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YOUNG CHILDREN POSITIONED AS STORYTELLERS IN THE CLASSROOM:
AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS AND THE
STORYTELLING EVENT

A Dissertation Presented

By

PEGGY MARTALOCK

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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Education

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DEDICATION

To my patient, strong, and wise husband Michael

To my children Elijah, Rafael, and Isabelle

To my mother, Darlene, a teacher

To my grandmother, Marion, a teacher

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

YOUNG CHILDREN POSITIONED AS STORYTELLERS IN THE CLASSROOM:
AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS AND THE
STORYTELLING EVENT

SEPTEMBER 2016

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Responsive, well-attuned, sensitive, dynamic, and individual interactions between teachers and children in early childhood classrooms support language and literacy development. This study looks at the nature and qualities of teacher – child interactions during Vivian Paley's storytelling approach when implemented as a curricular activity. This is a microethnographic study conducted from a socio-cultural theoretical framework of two early childhood classrooms (one PreK and one K) in a large urban school in the northeast United States. Both teachers were participating in a professional development initiative through the school district to implement Paley's storytelling approach. Two teachers and 23 children participated in this nine-month study. Three main research questions frame this study: (a) What are the specific contextual markers that frame a storytelling event?; (b) What are the nature and qualities of adult – child interactions during the storytelling activities?; and (c) How do the participants perceive the storytelling interactions? Analysis shows that contextual markers, such as conversational cues and turn-taking are consistent and similar in both classrooms.

Broader structures of implementing the approach, such as timing and frequency, vary widely between the classrooms. Nature and qualities of the interactions and participants' perceptions are similar and consistent for both classrooms.

Research shows that fidelity to protocols across classrooms for curricular activities such as dialogic or interactive reading does not guarantee similar qualities of the teacher – child interactions. This research shows that when there is *not* fidelity to a curricular protocol, in this case the storytelling approach, there may *still be* similarities and consistencies in the nature and qualities of the teacher – child interactions. Themes running throughout the data include, autonomy, listening, and the participants' perceptions of the storytelling event as a time and activity that feels qualitatively different than other daily curricular activities. Implications to consider include the structuring of professional development for Paley's storytelling approach as well as the relationship between the underlying pedagogical stance of a curricular approach and individual teachers' pedagogical stance.

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CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Introduction

It is widely recognized that support for children's developing language and literacy skills is a critical element of an early childhood curriculum. There is a good amount of research and attention aimed toward developing approaches and methods that target literacy skills, such as knowledge of the alphabet, phonemics, and de-coding skills. Research targets oral language development because it also plays a significant role in the overall process of becoming literate. This may be especially important as children progress through their education into higher grades where things such as comprehension and the ability to critically evaluate as well as construct narratives becomes more important (McEwan & Egan, 1995). A goal of this study is to add to the research targeting oral language, explicitly as it relates to teacher-child interactions within a specific storytelling activity.

In the early childhood classroom, the interactive read-aloud is a typical part of the curriculum that may be used to support elements of oral language development (Lennox, 2013). However, the activity of storytelling, and in particular the children as the storytellers, is less typically a formal part of the curriculum. The act of storytelling takes place across all cultures (Dyson & Genishi, 1994) and creating narrative is a fundamental part of language, literacy, and overall sense-making of our world (Bruner, 1990). While this activity may occur informally in varying fashions in early childhood classrooms, it is not typically part of a formal curriculum. This research looks at classrooms that are formally incorporating children's storytelling into the curriculum. The purpose of this study is to examine the contours of the storytelling event and explore the positioning of

children as storytellers and the subsequent nature and qualities of adult – child interactions during storytelling events. Particular attention is paid to how the event unfolds in the classroom and how teachers and children 'use' the event, with an eye towards elements that may support specific oral language skills and development.

B. Socio-cultural Theoretical Perspective

My theoretical framework can be described on three levels: (a) the very broad theoretical field, (b) the contextual field, and (c) the focused event field. The broad theoretical field refers to my overall theoretical framework. The contextual field delineates specific theoretical constructs developed for research application that I draw from to frame my study. The focused event field refers to the specific context of the research, in this case a classroom micro-ethnography of storytelling interactions. I will discuss each, beginning with the broad and working to the focused event, which is the unit of analysis in this study. Visually, this could be thought of as inverted pyramid, working from the top and most broadly framed level down to the point, which is the context of the focused event analysis.

The broad perspective of this study is from a socio-cultural theoretical framework. This theoretical framework foregrounds social and cultural elements of meaning-making, learning, development, and action "to explicate the relationships between mental functioning, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this functioning occurs on the other" (Wertsch, Del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995, p. 33). The socio-cultural theoretical perspective exerts an influence on the field of early childhood, including the development of educational theory and suggested practices in the United States (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). This research

maintains this perspective, seeking to examine and analyze how a particular educational

practice is lived and understood by the classroom participants in naturally occurring

situations.

Socio-cultural theory is heavily influenced by the Russian psychologist Lev

Vygotsky whose work has increasingly influenced Western thought in the area of

education over the last several decades (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

The work of subsequent scholars such as Jerome Bruner, Barbara Rogoff, Sylvia

Scribner, demonstrate his influence. While Vygotsky's work is the backbone of current

socio-cultural theory, several scholars have further developed pieces of his theoretical

work that address perceived weaknesses or less developed aspects (Engstrom, Miettinen

& Punamaki, 1999; Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007). Various strands of socio-cultural

theory have emerged including activity theory (Engestrom et al., 1999), distributed

cognition (Rogoff & Lave, 1984), and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991),

among others. These theoretical threads all have in common the perspective that "human

interaction [is] mediated by language and other symbol systems within particular cultural

contexts" (Lewis et al., 2007). This research seeks to further understand the interactions

of the classroom storytelling events from the socio-cultural perspective, using the

theoretical framework I have outlined.

A major socio-cultural concept that informs this study is mediation. Mediation is

a basic construct in socio-cultural theory (Engstrom et al., 1999; Wertsch, 1991).

Meaning-making and learning occur not as isolated events within the individual but

through processes mediated by tools and artifacts, interactions with others, and through

eventual internalizations of social meanings (Kozulin, 2002; van Lier, 2004). Mediation

occurs across two major domains, the phylogenetic and the ontogenetic (Werstch et al., 1985; van Lier, 2004). Phylogenetic refers to biological development and the social, cultural and historical development of structures and institutions in which the child is embedded. This might also be understood as macro structures of context, which in the case of this research would include elements such as the school district, curriculum, popular culture, among other things. Ontogenetic refers to the use of signs, tools, language, and the interactional processes in which meaning becomes internalized and is connected to the development of higher mental functions. These elements can be considered micro processes of context, including for this research words, actions, and materials, and the way they are used and enacted during adult-child interactions of storytelling events.

Vygotsky (1978; 1986) proposed that human mental activity is always mediated by the tools of the society and culture of which a person is a part. The tools of a culture include both physical objects and "signs and symbols" which circulate and operate as a means of communication. Language being one of the primary tools that mediate the growth and development of the child.

Vygotsky also places primacy on the social interaction and environment as the leading factor in knowledge construction. Wertsch (1985), states Vygotsky's argument that "the social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and in fact the individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary" (p. 58). Bruner (1985) interprets Vygotsky, saying, "It is inherent in his conviction that passing on knowledge is like passing on language – his basic belief that social transaction is the fundamental vehicle of education" (p. 25). One of his basic tenets is that knowing is first a social, external

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interaction which subsequently becomes internalized by the child (Vygotsky, 1986). This is stated in Vygotsky's "general genetic law of cultural development"

> Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition. (Wertsch, 1985, p. 61).

The child participates in interactions with materials and people within his or her environment. Over time and exposure to the materials, in conjunction with interactions among adults and peers, children are able to master their actions and gain a conscious awareness of material and thought. Once this is achieved children have mental access to their thoughts and understandings that are then, essentially, tools under their control for further action (Bruner, 1985).

Theorizing human activity and learning as dynamic processes of social and cultural co-construction of interplay among macro forces and micro features is inherently complex. A full accounting of all elements is not possible. A researcher makes choices about what to highlight in any study based on the nature of the construct of interest and specific research questions. In this case the construct of interest is adult-child interactions during storytelling events in specific early childhood classrooms with the inclusion of carefully chosen macro elements.

I have addressed my broad theoretical perspective but before moving on to the contextual and the focused event fields, I will discuss my theory of culture. This is

important for illuminating both my ethnographic stance and my theoretical choices regarding how to frame the context and focused event fields of my research.

C. My Theory of Culture

The ethnographic researcher both studies culture and brings to the task personal theories of the concept of culture. The following is how I define culture, drawing from socio-cultural and post structuralist theoretical viewpoints. Culture is a process of relationships; among our environment, with others, and with ourselves. It encompasses the activities, interactions, and understandings that we engage in and create (Rosaldo, 1993). Culture is both implicit and explicit, in how it is conveyed, generated, and understood (Bereiter, 2002). Culture is identifiable yet not static, it is dynamic and evolves. Culture includes rules and guidelines for language and behavior that are generally agreed upon among a group of people. In this way features of culture exert itself and create defining features of our lives yet we also exert ourselves upon culture shifting and creating different lines of identity, norms, and practices (Heath & Street, 2008; Rosaldo, 1993). Culture neither stands as an outside force on people and events nor as a construct solely within an individual. It is a dynamic interaction within a situation; and the meanings, or interpretations, people both bring to the situation and construct from the situation. In this manner we are both products and producers of culture.

From this perspective one might say that we *are* culture. In our doings, our actions and interactions with people, materials, signs and symbols we *act* culture. We communicate culture through tangible and intangible means. For example, styles of dress, art, and artifacts, are tangible manifestations of culture. Language, gestures, body language, and implicit understandings about codes of behavior are less tangible examples

of culture. Aspects of culture are constantly negotiated, produced, reproduced, and co-constructed through interactions with our environment (Bereiter, 2002). Understanding ourselves, and our practices, requires grappling with the complexity of these interactions. Part of this process includes examining and analyzing artifacts that are produced, and uncovering the implicit codes and beliefs that we enact throughout our experiences.

The difficulty in conducting research from this complex perspective is finding a balance among creating boundaries that will define categories and systems within a culture to a degree that will 'hold them still' for the purpose of analysis, without at the same time perpetuating a notion of culture as bounded and static. My choices of methodology follow my theoretical perspective and find a path to 'hold still' the classroom culture for the purpose of a close examination of the storytelling activity.

Throughout the rest of this section I address theoretical and methodological perspectives as they relate to one another and create a path to the focal point of the storytelling approach. My perspective must necessarily both make distinctions between theory and methodology in order to provide clarity, and also view theory and methodology as intricately entwined because one always informs the other (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Schram, 2006). At this point I move from the discussion of my theory of culture and return to the theoretical framing of the study. Continuing with the visual of the inverted triangle as a representation of theoretical levels, the next part of this paper moves onto the mid-level and then the focused point of the research.

D. Cultural Historical Activity Theory

To place my construct of interest within a contextual framework I draw from cultural historical activity theory, CHAT (Engstrom et al., 1999). CHAT is useful for theorizing the context of this research. CHAT takes the perspective that human activity is part of activity systems, which are dynamic constructs of subject, object, and tools (material and symbolic). While the parts of an activity system, as well as activity systems themselves, are viewed as shifting and malleable features the theory does provide a framework to hold still the constituent parts and begin to position them in relation to one another. This framework helps to situate the narrow focus of my research within a context that is theorized from a socio-cultural perspective. In this case, the storytelling event is positioned within the activity system of formal schooling.

CHAT, originating with the work of Vygotsky, was further developed by his pupil Leont'ev and continues to evolve through the work of later scholars including Lave, Engestrom, Rogoff, Scribner, Wertsch, and Cole (Roth & Lee, 2007). Vygotsky's focus was on semiotic mediation, primarily speech and language. Later scholars broadened this to include practical human activity and address issues of praxis (the actual moment of an activity) and practice (patterns of behavior) with more attention to cultural and historical elements (Roth & Lee, 2007). Activity is defined as, **"evolving, complex structure of mediated and collective human agency…. with objects and motives that contribute to maintaining human societies and; therefore, to maintaining individuals"** (Roth & Lee, 2007, p.198). In this case, "activity" does not refer to relatively bounded, one-time events or tasks with a beginning and endpoint, such as taking an exam but to the evolving system of human activity in which that task may be one part. One goal using CHAT as a

theoretical tool is to be able to explore the position, goals, and interpretations that events and tasks can take on within the broader activity system. The object or goal of an activity system may be functional, material, or ideational (Lewis et al., 2007). Examples of activity include such things as architecture, farming, and schooling, which are activities that have a history of evolving to (re)produce human society (Roth & Lee, 2007). The broad activity system theorized in this study is early childhood public schooling.

CHAT has (and continues to) evolve over time responding to limitations and concerns by scholars and researchers. There is currently a "third generation" CHAT which explicitly acknowledges that activity systems are not self-contained static entities, but that the constituent parts may shift according to their function within a system. Systems also overlap and intertwine with other systems in dynamic networks across societies (Roth & Lee, 2007). Roth and Lee use the example of students as part of the activity systems of both home and school. Third generation CHAT also recognizes multiple perspectives, interests, and voices, within a system.

While recognizing the complexity of human activity as both situated in and shifting among activity systems, CHAT does provide a useful hueristic for organizing salient features of an ecological system. It provides a structure for linking important elements that are part of an activity system. The main elements of CHAT include the object (goal of the activity system), subject (actors engaged in activity), community (social context), tools (means of mediation) division of labor (structure of roles within activity system), and rules (conventions or codes regulating behavior and actions) (Brown & Cole, 2002; Roth & Lee, 2007). These elements provide the structure for conceiving an activity as a manifestation of these inter-related parts, any one of which is irreducible

to the whole. We may seek to understand a system by looking at its component parts but we will not understand any separate part if we isolate it from the system (Roth & Lee, 2007)

The following diagram is commonly used within CHAT research to represent the components of an activity system and to aid in visualizing issues of mediation, contradiction, etc. Represented here is an example of how the concrete enactment of storytelling might be theorized within the activity system of the early childhood classroom. Italicized are elements that may fall into each component category.

Storytelling theorized as part of an activity system

Mediation tools and signs
language, pen, paper, computer, actions

Subject
teachers & children

Object
implementing storytelling approach

Outcome
story texts, acting, interactions, interpretations

Rules
conventions of interaction rules for storytelling, classroom expectations

Community of Practice
classroom, professional development group, Fairview ECE teachers

Division of Labor
roles of teacher, child (teller, scribe, audience, teacher, student)

Cole & Engstrom, 1993)

CHAT offers an organizing framework and dialectical model to study activity and its object goal but it does have limitations. One limitation of CHAT that is particularly

relevant for the purpose of this research is that it does not necessarily provide robust methods for examining relationships at the micro level of interactions (Lewis et al., 2007). Also, while a central feature of CHAT includes the objects, goals and motives of the system, the subject participant(s)' goals and desires within that system are not fully theorized. For instance, if the activity system is conceptualized as formal schooling, the goals and motives of that system may be very different than if the activity system is conceptualized as storytelling (as a human phenomenon). Subsequently, the subject's goals and motives may be understood or conceptualized from quite different perspectives. So, while I use CHAT as a framework for thinking about and theorizing the various components of the context, my research questions lie at the level of individual participant actions and interpretations.

Again, CHAT provides a useful hueristic but the primary unit of analysis is at the level of the event. The event of interest for this research are the interactions as they occur naturally within the life of the classroom between adult and child during the child's narration of their story. The intention is to examine the enactment of the storytelling events as a language based classroom activity. At this level I turn to the theory and methodology of the ethnographic approach, and specifically the classroom micro-ethnography, as a means for the close attention to and examination of adult – child interactions during these language based storytelling events as they are lived and experienced by the participants.

In the next section I step back from the specifics of this research to give a brief overview of the ethnographic tradition and its usefulness in educational research. Then I return to the context of the research to conceptualize my unit of analysis at the event level

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within the classroom.

E. Ethnography and Microethnography

Ethnography has its roots in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. The discipline of ethnography is broadly defined as the study of the culture of the 'other' (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). The field of ethnography has grown to include a myriad of types including applied, activist, critical, feminist, and autoethnography to name a few, each with particular aims and theoretical orientations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Yet, at the root of all ethnography is the attention to culture and how elements of culture, both micro and macro as well as explicit and implicit elements, interact in ways that shape people's thinking, actions, and experiences (Grenfell et al., 2011).

The purpose of an ethnographic approach broadly, is to describe, contribute to understanding, and convey a perspective regarding a group of people as they engage in the everyday experiences of their lives (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Purcell-Gates, 2004). One goal of the ethnographer is to enter into a shared space with the participant subjects around the meanings that they make throughout the myriad of relationships within the culture of their day-to-day lives, to describe and analyze these meanings for patterns and connections, and articulate these understandings for persons outside of the particular cultural context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Heath & Street, 2008). In order to do this, ethnography relies on "thick description" (Geertz, 1973). Geertz, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) assert that culture is the context in which participant subjects' behaviors and meanings can be, "intelligibly – this is, thickly – described (Geertz, 1973, p. 14)".

The fact that the ethnographic approach places an emphasis and focus on the concept of culture as a point of developing an understanding of how people engage, make

sense of their world, and act within their particular culture(s) has contributed to its growing use as a method of understanding practices within localized cultures such as organizations, businesses, and education (Tedlock, 2000).

An ethnographic approach is appropriate for this study because it is a methodology that is closely bound up with a socio-cultural theoretical framework. It supports fleshing out the context as a necessary element for greater understanding of human actions and interaction. The intention of this research is to thickly describe and analyze a particular activity that uniquely positions the child and adult within a language based classroom event, namely storytelling. This study aims to foreground the interactions and interpretations of the adults and children regarding the storytelling events. From this perspective the storytelling events are situated within the culture of their specific classrooms. Framing the study as a close examination of a specific language activity within a culture draws on a micro-ethnographic approach.

A micro-ethnography is an ethnography focused on events within a context, in this case two early childhood classrooms, which are embedded in a larger cultural milieu. It is not always possible or practical for a researcher to thoroughly attend to the full scope of a school's community and society. A classroom micro-ethnography foregrounds the daily life of the classroom while acknowledging the wider social and cultural context. (Bloome et al., 2005; Grenfell et al., 2011). I used the theoretical model of CHAT to aid in conceptualizing the broader contextual system in which the event of storytelling takes place. The interactions of storytelling are at a focused event field level.

At the level of the classroom interactions I define an event as "a bounded series of actions and reactions that people make in response to each other at the level of face-to-

face interaction." (Bloome et al., 2005, p. 6). In line with my theoretical perspective, persons are conceived to be active agents within their culture and society. People construct and re-construct their world and make meaning through mutually constituting interactions and relationships with other people, materials, and the signs and symbols of their environment (Bloome et al., 2005; Van Lier, 2004). They are not separate from their situation but integrally a part of co-constructing events as they occur. Drawing from Bloome et al.,'s theorizing and defining of an event, I propose that the storytelling interactions may be theorized as a language and literacy event. The contours and meanings of which are situated with the persons, language, and relationships within the context.

 While a goal of this research is to examine the actions, language, and objects that work to define the storytelling event within the classroom contexts, there is a general understanding of basic components of the event. These interactions happen at some point during the school day. As the adults and children act to construct the nature and parameters of the event their interpretations of these things will also be part of creating their understanding of the function and purposes of storytelling as a part of the classroom curriculum. This is important in understanding how storytelling may be used as a classroom support for language and literacy development.

 This study is important because it looks at a curricular activity that theoretically aligns with research-based elements of effective classroom language activities for young children. It shares elements with some common classroom language activities, most closely interactive reading, however it is unique in some important aspects, including the way oral language is used and how it positions the adult and child within the interaction.

These unique qualities may offer affordances for understanding children's oral capabilities and developing stronger means to support children's oral language growth. Oral language competencies are important for children's continuing language and literacy development and for success in their on-going school experiences (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Dickinson & Snow, 1987; Hart & Risley, 1995). While storytelling may provide the means for this support, it has not been widely studied especially at the focused event level of implementation. Examining the practice of storytelling in terms of how it is created, lived, and understood by the adults and children in the classroom offers a perspective on the approach that maintains it as an enactment among persons and within a relationship to their particular context. This echoes the socio-cultural theoretical perspective that learning is first a social transaction among persons and environment. If we continue to examine relationships between the enactment of interactions and children's developing competencies we can support the development of educator practices.

In conclusion, I return to the inverted triangle as an image for explaining my theoretical framework. The storytelling event as the unit of analysis is at the focused level, represented by the point of the triangle. I draw from Bloome et al.,'s (2005) theoretical construct of a social literacy event for this analysis. I theorize the storytelling event as an enactment within an activity system. The activity system I consider to be at the level of the contextual field in which the event is situated. CHAT provides a framework for conceptualizing the constituent elements within an activity. This is at the mid-level of the triangle. Finally, the widest part of the triangle represents the broad

socio-cultural theoretical perspective that overall informs my research questions and approach.

Working from these theoretical constructs to examine a classroom language activity such as the storytelling approach can contribute to a re-conceptualization of what actually occurs throughout the real-life events of classroom interactions. It can challenge or push the boundaries of existing classroom practices in exciting and informative directions.

The next chapter details the common curricular activity of interactive read-alouds and the similarities and differences of this activity with the storytelling activity as overall influenced by Vivian Paley's work. Possible affordances and constraints of each approach are discussed alongside important components of language development such as vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative abilities. If the storytelling approach is to be used in classrooms as tool for supporting oral language development, I make a case that it is necessary to include research that takes a close look at the nature and qualities of the storytelling events as they are understood and enacted by the participants.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

The use of storytelling in the early childhood classroom is not a new phenomenon. Storytelling as a means of understanding and making sense of our world is well recognized both culturally (Dyson Haas & Genishi, 1994; Engel, 1995) and theoretically (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wright, Diener & Kemp, 2013). Storytelling took place as adults told stories to children and children acted out stories through pretend play. Some teachers might record and make use of children's pretend play stories, however, it has remained an informal part of classroom culture, meaning it has in large part not been taken up as part of a formally developed curriculum or method of instruction. In the 1970's, Vivian Paley, an early childhood educator at the Chicago Laboratory School began experimenting with the use of storytelling in her classroom. Over the next several decades she would publish 13 books related to her work with storytelling and acting in the early childhood classroom. Her accounts are purely autobiographical in nature in which she describes and reflects on her experiences with the children in her classrooms. Her work has become internationally popular and she has spoken to thousands of educators over the years. However there is limited research regarding the use of her approach by others in early childhood classrooms. Throughout the next sections my use of the term "storytelling" refers to the activity as described in Paley's approach.

This chapter brings together literature to discuss the intersection of three main ideas; components of oral language development, curricular approaches of interactive

read-alouds and storytelling, and the nature of the adult-child interactions (their roles and positions) during the enactment of these curricular activities.

First, I define oral language as part of young children's overall literacy development and introduce the main components of vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative that are referred to throughout this study. This lays the groundwork for introducing the two curricular approaches of interactive read-alouds and storytelling that are used to support oral language development. This discussions leads into the role of interactions between adult and child as they enact classroom curricular activities. As I articulate the significance of the nature and qualities of adult – child interactions in the classroom, I make the case for examining the nature and qualities of adult – child interactions as they participate in the storytelling activity.

In order to further situate the research on the storytelling interactions, I return to a discussion alongside the more commonly recognized activity of interactive read-alouds. I provide an overview and description of the two approaches along with a discussion of the adult and child's role and positioning within each approach.

Then I return to a discussion of the components of vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative in relation to the approaches of interactive read-alouds and storytelling. Possible affordances and constraints of each approach in supporting the development of those components are addressed and this links back to the significance of the nature and qualities of teacher – child interactions and I return to the argument for examining the nature and qualities of storytelling interactions.

B. Language and Literacy Development

The phrase 'language and literacy development' is common in the discourse regarding young children's early educational experiences. This is because language development and literacy development go hand-in-hand, one supports the other in an on-going process of becoming literate (Watson, 2002). There are many factors and variables that influence this complex process ranging from skills such as alphabet knowledge and phonics awareness to abstract skills such as comprehension and metalinguistic awareness (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Lennox, 2013; Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002). For this review I draw a distinction between literacy skills and oral language skills. Literacy skills include things such as alphabet knowledge, de-coding skills, and phonemics; in other words, concepts of print awareness and knowledge of how letters and sounds come together to create words. Language skills include knowledge of words and ways that they are used to communicate and convey meanings; this includes vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative development (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; Watson, 2002).

Language learning and development is a phenomenon of an ecological system of signs and symbols, social interactions, and cultural meanings (Van Lier, 2004). Children must have opportunities to engage in sustained oral interactions around ideas and objects that have personal, social, and cultural meaning for them (Chapman, 2000; Dickinson & Snow, 1987; McNamee, 1987; Van Lier, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). Despite the research that points to these types of exchanges as having a significant impact on children's language learning and development, they are not a regular occurrence in early childhood classrooms (Kontos, 1999; Massey, 2004).

It is widely accepted that young children's early language experiences have a significant impact on developing reading and literacy skills that extend into the early primary years and benefit their continuing educational experiences (Dickinson, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010; Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; NELP, 2008). Children that do not have opportunities for wide ranging oral language experiences and exchanges may be at a disadvantage for later academic language and literacy development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1992, 2003; Watson, 2002). Back and forth, conversational-like exchanges among adults and children in the classroom are an important element of support for language development. Children must have opportunities to engage in sustained oral interactions around ideas and objects that have personal, social, and cultural meaning for them (Chapman, 2000; Dickinson & Snow, 1987; McNamee, 1987; Van Lier, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). While these types of conversational exchanges may occur spontaneously among adults and children in the classroom, research suggests that that is infrequent (Massey, 2004). This is important to note because pressures on early childhood education continue to call for increases in quality early childhood education, especially in the areas of language and literacy (Justice et al., 2008; Dickinson et al., 2010).

While the development of literacy skills (de-coding, alphabet knowledge, phonemics, etc.) can be supported through code-based, direct instruction approaches (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2010), oral language development requires opportunities for responsive, unscripted talk and exchanges with teachers (Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2003; Hart & Risley, 1992; Massey, 2004; Watson, 2002). The nature and qualities of these interactions play a significant role in children's educational experiences.

A common activity in early childhood classrooms that is intended to provide opportunities for back and forth verbal exchanges between adults and children that support vocabulary, comprehension, and oral language skills is the interactive read-aloud (Lennox, 2013; Wiseman, 2011). Interactive read-alouds are also often part of a formal curriculum to support language and literacy development. The storytelling approach shares the same general goals as interactive read-alouds, which are to actively engage children in a language and literacy focused activity that can promote conversation-like exchanges among teachers and children. However the act of story*telling* is not typically recognized as a formal element of curricular instruction.

This research examines the nature and qualities of the teacher - child interactions during the storytelling event. The following section discusses literature regarding the role of teacher – child interactions in the early childhood classroom across a spectrum of contexts. This sets the context for focusing on interactions regarding storytelling along with interactive read-alouds, which share some features with the storytelling approach. Using interactive read-alouds as a comparison with storytelling aids to clarify aspects unique to storytelling, which is part of the focus of this study. After this section, I return to the specific features of interactive read-alouds and storytelling with attention to the role of interactions.

C. Teacher – Child Interactions in the Classroom

In the classroom interactions are the basic units by which any communication of learning or teaching takes place. Interactions are complicated things. They can consist of verbal (words and sounds) and non-verbal actions (movements, gestures, facial expressions, etc.) as well as signs and symbols (text and markings). Beyond those

observable features, interactions are socially situated acts, always mediated by the context of the moment (this time, in this place, with these tools and objects) as well as culturally and historically situated (this group of people at this time in history) (Gee, 2014). Interactions are also mediated by participants as they draw from their own experiences and understandings of their role within that specific situation and of their on-going perceptions and reactions during the course of the interaction (Brophy-Herb, Lee, Nievar & Stollak, 2007; Gee, 2014; Hamre et al., 2012).

The research suggests that a salient feature of any curricula include qualities of the teacher-child interactions (Chapman, 2000; Copenhaver-Joahnos, Bowman & Rietschlin, 2009; Justice, Mashburn, Hamre & Pianta, 2008). Even when a specific curriculum is not under scrutiny but rather the general environment of the classroom, qualities of teacher-child interactions stand out as predictors of children's language and literacy development (Hamre & Pianta, 2007; Hamre et al., 2012).

