challenges. The structures and procedures they might have taken for granted in other places were not necessarily present.

... It's not just a time and a place and a person... It's the follow-up; it's the--relationship. And those teachers need to feel really, really supported. Where like you, gosh, you're out there doing your own thing, Beth. I don't think you feel not supported, but you don't need that constant support.

Beth: And I know you're there if I need you.

Education Director: And you know your kids are going to be there.

Beth: So it's a whole set of problems that they just didn't have--

Education Director: That were beyond their control; that... now they've had to make in their control.

Even though the missions were different, the Children's Theatre teachers and I shared the vital knowledge that building and maintaining relationships was central to any movement toward art. A social art, like drama, required the common ground of a relationship. Some teachers I spoke with saw the time
spent negotiating relationships with children and support staff was time stolen from drama time. Perhaps the two were less separate than that. Wasn’t there always potential art in two worlds coming together? It’s really not for me to judge as the theatre teachers had a harder task than I did. I worked within the structure and expectations of a school. That provided a degree of stability. Some of the organizations they worked with remained in crisis mode on a day-to-day basis. Their effort was genuine and on-going, but ultimately exhausting. And so as that challenge continues, the theatre seems to find comfort and pride in being associated with the St. Joseph’s-sponsored program. On a relative scale, it is a success. Sometimes I would forget that.

So What Do You Want?

The Children’s Theatre Board of Directors (all 40-some of them) visited McDowell to observe me “in action” teaching (11/25/98). This was an effort by the executive director to demonstrate the kind of programs the theatre offered/supported in schools. He knew that drama was better experienced than explained. The visit was a positive, interactive one. The children helped lead the adult visitors into participating. It was a worthy commercial of sorts. Afterwards, a few members of the board spoke informally to me as they left. One woman I had never met before gave me a hug. The visit had served its purpose: to further strengthen belief in drama.

There was a tinge of sad reflection for me. The Chairman of the Children’s Theatre Board was also a member of St. Joseph’s Church and a key figure in the Seeds of Hope Program. He shook my hand at the start of it all and introduced himself, first and last name, yet again. I had met him before. I remembered his eyes and smile, but not his name. All these organizational connections we had in common (the theatre, the church, the school), and I
didn’t know his name. Questions raced through my mind: “Are we really working together? Is the church program too large for such connections to be more than superficial? Am I just socially inept at building and unrealistic in expecting deeper connections? Am I operating too autonomously? How could I involve the church people more? Do they even want to be closely involved?”

Both the theatre and the church had individuals who made it their business to build an active connection with McDowell. The closer and more frequently they came, the more complex their understanding grew. The growing understanding had both positive and uncomfortable elements as do most complex understandings. However, as organizations who did a great deal to support this drama program, they both recognized its value for their organizations, too: it provided a marvelous public relations opportunity. This is perhaps best demonstrated in a series of requests from Pauline, the program founder, over the course of the program.

September 1997: Beth, I’m going to an Episcopal conference in Raleigh next month and I was thinking how good it would be for us to have a video about this program... no we don’t need a show, that’s not the thing about what you do. It’s the way they’re so, so... just so involved.

April 1998: There is this arts group in Winston-Salem that I was thinking might be interested in knowing about our drama program... let me get you the phone number...

February 1998: There’s a woman at church who would love to write an article about you...

From the article about the program in the state Episcopal Church Newspaper (Zuccarelli, 1998):

Article: There is unanimous agreement among all professionals dealing with children that drama occupies an important place in a child’s learning.”

Beth’s Mind: I didn’t say “unanimous” and “all.”... did I? Those are quotation marks... Oh Lord, she called me a “dynamo.”

Article: Beth gets to know her children and has been known to take them home with her to bake cookies.
Beth’s Mind: The church folk always love that baking cookies part... I
don’t think I even told her that... must have been Pauline.
Article: ... performance is not the central theme. ... the students
understand learning experiences from different perspectives ... 
Beth’s Mind: Glad she included that...
Article: ... And one of her boys, Jamey Kiser, has a part in the current
Children’s Theatre production of To Kill a Mockingbird.
Beth’s Mind: I had nothing to do with that. He auditioned... hey--
where’s the part about how it’s difficult to do drama with an emphasis on
tests and outcomes??? Guess that wasn’t as important to her as to me..