Several large-scale studies found teacher – child interactions to be a crucial factor in children's language and social skill development. A study conducted by Justice et al., (2008) of 671 pre-Kindergarten classrooms looked at measures of quality using three measurement tools, NIEER, ECERS – R & CLASS. The National Institute for Early Education Research measure (NIEER) addresses structural elements of a program such as teacher qualifications, class size and comprehensive curriculum. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale –Revised (ECERS – R; Harms et al., 1998) primarily focuses on features of the classroom environment and the third instrument used was the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Pianta, LaParo & Hamre, 2008) which assesses qualities of teacher – child interactions along both academic and social domains.

Of the three measurements of classroom quality, the researchers concluded that, "The measure of pre-K quality that was most consistently and strongly associated with children's development was dimensions of teacher – child interactions that children directly experienced in classrooms". They add that "These findings are consistent with theoretically driven expectations that the mechanisms through which pre-K directly impacts children's learning involve proximal processes that children experience in settings, for example, the quality of teacher-child interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)" (p. 743). One goal of the storytelling approach is that the teacher and child engage in one – to – one interactions, that occur regularly over time in the classroom. Putting this into the context of an ecological system this would be an example of a proximal process that children are experiencing.

Another study of 135 publicly funded preschool classrooms conducted by Justice et al., (2008) was designed to capture the qualities of a supplemental language and literacy curriculum implemented by teachers participating in a professional development project regarding high quality language and literacy instruction. While the teachers exhibited high fidelity to the curriculum implementation, this was not strongly associated with high quality of instruction. Teachers were able to follow the step-by-step routines laid out to implement the activities as intended, something which is typically considered an "essential quality" for research regarding classroom interventions (Justice et al., 2008). Justice et al., define quality of instruction as "a teacher's ability to work flexibly with students to differentiate instruction and respond sensitively to what they bring to the task, that is, to exhibit skilled performance within dynamic interactions with children in learning activities that unfold over time" (p. 53). Most importantly is a distinction made

between language versus literacy instruction and the complex nature of language interactions, "Language instruction that is of high quality requires adults to provide well-tuned, responsive conversational input to children…Because a key characteristic of high-quality language instruction is linguistic responsiveness of adults to children within dynamic exchanges, high-quality language instruction is virtually impossible to script procedurally" (p. 64). While fidelity to the procedures of an activity is often considered a necessary part of studying the approach, it may not always be the most salient aspect.

The point I make here is to contrast this with the storytelling approach, which so far has not developed into a highly structured set of procedures but remains very open to be responsive to the situation and participants to create, change, and construct together. How teachers make use of this relatively unstructured approach, particularly regarding responsive, conversational interactions has not yet been widely documented and studied. This research takes a look at how teachers respond to this curricular approach as they learn about it through professional development experiences and then put it to use in their classrooms. There is limited research regarding the implementation of the storytelling approach (as influenced by Paley's work). The use of the storytelling approach may be quite varied among different classrooms and the issue of fidelity is still open to debate. This also provides a unique opportunity to study a language based activity that purposefully leaves many decisions regarding implementation open to the teacher and child and is at the same time recognized as a formal part of the classroom curriculum.

A third large scale, multi-state study conducted by Pianta et al., (2009) found that child outcomes in standard language and literacy assessments at the end of kindergarten could in part be predicted by the nature and qualities of interactions with their pre-

kindergarten teachers as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System

(CLASS) (Pianta, LaParo & Hamre, 2008). This study looked at state funded pre-

kindergarten classrooms in various contexts including full and half day programs located

both in elementary schools and in other outside locations such as community centers, etc.

The programs examined were chosen to maximize diversity among geography and

teacher educational requirements across six states. Children learned and sustained more

when teachers interacted frequently with children in positive and supportive ways,

encouraging language to communicate and develop reasoning skills, provided specific

feedback tailored to the child's skill and development level. It is noteworthy to mention

that these interactions, "tended to occur when teachers interacted individually or in small

groups with children" (p. 151). The storytelling approach seems to create the structure for

these types of individual interactions and teachers may use them for specific support

tailored to the individual child's level.

The literature on classroom interactions reveals that the nature and qualities of

teacher – child interactions are significantly important regarding the learning experiences

of children, especially in the area of language development. This aligns with research that

calls for supporting language growth with regular conversation like exchanges among

teachers and children surrounding topics of interest and relevance for the children. The

storytelling approach seems to create a space for these types of exchanges, much like an

interactive read-aloud. However it provides some distinct differences as well. A focus on

the nature and qualities of interactions during storytelling activities has not been closely

examined. The intention of this study is to examine the nature and qualities of the adult –

child interactions during the storytelling activities in order to analyze how they are used

and experienced by the participants as they naturally occur in their classroom context.

The next section provides an overview of the features of interactive read-alouds and of the storytelling activity. Situating storytelling next to a typical classroom activity that targets many of the same goals helps to articulate unique qualities of storytelling within a familiar framework.

D. Features of Interactive Read-Alouds and Storytelling

Interactive reading shares several general features with the storytelling approach yet there are some clear distinctions that make storytelling unique. The next section juxtaposes interactive reading with the storytelling approach in order to review similarities and differences. Since the storytelling approach is not as thoroughly researched, one of the goals of this study is to articulate characteristics of the activity as it occurs naturally in a classroom.

First, I give an overview of the interactive read-aloud activity and the storytelling activity, discussing similarities and differences among the general features of the two types of activities. Then, I will discuss the key language skills of vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative along with the potential affordances and constraints in each of these areas relative to the two types of activities, interactive read-alouds and storytelling.

The activity of reading to children has a long-standing tradition in Western European culture (Handler Spitz, 1999). Scholars of child development and education advocate that parents and teachers read to children on a daily basis. It is suggested that it is one of the most important activities to promote children's growing language and literacy skills (Cunningham & Zibulsky, 2011). It also provides cultural access to ideas,

beliefs, and concepts (Dyson Haas & Genishi, 1994). In U.S. early childhood classrooms, reading to children is a nearly universal and institutionally recognized part of good educational practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Cunningham & Zibulsky, 2011). Along with the act of reading to the child, some type of informal verbal exchange may take place beyond just the words of the story. As educators and scholars paid attention to and studied these interactions it became apparent that the nature and qualities of these exchanges were significant factors in children's growing language and literacy awareness. Attempts to maximize these benefits for children led to a creation of a more formalized framework for these interactions around a storybook, which is now commonly known as an interactive read-aloud activity (Lennox, 2013). It is a major component of popular curricular methods such as Doors to Discovery (Wright Group, 2004; Justice et al.,. 2008), Reading Street (Blachowicz, Leu, Juel & Pearson, 2008), and Open a World of Learning (Schickedanz, Dickinson, & Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2006). The concept of the interactive read-aloud expands the roles of the adult and child to create an interaction that engages the child in a more active experience with the story. It promotes the type of back and forth exchange between a child and adult that supports elements of oral language development.

The nature and qualities of an interactive read-aloud activity will vary among classrooms depending on several factors, some of which are addressed here, however there are some identifying features common to interactive read-alouds. For an interactive read-aloud the adult typically chooses a children's book that they feel to be appropriate to the child(ren's) interest and developmental level (Lennox, 2013). Sometimes the child may choose the book, even so, the adult chooses which books are made available to the

child. Adult behaviors characteristic of interactive reading include, asking the child questions or predictions about the story, extending the child's responses and creating dialogue, offering additional information or clarification, sharing personal reactions, and relating content to life experiences (Pantaleo, 2007; Wiseman, 2011). Instruction by the adult can fall into two categories, implicit and explicit. Implicit instruction includes vocabulary, concepts, text connections, etc. that the adult weaves into the questions and dialogue with the children but does engage in directly teaching these things. Explicit instruction includes the adults direct explanation about such things as the meaning of vocabulary or concepts used in the text (Lennox, 2013). During interactive read-alouds the adult makes multiple decisions regarding all of these features. They decide what questions to ask, how to ask them, what connections they make to the text, if and when to share this with the children, what information to add or expand on, what vocabulary to emphasize, etc. They also decide the extent of implicit and explicit instruction they will use. These decisions will impact the type of interactions and kind of learning that takes place (Justice et al., 2008; Kindle, 2011).

The types of interactions that a teacher attempts to create with children during interactive read-alouds depends on a various factors, including the teacher's pedagogical knowledge, the curriculum, and specific learning goals for the class or for individuals (Kindle, 2011), as well as the teacher's overall cultural beliefs about young children (Raths, 2001). These factors will play out in how the teacher interprets children's responses, reacts to them, and makes decisions regarding the on-going interactions. One goal of the interactive read-aloud is to extend the interactions beyond the typical "IRE" sequence of "initiate, respond, and evaluate" where the teacher asks the question, a child

responds, and the teacher evaluates the appropriateness of the response (Lennox, 2013).

Again, the extent to which the interactions extend beyond this, from involving the child

in a more extended exchange to facilitating a co-construction of understanding of the text

situated within their social and cultural context (Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman &

Reitschlin, 2009) is influenced by both curricular approach being used and the

characteristics of the individual teacher. This is reinforced by research that suggests that

the nature and qualities of a teacher's interaction may be more salient to children's

language development than the structure of the activity (Brophy-Herb et al., 2007;

Dickinson & Porche 2011; Justice et al., 2008; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

The child's role within an interactive read-loud is to respond to the adults'

questions. When asked, children talk about their predictions or other ideas, thoughts, etc.

that the adult has asked them to share. In so doing they draw from their own knowledge

and experiences to begin to make sense of the text (Sipe, 2008; Wasik & Bond, 2001;

Wiseman, 2012). By sharing their thinking with the adult (and peers) they enter into an

activity of building knowledge together with others (Pantaleo, 2007). The children may

have the opportunity to "talk it over" (Barnes, 1992, p. 28) and participate in developing

and extending interpretations, exploring possibilities of text and meanings, and practice

using language to express ideas (Pantaleo, 2007; Wiseman, 2011). However, the child's

experience regarding their role in an interactive read-aloud will varying depending on the

adult's understandings of the purposes of the interactive read-aloud activity (Lennox,

2013) along with the previously mentioned knowledge of pedagogy, classroom goals and

curriculum, and their cultural experiences. In turn, from a socio-cultural interactionist

perspective, while the adult may 'set the stage' for an interaction, the child's responses

and participation will influence the adults perceptions of the experiences and the qualities of their in-the-moment interaction as well (Chapman, 2000; Copenhaver-Johnson et al., 2009; Gee, 2014).

I now turn to the storytelling approach. Storytelling, broadly speaking, is a phenomenon that spans all cultures and may be a fundamental aspect of human nature. The forms and significance that stories take can vary greatly among cultures as well as among situations and contexts within a culture. Story forms range from a one-time accountings, such as a telling of our days events at the dinner table to oral traditions of retelling a myth or legend to stories formally written down, bound, and published. Young children telling stories is nothing new, they naturally create stories through their pretend and play activities. They tell stories to their parents, peers, and friends, and they use stories as a way to organize, make sense of the world, and integrate with their culture (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Engel, 1995). So, while children telling stories in the classroom is a ubiquitous activity, it is not typically part of a formal early childhood curriculum.

One educator who has established herself as a prominent voice for the inclusion of storytelling as a regular part of an early childhood curriculum is Vivian Paley. Paley received an M.A. from Hofstra University in 1962 and spent most of her 30-year career as an early childhood educator at the University of Chicago Laboratory School. Her use of storytelling grew out of her desire to integrate children's play into the classroom curriculum. She strived to genuinely listen to and understand the children by paying close attention to their creative and dramatic pretend play (Paley, 1987; 1990; 2007). She began to record and transcribe children's play events, this led to her asking the children to tell her about their play interests, which then became the children's stories. Eventually

established a basic structure of inviting children to tell her a story, which she would then transcribe as they told it. Later, they would act out that story with classroom peers as part of a whole group activity. Paley points out that the acting out of the story is a crucial part of the storytelling process. Paley's interest was in supporting the children's social and emotional development, as well as promoting a sense of community within the classroom (Paley, 2000, 2007; McNamee, 2005).

Paley's work has received a good deal of attention over the years. She has authored 13 books about her experiences using the storytelling and acting approach with young children, given countless workshops and presentations, and received a MacArthur Genius award for her work. Her books and presentations are based mostly on anecdotal accounts of her personal experiences and focus primarily on children's social, emotional, and identity development. She does not specifically address the issues of children's language and literacy development. However pedagogically her purpose for using storytelling and acting includes drawing on the power of children's play as a guiding educational force (Nicolopoulou, Barbosa de Sa, Ilgaz, & Brockmeyer, 2010; Paley, 2007) that can support social, emotional development as well as provide practice in oral skills necessary for rational discourse which is a central component for participation in later educational tasks (Cole & Nicolopoulou, 2010). When reading Paley, one can surmise underlying theories of growth and development that she draws from to influence her work with children, however Paley herself does not champion any particular theorists or body of research literature (Cooper, 2009; Nicolopoulou, 1996). She has left that agenda up to others.

Several educators and scholars have included Paley's ideas regarding storytelling and acting in their own research (Cooper, 2005; Cooper, Capo, Mathes & Gray 2007; Dyson & Genishi, 1994; McNamee, 2005; Nicoupoulou & Cole, 2010; Nicoupoulou et al., 2010; Wright, Diener, & Kemp; 2012). In their research, these scholars emphasize different areas of children's growth and development that may be supported by the approach, including vocabulary and literacy skills (Cooper et al., 2007), narrative development (McNamee, 1982, 1987), social and identity development (Nicoupoulou et al., 2010; Richner & Nicolopoulou, 2001) as well as the nature and structure of implementing the activity itself, (Cooper, 2009; Nicolopoulou & Cole, 2010). It may be that educators are drawn to this activity because it seems to tap into children's natural disposition for pretend and dramatic play while also creating a bridge to academic goals of language development. Despite its attractiveness, successful widespread use of the approach has been elusive (Cooper, 2009).

Paley's work is known as the storytelling and acting approach. My research concentrates on the storytelling feature of the activity because that is where the individual child – adult interaction occurs and is the moment when the child is originating their narrative and the teacher is receiving it for the first time. The storytelling activity is when conversation-like exchanges may take place in the context of the child's narrative storytelling. The acting portion of the approach occurs as a whole group activity in which the interactions are less likely to be focused on the narrative of the story or be conversational in nature but more pragmatic to a group activity.

Following, I provide an overview of the basic features and a description of how it may generally be carried out in practice. These are guidelines for the approach, however

its implementation may vary widely from classroom to classroom. Paley's storytelling approach is not a formalized method and there are minimal activities that are suggested as necessary for implementing the approach. Beyond that there is room for a great a deal of variance in how the approach is taken up and used in various contexts. This reflects the approach to early childhood curriculum in general in that it be flexible and responsive to the context of the classroom, giving the teacher responsibility for interpretations and decision-making (NAEYC, 2009)

Gillian McNamee, professor and director of teacher education at Erikson Institute and Patricia Cooper, professor at Queen's College both taught with Vivian Paley at the Chicago Lab School. McNamee and Cooper have gone on to include the storytelling and acting approach in much of their scholarly work regarding children's language and literacy development and teacher education. McNamee (2005) identifies seven "narrative tools" used by Paley to create a common learning culture in her classrooms, they include, "(1) children's play; (2) their dictated and dramatized stories; (3) parent's visits to the classroom to tell stories from their childhood; (4) stories that are read daily, acted out, [….], (5) the year-long study of one author, and how his author's voice influences classroom life; (6) Paley's own made-up folk tales that she told the children on a regular basis; and (7) discussions of the classroom social issues and stories" (p. 277). Number two on the list, children's dictated and dramatized stories, is the feature most often associated with Paley. It is the feature that other educators have taken up and experimented with implementing in their classrooms (Cooper, 2007; Nicolopoulou & Cole, 2010). Perhaps the storytelling and acting part of Paley's work offer more concrete activities or at the very least a set of basic 'things to do' for others looking to implement

her style and approach. Focusing primarily on the tool of storytelling and acting, without due consideration of the other tools Paley draws from, may present a problem of oversimplification of this approach.

The framework of Paley's storytelling and acting approach seems relatively straightforward; the most basic elements are (1) the adult asks a child if they have a story to tell, (2) the adult transcribes the story word for word as the child tells it, during this interaction the adult engages in conversational exchanges with the child that may include questions, prompts, replies (or any type of response and interaction), (3) at a later time the story is informally acted out with the child's peers at a whole group meeting (again, the acting portion is not the focus of this study) (Paley, 1987, 1990, 2007). Cooper, in "The Classrooms All Young Children Need" (2009), offers more detailed suggestions regarding the practicalities of implementing this approach. For example, she recommends creating a regular routine for storytelling and acting which includes a daily or weekly schedule and choosing a spot in the classroom where it will regularly take place. She suggests tips about taking the child's dictation, such as sitting so that the child can watch the writing, repeating the child's words as you write them down, and limiting the length of the story to one page. In terms of language and literacy support Cooper states, "The teacher helps the child expand on thoughts by engaging in a conversation about the story." (p. 159). As with interactive read-alouds there is the opportunity for conversational oral language exchanges between teacher and child. With an interactive read-aloud the text and images of the storybook provide a tangible cognitive tool for reference, in the case of storytelling the teacher's transcription of the child's words

provide that cognitive tool. In some cases the child is also invited to draw a picture to go along with his story, providing another tangible tool for reference.

This uniquely positions the child, because through their story narrative they are generating the content around which the language activity revolves. The teachers' role is to transcribe the child's words into text and possibly ask questions regarding the child's words and meanings. This is distinctly different than the interactive read-aloud activity. In the interactive read-aloud the storybook acts as an initial common point of reference for both the adult and child. The adult however will most likely already know the content of the storybook. The fact that the text of the storybook already exists and that the interaction revolves around this existing text will influence the way the adult and child thinks about and uses language to construct their interaction. In contrast, during a storytelling interaction, there is no already established common reference point for content. This will, in turn, influence the adult and child's interaction and use of language.

E. Components of Oral Language Development

This study looks at the nature and qualities of the storytelling interactions in light of opportunities for oral language development. The following section reviews main components of oral language skills including vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative; essentially knowledge of words and ways that they are used to communicate and convey meanings. I also give some attention to the element of motivation because this may play an important role in how these types of language activities are enacted by adults and children. Features of interactive read-alouds and the storytelling approach are considered within each area.

1. Motivation

The aspect of motivation is not a central focus of this research however I briefly address the concept because, in theory, children self select both for participation in and for the content of a storytelling event. I anticipate that motivation and interest may play a role in the nature and qualities of storytelling interactions. Elements of motivation concern the role of interest and the processes of interactions between the individual and the environment (including persons and materials) (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002; Azevedo, 2006; Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992). In other words motivation and interest do not lie primarily in the individual mind as a fixed state, nor solely in the environment, but occur in a dynamic relational process. Interest is defined as both s a psychological state, characterized by, "focused attention, increased cognitive and affective functioning, and persistent effort" (Ainley et al., 2002, p. 545). Krapp et al., (1992) an individual pre-disposition, an "interest is a phenomenon that emerges from an individual's interaction with his or her environment" (p. 5). Generally speaking elements of interest and relational processes are part of both interactive read-alouds and storytelling.

Interactive read-alouds may create a motivating context for children in several ways. Storybooks provide narratives that tap into common child interests such as family, friendship, adventure, fantasy, etc. and utilize engaging characters including animals and imaginary creatures. These elements draw children into the world of language and literacy. The way the event is structured and the teachers use of questions and prompts to engage the children and to create opportunities for exchange during the read-aloud also factor into motivation and interest.

The curricular activity of storytelling may promote one-to-one conversational exchanges because it calls for a classroom routine in which the adult engages one-to-one with an individual child for a length of time around an idea generated by the child. The length of time is not prescribed. The intention is that, each child is given the opportunity to share an oral narrative of their own, during which conversational exchange may take place. Since the subject of the narrative is meant to be determined by the child we can assume that it has some personal, social, and/or cultural meaning for them. These are general intentions of the storytelling approach. How it becomes enacted in classrooms in this topic of this research. These elements are unique to the storytelling approach, in comparison to an interactive reading activity where the teacher typically chooses the storybook (or at least chooses which books to make available to the children). The storybook may (or may not) provide material that is personally meaningful to the child, or the teacher may not choose to ask questions about and discuss the particular part of the story that is meaningful to them. If the interactive read-aloud is occurring as a group activity, the adult cannot be expected to attend to every child's personal interest in that situation. Also, while children's storybooks usually appeal to children, teachers (especially those in public school classrooms) may not include books, cartoons, or comics of children's popular culture, such as Disney, Nickelodeon, or superhero themed texts in the curriculum. However, children's narrated stories sometimes include the popular princesses of the moment, tv characters, and superheroes (Cooper, 2009; Paley 2007).

Generally in classrooms there is a tension between school appropriate content and the content or subject matter of children's popular culture (Alvermann, 2011; Dyson Haas, 1997; Wien, 2014;). Popular culture may present topics or issues that teachers,

families, or administrators may feel are too sensitive, controversial, or beyond children's developmental or emotional level of grasp and understanding. This might include issues of morality, religion, gender identity, etc. Adults may also feel that some elements of pop culture, such as videogames and superhero play will encourage inappropriate behaviors in school and do not support academic content (Alvermann, 2011). Other educators and scholars will argue that by allowing popular culture to be a part of the life of a classroom, it provides a powerful tool for learning and teaching by tapping into children's 'real world' experiences and interests (Dyson Haas, 1997; Marsh & Millard, 2000). Also, by actively addressing and including sensitive and difficult subject matter, teachers may also support children's growing development and understanding of issues in positive ways (Wien, 2014).

Returning to the context of the storytelling approach, teachers are encouraged to not sensor a child's narrative for 'inappropriate' themes, such as ninjas killing bad guys or princesses kissing princes, or even for sensitive topics such as family disturbances. How these topics (and the actual story text) are handled after the storytelling interaction depends of several factors. Generally, teachers are encouraged to use the emerging story themes to inform their relationship with and knowledge of the children. A discussion of the appropriateness for including subjects of popular culture as topics for storytelling can be debated, and the topic may fall more in the area of social, gender, and identity development than that of strict oral language development. I am not taking up the debate of appropriate content here but pointing out that storytelling may open a space for children to express ideas, experiences, interests, etc. that may otherwise fall outside the scope of other curricular activities. At the same time, storytelling may provide the

occurrence of regular one-to-one interactions that provide the opportunities to support language development (Dickinson & Porche, 2011). It is the nature and qualities of these interactions that mediate language development (Justice, et.al. 2008). The idea that the interaction is around a subject generated by the child may help to create a situation in which the adult can foster language development in key areas such as vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative within a relevant and motivating context for the child.

2. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a key component for children's language development and a predictor of on-going success in the school environment (Kindle, 2011). Hart & Risley's (1995) seminal research reveals that children's exposure to more and varied vocabulary in the home correlates with higher rates of vocabulary growth and measures of language and literacy skills throughout the early grades. A more important finding of their research reveals that it is not simply exposure to, or direct teaching, of vocabulary that is crucial, but the nature and qualities of the interaction with adults within specific cultural contexts that was the key to the nature of the children's learning. Within the classroom the same holds true that there is not one activity type or one exclusive sequence of instruction that is guaranteed to produce vocabulary development (Kindle, 2011)

Interactive read-alouds can provide exposure to vocabulary within a text that provides a context for children to gain an understanding of the word. The text and pictures provides clues and orienting information that the children can draw from to form meaning. This, along with the teachers questions and prompts aid in the understanding and acquisition of new vocabulary. The storybook provides a tangible object of text around which the teacher can plan instruction. The teacher can target words within the

text and prepare a sequence of instruction aimed at that vocabulary, such as introducing the word before reading the story, reviewing it during the story, and discussion after the story (Wiseman, 2011). The storytelling approach does not provide a starting text to work from to allow planning ahead for specific vocabulary.

With storytelling the child's narrative provides the context. Because the text is generated by the child new or unfamiliar vocabulary will not be accessible for the child to use. If the interaction is to support vocabulary development, the teacher will have to introduce vocabulary at some point during the storytelling interaction that the child may use within their story. This may have varying results, without a pre-established context the child may not be able to form a conception of the word and will not be receptive to building an understanding of the new term. A different result may be that because the child's story is important to them they will be receptive to new words that can enhance their own story, making it more dramatic or humorous for example. In this case children may be more apt to remember and reuse that vocabulary (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2011). In addition, opportunities to play with and manipulate words while crafting a story not only personalizes the learning but may promote meta-linguistic awareness, the understanding that words as objects can be changed, combined, and used in different ways for particular purposes (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2011). Again, what types of language support, how, and when they are used, are decisions made by the teacher. The nature and qualities of these interactions are the topic of this research.

3. Comprehension

Strategies that foster literate comprehension also hinge on the active participation of individuals within the learning context (Almasi & Hart, 2011). Through a review of

the literature Almasi and Hart identified seven key comprehension strategies; predicting, use of background knowledge to make connections, setting purposes, visualizing, identifying text structure, monitoring comprehension, and summarizing. These strategies have been effective when explicitly taught to children to use for text comprehension, however the effects are short-term and may not transfer to other contexts (Almasi & Hart). Children as they are in the process of becoming literate must not only be taught strategies but must also learn how to be strategic in terms of employing those strategies. One way to encourage this is through the teacher's modeling of strategies as they interact with children around a particular text (Almasi & Hart, 2011).

Interactive reading provides opportunities to engage children in all of the above mentioned strategies (Wiseman, 2011). Often however, the pattern of interaction follows the IRE model of "initiate, respond, evaluate" (Sipe, 2002; Wiseman, 2011). The teacher initiates by asking a question, the child responds with an answer, and the teacher evaluates the answer for correctness or appropriateness. This may especially be the case when discussing a pre-existing text, such as a storybook with children. The teacher most often already knows the text and will have a broader background and existing knowledge base from which to make what may be judged as the more 'correct' inferences and interpretations. This follows a focus on developing the skills of comprehending a pre-existing text. We do not know if the familiar pattern of IRE emerges as part of the nature and qualities of storytelling interactions.

Storytelling provides a distinctly different type of opportunity for approaching the work of comprehension. The storytelling interaction provides an avenue from the child's oral narrative to concept development, such as relationships among time, cause and

effect, and theory of mind (that other people can think and feel differently) (Applebee, 1978; Nicolopoulou, Barbosa de Sa, Ilgaz & Brockmeyer, 2010; Nicolopoulou & Richner, 2007). The child's position as the generator of the story content is distinctly different in terms of comprehension. Instead of the work of comprehending an existing text, the child is in the role of creating, comprehending, and communicating a narrative. This positions the teacher in a very different role in terms of modeling and supporting different forms of comprehension.

The research surrounding comprehension is primarily centered on children's comprehension of prewritten text (Lennox, 2013; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011). In contrast, in the storytelling activity children are the composers of the text (through their narrative to the adult). In this inverting of the roles, the question arises as to how this effects the adult – child interaction in terms of strategic use of comprehension tools. For example, the child may have a fairly full understanding of the 'story' they are attempting to tell, however their command and use of the language may not be able to convey all parts of the story clearly. Or the child may have a general sense of something they want to narrate but still be in the process of developing comprehension of their own 'story'. In these examples, the adult may be in a position to not only introduce strategies of comprehending text (or narrative) as it is being produced but also to genuinely use (and therefore model) strategies while trying to comprehend the child's text and to make explicit to the child how they are using those strategies. For instance, saying, 'I think I can visualize the castle in my mind but I don't understand where the dragon lives.' Of course, this latter part is speculation and one of the goals of this research is to evaluate how interactions are used during storytelling activities.

4. Narrative

In scholarship and literature the terms "story" and "narrative" are sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes they take very distinct definitions. This depends on the context of the scholarship. Debating the scholarly definitions of story and narrative is outside the scope of the this research. However, examining how the term "story" is understood and defined by the participant teachers and children will be a point of interest for this study. The following discusses the concepts of narrative and story as they pertain to this research.

The concept of narrative is perhaps more broad or abstract than vocabulary or comprehension development. Narrative is the very way in which we, as humans, organize and make sense of our experiences (Bruner, 1990; McEwan & Egan, 1995; Wells, 1981). Narrative is how we shape our thoughts and experiences in a way that, "takes shape, in however attenuated a form, as a rhythm that ultimately springs from patterns implicit in human life and action" (McEwan & Egan, p. vii). Narrative broadly defined is some form of coherent structure, constructed to function as an internal organizing mechanism and as a bridge to the mind of another, an essential tool of communication and understanding (McEwan & Egan, 1995; Mitchell, 1990). What becomes defined or understood as a coherent form by another depends on cultural and situational factors (Dyson Haas & Genishi, 1994; McCabe, 1997). Experience with producing and manipulating narrative, especially in exchanges with others within a specific context creates a space for accessing knowledge, ideas, and conceptual frameworks that are important in that contextual situation. This is especially important considering the role narrative plays in learning and

navigating throughout the broader educational context (Gudmundsdottir, 1995; Joeson, 1995; Wells, 1981).