Both organizations benefited from the fact that bringing non-materially
privileged children together with the arts could catalyze public support and
reflect very positively on their organizatins efforts. I saw little wrong with that
pattern as public knowledge and awareness of drama could grow as well. Yet,
there was a tinge of discomfort on my part. And the feeling finally found worried
words as I sat listening to a committed, articulate, deeply-caring member of St.
Joseph’s church address the staff of McDowell (6/8/98). She warmly thanked
us for all we did for the children of McDowell. The appreciation mattered, at the
end of a difficult year. She went on to talk of the long history between the
church and the school. Then she pledged that after this grant ran out, there
would be a similar effort. One part of my heart warmed, the other sank. There
was the troubling part.

Wouldn’t it be nice to have the goal be that there would eventually be no
more need for a grant, because programs funded by former grants led to growth
and self-sufficiency? Was that promise of permanent support an act of Christian
love or thinly-veiled oppression or simple complacency? Were we really
helping the “less fortunate” if we were working under the assumption that there
would always be the less fortunate group for us to help? Would we ever know
or be able to alter the historically-established pattern?
Conclusion

This chapter shared some of the voices and forces seeking to shape—or at least touch—the McDowell program from a more distant place than a classroom and revealed some of the complications and questions inherent in considering a program such as this in all its social complexity. In the next, and final, chapter I amass findings and conclusions in individual pockets and across cases and settings of the study, returning once again to the grandness of our complications.
Concluding always makes me nervous because it implies an ending. But I find comfort in viewing this dissertation as an artist might, as simply an action that reflects my visions and decisions to this point: a pause in the journey prior to re-envisioning once again. In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the entire dissertation as well as the individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the grant-funded drama program I studied. In Chapter 2, I shared my personal journey to my current beliefs about drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool. I supported those beliefs with a review of literature in drama and related fields, relying heavily on both Dewey's (1934) dynamic organization of art as well as Bruner's (1996) four dominant models of learners' minds as organizational frames. In Chapter 3, I outlined and supported the evolution of this narrative case study's methods using ethnomethodological and phenomenological approaches. In Chapter 4, I provided an historical account of the non-classroom, institutional forces invested in shaping this grant-funded drama program prior to any classroom work. Chapter 5 depicted the interpretive, negotiated journeys of three classroom teachers charged with using drama in their teaching and utilizing me as their "guide" over the two years of this study. In Chapter 6, I revisited the non-classroom individual voices and institutional forces in an episodic.
reflective collage highlighting trends and patterns in individual and institutional connections and disconnections. In Chapter 7, I plan to tie together and highlight key findings and new questions that now confront me in response to the research questions.

**Question 1 and Findings**

How do classroom teachers and a school drama specialist negotiate and interpret the evolving status and function of drama as a potentially generative, artistic teaching and learning tool over the course of two years?

**Interpreting Drama**

- Drama was not a foreign word to these teachers. Whether they considered themselves experienced in drama or not, they had distinct a priori ideas about and expectations of the potential functions and status of drama with respect to teaching and learning in their classrooms.
- Despite efforts to the contrary, I became synonymous with drama. At the national drama conference, I asked Geri, Janine, and Lane to introduce themselves to the session group and talk a little about their experiences with drama. All three of them said: “My name is---. I teach---. I have known Beth since---.” Knowing Beth was equivalent to the sum of their experiences with drama, or so they said. What I said and did—good or bad, artistic or utilitarian—became known as drama, or at least a version of it. Who I was as a person was inextricably folded into that understanding as well. This went along with Heathcote’s picture of teachers as being first themselves. Elements of my personality, such as my sense of humor or my patterns of interaction were sometimes seen as elements vital to working in drama rather than as idiosyncratic parts of me.
- Even when considered by teachers to fulfill important classroom functions and
possess generative elements, drama was not among the most primary of classroom concerns. Drama was not part of establishing the classroom routine, rather it needed to wait until the classroom routine was established. Drama was not usually a central feature in helping shape generative units of study, rather teachers wrote units of study, then considered where drama might fit in.

- Teachers' beliefs about learning determined the range of functions drama might have in their classrooms as well as drama's resultant status (periphery, utility, craft, art). Functions and status could and did change over time. However, teacher beliefs about learning also determined their own openness to drama and its potential functions.

- On a theoretical level, Geri, the teacher who primarily viewed learners as imitators or mental acquirers (the first and second of Bruner's models) was most drawn to drama done "to" or "for" children. This coincided with her acquisitional beliefs about knowledge. In her classroom, drama ultimately had specific functions which aimed to help students master isolated skills or concepts. Drama used in this non-generative way over time received a periphery or utility status, remaining at worst insignificant or at best servant to the distantly formulated curriculum.