McEwan and Egan (1995) describe a "narrative turn" in educational research and go on to make the case for this because narrative is so pervasive and basic to everyone's way of living and interacting (Bruner, 1990). Within the area of early childhood education several scholars make the case for the explicit inclusion of narrative or more specifically, storytelling, into the educational curriculum (Cooper, 2009; McCabe, 1997; McNamee, 1987). The level of attention being given to narrative development is not as intense as to other areas such as vocabulary, comprehension, or decoding skills (Stadtler & Ward, 2005). However, narrative development may be a most fundamental aspect because it provides a context for vocabulary and comprehension. Much of the research related to children's narrative development focuses on issues relating to children's retelling abilities or the developing structures of children's narratives (listing, sequencing, etc.) (Heilmann, Miller, Nockerts & Dunaway, 2010; McCabe, 1997).

Narrative development and an understanding of how it is constructed and used is a key part of becoming literate. The ability to strategically use tools of vocabulary and comprehension is in part rooted in the understanding that narratives are constructed for a particular purpose, within a cultural context and a particular historical time and place, for instance a nursery rhyme written in the 18th century versus a 20th century children's picture book about farm animals.

Storytelling, as an act of constructing and communicating is a particular kind of narrative that children begin to use very early on in their sense-making activities and exchanges as they engage naturally in play activities (Stadtler, 2005). The ability to use,

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understand, and function within the story narrative structure is also key in accessing more formalized texts that form most of the structure and delivery of content knowledge in education (McEwan & Egan, 1995; Wells, 1981).

A story is a form of narrative (and may be used synonymously with narrative in certain contexts). Further definitions of story depend on the context in which it occurs as well as the functions it serves. For instance, as a classic literary convention, a story must at minimum include a beginning, middle, and end; or in some cases a more complex series of conflict, rising action, resolution, etc. are needed to establish a story. A more general definition of story is any series of events or circumstances, represented from someone's perspective, as having some connection to each other (Stein, 1982). The forms and functions of story also vary among cultures. In any instance, stories may be intended to represent true events, or be fictitious, or a combination of both. In another vein, the term story may be used to refer to our internal meaning-making activity, or in other words, the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of our world (Bruner, 1990; McEwan & Egan, 1995). An important part of becoming literate in a society is being able to understand and participate in its story culture, to distinguish between story types and structures (formal vs. informal or fiction vs. nonfiction for example). It is also important to understand and be familiar with the functions of stories as they occur in different contexts, (for example, stories told by an uncle around the kitchen table for laughter and bonding or cautionary tales told by a grandmother vs. stories on Nickelodeon to sell pop culture). Young children, as they begin their experiences within the formal educational context, may begin to encounter forms of story and its uses that differ from the family context (Compton-Lilly, 2012). They have to navigate the similarities or differences

between family and personal story with the stories of an educational context. The stronger and more relevant the bridge can be between the personal and educational contexts the better chance a child has for successful learning experiences (Compton-Lilly, 2012; Hart & Risley, 1995).

Interactive read-alouds with storybooks provide young children with critical exposure to types of formalized narratives. The storybooks are a tangible artifact and teaching tool for teachers and children to experience, talk about, make sense of together. Storybooks offer a wide range of rich topics, types of narrative constructions, vocabulary, and important concepts for young children. They are an indispensible part of the early childhood classroom. Teachers (or a specific curriculum) choose storybooks that will be made available and read in the classroom.

The storytelling approach puts the child in the position of creating the narrative. Young children, while they may create types of narratives as they play, are not experienced at generating formal narratives. This combined with the influences of culture and contexts regarding the structure and purposes of story narratives will have implications for how teachers and children understand and interpret the storytelling activity. Teachers' and children's expectation and interpretations will play out as they interact during the storytelling events. The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers and children experience and use the storytelling interactions.

F. Summary of Affordance and Constraints of Interactive Read-Alouds and

Storytelling

Interactive read-alouds and the storytelling approach both have potential benefits

and drawbacks as activities to support oral language development in the classroom. They

offer opportunities for back and forth conversational exchanges among teachers and

children. Benefits of the interactive read-aloud include the pre-existing text that can be

used as a shared reference between the child and teacher. It provides a context for

vocabulary, comprehension, and examples of types of narrative construction. It may more

easily allow for explicit instruction in these areas. Interactive read-alouds as a group or

small group activity also create opportunities for children to learn from the comments and

participation of their peers without actively speaking themselves. This may be especially

beneficial for children with low verbal skills or children that are very quiet and reserved

for whom telling a story may be difficult or intimidating.

While both interactive read-alouds and storytelling encourage the child to take an

active role in understanding stories, the storytelling approach puts the child in the role of

constructing the story. During an interactive read-aloud the child is the 'receiver' of a text

and encouraged to participate in actively thinking about and making sense of it. During

storytelling the child is the 'knower' of the text and active creator of a narrative. This

positioning is a very distinct way of actively engaging with narrative. It may be

motivating for some children to engage with narrative when they are in control of the

topic and content. It also creates a different position for the adult, as the receiver of the

child's narrative. So this may create a different dynamic in terms of questions, prompts,

and discussion that a teacher might use during a storytelling activity versus an interactive

read-aloud. Again, the intention of this study is to examine these interactions and articulate possible affordances and constraints of the storytelling approach as it is actually enacted in the classroom.

This brings up the role of the teacher – child interaction as the focal point for this research. A socio-cultural, interactionist perspective foregrounds the role of interactions in human learning and development. Research in early childhood classrooms suggest that teacher – child interactions play a crucial role in learning and teaching experiences.

G. Research Using Paley's Storytelling Approach

Research on Paley's storytelling approach is limited. Much of the literature focuses on the general features of the approach and on its relevancy to contemporary goals such as the integration of academics and play (Cooper, 2005; McNamee, 2005; Nicolopoulou et al., 2010). Cooper (2005) identifies 6 key elements of a balanced approach to language and literacy development; oral expression, narrative form, conventions of print, encoding & decoding, word study, and reading for meaning. In this article she details, using specific examples, how the practice of storytelling (dictation) and acting (dramatization) can be used to support these elements. Cooper (2007) reports gains in scores with PreK and Kindergarten children on two standardized measurements, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and Get Ready to Read! (GRTR!) in comparison to control groups from a year long study conducted with 6 early childhood classrooms. In this study the classroom teachers, all with at least 1 year experience implementing the storytelling approach, conducted storytelling and acting at least four times per week in addition to the school's regular curriculum. When interpreting these results, it is important to note that the teachers' implementation of the storytelling

approach did not follow a strict protocol and exact fidelity to a procedure was not measured. Several other factors may also have contributed to the children's scores.

Nicolopoulou et al., (2010) conducted a 2-year study implementing storytelling and acting activities in 7 early childhood classrooms serving low-income families. In this case, stories were sometimes dictated to classroom teachers and sometimes to members of the research team. They conducted pre and post-tests in the areas of expressive vocabulary, narrative skills, emergent literacy (subscales of PALS-PreK), and social competence through observation ratings using scales of peer interaction and self-regulation. They found significant improvements in overall story comprehension, print, and word awareness, as well as increased self-regulation with less play disruption. The rest of their paper details a case study of one child described as "difficult" and her use of storytelling along with her pattern of development. This study, while ranging across 7 classrooms, took a turn to a more case-like approach with the close examination of one child's experience.

A previous study by Nicolopoulou & Richner (2007) examined 617 stories told by 30 children ages 3 -5 years over the course of a year in their preschool program. The researchers focused their interest on children's development of character in narrative, from actors (non-psychological characters, externally described) to agents (simple psychological characters) to persons (characters with "complex mental representational capacities"). They address a discrepancy between research into children's narrative capabilities, which suggest that characters with full inner mental life do not appear in children's narratives until ages 8 or 9, whereas developmentally children as young as 4 years have the ability to ascribe other's with mental states that predict their actions and

behaviors. The researchers suggest that by participating in regular, spontaneous storytelling that is child initiated allows for richer more varied experiences with children's modes of thought and understanding than more prescribed classroom narrative activities, such as re-tells. Similar to the previously mentioned study by Nicolopoulou et al., this focused on a relatively small sample, so conclusions cannot be generalized across contexts.

Nicolopoulou & Cole use CHAT in a distinctive study to look at Paley's approach, used over time in 5 different contexts from a design-based research paradigm, in which a pedagogical activity is enacted over repeated cycles of design and redesign. Their focus being the mutually constitutive elements of an activity system (subject, object, materials) and what contributed to the productive enactment of the storytelling/acting approach in classrooms. They found that salient features of implementing the approach include the broader ecology of the classroom and how it is situated within a complex matrix of activity systems and characteristics of the individual teacher, such as their experiences with the approach and their more general educational goals and beliefs.

These studies inform the perspective of this study because they explicitly look to address the social interactional nature of the classroom, in particular storytelling. They point to the importance of the nature and qualities of interactions, and the roles and positioning of the participants in regards to curriculum implementation.

From a social constructivist, interactionist theoretical perspective, the nature and qualities of an interaction are mediated by both participants (adult and child) in an on-going interpretation of the features of the interaction, so that not only is knowledge that

emerges from an interaction co-constructed (i.e. meaning of a text) but the interaction itself is co-constructed. Drawing from socio-cultural theory, the co-constructed interactions of a curricular activity (micro-features) are mediated by broader (macro-features) of the classroom culture, things such as children's popular culture and teacher's professional development. By engaging in a particular curricular activity, such as interactive read-alouds or storytelling and acting, repeatedly over time in a classroom, the adult and the children will jointly construct the parameters of the interaction. The resulting (and on-going) interpretations and decisions will create the nature and qualities of the interactions.

Studies in classrooms using interactive read-alouds as well as other studies that focus on adult – child classroom interactions with similar potential to extend talk about a subject and create conversational-like exchanges point to the need for detailed examination of interactions themselves (Dickinson, Freiberg, & Barnes, 2011; Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Justice et al., 2008; Kindle, 2011; Lennox, 2013), call for examining the "microstructure of how teachers relate to children" and they state that "description of the details of teacher-child interactions may better pinpoint features of classrooms that support children's learning than do global ratings and may provide greater insight into the mechanisms by which classrooms foster development" (p. 883). This is akin to Geertz's "think description" as a means of gaining insight and understanding regarding a particular cultural phenomenon (1973). I argue that attending to the micro elements of adult – child interactions, in tandem with attention to broader macro structures of the classroom culture will add to our understanding of classroom interactions surrounding language events.

From a socio-cultural perspective, a story is also an act of social transaction among persons. There is the teller and an audience, both of which influence the act of the storytelling. As the teller speaks the audience reacts and vice versa, influencing the course of the story. Even retold stories are never the same twice (Dyson Haas & Genishi, 1994; Engel, 1995; Kozulin, 2002; Wells, 1981). A frown or laugh or change in pitch can alter the course, either in a story being told for the first time or from one time to the next. A story that is put into written text is also subject to changing interpretations by the readers (or audience). In the classroom young children are most often the audience for stories told (or read) by an adult. While children often engage in informal story construction as part of their play, they are not typically positioned to be the storyteller for the construction of a story text. This research explores the interaction, or social transaction, between the adult and child when the child is positioned as the storyteller and the adult transcribes the narrative of the child's story into a written text.

In order to explore the nature and qualities of interactions surrounding storytelling it is necessary to try to know something of the participants' experiences as they interpret and make sense of them. Observing the storytelling events in real time as they occur in the natural setting of a classroom contributes to a particular understanding of these interactions. Observing the storytelling events over time as they occur in the same classroom provides a window into how the participants use the interactions. As previously mentioned the storytelling approach may have the potential to support social/identity development, but it may also be used to support language development.

From a socio-cultural and ethnographic perspective, analyzing the nature and qualities of an interaction include gathering information about the context, observing the

actual interactions, and gathering related artifacts that are produced as part of the process.

In this case, engaging participant observations in the classroom and professional

development seminars, recording storytelling interactions, and collecting the written story

texts. Holding actions, content, and context up against one another through field notes,

memos, artifacts, and transcriptions in constant comparison during analysis to further

describe and understand a phenomenon is the work of ethnography.

H. Questions that frame the research

What are the specific contextual markers that frame a storytelling event?

What are the nature and qualities of adult – child interactions during the

storytelling activities?

How do the adults perceive the storytelling interactions? (the purpose, their role)

How do the children perceive the storytelling interactions? (the purpose, their

role)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

<u>A. Introduction</u>

This chapter includes three sections: (a) the methodology of ethnography, (b) the site and participants, and (c) the specific methods used and data collected. In the first section, methodology, I introduce how I began my research with the classrooms. Then I review the methodology of ethnography broadly and give an overview of ethnography as a research approach within the field of education. Finally, I introduce microethnography as the approach with which the study most closely aligns.

As I move into the active work of the microethnography, my research plan occurs in three phases. Phase one includes, participant recruitment, initial field visits, first participant interviews & conversations, and beginning data collection. This phase is what Dyson & Genishi (2005, p. 39) describe as "casing the joint" or the "casing phase". During this phase the researcher gathers first impressions and understandings of the context, the people, and their actions as they engage in their daily classroom lives. It is an acknowledgement of the etic view as the researcher looks at the context through her own eyes in order to gain a broad perspective and ground her in the field. Phase two includes making decisions about focusing time and observations in order to best gain participant perspectives, moving the focus onto the emic view. Data collection and initial memo writing proceed and specific decisions are made regarding data collection. Phase two continues throughout the rest of data collection and field contact. Phase three begins after all data has been gathered and includes the formal coding, analysis, and writing of the

ethnographic report. I will refer to these phases throughout this section in order to orient the reader along the research timeline.

<center>**B. Ethnography**</center>

The broad purpose of an ethnographic approach, is to describe, contribute to understanding, and convey a perspective regarding a group of people as they engage in the everyday experiences of their lives (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Purcell-Gates, 2004). Roots of ethnography lie in studies of groups of people and cultures often considered exotic and foreign to Western researchers. The fact that the ethnographic approach places an emphasis and focus on the concept of culture as a point of developing an understanding of how people engage with, make sense of their world, and act within their particular culture(s) has contributed to its growing use as a method of understanding practices 'closer to home' within localized cultures such as organizations, businesses, and education (Tedlock, 2000). The field of ethnography has grown to include a myriad of types including applied, activist, critical, feminist, and autoethnography to name a few, each with particular aims and theoretical orientations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Yet, at the root of all ethnography is the attention to culture and how elements of culture, both micro and macro as well as explicit and implicit elements, interact in ways that shape people's thinking, actions, and experiences (Grenfell et al, 2011).

<center>**1. Ethnography in Education**</center>

Ethnography in education is often concerned with events of language and communication and/or issues of identity, power, and agency (Bloome et al., 2005; Grenfell et al., 2011). This makes sense when language and communicative acts are theorized as meaning-making events situated within a cultural context (Gee, 2014; Van

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Lier, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1981). With issues of identity, power, and agency, which are often heavily embedded in the multiple uses of language(s) within a context, ethnography is one means of attending to these issues and importantly, a way to bring various perspectives to the fore front (Emerson et al., 2011; Grenfell et al., 2011; Heath & Street, 2008). Broadly, the storytelling approach is a language event that is situated in specific classrooms and becomes enacted by specific adults and children that will co-construct the features and meanings of the event.

Paley's storytelling approach is built on interactions among children and teachers and is revealed through multiple texts, including oral and written, that are created as part of this process. The storytelling approach as described in the literature seems to allow, or even encourage, a space for teachers and children to experiment or play around with language as a way of 'making meaning' and communicating with each other. This aligns with positive features of oral language experiences for children. It also creates a space that positions the child as the leading protagonist in the interaction when they narrate their story. The features and meanings of these interactions and how they may support oral language development will play out in the lived experiences of the persons engaged in enacting the storytelling approach.

It is important here to revisit that Paley's storytelling is characterized as an approach. There are some basic guidelines and principles for teachers to draw from in order to implement activities of the practice but much is left open for individual teacher discretion and adaptation to context. Presenting it as an approach may position the adults and children to explicitly negotiate, change, and adapt how they enact the approach in ways that reflect on their own experiences with it. Since the storytelling activity is

essentially a one-on-one interaction, the participants will be left to interpret and negotiate those interactions.

On the face of it, children telling stories in their classroom seems a simple, straightforward activity. Scratch the surface and it might quickly become complex, with multiple strands of meanings, decisions, and goals influenced by the cultural context. Combined with the theoretical perspective that interactions are social transactions that are dynamic and fluid, acting and reacting in the moment to features of the situation and the participants, the storytelling event becomes a complex process. It is embedded in the language and multimodalities (Heath & Street, 2008) that converge in the context and culture of the classroom and are enacted through interactions among teachers and children (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). An ethnographic methodology is best suited to study the complex contours of interactions from this theoretical perspective. The emphasis in ethnography on "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of what happens in the social and cultural processes of the context, along with attention to the emic perspective, allows researchers to examine the many nuances and complexities of specific human interactions.

The specific unit of analysis for this study, is the teacher – child interaction during the storytelling event. However, my theoretical lens includes the relationships among features of the micro-level context and components of the macro-level context (Bloome et al., 2005). Micro features of an interaction include language, gestures, and materials. Including, in part, other interactions, activities, and curricula in the classroom as well as broader influences such as district or state policies, personal experiences, pop culture, children's storybooks, etc. It is not possible for research to capture all of these influences

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so choices must be made about what will be considered. The micro-ethnographic methodology provides the methods for moving between the fine grain analysis of the micro contexts of adult – child interactions and the broader macro structures of the classroom culture.

An ethnographic approach is appropriate for this study because it provides a conceptual framework for focusing on a particular event (the micro) while also attending to the broader historical and cultural context (the macro) in which it is embedded (Heath & Street, 2008). As example, the classroom is a specific context for the storytelling/acting interaction and yet at the same time the history and current trajectories of a public school district in mainstream U.S. education carry a range of broader influences that impact the daily life of classroom inhabitants. Ethnography provides the structure to move between the fine grain analysis of an activity within a specific context and a broader lens to discern patterns of behavior and interaction among people and the meanings that they attribute to those behaviors (Schram, 2006). In this case, the adults and children are negotiating and navigating among the storytelling and acting interactions, guidelines for storytelling activities, requirements of the school and/or district, relationships with peers, and their own beliefs and experiences.

Ethnography also allows for moving between the emic and etic viewpoints (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The emic view, knowing how insiders understand and make sense of their own lives, is necessary before undertaking any serious attempts to interpret and analyze behavior and patterns of behavior (Rosaldo, 1993). In conjunction with this, it is necessary to step into the etic perspective, the researchers' 'outside' view, in order to engage in the process of finding patterns and relationships. To support this balance of

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perspectives, the study will be naturalistic and inductive (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). It is

naturalistic because data collection will occur as the participants go about their daily

experiences in their familiar classroom surroundings. It is inductive because data

collection and analysis will occur simultaneously and be on-going throughout the study.

Analysis and data processing will determine some of the directions and focal points of the

research.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>**C. Site and Participants Overview**</u></p>

I became aware of the initiative to begin implementing the storytelling and acting

approach, based on Paley's work, into a large urban school district, Fairview

(pseudonym) when a colleague invited me to attend an initial information and orientation

meeting for members of the Fairview educational community. Because of my interest in

classroom culture, especially classroom interactions, I approached the project leaders

asking if I could coordinate with them to collect data regarding the experiences of

teachers and children implementing the approach. I was invited to participate and began

with the attending the half-day professional development meeting in September held for

all Fairview public schools early childhood educators (PreK – 1st grade). Note that

pseudonyms are used for all site locations and individuals referenced in this paper.

Vivian Paley, whose storytelling and acting approach the district was interested in

implementing, was the speaker for this conference. After Paley spoke and gave a

demonstration of the storytelling/acting approach with a small group of young children,

two district leaders and a professor from a local university spoke to the teachers about

implementing this approach in their classrooms. The district leaders are the head of the

Fairview Public Schools early childhood department and an early childhood coordinator

<p style="text-align: center;">59</p>

and classroom coach. The professor is the Program Director for Early Childhood Education at local private university that is known for the quality of its programs in educational studies.

Each of them spoke about the benefits of incorporating storytelling/acting into the classroom and introduced the professional development series called Fairview Listens. The teachers were invited to go to the school website and sign-up to be part of these professional development seminars. The district head of the early childhood department told the teachers that participation in the seminars was voluntarily, but that the district did plan to incorporate storytelling/acting into the district wide curriculum beginning the following year.

I attended the professional development seminars and met the teachers choosing to participate in implementing the storytelling approach. It was a group of 30 teachers from throughout the district. The seminars met once monthly from 4:30 – 6:30 pm on a weekday beginning in October and continuing through May. The seminars were held in a neighborhood early childcare center located in Montego Hills, a neighborhood within the school district. I attended all seminars as a participant observer. The leaders of the Fairview Listens seminars introduced me at the first meeting as a researcher from University of Massachusetts, Amherst that was interested in how they will be incorporating storytelling and acting into their classrooms. They explained that I will be attending the seminars and that I may speak with some of them about visiting their classrooms.

Before continuing, I want to point out the connection between the nature of my research interest and the process of site and participant selections. My interest pertains to

the nature and qualities of teacher – child interactions surrounding the activity of children narrating their stories to the teacher. In order to observe and gather data on these interactions, I sought to locate my research in classrooms where this activity was likely to occur on a frequent basis. As I attended the initial meetings of the Fairview Listens seminars I made note of teachers that appeared particularly motivated to implement the storytelling approach in their classrooms through their active participation in the seminar meetings such as frequently asking questions and sharing anecdotes from their classrooms. Within ethnographic methodology accessing a site and participants that are open and apt to be engaging in the construct of interest is referred to as purposive sampling (Purcell-Gates, 2004).

The study is designed to attend closely to micro features of the event and to take into consideration a couple of key macro structures relevant to the context. The micro context is the individual storytelling event as it occurs naturally in the classroom setting between adult and child. The macro structures considered include the professional development seminars, the current language and literacy curriculum for classroom, and children's popular culture as expressed in these classrooms. The purpose is to closely observe, record, describe, and analyze adult – child interactions occurring naturally as part of storytelling events in the classroom, and to draw from the context in which the classrooms are situated to inform the examination and understanding of the interactions.

From the seminar, I recruited three teachers from one elementary school to participate in my research. While the teachers agreed to participate, the principal of the school did not give consent for the research to take place. I approached two other teachers from another school, Laney and Anita (pseudonyms) regarding participating in my

research. During initial professional development seminars they also demonstrated a high level of interest and motivation, frequently asking questions and contributing to the discussions about implementing storytelling and acting activities into their classrooms. This was confirmed through discussions with the leaders of the professional development seminars, one of which is an early childhood classroom coach in the school district, and has worked closely with these teachers on other projects in the past. It was likely that by observing and participating in their rooms I would experience many instances of storytelling and acting events.

I arranged to meet with Laney and Anita before one of the seminars to discuss with them my research interests and answer any questions they had. I reviewed the consent forms with them and they both agreed to participate. Laney and Anita both teach in the same elementary school, Cranston Elementary, located in the west zone of the large urban school district, in the neighborhood of Montego Hills. Observing teachers working at the same school provides some consistency regarding the macro context of the research. Shared characteristics include the student population, the location and neighborhood of the school, and the level of administrative support for implementing storytelling. We made plans for my first visit to Cranston Elementary school. I also arranged to meet with the principal of Cranston to discuss my research and gain his permission to observe in Laney and Anita's classrooms. Consent was given and fieldwork began in the classrooms at the end of January, 2013 and continued through the end of the school year in the third week of June, 2013. Details regarding fieldwork are provided in the data section.

Laney taught in a pre-kindergarten classroom with an enrollment of 20 children ages 4 - 5 years. There was one lead teacher (Laney), one assistant teacher, and one student teacher. Laney had been teaching at Cranston for four years since the completion of her Bachelor's degree in early childhood education from a private university located in the same city. Laney subsequently earned her Master's degree from the same university. She was active in professional development opportunities affiliated with local private universities and could be considered a leader in her educational community.

Anita taught in a kindergarten classroom with an enrollment of 24 children, ages 5 - 6 years. There was one lead teacher (Anita) and one assistant teacher. Anita had been teaching at Cranston for five years, since completing her Bachelor's degree in early childhood education from a private university in the same city. At the time of the study she was working towards earning her Master's degree. Anita's classroom was a Shared English Immersion (SEI) classroom. All students were dual Spanish and English speakers, most with Spanish as their first language. Anita's speaking and instruction was first and primarily in English with follow-up and individual guidance provided in Spanish as needed. I am not fluent in Spanish. The fact that this was an SEI classroom was both an affordance and a constraint. It allowed observations of storytelling events and interactions with second language learners and the opportunity to gain insight into the event and interactions from this perspective. Approximately 90% of classroom interactions were in English and all of the storytelling activities that I observed where entirely in English. However, being able to only communicate with the children in English may have limited my access to the children informal conversations amongst

themselves and the children's ability to express themselves to me may have been limited by their level of English proficiency.

Before I could begin collecting data that included any children in the classroom, active consent from their parent or guardian was required. A consent form, including permission to photograph, video-tape, and collect samples of their child's work, was sent home to each family in both classrooms. The form for the families in Shared English Immersion classroom had both English and Spanish translations. Thirteen families from the pre-kindergarten class and 10 families from the kindergarten class gave consent for their child to participate. Even if the parents/guardians had given permission, before including children in videotaping or small group discussions the child was asked if it was "okay" and was allowed to opt out of participating if they chose. No child chose to opt out.

In addition to typical ethnographic observational fieldnotes, data included video-taping a total of nine consenting students in a storytelling interactions with Laney or Anita. In addition, 12 consenting children participated in a small group conversations that consisted of two or three children and myself. We discussed their thoughts and experiences with storytelling in the classroom. These conversations were also video-taped. Initially, in this phase of the research I was concerned that I would not be able to closely observe all of the consenting children in storytelling interactions or focused group discussions. In order to concentrate field observations I decided to choose focal participants from each classroom. Consulting with both Anita and Laney, I chose four students from each room to focus on in greater detail. Establishing some focal participants and consulting with the participant teachers is consistent with an

ethnographic approach (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003; Emerson et al., 2011). Also, by focusing on children that the teachers were particularly interested in regarding their storytelling, may provide opportunities for richer exchanges with the teachers about the storytelling activity. As research continued into phase two, it became clear that I would be able to include more than the original four focal children in the PreK (PreK) classroom because storytelling occurred every day. In the Kindergarten classroom I remained with the four original focal children throughout the study.

In PreK the original four focal children included Ryan, Stavros, Jarrett, and Joe (all pseudonyms). It is important to note that this class consisted of 16 boys and 4 girls. The criteria for choosing each child was based on particular qualities regarding their individual experiences with storytelling as reported by their teachers. Qualities of their storytelling as well as their frequent level of participation were factors that were considered for choosing focal children. Laney felt that Ryan took an early and leading role within the class as a storyteller, suggesting a commitment and interest in the activity. He told the first Ninja story that became a long-standing theme among several children's stories. Stavros told stories that always included some form of gun violence and Laney was interested in whether or not his stories would change over time. Jarrett was very enthusiastic about storytelling and a frequent participator, however he exhibited some challenges with behavior in the classroom in general. Joe was eager to participate but he struggled with actually finding the words to tell his story, Laney was interested in how his participation would develop.

As data collection progressed additional children expressed their desire to participate in a small group conversation about storytelling. Some of these children did

not have consent, however I did add two of the children (Anna and Mandy) with consent to my focal group. This decision was made because I was frequently able to observe them and they both were very active participants in storytelling activities in the classroom in general. For instance, I observed both of them "playing storytelling" with other children during free play times of the day.

In Anita's kindergarten classroom the 4 focal students chosen were Zara, Sahil, Jacinta, and Brenna. All of the focal children needed to be proficient enough in English to answer questions and carry on a conversation. Zara was chosen for her frequent participation in storytelling. Sahil was also a frequent and enthusiastic participator. Early on he showed an interest in talking with me and I felt he would have a lot to say about storytelling. Brenna was chosen based on her level of narrative, which Anita had expected to be greater at the start of the storytelling activities. Jacinta's style of storytelling was, according to Anita, somehow quite distinct from the others and Anita was interested in understanding the qualities that made it distinct and in how this might change over time.