- On a theoretical level, Janine and Lane, the teachers who primarily viewed learners as collaborative thinkers or critical interpreters (the third and fourth of Bruner's learning models) were most drawn to drama done "with" or "artfully with" children. This coincided with their beliefs about knowledge being socially and culturally negotiated. In their classrooms, drama ultimately had a wide range of functions which aimed to help students construct more complicated individual and collective meaning, across disciplines and over time. In such classrooms, drama usually occupied a craft status, with a hopeful eye toward
The level of complication and the depth of collective meaning over time were less-developed but more appreciated facets of drama in these two classrooms. Both teachers with this orientation worked largely in the craft status which was marked by a gap between appreciation and practice. Both statuses aspired toward generativity and shared artistic creation, craft status being the technique-perfecting apprentice stage leading the teacher toward art status. Geri’s practice fit quite cleanly with her theoretical profile, primarily viewing learners as mental acquirers. Geri’s view of learners coincided with the traditional school view of learners. And her orientation remained consistent throughout the entire two years of the study. Lane and Geri, however, did not consistently map onto their own theoretical profiles as teachers who primarily viewed learners as collaborative thinkers or critical interpreters. What’s more, their orientations varied across the two years of the study. Was that a function of their personalities or their struggle to accommodate both their visions and the school’s visions of learning?

A teacher working in a school had to accommodate the school’s imposed vision of learning as well as her own, and negotiate between the two if they differed. In the case of a teacher with an artistic vision of learning, the historical and institutional power of the school’s vision required her to either negotiate, hide, compromise, or abandon her artistic vision.

The Drama Apprenticeship: Negotiating Craft Toward Art

To me, real drama teaching began when the teacher ushered drama past periphery and utility into craft status. That transition was marked by the teacher’s interest in doing drama “with” children rather than “to” or “for” them. The art of teaching through drama began as craft in the mechanical, imitative phases of borrowed decisions and imitative actions while vision developed.
Craft moved toward art as the crafts person accumulated enough integral experience and trust in a personal artistic vision. Artistic vision could be admired and appreciated, but could not be borrowed.

The scaffolding relationship the teachers and I shared allowed them to safely explore teaching through drama. Those teachers who experienced the greatest growth toward artistic drama teaching possessed an internal drive for a period of time that propelled them forward through scaffolded apprentice experiences toward more independent experiences. The drive was strongly influenced by voices and forces outside the classroom but inside the school system, in one case to please those voices and forces, in another to fly in the face of them in defiance.

In the absence of a teacher's internal drive toward artistic growth, the negotiated vision between the teacher and I often stagnated, resulting in superficial, familiar-activity-driven drama and/or my assumption of responsibility for drama in their classroom. Without individual drive, the potential artist remained the eternal apprentice. Part of drive was viewing apprenticeship as a valuable but temporary state.

Growth within the craft status away from the apprenticeship-expert relationship toward more independent exploration was partially fueled by an understanding of drama's generative potential regarding other curricular areas (e.g. response to literature, writing). Two teachers came to first understand generativity as the influence of drama on their students' writing.

**Teaching Teachers in Action**

Teaching teachers required balancing theory and practice. Studies before mine confessed to privileging theory over practice (e.g. Edwards & Cooper, 1996). I confessed to the opposite imbalance.
Co-teaching was a complicated challenge. I would push or violate classroom
thresholds, or classroom teachers would push or violate mine. On-the-feet
decisions required eyebrow, whispered, and unstated communication between
the teachers and me. One of us usually ran the lesson, the other assisted.
Lesson and unit plans were the outward manifestation of envisioning and some
decision-making. Whoever held the pen owned the plan and led the lesson.

Co-teaching as an experienced advocate of drama working with a less-
experienced teacher being required to use drama set up some interesting and
distracting dynamics. There were two sets of clients: the children and the
teacher. When the children were a far easier “sell” than the teacher, I ran the
risk of alienating the teacher in sharing an alliance with the children. Similarly, I
had a hard time letting dramas “flop” as learning experiences for teachers
because I felt obligated to the children.

A vital component of drive was the willingness to take risks. Obstacles to that
cOMPONENT were numerous and varied, some cognitive, some contextual. The
“back-to-basics” climate and the top-down mandated changes contributed to
teachers being unwilling to take risks. But sometimes my presence was an
obstacle... In trying to help I was sometimes hampering vital risk taking.

In order to use drama, a teacher needed to intrinsically experience it. Teachers
who viewed learning constructively and intrinsically naturally joined in the
drama experience with their students when I led. Teachers who viewed
learning more extrinsically only joined the drama “for her part,” thus never
experienced drama from inside.

Beginning use of drama required both theoretical reflection in a social context
as well as a practical, scaffolded apprenticeship component. Existing team
groups with set patterns of interaction were not the best context for planning
generatively, unless the group had a pattern of exploratory planning and a shared style of implementation. The rare instances where cross-grade-level groups discussed drama provided an arena for teachers to share ideas and display their growing understanding of drama. They talked about drama more confidently to one another than they did to me. Did they thrive on less familiar faces and perspectives? Had I intimidated or coddled them into not reflecting confidently?

• ideally the teachers would have experienced drama in a teacher-only class situation. This was in the works for the second year of the program, but I abandoned the idea until I could garner more of the teachers' attention.

• I will never have teachers' full attention.

Generativity Requirements: Structure and Indeterminacy

• Drama shared an artistic indeterminacy with all art forms. However, art forms such as literature, poetry, and writing are more privileged in schools than the art form of drama. A teacher's comfort with or interest in these arts provided avenues into understanding drama and laid complementary groundwork for generative growth in drama teaching.

• The closer drama was allowed to the center of the curriculum and the guiding forces of the classroom, the more generative its influence, and the more useful as a tool rather than a special event it became.

• When children got too loud or out of control during a drama experience, the knee-jerk reaction was often: "We don't need to do that again" when it could have been: "What stood in the way? How could we help them face the social challenge differently rather than avoiding the challenge altogether?" Teachers sometimes quickly lumped drama's social and generative elements in the negative category of "too much noise" rather than first considering the content of
the perceived din. A generative, interactive drama event was often labeled as lacking structure, when in fact, the structure was vital to the generativity. “Our children” were often blamed for lacking social skills when lessons went poorly or wildly. Generativity and structure were not opposites, though they were often described as such.

**Question 2 and Findings**

What is the influence of other individual voices and institutional forces invested in shaping the extent to which drama becomes part of the school’s and each individual classroom’s culture?

**Drama and School**

- The people who make up and support the school had widely varied beliefs and definitions about of drama and what it could be. Some wanted the performative theatrical elements as a central piece, others saw drama’s heart in the classroom. The end result was that sometimes they compromised or stretched their beliefs and sometimes drama itself was compromised and negotiated.

- Drama with children in schools was “socially messy,” for children did not necessarily share a vision with their teacher or one another or me. Good drama was a negotiation. Proximity to and frequency of drama experiences complicatedly negotiating toward art had everything to do with helping children, teachers, and their supporters move away from idealizing drama toward understanding the value of this negotiation.

- There was never a time—nor may there ever be a time—that I had the teachers’ full attention so we could calmly go about exploring the theory and practice of drama in a class/workshop setting. Each spring we set up the prospect. Each summer, we returned to school with a crisis that distracted the effort and a slew
of other workshops and trainings the teachers had to attend. The watch word became “flexibility” not “creativity.” Was it that drama alone couldn’t be trusted to make a difference or wasn’t deserving of undivided attention? Or was it just the nature of schools? Was I being selfishly narrow-minded in thinking drama and I deserved such attention?

Those outside the classroom had a larger, more comprehensive, and more idealized view of drama’s potential functions than classroom teachers. Teachers were theoretically required to remain aware of the big picture, but practically their view remained small and disjointed, not because of their lacking mental capacity, but to accommodate the varied tasks asked of them daily. Change and requests for change, including drama, remained on a small scale. The same sentiment affected me, though not as greatly. I could almost never do the gear switch necessary to write this dissertation while school was in session. Time was one element, but mindset was another.

Outside the Classroom

The school system’s goals and drama’s goals were not always at odds. For instance, the school system recognized the need to help children understand what it was to be human and to share this world, just as I did. Rather than making that concern an element of contextualized learning as I believed they should, the school system instituted a character-education program, guided by six traits that all people needed to help them get along in the world (cooperation, perseverance . . .). Every teacher, regardless of her orientation to learning, saw drama’s potential to function as an important part of exploring human qualities and interactions. However, the presentation of the list, in keeping with Bruner’s second model of learners as mental acquirers, set
up the empty vessel student-full pitcher teacher relationship. That in turn also shaped and limited the teachers' envisioning of drama's potential.