1. Specifics of Site/Participants

a. District and School

The large urban school district is in the Northeast United States, in a city I refer to as Fairview. The district is divided into four zones, designated as north, south, east, and west. There are a total of 125 schools in the district, 78 of which serve children in pre-Kindergarten through at least grade one, and up to grade eight. Student demographics include 42% Hispanic, 35% Black, 13% White, and 8% Asian. Teacher demographics include 62 % White, 23% Black, 10% Hispanic, and 5% Asian. District-wide 78% of

students are eligible for free or reduced school lunch. Forty-three percent of children speak a first language other than English and 30% are designated as English Language Learners.

Enrollment in the pre-kindergarten classroom included twenty 4 -5 year olds, with 16 boys and 4 girls. Three children are dual language learners, but none receive special language accommodations during classroom activities or instructions. The class is predominantly white, with five children of color, one Chinese child, and one Greek child. Laney, the teacher, is a white, English speaking, female in her twenties.

The kindergarten classroom has an enrollment of 24 children, including 13 boys and 11 girls. All students are dual Spanish and English speakers, most with Spanish as their first language. Students' English proficiency ranges from very proficient to very limited. All students are children of color. Anita, the teacher, is a Hispanic female in her twenties and speaks Spanish and English.

b. Myself as Participant

Consistent with many ethnographic studies (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003; Heath & Street, 2008), I position myself as a participant observer during the professional development seminars and during my time in the classrooms. Adults' and children's thoughts regarding the goals and purposes of the storytelling events are captured through direct interviews and conversations as well as observations of the event as it naturally occurs in the classroom. I also gather artifacts directly relating to the storytelling event and the professional development seminars.

The participant observer role can vary greatly from primarily observer with little participation to nearly full integration and participation in the lives and experiences of the

context. This depends on the researcher's intentions, the context, and the goal of the research project. My goal is to build casual, low-key relationships with the adults and children so that we can engage in everyday conversations together about a wide range of topics, striving to minimize the 'researcher authority' or 'adult authority' aspect. Observing and getting to know the teachers and children in various contexts throughout the day and talking with them about the things they do and say will aid in understanding the resources and experiences that they bring to storytelling related events. However, my position as a university researcher, as well as my other professional experiences will play a role in how I am perceived and how I interact with the participants.

In this case, I position myself as primarily an observer, yet participating informally and casually as opportunities arise, keeping a low profile and following the lead of the teachers, children, and the routines of their day. I also, most often, position myself with the children and not the teacher. As another adult female in the room the children will most likely automatically view me as another teacher however I want to minimize that impression so that I can interact with the children from a more neutral position. With the children I took the position of an interested outsider, rather than a teacher or other expert, to encourage them to talk with me and explain the things that they do in the classroom. I did not implement or try to teach classroom curriculum, nor did I engage in guiding or monitoring children's behavior. For instance, during whole group meeting times, I sat on the floor, just behind the circle of children or in the back of the group (so there is enough room and I don't take up a child's spot), facing the teacher and I joined in the songs, motions, and listening to the teacher. During center time, when the children were playing freely in the classroom, I sometimes did things such as sit in the

block area, watching the children build and play, talking with them from time to time, maybe putting some blocks together in my area and just generally 'hanging out'. The intention was to become familiar to the children and build relationships without my presence becoming the focal point or greatly altering their typical daily activities.

During professional development seminars with the teachers, I again took an observer participant role. I positioned myself at the tables as a member of the audience (versus in front with the project leaders) and occasionally asked small questions. When the group was divided up into small groups for an activity or discussion, I am put into one of the groups and join in the discussion protocol of the seminar. Here, I also tried to maintain a low profile, primarily listening and showing interest without offering strong opinions or becoming the focus of talk. My goal was to take the role of someone who is also learning about implementing the storytelling and acting approach and engage in conversations with the teachers as they work to understand it so that I have a window into their thinking.

As a researcher participant, particularly within the ethnographic perspective it is important to explicitly reflect on my characteristics and experiences in order to take them into consideration regarding both how they may influence the participants and how they may effect my analysis of events. As my relationships with participants unfold and I write fieldnotes, memos, etc., I actively reflect on how some of these characteristics may influence the questions I ask and the interpretations I make. Consistent with my theoretical stance and ethnographic perspective, the researcher is never neutral in the research. The researcher's goal is to be acutely aware of this and make it as visible as possible so that we can hold them to examination alongside our data gathering (Dyson &

Genishi, 2005). At this point, I name characteristics that I think may influence how I approach this particular research project.

As a white female in my forties, I am older than both participating teachers. I speak only English. I have spent most of my life in the Midwest United States, growing up in a rural area from a lower socio-economic class. Social and cultural norms of interactions vary from this background with the northeast, where I now live, work, and study. Prior to starting full-time graduate academic study and research, I was an early childhood educator for 12 years, teaching primarily in private non-profit preschool center programs. In the Midwest I taught for four years at a large preschool located in a mid-size city with a large state university. The preschool enrolled many diverse families from the university population. After that I relocated to the northeast, teaching another four years in a small preschool affiliated with a small private college. Both of those experiences provided extensive experience with the Reggio Emilia approach to education. This approach emphasizes the role of close observation and documentation combined with reflection on local contexts and cultures as a vital part of curriculum development. As a result, my experience as a teacher included a great deal of recording and documenting of children's daily work and play experiences. This experience has in part stimulated my interest in adult (teacher) – child relationships and interactions and the role of perceptions and interpretations of each other within various classroom cultures.

My training and experiences as an early childhood teacher carry both benefits and drawbacks as a participant observer and researcher in an early childhood classroom. I can never be entirely an outsider nor an insider in this research context. My past experiences make me an *insider* in some respects in this context. This perspective can heighten my

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awareness of certain aspects that an outsider might not even consider. At the same time because it will be in many ways a familiar environment, I may overlook important features by 'taking them for granted'. On the other hand, I am an *outsider* in other ways. The site of the research is a large, urban, and public school district that is distinctly different than the context of my own early childhood teaching experiences. I am not affiliated with or have any experience teaching in this school or district. I do not live in the neighborhood or city. Prior to this study I did not know the participating teachers or children. So, for this particular classroom and group of people, I am very much an outsider. As I conduct the research I draw on this distinction as a reminder to continually reflect on and take an active stance in balancing my insider vs. outsider perspective.

In addition to my previous experiences as a preschool classroom teacher, I have worked supervising pre-service teachers at a university in their practicum experiences. In this role I observed in many early childhood (PreK – 2nd grade) classrooms, primarily in two contexts; one, a small city district in an area with a large state university and several small private colleges and secondly, a mid-size urban district with a large Hispanic and Spanish speaking community. In my current work at a college I continue to supervise pre-service teachers (PreK – 2nd grade) classrooms. The context for these observations includes small community-based programs and small public schools serving a range of children including an at-risk population as well as dual language learners. All of these experiences become part of the lens through which I see classroom events, experiences that broaden my sense of both similarities and differences across many 'typical' classrooms.

D. Methods and Data Collection

This section delineates the specific research design, describes the methods, and how they are used within this study. The study is designed to be an iterative process of data collection, on-going initial analysis, and continued data collection. The initial analysis phase includes writing memos, based on reviews of fieldnotes or collected artifacts, that help to probe and articulate emerging findings, examine unexpected experiences or begin to explore connections and patterns. These memos help guide the on-going process of data collection. Based on reviews of collected data, my own field experiences, and participant input, my focus in the field may shift slightly to focus more closely on a certain aspect or feature of the context. This is in line with an ethnographic stance of inquiry. While my focal point of research regarding storytelling interactions remains consistent, information gained from field observations and notes informed how I positioned my participation in the field. Generally, my position is as a participant observer in the classrooms and in the professional development seminars in order to "get close" to the lived experiences of the teachers and children (Purcell-Gates, 2004). My role within these contexts remained flexible depending on the situation and activities of any given day or time. At some points I was more observer than participant and at others times more of an active participant. How I positioned myself depended on the focus for data collection, for instance, as an observer I could note interactions, activities, details, etc. of the overall classroom. As a participant, I was able to experience more focused interactions, such as what it was like to take a story from a child. Being able to move between these positions allowed me to gain varying perspectives of the classroom and reveal topics or ideas to pursue during my inquiry (Emerson et al., 2011).

E. Study Design

This study is designed to include both macro and micro features of the context. This section delineates those features that are addressed in this research.

1. Macro Context

Within the scope of this study, the macro features considered include the professional development seminars and associated materials and the current language/literacy curriculum used in each classroom.

Professional development seminars were scheduled the first Thursday of each month, October through May from 4:30 – 6:30 pm at a neighborhood childcare center in Montego Hills. I attended at all 7 professional development seminars (one was cancelled due to weather). During the professional development seminars I sat with the teachers and primarily took field jottings and joined small break-out groups as arranged by the seminar leaders. At the first meeting the seminar leaders introduced me as a doctoral researcher from University of Massachusetts, Amherst, explained I am interested in their experiences implementing the storytelling approach, that I will be working closely with a couple of the teachers, and that I will at attending the seminars. I took jotting notes on my iPad, many of the other teachers have their laptops and also took notes during the seminars. Primarily I listened and noted the discussion strands, questions that arose, etc. I did not typically join in the discussions because I was interested in hearing how they are experiencing using the approach in their classrooms and in how they are experiencing the professional development seminar. Occasionally, I asked a clarifying question of the seminar leaders or of a comment made by a teacher, but I was careful not to derail the flow of the seminar. Usually, the seminar leaders divided the group into smaller groups

for sharing and discussions. In the first couple of seminars I joined whatever group I was put with. Once I began working with the teachers from the two classrooms, I joined the small group that they participated in.

2. Micro Context

The micro context includes the classroom, and in particular the storytelling interactions. I spent time as a participant observer in the two early childhood classrooms one to two full days per week during the months of March, April, May, and June for a total of 15 weeks. I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each teacher, one at the beginning of the study in March and one at the end in June (see Appendices A & B).

During my time in the classrooms I took field jottings while I spent time watching, listening, and interacting with members of the classroom. I also videotaped storytelling interactions in the preschool classroom between the teacher and each of seven different participating children and in the kindergarten classroom I videotaped storytelling with two of the participating children, for a total of nine storytelling interactions. In addition, I invited the participating children to meet with me in small groups of two or three children at a time. Regarding the PreK classroom, there were four small group conversations and for the Kindergarten classroom there were two. I used approximately 10 questions to prompt discussion about the storytelling activities (see Appendix C). These small group conversations were videotaped. Overall, the PreK classroom provided more opportunities for observing and recording storytelling interactions due to the way the teacher structured the daily routine and decisions made regarding the implementation. Storytelling occurred fairly regularly everyday in the pre-

kindergarten classroom; in the kindergarten classroom it was less predictable and occurred less frequently.

I also engaged in informal conversations regarding the storytelling activities with the participating children. I primarily followed along with their daily schedule, joining the children on the rug during meeting times, moving about the classroom during choice times watching, listening to children play, and occasionally talking with them. They often engaged me in conversation, at first asking about what I am doing there but then mostly telling me about what they were playing or working on.

Occasionally, I joined the children outside on the playground. This allowed me to put the storytelling events into the context of the full scope of their days. I also joined the teachers during their lunch breaks, eating and conversing with them. Participating along with the teachers and children throughout their days, versus just watching storytelling events, is in keeping with the ethnographic perspective of this inquiry (Emerson et al., 2011; Schram, 2006). It allowed me to observe not only the specific event in question but to also gain some insight into how it functions within the broader culture of their classrooms.

Table 1: Sources of Evidence

	PreK	K	Professional Development Seminar
Fieldnotes	22 visits	16 visits	7 seminars
Transcripts (audio and video)	2 teacher interviews 4 small group conversations 7 storytelling interactions	2 teacher interviews 2 small group conversations 2 storytelling interactions	
Artifacts	153 children's story texts	8 children's story texts	*"Fairview Listens" Storytelling/Story Acting Menu"* (2 versions)[1]

F. The Ethnographic Process[1]

This section describes these types of data in more detail. For each data type I discuss its purpose within an ethnographic study generally. Then I provide an overview of the actual data collected for this study. This is intended to be a walk through of this study as conducted as a classroom ethnography.

Jottings are often the first and primary source of data that is generated. They are relatively quick and short notes taken during observations and participation in the field. The goal is to record details and any information during the moment of experience that helps describe the scene, interactions, etc. and that can be useful for later expansion in

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[1] Document developed by Fairview school district and given to teachers as a resource for implementing the storytelling and story acting approach. Wording and guidelines in this document change throughout the 2012-13 school year, see page 131 for discussion.

fieldnotes. Emerson et al., (2011) provide five goals related to jottings, 1) identify important elements of the situation, 2) be specific and avoid generalizing, 3) use concrete details to "show rather than tell" (p. 32) about the people and place, 4) include sensory details when appropriate to aid in recreating the scene, and 5) note general impressions that may be useful or important to follow up on in future data collection. Jottings are the building blocks of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) that are key to an ethnography because it requires significant time and attention in the field and it allows the ethnographer to situate the reader in the context and culture of the place.

For this study, I took jottings during classroom observations, professional development seminars, related meetings, and while viewing video resources posted on the school district's website for teacher access. My primary tool for jottings was an iPad, using a simple document word processing system. For me, the iPad was becoming a comfortable tool that allowed me to make notes and jottings more quickly and coherently than writing. I had the option of using an external keyboard during the seminars when I mostly sat at a table and other teachers were also taking notes on their laptops. In the classroom I more often used the built-in iPad keyboard because this allowed me to move around and change positions easily while still being able to take frequent notes. The iPad could also be closed or covered and reopened quickly to minimize possible distractions. The iPad drew the interest of some of the children and provided a topic of initial conversation and relationship building. I explained to the children how I was using the iPad to write down (or make a record of) things that I did not want to forget. There were times when I used paper and pencil for jottings. All jottings were used to write full fieldnotes after a period of observation.

Writing fieldnotes constitutes the next step after jottings. Soon after a recording of jottings, typically within a day or two, the jottings are 'thickened' into full fieldnotes. This step entails turning the jottings into a full text, adding additional details and descriptions to produce a coherent narrative of the observed time period. Through the process of reviewing and re-thinking through the jottings to create fieldnotes connections may surface among observations, ideas, etc. Emerson et al. (2011) suggests this is a kind of "preliminary analysis" (p. 51) where decisions begin to be made about possible patterns, surprises, or other interesting features to explore. It is important to note that this is not a linear process and decisions must be made that impact how the fieldnotes are processed. This includes the point of view (1st person, 3rd person, etc.) and the tense (present or past) of the written text. These decisions have implications for how the ethnographer positions herself, how the text is constructed and subsequently read (Emerson et al., 2011).

Since I am interested in exploring and describing the experiences of the teachers and children, I chose to write fieldnotes mainly from the third person point of view. Although the fieldnotes are essentially my construction, this viewpoint positions me outside of the direct frame of reference. I occasionally wrote from a different viewpoint, using a first person point of view to write a full portion of fieldnotes that focus on a period of my direct participation. The ability to intentionally shift viewpoints contributes to an overall more nuanced construction of persons, events, time, and place.

A two-hour professional development seminar yields 5 to 7 pages of jottings. Processed into full fieldnotes this becomes 10 – 15 pages of data. Jottings from one day of classroom observation range between 5 to 10 pages. Fieldnotes from one day in the

classroom average 20 pages in length. Fieldnotes begin to form the backbone from which analysis proceeds. Jottings and fieldnotes from my first days in the classroom tend to be very lengthy and range across the many experiences of the day. They begin to map out the broad context of the persons and environment of the classrooms. In subsequent jottings and fieldnotes I take a more pointed gaze at certain features or events. Of course, this includes the storytelling event, but also times such as the book reading portion of the classroom literacy curriculum. This provides information about the teacher – child interactions around a story text that positions the teachers and children differently than the storytelling event. This helps inform my observations of the storytelling event and how the teachers and children are constructing their interactions in that situation.

As fieldnotes are constructed the ethnographer begins to look for patterns, connections, an unexpected finding, an interesting idea or exchange, etc. and writes a memo that further explicates her thinking in relation to that topic. Memos are written for varying purposes and intentions and are called by different names including initial memos, commentaries, analytic memos, or integrative memos (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Emerson et al., 2011). Initial memos or commentaries may serve a more reflective purpose; a space to 'set aside' in writing thoughts and ideas related to a particular aspect of the fieldnote, perhaps to note specific language or terms used by participants and their possible meanings or to highlight an interaction that stands out as unusual from others, etc. These memos create a thread, or multiple threads of thinking, that will be revisited throughout the data collection process. Analytic and integrative memos move further from descriptive purposes and into a more analytic examination of ideas and events relevant to the research. At this point the research process takes on a clearly iterative and

recursive nature as the ethnographer moves between fieldnotes and memos in order to inform decision regarding the direction and focus of further data collection.

My initial or in-process sets of memos were written (on average) after every seminar and after every week of classroom observations. They range in tone and purpose from fairly free-ranging reflection to more focused thoughts regarding a specific topic. Again, after my first seminars and classroom visits the memos tend to function as a way to process the wealth of new experience. As I moved into phase two of research, my memos began to take a more analytic stance. For instance, one analytic memo addresses the topic of ownership of a story related language and routines from the classroom that connect to this idea. An example of how memos are used to make connections and explicate strands of ideas, the issue of ownership surfaced in the both the classroom and professional development seminar but it was addressed and enacted differently in each setting. After writing these memos, it alerts me to pay attention to features of the storytelling interactions that relate to the issue of ownership. My in-process and analytic memos range in length from one to three pages.

During phase three of research, formal analysis of data begins in earnest, memos are integrative in nature as I explore and analyze codes, categories, and themes across the data sources. This work establishes the major themes of the research. At this point the memos and coding work to guide more focused coding to deepen themes and build excerpt commentary units that will be the backbone of the final ethnographic text.

G. Data Sets

In this next part I describe the data sets of interviews, videotapes, and artifacts. Then I return to a review of how I will continue to process the data according to an ethnographic approach.

1. Teacher Interviews

This study includes interviews with the teacher participants. The initial design included three semi-structured interviews throughout the course of the research. Two semi-structured and audiotaped interviews were conducted. This is due to the shortened length of time in the classrooms. However, throughout the course of the research I was able to have several informal conversations with the teachers during 'down times' such as lunch breaks. I was able to ask many of the questions that might have been addressed in a midpoint interview during these conversations. Each teacher was interviewed separately, once in March, soon after permission for research was granted, and once in June. The two teachers had been implementing storytelling to various degrees in their classroom since October. In the first interview we spent some time reflecting back on their first impressions and experiences. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes each. For each interview I wrote a general memo regarding the overall experience. Each interview was transcribed.

An ethnographic interview is meant to be a means for getting a more in-depth accounting or perspective from the participants and must be flexible enough to follow the participant's thinking and patterns of talking (Fontana & Frey, 1994). I view the teachers as "conversational partners" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 10-11), during the interview because I am not only pursuing what I may think is important or interesting, but just as

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concerned with what they view as important. The semi-structured interviews consist of pre-planned questions along with some possible follow-up questions. Semi-structured interviews are generally informal in tone and practice and they provide starting points from which subsequent questions and conversations may develop within the course of the exchange. While informal exchanges of conversations and questions will occur ongoing throughout the course of being in the classroom and participating in daily routines, the planned interviews provide dedicated time for the participants and researcher to communicate and check-in throughout the course of the study.

The first interview took place in March, at the beginning of my time in the classrooms and the focus was to gather information about the teacher's background, thoughts about her current group of students, general teaching style and philosophy, and about her involvement with the storytelling and acting approach (Appendix A). The semi-structured interview consisted of seven main questions. Important points included the teacher's reasons for participating in, and her expectations for, implementing the approach. Questions also addressed expectations for teacher – child interactions during the storytelling activity. This information served as a point of reference and comparison as further data is collected.

As previously noted, in place of a second interview I used informal conversations (such as those during lunch and break periods) to ask questions specific to certain observations or ideas that were emerging in my fieldnotes, in-process memos, and data to date. These conversations also serve as a "member check-ins" (Emerson et al., 2011) that allow the researcher to present emerging ideas, themes, or understandings to the teacher and receive direct feedback. It also provides a chance to more closely pursue members'

meanings and terminology that might not be apparent through observations and fieldnotes alone. These types of conversations were not pre-planned or formally structured. They occurred as instances arose during the course of daily routines, however I did have some certain questions in mind to ask when the opportunity arose. For instance, I ask about the limit of one page length put on children's stories, why this was used, if they ever go over that limit, how they think this effects the children's story and their interactions. These exchanges are documented in my jottings and fieldnotes.

The last interview took place at the end of the study. It is also semi-structured in design, the questions are developed from the preceding fieldnotes, memos, artifacts, etc. (Appendix B) and range between 13 – 15 questions. There is some variance in interview questions between the two participants due to some differences in my experience between the two contexts as well as informal conversations that I had with the teachers in the days prior to the interview. For instance, Laney discussed the "one-page limit" with me during a classroom discussion, so I did not include the question a few days later in the interview. The purpose of this interview is twofold, first, it again provides a time for member check-in and to follow-up with themes or issues emerging in the data. Second, since it coincides with the ending of the school year, it was an opportunity to engage in an overall reflection of the teachers' experiences with the storytelling interactions. It was a time to jointly discuss how they perceived and interpreted their trajectory of experiences over the preceding months regarding both the storytelling approach generally as well as the interactions with the children.

2. Storytelling Interactions

Consenting children were videotaped engaging in the storytelling activity with the teacher. Storytelling interactions with seven different children were recorded in the pre-kindergarten class (each of the four focal children and three others) and two in the kindergarten class (both focal children). I was not able to video a storytelling interaction with all of the additional consenting children because my visits did not align with the opportunity. The videos allow for precise transcriptions of verbal interactions as well as associated physical gestures. This data will be used for points of cross-reference with other data sources such as teacher interviews, small group conversations, and fieldnotes.

3. Small Group Conversations with Children

In order to gain some insight into the children's perspectives about the storytelling activity, I invited a small group (two children at a time) to have a conversation with me about storytelling in their classroom. I invited two children at a time in order to minimize any discomfort or hesitation the children might have about talking with me individually. I also expected that the children might draw from each other's comments to prompt further discussion. The small group conversations began after the first month of my participant observation in the classrooms. This gave the children some time to become accustomed to me and to have some general interactions with me during the normal routines of their day before asking them to meet and talk with me separately. It also allowed some time for me to observe the storytelling process so that I could formulate relevant and appropriate guiding questions for the conversations. The small group conversations took place during the children's free choice play time. Free choice play time was preceded by a large group meeting in which the children made choices about where they would like to

begin working/playing before leaving the group. This is the time I invited the children to join me for a brief conversation. Prior to the meeting I discussed with the teacher which participant children to invite together, with the goal of creating a group that was comfortable with each other and likely to stimulate conversation and avoid having one child that might dominate the conversation over a more reserved child.

From the kindergarten class, two small group conversations took place, each with two of the four focal children from that room. From the pre-kindergarten class four small group conversations took place, with a total of eight participant children (six focal children and two additional consenting children). These conversations were videotaped and are part of the data set. There were also two non-consenting children that expressed a desire to meet with me about storytelling. In this case, I met and talked about storytelling with these two children but did not take notes or any type of recording. They are not included in this study.

The small group conversations took place outside of the classroom in the school library, a space that is familiar to the children, in order to avoid distractions from the busy atmosphere of the classroom. Also, since the conversation was video-taped it avoided the case of children spontaneously joining in or wandering into the video field that did not have consent to participate. I used approximately 10 guiding questions or prompts designed to be broad enough for children to be able to contribute their thoughts ideas in an open general manner without pressure to produce a correct answer (see Appendix C). For example, "Tell me about storytelling in your classroom." This can then be followed up with more specific questions or prompts, such as "What does she say next, or show me how you do that." The conversations last approximately 10 – 15 minutes, with the length

determined by the children's level of engagement, being shorter if the children are less engaged or longer if they continue to show interest in talking. As the conversation winds down, children are invited to draw a picture of storytelling. This provided another means for children to communicate how they perceived storytelling events and serves to bring different ideas and questions to the surface. The conversations were videotaped in order to capture the children's actual words and movements (in the case of acting out a storytelling event) and as a means of easily and accurately identifying who is speaking. This may be especially relevant when cross-referencing with video and observations of storytelling events in the classroom. Each video was transcribed. As with the teacher interviews, I wrote in-process memos regarding these conversations.

4. Artifacts

A photograph was taken of the participant children's transcribed story texts. The texts will act as a source of reference and cross-reference for emerging themes or ideas related to the storytelling interactions and the participant's interpretations.

Also collected from the professional development seminars, includes the *Fairview Listens Storytelling and Story Acting Menu,* which was the teachers' guide for implementing the storytelling and acting activities.

<u>H. Processing Data</u>

Here I return to my proposal for processing the data and the completion of the ethnographic study. These steps follow a process of ethnographic data analyses informed by methods of grounded theory. The next steps constitute the in-depth analyses of the data that has been collected. These steps include writing integrative memos, open and selective coding, thematic development, writing excerpt commentary units, and lastly

structuring the final ethnographic report. Each of these is discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. While there is a general progression through these stages the process remains recursive in that each successive step relies on constant check-in and comparison among data sets. Overall the process can be conceived as a de-construction in order to recognize recurring, salient, or otherwise important themes and a re-construction of those themes in light of important issues in the discipline and which then renders them accessible to other educators and scholars.

The analysis of data from an ethnographic methodology is both an inductive and deductive process (Purcell-Gates, 2004). Deductively, researchers are working from a theoretical perspective and asking particular questions that inform and frame decisions made during design, data collection, and analysis. From this top-down angle an area of interest is highlighted, and this will inform subsequent coding categories. As the researcher begins analysis of data the process also takes on an inductive, or bottom-up approach. The researcher codes according to what is present in the data, using participants own words and actions to develop codes and categories. Analysis proceeds recursively from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives, as the researcher works in constant comparison among theory, data, and interpretation.

This approach is useful in this research project because a deductive perspective informs the choice to study the particular phenomenon of the storytelling approach through the lens of adult – child interactions, with an eye towards important oral language development areas such as vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative. In line with my theoretical framework regarding the social and cultural transactional nature of interactions, it is appropriate to approach the analysis of the individual storytelling

activities from an inductive perspective. The actual words and actions of the participants, as they occur in the natural context of daily life, will determine the trajectory of coding and analysis.

This process of coding draws from methods of grounded theory to analyze qualitative data (Emerson et al., 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Open coding is the process of closely reviewing fieldnotes, transcripts, and artifacts and noting any ideas, themes, topics, etc. as they arise. The intention is to bust-open the data, so to speak, and take a look at all the pieces. At this stage there is no narrowing of a focus on any particular idea or topic. Codes for separate ideas are created and noted in the data. As coding continues, pieces of data may be grouped together by code(s). This step generates many possible codes that can at times seem overwhelming, however it is a crucial step in beginning to organize the data in a meaningful way. It is important throughout this process to stay close to the participants' own experiences and not to inject outside or exogenous meanings onto the data. For example categorizing a teacher's remarks as 'harsh' when this is not how the teacher or children may be experiencing her words. Instead, the data may show that the teacher speaks about her own style as having "high expectations". In such cases using the participants own words for coding may be most appropriate. Referring to in-process memos written while gathering data and writing up field notes serve as check-ins and guides for this process.

My initial open coding process consisted of coding each type of data. I have three types of data: (a) fieldnotes from classroom and professional development seminars, (b) transcripts (participants words) from audio and/or video of interviews, small group discussions, and storytelling interactions, and (c) artifacts from professional development

seminars (i.e. Storytelling Menu) and children's story texts. These three types of data create a triangulation across sources. The steps of open coding and categorizing are conducted separately for each data source. Open codes and categories along with definition notes are recorded and organized in a code notebook. From this information I began to look both within and across data types for related codes and concepts. I looked for both convergent and divergent codes and concepts. This process is described generally in the following paragraphs.

After busting apart and labeling the data I started creating categories to classify the codes. This step begins to put the concepts identified through open coding into smaller groups according to similar or related concepts. The researcher always takes a critical or questioning stance towards coding and category decisions, considering the consequences, conditions, strategies, etc. regarding grouping codes and categories. Again, the researcher always strives to stay close to the data, engaging in the recursive process of refining data into meaningful groupings while returning to memo's and fieldnotes for constant comparison and critique.