Performances were highly-valued as opportunities to broaden student experience, build student confidence, bring communities together, and display and celebrate program success. The crowds, whether at school events or church-sponsored events, were judged successful by the number in attendance rather than the nature of the interaction. These were not events to help educate adults about drama's potential functions. Drama was expected to entertain and help others feel good and hopeful.

This drama program was important to many individuals and organizations, but---sadly---central in both theory and practice to no one but me. Support organization members, school administrators, teachers, students, families all had other, "bigger" worries. We didn't really know what we all meant together, because we so seldom were together. After two years, we were still at the beginning stages of knowing one another. Was that something we needed to improve or was that an element by design?

All three are organizations---the school, the church, and the theatre---were organizations both undergoing change and seeking to change the lives of children and their families at McDowell. None of these organizations spoke with one clear voice that depicted the desired nature of change sought at McDowell, other than "to help." They were more clear and directed with their own institutional changes. Regarding McDowell, the organizations proceeded in a general direction toward change, with individuals maintaining different visions and agendas of how that change had occurred to this point and how it ought to proceed into the future. Among the admirable helpful intentions for the
children of McDowell and their families was woven the historical complications of giving and receiving.

**Giving and Receiving**

The philanthropic undergirding of this program introduced elements of giving and receiving on all layers. Giving and receiving were complementary processes. Most gave in the hopes of getting. What did each “giving” organization seem to want from this program? The theatre and Pauline, the “founder,” were interested in publicity elements and associations. They didn’t necessarily seek to change anything, but they saw value in others knowing about the in-progress efforts of the program.

For other individuals, giving and receiving was more complicated, because giving required changing or inspiring change. The school principal wanted me to give drama strategies to teachers that they could, in turn, give to their students. She also wanted me to give the school performance opportunities, to be appreciated by both children and their families. What did she imagine she would get? A school of students engaged in learning through art--or at least looking like it. What did she get? Attempts, pockets and moments of success; individual and institutional resistance; frustration and disappointment; small steps in complicated understanding.

The church volunteer coordinator wanted me to create opportunities for volunteers to give of their time, not just their money. What did she get? The responsibility for coaxing people into volunteering. When it worked, she had a small step toward growth and change to celebrate. When it didn’t work, she had the awkward responsibility of running interference between church and school folk.
Both teaching through drama and volunteering done well are commitments over time that grow out of how people believe they ought to approach the world. No one could force lasting change in that direction, rather the willingness to risk and change had to grow slowly from within, based on accumulating integral experience, just like art.

The Political Underbelly of Giving

A school social worker once said of McDowell: “It’s the kind of place people feel good about helping.” St. Joseph’s comprehensive, long-standing financial support was but one piece of evidence to that fact. However, the underlying political realities of this program were complicated, particularly in the loyalty department. Were we seeking to help the children of McDowell and their families to better lives and futures or were we simply helping to feel good about helping in a selfish and immediate way? Or was reality somewhere in between?

Could I categorically refer to the philanthropic organization that paid my salary and brought drama into the lives of children who would otherwise have done without as an oppressive force? And the theatre? And myself an instrument of that oppression? The school that welcomed me--and didn’t need to--could I vilify them as well? There was potential for that. The alternative was to acknowledge that potential and work--or at least imagine against it.

The Big Picture

Teachers coming to use drama required a balance between theory and practice as well as between personal drive and the dynamic shared understandings of a reflective learning community to achieve any depth of change. Institutional change would require a view of learners/participants as critical interpreters, Bruner’s fourth model of learning, both calling on and
calling into question cultural knowledge in the form of organizational and personal histories. This would require a long, wide, critical view.

Similarly, the individuals and organizations that supported this drama program had yet to socially construct a world to inhabit together in any complicated way. Our connections were important, but fleeting and superficial. A similarly complex balance was lacking among our changing organizations as was needed among changing teachers if the goal was to construct a connection through and beyond the drama program’s three-year term. We needed to socially and critically examine the histories that once separated but now partially united these groups. Or was that too much to ask? Did organizations even want that degree of responsibility for change—or the change itself? Or were things fine “like they are?” Did we want to look at what the long, wide, critical view had to show us?