To illustrate the process of categorizing codes, I grouped open codes such as "decision-making", "questions", "choice" etc. into a category called "rules & structure". Other examples include categorizing any open codes that related to an expression of feeling such as "like", "happy", "frustrated", etc. into the category of "emotions". Excerpts from the data that corresponded to open codes were copied into separate documents representing each category. At this point in the process, I began to look across the categories while also being able to see the participant's words or (my notes) within the context of the categories.

The next step in the processing of the data is uncovering relationships among the salient categories, referred to as axial coding (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). This requires considering such things as the defining properties and dimensions of a category. Continuing with the example of the category "rules and structure" this included properties of "time, place, materials, etc." which delineate and give meaning to that category. Dimensions include properties that can fall along a continuum, such as more appropriate to less appropriate or open-ended to close-ended. Attending to these elements helps examine how categories (i.e. "rules and structure", "emotions", "acting", etc.) may link or cut across one another as well as how, under what conditions, in what situations, etc. these relationships play out. At this point in the analysis, the researcher begins writing integrative memos. The integrative memos serve the purpose of beginning to explicate links and relationships among data categories. They aid the researcher in putting the analysis into context and fleshing out the background for significant themes that are beginning to develop.

The work of axial coding and writing integrative memos serves to bring significant themes to the surface. The purpose is to begin to select the few salient ideas that serve as the backbone, or the framework, for the findings regarding the research questions. These will form the central narrative of the final ethnography; the theme(s) that hold the work together in a meaningful way that also illuminates the findings within the context of the research. Again, keeping with the recursive and constant comparison method, once the major themes are developed, the researcher goes back to do some more focused coding around those central themes. This provides both another level of check-in

regarding the data and also a way to expand or enrich the understanding of the important strands relative to the research questions.

In the context of this analysis I identified three themes for further examination and analysis: (a) storytelling event (the interaction of the child narrating to the teacher), (b) a time apart, and (c) imagination made tangible. The storytelling event is considered a theme because of its centrality to the research question of "what constitutes a storytelling event". In the analysis section the storytelling event as a theme is considered alongside the other themes of a time apart and imagination made tangible. Within the theme of "a time apart", I identify subthemes of "autonomy" and "listening".

This is a point where the researcher starts to make an important shift in writing analysis less for themselves and more for the broader audience. The necessary part of this step is connecting the broader significant themes with actual field data in a way that renders the findings coherent, readable, and relevant to a wider audience. Writing excerpt-commentary units bridges these features. The excerpt-commentary unit consists of four main elements, an analytic point, orienting information, excerpt, and analytic commentary. The analytic point directly ties the reader to a broad theme, the orienting information serves to set the stage for the excerpt from the field and the analytic commentary pulls apart the example explaining the pieces and their relationship to each other as well as situating it in the broader context of the research. The excerpt-commentary units form the core of the final ethnographic report.

To review the process in brief, through open coding the data is 'busted apart' and labeled. Axial coding gathers these pieces together in meaningful categories. Integrative memos examine relationships among the categories. Significant themes are developed. A

return to some focused coding enriches the analysis of the significant themes. Excerpt-commentary units explain findings to a wider audience. The data is organized and put back together in a way that addresses the research questions and communicates the findings.

I. Theoretical Tools to Support Event Analysis in Microethnography

A key interest in this study regards the question of what constitutes a storytelling event. This is important for examining how participants interpret and make sense of an event in tandem with their interactions during said event. As the processing, coding, and analysis of data continued, I drew from Bloome et al.,'s (2005) five theoretical tools for event analysis. They are: 1.) contextualization cues, 2.) boundary making, 3.) turn-taking, 4.) negotiating thematic coherence, and 5.) intertextuality. During interactions persons communicate their intentions using contextualization cues which can be verbal or nonverbal, examples include such things as gestures, facial expressions, voice tone, and volume, etc. Boundary making refers to delimiting the event itself. This is important for the nature of interactions because it signals to participants what is happening and therefore gives them information about how they are going to make sense of and construct the event. Boundaries are constructed by the participants in social interaction and are not static, predetermined points. Examining how participants negotiate and construct event boundaries provides information about they understand and interpret the nature and purpose of the event and their interactions within the event. Turn taking, as Bloome et al., use it in the context of event analysis focuses on participation structures, "defined as shared expectations among participants regarding the patterns of turn-taking protocols for a particular type of situation or event" (p. 28). The pattern of IRE (teacher

initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation) is one example of a participant structure. Analyzing the participant structure(s) of storytelling will add to understanding the nature and qualities of the participant interactions. Thematic coherence refers to how participants organize their meanings of an event, in other words, how they understand what it is about. In this study, this relates to what teachers and children think about the purpose and goal of the storytelling activities. Finally, intertextuality is the connections among texts (written and verbal) that participants make during their interactions with each other. Examinations of intertextuality must take into consideration what is recognized and made explicit among the participants regarding these types of connections.

There are limitations to these tools in terms of interpretations, assumptions, and the use of language that cannot be made transparent. However, in tandem with the coding and analysis process, these theoretical tools do offer means to support the examination of the storytelling events and the participant interactions.

J. Storage and Organization of Data

All original data (jottings, fieldnotes, artifacts, etc.) and consent forms are saved and stored both electronically and as a hard copy. Electronic files are saved to a password-protected desktop on my personal computer and backed up on to a hard drive. Hard copies are stored in binders at my home office. These originals are organized by site (professional development seminar, school classroom, etc.) and date, for example, PD seminar 4.4.13, jottings, fieldnotes, artifacts, memo. The work of coding was first done using hard copies of the data. As coding progressed and data was 'busted apart',

analyzed, and re-conceptualized, some of this work was recorded and saved electronically.

K. Validity and Reliability

The ethnographer's job is to use the methods and methodologies of the ethnographic approach to gather and interpret data, most often from the perspective of the participants, that best represents a context or phenomena of real life (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 2004). The nature of people and the processes they engage in as they go about their lived experiences are complex. There is not only one best interpretation, but multiple interpretations and stories that may emerge from any phenomenon under study. The ethnographic researcher's goal is to tell one carefully detailed and examined story that can reveal important parts of the phenomenon under study.

Issue of validity and reliability go hand-in-hand in ethnographic research. Validity refers to the closeness of fit between the researchers interpretations and representations and the actual events in the field. Another consideration of validity is whether the findings can describe other similar groups and contexts (Galman, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 2004). In this study, issues of validity center on representations of the storytelling event and the participants interpretations of that event. Reliability refers to the congruity between the researchers interpretations and the data, as well as to how findings compare to other studies using similar methods to study similar groups of people (Campbell Galman, 2007; Bogdan & Biklan, 2003). In this study reliability centers on whether concepts I develop about storytelling interactions match the data collected and cohere with other studies on the storytelling approach.

Since ethnographic research is an interpretation of people and their experiences within their cultural context, no study can be exactly replicated nor are there measures that guarantee validity. However, there are methods to strengthen the integrity and value of the study. Choices made during the initial design of the study as well as decisions during the on-going, iterative analysis of data are important for establishing levels of validity and reliability. Triangulation is used as a means of reaching validity. This refers to gathering data regarding a situation using as at three means or sources (Purcell-Gates, 2004). As analysis of the data continues the researcher must use all sources as a way to cross-reference and contrast possible interpretations. In this study data was gathered through four main sources: (a) researcher participant observations and fieldnotes, (b) teacher participant interviews, (c) small group discussions with participant children, (d) videotaping of storytelling activities with participant children. Additionally, informal participant check-ins occur throughout the study and artifacts from professional development seminars and storytelling activities are gathered as materials for reference and crosschecking. Other means of establishing validity and reliability include spending extensive time in the field, generating thick description, and looking for evidence to contradict emerging hypotheses (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003; Galman, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 2004). Finally, sharing emerging findings, memos, and other written analyses with critical readers is useful for the individual ethnographer. For this feedback, I drew from fellow social science researchers as well as professional colleagues.

L. Limitations

There are some limitations specific to this study. The original design included a length of about 8 months of classroom observations. Due to issues of gaining permission

from the principal to conduct the research in classrooms at that school, another school was chosen. This resulted in a delay of classroom access, leaving 4 months of classroom observation time. In this school one of the participating classrooms was designated as a Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) class. All students were first language Spanish speakers, with varying levels of English proficiency from very fluent to very limited. Classroom instruction was primarily in English. This meant that my choice of focal students was limited to those speaking fluent English. In addition, this classroom did not have a regular schedule for storytelling activities. This meant that it was sometimes difficult to coordinate observation days when storytelling events would be taking place.

M. Ethical Considerations

A primary ethical consideration for this study regards the participation of young children. As an unfamiliar adult entering their classroom and beginning to talk with them and share their days I needed to be conscious of how I presented myself and of my perceived level of authority. I positioned myself physically with the children, sitting with them during group meetings, lining up and walking with them when going to another room, etc. I also did not take the role of correcting, guiding, disciplining, or instructing them during our interactions to mitigate the effect of adult authority. Regarding consent to participate in the study, parental consent was first attained. Before videotaping or inviting children to participate in a small group discussion, they were also asked on an individual bases if it was "okay" for them.

My status as a researcher from a well-known university carries privilege and assumptions that would affect my relationship with the participating teachers. I emphasized to them that I was not an expert nor did I have any direct experience with the

storytelling approach. I was not there to evaluate their practices, but as an 'outsider' to the school district and its PreK and Kindergarten curriculum. From my own experience as an early childhood classroom teacher I know how personal it is to allow someone to spend a great length of time observing in your classroom. I believe this experience helped me be sensitive to how I positioned myself in the classroom, both physically and psychically.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORYTELLING EVENT

A. Introduction

In this chapter I detail the contours of the storytelling event as it was constructed in these classrooms. This addresses my first research question, what constitutes a storytelling event, in the context of these classrooms. My goal is to define the space and movements of the interaction between the teacher and child during the time that they understand to embody the act of storytelling within the story telling/story acting approach. Understanding the boundaries and moves that the participants use to co-construct the event sets the stage for the following research questions that focus on the nature and qualities of the interactions and the participant's perceptions. In the following chapters I discuss the themes of "a time apart", "autonomy", "listening", and "imagination made tangible" that emerge as salient features and qualities of these storytelling interactions.

This chapter and the following chapters articulate themes and follow a typical ethnographic writing structure (Emerson et al., 2011). Data is presented though excerpt commentary units followed by discussion. Ethnographic data is by nature situated, contextual, and descriptively dense. This format helps to ground the reader by keeping the representation of data close to it's corresponding discussion.

B. Telling and Taking Stories

First, I discuss the event broadly (frequency, timing, organization, etc.) then I move on to detail the specific features of an individual storytelling event.

The act of children telling stories to the teacher was a regular or semi-regular event in both classrooms. When the teacher or children referred to "storytelling" they had a common conception of what that meant, or at least they shared enough references so that they did not need to explain or describe the event in order to either discuss it or participate in it. Common language used by the children and teachers included the phrases, "tell a story", "take a story", "storytelling", and "story acting" or "acting it out". There was also discussion around the topic of turn taking and whose turn it was to tell a story. This indicated that the telling and taking of a story was a bounded event, it included a beginning and end that involved the interactions of individuals, most specifically the teacher and a child.

The teachers, Laney and Anita, were both part of the same professional development seminar group that was implementing the storytelling/story acting approach. Each teacher had the freedom to decide the frequency and location of the storytelling events in their respective classrooms. Their choices impact both their own and the children's experience of storytelling in the classroom. Children also had the freedom to choose if and how often they wanted to participate in a storytelling interaction. The choices and responses made by the teachers and children constitute micro-elements of socio-cultural context. Macro-elements that may have influenced the teachers' choices and experiences of the storytelling approach include mandated curriculum expectations, which varied between the PreK and Kindergarten classrooms, the professional development seminar, as well as the teachers' amount of prior individual exposure to and knowledge of Paley's storytelling/story acting approach.

In the K classroom storytelling happened sporadically. Anita used "free choice" periods in the schedule in which to incorporate storytelling interactions. While there was a daily time slot for free choice, it was often a time that got cut or shortened to accommodate other changes in the schedule (another activity running long, specials, etc.). It was also the time Anita had for completing other tasks such as individual child assessments, individual follow-up instruction, or paperwork. Storytelling and story acting happened on average once every two weeks.

When there was time during a free choice period Anita took out the notebook she used to write down the stories, looked at the waiting list and asked the first child on the list if they wanted to tell a story. Anita would sit beside the child at any one of the 3 large tables in the classroom. In the K classroom it was always Anita that initiated this time, however once the first storytelling interaction got underway, other children came up and asked Anita if they could tell a story. She said put your name on the list. Anita kept a running a list of children that were asking to tell a story. She took as many stories as there was time for during any one period. I did not observe Anita approach any children that had not already expressed a desire to tell a story. In conversation with Anita she did talk about encouraging children that had not participated so far, to give it a try.

Storytelling in the K classroom was a somewhat unpredictable occurrence. It was not a part of the daily routine and children did not know when it might happen. They could not anticipate it and therefore could not plan for it. Because of this it is likely not something the children thought about on a daily basis. I did not observe the topic of storytelling come up spontaneously in the children's conversations or play. However, when I initiated a conversation about doing storytelling in the classroom with several

children their responses indicated that they readily associated "do[ing] storytelling" with the storytelling interactions with their teacher. For example, Zara launched into retelling the story that she last told to Anita during her storytelling event. It is noteworthy that during focused group discussions regarding storytelling, children expressed a level of autonomy through comments such as, "you get to do anything you want and that's how you like it." However, at the point in the storytelling process, just before the actual storytelling interaction, the children's autonomy in the event is more removed.

When Anita was "taking stories" children were eager to participate and several would keep returning to the table to ask about having a turn. Anita tried to take as many stories as possible during that time. The longer Anita spent with each child, the less number of stories she could take. This creates tension in making decisions about how long to spend with each child, how many clarifying questions or follow-up prompts to use, etc. It also means that the longer amount of time Anita, the main teacher, spends engaged one-on-one with children, the more time the rest of the classroom needed to be managed by the assistant teacher. This creates potential tension between the goals of taking as many stories as possible and maintaining the classroom environment. Anita must make the decision about how far the energy and action of the classroom can escalate before she must shift her focus. These factors, outside of the one-to-one storytelling interaction, may impact how both teacher and child experience the event.

In the PreK classroom the frequency and placement of storytelling was consistent. Before the year began Laney decided that she wanted to "do storytelling every day" and that she wanted to "take 2 stories a day and act them out". In the beginning of the year storytelling events always happened at the "storytelling station" as the year progressed

the physical placement of the storytelling events evolved to include other areas of the classroom. To keep track of whose turn it was to tell a story, Laney used the large white board that was also used to keep track of children's choices during daily free time. Across the top of the white board were pictures that showed the different areas of the classroom (blocks, art, writing, creative dramatics, computer, etc.). Storytelling was included in this list. At the start of free choice period, children indicated in which area they wanted to begin, Laney wrote their name under that area's picture. When a child chose storytelling, Laney wrote their name on the bottom of the list under the storytelling picture. At some point during that day's free choice period, Laney individually invited the first 2 children on the list to tell a story. Those names were erased and the next 2 on list moved up and they would be the ones that told a story on the next day. The white board with this list was always visible at the children's level in the large group meeting area of the classroom. Children frequently checked to see where their name was on the list. Children knew that storytelling interactions would happen every day, they knew that the storytelling would take place during free choice time and that the story acting part would take place every day after lunch.

Children's engagement in the process of storytelling was active and explicit. I frequently observed children talking amongst themselves about storytelling and story acting in the classroom. My first day in the PreK classroom I was sitting at a table with 4 children eating lunch:

> One child said to the person next to him, "We're doing Stavros's story today."
>
> The child responded, "I know. I know what it's about."
>
> The first child replied, "I know what it's about."

Second child, "It's about football."

I say, "Can I ask you a question?" They looked at me and I asked, "What do you mean, 'doing Stavros's story'?"

The first child said, "After lunch we do story acting. I'm going to tell my story tomorrow."

The children turned back to each other and continued to talk between themselves about who's turn it would be to tell a story next and who's stories they would act out that day.

The children had not yet been told that I was interested in storytelling. They were told I was interested in the work and activities that they did in PreK generally. This is important to note because their topic of conversation was self-generated. It was something that they felt compelled to talk about it; it was interesting and important enough to them. There was no preface to the first child's remark and the second child knew what he was referencing. They immediately had a shared context for their discussion. The child's response to my question indicates that there is an expected routine for story acting and story telling and that they can predict and plan for the events. After the children responded to my question, they turned back to each other to continue the discussion. My continued involvement in the conversation was not necessary to them. My question seemed somewhat of a distraction to them as they quickly turned back to talking with each other.

An example of how the frequency and organization of storytelling may impact the children's spontaneous engagement as well as a sense of autonomy is demonstrated by

the following comments. This excerpt is from a focused group discussion with Anna and Jake.

> *I had asked Anna and Jake to tell me, when it is their turn to tell a story, how they decide what their story is going to be about. Jake first says, "we just make it up" and "whatever pops into my mind". Anna says she tells about princesses because "princesses are beautiful". Then Jake adds, "But sometimes I think, sometimes when it's my turn I know it's my turn and so the day before I start thinking and then...I look at the wait list everyday and who's next and so I look if my name's there and then if the day before I just try to get something in my mind and then I tell a story, I remember and then try to tell that story."*

Jake's response articulates the fact that the visual element of the wait list, along with the regular and predictable occurrence of storytelling events provides a scaffold for children's participation and agency. Jake's capacity to recognize, think, and plan for the storytelling event impacted his experience and ability to exert control over his participation.

The sense of autonomy is a thread that runs throughout the data, appearing at different levels. At this broad level of frequency, timing, and organization of storytelling events, teachers hold a certain amount of autonomy. Their control or autonomy is impacted by factors such as daily schedule and curriculum expectations. The daily curricular expectation of the PreK class perhaps allowed Laney easier ability to incorporate storytelling into the daily schedule of the class. Ultimately children decide if they want to tell a story, however they may not be able to tell it at the moment that they

express an interest in doing so. At this level (before the actual storytelling interaction) children do not have as much direct autonomy, however frequency along with making the organization of storytelling visible to the children, may impact the children's overall sense of autonomy within the event as a whole. The theme of autonomy is explored later as a subtheme of "a time apart".

Next, my analysis moves on to the specific contours of the one-to-one storytelling event interaction. Again, Bloome et al.'s (2005) theoretical tools for analyzing a literacy event inform my descriptions. My ethnographic goal however, is to present a description that reflects the experience of the storytelling event, not to do a full discourse analysis of a particular interaction.

Storytelling events primarily happened during a period of time in the day called "free choice" or "free play". This was a time when the children were able to choose the area and/or materials in the classroom that they wanted to work and play with. Telling a story was one of the choices. During this time teachers typically circulated among the room having conversations with children, extending play, working one-on-one or in small groups on a project or assessment, etc. In Laney's classroom the two storytelling interactions took place at some point during this time. In Anita's classroom, when it was a storytelling day, she would take as many stories as possible during the free choice time on that day. A story telling event began with someone verbally initiating the event, most often initiated by the teacher. The teacher approached the next child on the list and asked using phrases such as, "Are you ready to tell me your story?" or "Do you want to tell a story now?" The child indicated they were ready by moving away from the spot they were in and followed the teacher to a table and sat down in a chair. The teacher sat down

beside them and put a notebook on the table. In PreK there was a "storytelling station" that consisted of a table and chair used for the storytelling interactions. Later the storytelling interactions happened in other parts of the classroom.

In PreK the daily routine included a large group meeting just before free choice period. At the end of this meeting is when children chose an area/activity to begin with. Laney announced the names of the children that were next on the list so that everyone knew whose turn it would be on that day. Typically a storytelling event began when Laney approached a child and asked if they were ready to tell their story.

A very few times in the pre-k classroom I observed a child attempt to initiate the storytelling event. For example,

Anna told the teacher, Laney, she wanted to go to the storytelling station and tell a story. Laney was actively engaging in play with children in the block area, Laney told her to go to the storytelling station and wait for her. Anna went to the storytelling station and sat down. Laney disengaged with the play by saying, "That was hard work being leopards, we got so thirsty!" Then Laney picked up her notebook and a pen and sat down next to Anna and asked, "Are you ready? Ok Anna."

When a child initiated the event it usually meant they had to wait until the teacher was ready. Laney would respond by either saying that she could not do it at that time and she would tell them when she was ready or she would tell them to sit down and wait for her. When Laney initiated the storytelling interaction the child always began to move into the interaction right away. I did not observe a child that turned down the invitation or

asked to do it later. Ultimately the decision about exactly when a storytelling event would occur was in the teacher's hands. Children did not have the ability to engage in a storytelling event whenever they wanted. They needed to add their name to the wait list, wait perhaps 2 or 3 days, and then wait until the teacher had the chance during free choice time to sit down with them. The following exchange suggests that this may be difficult.

> *Laney sat down with a child to take his story. Another child came over to Laney and said, "I want to tell you a story badly." Laney raised her eyebrows, smiled, looked at the child and said, "You want to tell me a story badly?" Have you put your name on the storytelling list? You have, oh awesome, yeah there's only a few people on there so it will be soon." The child walked over to check the wait list and came back to Laney to make sure that she would erase the names after they had a turn.*

The frequency and visibility of the storytelling events provided the children with access to the process and autonomy regarding participation. They were however still constrained by parameters set by the teacher.

After the storytelling event is initiated the teacher and child sit at a table side by side. The teacher has a notebook opened to a blank page and a pen. The following is a detailed account of a storytelling event between Laney and Ryan. This event is representative of the common structure and moves of storytelling events observed in both the K and PreK classrooms. There was an indication from the teacher to start the narration.

Ryan was sitting on the right side of Laney. Laney leaned forward with her elbows on the table. The notebook was open and positioned a little bit out in front of Laney and between them. The fingertips of Laney's left hand rested on the open page and her right hand held a pen. Her neck was stretched out and she looked directly at Ryan's face. Their heads were about 18 inches apart. Laney did not say anything but remained looking at Ryan for a full 15 seconds. During this time Ryan looked at the paper, then ahead and out at the classroom, moved back and forth in his chair, and then looked at Laney. She raised her eyebrows and smiled slightly. Ryan rocked back and forth in his chair, opened his mouth and moved his tongue around, and looked around the classroom, then back at Laney and then began his story narrative.

The indication to start is given through a combination of contextualization cues, including Laney's body language in combination with how the literacy tools of pen and paper are presented. Her posture and gaze are directly angled toward Ryan in an open and expectant manner. They are sitting at a table in the middle area of an open area of the classroom and other children and adults are moving around them, talking, working, and playing. It is significant that Laney does not look anywhere else, her gaze and attention stay completely on Ryan even though it takes a full 15 seconds before he begins to speak. Laney does not say anything; she waits. She conveys the message to Ryan he has her full and complete attention. In a classroom with eighteen 4 year-olds and one assistant teacher, Ryan has his teacher's singular attention and he is not being rushed or hurried to begin.

The teacher and child share the understanding that now the narrative portion of the interaction will begin. The momentum has just taken a palpable shift from the teacher's lead to the child's lead. Ryan begins his story narrative.

> *He said, "Once upon a time there was a lion" while Laney continued to look at him. As soon as he completed the first line he stopped. Laney looked down at the paper and wrote down what he said. As she wrote the words, she repeated them out loud. While she wrote Ryan rocked back and forth in his chair, looked around the room, and glanced at the paper as Laney wrote. After she finished writing the words, she looked back up at Ryan.*

This begins the cycle of narration and transcription that characterizes the next portion of the event. This cycle seems relatively simple and effortless, yet it is comprised of several subtle cues that indicate the participants shared understanding of the moves that constitute this particular literacy event. The two most recognizable cues include the gaze and the pause. This is detailed in the following excerpt that continues with the same storytelling event.

> *Ryan looked up and out into the classroom. He rocked back and forth in his chair a few times. Laney continued in the same leaning forward posture and looked at Ryan with a slight smile on her face. Then he said, "and there was a city". As Ryan said the word "city" he looked at Laney and paused. She began to repeat his words as she turned her gaze toward the paper and wrote. Ryan looked briefly at the paper and then up and out into the classroom and rocked in his chair. As*

Laney wrote she repeated his words out loud, "and…there… was a… city". She stopped writing and looked up at Ryan.

Laney's gaze at Ryan is communicating that it is his 'move', or turn in the interaction. Ryan continues his narration with just a phrase and on the last word turns his gaze towards Laney and pauses. With these moves he signals that he is stopping his turn and that it is now Laney's turn again. Neither Laney nor Ryan directly discuss when either of them should begin or stop talking or when it is the other person's 'turn' in the interaction. They both read each other's contextualization cues. This back and forth turn-taking constructs the major portion of the storytelling event. The participants construct a rhythmic pattern of gaze, narration, transcription (with teacher repeating child's words), etc. This part of the interaction is not a conversation between them per se, but it does have the conversation-like qualities of turn taking centered on a shared goal or idea. It also embodies the use of similar cues used in conversational interactions that signal turn taking, such as the gaze and pause.

This storytelling event included a total of nine turns at narration and transcription. Combinations of pauses and gazes signaled each interactional move from narration to transcription and back. The end of the narration/transcriptions is not however the end of the storytelling event. The child typically ends their narration by saying, "the end", at which point the momentum shifts back to the teacher's lead. In the PreK class there were a series of steps that the teacher moved through to complete the interaction. Even though the momentum shifts, focus on the child's intention and ideas is maintained.

As soon as Ryan said "the end", Laney moved the paper over a little closer to

him, leaned closer to him and re-read Ryan's story straight through from start to

finish. She moved her hand holding pen along under each line as she read it.

Ryan looked at the paper and her hand as she read. Laney changed her speed and

tone of voice as the action in the story changed. She read faster and slightly

louder, "… and the lion came out of the jungle and the lion battled the people..."

She read slower and softer, "and the lion killed the people. The end." Laney

looked up at Ryan, Ryan looked up and out and Laney leaned in towards him.

Ryan said, "There were five people".

Laney nodded and wrote that on the paper and then looked at Ryan.

Ryan said, "and I'd like to be the lion".

Laney repeated, "and you'd like to be the lion" and wrote that on the paper. Then

she looked Ryan and asked, "What would you like the title to be?"

Ryan looked down at the paper and said, "The lion story".

Laney wrote this across the top of the paper. Then she said, "Can I ask you, is

there anything else that happened after the lion killed the people?"

Laney looked at Ryan and he looked up and out and said, "no."

Laney said, "No, nothing else….what type of applause would you like?"

Ryan, "A finger clap."

Laney wrote this on the paper as Ryan watched. Then she tore the sheet out of the

notebook, looked at Ryan, smiled, and said, "Here you go." Ryan took the paper

in his hand, stood up, and started walking toward the large meeting area of the

classroom. Laney stood up and turned her attention to another part of the

classroom.

This excerpt reveals the closing of the storytelling interaction. The teacher immediately reads the story back to the child from beginning to end so that they can hear their story in its complete and uninterrupted form. This allows the child to experience their text as a whole and possibly recognize something that is not correct or something they want to change. Then the teacher asks for a title to the story. Occasionally after this read-through the teacher may ask a clarifying or extending question about the story. At this point the teacher makes a decision about her role at this juncture in the interaction. She may choose to ask questions about the story, explicitly offer suggestions or corrections to the text, introduce vocabulary, etc. or engage the child in a broader general conversation that relates to the story. In this instance, after Laney asked for a title, she asked Ryan if "anything else happened". This question may have served to extend the story generally. It also may have functioned as a gentle probe to go beyond the ending action of the story in which the people get killed.

The PreK classroom had established two more elements to the end of the interaction that directly addressed the story-acting portion. The elements that were addressed included decisions about the characters and the applause. The teacher would identify and/or clarify the characters in the story, in this case, people, and a lion. Ryan was familiar with this routine and knew that he would be asked 'how many people?' and essentially answered the question before being asked. He also knew that his role was to choose which character he wanted to be when his story was acted out. The PreK

classroom included the idea of different kinds of applause for after the story-acting event. They had created a repertoire of various different kinds and someone could always add to the list with a new idea. The tradition was that the storyteller chose the type of applause that everyone gave at the end of the story.