The telephone rings.
BETH: Hello.
RAYMOND: Hi, Beth.
BETH: Hey you. How’s your summer?
RAYMOND: OK. Me and Ty are goin’ camping with the boy scouts.
BETH’S MIND: Between hiking with me and St. Joseph’s-sponsored camp experiences, they ought to be ready. Cool.
BETH: That’s great. You excited?
RAYMOND: Yeah, but we don’t have all the stuff. We got boots and slickers, but we still need backpacks—the big kind, with frames.
BETH: You’re camping off-trail the first time out? Hmm.
RAYMOND: Mom said I should call you.
BETH’S MIND: To them, I will always seem wealthy, won’t I?
BETH: Well, honey, those packs are expensive and I don’t own any.
BETH’S MIND: Don’t do it “for” him, work “with” him.
BETH: There’s a second-hand sporting goods store on Independence. Why don’t you call them? Or could you borrow them maybe?
RAYMOND: I guess. Who from?
BETH: Maybe we can check with the boy scout office. Hey—by the way—how was your report card?
RAYMOND: Oh, well. I think I failed.
BETH: How did that happen?
RAYMOND: I don’t know. This new school had a different kind of motivation or something. The teachers were—
BETH: Did you do your work? Remember how you said you were going to get better about homework--did you?
RAYMOND: Sometimes.

BETH: How about your brother?
RAYMOND: He failed, too. And Angel, too. I think.

BETH: Oh boy. What's your mom think?
RAYMOND: She said she's disappointed.

The Hope

Pauline, the program founder, and I have had this same conversation at least two or three times over the last few years. I would tell her something about Raymond and Ty. She would recognize their family name. Her eyes would sparkle and she'd gasp a little and put her index finger to her cheek and furrow her brow. Then she'd ask a question or two through a faint and distant smile, as if trying to focus the specifics of faces and names so the fond memory might bask in clear focus for a precious moment.

PAULINE: Don't they have an older brother... Terrence or something?
BETH: Yes, they do.
PAULINE: He's quite a poet, you know. I think he's the one. He won a contest we had at the school years ago.
BETH: Terrence?

BETH'S MIND: Guess now is not a good time to tell her Terrence took up smoking, won't get a job, and is in the tenth grade for the second time, contemplating dropping out.
PAULINE: It was a wonderful poem...

The next time I saw the guys, I couldn't resist asking about Terrence's alleged poetic past...

TY: Yup, he did. Shoot. That was-- Remember when Terrence used to write poetry?
LAUGH:
FRIEND: Terrence?
RAYMOND: Yeah--ha! It was pretty good, but...shakes his head and smiles, fondly remembering a lost friend;

I worry that we who have worked so hard to "help" families in the northeast section of Webster might fall into the trap of extremes: either focusing only on the magical, hopeful moments of success or focusing on
overwhelming odds that society presents and ultimately not expecting our efforts to really pay off. I have just shared a potential example of each extreme regarding the same family. Yes, this family has been touched by the generous works of St. Joseph’s Church and the supportive efforts of the personnel of McDowell School and Children’s Theatre, but most importantly: what does that mean to them now? Day-to-day existence usually lingers between the extremes. Have we only been in the business of providing fond memories, ultimately encouraging people to look back? Or have we been actively about the business of providing opportunities for shaping futures, ultimately encouraging people to look forward? Ideally, we’d be doing both.

The arts can be fleeting memories, or internalized experiences. The arts have transformative potential, linking vision and action. Our schools and our society are in need of some transformations. For children to think as artists, imagining the possible then seeking to make it so, they must be taught by people who do the same. When and how will we let teachers move toward art, trusting them to take stock of their experiences and envision their futures dynamically—that their students might do the same?

... in theorizing about the practice of education... you had better take into account the folk theories that those engaged in teaching and learning already have. For any innovations that you, as a “proper” pedagogical theorist, may wish to introduce will have to compete with, replace, or otherwise modify the folk theories that already guide both teachers and pupils. (Bruner, 1996, p. 46)

Currently, teachers are not a central, vital part of the constructive conversation guiding their own fate. If this study reveals nothing else to me, it reinforces the notion that teachers speak how they are spoken to, treat how they are treated, give how they are given to, hold accountable how they are held accountable, and ultimately teach how they are taught. That has enormous
implications for those who seek to influence education. The sentiments and patterns and expectations placed upon teachers eventually reach children. Any student "failure" reflects a grander problem. The current trend in the politics of education seems to be adopting the "get tough" attitude toward failures on all levels. I'd prefer to adopt the "get complex" attitude, of which working through the arts could be a vital component. There are no simple answers. We must all be part of the solution/s, but teachers must be trusted and empowered to lead the way.
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