C. Discussion of Storytelling Event

Regarding the parameters and contours of the storytelling event as constructed in this context. I consider three areas regarding how it functions as a language and literacy event. First, it reflects and reproduces western European middle class socio-cultural norms for a schema of story (Dyson Haas & Genishi, 1994; Engel, 1995; McCabe, 1997) as well as norms for interactions in an educational context (Chapman, 2000; Dickinson & Snow, 1987). At the same time through the unique positioning of the child as storyteller it creates potential tensions related to autonomy and purpose that create a twist on the norms of teacher-child interactions. (This idea is explored in the next section.) Second, it serves to 'hold still' and contain the children's imaginative thinking in a narrative form. Third, the storytelling event functions to make visible and concrete the link between idea, language, and text.

The schema for story is reinforced as a bounded, linear model with beginning, middle, and end. One turn at storytelling equals one story. The children commonly use literacy conventions such as "once upon a time" and "the end"(Stadler & Ward, 2005). The back and forth turn taking of narration and transcription creates an orderly progression for the child's expression of ideas. The interactional moves of the storytelling event engage the child in a type of give and take exchange with the teacher. This reflects the norms of classroom discourse and conversation generally, and serves to socialize the

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child in the ways of talking, thinking, valuing, and acting that reflect the culture of school (Gee, 2014; Massey, 2004). The teacher and child are engaging in a "dance" in which they must coordinate with each other and with their tools (pen, paper, & symbols). They construct clear parameters of turn taking, listening, and waiting, such as, child's turn to speak (teacher listens), teacher's turn to write (child waits and watches), etc. This reflects a typical model of exchanges in a school context; one person speaks or responds at a time, such as the question and answer or comment and reply back and forth rhythm. It is important to note however, that the exchanges do *not* follow the IRE pattern of teacher initiate, child respond, and teacher evaluate. Engaging in the storytelling event provides a shared goal, for the teacher and child, which is the construction of the text. This works to create a thematic coherence for the language and literacy event. They must also 'read' each other's cues to maintain the activity and accomplish the goal. This activity provides the children with experience and practice with these types of contextualization cues within the educational context. This supports their access to the cultural capital of 'doing school'.

It is also an academic asset to understand that a mainstream western story consists of (at minimum) a beginning, middle, and end. Knowing and appropriately using common literacy conventions of the genre is also important. Supporting this knowledge through an activity that is authentically engaging and important to the child, while also reflecting an academic culture of conversational-like turn taking as a way exchange, is a productive teaching and learning strategy.

The parameters and characteristics of the event can also act as a constraint regarding the acknowledgement and acceptance of cultural variations in the

understanding and definition of 'story'. If a child's cultural and lived experience with storytelling does not match that of the teacher's, it may impact how productive the experience is as a tool of teaching and learning. Factors of the child's macro cultural context may not map onto the micro culture of the classroom. Apart from possible cultural variations, the storytelling event is also constrained by its physicality (or lack of) and the tools that are chosen. Using a pen on paper to transcribe words does reflect a basic use of cultural tools for literacy and provides the children the opportunity to see their thoughts transformed into text (through letters, words, sentences, etc.). There are other means of presenting and capturing stories, such as the telling of stories through physical action and representation with or without words or audio or video-recording, which does not require the pausing and phrasing needed for hand transcribing. The parameters of the event act as bounds that create the 'acceptable' story construct.

There are some potential tensions in the contours of the interactions that create the storytelling. These tensions have to be navigated, and are often driven by decisions made by the teacher. *Fairview Listens: Storytelling/Story Acting Menu* (2013) states, "Try to write down verbatim what the child tells you." This is consistent with Paley's advice (Paley, 2007). However, teachers are encouraged to use various scaffolding strategies when and where they deem appropriate. For instance, posing questions such as, "Does anything else happen?" or "What did (x character) do then?" (Fairview Listens Menu, 2013). These types of clarifying or extending questions can work to stretch the child's thinking and use of literacy skills. However, they also reflect ways in which the story becomes co-constructed between the child and the teacher. The use (or misuse) of these strategies may act to insert too much of the teacher's voice into the narrative. Paley

maintains that the teacher's primary purpose is to act as scribe for the child's story scripts (Paley, 1987; 1990; 2007). Paley tells the story of a quiet, reserved child's first response to the invitation to tell a story. The child says, "A flower." The teacher writes "A flower" and asks no more from the child (personal communication, 2012).

This leads to the second point of consideration regarding the storytelling event. It serves to hold still the child's imaginative thinking and transform it into a narrative stream. Children are functioning through a mechanism of story all of the time (as we all are to certain extents) (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wright et al., 2012). Children naturally engage in pretend play, the forming and reforming of scripts that give shape and form to their thoughts and help them make sense of their world (Dyson Haas & Genishi, 1994; Engel, 1995; Paley, 1987). As children engage with peers in pretend play the storyline continuously morphs and shifts as new ideas are suggested, roles are changed, rules are changed; it is a very fluid process (Paley, 1987; 1990; 1992). Inviting a child to tell a story within the parameters of the storytelling event, functions as a way to capture a storyline as a single narrative. It bounds and holds still the idea. In a way it funnels imaginative thought into specific ideas that can be communicated. As the child tells their story they must decide just what to say next, out of a myriad of possibilities. For instance, if a child begins with 'Once there was a robot…' she must make a decision about what comes next, out of all the possible things that she might imagine a robot to do or say. As the child tells and the teacher transcribes it holds still the threads of her imagination.

This also points to the role of intertextuality that may play out during a storytelling interaction. The child's imagination and subsequent narration may often reference other textual sources such as children's popular culture (movies, cartoons,

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books, etc.). Several texts may combine and overlap as the child constructs their narration. As teachers recognize, acknowledge, and 'take up' these other textual references the teacher and child engage in socially constructing a level of intertextuality. Through repeated storytelling events, and the subsequent story acting events, the layering of intertextuality exerts an effect on the social and cultural micro context of the classroom.

My final point of consideration regarding the storytelling event is how it works to set apart this interaction from other daily interactions. The storytelling event has specific boundaries, as pointed out in the analysis, so that children and teachers readily identify it as a separate and specific time. However, many of their daily activities are also clearly bounded and identified. A slight difference may be that the teachers have some control over the decision about when, where, and how often a storytelling event will take place in the classroom as opposed to other events that must adhere to a daily structure that is beyond their control. A greater difference may be seen in the contours of the teacher-child interactions during the event. It is interesting that from an outside observation perspective the events look all pretty much the same; a child and teacher sit down and engage in an exchange of narrative and transcription, pause and gaze. From the perspective it could be seen as similar to many other types of events in the classroom. However the overall positioning and identification of the participants is quite different. The understanding of the roles and expectations for this interaction are distinctly different from other typical classroom interactions. The child does most of the talking while the teacher takes a more passive, receptive role. This impacts the participant's decisions and

interpretations of the event itself. This idea is more thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, "A Time Apart".

Each of these points of consideration regarding the storytelling event relate to, and are further explored in the following chapters where I discuss the themes of a time apart, autonomy, listening, and imagination made tangible.

CHAPTER V

A TIME APART

A. Introduction

This chapter discusses the nature and important qualities of the storytelling event. In this context 'quality' refers to characteristics or the essence of the interactions as opposed to a judgment of goodness or badness. I present the overarching theme of 'a time apart' and then address related subthemes of 'listening' and 'autonomy'. The nature and qualities of interactions as perceived by the participants are a driving force in any educational context. The following excerpts, analysis, and discussion address salient qualities of the interactions that make up a storytelling event within the context of the classrooms studied.

The storytelling interactions were 'a time apart' from the rest of the day in the classroom. The participants experienced the nature of the storytelling time as qualitatively different from other times of the day. Teachers spoke about storytelling interactions in contrast with other interactions in terms of the qualities of both emotions and thought that they experienced. Teachers related that they also perceived the children to have experienced the storytelling interaction as having a fundamentally unique quality. This is echoed in the voices of the children and is particularly revealed in the theme of autonomy.

B. A Time Apart

As part of the storytelling/story acting professional development seminar the teachers received the *Fairview Listens Storytelling/Story Acting Menu*. This document, approximately 25 pages in length, was developed by Fairview school district to provide

guidelines for implementing storytelling and story acting in the classroom. (Seminar leaders edit and revise this document throughout the seminar and some language is changed in the final version, see page 131 for discussion.) One section of the guideline suggested possibilities for "when and where" the storytelling event might take place but the phrasing and word choice left it open for individual teacher choice. The language alludes to the idea of a space that is separate and apart. The following is an excerpt from the guideline:

> *Many teachers take dictation during choice or center time. Others work with children during outside time, asking a child to stay in for a few minutes in order to take their story. A quiet and consistent location helps children and teachers focus on story dictation.*

The point is made here that the storytelling event should be a time of focus between the teacher and the child. Asking a child to stay, while the rest of the group goes on, puts the child in a place of being special for that moment. Especially when the interaction is perceived as positive. In this case it is for the sole purpose of listening to what the child wants to tell. This does convey the sense that this interaction is important and that the child as an individual is important. The words, "quiet and consistent" also emphasize that the storytelling event is important enough for specific, undisturbed place of it's own. The guideline sets this expectation yet the phrases "many teachers" and "others work" suggest a loose quality for interpreting the guideline. It also maintains the purpose of this time expressly for telling and transcribing, "dictating" a story.

As we see in the next excerpts the teachers spoke about these moments, (the times of the storytelling events), as embodying more than just taking the "dictation" of a child's story. In my second interview with Laney, she said:

"…it is one of the only interactions…that I'm having one on one conversation… the student knows they have my undivided attention…"

Fieldnotes reveal that the teachers and students in these classrooms constructed the understanding that storytelling events were not to be disrupted, that that interaction took precedence over any other. In the following excerpt, Laney and Ryan are engaged in a storytelling interaction in the classroom.

Ryan and Laney were about halfway through the storytelling. Ryan had narrated a phrase and Laney was writing it down and repeating it. She had just finished the writing when another child came quickly up to the table holding out a bright green plastic trowel covered in dirt from the sensory table. The child exclaimed, "Look what we found!" Laney briefly glanced at the child and then turned her gaze back to Ryan. She turned her shoulders more toward Ryan and leaned in slightly. The child walked away. Ryan began narrating his next phrase.

This series of moves and cues by Laney clearly conveyed that the storytelling interaction took precedence over the other child's discovery. She did not engage the other child, even though the child was expressing enthusiasm and interest with classroom material; a reaction that a teacher would otherwise welcome and quickly respond to. The

child simply moved away and sought out the assistant teacher in the classroom. This indicates that the child interpreted the cue, 'read' the situation, and understood not to disturb the storytelling event. The teacher and child did not exchange any words, but Laney communicated and reinforced to both Ryan and the child that interrupted that the storytelling event was special.

I observed both Laney and Anita use other non-verbal cues or signals to reinforce the importance of the storytelling interaction. Anita would raise a hand, sometimes with a few fingers extended, toward the child that had interrupted. She would not look at them. Laney often used the strategy of shaking her head 'no' as a child approached to interrupt a storytelling interaction. Again, she did not look at the child or speak to them. The expectation was maintained that the storytelling event was a separate and important space.

The storytelling event was not only a physical 'space apart' but also an emotional 'space apart'. Other than typical classroom interactions, the storytelling event positioned both the teacher and child differently in relation to each other.
In my second interview with Anita she discussed in detail the emotional aspect of the storytelling interactions from both her perspective and how she perceived the children to experience it.

> *Anita, "Through the other parts of the day I'm constantly telling, like 'do this',*
> *'do that', redirecting what not." Anita sighed and said, "Ahh, I feel like there's*
> *none of that during storytelling, like, I prompt, I ask like, well, if there's anything*
> *else I need to know. Sometimes if something is unclear at the end, I'll ask about*
> *it."*

Anita paused for a moment, "But it's really all up to them what they do and there really isn't 'wrong' they could really do during storytelling. So I think it's just, I think it's a nice like, for however long it takes them to tell their story, like five or seven minutes where it's like," She goes on speaking from the children's perspective, " 'hunh!?, everything I did during this time period is like, ok!'"
Anita laughed, "There's no redirection!"
She went on, speaking from the child's perspective, "...I could just do what I...I could just tell my story in the way I wanted to say it and [Ms. Anita] just wrote it all down."

Anita continued, speaking from the child's perspective, "Like, ok now it's time for math, now it's time for reading, and now it's time for writing, and it's like I'm constantly doing all these things my teacher is telling me I need to do during the day and [storytelling] it's like the one time where I can just say, oh, this is just what I would like to say or what I would like to do and then it's just accepted by the teacher." Anita laughed and said, "I really enjoy it."

Anita starts out describing her role as the teacher as being in the position of telling the children what to do. She controls the schedule and the rhythm of the day. Her comment about "redirecting, what not" also points to her role of maintaining the children's appropriate behavior in those contexts. When she begins talking about the event of storytelling, she sighs and her voice relaxes. She says, "there really isn't wrong they could do" which functions to take the pressure off of herself and the children. The

emotional energy is different. She is conveying the essence of the storytelling event as fundamentally and qualitatively different than the rest of the day. Anita characterizes it as a relaxed time because the only expectation is that you "be yourself" and you tell want you want to tell. It operates as a safe space, a time apart, "it's just accepted by the teacher."

The sense that this is not the typical atmosphere is emphasized when Anita prefaces a statement with "hunh!?" followed by "everything I did during this time period is like, ok! The "hunh!?" conveys a sense of wonder about the thought of 'everything I do is ok', as if that is an unusual condition, something unexpected. This is reinforced by her laughter at the thought of "no redirection" and "just accepted by the teacher" quickly followed by "I really enjoy it." In this context her laughter expressed something unexpected yet pleasant as well as a hint of something slightly subversive. It had the quality of giggling at oneself for slightly breaking the rules and getting away with it. As if the teacher and children get to own this event, in which they can break out of their standard classroom roles.

Children also use emotional language to describe the storytelling event. The most common first response to the prompt, "*Tell me about storytelling in your classroom*" is "*I like it*". When prompted to tell more about why or what they like, the responses suggest playful and positive self-images.

> Jarrett: "*Like, like if you act out a story you think like, learn that you can show people that you're not like a bad guy or a good guy if, if you're either a kids, because if, you can act out the stories so they can know what you are and then, and then they will notice that, that you are nice and not like (??) or something.*"

Mandy: "*Because we wanna, we wanna show people how good we are*"

Zara: "*When she [Anita] thought it might be fun for the kids to do that cause it's sort of to make, to make enough time in the day, for to do enough playing at school so, so it's fun*"

These comments suggest that the children perceive the time to be quite personal and a time to perhaps show their true selves or maybe just to reveal a part of themselves that they don't get to during other activities with the teacher. The children's perception of the storytelling event as an activity that has unique qualities also comes out in the themes of autonomy and, especially, listening. The children frequently characterize it as a time when you "get to do anything you want".

C. Discussion of A Time Apart

Children's oral language development is supported by opportunities for unscripted talk around ideas and objects that have personal, social, and cultural meaning for them (Dickinson & Snow, 1987; Giralometto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2003; Massey, 2004). The teachers in this study identify the storytelling interactions as a "window into their mind". It is a time that is explicitly meant to reveal ideas and topics that have meaning for the children, ideas that are not otherwise made known or recognized through the typical curriculum and activities of the classroom. The time apart sets the stage for a different kind of unscripted talk that is an important experience for children's oral language development.

The teachers' construction of this time as an interaction that takes precedence over anything else supports the child's feelings of worth and importance. It conveys that

they are worthy of undivided attention and that the teacher desires to know their personal thoughts and ideas. The children's reactions support this sense of being known in a personal and positive way. The desire to be known and listened to is a very powerful human trait (Bruner, 1986; 1990; Dyson Haas & Genishi, 1994; Rinaldi, 2006) Perhaps it is at the root of all interactions. Tapping into this desire within the context of a literacy event is compelling.

The next section addresses the subthemes of "autonomy" and "listening".

D. Autonomy

A subtheme to 'a time apart' is the theme of autonomy. One of the main qualities of the storytelling time apart is the participant's perception of autonomy and control. A thread that runs throughout the data collected in all contexts of the research is the quality that the participants in the storytelling events have an explicit degree of autonomy and choice at various levels of the process. First, I explore the sense of autonomy as expressed by the participants. Next, I point to how the language of the *Fairview Listens: Storytelling /Story Acting Menu*" (2013) works to both create and constrain the sense of autonomy and choice.

As previously referenced, the teachers received a packet as part of the storytelling/story acting professional development seminars they attended. They received the first packet at the October meeting. The intention was that over the course of the seminar the content of the packet would be revised according to the teachers' experiences and their subsequent feedback to the facilitators of the professional development. I focus on the "Introduction" and the section of the guidelines called "Children's Storytelling (Dictation)" because it applies directly to the storytelling event.

The language of the guideline attempts to balance the tension between being prescriptive yet maintaining autonomy for teachers and children. The first packet passed out at the October 2012, meeting was titled, *Fairview Listens: Storytelling/Story Acting* ***Menu*** (my emphasis). The introduction read:

> *For each component of the Fairview Listens program, there are many options for how to proceed. You can "order" the options that best suit your children and teaching style from this menu. As the year unfolds, you can sample different options. You can also create new options and add them to the menu.*

Here the language is very open, the use of the word "menu" conveys options from which to pick and choose. It is clear that that this is not a follow-the-steps method. Teachers are given the autonomy and the responsibility to choose what "best suit[s] your children and teaching style" and to even come up you're your own ideas that may be included in the guidelines. Immediately the teachers are positioned as having 'ownership' in the approach and as professional decision-makers. The introductory statement evolved throughout the year and in May the facilitators present an updated version drops the word "menu" from the title.

Both teachers expressed a great deal of flexibility and autonomy in how they implemented storytelling/story acting in their individual classrooms. For this context autonomy is defined as an as "action that is chosen; action for which one is responsible" (Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, & Turner, 2004, p. 98). Throughout the data teachers and children express the concept of autonomy as they tell about their ability to make decisions and choices. The teachers discussed their level of freedom and flexibility to

make decisions about how to implement different aspects of storytelling/story acting. They also gave examples of how they tried new things and made changes as they went along to better suit their classroom contexts. For the children the sense of autonomy is expressed in how they talked about the experience of storytelling/story acting in focused group discussions. From the children's perspective, I think the theme of autonomy is closely related to the theme of listening. First, I discuss the theme of autonomy from the teacher's perspective. The theme of autonomy from children's perspective is discussed as it relates to the theme of listening.

The structure for the storytelling/story acting approach creates a space for teacher autonomy and decision-making. The teachers gain a sense of ownership through actively making decisions, and the ability to make changes in response to experiences. The following are examples of how Laney described this process:

> Laney: "I didn't solidify it and make it how it is now, the way that it works and I like it and we get everything in and it doesn't feel as rushed…"
>
> Me: "The way it is going now?"
>
> Laney: "um, we didn't get that until December, we played around with it so much until December and now it flows a little bit better"

She uses both "I" and "we" when talking about constructing the storytelling, implying that it was both her *and* the children that took part in the process of decisions and change. This is also reflected in the following comment:

Laney, "Yeah, I think it was really, uh, really interesting just from, you know, I

know that the kids kind of went through a process. But you know I went through

my own of really trying to find my groove and my niche and what worked for me

and what worked for these students."

Laney's use of the word "process" reflects her perspective that engaging in

storytelling/story acting is not a strict method but something that she (and the children)

had some control over. It also implies that she understands it to be something that

changes and evolves. When she follows that by saying, "what worked for *me* and…for

these students", (my emphases) indicates again her sense of individual autonomy and

ownership.

Laney described specific ways in which her thinking about the storytelling

changed throughout the year. This is a result of her investment in understanding the

process and the ability to create personal goals and objectives from multiple perspectives.

In her second interview she talks about the changing perspectives:

"*Probably up until about January a lot more of the focus was on, you know, the*

kid's stories and understanding, you know, what they were interested in (and)

what they were going to tell."

"There was this kind of switch, pretty much around when Tina [storytelling

consultant] *came. It became more around um, you know,* **my** *understanding of it*

and what **I** *was making sense of. And so it was interesting for me as the, you*

know, being the learner with them to feel that kind of shift from really being

mindful and intentional and thinking a lot more about the stories they were telling

and the characters and how they were taking to it. To then thinking more about

what **I** *was doing and what* **I** *was thinking about it."*

Laney explicitly positions herself as a "learner" with the children. This position reflects her ownership and subsequent change throughout the process. Her description of change as being a result of her understanding and her thinking clearly reveals her sense of autonomy. It is also essential to consider how she talks about her role in the storytelling interaction. She describes being "mindful" and "intentional" when thinking about the stories that children were telling. This points to another thread that runs throughout the data, the theme of listening, which will be explored later.

At the first professional development seminar the teachers received a resource packet for implementing story telling and acting in their classrooms. The packet included 26 pages and was titled *Fairview Listens: Storytelling and Acting Menu.* By the end of the school year in May 2013, some of the language in the packet had been revised and the name changed to *Fairview Listens: Storytelling/Story Acting.* This section points to how the language in the packet both supports and constrains autonomy. The effort to construct a document that functioned as a useful guide, without becoming too prescriptive, continued to play out and impact participants perceptions and assumptions about storytelling.

The language in the May version of the introduction explicitly makes the point that the guideline represents the authority on the approach. First, the word "menu" is dropped from the title. In May 2013, the title read: *Fairview Listens: Storytelling/Story*

Acting in the Fairview Public Schools. The suggestion of 'pick and choose' options is gone and it became a statement of fact. Language in the introductory paragraph now included this statement:

> *Based on the experiences of teachers from around the world, including 50 [Fairview Public School] teachers who piloted this program during the 2012-13 school year, we have identified components that make for successful ST/SA.*

Using the statement "teachers from around the world" conveys the message that this information is the best and most informed. Adding to that the weight of the Fairview Public Schools creates the implication that this is solid and complete for the teachers in the Fairview Public School system. The next sentence in the introduction turns back on the notion of autonomy and choice:

> *At the same time, each group of children and each teacher is unique, and so there are options for ST/SA, some of which are listed here. Other options you and your children will discover.*

Within the introduction the tension between a prescriptive 'best practices' approach and a flexible autonomous one is evident. This dichotomy and the ability to critically maneuver between these perspectives may prove to be a critical dimension for the storytelling/story acting approach. Any individual teacher is afforded the opportunity to interpret and implement storytelling in a variety of ways. At the same time the facilitators of the professional development set parameters are that impact the event.

Turning to the section of the guidelines that focuses on "Children's Storytelling (Dictation)" I highlight two specific instances from the guidelines that resonate with the thread of autonomy and choice. In both instances it is primarily the child's autonomy that is addressed. In these examples there is the tension of balancing flexibility and choice with a prescriptive approach. First, this section stated:

Telling should always be voluntary.

This statement is interesting when held up against typical expectations for children's participation in the curriculum. Participating in math or reading block or large group time or music special, etc. is not typically considered a choice, but something that all children will do. Positioning storytelling as a choice not only creates room for children's own autonomy in the event but also may contribute to the perception that a storytelling event is qualitatively different from other school activities, in keeping with the theme of a time apart.

Laney and Anita both maintained storytelling as a voluntary for the children in their classrooms. For example, Laney commented that one child did not tell their first story until January, but then participated regularly for the rest of the year and told several stories that increased in length and sophistication. In Laney's classroom all children eventually participated in storytelling. In Anita's classroom 17 out of 24 children participated in storytelling.

In the second instance in the guidelines, parameters for the event are clearly specified and the tension between autonomy and prescription is more evident. The section stated both:

Try to write down verbatim what the child tells you.

And

*One page limit. Lengthy stories take a long time to copy down (robbing other children of the opportunity to tell stories) and can be **very** difficult to act out. Let children know at the beginning of the year that their stories can be as short as they like, but no longer than one page.*

In the first sentence the child is clearly positioned as the driving force for the interaction. It supports the child as the knower of the story and the creator of the text. The role of the teacher is to capture "verbatim" the child's ideas and language. This is a key concept of the storytelling/story acting interaction. Positioning the child as the story*teller* and the teacher as the story *taker* fundamentally shifts the typical relationship between teacher and child. Bluntly stated, in this interaction the child is the 'knower' of content or information and the teacher is the 'receiver' of the content of the child's story.

The unique positioning of roles impacts the qualities of the interactions. This is reflected in the earlier discussion of the overarching theme of this chapter, the storytelling event as a time apart. It also relates to the next theme of listening. Before moving onto the theme of listening, it is important to consider how the second part of the guideline statement, "one page limit", along with its following explanation, is interpreted and experienced by the participants. As well as how their experiences relate to the juxtaposition of autonomy and prescription.

There is a tension between the two statements. The first statement sends the message that what the children tell and how they tell it is of the utmost importance.

It gives children the ownership of the story narration. The second statement seems to convey, yes, as long as the children's narration fits on one page. The guidelines suggest setting this parameter very clearly at the very beginning of the year. The limitation is clear. The two statements almost seem to be in direct contradiction to each other. The rationale for this limitation is that long stories "rob" other children's chances and are "difficult" to act out. Considering the overall tone of the language in the guidelines, the choice of the term "rob" is striking, it appears harsh and almost threatening. It certainly breaks from the typical phrases used, such as, "We recommend…" or "Some teachers prefer…" Laney and Anita enforced the one page limit for stories, however their reasoning differed somewhat from the guidelines rationale.

Laney and Anita expressed that the 'one page limit' was a technique to forestall the phenomenon of the "run-on" story. In my first interview with Anita she talked about the 'run-on' story and how the one page limit addressed that:

"I'm changing it to better, to my needs, so that like the stories are shorter this year. I tell them, 'we're getting to the end of the page now, you have to wrap it up.' Rather than having it go on and on and on…"

I asked, "Yeah, how does, how do think that works for them (the children)?"

Anita replied, "I like it because some of them started to segue into a completely different story."

Me, "Mm hmm."

Anita continued, "So it just made it so that when you, when I, give them the page limit, I'm more likely to get one story, I mean sometimes I do get two very short

stories. But rather than going, it becoming something else, it's just like, (Anita

spoke from the child's perspective), 'oh this is where we are stopping.'

Me, "Mm hmm"

Anita: "So I do like that aspect of it, cause I'll be like, this story just goes on and

on and on." Anita laughed.

In this case, Anita speaks about the one page limit as better fitting her needs and as a means of stopping a story that goes on and on and on. Anita is also implying her definition of 'story' when she states that they sometimes go into "a completely different story". She also appears to be ok with what she considers to be two separate stories, as long as they are both short enough to fit on one page. Although the teacher describes the rationale as centering on the concept of what constitutes a singular story this is not what is explicitly communicated to the children. The rationale for stopping is communicated to the children as running out of space on the paper.

Often, I observed both Anita and Laney explicitly cueing children during the storytelling event that the text was nearing the end of the page. It was the signal that the child's story should end. For example, in one videotaped storytelling interaction, a child is telling a story to Laney, his story followed the plot of a game that he played. Even though this particular story did not fit the pattern of a 'run-on' story, when there was one empty line left on the page, Laney:

Pointed to the last empty line and said, "We're almost at the end here."

The child finished with "He solved it. The end."

It is interesting to note the disconnect here between the overall tone of this approach, that emphasizes valuing the children's concept and idea of story and closely tuning in to support that development, and the seemingly arbitrary limit of a one page story. While it may very well be that the length of one-page is a good measure for the typical length of a story told by children of this age that at least maintains the loose structure of 'story', using the tactic of 'no more space on the page' as rationale for ending the story does not seem to support the child's developing concept of 'story'. It seems to be an arbitrary limit that functions to stop the narration, rather than a scaffold for understanding *how* to end a story.

This is reflected in the children's explanations. Children interpreted the one page limit as merely running out of space, rather than an indication of the story structure. This was evident when asked about the "one-page limit" in focused group discussions. In each focused group discussion the same general reason was given.

I asked the question, "Why do stories stop at the end of a page?"

Jake, "'Cause if she gets to the bottom of the page that means ya gotta end it."

Brenna, "Cause then you don't have enough paper to um, you don't have enough, you don't that much more pap… you don't like have that much blank space to tell some more of your story."

Mandy, "Because and then it's full and then you can't write more."

In a couple instances children suggested ways to 'get around' the one-page limit.

Ryan, "Yeah, or you could connect another piece of paper to it with some tape on it."

Joe, "Sometimes those are the words to make the story but if you want to make more words to the story they have to make space for the paper, sometimes it's ok if there's no space for the paper because there's a little more space on the sides and everything."

Children's interpretation is that even if you "have more story" you have to stop because there is no more space on the paper. At times this is confusing for the child. For instance, Brenna begins by saying that there isn't enough paper, however when the teachers are writing down a child's story they are using a notebook with a lot of blank paper in it. Brenna attempts to be more accurate by saying there isn't enough, "blank space". Other children suggest ways to get around this by taping more paper onto the end of a page or using blank spaces around the edges. While watching storytelling events in the classrooms, when told they where "out of space", I observed children pointing to the skipped blank lines in between the written lines to indicate more room to write. The children look for a solution to what they perceive to be a problem. Children do not suggest that a story might be too long in its structure or that some stories can "run-on" and perhaps not be very 'story-like' at that point.

A story could, on the other hand, be as short as the child wanted. In the professional development seminar the example of a child's one-word story consisting of just their name was used as an example of honoring and accepting children's emerging confidence and competence with language. The one page limit was one of the few accepted "rules" of storytelling. It represents an example of the tension between autonomy and prescribed method that both teachers and children needed to navigate. In

this instance the children and teachers did not share an understanding of this event parameter.

E. Discussion of Autonomy

Autonomy is an identified element of engagement and motivation. The perception and ability to make decisions and have choices about ones actions is identified as a key aspect for motivation in a classroom environment (Dickinson, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2008; Stefanou et al., 2004). While the participants express feelings of autonomy, there are also tensions that surface throughout examination of the data, which may reflect tensions among goals associated with micro versus macro cultures. Such as the charge to capture verbatim what the child says but keep the story to a one-page limit. And, to maintain the child's ownership of the story but also use strategies to extend or expand on the child's ideas to specifically target goals of language and literacy development. Also, the teachers are given the ability to revise the storytelling process over the course of the year but only to a certain extent. They express that if they could they would "do it more often", but the demands of progressing through other curricular activities do not allow for this flexibility.

"Autonomy is thought to be best supported through the provision of choice and the removal of external controls, such as pressures or rewards" (Stefanou et al., 2004, p. 99). Storytelling both provides such a context yet it is also bounded. Negotiating the boundaries of autonomy is key to facilitating the storytelling practice. Teachers need to recognize and engage with those boundaries consciously. This can act to position the teacher as the expert on her classroom and group of children. At the same time the teacher must understand the rationale for her own decisions and be able to communicate

this effectively with the children. Not doing so may result in missed opportunities for explicitly teaching children certain language and literacy skills and conventions, for example, how and why to end a story within the context of a narrative, and not simply because you've run out of room on the paper.

Teachers make decision and choices in the classroom all the time. The point to consider here is what is driving or influencing those choices. A guiding question teachers should ask is, 'what is the pedagogical purpose behind my decisions and actions?' and, 'what forces are shaping the pedagogy in my classroom?' In her article, "Literacy Learning and Pedagogical Purpose in Vivian Paley's 'Storytelling Curriculum'" (2005), Cooper identifies six "essential tasks" of language and literacy development that the activity of storytelling may support, such as conventions of print, encoding, decoding, narrative form etc. These are, of course, critical skills to develop and reveal a particular pedagogical lens through which to view the activity of storytelling. My research on the nature and qualities of storytelling interactions, along with the participant's perceptions, points to other ways of thinking about potential pedagogical purposes of storytelling. The degree of autonomy present in storytelling (for both teachers and children) may open a space for teachers to explore these possibilities.

The nature of storytelling as a curricular practice that embraces such a degree of autonomy for the participants is distinctive. There is a trend towards more prescriptive methods for curriculum delivery (Alliance for Childhood, 2010; Cooper, 2005; Dyson Haas, 2012; NAEYC, 2012). As a point of comparison, the interactive read-aloud, which is a staple of early childhood curriculum, represents an activity that may readily compare with storytelling in the level of autonomy for the participants. In the interactive read-

aloud the teacher makes multiple decisions about when and how he might extend the reading by asking children questions or engaging in dialogue about the story. It is expected that some of these questions will be open-ended in nature, allowing the children to express their own ideas without a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. This is certainly a productive activity for supporting children's elements of children's literacy, such as comprehension, vocabulary, and connection to text. The element that makes the storytelling interaction distinctive is that it starts with the child. It does not start with an external object (the book) with which the teacher is the familiar expert and guide through the activity. With storytelling, the child is positioned as the expert and the teacher must follow the child's lead through the activity. This significantly changes the roles and expected duties and contributions of the participants, which opens the space for varying one's pedagogical stance.

Turning now to the theme of listening, the following section analyzes how the act of listening functioned to create a unique shared space for both teachers and children.

F. Listening

In this section I discuss the theme of listening. Listening runs throughout all layers of data collected in the research. It is explicitly stated as a purpose of the storytelling/story acting approach. It is an idea that arises in the teacher reflections about their experiences implementing the approach, sometimes in unexpected ways. Teachers embody the physical act of listening throughout the storytelling events. Children's talk about storytelling reveals a sense of recognition, being heard, and understood that reflects the feeling of being listened to.

The space for listening that is created through the storytelling events continues to intertwine with the overarching theme of 'a time apart' and the theme of autonomy. In the teacher's case it is the ability, in a sense, to listen on one's own terms, that supports the theme of autonomy. For the children, it is the space to express their individual interests, which creates the sense of listening and autonomy. They have the chance to express a part of themselves that stands outside of their identity as student in school. Again, echoing the quality of 'a time apart.'

This research shows that the storytelling event can create a space with the potential for interactions that are personally meaningful. Within the interaction the child can be positioned as the knower and, through the way listening is embodied by the teacher, can become known. The teacher can step into the child's world, suspending expectation and judgment. The child can feel recognized and acknowledged.

The goal of listening may seem rather simple and straightforward. However listening is not a passive act. It requires intention and decision-making on the teacher's part. In this context the charge to listen carries with it an imperative to take a position of curiosity or uncertainty, a 'not knowing' stance. The following excerpts show how Laney and Anita constructed their roles as listeners in the storytelling events. First, their experience in the professional development seminar set a clear tone that listening was a vital component of storytelling/story acting. In the guidelines packet, the first line of the introduction read:

> *At the heart of storytelling/story acting (ST/SA) is listening – teachers listening to children, children listening to their classmates and children listening to adults –*

all in better understanding of each other's ideas and enjoying each others'

stories.

"Listening" is the first stated purpose of storytelling/story acting and the very next stated purpose is "teachers listening to children". This is a key statement for two reasons. First, the placement as first in the list that clarifies the act of listening gives it an important position. It comes before 'children listening to classmates', which comes before 'children listening to teachers', which is the last in the list. The choice to put the statements in this order signals its significance. Second, it positions the children as primary protagonists in the storytelling event; they are the knowers of the information. The opening sentence further explains the purpose of listening as a means to "better understanding of each other's ideas". When this phrase is place alongside the phrase, "teachers listening to children" it further focuses the intention as better knowing the ideas and thinking of the child first and foremost.

The final phrase, "enjoying each others' stories", reflects back to the overarching theme of 'a time apart'. Explicitly stating that a primary purpose of a curricular activity is enjoyment lends the event the quality of being special and different from typical curricular activities. The guidelines packet and the professional development seminars included many ideas and specific examples for using the storytelling interaction as an opportunity to directly target language and literacy goals. However, it is revealing that this comes later in the guidelines and is not included at all in the introductory statement.

This remained a strong tenet throughout the professional development seminars. The teachers were charged with the task of balancing listening with supporting academic

development. During a professional development seminar, Brian (pseudonym), one of the facilitators, spoke about the fundamental goals of storytelling.

> *Brian emphasized that one of the key points is "be a good listener". A related point he added was to "provide (academic) support without taking away ownership of the story"*

Here he points to the balance that the teacher must negotiate in her role in the storytelling event. He qualifies that the character of listening should be "good", implying that listening has a purpose or intention and requires an active role. If you can be a 'good' listener, you can be a 'bad' listener. The teacher must also provide academic support, which is more in line with the 'typical' foremost teacher task. However, this is given with the caveat to not take away the child's "ownership" of the story. Again, the child is always positioned as the protagonist.

This creates a balance that the teacher must sustain. At the professional development seminar the teachers were introduced to a practice called "See-Think-Wonder." It is a protocol that engages participants in looking at an event or artifact through different lenses.

> *The protocol that they used is a model called 'See-Think-Wonder'. Brian introduced it and then provided a handout that also briefly explained it. The teachers were put into small groups and given stories from two children to read. After reading the two stories to themselves, each member of the group took a turn to comment by answering the following questions, in this order.*
> *"What do you see?"*

"What do you think about that?"

"What does it make you wonder?"

Looking at children's narrations through the lens of these questions supports the role of engaged listening. The sequence of questions moves the teacher through the stages of description, reflection, and projection. It also keeps the focus directly on the child and their narration. The questions are broad and function to open up the possibilities for how teachers can support children.

After the group concluded their discussion using the "See-Think-Wonder" model, Laney made the connection to a different seminar she had participated in, in which they discussed the use of the phrase "I wonder" as a prompt. Laney's description tied together the role of 'listening' to the role of 'academic' support.

> *Laney shared with the group that she had participated in a different seminar*
> *where they had discussed the use of "I wonder" as a teaching tool prompt. Laney*
> *gave an example related to storytelling. She used the example of a child telling a*
> *story that takes place in a forest. Laney suggested asking the child, "I wonder*
> *what this forest would look like?" as a prompt to support the child's language*
> *and literacy development by adding details and descriptive vocabulary.*
> *Brian then referred to using the "I wonder" prompt as a "listening device".*

Generally in a classroom context, one of the primary imperatives for teachers is to provide academic support. The intense emphasis on academic development creates the lens through which teachers view their role in the classroom and their interactions with

the children. The emphasis on listening as an imperative shifts the lens. Laney makes a connection between using the concept of 'wonder' as both a means for the teacher to practice engaged listening and as a tool to support academic development from a listening lens.

Listening was a theme in the professional development. In the classrooms, the theme of listening emerged through analysis of storytelling event videos and the teachers' own reflections. In the chapter, The Storytelling Event, and in the overarching theme section of this chapter, A Time Apart, several examples are given that illustrate the listening nature of the storytelling event. The posture and gaze of the teachers were solidly focused on the child that was telling the story, an embodiment of attention and listening. Teachers did not show distraction by other activity in the classroom. Anita described the nature of the interaction as "undivided attention." These examples are reinforced here with comments made by other teachers in the professional development group. For one activity the teachers shared a videotape of themselves and a child engaging in a storytelling event in their class. Laney showed a tape of Alex telling her a story. The teachers' comments highlighted qualities of the interaction that exemplify listening.

> *Teacher 1 describes Laney's actions with the phrases, "your tone of voice", "way you leaned in", "open and warm", "respectful", and "that probably felt good for him".*
> *Teacher 2 added that Laney was "patient", because she waited for the child to add details.*
> *Teacher 1 said Laney was, "fully engaged with him".*

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Teacher 3 commented she, "blocked out everything else going on in the room".

The teachers recognize listening as a physical action (or series of actions). The words "tone", "open", and "leaned in" all attempt to describe nuanced characteristics of the interaction that, experienced together, create the expectation of listening. The inclusion of "patient" as a quality of listening is particularly interesting to consider. Giving the child time to think as they are constructing a narrative conveys the sense that it is worth waiting for what they have to say and that you don't want to 'take away ownership'. The description of "fully engaged" and "blocked out everything" describes the quality of being fully present within this interaction. Through these contextual signals the teacher is communicating their desire to know the child's thoughts and ideas. Through the focused listening of the teacher the storytelling event becomes a way for the children to feel known as individuals.

Every child that participated in a focused group discussion said that they "liked" to do storytelling. I followed up by asking, "What *about* storytelling, or what part of storytelling do you like?" Their answers carry on the theme of autonomy as it relates to the sense of being known and listened to as an individual. The children's responses most often included the idea of being able to tell about anything they wanted and being able to tell about things that are important to them. For example:

Zara, "you get to do anything you want and that's how you like it"

Jake, "And we could make up our own stories so we could, like if you really wanted to make a story that you don't know, you could tell it."

Mandy, "You get to do anything that you want."

The phrase, "anything that you want" expresses a feeling of autonomy. The children express that they have the ability to make choices about their narrations. They tell their "own stories" which carries the theme of ownership. They own the stories that they make up and they get to choose what they are about. Jake's comment is interesting; it suggests that one might have a story *idea* but the story does not yet exist, and that through the telling of it, it becomes a story. Without more discussion with Jake about this idea, it is not certain that is what he meant. However, this comment does point to my next overarching theme, making ideas visible, which is discussed in the next chapter. Returning to the theme of listening, the children get to tell "anything they want" within the context of the storytelling event. Which in this case is partly constructed by the quality of the teachers' listening cues during the event.

Along with the experience of 'being listened to' while you tell 'anything you want', the children choose to tell about things that are personally important to them. The story topics are most often drawn from their own children's culture and/or a combination of their real life experiences outside of the classroom. This is another example of the role of intertextuality within the storytelling event. One of Brenna's stories, for example, combines a storyline from the Nickelodeon program "Victorious" with the activities of play-dough and coloring. Outside of the storytelling context Brenna often included references and talked about the show "Victorious". In a subsequent conversation with Anita she refers to play-dough and coloring as two of Brenna's "favorite" activities because she often includes them in her stories. This adds another layer to the rich theme of listening; they can tell about anything and they take this opportunity to be heard (and

known) as persons outside of the school context and their role as student. They "like" to do storytelling because they can share what is meaningful to them.

> *Sahil (dual language learner), "Because I can say to someone and you can ever way you want and so what story you like…a Spiderman, Ben Ten, or things, a lotta things you can do it like that."*
>
> *Mandy, "The kids would like telling stories because like, there's like made up things. And probably like, she (Laney) thought that, like some of the people like ninjas or princesses or wolves or anything or like anything that you dream of"*
>
> *Brenna, (dual language learner), "I like Victoria because she's a love singer" (Brenna's stories usually included the character, Victoria, from a Nickelodeon program)*
>
> *Caleb, "I like about making up your own things and making cool things up like planets and rockets and robots and things that are robotic."*
>
> *Anna, "I tell about princesses because princesses are beautiful."*
>
> *Zara (dual language learner), "Selena Gomez, Justin Beiber, Hannah Montana, and all the musics, all the musics. Hip Hop songs in English and Spanish songs in Spanish."*

While it is not surprising that children would choose to tell stories about these topics, the fact that they are given the space to do it in a way that confers importance through the qualities of focused listening, has implications for the type of relationship it constructs between teacher and child. The relationship is more personal and intimate.

The teachers expressed "knowing" the children in new and different ways than they typically might. Teachers took on the role of being a 'novice' about a topic and positioned the child as the 'expert'. Anita and Laney both expressed this in their second interviews. It was also a topic of discussion during a professional development seminar discussion:

> Anita, "I think I just like knowing where their minds are at, like where are my students thinking. I like that part of it, it's kind of like a little window into their world."
>
> Later in the interview she expressed this again, "I guess it's just like a glimpse into their world because I literally sat down for an hour and watched cartoons so I'm like well they are like telling me stories about these things so maybe I should just sit down and watch it"
>
> At the professional seminar Anita told her group that one child kept correcting her when she tried to repeat and write down the different terms from the cartoon that his story was based on.
>
> Laney said, "I would definitely say it has in that it's just given me another avenue to understand their interests and a little more insight into what they do at home, you know, like John and the grizzly manor game, I never would have known that… Sometimes, like Gabby would just give me a little snippet into her weekend, you know through that story, and it was a different way than hearing the morning news because it was a more personal."

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The feeling of stepping into the mind of another is an experience of intersubjectivity, in the general sense of a having a shared experience that can act as a bridge for communication and understanding. Often teacher – student classroom interactions are positioning the child to 'step into' the teachers mind, to listen to the teacher and try to construct meaning from that perspective. Good teachers will know that it is important to be able to take the child's perspective and work from that angle, however this is not necessarily made explicit to the child. The context of storytelling takes this to different level; the children feel that the interaction (and text) is from their perspective. The teachers express knowing the children from a perspective they don't usually have access to, a "glimpse into their world" and also, sometimes as the novice that needs to seek out more information by watching cartoons or a video game. The teacher – child relationship becomes more personal and robust.

G. Discussion of Listening

We know who we are through our relationships to others (Casper & Theilheimer, 2010). Children's relationships within and around literacy practices will shape their identities as literate persons (Bruner, 1985; Dyson, 2003; Owocki, 1999). When children are positioned as the storytellers in relationship to the teacher they begin to know themselves as authors, not just as participants but also as protagonists in a language and literacy practice. The children have the autonomy to be themselves, to tell about anything they want, and it will be acknowledged as important. They will be listened to, their words written down to be later shared with their entire classroom peer group.

Positioning the roles of the teachers and children in relation to each other during the storytelling events impact how listening is enacted in these contexts.

Listening, from these perspectives, constructs qualities of the teacher – child relationships. Children feel a sense of autonomy and recognition for interests and identities outside of their school role as student. Teachers feel it is a safe space for the child to participate without the pressure of judgment as well as a way for them to know the children personally and individually. The children think they do this because the teacher likes their stories, wants them to have fun, and likes to see them act it out. Only a couple children articulate that they learn something academic from it. It is 'a time apart' from 'schooling'.

These qualities of autonomy and listening construct the storytelling interaction as unique and special, as 'a time apart' in the classroom. The nature and qualities of autonomy and listening of this 'time apart' create a space for responsive, unscripted, interactions based in a language and literacy event. These are qualities that are necessary for children to experience, practice, and participate in for strong language and literacy development (Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2003; Hart & Risley, 1992; Massey, 2004; Watson, 2002). This is consistent with research that points to the importance of the qualities of teacher-child interactions generally in the classroom as a significant factor in any teaching – learning process (Chapman, 2000; Hamre & Pianta, 2007; Hamre et al., 2012). As educators strive to develop a classroom culture and curriculum that fosters responsive interactions tailored to the individual child, the storytelling event may be a valuable tool for creating these types of experiences. What sets the storytelling event apart from other typical teacher and child one-on-one activities or interactions is in how it positions the participants in relation to each other.

In mainstream western European education the teacher is often positioned as the 'knower' of content, and pedagogy is often based (explicitly or implicitly) on a premise of delivery, (Bondy et al., 2007; Claxton, 2013). This is a valid and necessary perspective because the teacher is a knowledgeable professional with the responsibility for supporting and guiding children's right to knowledge and academic skill development. However, learning and knowledge is not simply a model of one-way transmission. Learning and knowledge is a process of relationships among people and their environments (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff & Lave, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). The storytelling may act as a mechanism to shift pedagogical thinking because the event foregrounds the nature of the teacher-child relationship and emphasizes the role of listening within the interaction, a relationship that begins with the teacher listening to the child.

It is worth reflecting at this point on qualities and elements of the storytelling interactions that I expected to see prior to beginning my observations. I expected to observe much more 'teacher talk' during the interactions that focused more explicitly on language and literacy skills such as vocabulary, adding details, and description, etc. than actually occurred in these classroom interactions. The focus was on the child's overall narrative stream. I think this links closely to the idea of listening and creating that space that prioritizes the narrative as a whole and the experience of producing a narrative as a whole rather than focusing in on constituent parts of the narrative. Teachers' responses to the narratives were more often focused on clarifying questions regarding their overall understanding or comprehension of the big ideas or themes in story.

This is may be conceived as a move from a pedagogy of delivery to a "pedagogy of listening" (Bae, 2012; Low & Sonntag, 2013; Rinaldi, 2006). The concept of a pedagogy of listening is rooted in "an ethics of encounter" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 14), which requires an openness to the other and a willingness to value the other's perspective and experience. It necessitates taking a position of 'not-knowing', a stance of curiosity and interest as well as a suspension of judgments. In the interactions of a storytelling event the teacher is the receiver of the child's knowing of their story. The positioning of the child as the storyteller and the teacher as the story transcriber is fundamental in setting up the possibility for a shift in pedagogical perspective. What this type of shift may mean for classroom culture and activities is still a very open question. The participant's experience of the storytelling as a time apart, (marked by autonomy and listening), from typical school interactions begins to shed light on the ramifications of such a pedagogical perspective.

CHAPTER VI

IMAGINATION MADE TANGIBLE - "IT'S LIKE THEIR WORDS COMING TO LIFE"

A. Introduction

This chapter addresses my third theme, imagination made tangible. The storytelling event functions to make imagination tangible through the creation of the text. It begins to codify the child's thoughts and imagination into a literary product through the use of oral language. The teachers perceive this as a primary purpose of storytelling. The children perceive the primary purpose of the storytelling event (and creation of a text) as the means for story acting. For the children, the reason for telling a story and writing it down is so that it can be acted out, which is another way of making their thoughts and imagination tangible.

At the core of the storytelling event is the creation of a text of the child's narration. Writing the children's words down in a narrative text is a part of every storytelling event. At the end of the event there is a product or artifact of that interaction. The written text functions to make the children's stories, or imagination, visible. As discussed in the previous chapter, children's stories nearly always included some element of fantasy, often through the themes of superheroes, princesses, cartoons, movies, etc. Children use these ideas and create new contexts or add elements from their own lives to create an original story. As the teacher writes down the child's narrative, their imagination becomes a tangible, concrete item embodied in the text. This text then functions as the common referent for both the teacher and child. Creating this object is

part of how the teachers and children perceive their role and the purpose of the storytelling event.

B. Imagination Made Tangible

The focus on the creation of the text as artifact, and as an artifact that stays true to the child's ideas is a central goal for the teachers. They perceived their primary role as making visible the child's thinking and imagination. This is summed up in Laney's statement:

> *"For the first few months I pretty much didn't say or do anything beyond writing exactly what they said. I started um writing it sentence by sentence and saying it back to them word by word"*

It is relevant here to consider what Laney does not focus on, for instance, grammar or vocabulary or structure, but on "exactly what they said" and turning that into text. This is in line with the *Fairview Listen's: Storytelling/Story Acting Menu* which states, "Try to write down verbatim what the child tells you." Laney's attention to detail and confirming accuracy with the child, affirms for the child the importance of the text as object. This is reflected in Laney's comments:

> *"It's like their words coming to life."*
>
> *"…but these stories are their words. The stories are so much more meaningful to them than their play or, and I seen how valued their stories are (pause) you're taking their stories and you're taking their words down and writing it but they're so interested in their story and they want to see it written down that that's the real interest in it too."*

The storytelling event seems to particularly capture for the children the phenomenon of making thoughts tangible. The structure of the interactions of the event, as detailed in the Storytelling Event chapter, serves to reinforce this process. It is the subtle, yet specific, cycle of narration and transcription (constructed partly through the exchange of pause and gaze) that creates and supports the idea of text as tangible representation of thought. The children are invested in seeing "*their* story", "*written down*" and "coming to life" (my emphases).

The children expressed their level of investment and connection with the process of the creation of the tangible text.

> *Joe, "I think it's important about the storytelling is that like that we act out the specific thing in the story."*

It is also conveyed through the qualities of their actions during the storytelling event. In the second interview with Anita, she shared the observations of fellow teachers in the professional development group after they had watched a video of a storytelling event in her classroom.

> *Anita, "I videotaped one of (child's) stories to bring into the seminar, um the people who I showed it to, the other teachers, commented that she was very in tune with my writing. Like she was hanging on to every word I wrote and she would wait until I was done and would look over, so she was very much connecting to the text. So that I thought, they need that too, I know students do connect to text."*

This excerpt reveals the relationship between the nature and qualities of the event interactions with the tangible product of the event. The phrase "in tune with" captures the quality of the rhythm of the' pause, gaze, narrate, write' flow of the event. The idiom, "hanging on to every word", bridges the intangible thought with the tangible word as something to 'hang on to'. By reflecting on the nature of the child's actions, Anita concludes that making the child's words visible in the storytelling context creates a tangible connection for the child. Her comment, "they need that too" is an acknowledgment of the significance of the storytelling event.

At the end of each storytelling event there was a text created on a piece of notebook paper. At this point, the imagination has been made concrete and tangible, it now exists as 'a thing' that can be used and manipulated in various ways. How the physical story text is handled after the storytelling event is different in both Laney and Anita's classrooms. Anita writes the stories in a notebook, adding one after the other. The notebook is kept on her desk. In her second interview we discussed what would happen to the texts.

I asked," So what will you do with the stories that they've told?"

Anita, "I haven't thought that far… I mean it would be great ideally to like send them home and like, this is what your child did this year, these are the stories they told. I'm sure lots of parents would get a really great kick out of them."

Anita was saving the physical objects of the texts. The children's imaginations are captured there and she recognizes that that creates opportunities that would not exist otherwise. Her suggestion of sending them home to parents is a way to extend the

purpose of the artifact. It becomes concrete evidence of "what your child did." The act of storytelling, which Anita characterized as a "window into their world" is now also an *object* of their world that can be shared. Anita perceives the stories as positive and enjoyable and, because they have been made visible through the text, something parents can experience as well.

In Laney's classroom, after children finished their storytelling, she ripped that page out of the notebook. The child had the option to then draw a picture on the back of the page. Then the child put the paper in a basket near the large group meeting area. During large group meeting Laney took that days stories out of the basket to read and act out. After meeting time Laney would add the story to the child's story binder. Each child had a story binder labeled with their name. The binders were kept on a low shelf in the writing center and always accessible to the children. The child that told a story that day took their story binder home with them to share with their family. The family would bring it back to school after a few days.

As the storytelling event evolved over the months, sometimes Laney would go to the area where the child was playing to take their story. Sometimes that child's story would incorporate what they were playing with. In this situation, children were given the option to take a picture of the materials they were playing with that represented their story. Laney would print out the picture and the child could tape or glue it to the back of the story text page. For example,

> *Alex was playing with small, colored, plastic animals and magnetic blocks at a*
> *table. Laney come over and asked if he was ready to tell his story. She sat down*
> *next to him at the table. He told a story about the animals being trapped in a*

building and rescued. As he told the story he pointed to the plastic animals and

the structures he had built as part of his story. When he finished his story Laney

asked if he wanted to take a picture of the animals. He did. She immediately

printed the picture in the classroom and handed it to Alex. Alex went to the art

area, cut out the picture and glued it to the back of his story. Then he put it in the

basket. Then he went back to playing with the animals and the magnet blocks.

The series of events that happen after the storytelling event are focused on the story as artifact. Options to draw or take a picture to go along with the story give it another layer of visibility. The story artifact is placed into the children's hands to further manipulate, reinforcing the concrete existence of their thoughts. Knowing that your story will be acted out on the same day and that it will go home with you conveys that it is an important object. The children experience their narration as an object that can be physically moved around, saved, re-communicated, interpreted, etc. This ability to communicate and move ideas around is the very purpose and essence of language and literacy. The children experience this viscerally through the physical object, by literally having their ideas handed back to them as text.

The tangible text as an object to hold, carry with you, or give to someone else, etc. acts as the repository for the value of language into literacy. In this excerpt, Laney described Stavros' relationship to his story text:

Laney, "I mean, I think that they all just genuinely value it so much. And like you

know it's just awesome to see like Stavros who, you know it's like gosh give him a

pencil and pen and he's like, 'are you kidding me?' He's like (pause) try to get

him to come to the writing center and he's just like, (Laney snorts) you know, like

those. And to hear he told a story when I was gone and yesterday um, he raised

his hand and he was like, 'well I told my story and my binder didn't come home.'

Me, "mmhmm"

Laney, "You know what I mean, like that's awesome!"

Me, "Yep."

Laney, "He wanted it home, he wanted the written story of it. That's awesome,

I'm so pleased by that."

Stavros does not show interest in writing activities, in fact, actively scoffs at them, as demonstrated by Laney's description of his reactions and snorting sound. Indicating that making marks on paper to convey meaning is not something that he finds valuable at this point. Perhaps he does not see how this activity is relevant to him. He is, however, invested in the text of his own thought and imagination. The preceding day he watched his imagination become a tangible object that was handled, shared, and moved around. It was meaningful enough to him that he remembers it the next day and wants to 'have it' to take home. The text, which is the product of a language and literacy act, is now personally valuable to Stavros.

A purpose of the storytelling event was to create a story text that could be shared and valued between the child and the teacher. The story artifact also functioned in the classroom as a means of communication, influence, and community building. In the second interview Laney reflected on how the children used the stories to relate with one another.

"I knew that they would be inspired by each others stories but I had no idea how much. Like from the one ninja story that kept kind of repeating, of like the drama of the ninja getting another ninja and that kind of theme. And then there was a good two weeks of this Christmas story about Christmas Eve and the kids opening the presents that you know, really picked up. Now it's more like small moments that get passed along and right now it's um, somebody named a character Josiah, which was the first time any character was named and we pointed that out. That it was interesting that she named the cheetah Josiah."

The texts are a physical trace of the communication, influence, and community building. The children's influence on each other evolved throughout the year. In the beginning Laney notices big scale and obvious ways that the children picked up and related to each other's ideas by repeating major story themes such as "ninjas". The children also talked about their influence on each other. In a focused group discussion with Ryan and Mandy there was this exchange:

Mandy: "Actually it was Ryan's story. Adam, was first then Ryan, Ryan told this story about ninjas and animals and then like all the other boys started to tell like kind of the same story as Ryan."

Me: "Yeah"

Mandy: "Because they like really liked the details."

Ryan: "Yeah, like at the first. I was the first one to tell a ninja story and then everyone was like telling ninja stories."

The traces of influence are made visible through the story texts, and especially in the context of this classroom, because the texts are kept in the individual binders that were accessible to the children. The hard copies recognize and affirm the children's connections with each other.

As the year progressed and children had more experience listening to and seeing each others stories, the influences become more subtle and specific, "small moments that get passed along". The example of naming the character is notable for two reasons. First it is an example of developing literacy sophistication and use of comprehension strategies. The child is moving from identifying characters by general category, 'cheetah', 'girl', 'ninja', 'princess', etc. to specific identification, 'the cheetah named Josiah'. Secondly, and more germane to the idea of communication and community building, is that the character of a cheetah had become popular and many children's stories included a cheetah. When these stories were acted out in large group, the classmate Josiah always wanted to be the cheetah. When this particular story was acted out, another classmate, (not Josiah), actually acted the character of the cheetah. However, the cheetah character was still named Josiah. Through this story, the child makes the connection to something that her peer likes and identifies with, and her own story line, and bridges the two. Her story is a visible object that represents the relationships and shared identities among peers.

Making imagination visible through the story texts of children, that are then shared and acted out with the group, serves to make both the individual child's thinking known and acknowledged and the sense of this class as a community group tangible. For the children, a primary purpose of telling a story was closely linked to the group

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experience of acting it out. "Acting them out" was another tangible manifestation of the children's imagination that was also public.

The focus of this research was on the story*telling* interaction between the teacher and child. The implementation of this approach includes the activity of "acting out" the story at a later time as a whole group activity. I did not focus on the story acting portion, however for the children, the *acting* part was very intertwined with the *telling* part. So much so, that they did not always make distinctions between the two activities. This was often demonstrated in the focused group discussions. Ryan's answer to my question captures this clearly:

> *Me, "Why do you think you do storytelling in the classroom."*
>
> *Ryan, "We tell stories because we act them out."*

The purpose of the story from the child's perspective is to act it out. The acting is the reason, the motivator; it precedes the story in importance.

> *Mandy, "I think it's important about the storytelling is that like that we act out the specific thing in the story."*

Even when my questions do not mention story acting at all, the children's answers seem to indicate that for them the two are much more entwined. It is almost as if they do not experience the two as existing as separate activities. At the end of the focused group discussion I invited the children to, "draw a picture of *storytelling*." All of the children drew a picture of the meeting time 'stage' and the 'acting out' of the story.

In the next excerpt Joe goes a little farther in his answer by taking the perspective of the teacher:

Joe, "Maybe it's just probably, [Laney], she thinks it's interesting and maybe she likes it when we tell stories because maybe, um she just likes to watch us act out stories and read the stories that we tell"

He speculates that she also shares the purpose to be the acting portion. He also adds the purpose of reading the stories. His answer captures the possibilities for making imagination tangible; to share it, re-interpret it, enjoy it, etc.

For these teachers and children a primary purpose of the storytelling event was the production of the text. Through both the creation of the text and the acting out of the text the children's imaginations are made tangible. Once the tangible artifact is created it serves various roles and functions. It is a literary object that can be shared and valued by both the teacher and child. It is particularly unique as a manifestation of the child's own thoughts that can now be physically held, moved around, shared, etc. For the children one of the most important ways of sharing the text is as a script for group acting.

C. Discussion of Imagination Made Tangible

The teachers and children perceive that the creation of the story text is an important purpose of the storytelling interaction. Through this activity they are engaging in the process of transforming thought into words into text. For children, this bridges their own imaginative world with a recognized literacy practice through the use of oral language. The stronger and more relevant a bridge between the child's personal and educational contexts the better chance the child has for successful learning experiences

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(Compton-Lilly, 2012; Hart & Risley, 1995). Not only does it hold still and make tangible their ideas but it also creates a tool for using those ideas in different contexts that the child perceives as important. It becomes the common referent for the child, teacher, and peers as a tool for acting out the idea. This is fundamentally different than using a child's storybook as a common literacy referent for the child and teacher (as is the case in interactive read-alouds for example). This links back to the idea of the child as the protagonist of the literacy event, where the child is invested with a sense of autonomy and knowing. The text represents the child.

The text of the child's story serves to bring the use of language into a conscious awareness through the physicality of the written words (Watson, 2002). The written text, "'fixes' a representation of the language, allowing reflection and interpretation. Language thereby becomes the object of thought" (Watson, 2002 p. 44). After the teacher has transcribed the child's story text, they use it in several ways. The teacher re-reads the child's language and checks with the child to make sure it is accurate according to the child. This action makes explicit the role of literacy in communication. It encourages the child to make the connection that the way something is conveyed in writing will impact how it is understood. The message to the child is that if you want others to understand your thoughts, intentions, ideas, etc., it is important that they are written in a way that accomplishes that goal. By positioning the child as the 'teller' of the text, and ensuring that the text is satisfactory to the *child*, it puts them in the place of owning the text and in turn they are invested in the literacy product.

The subsequent story acting activity reinforces the importance of the text because the text is what is used to present the child's idea to their peers. In children's peer play

they regularly verbally share story-like ideas and themes with each other that become the context for their pretend play scenarios. In the context of the storytelling/story acting events, the written text is the mechanism for communicating the play, or 'acting' scenario to their peers. This link is clearly seen in the children's perceptions of the purpose of the storytelling event. The purpose for telling a story that is transcribed into text is to communicate sufficiently to others so that it may be acted out. For the children in this study this was a clear reason and motivation for attending to the bridge between oral and written language (Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010). It also reinforces the idea that a text communicates from a particular perspective (child's own/or peers imagination) and for a particular purpose (to act it out). These are both fundamental concepts that are needed for higher-order understanding and evaluation of texts, which become important academic skills in later grades.

CHAPTER VII

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

A. Introduction and Review

The intent of this chapter is to summarize and discuss implications. First I present a brief summary of the research project followed by a summary of my points of analysis. Then I discuss implications of this research regarding implementing Paley's Storytelling/Story acting as a curricular activity. I also discuss implications for the impact of the activity on the relationship between teachers' pedagogical stance and teacher-child interactions regarding language & literacy.

The research was a micro-ethnographic study of two early childhood classrooms, (PreK and Kindergarten) in a public school located in a large urban school district. The teachers were beginning to implement activities based on Paley's Storytelling/Story acting approach and this research focused on the storytelling event. Participants included 2 teachers and 12 children. Data was collected from September 2012 through June 2013 and consisted of fieldnotes, interviews, videotapes, small group discussions, and artifacts. Analysis was conducted through on-going memo writing during the data collection and then the process of open coding, axial coding, theme development, and excerpt commentary unit writing. Ethnographic research is an interpretation of people and their experiences within a specific context. The purpose of this research is not to make definitive and generalizable claims. The purpose of ethnographic research is to describe and interpret people's behavior within their ordinary context, to look for patterns and themes that can provide a perspective on human actions (Emerson et al., 2011; Schram,

2006). To maintain the integrity of the research I engaged in constant comparison among data sources, used participant check-ins, as well as critically examining my stance and looking for evidence to contradict hypothesis development (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 2004).

This study was framed by three main research questions, (a) What constitutes a storytelling event? (b) What are the nature and qualities of storytelling interactions? and (c) How do the teachers and children perceive the interactions? I explored the storytelling event, seeking to describe the parameters and contours of the interaction between teacher and child when the child is positioned as the storyteller. I looked for salient features of the interactions and explored how participants themselves perceive the storytelling event. The following is a summary of themes that emerged through the process of this research.

1. The Storytelling Event

The storytelling event is constructed in ways that reflect and reproduce western European middle class socio-cultural norms of story narrative and educational interactions. This serves to support children's experience and familiarity with common educational discourse and conventions of literacy. It can also act to constrain or silence cultural variations of storytelling and narrative. The manner in which the event is structured in the context of these classrooms along with the tools used in the task present a relatively narrow interpretation of storytelling.

The storytelling event functions to 'hold still' a child's imaginative thought and transform it into a narrative text. It is an act of language and literacy that produces an artifact of language and literacy. What makes this literacy event particular is how it

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constructs the roles of the participants and how it positions them in relation to each other. By positioning the child as the knower and teller of the story and the teacher as the receiver and scribe of the story, it creates a space that the participants perceive as qualitatively different than other typical school activities. Two characteristics of the event, autonomy and listening, promote it's unique qualities.

2. A Time Apart

The storytelling event as enacted in these classrooms creates a relational space between the teacher and child that is characterized by qualities of autonomy and listening. The children experience a degree of autonomy by being positioned as the protagonist in the interaction, with the ability to tell about anything they want. The topic is from their imagination, ideas, and thoughts. Their perspective is the driving element for the construction of the story. Teachers experience autonomy by being released from the need to enforce specific expectations or performance by the children. Teachers are given the freedom to make decisions about if and how they might specifically support children's emerging literacy skills and development. This allows the teachers to broaden their perspective on the child. They have the opportunity to 'know' the children in ways that they may not otherwise have access to in the course of other school activities.

Listening emerged as a salient quality of the storytelling interactions. The act of listening encompassed several elements. The positioning of the teacher as the receiver and scribe for the child's story (a narrative unknown to the teacher) requires a stance of attention and curiosity. This is coupled with the autonomy regarding how to respond to and take up the child's narrative. The teacher must listen with intent towards making decisions about how to respond (or not respond). Responses may be aimed at the child's

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personal thoughts and experiences or aimed at supporting a specific literacy skill, etc. However there is no stated expectation that a teacher *must* target an academic skill in every interaction *or* make any limitations or restrictions on the content or structure of a child's story. The teacher *is* expected to actively listen and engage in the child's perspective. This position as listener resulted in teachers expressing the sense of a window into children's minds and thinking that they did not have before.

The theme of listening manifested for the children through their expressions of being able to tell about whatever they wanted. The storytelling interaction was a time of undivided attention by the teacher, physically present and attuned to the child, willing to hear and write down whatever their thoughts and ideas may be. It was a listening without expectation or judgment. It was a listening act with serious intent because the teacher takes care to write down their ideas, making them concrete, visible, and tangible. This tangible product then becomes the means for sharing their idea and story with their peers (and others). The storytelling interaction combines the quality of being listened to (being known) with being the protagonist in creating a language and literacy product. This is a potentially powerful entrée for the child into a literacy practice.

3. Imagination Made Tangible

The teachers and children perceive production of the story text to be an important purpose of the storytelling event. For the children it is the means by which they can share and act out the story with their peers. For the teachers it also serves as the tool for acting out the story, as well as an artifact for reflection regarding a child's thinking, interests, and literacy development. One teacher made the texts available to the children (and their families) in binders, emphasizing for the children various purposes of print and literacy.

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The storytelling interaction embodied the process of transforming thought into words into text. The children are positioned as the authors and owners of the process and of the literacy product. The activity bridges the child's mind with physical text. It bridges the abstract to the concrete, which is a vital function of language and literacy. Children come away with an actual, physical product of their thoughts and ideas. A moment of their thought and narrative is now captured and in their hands.

B. Implications - Implementing Paley's approach

Vivian Paley's storytelling/story acting approach is just that, an approach. It is more of a philosophical and pedagogical stance than it is a method for the delivery of curriculum. The tenets of the approach encompass many elements that resonate strongly with educators as being important parts of teaching and learning with young children. Elements that are also shown by research to be important factors in effective teaching and learning practices, such as relationship building, individual attention, responsive communication and conversation, and integrating children's interests into the curriculum. However, because it is not a method that can be easily scripted, or child outcomes readily codified, it cannot be tested for fidelity in the traditional sense. This makes determining factors of implementation a more complex task. This is both an affordance and a constraint of this type of curricular activity.

It makes it difficult to look across instances and isolate specific factors that make it effective and that could be replicated with predictable or consistent results along certain dimensions. Creating professional development resources for teachers to implement this approach requires balancing authoritative do's and don'ts with open-ended flexibility. This may feel confusing and contradictory for teachers. For instance, they are told to

create a consistent space in the classroom where they will take children's stories, and then they are also told that taking stories can happen anywhere. They have the autonomy to decide when and how to do storytelling, but external factors limit when it can be done and the models presented for taking a story all follow the same cultural pattern. They are told that storytelling is an important language and literacy activity and that the interactions may be used to teach academic skills, but at the same time are warned not to turn storytelling into a phonics lesson (Fairview Listens Menu, 2013).

This flexible approach stance is also the affordance of storytelling. It is a solid language and literacy activity that is meant to be responsive to the individual child and to the unique configuration of any particular group of children and classroom situation. This is clear in the amount of autonomy that the participants experience. It also means that control and power regarding many of the details of how to enact storytelling must be given over to the teachers and the children.

In the case of the two classrooms studied the frequency and consistency of storytelling varied. During the time of this study I had more opportunities to observe storytelling in Laney's classroom then in Anita's. In Laney's classroom storytelling happened everyday so I was able to observe storytelling related activities nearly each time I visited. In Anita's classroom storytelling happened less predictably and with less flexibility, this meant that at times there was no storytelling happening on the day of my visit. Storytelling did occur in Anita's classroom more frequently during the course of the study than I had the opportunity to observe. What is interesting is that even though the frequency and predictability varied, the nature and qualities of the interactions and the participant's perceptions were very similar.

From a socio-cultural perspective no two interactions among differing persons in a differing context will ever be entirely equivalent. In this case we can consider some shared aspects of the macro-context for both classrooms (i.e. shared professional development seminar, shared school climate, shared neighborhood and community) that help to establish some degree of shared references for the participants. However, at the micro level of person-to-person interactions within the individual classrooms, each interaction will be unique to some degree because it involves two unique persons with unique personal histories, experiences, etc. Each child will tell a different story, each teacher's words and reactions will be specific to that one exchange. Each participant will act and react to each other, continually (re)-constructing each storytelling interaction together. Again, what this study points to is that fidelity to a particular procedure is just one lens through which to view a curricular activity.

This study looked specifically through the lens of the nature and qualities of interactions and participant perspectives and found similarities among two classroom contexts, even though aspects of procedural implementation varied. In the following paragraphs I discuss this implication in more detail. In the next section I discuss how this phenomenon may be tied to the relationships between pedagogical stance and the framing of curricular activities.

Each group of children and teachers are unique and will include a range of personalities, learning styles, developmental levels, etc. Generally, teachers are instructed to differentiate established curriculum to meet the needs of the children. In the case of storytelling, the 'activity' seems to be loosely defined so that teachers and children create it (or flesh it out) as they go, in order to suit their own classroom situations.

Differentiation is built into its design. For instance, in Anita's SEI classroom the majority of stories were dictated in English by the children's choice. However, mid-way through my time with the classroom two new children from Puerto Rico joined the class. They told stories in Spanish to Anita, which were later acted out by their new peers. Storytelling (and acting) allowed them to join an established classroom activity that seemed to easily bridge the language divide and allowed their personalities to be 'heard'. Another consideration is that storytelling is a voluntary curriculum activity and therefore not all children will necessarily participate the same amount or at the same rate. However, I hesitate to assume that just because a child is not engaging in the one-on-one storytelling interactions with the teacher, that they are not participating in the broader influences of the activity on the culture of the classroom (especially regarding the acting out portion). Some of the classrooms participating in this initiative were inclusion classrooms including children with a range of physical, cognitive, and communicative differences. The scope of my research did not include these classes. This would be an informative area for more exploration.

The teachers make decisions about exactly how to structure and organize the event, what steps will be part of telling a story, when and what types of support or scaffolding strategies to use for literacy development (if any), how the text artifact will be used beyond the acting out activity, etc. The teachers will also decide how much and when to include the children in making decisions about the structure and 'rules' of storytelling (and story acting). These things are left up to the teacher as professional decisions to make regarding this teaching and learning process. Again, this points to the

pedagogical purposes of storytelling and in turn to the individual teachers pedagogical stance.

Flexibility and autonomy are keys to this approach and teachers will have to be trusted to make decisions that often fall in a gray area. The teacher must be trusted to navigate among the role of listener and receiver (positioning the child as the knower) to a position of strategically scaffolding specific learning/thinking skills. The teacher must decide what is it at this particular moment in time that will best support this child, to talk with them about how it feels when the ninja has to fight so many bad guys or point out that 'coach' is the word for 'the guy that does the team'. In other words, the teacher is the pedagogical expert, with the autonomy and skill to shift lenses and/or see through varying and complementary lenses at the same time. With many schools adopting more and more prescribed curriculum and teachers expressing increasing pressures to conform to external mandates, an approach that explicitly gives the teacher control of the learning process is decidedly different.

A public school district that embraces this approach must embrace its openness and flexibility. This could prove difficult for schools because of the external mandates to which they are bound. Professional development to support teachers to implement this approach may need to be quite different than models used for instruction regarding a curriculum method. Teachers and administrators would need to be comfortable with a degree of trial and error and with a curricular activity quite possibly looking very different from one classroom to another. What this research shows is that even though the approach to storytelling looked (from an etic perspective) considerably different, the interactions shared the same nature and qualities. The participants' perceptions (an emic

perspective) of the purpose and interactions were also very similar. A study by Nicolopoulou & Cole, (2010) examined Paley's storytelling approach through the lens of CHAT (cultural historical activity theory) which took a critical look at how the broader ecology of the classroom and the multiple, overlapping activity systems (of which both teachers and children must navigate) impacted implementation. This study confirms that elements such as classroom context, teacher experience and disposition, children's personality and development will indeed impact implementation in ways that differ across classrooms. However, other critical features such as the nature and qualities of the interactions and the teacher and children's perceptions of their experiences point to its potential to consistently support positive, attuned, responsive experiences.

The discussion and consideration of what constitutes a storytelling approach will always need to be an open and on-going discussion. Implementing the approach will always need to maintain a balance of providing enough structure and guidelines to make it a coherent and cohesive practice without turning it into a prescribed method that loses its responsive and individual qualities.

C. Implications – Relationships and Pedagogy

Research indicates the critical role that teacher-child interactions play in the process of language and literacy teaching and learning (Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh Pasek, 2010; Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Hart & Risley, 1992; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011). It also points to the effectiveness of interactions that are sensitive to the individual, positive, well attuned, and responsive (Chapman, 2000; Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman & Reischlin, 2009; Justice et al., 2008). Teachers may show high fidelity to a particular curriculum method yet this may not result in an effective or productive learning

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experience. The qualities of the interaction can still be quite varied and account for the level of success as a teaching and learning experience (Justice et al., 2008). In successful and productive interactions teachers, "respond sensitively to what they [children] bring to the task" and engage in "dynamic interactions with children in learning activities that unfold over time" (p. 53). A teacher's ability to engage in interactions that embody these qualities will depend on several factors, one of which is the teacher's pedagogical stance (Hamre et.al. 2012; Loughran, 2013; Raths, 2001).

Most early childhood teachers experience a teacher education that includes the rhetoric of a child-centered approach; that emphasizes the importance of the child's experiences, knowledge, and perspectives as essential for establishing a relationship of teaching and learning. They also learn the importance of student learning objectives and outcomes (Dunphy, 2012; Farquhar & White, 2014). Often the reality in the classrooms is more focused on specific objectives and outcomes. As teachers continue to develop and refine their pedagogical stance they are embedded in a pedagogical culture of delivery and intervention. This pedagogical culture may impede teachers' abilities to foster a pedagogical stance that privileges a space for sensitive, attuned, dynamic, responsive, and individual interactions, in other words, a space for active and critical listening to the child. These pedagogical stances need not necessarily be at odds, but teachers need to have not only exposure to them in theory but also in practice. Perhaps the storytelling activity provides a way to practice a different pedagogical stance.

I want to draw a line between young children's language and literacy development and a teacher's pedagogical stance. I have stated throughout this study the important qualities that are part of teacher-child interactions, particularly for language

and literacy learning. Dunphy (2012), referencing Genishi & Dyson, articulate an essence of these qualities of interaction:

> Genishi and Dyson (2009, 108) argue that a critical factor for enabling optimal language and literacy learning is observant teachers who can 'attune their teaching to what children are doing' and in that way enable all children to mobilise (sic) the literacy resources they bring with them to the education setting. Attuning to children's interests, concerns and experiences implies that the teacher must focus on the nature and contexts of children's experience and how these issues have impacted children's perspectives.

I do not think that educators would disagree with this perspective. However, even when teachers stated pedagogical beliefs align with this perspective, it may be difficult to carry this into practice. The influence of past experiences, especially coupled with an educational culture that prioritizes testing for quantifiable student outcomes, may be steep pressures to overcome.

Interactive and dialogic read-alouds are techniques for teachers to 'get at' children's thinking and actively engage them in literacy activities. The qualities of these interactions may vary greatly from teacher to teacher depending, in large part, on their pedagogical beliefs (Wiseman, 2011). There will always be a dynamic relationship between a teacher's pedagogical beliefs, personal experiences, their current educational culture, and their actual practices. This may be more evident in curricular activities that are less prescribed or scripted, activities that provide for more teacher (and student) autonomy, flexibility, and decision-making. It is important that we continue to explore

the intersection of these elements especially from new perspectives in terms of both pedagogy and practice.

Research and scholarly thinking regarding early childhood pedagogy is wide ranging. At one end it is pushing at the boundaries of critical thought and examination into the postmodern and poststructuralist domains (Burman, 2008; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; MacNaughton, 2005). At the other end is the focus on a positivist psychological paradigm (Wood & Hedges, 2016). The work of research is, in part, to explore the terrains of these pedagogical perspectives and continue to examine the relationships between theory and practice (Farquhar & White, 2014).

Pairing the storytelling activity with the concept of a "pedagogy of listening" may broaden teachers (and researchers) lens and give us another tool in which to envision our practice. Carlina Rinaldi (2006) posits the concept of a "pedagogy of listening" based on the theoretical work of Dewey, Derrida, Vygotsky, Bruner and others. Some scholars and educators are beginning to take an interest in this concept and attempt to apply it in practice (Bae, 2012; Low & Sonntag, 2013). A pedagogy of listening privileges the relationship among teacher and child as an ethical encounter (Rinaldi, 2006); an encounter that does not presuppose a hierarchy or an assumed body of knowledge, but one that is based on openness and possibilities. In many ways such a pedagogical approach could signal a radical shift in the how early childhood education is conceptualized. My purpose here is not to argue for a radical shift in pedagogical perspectives, but to draw from an emerging pedagogy that may help to inform a curricular approach such as the storytelling/story acting approach.

Returning to the concept of a pedagogy of listening, this is a relatively new concept that is actively being defined both in theory and practice (Dunphy, 2012; Low & Sonntag, 2013; Rinaldi, 2006). Rinaldi says:

It involves an ethical relationship of openness to the Other, trying to listen to the Other from his or her own position and experience and not treating the Other as the same. The implications are seismic for education.

Embracing this perspective in its fullness may indeed push into postmodern and poststructuralist pedagogical domains. However, drawing even modestly from this framework may help us understand and make use of literacy activities that seek to create spaces for responsive, well attuned, and sensitive teacher-child interactions.

Putting this intersection of pedagogy, theory, and practice into the context of the Story Telling/Story Acting approach, it means the teacher is able to take the position as the 'not knower' of knowledge, the not knower of the story, the child's ideas, etc. Being able to observe and attune so that they can view the child as an owner of knowledge and from that perspective be open to the "otherness" of the child in a way that can "mobilise (sic) the child's literary resources" (Dunphy, 2012; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Rinaldi, 2006). The storytelling interactions open a space for teachers to have a window into the child's concerns, interests and lived experiences. Perhaps it may also work to make a different approach to pedagogy not only accessible but also necessary.

Accomplishing this perspective may require that teachers and teacher educators shift (or widen) their pedagogical stance. But even more necessary is creating space within the realities of the classroom to allow for this shift. This means continued attention to the relationship of the micro and macro contexts and cultures (Nicolopoulou & Cole,

2010). The story telling activity presents an opportunity to bridge new possibilities in the area of pedagogical growth with current understandings of best practices in language and literacy development.

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, this ethnographic research sought to explore the story telling portion of the Story Telling/Story Acting approach and describe the participant's perspectives regarding this language and literacy event. Both teachers and children experience the storytelling event positively. The storytelling interactions are characterized by qualities of autonomy and listening that result in a tangible literacy product of the child's thinking and imagination. This research points to considerations for teachers evolving pedagogical stances along with broadening perspectives of how teachers and children position themselves to one another during classroom curricular interactions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FIRST TEACHER INTERVIEW

The goal is to obtain background on the teacher and a perspective on their beginning experiences with the approach

Tell me about how you got started teaching.

Tell me about the children in your classroom.

What goals do you have for the children in your classroom?

      Is there a priority?

When and how did you first become acquainted with Vivian Paley's storytelling and enacting approach?

      Tell me about how you made the decision to participate in the *Fairview Listens* initiative.

Take a moment and think back to the beginning of the year…describe your expectations surrounding the storytelling and enacting approach.

      What did you expect would be 'easy'?

      What did you expect would be 'difficult'?

      How did you expect the children to react?

Starting from the beginning walk me through the process of beginning to use this approach in your classroom.

      Possible follow-up prompts or questions:

      Were there any surprises for you?
      How did that make you feel?
      What did you do next?
      Did you talk to anyone about that?
      Can you give me an example?

Etc.

APPENDIX B

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR SECOND TEACHER INTERVIEW

Questions vary slightly between teachers due to some information previously gathered during informal conversations.

<u>Anita</u>

Thinking about storytelling over the whole arc of the year, tell me about your experience with it?

How do you think the children feel about the stopping point at the end of the page?

    Did you ever think to change this option?

Is there anything that surprised you about the storytelling?

Talk about the combination in children's stories of fictional characters with real life experiences.

Does storytelling effect how you know the kids? Or not?

If I asked the children 'why do you do storytelling in the classroom', what do you think their answer would be?

    Do you think they see it as a learning activity?
    What do you think about the 'choice' aspect of it?

What do you think was their favorite part of the whole process?

What was your favorite part? Least favorite?

Are there any children in your class that never chose to tell a story?

Did you use the Storytelling Menu?
    How much, for what, etc.?

Does it coordinate with any of your other curricula?
    Tell me more about that…

Did you use it for any kind of assessment?
    Tell me about that…

Would you do anything differently if you did not have any other pressures or restrictions?
Are there any stories the children tell that you feel are inappropriate?

How do you feel you interact with the children during the storytelling activity compared with other activities?

Any other thoughts about the experience?

Laney

Thinking about storytelling over the whole arc of the year, tell me about your experience with it?

If I asked the children what they learned through storytelling, how do you think they would answer?

What do you hope they have learned?

Is there anything that surprised you about the storytelling?

Has it effected how you know the kids? How?
        Personally?
        Academically?

How do you feel you interact with the children during the storytelling activity compared with other activities?

Tell me about how you handle the distractions that occur during the storytelling activity?

How do you think the children would answer if I asked them if there were any stories that Ms. Laney didn't like?

Does it coordinate with any of your other curricula?
        Tell me more about that…

Did you use it for any kind of assessment?
        Tell me about that…

Would you do anything differently if you did not have any other pressures or restrictions?

Are there any children in your class that never chose to tell a story?

Any other thoughts about the experience?

APPENDIX C

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN

Tell me about storytelling in your classroom.

Why do you want to tell a story?

What is the best part about storytelling?
      The worst part?

Why do think that Ms. Anita/Ms. Laney does storytelling in your classroom?

Tell me what Ms. Anita/Ms. Laney does when you tell a story?
      Or, Can you show me what she does (what she says)?
      Pretend you are Ms. S/L. and (other child) is going to tell a story, show me what happens.

Why do stories stop at the end of the page?

Can you ever tell a story that is wrong?
      Tell me about that.

Do you ever tell real stories?

Does Ms. Anita/Ms. Laney have a favorite story?
      Tell me about that.

Why do you tell stories about Spiderman? Or Princesses?   Etc.

Tell me about the story binders.

Do you learn anything from storytelling?
      Tell me more about that.

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